Chapter One: Introduction

Fierce Controversy over Naipaul and His Works

(I) The Subject Matter for Most of Naipaul's Works—the Third World

The critical portrayal of postcolonial societies has been an obsessive topic in most Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul's works but it is never the natural subject for him to write about. In his *The Overcrowded Barracoon* (1972) (hereafter *OB*), Naipaul describes the reason why he chooses postcolonial societies rather than England as his subject matter for most of his novels and travel books. Determined to become a great and well-known writer, Naipaul is advised to write about England: "They [those who wish Naipaul to do well in his writings] say I have lived long enough in England to write about England. I would like nothing better. But there are difficulties" (*OB* 14). Naipaul, though feeling at home in England, a country he has lived for years, thinks that he knows so little about England. He admits, "But now I feel I can never hope to know as much about people here as I do about Trinidad Indian, people I can place almost as soon as I see them" (*OB* 14-5). Naipaul is aware that he knows the Britons "only in official attitudes" and that he and the Britons "are not all brothers under the skin" (*OB* 14). Compared to Britons, Trinidadians "are more recognizably 'characters'" (*OB* 9) since Trinidad is "a simple colonial philistine society" (*OB* 9). The reasons Naipaul mentions stimulate disagreement since they imply not only his inability to assimilate himself into England but also his disdain for the places he writes about, which will be discussed later. Having found the subject matter for his works, Naipaul travels throughout West Indies, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Ivory Coast, Zaire, Iran, Argentina, Uruguay and so on, and writes down what he has observed in his oeuvre.

(II) Distinctions between Naipaul's Early and Later Works

However, Naipaul's characterization and analytical understanding of the Third World often dispel critics' admiration for Naipaul's eminence in writings. On the one hand, Naipaul, the 2001 Nobel Laureate in Literature, is praised for his exquisite mastery of English language by critics such as Irving Howe (1920-93, an American literary and social critic), Chinua Achebe (1930-, Nigerian novelist and poet), Derek Walcott (1930-, a Caribbean poet and winner of the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature), Edward Said (1935-2003, a well-known Palestinian American Literary critic and theorist and an outspoken pro-Palestinian activist.), and Salman Rushdie (1947-, an Indian-born British novelist and essayist). On the other hand, Naipaul's political and ideological position in his books disappoints them. Howe, a great admirer of Naipaul, in response to Michael Thelwell's attack on his article on *A Bend in the River* in the *New York Times Book Review*, entitled "A Dark Vision," admonishes Thelwell, a Jamaican critic, to read the novel first before he sends off his letter. However, Howe's defense at the same time discloses that he, an American critic, is an uneasy admirer, troubled by "the politics of V. S. Naipaul, with which I [Howe] might well disagree" (Letter 45).[1] Achebe, in an interview, frankly admits, "I do admire Mr. Naipaul, but I am rather sorry for him. He is too distant from a viable moral centre; he withholds his humanity; he seems to place himself under a self-denying ordinance, as it were, suppressing his genuine compassion for humanity" (90-1). Walcott also points out, "As beautiful as the prose becomes in the first chapters of this novel [*The Enigma of Arrival* (1987)], it is scarred by scrofula, by passages from which one would like to

[1] Howe's review of *A Bend in the River* (1979) in *The New York Times Book Review* on May 13, 1979 is criticized by Thelwell in his letter to the editor of *The New York Times Book Review* entitled "Africa Views" on June 24, 1979. How's response to Thelwell's critique appears on the same page.

