1. In Search of India: Locating India in Postcolonial Travel Narratives

1.1. Travel Writing: An Overview

The relationship between movement and narrative is an ancient one and the role of travel writing in shaping the histories of peoples and cultures, similarly, go back a long way. Traditionally, travel writing played a pivotal role in the representation of foreign cultures and places. Before the advent of the age of easy communication, information pertaining to foreign lands and peoples were mainly obtained through the oral or written accounts of travellers—explorers, adventurers, missionaries, sailors, traders, soldiers, diplomats and the like. These accounts, in turn, were responsible for generating the discourse on the Other and subsequently, its history. The view that “Europe works as a silent referent in historical knowledge”34 (about the Other) derives as much from the subalternity of Third World histories as from the fact of Europe’s imagining of the rest of the world as fundamentally different from itself—an idea that (for Europe) acted as a moral justification for “humanising” the Orient and concomitantly, for appropriating it. Situated in the Foucauldian discourse of power/knowledge, this idea lies at the very foundation of Europe’s imperialistic ambitions pertaining to its exotic Other—a world in whose formulation and propagation (among the domestic audience through sensationalized, fictionalized accounts) travel writing had no inconsiderable a hand.

A careful survey of the genealogy of travel writing about India leads to a number of distinct observations. Firstly, the accounts of early European/Christian voyagers to India such as

that of Vasco da Gama at the close of the fifteenth century record in interesting detail how the Indian subcontinent appeared to Christian eyes. Secondly, the focus of (primarily) European travellers writing about India in the period immediately following the foundation of the East India Company in 1600 was, however, mainly mercantile. Thirdly, while these travel accounts extolled the wealth of the subcontinent in great detail leading to a convergence of travellers from almost all parts of the world, the wide circulation of these accounts fulfilled yet another crucial political function: they “documented” India. In other words, these travel accounts often presented the Indian subcontinent in great scientific detail and were, for that reason, considered to be a valuable repository of practical information that could be used to assert political dominance over the region. Fourthly, in advancing the evangelizing mission of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British as well as in articulating the anxieties central to the colonial enterprise, travel writing played a major role. It opened up the subcontinent to Europe and also to the rest of the world by displaying a flair for extensive survey of the geography, the people and the culture. In the late eighteenth (after 1757) and the nineteenth centuries, in particular, travel writing about the subcontinent—besides advancing the imperial ambitions of Great Britain—helped popularize the benefits of an English education. Furthermore, travel writing of this period also helped consolidate the popular perception about the Indian subcontinent as an “Oriental” site—an idea whose dissemination led to the proliferation of what came to be known as the tourist text.

Whether through its ostentatious presence as the site of the exotic or its insidious absence, the Orient continued to feature in the literature of the West well into the twentieth century. The East, often expressed through routine valorisation, occasional disenchantment (accented by the mismatch between reality and imagination) and overall as a success story of Europe’s political ambition in the region, found new modes of representation in the twentieth
century. Moreover, in consonance with the historical developments in the East (and the world in general)—the two World Wars and the resistance struggles that led to the liberation of the erstwhile European colonies—the grammar and motives of travel writing underwent substantive changes. In addition to this, with the incidence of civil wars, mass migrations, decolonisation and globalization, the role of the archetypal traveller—not to speak of its partial dissolution in the figure (and role) of the twentieth-century tourist, ushering in an age of high consumerism—stood significantly modified. The literature of travel, in order to fight the label of “subliterality,” on the one hand, and the threat of devolution on the other, had to invent new representational modes to replace the traditional motifs of the journey that had quietly transcended the boundary of contemporary lived experience. These changes, in turn and quite understandably so, had significant impact on the role of the traveller/narrator which came to reflect travel writing’s convergence with globalization, nomadism, diasporic writing and the politics of representation. The idea of the traveller/narrator as a homeless wanderer negotiating the socio-cultural space of an alien society/nation/civilization acquired a fresh perspective in the light of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory on nomadism, the nomad space and its affects.\footnote{A detailed account on this can be found in Deleuze and Guattari’s \textit{Anti-Oedipus} (1972) and \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} (1980).}

The formation and structuring of subjectivity and social identity in a postmodern, postcolonial world draws liberally from poststructuralist thought and so does the idea—anticipated by Deleuze and Guattari—of the essentially unstable (nomadic) subject poised between \textit{being} and \textit{transformation}. The political climate of the twentieth century, especially the latter half—marked by globalization, consumerism, the inception of cyberspace, a trenchant proclivity for virtual reality and increased mobility—necessitated the conception of the “subject”
as an essentially complex entity characterized by a multiplicity of surfaces. Such a theory urges the envisioning of culture—of which the Subject is a product—as a confluence of historical, political and socio-economic factors. Conceding the fact that much of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing (in English) focused on gaining knowledge about exotic locations turning them, in due course of time, into reserves of colonial wealth and power, the sociology of contemporary travel writing—to a great extent—concerns itself with the analysis of displacement and dispossession. Concomitantly, it is hardly surprising to note that contemporary travel writing looks more inward than its precursor and is increasingly inclined to treat its geographical setting as a platform on which the traveller’s (or the narrator’s, as the case may be) social identity is (re)formed, (re)shaped and finally unfurled.

1.2. From Kipling to Naipaul: Changing Visions of India in the Twentieth Century

This section of the thesis purports to provide a brief summary of the development of the genre of travel writing from Kipling through Naipaul. It examines the changing complexity of the travelogue as a literary form and attempts to show how travel narratives—in pointing towards a more or less unambiguous link between man’s peripatetic ventures and historical developments in the forms of shifting power structures—function as vital social documents charting the histories of civilizations.

In summarizing the changing visions of India in the twentieth century, it is useful to classify the travel narratives of the period according to their socio-political orientations and their situated-ness in time and place, i.e., within the metanarrative of history. The transition from the imperial theme to a postcolonial one covers a space of almost a century—a timeline that
incorporates the works of such diverse authors as Rudyard Kipling, E. M. Forster, Eric Newby, Geoffrey Moorhouse, Pico Iyer, Dervla Murphy, Günter Grass, Bharati Mukherjee, V. S. Naipaul and William Dalrymple (to name only a few). Concomitantly, this brings into play a wide array of identities: Anglo-Indian (Kipling and perhaps belatedly, Newby), colonial (Forster), diasporic (Mukherjee and Naipaul), postcolonial (Iyer and in a sense, Dalrymple) and so on and so forth. From Kipling’s descriptions of urban squalor to Forster’s humanistic rendition of India; from Newby’s re-telling of history through travel writing to Iyer’s synoptic presentation of India; from Grass’ very different, deeply sinister rendition of Calcutta to Dalrymple’s exoticizing of cultures and histories; from Murphy’s ethnographic study of Southern India to Blaise and Mukherjee’s counterpointed study of Calcutta, the narrative of travel’s ontogenesis can be taken to be an allegory of the monumental shifts in history, politics and culture of the last century. While this analysis applies chiefly to travel narratives, it also tries to accommodate experimental writing on the subject of travel and peregrination—narratives in which travel often becomes a mode of self-fashioning or the occasion for exploring the arcane semiotic fields of alien cultures. Such an approach not only enables one to better detect the relationship between historical developments and the shifting dynamics of power structures but also provides a deeper insight into the many transformations that the trope of travel itself has undergone in the twentieth century.

In her 1988 essay, “The Content and Discontent of Kipling’s Imperialism,” Benita Parry remarks: “In 1939 when Auden wrote his wry lines, Time that ‘Worships language and forgives / Everyone by whom it lives’ had not yet ‘Pardoned Kipling and his views’, nor was exoneration imminent” (119). Parry’s observation testifies to the view that Kipling, as the most celebrated and unabashed apologist of imperialism, was theoretically ineligible for canonization—a view
that held ground well into the 1960s. Kipling’s reputation (or notoriety) as a fervent advocate of colonialism coupled with his political views and racial vanity threatened to ruin any legitimate claim to literary veneration. It was only in the wake of decolonisation, notes Parry, when western scholars’ embarrassment pertaining to Europe’s imperialistic excesses in its colonies was to a great extent mollified, that Kipling’s artistic genius began to be recognized. However, his political views hardly lost their critics which meant that his literary virtuosity, in order to be widely acknowledged, needed to be interpreted as a separate phenomenon and as independent of his political views—a stance that was particularly adopted by critics who promoted a disinterested literary reading of his texts.

Kipling’s *Kim* appeared in 1901—twelve years after he left India for England. Although not generally regarded as a travelogue in the traditional sense, *Kim* offers a reified version of colonial India as seen through the eyes of the “imperial boy,” Kim. Kipling’s India in *Kim* betrays a predilection for immutability—an aspect that Edward Said attributes to his desire to see India as essentially unchanging (Said, Introd. to *Kim* 9)—as an unwaveringly concrete object of the Western imagination and of English hegemony. In *Kim*, Kipling operates from the dual positions of the patriotic Victorian to whom extolling the virtues of the Empire appeared to be both natural and a deeply moral responsibility and an agent of history. As Said clearly mentions in his introduction to *Kim* (in the Penguin 1987 edition of the book), “Kipling was not a neutral figure in the Anglo-Indian situation, but a prominent actor in it” (11). As an agent of his time and the Empire, Kipling—very much like the fictional Kim—functioned as a surveyor of India and as someone who sincerely believed that the knowledge gained through the process (of surveying) would be useful in keeping out external threats and in the overall upkeep of the Raj. Apart from emphasising the grandeur of Oriental India, colonial travel texts also accentuated the angst of the
colonisers—fears stemming from the threats of rebellion, disease and defeat. Kipling’s *The City of Dreadful Night* (1891)—an exploration of Calcutta, the “city” of the title—draws out the horrors lurking beneath the gilded edifice of the Empire. Kipling’s topophobic description of the city—stinking, choked with filth, pockmarked with “conspiring tenements”—has a Dickensian aura about it. The spatial imagery of the city in Kipling’s sketch adumbrates the white man’s horror—like Conrad’s Congo, it is the very *heart of darkness* given an urban locale—inimical to men, even diabolic. Kipling’s Calcutta is hellish; its chaos, the exact opposite of English refinement and order. Kipling conceives the city as “another wilderness of shut-up houses”—an impenetrable labyrinth threatening to undermine the colonist’s ambition to appropriate it through the accumulation of knowledge.

