

## GEORGE LAMMING AND V. S. NAIPAUL IN THE LIGHT OF POLITICS OF POSTCOLONIALISM

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### ABSTRACT

*Considering their literary lives, oeuvres, political and ideological affiliations as regards the third world societies and the West; this article deals with a comparison of V. S. Naipaul and George Lamming in the light of their politics of postcolonialism. It tackles the general qualities that characterize and differentiate each of them, and the question as although they both have almost the same backgrounds, why they are considered as two postcolonial writers representing discrete poles as regards their culture and once-colonized societies. Considering both writers' different standpoints regarding the history, the writing style & language, the prospect of an integral Caribbean nation, and the identity of the individuals of the once colonized nations, it comes to a conclusion that while Lamming (as a socialist realist who champions language, tradition, myth and the disadvantaged) is likely to be considered as a figure representing the 'old new caliban' who has exerted to find remedies which aim to cure the feeling of alienation and rootlessness on the basis of subjectivity and intuition, Naipaul, as a modernist and positivist who champions reason, logic and science, and who has mixtured satire and comic irony to awaken the colonized subjects from their romantic and subjective thoughts to the contemporary world's positivist and objective realities, is likely to be considered as a figure representing the 'new new caliban'. Or to put it in other words, while Lamming represents the one side of the binary opposition in a biased manner, Naipaul acts in a manner which may likely be perceived through Hegel's concept of 'Aufhebung' which also means sublation.*

**Keywords:** Naipaul, Lamming, Caribbean, Postcolonialism, Caliban, Aufhebung.

### ÖZET

*Bu makale, sömürgecilik sonrası (postcolonial) edebiyatı alanında önemli bir yere sahip olan ve bir anlamda doğu-batı karşıtlığını temsil ediyor diyebileceğimiz V.S. Naipaul ve George Lamming'in Üçüncü Dünya ülkelerinden biri olarak bilinen ve bir zamanlar sömürgeleştirilmiş olan Batı Hint Adaları (The West Indies) halkının kültürü ile ilgili politik ve ideolojik duruşlarını karşılaştırmaktadır. Her iki yazarın 'tarih', 'dil', 'milliyetçilik' ve 'kimlik' gibi kriterler ile ilgili düşünceleri ve söylemleri göz önüne alınmış ve şu sonuca varılmıştır: Dil, gelenek, kültürel mit ve madunları öne çıkardığı için bir 'sosyalist gerçekçi' olarak değerlendirilebilecek olan Lamming'in sömürgeleştirilmiş bireyin yersizyurdsuzlaşma ve yabancılaşma duygularına çözümler bulmak için öznel ve duygusal temeli üzerinde çaba sarfeden ve 'old new caliban' diye tanımlanan bir*

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YDÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, C. V, No. 1, (Nisan 2012)

figürü temsil ettiği öne sürülebilirken, akıl, mantık ve bilimi öne çıkaran bir modernist ve pozitivist olarak tanımlanabilecek olan ve sömürgeleştirilmiş bireyleri romantik ve subjektif yaklaşımlardan çağdaş dünyanın objektif gerçeklerine uyanmalarını sağlayabilecek hiciv ve ironiyi olanca sertliğiyle kullanan Naipaul'un 'new new caliban' diye tanımlanan bir figür olduğu ileri sürülebilir. Başka bir deyişle Lamming ikili karşıtın sadece bir ucunu kendi öznel gerçeği üzerinden subjektif bir şekilde temsil ederken, Naipaul'un sadece kendi doğrularını ileri süren tez ve antitezlerin, ya da ikili karşıtlıkların kısır döngüsel çatışmalarından kurtulmanın, Hegel'in 'bir ikiliğin iki ucunu da hem kapsayıp hem de inkar ederek ötesine geçmek' anlamına gelen 'Aufhebung' kavramının benimsenmesiyle mümkün olabileceği düzleminden hareket ettiği söylenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Naipaul, Lamming, Karaippler, Kolonisonrası, Caliban, Aufhebung.

## Introduction

Richard Terdiman's assertion that each discourse brings its counter discourse (*Discourse/Counter Discourse*, 1985), and Mikhail Bakhtin's that no discourse can be regarded as a monologue are premises that an utterance (or reality) will always bear a competing, contrary utterance (reality) from which it procures its own energies. These Versions of realities eventually produce binary oppositions which rely only on their own discourses. In the struggles of these binary oppositions, dialectically, theses clash with antitheses; and from these endless clashes emerge syntheses which also eventually create their own antitheses. Each discourse (or thesis, or opposition), legitimizing and relying on its own versions of realities, tries to have the control of the necessary tools which pave the ways to the power. This vicious circle is evident in all stratum of social life. Consequently, from these oppositions emerge many problems. Among these problems are economic or cultural wars between groups, states and civilizations, mass-migrations, cultural degeneration, the sense of alienation and displacement in the psyches of individuals or groups, etc.

There has been such a common inclination in the majority of postcolonial literature too. In 1970s, after almost all colonized countries gained their independence, and as they engaged in a vast cultural, political and historical enquiry of the colonial period and its consequences which was more critical and more challenging than before, there occurred two discrete points of view among the scholars and intellectuals of the once colonized countries. Thus, while some writers dwelt on the contradictions and failings of the postcolonial cultures and societies criticising them for their intellectual and 'cultural parasitism' on the West, the others believed that it was possible to reconstruct the damaged identities by

looking back at their past, tradition, language, and myths. In this regard, being considered as two of the prominent figures among postcolonial literary circles, Naipaul and Lamming represent these two discrete poles each of which has its own version of reality and obtains its discourse (its energy) from the other's theories.