avert one's eye; and these reveal, remorselessly, Naipaul's repulsion towards Negroes" ("The Garden" 132). In his "Bitter Dispatches from the Third World," Said harshly criticizes the way Naipaul "sees" the Third World, but adds, "I write of him [Naipaul] with pain and admiration" since "he [Naipaul] is so gifted a writer" (101). Additionally, Said admires Naipaul for his "extraordinary antennae as a novelist" ("Intellectual Exile" 36) but becomes dissatisfied with his ideologies in his novel *A Bend in the River*. Likewise, Rushdie, before his critical analysis of Naipaul's travel book entitled, *Among the Believers*, remarks, "[B]ecause Naipaul's is a formidable talent, the book is studded with good things: the surrealist humour [. . .]" ("Naipaul among the Believers" 373). While Naipaul the storyteller earns a unanimous reputation as an expert on the craft of writing and as one of the greatest living craftsmen of English prose, Naipaul the social and political commentator discomfits critics, leading them to wedge between Naipaul as a great stylist and Naipaul as a political figure. The foregoing quotations from critics reveal that Naipaul is more than merely a great stylist; his political and ideological position is made explicit in his prose of exceptional grace and lucidity, particularly the prose which mainly deals with the dilemma postcolonial societies are faced with.

Not all of Naipaul's works concerning the Third world are controversial. Critics find Naipaul's early writings preferable to his later ones. Geoffrey Wheatcroft, an English journalist, argues, " He [Naipaul] could have stuck to that vein [the way he creates his early Trinidadian novels], with books that not only were exquisitely funny but also, conveniently enough, could later have been appropriated by campus exponents of what wasn't then called colonial discourse" (90). Similarly, Caryl Phillips (1958-, a Caribbean British writer) asserts, "[T]here is passion in *A House for Biswas* (1961) and in the three books that preceded it, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957),

The Suffrage of Elvira (1958), and *Miguel Street* (1959)" (46). Phillips continues, "In the post-*Biswas* years, however, it is difficult to find much passion, or compassion, in Naipaul's work. The guiding principle of Naipaul's work became his so-called analysis of so-called inferior societies and inferior peoples [. . .]" (46). Naipaul's early Trinidadian novels, starting with *The Mystic Masseur*, culminate in his widely acclaimed book, *A House for Biswas*. After the enormous success of his widely acclaimed novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Naipaul hardly writes about the Third World with affection and humor but portrays the formerly colonized societies struggling towards self-realization with searing, unforgiving, and pessimistic tones.

It is Naipaul's later writings that arouse considerable controversy. Naipaul, on the one hand, is acclaimed for his objective reports about the lasting impairment of postcolonial societies by such admirers as John Lukacs (1924-, a Hungarian-born historian) and Howe. Lukacs defends Naipaul as a truth-seeker, whose "principle concern is not with injustice, or justice, but with truth" (O'Brien et al. 68). Howe compliments Naipaul on his faithfulness to "what he sees" and affirms that "few see as well as Naipaul" ("Dark" 37):

> He [Naipaul] is free of any romantic moonshine about the moral charms of primitives or the glories of blood-stained dictators. Nor does he show a trace of Western condescension or nostalgia for colonialims. He is a tough-spirited writer, undeluded about the sleaziness of much contemporary history and not especially hopeful about its consequences. (1)

Depicted as a detached and disinterested observer, who is removed from politics and any ideologies, Naipaul becomes the exemplary writer from the Third World, who can be relied on to tell the truth about its corruption and the hideous problems. On the

other hand, the other camp accuses Naipaul of his prejudice against postcolonial countries; among the best known are Edward Said, Selwyn R. Cudjoe, a professor of African studies at Wellesley College, and Rob Nixon, the Rachel Carson professor of English literature at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, whose critical remarks about Naipaul are respectively discussed in the following paragraph.

In a panel discussion,[2] Said criticizes Naipaul for the way he benefits from the promotion of himself as an exile from the Third World and accuses him as a racist:

> [. . .]; and he is a very convenient witness. He is a third worlder denouncing his own people, not because they are victims of imperialism, but because they seem to have an innate flaw, which is that they are not whites. (O'Brien et al. 79)