Eric Newby’s *Slowly Down the Ganges* (1966) is a more straightforward travel narrative which, in the words of its author, is “the story of a twelve-hundred mile journey down the Ganges from the place where it enters the Plains of India to the Sandheads, forty miles offshore in the Bay of Bengal, made by two Europeans” in the winter of 1963-64. Newby’s prose is

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36 Naipaul, too, who by his own admission considers Dickens as a literary model, displays a similar propensity in AD—his description of India betraying a preoccupation with squalor and filth. This fascination with dejection and squalor and the way(s) in which it shapes Naipaul’s notion of the postcolony has been discussed and analysed at length in ch. 4 of the thesis.

37 It is interesting in this context to consider Shelley’s antipodean formulation of his native London in “Peter Bell the Third” (1819):

   Hell is a city much like London,
   A populous and a smoky city;
   There are all sorts of people undone,
   And there is little or no fun done;
   Small justice shown, and still less pity. (pt. 3, st. 1)

38 The second European in Newby’s “story” is his wife, Wanda. Another such instance of husband-wife collaboration—albeit with very different outcomes given, their different nationalities among other things—is to be found in the case of Bharati Mukherjee and Clarke Blaise who jointly authored *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977). Incidentally, Naipaul travelled to India in 1962 with his (first) wife, Patricia Hale. However, in AD, he never directly acknowledged her presence but only indirectly indicated that she was travelling with him. Naipaul’s suppression of his wife’s presence at the narrative level has problematized the relation between representation and (narrative) authority—a topic that has been separately addressed in ch. 2 of the thesis.
fairly descriptive as one would expect of a travel book that reports and records (“At seven the
fog was still thick, but now the sun was trying to force its way through. It was bitterly cold.
Overhead, a thin sliver of moon was fading in a sky that was becoming, every moment, a deeper
shade of blue” (107).), but it can also be read as an informal appraisal of British colonialism. In a
visit to the church of All Souls in Fatehgarh, Newby notes:

> Inside the church rotting punkahs . . . swung backwards and forwards, which the
punkah-wallah used to operate by pulling a cord. . . . The altar was gone, but the
place was still kept clean by a family of Christians who lived in a hut in the corner
of the churchyard, and only one or two of the stained-glass panes of the east
window were broken. The place exhaled an indescribable air of melancholy. (157)

The “rotting punkahs” that have ceased swinging; the altar that is no more in a church which is
maintained by a “family of (Indian/converted) Christians” speak of the ruins of the Empire (or in
other words, of the presence of the Empire’s absence) in a place that is busy shedding the last
remnants of the Raj (“the outer wall of the churchyard . . . was being whitewashed in anticipation
of the visit of an Indian General who would pass that way” (157).). It is tempting to read the
overall failure of the English imperial ambition in the line: “Only one or two of the stained-glass
panes of the *east* window were broken” (157; emphasis added).

In *Slowly Down the Ganges*, Newby (as hinted in the Introduction) often assumes the role
of the “story teller” or the chronicler of history—as his ruminations on the Mutiny of 1857 would
show—which is to say that he weaves historical narrative into the body of the travelogue
producing an effect that is an interesting admixture of nostalgia for time past and a retelling of
the events of the Mutiny from a seemingly disinterested, yet *essentially* English perspective.
The exploration of Anglo-Indian relationship forms a significant aspect of E. M. Forster’s oeuvre. In *The Hill of Devi* (1953), he chronicles his visits to the court of the Anglophile king Dewas Senior. However, Forster’s account more or less leaves out colonial politics for a humanistic inquiry of Indian royalty in pre-Independence India. In Dervla Murphy’s *On a Shoestring to Coorg* (1976), on the other hand, the focus is turned upon the common people—the people that make post-Independence India. Murphy’s book, as its subtitle declares, is an “Experience of Southern India” as experienced by a white, European woman travelling with her five-year-old daughter. The narrative—organized as journal entries—in its exploration of Coorg, its people and culture is almost ethnographic in form and content. But as the reader subsequently finds out, Murphy’s travelogue (in the same vein as most other twentieth-century travel narratives), foregrounds its author’s quest for personal ideals—ideals of stability and order that is also, and to a great extent, part of her white, European upbringing.

Notwithstanding their distinctly different styles and orientation, it is interesting to consider the travel writings of Geoffrey Moorhouse and Günter Grass in the context of their respective treatments of “space” and “place.” Moorhouse’s *Calcutta* (1971)—the city that Grass also wrote about in *Show Your Tongue* (1987)—can be contemplated as an almost physical presence, a writhing, pulsating body whose chaos is darkly menacing. The claustrophobia invoked by Moorhouse in his contemplation of the Calcutta crowd is reminiscent of Kipling’s response to the city. Likewise, in its consideration of the ancient rites of blood sacrifice pertaining to the goddess Kali, it anticipates Grass’s travel memoir haunted by the fierce deity.

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39 Chapter 2 provides a detailed critical analysis of the concepts of “space,” “place,” “site,” and “landscape.”

40 Incidentally, Naipaul begins *IMMN* on a similar note when he opens the first section entitled “Bombay Theatre” with the following conceit: “Bombay is a crowd” (1).
Grass punctuates his memoir—written in the form of a diary—with drawings,\(^{41}\) an attempt to compensate for the ultimate incapacity of language to “describe” what he considers as “the problems of the first world . . . openly mixed up with those of the third, out in the daylight.”\(^{42}\)

Both Moorhouse and Grass’s texts contemplates the postcolonial space as the embodiment of chaos, housing cities contaminated with poverty, disease and decrepitude—a motif that recurs insistently in Naipaul’s India trilogy. The preoccupation with filth and claustrophobia gives way to fascination in Pico Iyer’s \textit{Video Night in Kathmandu} (1988) where he writes (of India): “India had everything, and its opposite; and if the West often struck me as a masculine culture, dedicated to assertion, virility and power, while Southeast Asia seemed feminine in its texture, all softness, delicacy and grace, India was both, and neither, as grotesque and fascinating as a hermaphrodite” (261). But, Iyer’s narrative is also insidious in its suggestion that India, despite the fact of globalization and in spite of it, continues to inhabit the label of the “exotic.” Writing about one Persis Khambatta, an Indian actress who made it to Hollywood, Iyer notes that: “Though she had certainly cornered the market on Indian females, Persis herself admitted that she was seldom offered more than one role a year. And that was always the part of an “exotic”” (256). \textit{Days and Nights in Calcutta} (1977)—co-authored by Bharati Mukherjee and Clark Blaise—offers a dual view of India: the view proffered by the India-born Mukherjee on the one hand, and that proffered by her Canadian husband Clark Blaise, on the other. While Mukherjee’s narrative speaks of a complex response to the ideas of home (\textit{desh}) and identity, Blaise’s perspective borders more or less around the rather normative Eurocentric notion regarding the Third World.


Naipaul’s India trilogy—recording his visit to the subcontinent over a span of three decades—does away with the romance of the East, presenting a picture of a more or less studied disenchantment giving way to a discovery of the Self. It will be rather misleading to consider Naipaul’s India trilogy as an accurate exposition of Indianness from the Indian point of view. In fact (and as this study demonstrates), the point of view neither is nor ever becomes Indian, preferring to vacillate between the positions of the outsider and that of the insider and preserving that ambivalence until the very end.43

Early twentieth century travel writing, as this analysis attempts to show, is concerned with the subject of travel in the backdrop of imperialism and colonialism. The narratives belonging to this group are more likely to envision India as the rather consecrated site of Europe’s humanizing mission in the East and on a subtler plane, as a site of self-fashioning for western authors writing about the country. On the other hand, the post World War II travel writing—placed at a father remove from Europe’s imperial excesses—displays a renewed interest in the erstwhile (European) colonies—now decolonised; newly independent; rich with “writerly” material. This tendency transmogrifies in the last decades of the twentieth century into a quest that is directed inward rather than outward—a kind of complex self-fashioning that involves the contemplation and structuring of the postcolonial space as a site of identity formation.

43 This has been analysed in some detail in ch. 2 and 3 of the thesis.
1.3. The World Is What It Is: Writing Travel in the Era of Tourism

The first chapter of the novel *A Bend in the River* (1979) opens with the following lines: “The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it” (3). Throughout the corpus of Naipaul’s work, we see this play out—time and again—in the denouement of civilizations and characters and more generally, in the author’s complex expression of his *Weltanschauung*. Naipaul brings to the literature of travel, a genre whose pre-World War II embodiment was notoriously riddled with a sense of exhaustion and ageing, a new and critical fixation with civilizations, mobility and displacement. Issues of dispossession and displacement, the increased vulnerability of the Western civilizations and the chaotic rebirth of the erstwhile “barbarous” societies to new-found freedom from colonial rule leading to shifts in the old loci of power are some of the recurrent themes that dominate the Naipaulian canon.