Naipaul and Lamming are the descendants of slaves and indentured workers from India and Africa who were deracinated from their homelands and brought to the Caribbeans to work in large plantations to produce sugar cane after the abolition of slavery in Europe. Both of them were educated in the schools which were based on British educational system built to, as Thomas Babington Macaulay puts it, "form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (qtd. Young, 1967: 729). The formal education system (be it British, French, or American which were established by the colonizers) had one feature in common; they were based on the assumption that the colonial culture was superior to the native culture. The aim of the education was to "civilize" the colonized, cutting them away from the roots of their culture. As Manjith Inder Singh states "The production of a lumpen bourgeoisie was the main purpose. All that it produce much to the detriment of the native interests were minor, inexpressive cogs, such as clerks, glorified office boys, officials and a few professionals meant to run the colonial administrative machine" (Singh, 1998: 12). This operation resulted the people of the colonized countries in a state of passivity which injured their confidence and self respect, and caused them to experience psychic damages one of which can be considered as being ashamed of their culture. "It transformed many into what Naipaul terms "mimic men" inducing a subconscious slavery to the foreign values" (Singh, 1998: 12). For example, as Lois Tyson underlines, the indoctrination through a "British system of education, British culture, and British values that distorted the culture, morals, and even physical appearance of formerly subjugated peoples" (2006: 419) eventually formed such identities that range between acculturized (fully assimilated) and nationalized individuals. Thus, while some have favoured hybridity claiming that it is not possible to turn back to their original culture, the others have favoured nativism propounding that unless they haven't relied on their own culture, they won't completely be decolonized. In this respect; postcolonial theorists, writers, scholars, and intellectuals favour discrepant approaches in order to heal the effects that the colonial experience left on the colonized peoples. For them, the crucial issue is to understand not only the influence, but also how colonialism and its policy changed the character of the whole societies. In this

context, although they experienced almost the same ways of life, [thus; both being born in the West Indies in 1930s as descendants of indentured ancestors, both having been educated under colonial conditions, both having travelled to the imperial centre (England) for better conditions of life, both having inspirations to become writers that they eventually achieved, both being considered as postcolonial writers who have taken certain postcolonial themes (such as cultural identity, exile, the sense of homelessness) as their subject matters, both writing their works in English, and etc.], George Lamming and V. S. Naipaul have emerged as standard examples of writers who have different versions of their own reality and take different approaches to resolve the problems stemmed from the colonial process in the Carribean. On the one hand, while Lamming, in his writings, favours a literary strike back on the existing assumptions attributed to the West, Naipaul, rather attacks and harshly criticises the social, cultural and psychological decadents that the colonial subjects are entangled in.

Although Naipaul has always been engaged in the concepts and themes peculiar to the societies which have experienced the colonial processes, and although he has taken these colonial themes as his subject matters in all his fiction and nonfiction works, among the postcolonial circles, especially among those writers such as George Lamming, Edward Said, Derek Walcott, and Caryl Phillips who have opposing views of colonialism, he is known to generate controversy, and to be the mouthpiece of a Eurocentric view. He is not welcomed in postcolonial circles, because; as claimed, Naipaul has never articulated any displeasure on the practices of colonization, or blamed the West for its subjugation on the once colonized peoples. He is blamed and even hated for ‘having no loyalty’, as it is claimed, to his home country and his ethnicity. Additionally, it is claimed that he has never been seen to have shown sympathy for the oppressed, as he has generally looked at them ‘with contempt’ and criticized them with a severe language. Naipaul, from the beginning of his adolescence on, has shown a steady attitude towards the third worlds way of life. He has articulated, in Fawzia Mustafa’s word, “the same nervous energy” in all his works. He is a man who feels a physical bound to the East, and a psychological, mental bound to the West. Due to his harsh criticism on Islam and third world countries, and due to his stand point of being inbetween the two cultures, his work has always been the object of radically divergent views, depending on the perspectives of the readers. As Fawzia Mustafa states, “For almost his entire career, Naipaul’s writings and their idiomatic inflections have been simultaneously celebrated and castigated with descriptions that range between objective or ahistorical, unsentimental or culturally ignorant, unafraid or

hysterical” (1995: 1-2). In other words, his fiction and non-fiction works have formed pros and cons. On the one hand, while he is welcomed by the Western critics for his candid opinions on the political, social, and cultural issues in the Third World countries, on the other hand he is severely criticized and blamed by the intellectuals of the countries that once were colonies of the West. In *The Pleasures of Exile*, George Lamming mentions Naipaul, saying:

“His books can’t move beyond a castrated satire. (...) When such a writer is a colonial, ashamed of his cultural background and striving like mad to prove himself through promotion to the peaks of a ‘superior’ culture whose values are gravely in doubt, then satire, like the charge of philistinism, is for me nothing more than a refuge. And it is too small a refuge for a writer who wishes to be taken seriously” (1995: 225).