Besides, Said reprimands Naipaul's prejudice against postcolonial societies. In his "Intellectuals in Post-Colonial World," Said points out that "the none-whites are the cause of [their] own problems, not the overly maligned imperialists" (53). In another essay of his entitled, "Bitter Dispatches from the Third World," Said further explains the foregoing statement: "[. . .]; he [Naipaul] prefers to indict guerrillas for their pretensions rather than indict the imperialism and social injustice that drove them to insurrection; [. . .]; he sees in today's Third World only counterfeits of the First World, [. . .]" (100-1). In addition to Said, Cudjoe in his *V. S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading* (1988) reveals his disagreement with English and American critics' admiration for Naipaul's "objective" description of the Third World. Cudjoe comments, "Most First World critics fail to see that their readings of Naipaul are so strongly colored by their values, experiences, and aspirations" (6). Unlike those critics, Cudjoe attempts "to reveal the 'unsaid' of the text, to gather the scattered ideological discourses of the

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[2] The panel discussion was held at Skidmore College on April 10, 1985.

work, and to demonstrate that, indeed, Naipaul's work serves to concretize a well-defined ideological position" (5). Nixon follows Said's and Cudjoe's lead as he begins his book on Naipaul. Nixon, like Said, in his *London Calling: V. S. Naipaul, Pstcolonial Mandarin*, dismisses Naipaul's professed sense of homelessness merely as a pose to conceal his allegiance to the West and to court the white. Nixon, similar to Cudjoe, lists the titles of articles on and interviews with Naipaul and finds that most of the Anglo-American critics deploy the rhetoric of uprootedness, homelessness, exile, and displacement to understand Naipaul's life and his writings: "'Writer Without a Society,' 'V. S. Naipaul, Man Without a Society,' 'Without a Place,' 'Writer Without Roots,' 'Historicity and Homelessness in Naipaul,' 'Exile's Story,' 'V.S. Naipaul's Negative Sense of Place,' 'No Place: V.S. Naipual's Vision of Home in the Caribbean,' 'Nowhere to Go'" (26). In addition to the critics' depiction, Naipaul also tends to sketch himself as "a mandarin possessing a penetrating, analytic understanding of Third World societies" (Nixon 4). However, Nixon deprecates the foregoing standard critical viewpoints, arguing that the critics do not perceive but legitimate the unsaid in Naipual's remarks, an undeclared set of Naipaul's ideological interests. Nixon instead urges a more skeptical approach:

> It is quite possible to turn the conventional account of his life inside out and discover, not Vidia [short for Vidiadhar] the exiled victim of historical mischance, but Vidia the beneficiary of a narrative of dislocation that ultimately bolsters the myth of his detachment. (18)

With his critical analysis of Naipaul's travel books, Nixon aims to dispel the myth of Naipaul's detachment and unveils his opaque endorsement of imperialism. Said, Cudjoe and Nixon all try to unmask Naipaul's political affiliation and ideological faith, arguing that he is not a disinterested truth-seeker he purports to be but a flatterer of

Western white liberals.

(III) Critics' Pointed Remarks about Naipaul and His Works

Those who express serious reservations about Naipaul's reputation as an objective observer of the Third World represent their own cultural and political positions, different from Naipaul's. To have a better understanding of the controversial politics Naipaul puts in his writing, I will discuss critics' critical remarks about Naipaul's political positions disclosed in his writings point by point with the detailed illustration of his specific works. Those remarks can be summarized and categorized as follows: Naipaul's preconceived ideas of the Third World, his belief of the hierarchical polarity between the West and postcolonial societies, his nostalgia for the imperial past, his oversimplified and generalized description of the Third World, his overly pessimistic vision of the countries he has visited, and finally the lack of his sympathy in his writings.