The curious ambivalence that marks Naipaul’s rhetoric derives partly, from his characteristic denouement of the so-called “simple societies” that figure at the periphery of the civilized world and partly, from the nervous recognition of the ultimate vulnerability of the civilized Centre—the possibility of obliteration that is never quite extirpated. Even in the heart of the metropolis, the encroachment of the bush remains as a liminal possibility—a paranoia that finds expression in the lexicon he uses to berate the general impoverishment characterizing the Third World. Of the West Indies he writes in *MP*: “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” (20). The voice of the metropolitan traveller is but feeble here with the dark Victorian undertone of imperialistic writing becoming exceedingly conspicuous. Naipaul’s indictment of the Third World or what he refers to as the
“half-made” societies together with his need to reaffirm European certitudes is hardly incidental. As a child growing up in Trinidad and desperately seeking reprieve from a society riddled with the legacy of slavery, violence and non-doing, young Vidia vowed to find his feet in the civilized world—a world, that stood in sharp antithesis to Trinidad and all the Third World sensibilities he grew up to detest. Years later, as a traveller to the West Indies, he is offensively candid, his language starkly brutal with an ideological affinity for Victorian travellers such as, Trollope, Kingsley and Froude. He seems to echo Trollope in a scathing attack on postcolonial mimicry and what he decrees as “an old West Indian problem” (MP 41):

Pursuing the Christian-Hellenic tradition, the West Indian accepted his blackness as his guilt, and divided people into the white, fusty, musty, dusty, tea, coffee, cocoa, light black, dark black. He never seriously doubted the validity of the prejudices of the culture to which he aspired. In the French territories, he aimed at Frenchness, in the Dutch territories at Dutchness; in the English territories he aimed at simple whiteness and modernity, Englishness being impossible. (MP 63-64)

The “old West Indian problem” Naipaul lashes out at is, according to him, endemic to the Third World societies he travels to—most notably in the West Indies, Africa and India. His ideological alignment with the Victorian travellers is the most ostensible in this context. He quotes Trollope: “If we could, we would fain forget Jamaica altogether” (MP 19). His subsequent quotations in this section—one from the Ras Tafarian of 1959 and another from an anonymous seventeenth-century observer—helps reinforce Trollope’s prescription. Like the Victorians’, Naipaul’s perception of the West Indies affirms his English identity and his overt affinity with the British colonial lineage. His alignment with the Victorian ideology derives as much from his colonial
upbringing that produced a romanticized idea of England as from his desire of belonging to and functioning from within an exclusively British literary tradition. Alternatively, through his earnest dismissal of “half-made” societies, he strove to write off his own West Indianness—the very trait that excited Victorian indignation towards philistinism. His position as the metropolitan traveller from the heart of civilized Europe carries an artificial superiority; unlike the Victorian travellers before him, whose act of writing the periphery also, in a sense, produced it for Western audiences, Naipaul uses his first-hand knowledge of the West Indies and his fledgling English identity to lay claim on an audience who would find his authority as a writer both authentic as well as natural. He rarely attempts to romanticize travel or travel writing and instead, like his Victorian predecessors, turns to opinionative writing that often serves as political commentary on the societies or people he writes about. Notwithstanding his affinities with the British colonial lineage and the post World War II politics that entailed the exoticizing of primitive societies, MP is a curiously personal account; in the words of Rob Nixon, the book entails “a journey of rage into the terra incognita of the self” (*London Calling* 65). Besides illuminating the darker recesses of its author’s personal history, MP functions as a complex response to a post World War II era characterized by mobility and displacement—conditions that were to have far-reaching impact on the genre of travel writing itself.

Naipaul’s reverence for the Victorians and his general incorporation of Victorian values into the genre of literary travel writing were symptomatic of his emotional detachment from the interwar travel writers, a group that comprised the likes of Auden, Greene, Byron, Fleming and

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44 The liaison between politics and literature is analysed at length in ch. 2 and 4.

45 In his *London Calling*, Rob Nixon argues that Naipaul’s narrative model—at least, as far as his travelogues are concerned—is British Victorian travel writing and that he distances himself from both Georgian travel writing as well as the more contemporary or experimental variants of the genre (such as, tourist adventures).
Waugh. British travel writing peaked during the 1930s, both in popularity as well as in richness. The fatigue and excesses of the World War I had brought in an immense thirst for travel and adventure and the accounts of many such adventures found their way to the press. As Paul Fussell notes in *Abroad* (1980): “The fantasies of flight and freedom which animate the imagination of the 20’s and 30’s and generate its pervasive images of travel can be said to begin in the trenches” (4). Spurred by the increased mobility of the interwar years and a pressing need to escape a stifling, philistine England and the frustrations bred by the war, the bohemian travel writers of the time gravitated away from the insecurities of home. In the voice of Max Plowman, Fussell identifies this indomitable urge to escape:

I shall lie on the beach
Of a shore where the rippling waves just sigh,
And listen and dream and sleep and lie
Forgetting what I’ve had to learn and teach
And attack and defend.  

The Georgian ideology that conceptualized travel as essentially romantic was a formidable shift from the Victorian proselytizing mission. The reasons for Naipaul’s dissonance with the former are evident in his own writings—his readers would find it hard indeed to locate his desire to write in a corresponding desire to escape the world or its mundaneness. The chronic whimsicality of the interwar writers, the general irreverence evident in the authorial voice, the

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47 In the Introduction to Graham Greene’s travelogue *Journey Without Maps*, Paul Theroux captures the essence of amateur travel undertaken by the typical Englishman abroad: “It was 1935. Young, presentable, confident, well-educated, well-shod and presumptuous Englishmen were showing up in remote corners of the world, boasting their amateurishness, wearing comical headgear, with the assurance that all will be well. People would respect them for their Englishness and would fall in line and be helpful. . . .” (See Paul Theroux’s Introduction to Graham Greene’s *Journey Without Maps*. 1936. London: Vintage Books, 2006. xii-xiii).
disavowal of the real and a ubiquitous self-absorption—although stimulating—marked the beginning of an era of increasing political unease. This was, understandably, far too removed from the highly opinionated and missionary writings of the Victorian travellers and for that reason, dissonant with Naipaul’s Weltanschauung that seemed to favour Victorian solemnity over Georgian buoyancy. With the notable exception of Greene, whom he interviewed for The Daily Telegraph Magazine in 1968 and whose regret for the “passing of the Victorian peace” established a complex ideological bond between them, Naipaul remains for the most part a highly unsentimental writer.

Nevertheless, this rejection of the maudlin and an inclination towards realism strengthen that bond even further—so much so that both the similarities and the differences inherent in the way these two writers treat their respective subjects come to inform our understanding of the contradictions underlying contemporary society and civilization. In 1935, Greene travelled to Liberia—a journey that took him from Sierra Leone through the vast stretches of the Liberian jungle to Monrovia, the capital city. His travelogue, Journey Without Maps (1936) is an account of that journey which, through a string of literary allusions, political commentary and philosophical musings, attempts to capture the idea of Africa—a continent central to Greene’s literary imagination. His fascination with Africa was, to a great extent, informed by the adventure stories of boyhood—fantasies of anthropophagous tribes, magic and the seductive promise of epiphany. Interestingly, in his Liberian journey, Greene travels with another amateur and, given the rigour of the travel, an unlikely companion—his cousin Barbara—of whom he is curiously silent in his book. We know that Naipaul—in his first journey to India—travelled

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49 In his Introduction (2006) to Greene’s book, Theroux attributes Greene’s reticence to the “adulterer’s remorse”—he was unfaithful to his wife and probably infatuated with Barbara.
with his wife, Patricia Hale, whose presence in the book that recorded his experience thereof
(A*D) is, at best, cursory. Naipaul barely acknowledges Pat’s presence referring to her as “my
companion” and by doing so, refuses her agency. The reader is forewarned: one has indeed
travelled a long distance from the notion of the “innocent traveller” that Paul Theroux makes of
Graham Greene. 50

Both Greene (in Mexico) and Naipaul (in India) consider the ideas of “civilization” and
“history” from very different vantage points—Greene, as a traveller investigating the religious
persecution of the Calles regime in Mexico and Naipaul, as a traveller to the land of his forebears
exploring the idea of India. In The Lawless Roads (1939), the book that records Greene’s
Mexican journey, his view of civilization is plainly dystopic: “Perhaps we are in need of
violence” (224). The cruelty and oppression he witnesses in Mexico come across as the
beginning of the realization of civilization’s ultimate fallibility. For Greene, modern civilization
is—in the absence of Faith—essentially fragile, anarchic and incapable of deliverance. In The
Lawless Roads, Mexico is a metaphor of the immanent contradictions of modern civilization just
as Africa, with its Conradian echoes, is for lost innocence in Journey Without Maps.

The post World War II era ushered in an age of consumerism and mass displacement.
While consumerism led to the proliferation of the tourist and tourism, the mass displacement of
world populations was responsible for de glamorizing travel. No longer considered an initiation
rite into adulthood, travel became an everyday condition, even a necessity. These trends were
symptomatic of the postcolonial world in which the genre of travel writing was to undergo
significant transformations. Interestingly, Naipaul’s travel-writing career overlaps with the
positively increasing popularity of tourism and a fascination and nostalgia for the decline and

50 For more on this, see Theroux’s Introduction (2006) to Journey Without Maps (xii).
dissolution of a glorious past. The nostalgia for the past as a sentimental indulgence rarely permeates Naipaul’s writings (with the possible exception of EA where the narrator is nostalgic about the glory days of imperial England), although the complex relationship between cultural authenticity and cultural difference continues to occupy centre stage. The intermingling of cultures significantly altered the definition of travel as a quest for the different—in the age of high tourism difference was a carefully engineered construct and a cultural commodity to be showcased for the benefit of thrill seekers. The issues of cultural difference and cultural authenticity occur recurrently in Naipaul’s travel writings. For instance, in MP, the unapologetic replacement of indigenous styles by imported ideas and cultural formulations have, according to Naipaul, led to the dilution of cultural authenticity. The emphasis on America, although commercially gainful, has slowly yet irrevocably transformed the Caribbean into a model paradise for the tourist—a region that is largely made up, concocted and manufactured in keeping with the tourist’s idea of the place: “Modernity in Trinidad, then, turns out to be the extreme susceptibility of people who are unsure of themselves and, having no taste or style of their own, are eager for instruction” (MP 41). Naipaul’s travel writing, however, preserves a curious ambivalence—while, on the one hand, it gives the impression of the chronicler as an informed outsider, on the other, it underscores his vulnerability to subterranean tensions arising out of his ties to the West Indies; the latter resulting in moments of nervous panic: “When I was in the fourth form I wrote a vow on the endpaper of my Kennedy’s Revised Latin Primer to leave within five years. I left after six; and for many years afterwards in England, falling asleep in bedsitters with the electric fire on, I had been awakened by the nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad” (MP 34). Naipaul frequently transfuses his travel narratives with
autobiographical elements, being careful at the same time to maintain objectivity. Understandably, he cannot (and does not) travel merely for the sights.