Likewise; Said, in his *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, draws Naipaul’s profile as: “a witness for the Western prosecution, specializing in the thesis of... self-inflicted wounds, which is to say that we ‘non-Whites’ are the cause of all our problems, not the overly maligned imperialists” (Intellectuals, 1996: 437). Selwyn R. Cudjoe, in a critical study called *V. S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading*, portrays Naipaul as if he were a traitor of his cultural heritage, concluding that “if Naipaul has become the darling of the First World, it is because he has said so well what many white racists wanted to say all along but could not... V. S. Naipaul has clearly aligned himself and his writing on the side of the dominant class” (1988: 5).

On the other hand, Lamming underlines that the history of the oppressed people has been neglected or distorted. So they have been alienated from their history. In order to have the conscious of a native history and original roots, Lamming implies, one has to turn to his old myths and folk tales. He compels his readers to focuss on these uprooting practises of the colonizers which have been put forward as being the indications of civilization.

Imre Szeman makes a clear statement regarding the people’s perception of Naipaul and Lamming, saying that “if critics have wondered about Lamming’s politics, they are at least willing to concede that his heart is in the right place; with Naipaul, this remains a perpetually open question” (Szeman, 2003: 98). Why? What are the reasons that make the critics and the people of the once colonized countries to have such a perception? I am of the opinion that making a comparison of Naipaul and Lamming in the light of their standpoints regarding ‘the history’,

‘the language and style’, ‘the idea of nationalism’, and the ‘identity’ of the West Indians in particular and the Third World in general, will clearly and impartially answer the above questions and put forward the general qualities that characterize and differentiate each of them.

### **Their Standpoints on the History of the West Indians**

As regards the need to look back and rely on the history of the West India, Naipaul and Lamming have discrete thoughts. While Naipaul thinks that it is futile to concentrate on the history and roots of the West Indian, stating that “How can the history of this West Indian futility be written?.. The history of the islands can never be satisfactorily told. Brutality is not the only difficulty. History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies” (MP, 2001: 28-29), George Lamming is of the opinion that these deracinated peoples had a rich heritage before the coming of the colonizers. He thinks that it is the Eurocentric view (concretized in the image of Prospero) itself that distorted the history of the colonized societies (descendants of Caliban). Hence, the colonized societies must reconsider their past by an affirmation of links to the non-European world. He is in search of a connection to a non-European past trying to bring the folk or the peasant group in his society to the foreground. According to Lamming, if the West Indians want to recover the established or endemic myths by creating new myths, they must rewrite their history.

Naipaul who, as Singh claims, “can not be understood in a conventional, traditional or nationalist idiom alone” (1998: 16), does not bear any contentment as regard the history of the once-colonized nations. Naipaul assumes that history is not an inactive, motionless record of the past that it can be arranged to serve the present and the future. He thinks that one cannot divide history into fragments as each day’s experiences are dependent on the previous days. If a culture tries to erase a segment of its past, then; he propounds, there will unavoidably be a void in its historical linearity. Thus, since all people living in the West Indies are descendents of slaves and indentured workers who were deracinated from Africa and Asia, it is not likely for them to have any sense of an inherited original history except that of the colonial period. For Naipaul, it is futile to instill a sense of history or roots to the psyche of the West Indians since there has been a rupture between the Caribbeans and their roots from the fifteenth century on. He assumes this rupture as a void from which the Caribbeans could not derive any stimulative tools for their future. Writing on their perception as regards the history of Trinidad, he expresses that:

“Though we knew that something was wrong with our society, we made no attempt to assess it. Trinidad was too unimportant and we could never be convinced of the value of reading the history of a place which was, as everyone said, only a dot on the map of the world. Our interest was all in the world outside, the remoter the better; Australia was more important than Venezuela, which we could see on a clear day. Our own past was buried and no one cared to dig it up. This gave us a strange time-sense. The England of 1914 was the England of yesterday; the Trinidad of 1914 belonged to the dark ages” (MP, 2001: 36).

He thinks that it is impossible to return to an unspoiled original culture since we are living in a globalized world.

Lamming, on the other hand, thinks that The West Indians need creative historians who do not keep away from the traditional habits and practices of history. Historians should rather recover lost historical traces. Supriya Nair asserts that “the most important example of Lamming’s creative historiography is in his representation of Vodoun, the Ceremony of Souls in which “underground rituals” of dance and song are a means of retrieving the past” (1996: 108). As Nair argues, Lamming asserts that thanks to vodoun the present does not allow the past to fade away, and it (the present) repossess it (the past). By such an emphasis, Lamming simply asserts that if the once colonized people want to escape from the cultural effects of the colonizer, the old rituals and conventions should be retrieved. Nair considers Lamming’s strong emphasis on the practice of Vodoun as “an emancipatory project” (1996: 117).

### **Language, Style and Their Writings**

Lamming uses a sophisticated language in his works. His writing style aims to prevent readers from uncritically absorbing his books. With such a style, J. Dillon Brown states that “Lamming encourages his readers not to proceed without pausing to consider the notion of their civilization in light of the history” (Brown, 2006: 691). In *The Pleasures of Exile*, placing the issue into his characteristic Prospero-Caliban trope, Lamming argues that “if Caliban [the colonized] aspires for a world which is not ordered by prospero [the colonizer], he must find a new discourse and a new pattern of looking at history” (PE, 1995: 119). For Lamming, language and history are two crucial aspects for a complete decolonization. He is of the opinion that “[They] shall never explode Prospero’s old myth until [they] christen Language afresh; until [they] show Language as the product of human endeavor; until [they] make available to all the result of certain

enterprises undertaken by men who are still regarded as the unfortunate descendants of languageless and deformed slaves” (PE, 1995: 119). Lamming sees a type of reordering necessary. In this regard, Brown mentions of Lamming’s view on an anecdote about an Englishwoman’s response which utters no “black stamps” have arrived on being asked to check. Lamming, as Brown asserts, highlighting the necessity for a new ordering, interpretes the Englishwoman’s response as:

“She meant stamps marked Africa or India, China or the West Indies. One kind, honest and courteous old woman had fixed almost two thirds of the World’s population with one word. You might say that the woman was a simple example of ignorance but I maintain that ignorant or not it has fundamentally to do with a particular way of seeing” (Brown, 2006: 672).