Said, Rushdie, and Eqbal Ahmad (1933/34-99, an Indian-born commentator and activist) are those who criticize Naipaul's preconception of the Islamic world revealed in his book *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey*, a record of his visit to Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia in 1979-1980. Said comments, "What he [Naipaul] sees he sees because it happens before him and, more important, because it confirms what, except for an occasionally eye-catching detail, he already knows" ("Among" 113). In other words, "[h]e [Naipaul] does not learn: *they* [the things Said sees] prove" ("Among" 113). Naipaul's professed objectivity and his promotion of his vision as the only beacon of light that can penetrate the dark world prove unreliable. Naipaul intentionally sees what he has expected and neglects what he does not want to see. Similarly, Rushdie writes an essay on Naipaul's *Among the Believers* and concludes with such sarcastic remarks:

> At one point, Naipaul tells his friend Shafi: 'I think that because you travelled to America with a fixed idea, you might have missed some thing.' The criticism holds good for Naipaul's own journey in the opposite direction, and makes *Among the Believers*, for all its brilliance of observation and depiction, a rather superficial book. (375)

Ahmad specifically points out what Naipaul deliberately omits from this travel book:

> Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the greatest of poets since Iqbal, one of the two greatest of this century living in exile, Habib Jalib lived in prison. And in the 60 pages, a serious writer [Naipaul] coming from London describes the regime of General Zia-ul Haq and the society he was creating without mentioning that we were all suffering in prisons or exile. This is not writing. He should stop writing. He should be selling sausages. (par. 116).

According to Ahmad, without mentioning that the state of affairs is opposed by thousands of people, poets and writers in exile and in prison included, Naipaul misrepresents Pakistan as an Islamic under General Mohammed Aiz-ul-Haq, supported by all the people. Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004, an Indian-born poet writing in English) makes similar but less severe critique of Naipaul's another travel book, *An Area of Darkness*. While he agrees with Naipaul's vivid description of "the grossness and squalor of Indian life, the routine ritualism, the lip-service to high ideals, the petrified and distorted sense of cleanliness, and a thousand other things" (201), he doubts whether Naipaul "really meet[s] no decent Indians" (203) other than "grotesques, contemptible or pathetic creatures" (201).

Naipaul's preconception is mainly based on his firm belief in the hierarchical dichotomy between the West and postcolonial societies, which is harshly condemned by critics. For instance, Said strongly disapproves of Naipaul's notion of "East/West

dichotomy," particularly the polarity between "'Islam' (critical, uncreative) and the 'West' (creative, critical)" in *Among the Believers* ("Among" 115). Naipaul's reverence for Western civilization is explicitly expressed in his lecture "Our Universal Civilization," given at the Manhattan Institute in New York in 1990 and the thesis in his lecture is describe by Achebe as follows: "[T]he civilization that began in Europe and spread to America has earned the right to be accepted as the civilization for everyone because it has made 'extraordinary attempt to accommodate the rest of the world, and all the currents of that world's thought'" (85; qtd. in Achebe, "Today": 85).[3] Achebe points out that Naipaul's admiration for Western civilization quickly leads Naipaul to "ridicule claims to any human achievement in Africa" ("Today" 88) and other postcolonial places since they are merely "half-made" societies, full of mimic men who pretend to be the people from metropolises. It is perhaps *BR*, as Achebe asserts, that deals with "Naipaul's thesis of a universal civilization most cogently" ("Today" 86). Aware that "it [*BR*] is patterned on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," Achebe compares Conrad's views of Africa with Naipaul's and finds out that Naipaul is more opinionated than Conrad:

> Conrad's 'great wall of vegetation,' which has, at least, a kind of ambiguous grandeur, is now cut down to Naipaul's mere 'bush'; Conrad's 'black, incomprehensible frenzy' of the Africans to a rather pitiful rage that will try to set fire to concrete; and so on, and so on, and so on. ("Today" 89-90)

Achebe endeavors to reveal that Naipaul's pompous and disdainful description of postcolonial societies suggests his unexamined nostalgia for and reliance on the colonial order: with the withdrawal of the colonizers, the colonies are kept further away from civilization, ending up in a state of anarchy and self-destruction.

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[3] Naipaul's "Our Universal Civilization" is collected in *The Writer and the World: Essays*, a collection of pieces of writings by Naipaul, edited by Pankaj Mishra.