Again, the intermingling of cultures which forms a pivotal theme in Naipaul’s travel writings, foregrounds his dislike for cultural hybridity—a natural outcome of prolonged and regular cultural exchange and intermingling. Of the various interventions that Naipaul brought to the form of post World War II travel writing, perhaps the most unsettling would be the formalization of “negative sight-seeing”, first introduced by Dean MacCannell in his exposition of the “tourist.” Naipaul’s obsession with Third World decrepitude (images of filth, faeces and general decay abound in his travel narratives) is notoriously anti-touristic. Ironically, his preoccupation with Third World decadence and his sometimes vapid denunciation of the people thereof, widely criticized for feeding the imperialist worldview, have also endowed his travel narratives with a dramatic authenticity. The absence of the speciously touristic affinity with beautification is a notable facet of Naipaul’s oeuvre. Yet, at times, he comes closer to the archetypal tourist but never fully identifies with his persona. The Middle Passage opens with an excerpt from Froude’s The English in the West Indies (1888) that describes the Victorian’s journey by carriage to the West Indian mail steamer. In MP, Naipaul—much like his predecessor—travels to the West Indies, but the “crowd of immigrant-type West Indians on the boat-train platform at Waterloo” (1) stands in stark contrast with Froude’s co-travellers who were all members of the English gentry. This is, at once, indicative of the increased mobility that characterizes the postcolonial era and is symptomatic of Naipaul’s assumed status as the


52 Satyajit Ray, for instance, whom Naipaul admires greatly—provoked the ire of both the Central (Delhi) and State (Bengal) Governments in India because of his unapologetic depiction of poverty and caste cruelties in films such as, Pather Panchali (or, The Song of the Road, 1955) and Sadgati (or, The Deliverance, 1981).
privileged tourist who is gladdened at the prospect of “travelling first class” to the West Indies. If this is a literary decoy that Naipaul consciously employs to accentuate the complex interplay of conflicting personas—that of the tourist-adventurer and the travel writer—it also doubles up as a parody of the Western colonial enterprise.

The figure of Froude (White/English/Victorian/Oxford-educated/imperialist/missionary), as the knowledgeable chronicler of British colonies, more than half a century later transmutes into the figure of Naipaul (Brown/born in the Caribbean but domiciled in Britain/a champion of Victorian values/Oxford-educated/critical of the Third World/politically conscious). Naipaul’s journey to the West Indies from England as the official chronicler of the region confirms the legitimacy of his status as an authentic and knowledgeable narrator. He figures as the antithesis of the casual tourist, displaying an obvious absence of touristic aspirations and an unambiguous fondness for the derelict and the grotesque. It is strange therefore, that he should conclude his sojourn of the Caribbean in a sprawling Jamaican resort like the archetypal tourist. But even in the Frenchman’s Cove, the most expensive hotel in Jamaica, he is prompt enough to dismiss any association with the touristic enterprise. His confession, “I couldn’t be a tourist in the West Indies, not after the journey I had made” (MP 240; emphasis added) ultimately strips the narrative of its Victorian veneer.

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53 In 1960, V. S. Naipaul was commissioned by the then Trinidad government to write a non-fiction book (MP) about the Caribbean.
2. The Narrator/Traveller as a “Subject of Difference”: Theories of Travel Writing

2.1. From Root to Rhizome: Travel Writing, Nomad Thought and the Poetics of (In)difference

In his *Poetics of Relation* (published originally in French in 1990; in English in 1997), Édouard Glissant writes: “Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (11). Glissant’s thesis on the “rhizome”—a conceptual device enabling and encouraging the proliferation of synchronic identity—is a thoughtfully measured development on Deleuze and Guattari’s (introductory) plateau (1987). While Glissant’s poetics of “relation”—in its adoption of the subterranean root system (the rhizome) as its primary metaphor—does not reject rootedness, it does challenge the idea of the “totalitarian root,” the rapacious radicle that devours all else in its vicinity. In this section of the thesis, I have used Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the rhizome (and Glissant’s masterful expansion of it) as the conceptual scaffolding of the following arguments: 1) the figure of the itinerant errant/traveller/travel writer—travelling from the metropolis to the periphery (“home,” in certain instances)—forms a rhizomatic relationship with the environment of his destination. While the historical facts contributing to an individual’s movement (exile, migrancy) actualize his deterritorialization, his subsequent “return” to the (contested) space of home—either physically or textually (via the “word” or “book”)—can be (figuratively) read as his reterritorialization, albeit, with certain reservations. Similarly, Naipaul’s relationship with India (the land of his forebears and therefore, an alternative home-space), as evinced in the India trilogy, can be described as rhizomatic. 2) The “nomadic subject” of the
India trilogy—the deterritorialized itinerant who, despite his deterritorialization and in spite of it, is sufficiently anchored to a historical position (see Braidotti 5) which, in turn, is implicated in the production of his discourse—does not celebrate (his) nomadism but identifies it as a traumatic condition. And, finally, 3) the nomadic principle is based on difference—that between home and abroad; stability and fluidity; sedentariness and movement.

However, nomadism—as Deleuze (“Nomad Thought” 149) informs us—does not always imply movement, a fact that proffers useful insights into the creative imagination of writers whose nomadic figurations of identity deliberately bypass the familiar literary tropes traditionally associated with nomad thought. In the India trilogy, for instance, Naipaul evades the subject of nomadism/errantry inasmuch as he allows the question of subjectivity to remain open-ended—one that is meant to evolve continually and over time. The relationship of his travelling persona with the environment(s) and the people he comes in contact with in India is one that can be said to “feed” on its immediate setting insofar as the (repetitive) “movements of deterritorialization” and the (subsequent) “processes of reterritorialization” come to resemble a continuous ‘flow’. This is also how the traveller’s “I” and the setting/environment of his travel form a rhizome. Deleuze and Guattari elucidate this point further by citing the analogous relationship between the “book” and the “world”: “[C]ontrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an a parallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world . . . .” (A Thousand Plateaus 11). Similarly, the India trilogy as a written testimony of the traveller’s

54 “The nomad,” writes Deleuze, “is not necessarily one who moves: some voyages take place in situ, are trips in intensity. Even historically, nomads are not necessarily those who move about like migrants. On the contrary, they do not move; nomads, they nevertheless stay in the same place and continually evade the codes of settled people” (“Nomad Thought” 149).
“I” forms a rhizome with the world (India, in the current instance) of which it is a representation (but not an image). While, on the one hand, the author’s (written) account effects a “deterritorialization” of the setting of his experiences, on the other, the locale or the “world”—as depicted in the writing—reterritorializes the book (in this case, the written account of the author’s experience of the locale he travels in and through).

Nomadism, as explored by Rosi Braidotti (in her *Nomadic Subjects*), presupposes an interiorized deterritorialization, but does not necessitate movement. According to her, nomadism refers to “the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior” (*Nomadic Subjects* 5). Her “nomadic subject”—as has been mentioned above—is someone who is thus deterritorialized, yet historically situated, i.e., both spatially as well as temporally. But, Braidotti prudently distinguishes between the confusingly interrelating terminologies of the postcolonial discourse, viz. the exile, the migrant and the nomad (*Nomadic Subjects* 21). While the post structural/modernist implication of the “exile” presupposes a total expunction of the unitary Self, Braidotti, however, associates a position of “nonchalant detachment” to the concept. The *migrant*, on the other hand, is one who travels with a fixed sense of “destination.” Notwithstanding the migrant’s search for fixity, as W. H. Hudson ironically notes in his *Idle Days in Patagonia* (1893):

[I]t may seem cruel kindness to whisper into the ear of the migrant the warning “That which thou goes forth to seek thou shalt not find.” It is not said, be it remembered, that he will not find happiness, which, like the rain and sunshine,

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55 This view is similar to Deleuze’s. For a detailed account on this, see Deleuze’s essay, “Nomad Thought” (1973).

although in more moderate measure comes alike to all men; it is only said that the particular form of happiness to which he looks forward will never be his. (59)

A migrant exists within a definite and socially identifiable subculture and is usually sceptic about establishing any significant socio-cultural link with the hegemonic host-culture. The nomadic subject of Braidotti is representative of a resistance against the “hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity” (*Nomadic Subjects* 23) and is “the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity” (22). Thus, the postcolonial/postmodernist traveller does not stand for “homelessness” or even some kind of compulsive detachment; he is an incarnation of that wonderfully “contaminated” creature that Kwame Anthony Appiah talks about in *In My Father’s House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992), a product of the “circulation of cultures” characteristic of an increasingly mobile world.\(^{57}\) The key to nomadic consciousness, as Braidotti argues and as this study seeks to establish, is to be found in the automatic and inevitable dissolution of one’s origin at the moment of birth and in between the Self and the diverse cultures (and languages) it comes to inherit and negotiate. In this sense and as the emphatically plural identity of the nomad would attest, the nomadic consciousness consists of “an inventory of traces” where in the place of a unitary and originary consciousness is to be found a complex concatenation of rhizomatic relations and (cultural) lineages. The rhizomatic thought is relational; it negates the autocratic regimes of borders and boundaries. As Naipaul writes in *A Way in the World* (1994): “Most of us know the parents or grandparents we come from. But we go back and back, forever; we go back all of us to the very beginning; in our blood and bone and brain we carry the memories of thousands of beings” (9; emphasis added). This excerpt highlights the fact that the history of the West Indian islands (Naipaul was born in the