Lamming considers this dialogue as a fundamental effect of her (colonizer’s) perception that she is white and superior to those black ones, a perception which Lamming continuously underlines as “an inherited and uncritical way of seeing prevalent on both sides of the colonizer/colonized” (PE, 1995: 76). Nadi Edwards, in *George Lamming’s literary nationalism: Language between the Tempest and the Tonelle*, argues that “For Lamming, the conceptual metaphor is that of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*; hence, the conflict between Prospero, and Caliban becomes a conflict between colonizer and colonized” (Edwards, 2002: 60). Language, for Lamming, is the tool of colonization and is therefore central in the process of decolonization and cultural nationalism. To Lamming, as Edwards states, “if language enables the displacement, dislocation, and alienation that characterize deterritorialization, it also possesses the potential to break out of this centrifugal dynamic” (Edwards, 2002: 63). It is language, Lamming assumes, which makes Prospero to be able to have the control of Caliban.

Naipaul’s subject matter is composed of his assumptions about the nature of colonialism, oppression, historical fracture and the consequent cultural sterility in Third World societies. He is in search of, as Manjit Inder Singh heighlits, creating “an alternative world to the nightmarish human societies” (Singh, 1998: XV). However, despite a description of denial and futility, his writings leads to an interpretation, a translation to a new undestanding. Singh further asserts that “In Naipaul’s writing significance arises out of the assertion of insignificance, something is created out of the sense of having nothing” (*ibid.*, 1998: 40). His dystopian stance, “while nursing a cautious, precarious hope, defines itself by

reconstructing them [the colonized societies] out of decadence and hopelessness” (*ibid.*, XV). His ‘destructive logic and laconic world’ view is the result of the political and personal knowledge about history and abstract issues which have done so much to transform relations of power, authority and values (*ibid.*, XV).

All of Naipaul’s books, be it fiction or nonfiction, employ a relentless inquiry of the past, the current and the future of postcolonial societies. *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958) and *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), all of which are considered as satirical novels, were written before *The Middle Passage*. In all these three fictional works, Naipaul satirizes the politics of the once colonized societies propounding that they are irrational, feeble, and devoid of questioning. *The Middle Passage*, it seems, is the compilation of Naipaul’s three satirical fictional works into a nonfictional work. Naipaul’s first nonfiction book reveals the logic behind his aggressive, dismissive characterization of politics and culture in the space of the Caribbean. In this regard Naipaul is of the opinion that the writer should use his words as drops of cold water primary task of which must be to awaken the readers of these words. So he comes to a conclusion saying: “...Here the West Indian writers have failed. Most have so far only reflected and flattered the prejudices of their race or colour groups... Irony and satire, which might help more, are not acceptable; and no writer wishes to let down his group” (Naipaul, 2001: 65). He thinks that the inability of the West Indian writer to escape from the racial divisions is the main cause of the problems. In a sense, Naipaul suggests that there is no literature in the West Indies: “To the initiated one whole side of West Indian writing has little to do with literature and much to do with the race war” (Naipaul, 2001: 65). The literature of the West Indies is at its best didactic and “propagandist” (Naipaul, 2001: 65), since “the Trinidadian expects his novels, like his advertisements, to have a detergent purpose” (Naipaul, 2001: 65).

On the other hand, Lamming thinks that satire eliminates concern, and it puts the artist to reproach individuals from a stance of superiority. But, as Elizabeth Nunez Harrell states, “it is because satire demands involvement that we question whether Naipaul's fiction can be considered as such. For satire expresses concern not merely by its exposure of evil, but by its assumption that society as a whole is not corrupt, but recognizes certain inherent moral and social norms” (Nunez-Harrel, 1978: 31). Nunez goes on asserting:

“It becomes too clear that the normal world by which he measures the distortions in West Indian society is England. Hence we are missing in his works about the West

Indies the *sine qua non* of satire; an assumption of societal norms that is the very basis for the exposure of distortions in a society. A comparison between scenes treating the West Indian's unabashed mimicry of the English way of life reveals Naipaul's contemptuous attitude towards the West Indian and Lamming's sympathetic understanding of this distortion" (*ibid.*, 31-32).

Nunez, quoting a passage taken from Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* (1964, pp. 208-209), contends that Naipaul's satire is loaded with "derisive laughter". As for George Lamming, quoting an excerpt from *The Pleasures of Exile*, and underlining Lamming's comment on that scene which reads: "Foreigners may smile, but this black apparition was no joke for Thomasos who was now beginning to feel the arrows of civilisation pierce his pride" (Lamming, 1995: 55), she asserts that "Lamming's narration is painfully accurate, but it prohibits any laughter. Rather, it inspires fear, for it demands that the reader realize the horror of the colonial experience and its corrosive effect on the self-esteem of the native" (Nunez Harrell, 1978, 33).