Naipaul's preconception not only prevents him from having a comprehensive understanding of postcolonial countries but also leads to his sweeping generalization. According to Said, the Big Man, one of the main characters in *BR*, "is intended by Naipaul to be a symbol of all postcolonial regimes," which is "Naipaul's debatable ideological point" ("Intellectual Exile" 37). Similarly, in Naipaul's *Among the Believers*, Said argues, "Carefully set and dramatized, Naipaul's descriptions, however, invariably tend to slide away from the specific into the realm of the general" ("Among" 114-5). Naipaul's generalization reduces postcolonial societies of great complexity to merely those of "ridiculous mimicry, tyranny, or some combination of both" (Said, "Bitter," 102).

From the discussion above, it is not surprising that Naipaul's works on the Third World are characterized by darkness, gloominess, and decline. *BR*, as Bruce King points out, is "perhaps Naipaul's most pessimistic novel, filled with a sense of apocalypse, of the futility and vanity of life, of an impending worldwide disaster and coming of a new dark age [. . .]" (119). In 1979, when Elizabeth Hardwick (1916–, an American literary critic, novelist, and short-story writer) asked Naipaul, in the pages of *The New York Review of Books*, about the future of Africa, he offered an even more idiotic response: "Africa has no future" (Naipaul, "Meeting," 36). Unable to stand up with Naipaul's pessimistic view of the Caribbean region, Walcott parodies V. S. Naipaul as "V. S. Nightfall" and voices the charges against Naipaul in his poems around the figure, "V. S. Nightfall": "You spit on your people, / your people applaud, / your former oppressors laurel you. / The thorns biting your forehead / are contempt / disguised as concern" (77). Moreover, Terry Eagleton (1943-, a British literary critic and philosopher) in his article "A Mind so Fine: The contradictions of V. S. Naipaul" comments, "Like the equally dyspeptic traveler Paul Theroux, Sir Vidia seems to find

most of the people he meets in his wanderings so disagreeable that one wonders why he doesn't just stay at home" (81). Pessimistic and ruthless, Naipaul is often accused by critics such as Said, Rushdie, Phillips and Ezekiel of his portrait of the Third World without sympathy, love and affection.

Critics' hope that Naipaul could write sympathetically and affectionately does not mean to encourage Naipaul to sentimentalize postcolonial societies. Nor does it prevent him from writing "truthfully." Instead, critics ask Naipaul to write for his countrymen critically. Said poses several rhetoric questions about Naipaul's *Among the Believers*: "But does he write *for* and *to* them? Does he live among them, risk their direct retaliation, write in their presence so to speak, and does he like Socrates live through the consequences of his criticism? " ("Among" 116). Said provides the answers to the questions as follows: "Not at all. No dialogue. He snipes at them from the *Atlantic Monthly* where none of them can ever get back at him" ("Among" 116). Neither does Achebe expect Naipaul to write for Africa in *BR*. Noticing that Salim, the protagonist, looks down on Africans, Achebe advises Naipaul to write the story the other way around: "Naipaul could have used this limitation to call the trustworthiness of Salim's narrative into question and, in that way, written a different kind of book" ("Today" 88). Naipaul, in Achebe's opinions, "evidently had no such intention;" instead, "he held Africans in deep contempt himself, and made no secret of it" ("Today" 88). In short, what Achebe attempts to argue is that "[a]lthough he [Naipaul] was writing about Africa, he was not writing for Africans" ("Today" 88). Naipaul attacks the Third World mainly because of his disdain for it; however, those scholars mentioned above criticize Africa because of their affection for it. As Ezekiel says, "I am incurably critical and sceptical. That is what I am in relation to India also. And to my self. I find it does not prevent the growth of love" (204).