\(^{57}\) For a detailed account on this, see Appiah (*In My Father’s House* 155).
West Indies) is shaped by mobility—from the pre-colonial adventures of Columbus through the subsequent depopulation and resettlement of their territories. The knowledge of relation, which is a constitutive element in rhizomatic thought, demolishes the myth of a unitary identity. By promoting the idea of a multi-layered identity, it nurtures and nourishes the nomadic consciousness which, going by this sense, is less a celebration of homelessness than what may be described as “the ontological obsession with knowledge” (Glissant 19). In the India trilogy (as also elsewhere in Naipaul’s travel writing), nomadic subjectivity—which suggests a convergence of travel, multi-faceted and multi-layered identities, errantry, migrancy and diasporic consciousness—postulates nomadism as a traumatic condition. In AD, Naipaul begins the section entitled “A Resting-Place for the Imagination” with a quotation from Charles Darwin’s *Voyage of the Beagle* that aptly captures the emotional impact of displacement: “These Antipodes call to one’s mind old recollections of childish doubt and wonder. Only the other day I looked forward to this airy barrier as a definite point in our journey homewards; but now I find it, and all such resting-places for the imagination, are like shadows, which a man moving onwards cannot catch” (21).

The (metropolitan) travel writer, one who journeys from the centre to the periphery in order to empirically represent the outside and whose very cosmopolitanism and resistance to sedentariness and “socially coded modes of behaviour” reveal his nomadic identity, also undoes—in and through his writing—the ancient immutability of language and thought. The nomadic principle is based on difference—that between home and abroad; stability and unrest; sedentariness and movement. The artificial divisions separating the subject, concept and being of

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58 Naipaul’s treatment of the concepts of “home” and “abroad” is analysed at length in sec. 3.4 of this thesis.
representation (Deleuze, Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* xii) are virtually non-existent in nomadic thought and so is the fixity of signs—the nomadic principle precludes interiorized order releasing the signifier from its signified in an apparently despotic regime of randomness and abstraction. So, unlike its sedentary *Other*—the disciplined, organized and sedentary subject of the State—the nomadic subject is amorphous, chaotic and essentially deterritorialized.

Prior to his first visit to India in 1962, Naipaul had only a vague notion regarding the land of his forebears—ideas that traced their origins merely to a child’s oneiric visions of a country shaped by the obsolete artefacts in the adopted “home.” India was, thus, essentially less than a place for him—a non-place, as it were—almost mythical in construct, a metaphor for a displaced community of migrants who had left India as indentured labourers in the wake of the shortage of labour faced by the sugar plantations of the Caribbean after the abolition of slavery in Britain in 1834. Naipaul’s travelogues on the subject of India can be traced along the lines of their author’s successive impressions of the country of his forebears and how the pessimistic scepticism of *AD* (under the influence of these impressions) is gradually transformed into the mature outlook characterizing *IMMN*.

Naipaul embodies a global rootlessness, a ubiquitous displacement that sets him apart from his peers as the solitary writer in exile. As Rob Nixon notes in *London Calling*, “he [Naipaul] has come to be celebrated as the ultimate literary apatride” (17). It is a rather curious coincidence that he is also the most autobiographical of travel writers writing in the twentieth century, playing off his detachment against the well-established literary traditions of his time. The autobiographical elements in his work not only form an integral part of his literary

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59 Interestingly (and as Glissant points out in his *Poetics of Relation*), in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Immanuel Kant related sceptics with nomads in view of their common resistance to sedentarity (promoted by civil society) and their readiness to disrupt localized power formations.
discourse, but also to a great extent, formulate it. Consequently, the great body of his literary narratives, of which travel writing constitutes an important part, can be read as a synoptic analysis of both his personal history as well as the history of the literary canon that traced its transit from the West Indies to the United Kingdom in the 1940s and 50s. The other literary personas associated with this canon are George Lamming, Sam Selvon and Derek Walcott, who like Naipaul, headed towards the metropolitan culture of London in search of a literary tradition that was conspicuously absent at the time in the West Indies. However, as pointed out by Rob Nixon in *London Calling*, for authors like Lamming and Walcott, life in London was intricately tied to their experiences as a minority community in the metropolis. Naipaul was already a member of the minority group in Trinidad—although not an underprivileged member—given, his upper caste affiliation within the resident Indian community. His ancestors’ dislocation from India to the West Indies was only two generations away; this allowed him the privilege of exercising a certain degree of aloofness, an informed objectivity towards cultures and traditions he was not born into, but nonetheless found himself a part of. On the other hand, his peers, the black authors of African origin whose dislocation was more immediately apparent, also carried an element of dispossession that although painful, was necessary to preserve and promote their literary talent.

In *IWC*, the metropolitan traveller/nomad from the Western metropolis exhibits a political consciousness that is no mere veneer to the main discourse. Naipaul’s acerbic denunciation of India as a civilization that clings to its past has the certain potential to offend, but this monumental indictment is also directed against a self-destructive complacency, an ancient

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60 This is, however, not to claim that Naipaul’s India trilogy is representative of its author’s indubitably objective account of India. On the contrary, this study seeks to demonstrate that Naipaul’s representational strategy in the case of his India trilogy is more appropriately a combination of subjective and objective positions.
tendency to regress, to seek refuge in the past. To free oneself from the entanglements of history, one must not only acknowledge the past but also resist denying the present: “Art historians tell us that the European renaissance became established when men understood that the past was not living on; that Ovid or Virgil could not be thought of as a kind of ancient cleric; that men had to put distance between the past and themselves, the better to understand and profit from that past” (IWC160-61). The past is a very special territory for the nomad. It is representative of a set of unique historical circumstances that form the rubric of his identity. Pitted against nerve-wracking hopelessness on the one hand, and the despicable servitude of habit on the other, Naipaul’s literary persona identifies intellectual discipline and social inquiry as the only meaningful ways to resist being obliterated by the past.

2.2. Routes of Passage: Conceptualizing “Space,” “Place” and “Site” in Naipaul’s India Trilogy

“Why should landscape be any less dramatic than event?” (Jameson, Postmodernism 364)

This section of the thesis examines and analyses how the notions of “space,” “place” and “site” are conceptualized (and developed) particularly with reference to Naipaul’s India trilogy. Like Dan Jacobson’s Bloomsbury, Naipaul’s oneiric model of India is cancelled out by the reality of the place(s) he encounters. For the India he witnesses responds poorly to what he describes as the “resting place of the imagination”—the land of his forebears playing out as his

61 John McLeod refers to Jacobson’s disappointment with what he discovers as the “real” London—a place which is painfully at odds with the London of his imagination—the London found in the books. McLeod quotes Jacobson: “The half-conscious, always-unfinished guesswork which had been so inextricably an aspect of my reading, throughout my childhood and adolescence in South Africa, the dreamlike otherness or remoteness in the books I had read, which I had valued more than I had supposed, were being taken from me, bit by bit” (1986: 79)” (Postcolonial London 60).
own private heterotopia whose physical reality does little to mitigate its essential placelessness. Like Jacobson’s “ruinous” and “voided” Tavistock Square (see Postcolonial London 60), Naipaul’s India turns out to be a “difficult country”—a quintessentially unheimlich realm which is as much a counter-site as it is a mythical construct. “Jacobson’s revealing memories of arriving in London,” writes McLeod, “stage a particular kind of troublesome encounter with England and English culture which . . . was by no means uncommon in the 1950s and 1960s. Many budding writers from colonised countries who came to London suffered similarly dislocating experiences” (Postcolonial London 60). This section attempts to trace the extent to which Naipaul, by recounting his travels in and through India in his India trilogy, creates a place rather than merely evince the gaps between language and place. In other words, the primary concern of this section is to determine if Naipaul, in his India trilogy, can be said to have accomplished a comprehensive “worlding” by narrativizing the space/place he had travelled both in and through. But before that can be determined, it is imperative to analyse each of the key terms—“space,” “place” and “site”—which will recur in the course of the study at issue.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the essence of place—the very point confirming one’s being in the physical world—was completely absorbed into the all-encompassing notion of space. In The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History (1997), Edward Casey appraises this phenomenon when he writes of space as the “infinite extension, (which) has become a cosmic and extracosmic Moloch that consumes every corpuscle of place to be found within its greedy

62 Foucault defines heterotopias as places “which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.” For more on this, see Michel Foucault. “Of Other Spaces.” 1967. Diacritics 16 (1986): 22-27.

63 Interestingly, in the section entitled “Jack’s Garden” of EA (1987), Naipaul recounts his first impression of England (he arrived in England in 1950) which seems to reflect a similar angst: “I saw what I saw very clearly. But I didn’t know what I was looking at. I had nothing to fit into. I was still in a kind of limbo” (5).
reach” (x). “Space,” however, is a more abstract concept than “place.” Space, as Yi Fu Tuan (1977) argues, is “undifferentiated place”—a somewhat diffused area that is yet to be endowed with meaning. Tuan writes: “The ideas “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Space and Place 6).