### **Their Standpoints Regarding the Caribbean Nation**

From 1958 to 1962, the period in which both Naipaul's *The Middle Passage* and Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* were published, there had been a project of federation in the West Indies. The West Indies Federation was a brief political entity (1958–1962) that proposed to join all of the various British colonies in the Caribbean into a new independent national entity. Although it was not a functioning political entity, it existed for four years. But, "it failed to materialize because of in-fighting among the islands over such fundamental issues as the nature of the federal constitution, power-sharing arrangements in the new nation, the system by which representatives would be elected, and the like" (Szeman 2003: 67). Szeman asserts that richer countries' drawbacks that the federation may bring rapid in-migration from poorer countries, their racial concerns and national leaders' agitating these threats to enhance their own political interests are some of the hinders that caused the project of federation to fail (Szeman, 2003: 67). Naipaul's *The Middle Passage* and Lammin's *The Pleasures of Exile* were written in this period in which the project of a national entity was in charge. Both of these texts constitute in their own way a response to the promise and possibility of federation, and they deal directly with the question of how to constitute a common political space which will gather all the Caribbean Islands within one federative state. In their works, while Lamming propounds that there are the conditions of possibility for federation, Naipaul, in *The Middle Passage*, denies the possibility that these

conditions might exist. Thus, as Szemans also states, Naipaul repeatedly suggests the necessary conditions for the existence of a federation are absent in the Caribbean (Szeman, 2003: 98). For constructing a national unity Lamming asserts that the role and importance of the novel in producing a regional or national culture is of great importance. And in order to produce these essential novels by which The West Indians will construct a national identity, Lamming suggests that the writer must accept an exilic situation because of the problems and hindrances that stand in the way of the colonial writer which prevent him from being a writer. He writes that “these men had to leave if they were going to function as writers since books, in that particular colonial conception of literature, were not - meaning, too, are not supposed to be- written by natives” (Lamming, 1995: 27). Lamming propounds that in The West Indies “the desire to be free, the ambition to make their own laws and regulate life according to their own impulses, is dormant” (Lamming, 1995: 35). It is the novel, according to Lamming, that is to activate these desires. For Lamming the advent of the novel in The West Indies is one of the three most significant historical events in the region (Lamming, 1995: 37). Lamming writes that “the novelist was the first to relate the West Indian experience from the inside... for the first time, the West Indian peasant became other than a cheap source of labour... It is the West Indian novel that has restored the West Indian peasant to his true and original status of personality” (Lamming, 1995: 38-39).

Written in 1960 in the midst of the political experimentation with the West Indies Federation, and appearing in 1962 when this experiment had failed, Naipaul’s *The Middle Passage* is interested explicitly in cross-examining the prospects for the nation in the Caribbean. In the foreword of this nonfictional work, Naipaul writes that the book was funded by the government of Trinidad and Tobago and written at the behest of Eric Williams (Naipaul, 2001: X). Naipaul, visiting all of the major islands, especially the ones most deeply engaged in the debates over the form that the federation was to take, produced a text which laid bare that it was impossible to build a West Indian Federation, because of the lack of a peculiar history in the West Indies. He writes that “the history of the islands can never be satisfactorily told. Brutality is not the only difficulty. History is built on achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies” (Naipaul, 2001: 20). Naipaul’s claim that it is impossible for The West Indians to build a union does not mean that he is opposed of a national unity. Although he is the most ‘ruthless’ critic of the once colonized world, he is, nevertheless, as deeply tied to the project of the nation as is Lamming, as well as to the place of literature with respect to the nation. As Szeman states; “What he sets out to show is not that

individual Caribbean nations or even a federation is undesirable, but simply that it is not possible” (Szeman, 2003: 99). The following excerpt taken from *The Middle Passage* can be considered as a confirmation of Szeman’s statement.

For seven months I had been travelling through territories which, unimportant except to themselves, and faced with every sort of problem, were exhausting their energies in petty power squabbles and the maintaining of the petty prejudices of petty societies. I had seen how deep in nearly every West Indian, high and low, were the prejudices of race; how often these prejudices were rooted in self-contempt; and how much important action they prompted. (Naipaul, 2001: 241)

He propounds that The West Indians, instead of being in the search of a binding national identity, are rather in pursuits of their personal or group interests. He asserts that “Everyone spoke of nation and nationalism but no one was willing to surrender the privilege or even the separateness of his group. Nowhere, except perhaps in British Guiana, was there any binding philosophy: there were only competing sectional interests. With an absence of a feeling of community, there was an absence of pride, and there was even cynicism” (Naipaul, 2001: 241). Naipaul’s reasons for the collapse of the federation are knotted on the assumption that the existence of the West Indies as a totality is tied too closely to the spatial impression (vague memory) left behind by colonialism. Lamming, too, shares the same idea that the people of The West Indies are in a void which was constructed by the colonial practices. What separates the analyses of Lamming and Naipaul is their understanding of the difficulties that exist in the Caribbean which impede the creation of a genuine nationalism. For Lamming, it is a difficulty imposed by historical circumstances that can be erased in time with mental and physical struggles. Naipaul, on the other hand, as one critic states, turns this difficulty into a kind of ontology.