(IV) Critical Analysis of Naipaul and His *BR* from the Perspective of "Diaspora"

I have great doubts about the possibility that Naipaul would write a book from the perspectives Achebe and Ezekiel mentioned above because Naipaul's family origins lie in the importation of indentured labourers from India to Trinidad, one of British outposts, in the nineteenth century. Born in Trinidad, Naipaul grows up in a state of social and political tension between Trinidad's two largest communities, the Indian and the black. Ancestral communal resentment and his father's racial bigotry have made a lasting impression on Naipaul. Thus, Naipaul's main concern is not to write for the people of postcolonial societies but to create characters like him in depth, whose hybridity leads them to get into a troubled state of being neither here nor there. Take *BR* for example. King not only points out the accusations critics have made against Naipaul but also goes further, exploring for whom Naipaul writes, if not for Africans:

> The notation of Africa in *A Bend in the River* is not dissimilar from that found in the disillusioned post-colonial novels of Achebe, Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Soyinka and others. Unlike the African novelists, however, Naipaul does not have a similar commitment to Africa and is sceptical of its future. His deepest sympathies are with the Indians threatened by African nationalism and political disorder. (118)

The Indians King refers to are not those who live in India but "the Indian diaspora" in East Africa, "made homeless in former colonies by the withdrawal of the imperial order and the resulting threat of chaos" (King 119). They are, to some extent, projections of Naipaul's own life. For instance, Indar is an Asian of East Africa, whose grandfather is brought by the British Empire to work as indentured laborer in

their East African colonies in much the same way as Naiapul's ancestors are taken to Trinidad. The unsympathetic Naipaul is found affectionate when it comes to the issue of diaspora. It is because of the difference between Naipaul's and critics' cultural, social, and political backgrounds that critics fail to see Naipaul as a diasporic writer who has experienced pain, difficulties, and pain that Naipaul can hardly write such books from the perspective critics have expected.

While charging Naipaul with his biased view of postcolonial societies, one should also take his diasporic experience into consideration; simply taking sides with either Howe or Said will reduce Naipaul's contradictions, complexity, and ambivalence to the problematic of Naipaul's ideologies. Achebe's harsh interpretation of the opening sentence in *BR* serves as a good example of the lack of his comprehensive reading of Naipaul's work. The novel begins with the words: "The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it" (*BR* 3). Achebe denounces the implication of the opening sentence, commenting, "Naipaul's forte is to browbeat his reader by such pontifical high writing" ("Today" 86). He wonders who those people Naipaul refers to as "nothing" are and what Naipaul means by "nothing." Achebe learns the answers from Salim, often seen as Naipaul's autobiographical narrator, who asserts, "That was no doubt why the region [in Africa] had provided so many slaves in the old days: slave peoples are physically wretched, half-men in everything except in their capacity to breed the next generation" (*BR* 76). Having detected Salim's thought that Africans are "nothing," dispossessed of the ownership of themselves as human beings, for the sake of their physical flaw, Achebe dismisses *BR* as a novel full of racial discrimination. Achebe's critical analysis is evidently limited in comparison with that from the diasporic perspective. Unlike Achebe, I argue that the sentence *BR* begins with is

about Naipaul's, Salim's and Indar's diasporic experiences, which are what *BR* mainly deals with. In order not to end up being "nothing," they all try hard to become somebody, climbing their way out of "the area of darkness" where they come from to somewhere better. For example, possessed by an ambition to become successful, Naipaul leaves the place of his birth, Trinidad, which he sees as inferior society populated by uncivilized people, and heads for England, from which civilization derives. But the difficulties in assimilating himself to the metropolis frustrate Naipaul, causing him to miss his family in Trinidad. Caught in this in-betweenness, Naipaul does not totally disown his homeland. Naipaul's contradictory and ambivalent feelings about postcolonial societies can be perceived in the two characters in *BR*, Salim and Indar. My assertion is not to negate Achebe's accusation of Naipaul's disdain for blacks but to complicate Naipaul's and two protagonists' attitudes towards the Third World.