The melting of space into place and vice versa is apparent in the following passage from Naipaul’s AD:

And India had in a special way been the background of my childhood. It was the country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real, a country out in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad; and from it our journey had been final. It was a country suspended in time; it could not be related to the country, discovered later, which was the subject of the many correct books issued by Mr Gollancz and Messrs Allen and Unwin and was the source of agency dispatches in the Trinidad Guardian. (21)

India as the background of the author’s childhood evokes the notion of a “sense of place.” For a “place” to become a “meaningful location,” it is imperative that it be endowed with a “sense of place”—a subjective and emotional attachment stemming from one’s familiarity and intimate involvement with such space. Interestingly, in the following lines Naipaul concedes to the fact that the country of his forebears was “never physically described” and for that reason “never real.” Furthermore, the notion of India as “a country suspended in time” challenges geographical
imagination launching the idea of a metaphorical (as opposed to physical) land awaiting habitation and use. On the other hand, the India “discovered later” can be said to be spatially (presumably temporally, as well) grounded; it is closer to the notion of “place” (than a priori limitless, undifferentiated “space”)—a location that is a concrete representation of something—a location whose materiality can be experientially derived and/or appropriated.

Closely associated with the idea of space and place is the notion of landscape. However, in Naipaul’s India trilogy, the traditional understanding of landscape as an aesthetic appreciation of the environment is complicated, given the importance of the gaze that formulates it. For instance, the recurrent images of filth, squalor and abjectness that punctuate the India trilogy imbues its landscape with a dreariness which is not only characteristic of the actual locale as experienced by the travel writer/narrator, but is also reflective of the specific position—that of a diasporic individual with ancestral roots in India and a highly complex, problematic and often ambivalent perception with regard to Trinidad (the country where he was born and had spent his early boyhood) and England (the country where he had lived ever since he left Trinidad in 1950 to pursue higher education and a career in writing)—he writes from. The use of landscape in Naipaul’s India trilogy often generates an acutely dystopic effect further complicating the traditional understanding of the concept. The imbrication of objectified environments and the gaze of the observer echoes Lawrence Buell’s conceptualization of landscape as an embodiment of the holistic comprehension of the gaze. In The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination (2005), Buell writes:

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Landscape typically refers to rural rather than urban contexts and typically implies certain amplitude of vista and degree of arrangement, whether the referent is an artifact or an actual locale. But what is called landscape may be messy or chaotic rather than orderly, foreshortened as well as panoramic, urban as well as exurban. In all cases, landscape implies the totality of what a gaze can comprehend from its vantage point. (Buell 142-43; emphasis added)

Thus, according to Buell, the conceptualization of environment as landscape not only entails variability but also the gaze (of the observer) delineating it. In fact, this is also how Naipaul seems to narrativize “place” in his India trilogy—by faithfully recording the varied environments (or landscapes) through which he traverses on the one hand, and endowing them (by means of his gaze) with meaning, on the other. Buell’s formulation of landscape as “the totality of what a gaze can comprehend from its vantage point” is particularly useful in the analysis of the imagining and structuring of landscape in Naipaul’s travel writing.65 Or, just to take it one step further, one may consider Kojin Karatani’s (1993) discourse on the (re)discovery of landscape in painting: “For landscape . . . is not simply what is outside. A change in our way of perceiving things was necessary in order for landscape to emerge, and this change required a kind of reversal” (Origins of Modern Japanese Literature 24). The “reversal” that Karatani mentions, is in essence a mode of perception that “does not take place either inside of us or outside of us, but is an inversion of a semiotic configuration” (Origins of Modern Japanese Literature 27). He gives the example of Masaoka Shiki—a Japanese poet of the Meiji era—to illustrate his point.

65 Of course, this may be extended to an intricate analysis of the formulation and use of landscape in Naipaul’s literary works in general, but this thesis is primarily concerned with Naipaul’s travel writing on India and only secondarily with his travel writing in general (inasmuch as the latter can be brought in to provide a context for the former).
Shiki, Karatani tells us, adopted and developed “sketching” (shasei in Japanese) as a technique for writing poetry—his “sketches” were haiku poems that were composed in the midst of Nature. In other words, Shiki’s practice of “sketching” entailed first, the discovery of the “external world” by being in (rather than outside of) it followed by the description of that newly-discovered reality. This form of realism based on the “defamiliarization of the familiar” always presupposes the presence of an “inner world” (Buell’s gaze is a function of its latency—the comprehension of the gaze from its vantage point being, at least partially, informed by the workings of this inner world which is reasonably complicit in producing the “reality” as the observer “sees”/experiences it) and is shaped by it.

At this stage, it would be rather contextual to explore Naipaul’s tendency to describe the external world through and in relation to landscape painting. For instance, in EA, he informs readers that his sense of the English winter is derived from the water-colour paintings of Rowland Hilder (1905-1993)—an association that quickly places in perspective both his alienation from the external world as well as his efforts to “discover” it in and through the works of Hilder. Interestingly, this “discovery” of the external world is also found to entail a vision of space that anticipates the emergence of a unique perspective—the depiction of the external world

66 Shasei—translated as “sketching” or “copying”—was practised and developed by the poet and verse teacher, Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) who considered it an important compositional technique for those practicing the “haiku” (a three-lined verse consisting of 5-7-5 syllables respectively) or tanka (a five-lined verse consisting of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables respectively) poetic forms. Shiki, in his advocacy of the shasei, placed the individual/poet/artist at the centre of the subject of his/her observation. For Shiki maintained that the “external world,” in order to be described or rendered accurately in writing, must, at first, be discovered.

67 Karatani refers to Victor Shklovsky in contending that this form of realism advocated by Shklovsky “creates” landscape rather than just “describe” it, indicating that the “relentless defamiliarization of the familiar” (Origins of Modern Japanese Literature 29) enables one to see that which, owing to the deadening force of habit, was hitherto unseen.

68 In EA, Naipaul writes: “And though I knew that summers were sunny and that in winters the trees went bare and brush-like, as in the water-colours of Rowland Hilder, the year—so far as vegetation and even temperature went—was a blur to me” (4).
as a conceptual phenomenon rather than as already existing, perhaps since a mythical beginning.

Consider the following excerpt from EA:

> Apart from the romance of the Constable reproduction, the knowledge I brought to my setting was linguistic. I knew that ‘avon’ originally meant only river, just as ‘hound’ originally just meant a dog, any kind of dog. And I knew that both elements of Waldenshaw—the name of the village and the manor in whose grounds I was—I knew that both ‘walden’ and ‘shaw’ meant wood. One further reason why, apart from the fairy-tale feel of the snow and the rabbits, I thought I saw a forest. (5; emphasis added)

The Constable reproduction mentioned in the text quoted above refers to a four-colour reproduction of the English landscape painter John Constable’s (1776-1837) painting of the Salisbury Cathedral—Naipaul’s first tryst (presumably) with an English town back in colonial Trinidad at a time when he was barely ten. What is especially noteworthy here is the coupling of speech and vision and the way in which one informs the other resulting in a unique spatial perspective. The description of the external world in this instance totally bypasses the mundane listing of natural objects or phenomena, concentrating in its stead on the discovery of only that which is signified by it. Naipaul mentions Constable and (E. H.) Shepard—marking “time” as a fluid category with the painter’s vision rendering the past ordinary, immediate and surprisingly tactile. The tension between the pastoral and the modern, articulated through a sense of nostalgia for the old order and the threat of the “modern picturesque” taking over, underscores the fragility of the painter’s view. But it also upholds, at the same time, the verity of the painter’s depiction of the external world as a concept rather than as a space crowded with natural objects; it is this very
trait that triggers and ultimately leads to the melting of space (undifferentiated place) into place (differentiated space).

Perhaps, the most evocative image in EA is Giorgio de Chirico’s painting also titled The Enigma of Arrival and the Afternoon (1912). De Chirico’s painting is thus described by Naipaul:

A classical scene, Mediterranean, ancient-Roman—or so I saw it. A wharf; in the background, beyond walls and gateways (like cutouts), there is the top of the mast of an antique vessel; on an otherwise deserted street in the foreground there are two figures, both muffled, one perhaps the person who has arrived, the other perhaps a native of the port. The scene is of desolation and mystery: it speaks of the mystery of arrival. (106)

This is a rather atypical landscape—a combination of the mundane (walls, gateways, deserted street) and the romantic (antique vessel, muffled figures, the mystery of arrival)—a scene that putatively represents Naipaul’s own personal history encompassing the moments of arrival.

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69 De Chirico was not a landscape painter; he founded the metaphysical art (Pittura Metafisica in Italian) movement that flourished between 1911 and 1920. The movement was developed by painters, Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) and Carlo Carrà (1881-1966). Chirico’s paintings display the symbolist iconography characteristic of metaphysical painting often embodied in dreamlike images. One may discern in his cityscapes an effort to create rather than describe through a process somewhat akin to Victor Shklovsky’s “defamiliarizing the familiar.” Concomitantly, Chirico’s paintings can be “read” as an extended discourse on space/place (his 1915 painting “Melancholia of Turin” is a particularly revealing case to the point).

70 Giorgio De Chirico. The Enigma of the Arrival and the Afternoon. 1912. Oil on Canvas. Private Collection. See fig.1 in Appendix.

71 De Chirico’s painting depicts what might be called an “urban” scene (or a “cityscape”) and hence, cannot be categorized under the traditional genre of landscape painting. However, it encapsulates the totality of the artist’s gaze and its comprehension of his physical surrounding—lineaments that Buell attributes to landscape (see Lawrence Buell’s The Future of Environmental Criticism 143). Buell refers to landscape as a “polysemic term whose chief modern usage in English derives from early modern Dutch landschap painting” (142) Although, it typically refers to a rural context (as opposed to urban) implying an aesthetic delineation of the physical environment, according to Buell, “landscape should also be thought of as shaped by the mind of the beholder, as well as by sociohistorical forces, a connotation that the German Landschaft captures better” (143).
initiation and flight. This corroborates Buell’s notion of landscape as “shaped by the mind of the beholder” (143)—the principle of both De Chirico’s art and Naipaul’s being inspired by introspection and melancholy.