Lamming advocates fighting for linguistic, political and cultural unity as a prerequisite for social transformation. He examines fragmentation from a cultural materialist perspective, and he calls for its transformation into a unity. As regards the nation, Lamming, due to his Marxist thoughts, is of the opinion that every nation has the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no external compulsion or external interference. This is the principle in international law and it is called Self determination. On the other hand, being aware of the multi racial and multi cultural characteristics of the Caribbeans, he proposes that all islands should be gathered under the federation of the West India. Thus, it is obvious that Lamming’s aspiration is to build a hybrid or creole

nation state out of many rootless ethnicities, a concept that was put into practise with the emergence of the idea of modernism.

Naipaul wants the colonized peoples to construct an order from disorder, not to dissipate their energies within nativist longings. He is too committed to a sense of modernity. Singh, in this respect, asserts that Naipaul's attempt is:

“What he calls a synthesis of the worlds and cultures that made [him]. The debris of experience is deftly related into an arched vision of decay and disorder. This historical and experiential conditionality of life, viewed as a theatre of memories and events, are tokens of Naipaul's powers and qualities as a modern and modernist writer”. He has done (despite the traditionalism of his early fiction) what all modernists have done—to make good through style and language what has been lost through history” (Singh, 1998: 76).

In *The Middle Passage*, he writes:

“Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands. Here the West Indian writers have failed. Most have so far only reflected and flattered the prejudices of their race or colour groups. Many a writer has displayed a concern, visible perhaps only to the West Indian, to show how removed his group is from blackness, how close to whiteness” (Naipaul, 2001: 64).

Naipaul, expressing the above excerpt, thinks that the writer should lay bare all the intricacies that the people are in. These once colonized peoples need writers who articulate their words as whips to make them be aware of their situation. Because if they recognize their situation, they will naturally show inclination towards better situations. Naipaul's not mentioning the process of the subjugation that The West performed does not mean that he is content with The West. He rather thinks that it is of no use to continually talk of these practices which lead to nativist stand points. Because in such an era of transportations, cultural intermingling, and mass medias, he asserts, it is not possible to construct a pure culture. “The multi-cultural, ethnic and bilingual exposure has given a new twist to [his] respective sensibilities” (Singh, 1998: 16). On his being blamed of reflecting the West Indians backwardness, Naipaul argues that “No writer can be blamed for reflecting his society. If the West Indian writer is to be blamed, it is because, by accepting and promoting the unimpressive race-and-colour values of his group, he has not only failed to diagnose the sickness of his society but has aggravated it” (Naipaul, 2001: 66).

## Their Standpoints Regarding the Identity of the Caribbeans

In portraying the effects of the colonial period and how it damaged the psychology of the people of the colonized nations, Lamming fictionalizes the entanglements in which his characters struggle with their alienated selves, disappointments, inadequacies, and feelings of abandonment. But at the same time he presents ways and solutions of how to overcome such feelings. Furthermore, Lamming is also in search of rebuilding the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized by presenting new ways of responses which, according to him, will help them in their liberation process.

Naipaul, on the other hand, asserts that what they lack is modernity which is considered as a set of thoughts constructed by the West. In this regard he says that:

“Nationalism in Surinam, a movement of intellectuals, rejects the culture of Europe. Ras Tafarianism in Jamaica is nothing more than a proletarian extension of this attitude, which it carries to its crazy and logical limit. It resembles African nationalism, which asserts the importance of the ‘African personality’, and is the opposite of middle-class West Indian Negro nationalism, which is concerned only to deny the existence of a specially Negro personality” (Naipaul, 2001: 227).

It is clear that, as Szeman states, Naipaul measures the once colonized societies with an ideal modern and civilized West (Szeman, 2003:102). Modernity is the theme of almost the entire section on Trinidad and of *The Middle Passage* as a whole. After many years of being abroad, Naipaul travels through his home country and comes to a conclusion that will never change by the course of the passing years later. “Ambition -a moving hand, drink being poured into a glass- was not matched with skill, and the effect was Trinidadian; vigorous, with a slightly flawed modernity” (Naipaul, 2001: 34). Naipaul, in the section written on Trinidad, gives casual examples of daily life. Giving an example, among the others, which reads “The excellent coffee which is grown in Trinidad is used only by the very poor and a few middle-class English expatriates. Everyone else drinks Nescafe or Maxwell House or Chase and Sanborn, which is more expensive but is advertised in the magazines and therefore acceptable” (Naipaul, 2001: 40), he concludes that; for Trinidadians, “To be modern is to ignore local products and to use those advertised in American magazines” (Naipaul, 2001: 40). In fact

Naipaul's the following observation clearly shows where his contentments have been derived from:

“Charles Kingsley, who ten years later spent a winter in Trinidad, tells the story in *At Last* of a German who, because Trinidad produced sugar, vanilla and cocoa, decided to make chocolate in Trinidad. He did, and his price was a quarter that of the imported. But the fair Creoles would not buy it. It could not be good; it could not be the real article, unless it had crossed the Atlantic twice to and from that centre of fashion, Paris” (Naipaul, 2001: 41).

For Naipaul, the concept of modernity is a positive social phenomenon, but only, he suggests, when it develops “organically” out of the soil of the country. “The main, degrading fact of the colonial society,” Naipaul writes, is “that it never required efficiency, it never required quality, and these things, because unrequired, became undesirable” (Naipaul, 2001: 53). Much of Naipaul's description of the problems with modernity in Trinidad stems from an assessment of the thorough penetration of Trinidadian society by American culture. But it is because Naipaul also has a different sense of modernity. For him, modernity entails something more than just the existence of consumerism, hence, he speaks of it as “flawed” in Trinidad. Observing that The West Indians are in an entanglement and a greedy absorption of the American culture, he suggests that “living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands” (Naipaul, 2001: 64). Hence, the West Indian writer needs to speak the truth about the West Indian condition and the particularity of the West Indian. Naipaul claims that this has never happened.