Unfortunate failure to notice Naipaul's diasporic experience often results in dehumanizing Naipaul. Said unsparingly comments that "Naipaul resembles a scavenger," which "is to say that he now prefers to render the ruins and derelictions of postcolonial history without tenderness, without any of the sympathetic insight found [. . .]" ("Bitter" 100). Ezekiel makes similar remarks: "Mr. Naipaul's conclusion of his *An Area of Darkness* is negative" (205). Rushdie also observes, "The dark clouds that seemed to have gathered over Naipaul's inner world would not, one feared, be easily dispelled; his affection for human race appeared to have diminished [. . .]," ("V. S. Naipaul" 148) particularly in his *The Enigma of Arrival*. The novel, according to Rushdie, mainly deals with "a life without love, or one in which love has been buried so deep that it can't come out" ("V. S. Naipaul" 151). Unlike Said's severe strictures on Naipaul, Rushdie's statement implies that rather than lacking love, Naipaul keeps

his affections under continual restrain. Naipaul's struggle to suppress his feelings about his homeland is discussed by Phillips in his "The Enigma of Denial" though he, like most critics, concludes that Naipaul treats postcolonial societies without humanity. Phillips discovers that in Naipaul's letters to his family collected in *Between Father and Son*, Naipaul is off his guard, releasing his sentimental attachment to his homeland. Besides, Phillips mentions that Naipaul, in his foreword to *A House for Mr. Biswas* published in 1983, wrote that he had been moved to tears overwhelmingly while he had been hearing an installment of the novel on the BBC World Service one evening in 1981. However, to Phillips' disappointment, "[t]his Vido trusted Trinidad to stir his heart, but eventually the Naipaul in Vido decided that Trinidad was best left to the inferior 'West Indian' writers" (48). Not only does Naipaul cruelly disown his early works that look up Trinidad with some affection but he also begins to make sarcastic observations about Trinidad and other postcolonial societies. As Phillips argues, "inevitably Naipaul's fear of weakness, and his contempt for feeling, kicks in, and he soon scampers back to his official narrative" (48). I agree with Phillips' assertion that there is a shift in Naipaul's writings from an affectionate to an unsympathetic approach to the Third World. However, Phillips should not have brought his argument to a rash conclusion that Naipaul's works written in the post-Biswas years are characterized purely as unemotional and impassive prose. The reason is that Naipaul cannot easily detach himself from the Third World, nor can he repudiate his background once and for all. Naipaul's detached, stern, and harsh narrative of the Third World is intermittently interrupted by his emotional attachment to it, which is shown in *BR*, one of Naipaul's books written in the post-*Biswas* years. Hence, to criticize Naipaul for his inhumane portraits of the Third World is to oversimplify Naipaul, which is the result of the failure to take Naipaul's diasporic

expereince into consideration.

Naipaul is regarded by critics such as Amitav Ghosh (1956-, Calcutta-born novelist), Victor J. Ramraj, Vijay Mishra, Nalini Natarajan and Emmanuel S. Nelson as a diasporic writer. Ghosh believes that among the Indian diasporic writers, "there are no finer writers writing in the English language today than V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and A. K. Ramanujan" (73). Ramraj provides a definition of diasporic writing as follows:

> In international English language [. . .], there are two bodies of writing that could be designated as diasporic. The first comes from the descendants of peoples uprooted from their homelands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and transported from one region of the globe to another to serve British economic needs: Africans as slaves to the West Indies, and Indians, Chinese, and Portuguese as indentured labourers to such corners of the Empire as the West Indies, Fiji, and Mauritus. The second is by those from English-speaking regions of the Indian subcontinent, Asia, Africa, and the diasporic communities of the West Indies and Fiji, who for economic, political, cultural, and familial or personal reasons left their homelands for London, England, which many, as citizens of the Empire, considered their capital, and for North America and Australia, continents that long had provided living space for peoples from overcrowded Europe [. . .]. (214)