The conceptualization of the physical environment as landscape in Naipaul’s India trilogy encapsulates not only the author’s moral involvement with his subject (which plays out in complex ways—space and place being the two important elements in the formulation and structuring of the narrator’s social identity) but also the rather problematic reconciliation of the imagined with the real. The ruined landscape; the relentless, brown suburbs; the unyielding fields—all stand in antithesis to the “imagined” India; they are both scenes of confinement and liberation. Consider the following “landscape” describing the workings of a trench-digger from *IWC*:

The man was small and slightly built. He was troubled by his chest and obviously weary. He managed the pickaxe with difficulty; it didn’t go deep and he often stopped to rest. His wife, in a short green sari, squatted on the stony ground, as though offering encouragement by her presence; from time to time, but not often, she pulled out with a mattock those stones that the man has loosened; and the white-capped boy stood by the woman, doing nothing. Like a painting by Millet of solitary brute labour, but in an emptier and a less fruitful land. (64-65)

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72 The Mediterranean scene (as described by Naipaul) in De Chirico’s painting works as a visual metaphor of Naipaul’s life and travels. According to Timothy Weiss, “The narrator's fantasy springs from an exchange between art and life: his encounter with the art-book photograph of de Chirico's painting as it evokes images of or connections with his own life. His fantasy contains in symbolic form his life as exile: his travels, estrangement, sense of loss of past and home” (*On the Margins* 211). Weiss reads into the narrator’s (of *EA*) fantasy of the arrival of the traveller to the ancient, Mediterranean city a sense of ending. Interestingly, the last chapter of *AD* (entitled “Flight”) conveys a similar sense of ending—after the arrival of the narrator to the land of his forebears and his subsequent disenchantment with the romance inherent in the idea of a “return” or “homecoming.”
Although Naipaul does not specify the exact title of Millet’s painting, it can be reasonably inferred that he was probably referring to Millet’s painting, *Des glaneuses*\(^{73}\) (1857), also known as *The Gleaners* or *Gleaners*. Millet’s painting depicts three women—representative of the rural working class—picking up ears of corn missed by the harvesters. The women—bent and labouring—appear in the foreground, their austerity in stark contrast with the hint of a promising harvest in the backdrop. Both Millet’s painting and the scene Naipaul describes have a number of things in common: both depict scenes of brute labour—thankless, repetitive tasks that seem to alienate the protagonists from their physical environments; both represent three anonymous figures in the foreground—nameless, ordinary people, whom art (painting and writing, respectively) has rendered unforgettable. Much like the Japanese romantic naturalist Kunikada Doppo’s (1871-1908) “unforgettable people” (from the novel of the same name originally published in Japanese as *Wasureenu Hitobito* in 1898), Naipaul’s trench diggers and Millet’s gleaners represent “people-as-landscapes”\(^{74}\)—ordinary people who are both inseparable from as well as representative of their physical environments. That Doppo afforded conscious thought to his “subject” emerges from his personal reflection: “Once I had become a believer in Wordsworth I could not think of a man as being separate from nature” (Keene 227). It is this basic correspondence of man with nature (“a man matching his rhythm to that of nature” (*IWC* 111)) that informs Naipaul’s formulation of the subject in his India trilogy, facilitating at the


\(^{74}\) According to Kojin Karatani, the unnamed person that Otsu, the narrator of Doppo’s *Unforgettable People*, catches a glimpse of on an island “is not so much a “person” as a “landscape”” (24). Karatani contends that Doppo’s *Unforgettable People* “offers convincing evidence that “landscape” was an inversion of consciousness before it became a representational convention” (23). Karatani’s view on this issue is central to my analysis of the “emergence” and structuring of landscape in Naipaul’s India trilogy where I have attempted to demonstrate that Naipaul’s conceptualization of the physical environment subsumes the foregrounding of people—often anonymous—as representational landscape.
same time, the conceptualization (or discovery) of landscape as “a realignment of the relationship between an individual and his/her environment” (Fujii 99). In fact, the individual—as Naipaul shows us in his India trilogy—often is the landscape. In the section entitled “The House of Grain” in IWC, he writes: “At Lonavala, where we broke our journey, a buffalo herdsman sang in the rain. We heard his song before we saw him, on a hill, driving his animals before him. He was half naked and carried an open black umbrella. When the rain slanted and he held the umbrella at his side, it was hard to tell him from his buffalos” (77). The portrayal of this pastoral idyll is inspired by both a (latent) Darwinian economy of inevitable, primordial struggle as well as what Richard Kerridge plays up as the idea of nature as “a paradise temporarily regained”—the last made possible (in the case of India), despite all odds, through the typical “Indian defences” of renunciation and withdrawal.

Pitted against this pastoral idyll, is the dystopic imagery of squalor and dispossession which is likely to evoke Dickens’ environmental imagination. Like Dickens’ dreary cityscapes, Naipaul’s environmental imagination is characterized by an unmitigated cynicism coupled with

75 In The Future of Environmental Criticism (2005), Lawrence Buell writes: “Traditional pastoral, dating from the poetry of Theocritus, is a stylized representation of rusticity in contrast to and often in satire of urbanism, focusing in the first instance on the life of shepherds. In the early modern and romantic eras, as in seventeenth-century English country house poems and in Wordsworthian lyric, pastoral becomes more mimetically particularized, and more given over to representation of country ways that are being displaced by enclosure and/or urbanization . . . .Pastoral is originally and predominantly a high-cultural, hegemonic formation . . . .” (Buell 144-45). One of the many uses to which Naipaul puts the pastoral idyll in his India trilogy is to assert the incongruities inherent in the notion of Indianness that insists upon conjoining the “beauty of simple life” with the “beauty of the poor”—ideas, which according to Naipaul, are representative of two essentially opposed civilizations.

76 In his essay, “Nature in the English Novel,” Kerridge cites the example of Clym Yeobright (of Thomas Hardy’s 1878 novel, The Return of the Native) who, as a furze-cutter on the Egdon heath, comes closer to nature “with a striking literalness.” Clym, as Kerridge maintains, is part of the landscape of the heath (where he works as a furze-cutter) itself; in fact, the realignment of his relationship with the small creatures of the heath makes him indistinguishable from them so much so that “(n)one of them feared him” (Hardy 312). See Richard Kerridge. “Nature in the English Novel.” Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook. Eds. Patrick D. Murphy, Terry Gifford and Katsunori Yamazato. UK: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 1998. 151-52.

77 This issue receives greater attention and is analysed at length in ch. 5 of the thesis.
an inexorable claustrophobia. Concomitantly, “place,” as far as the India trilogy is concerned, seldom imparts a sense of relief—being, for the most part, a “site” of confinement: either immured in an irretrievable Past or embodying chaos and disorder. The intrusion of what might be called an avowedly disconsolate—almost ruinous—landscape into the narrative concretizes the threat of entropy\textsuperscript{78} while encouraging, at the same time, the reading of Naipaul’s India trilogy as an alternative thermodynamic narrative.\textsuperscript{79} In the current context, the reading of Naipaul’s India trilogy as an alternative thermodynamic narrative concomitantly entails the envisioning of the ancestral land—the original “resting-place of the imagination”—as the embodiment of disorder and decay. While the India of the (diasporic) imagination hints at an internal order—albeit fragile—the India that is encountered in reality—the India of the ruins standing in for a decaying civilization—embodies the threat of disorder and decay, signalling a somewhat retrogressive evolution. “Place,” in the India trilogy—contrary to that in traditional travel writing which celebrated Nature and the “exotic”—is ostensibly unlovely, holding forth memories of violent histories (disorder and chaos) and deeply reminiscent of failed aspirations. Naipaul’s attitude towards the pastoral, rather than counterbalancing his more straightforwardly dismissive attitude towards “place” in general, is bafflingly ambivalent. For instance, in \textit{IWC}, the temple-town of Vijayanagar impresses itself upon the reader with a striking tentativeness: its

\textsuperscript{78} The \textit{Literary Encyclopedia} describes entropy in the following words: “Originated by Rudolf Clausius, the German pioneer of Thermodynamics, in 1850, entropy is a scientific expression of the degree of randomness or disorder in any system, zero entropy being a state of perfect order and high entropy being a high degree of randomness . . . .The term entropy moved from science into cultural and literary criticism (notably in the 1970s) to describe states of social and communicational disorder.” Editors. “Entropy”. \textit{The Literary Encyclopedia}. 1 Nov 2001. Web. 25 Nov 2014.