Having been descended from indentured workers, it is natural both for Naipaul and Lamming to feel in a vacuum and anchorless life. The feeling of having been deracinated eventually leads such mental disorders as feeling alienated, alone and losing the sense of pride, place and race. To quote Naipaul again from *The Middle Passage*;

“Everyone was an individual, fighting for his place in the community. Yet there was no community. We were of various races, religions, sects and cliques; we had somehow found ourselves on the same small island. Nothing bound us together except this common residence. There was no nationalist feeling: there could be none. There was no profound anti-imperialist feelings, indeed, it was only our Britishness, our belonging to the British Empire, which gave us any identity. So protests could only be individual, isolated, unheeded” (Naipaul, 2001: 36).

On the other hand, there is a wish to retreat from the constrained identity and return to inherited identity. Writers with Marxist point of view, as Lamming is, believe that it is possible to restore a sense of inherited identity by logically looking back at the past with the help of tradition, language or myth. They have inclined to stuff this great void from which grew extreme individualism and isolation. Lamming's argument stems from his personal quest as a writer who believes in the indestructibility of roots. They can be temporarily violated as is the case in *In the Castle of My Skin*, but their authenticity in life is the only certainty to which one comes back.

On the other hand, Considering Naipaul's standpoint which can not be associated with one single national identity or cultural sensibility, one can infer that he could not be understood in a conventional, traditional or nationalist idiom alone. Naipaul has been highly suspect of the response from the West Indian society and readership, as it has been spelled out repeatedly in *The Middle Passage*, and *A House for Mr. Biswas*, among other works. He believes that the colonial aftereffects has caused the colonized people's mind and finer sensitivity crippled so that these peoples are hardly left with any original views of their own. To establish an intellectual stance in a society devoid of aesthetic and cultured responses is very difficult for him as a writer. He seems to have found no way of recreating it except through satire and humour. Contrary to Lamming's ideas, Naipaul believes in the impartiality and impersonality of art. In this regard he says "We want more realism, not more romanticism; the time for that is finished. One can't be entirely sympathetic, one must have views, one must do more than merely respond emotionally" (Naipaul, 1971: 57).

## Conclusion

Considering both writers' different standpoints regarding the history, the writing style and language, the prospect of an integral Caribbean nation, and the identity of the individuals of the once colonized nations, one is likely to conclude that;

Although Naipaul's clear depictions of the cultural displacement, deracination, and unhomelines and his creative use of fiction and travel forms of writing draw the admiration of the critics both from the West and the East, his fiction, especially his travelogues which portray the East has received harsh criticism from the eastern scholars and warm receptions from The West. Naipaul is one of those writers who, as Elizabeth Nunez Harrell underlines, "attempts to

weed out the evils in morals and manners existing in the Third-World societies by resorting to satire” (Nunez-Harrell, 1978: 46). Nevertheless, Naipaul’s attempt of weeding out the Third-World people’s folly behaviours which have been laughed at, instead of being considered as stimulus for a leap, is the basis for antipathy towards Naipaul in the West Indies. Nevertheless, Despite all accusation from the postcolonial circles, as Bruce King puts it, “Naipaul blames European imperialism for the horrors of slavery and for the problems it left on its former colonies, while praising it for bringing peace and modern thought to areas of the world that remained medieval and debilitated by continual local wars and destructive non-Western invasions” (King, 2003: 4). Due to his having been born and brought up in the period in which modernism was in its heydays, Naipaul is possible to be considered as a writer whose thoughts have been shaped by aspects of modernism, but writing in an era of postmodernism. As Szeman puts it, Naipaul’s works are “seen either as the literary equivalent of developmental and modernization theories or as its almost exact opposite - as an important corrective to the overly optimistic characterizations of the postcolonial world offered by other writers and critics” (Szeman, 2003: 98). Although all his works, be it fiction or nonfiction, are engaged in the experiences between the colonized and the colonizer, and though among the literary circles, he is considered to be a postcolonial writer, his views towards the third world countries are rather of a modernist who champions science, logic and ration through a realist’s point of view. In other word, his subject matter is postcolonial, but as King states, “his perspective on decolonization, imperialism, black-white relations and other themes of post-imperial literatures is more complicated than that of nationalists and their foreign sympathizers” (King, 2003: 3). He looks at the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed as a universal and continuing practise, trying to tell us that since culture and identity are not fixed notions peculiar to some certain races, and since they are moveable and changing mechanisms, we should not regard them as being crucial for survival of the peoples. According to Naipaul identity is not fixed since it is shaped by the relations with other cultures. He propounds that due to the mass migration of the people from different cultures and geographic locations to find better living standards, peoples’ travelling all around the world, and information technologies, the world has become culturally interwoven that no one can assert s/he has a fixed or peculiar life style. He also thinks that one should be aware of his/her history in order to evaluate himself/herself, but he doesn’t consider history as the outcome stemmed from a specific culture’s characteristics. Hence, for him, imperialism is a recurrent, primordial instinct of mankind that is not peculiar to a certain civilization, but to all. This is the feature that distinct Naipaul from the other postcolonial writers.