Naipaul's works can be categorized either to the first or to the second one as he is the descendant of the nineteenth-century indentured laborer from India and later leaves Trinidad and heads for England where he has resided ever since. Whichever Naipaul belongs to, Ramraj argues, "Diasporic writings are invariably concerned with the

individual's or community's attachment to the centrifugal homeland. But this attachment is countered by a yearning for a sense of belonging to the current place of abode" (216). Naipaul's ties to India, Trinidad and England, as Ramraj explicates, are contradictory and ambivalent. His need to free himself from "the dead hand" of the given so as to make a career in England is constantly at war with an undercurrent of his emotional attachment to his homeland. My emphasis on Naipaul's ambivalence towards his homeland and identity does not mean to absolve Naipaul of accusations critics have laid against him. Instead, my attempt to take Naipaul's diasporic experience into consideration is to examine "the conditions that give rise to this particular ideology" (Mishra, "(B)ordering," 192)[4] which elicits angry rebuttals from critics. The best way to approach "this particular ideology" is to study the interconnections between various forms of social differentiation, such as class, gender, racism and so on since it is enmeshed with politics. As Natarajan argues, "[d]iasporic ideologies can thus be implicated in the cultural processes that reinforce patriarchy, class structure, and ethnic divisiveness" (xv). But simply to discuss discursive practices without paying attention to the historical conditions and to diasporic subjectivities risks losing specificity. "To speak of an Indian diaspora," as Nelson points out, "is to insist on a claim to an essential *psychological and historical unity* that undergirds the spectacular India mosaic" (x; emphasis added). In short, rather than merely accusing Naipaul of his bias against postcolonial societies, I deal with his *BR* from subjective, psychological, social and historical dimensions of diaspora in order to have a deep and comprehensive understanding of the novel.

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[4] In his "(B)ordering Naipaul: Indenture History and Diasporic Poetics," Mishra asserts that though Nixon rightly points out that "he [Naipaul] doesn't come clean on his pretensions," his critique fails to analyze what results in the problematic of Naipaul's ideology.

(V) The Basic Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is comprised of five chapters that provide both theoretical discussion about and empirical studies of “diaspora.” This opening chapter provides a critical survey of Naipaul’s controversial reputation. Critics of Naipaul’s works can roughly be categorized into two camps: detractors such as Said and Nixon, who accuse Naipaul of his imperialist intention and defenders such as Howe and Luckacs, who praise Naipaul for his objectivity and disinterestedness. Instead of taking sides with their argument mentioned above, I attempt to analyze Naipaul’s *BR* from the perspective of “diaspora.” By doing so, I not only avoid oversimplifying Naipaul’s works and but also have a better understanding of Naipaul’s works. The second chapter presents overviews of the historically constructed nature of the term “diaspora” and of the theoretical approaches to understanding the phenomena of diaspora. In addition to the broader discussion of “diaspora,” the case study of the Indian diaspora is specifically dealt with in this chapter. In the third chapter, the problematic of “home,” which is integral to the diasporic condition, is explored mainly by examining two protagonists’ distinctive diasporic journeys that mark processes of uprootings and regroundings, particularly contextualized in the turn of the era from colonization and decolonization. The concept of home entails not only diasporans’ emotional attachment to the “original” homeland but also their efforts of home-building and settling down. These two Indian diasporans’ internalization of Western values within the colonial regimes of power complicates their relations to their homeland and to their new surrounding culture and society. The discussion underlines the point that “home” should be addressed in terms of the interplay between “politics” and “affection.” The fourth chapter focuses on the concept of diasporic “identities.” Emphasis will be placed on in what ways Salim, one of the

Indian protagonists in diaspora, copes with his identity crisis at the particular moment of the political transition from colonialism to postcolonialism in Africa. His identities should not be understood as the fixed and singular essence but marked by the multiplicity of subject positions in respect to the interconnection among race, gender and class that constitute the subject. Though the final chapter continues the topic of Naipaul's controversy discussed comprehensively in the first chapter, it, after the critical analysis of *BR* in the three chapters, points out what makes Naipaul and his works become the targets of criticism rather than simply provides a detailed overview of critics' remarks about Naipaul and his works.

My analysis of *BR* from the perspective of "diaspora" is not to find an excuse for Naipaul's prejudice against the Third World, which is expressed in his works. Nor is it to prove critics' remarks "wrong" since their comments on Naipaul represent their respective cultural and political positions. My main concern is to explore what is unsaid, or less said, by critics, that is, the undertones the text wants to convey to readers.