As for George Lamming, he is known for his investigations to have the West Indians being aware of their colonial past, and the effects of this colonial past on the present. He believes that it is possible to restore a sense of authentic identity by logically looking back at the past with the help of tradition, language or myth. Lamming makes his observations underlying that the cause for the West Indians being in such entanglements is the West itself. He claims a new way of seeing of the history which was pushed to a situation considered as periphery by the colonizer's constrained assumption that the history of the West is in the center. In spite of its connections to a European tradition, he propounds, its future depends on its avoidance of mimicry. His novels, like most postcolonial writers, are engaged with the central themes peculiar to the literature of decolonization. He is in a struggle to dismantle the colonial structure that the West Indians have been shaped with, and tries to establish a consciousness among his people by underlying the importance of the old traditions and myths. He thinks that in order to recover all the ill characteristics attributed to the West Indies, it is essential for the Caribbean societies to restructure its multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic social structure around the needs of its peasant and working-class majority. The role of artist, he believes, is to produce works which underline the need for that leap. For him, the only positive thing for the writer is to have remained provincial. As he wrote about the peasant origins of Caribbean literature in *The Pleasures of Exile*:

“Unlike the previous governments and departments of educators, unlike businessmen importing commodities, the West Indian writer did not look out across the sea to another source. He looked in and down at what had been traditionally ignored. For the first time the West Indian peasant became other than a cheap source of labour. He became through the novelist's eye, a living existence, living in silence and joy and fear, involved in riot and carnival. It is the West Indian novel that has restored the West Indian peasant to his true and original status of personality” (Lamming, 1995: 38-39).

In this respect, considering Lamming's assertions, one is likely to establish a viewpoint that Lamming can be regarded among the “socialist realists” of 1930s who socially and economically favoured the disadvantaged to call attention to social ills and needs for reform. The theory of Socialist Realism was adopted by the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 which alleged and demanded that all art must depict some aspect of man's struggle toward socialist progress for a better life, and that the creative artist must promote and elevate the common worker, the proletariat - whether factory or agricultural- by presenting his life, work, and

recreation as admirable. Socialist realism, as Berna Moran states, is not being aware of the current social issues and realities, but it is to know [to anticipate] where it is inclined towards (Moran, 1998: 54). Because, in Marxist theory of historical materialism, the phases that the society is going to pass through has been manifested. These successive stages are known as the primitive society, the slave society, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and eventually, communism. So, since these stages are visible and fixed, the task of the artist, according to socialist realist, must be, as George Lamming does, to underline the intricacies of the lower classes such as the peasants and industrial workers, and to find remedies for promoting and elevating these classes' way of life. In this respect, in exploring the damaged psychology of the subjugated peoples that once had been colonized, Lamming lays down the effects of the colonial period and how it damaged the psychology of the people of the colonized nations, fictionalizing the entanglements in which his characters struggle with their alienated selves, disappointments, inadequacies, and feelings of abandonment.

Oscar Wilde, in the preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, states that "nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass. The nineteenth-century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass" (Wilde, 1983: 1). Brian May adds a third sentence to Wilde's above inference, saying, "The twentieth-century dislike (hatred, rather) of colonialism, however, is the rage of Caliban seeing or not seeing his own face in a glass" (May, 1998: 452). In his article, May makes a classification of all postcolonial canon into three figures of Caliban. The first figure is concretized through Matthew Arnold's nineteenth-century 'Philistine' staring stolidly and stupidly at art. This figure is the Old Caliban or 'Patsy Caliban'. The second figure, as May claims, is the one that became the very type of the intrepid colonial victim "who sheds his current servitude and physical disfigurements in the process of discovering his essential, pre-colonial self" (Said, 1994: 212). Brian May calls this figure as 'old new Caliban'. May goes on saying: "As the nineties draw to a close, one notices a 'new new Caliban' on the scene, one who does not "nourish and require" the old so much as upstage him. If the old new Caliban was enraged equally by seeing and by not seeing his face in the Western mirror, the new new Caliban is smoother, cooler, cannier, more pragmatic- less concerned about essences and more aware of the dangers of chauvinism and xenophobia" (May, 1998: 454). In the light of May's classification, one can easily identify Lamming with the 'old new Caliban', and Naipaul with the 'new new Caliban'.

To conclude, in terms of their politic standpoints, one is likely to assert that: while Lamming has a compassionate vision, propounding that it is possible to construct an original identity by looking back at the history, traditions and myths, Naipaul has a realist and positivist vision. He does not romanticize the West Indians' culture. As a realist, he portrays what he sees. For Naipaul, race and culture are constructed, subjective and changeable. In this regard, while Lamming's novels fragment into a series of remedies which aim to cure the feeling of alienation and rootlessness on the basis of subjectivity and intuition, Naipaul mixtures satire and comic irony to awaken the colonized subjects from their romantic and subjective thoughts to the contemporary world's positivist and objective realities. This is the main difference between Naipaul and Lamming. Or, to put it in other words, while Lamming represents the one side of the binary opposition in a biased manner, Naipaul acts in a manner which may likely be perceived through Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung* which also means sublation. *Aufhebung* can be considered as a concept which aims to abstain from the circular clashes of theses and antitheses (binary opposition, or versions of realities) by both comprising and negating both sides of the oppositions.

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