\textsuperscript{79} According to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the state of entropy in a closed and isolated system will always multiply over time. As Bruce Clarke (2001) argues: “Thermodynamic entropy became cultural allegory by unveiling a scientifically plausible version of last things. In some circles the second law was interpreted as God’s withdrawal from the material universe. Operating in parallel with the theological doctrines of the Fall and the promised end, entropy became the cosmic metonymy for a God that has absconded from the physical world” \textit{(Energy Forms} 27; emphasis in original).
melancholic ruins; its moribund scenery; its diminutive peasant lives in abrupt contrast with the
teeming pilgrims; the gay souvenir shops and the food stalls amidst the ubiquitous grime and
squalor. While the scenery, for Naipaul, becomes an occasion of philosophical rumination—with
Vijayanagar, the ruined Hindu city, taking on the colours of a far more recent, turbulent, post-
Independence India—for the reader, it functions as a form of psychic landscape signalling the
intellectual depletion and moral stultification of the Indian civilization. It is worthwhile in this
context to pursue what such a hypothesis might intellectually yield from another perspective. The
melancholy of ruins was poeticized, for instance, by both Nerval and Gautier who, in their
writings, explored and romanticized (as Orhan Pamuk informs us in his memoir, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2005)) the *hüzün*—or the melancholy—of Istanbul. It is interesting
indeed to consider what Pamuk, as a native of Istanbul—an *Istanbullu*—made of the Western
gaze and its rather romantic appropriation of one of Turkey’s most significant and distinctive
cultural traits, the *hüzün*. But before we proceed any further, it is important to clarify a few
essential aspects of the Turkish notion of *hüzün*. A particularly effective way to “apprehend a
local landscape,” the *hüzün* of the ruins is symbolic. Pamuk mentions in his memoir how the two
Turkish literary luminaries of the early twentieth century Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Yahya
Kemal took long walks amidst the impoverished, war-ravaged districts of Istanbul “looking for
signs of a new Turkish state, a new Turkish nationalism. . . .” (225). Their obsession with the
melancholy of ruins was, in effect, an utter rejection of cosmopolitanism; like nationalist
*Istanbullus*, they sighted beauty in the poverty, defeat and dispossession of the indigenous

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80 *Hüzün* is the Turkish word for melancholy. According to the Sufis, *hüzün* is a form of spiritual anguish
afflicting one who does not feel close enough to God. The word, however, has a wide range of meanings and
cultural implications that Pamuk elaborates on in the tenth chapter (entitled “Hüzün”) of his book. For more on this,
Muslim population who reminded them of Istanbul’s (and Turkey’s) glorious past. But when seen through the eyes of a stranger, an outsider or a non-native, they could be suggestive of the picturesque. Ruskin, as Pamuk notes, attributes the beauty of the picturesque to what he considers its “accidental nature,” which is to say that the picturesque cannot be planned but emerges over time to reveal the “accidental beauty” that history endows it with. And to discover this beauty, this splendour of the ruins, as Pamuk contends, one must be an outsider: “Those who take pleasure in the accidental beauty of poverty and historical decay, those of us who see the picturesque in ruins— invariably, we’re people who come from outside” (231). To the insider, on the contrary, such scenes — commonplace as they are — are trite, mundane and vacuous. This view offers a fresh perspective on Naipaul’s fixation with ruins in his India trilogy. To the question whether he is an insider or remains an outsider throughout, there is perhaps, no unambiguous answer to be found. However, if one takes into account the metaphorical potency of ruins in the India trilogy, they do seem to suggest the idea of Indian retreat, but even more subtly, the desire (of the seer) to experience the “creative urge” which absents itself from the India that is empirically accessed. 

81 In this context, it is useful to note that through the description of ruins in his India trilogy, Naipaul evokes the country’s glorious (Hindu) past as evident, for instance, in the descriptions of the ruined Hindu kingdom of Vaijayanagar in the South and the fort of the Pandavas in Kashmir in the North. In the India trilogy, ruins — as the reminders of the glory that once had been — symbolize the vulnerability and intellectual retrogression of the Indian civilization.

82 To elaborate on this, Pamuk writes: “It was much the same for the northern Europeans who lovingly drew the Roman ruins while the Romans themselves ignored them” (Istanbul 231-32).

83 One may discern in the narrator of the India trilogy the shadings of a subject who is aroused by the desire — one that stimulates memory — to evidentially experience the country (i.e., India) that held together the Indian diaspora in the colonial Trinidad of his boyhood. From such a proposition follows the idea that the construction of the Self in Naipaul’s India trilogy is informed by desidero (as in desidero ergo sum or, “I desire therefore I am”) rather than cogito (as in cogito ergo sum or, “I think therefore I am”) with the former disrupting the latter leading to the theorizing of the Self as a complex construct that no longer derives its legitimacy from reason (the Cartesian cogito) alone, but from memory, desire and the larger societal context in which it is situated.
2.3. The Genesis of Postcolonial Space in Naipaul’s India Trilogy

In his *Production of Space* (1991), Henri Lefebvre writes: “If space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production” (36). Imagining Naipaul’s India—the land of his ancestors and the subject of his India trilogy, the cradle of an ancient civilization and the young (chaotic) nation-state—as a *product* is challenging not merely because it lacks the overt characteristics of an *object* per se, but because it is rarely envisioned/analysed/spontaneously received as such, in the context of the process that generates it. This process—which is by nature and at once, social, historical, political and cultural and which as must be clarified at the very outset—is different from that of the “textual” production of the space of the *Other* or the *Unheimlich*. In his India trilogy, Naipaul begins his journey in and through an “area of darkness”—the realm of the unknown, the uncanny or, paradoxically, the strangely *heimlich* ancestral land. But, the common thread that runs through all the three books of the trilogy is this that Naipaul’s analysis of India therein—irrespective of his narratorial position—does not so much foreground a space crowded with things or objects, a concatenation of locales or even sites of arcane significations as imply the existence of what Lefebvre has called a “present space”—a wonderfully inscribed space where the past “leaves its traces” (Lefebvre 37). This obviously points at an approach whereby space is envisioned as a concept (or, an idea) that is *produced* historically, socially and politically (also, economically and culturally) and for that reason, symbolizes both the *product* as well as the *process* of its production/generation (Lefebvre 37).

While a detailed socio-spatial analysis of Naipaul’s formulation of India is beyond the purview of the current study, it does, however, briefly examine his socio-political organization of space in order to trace the genesis of the postcolonial space in the context of his India trilogy. A
close examination of the India trilogy seems to suggest that Naipaul’s conceptualization of the postcolonial space entails the textual production of the ancestral land on the one hand, and (less apparently, although not any less pertinently) an indirect enunciation of the productive process whereby the space of discrete things is transformed into a totality—a kind of meta-space, as it were—that can be perceived conceived and lived, on the other. To put it simply, Naipaul’s analysis of India—despite its inconsistencies and contradictions—is characterized by two more or less uniform aspects: the (textual) production of India as a postcolonial social space and an exegesis of how such a space is produced in the first place. While the first (of these two aspects) presupposes (social) space as a product (of say, for instance, history), the second anticipates the problematic of representation most apparent in the power relations that such (social) space embodies. Furthermore, since social space anticipates social action by individual subjects which, in turn, both modifies and generates the space from which it (such action) originates, an analysis of the social space becomes imperative in order to be able to fully grasp Naipaul’s representation of the individual subjects—the people, that is—who not only inhabit and develop within the space of the postcolonial nation-state but also, in terms of their everyday correspondence with such space, continually generate/produce it.

In his influential treatise, The Production of Space (originally published in French in 1974 and later in English in 1991), Lefebvre proposes a “conceptual triad” of social space corresponding roughly to the physical, mental and cultural expressions of spatialisation. His “spatial trialetics” consists of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces (or, spaces of representation). Spatial practice, according to Lefebvre, refers to space in

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84 The concept of “representational spaces” is derived from Lefebvre’s conceptual triad of space viz., spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. Nicholson-Smith translates the original *les*
its material, real form— one that is perceived, used and generated by its inhabitants.

Representations of space, on the other hand, refer to “conceptualized space;” it is the space of knowledge (savoir). Representational spaces, as Lefebvre informs us, embody “complex symbolisms” that are “linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art” (33). These refer to lived spaces which “the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 39). This is the space—as this study seeks to demonstrate—of the postcolonial nation-state (India) as portrayed in Naipaul’s India trilogy. Naipaul’s thesis of a “new,” “modern” India, derived from the idea of an “ancient,” “wounded civilization,” insists upon viewing the emergent postcolonial nation-state as an arena of struggle—a space of resistance and the social imaginary, often symbolizing localized re-appropriations of material space. For instance, imagining the social space of post-Independence/postcolonial/modern India in Naipaul’s India trilogy involves the ideation of a “Thirdspace” (Soja 1996) between perception (spatial practice) and conception (representations of space)—the domain of “lived space” which is also “dominated” (by regimes of knowledge or representations of space) and, for that matter, “passively experienced” (Lefebvre 39). However, these spaces which Lefebvre calls “representational spaces” are curiously “alive” in their active correspondence with history. According to Lefebvre: “Representational space is alive: it speaks. . . . It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations . . . . it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic” (42; emphasis added). This applies explicitly to Naipaul’s ideation of the nation-state in IMMN where the “million mutinies” symbolize the “emergent spatial revolutions” (Shields 165) that tend to recast the nation-state as not just a space that is perceived and conceived but also lived from the perspective of its users.

Stylistically, the dialogism of IMMN asserts that the “space” Naipaul writes about in the last

*espaces de représentation* to “representational spaces” instead of the literal (also preferred, in most cases) translation “spaces of representation” (see Soja 1996; Shields 1999; Elden 2004).
book of his India trilogy actually points towards the emergence of a new socio-spatial reality different from that depicted in *AD* or even *IWC*. While the “modern state” in *AD* seems closer to Lefebvre’s description of “representations of space,” the space of the nation as implied by the Dalit poet Namdeo Dhasal’s poetry in *IMMN*, for instance, echoes Lefebvre’s ideation of “representational space.” The political symbolism of Namdeo’s poetry signals a transition entailing the emergence of a “new” India from within the dominant or conceptualized space(s) of knowledge (*savoir*). It insinuates the understanding of the space of the (post-Independence) nation-state as one which is directly experienced (hence, *lived*)—the “space of radical openness, the space of social struggle” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 68). While Naipaul’s conceptualization (and textual production) of the space of the ancestral land (India) in *AD* is anticipated by the “reproduction” of India (together with its “spatial ensembles”) by his immigrant forebears in faraway Trinidad, his own ideation of the (space of) post-Independence India in *IWC* seems (principally) to encompass the “abstract presentation of lived experience in space” (Shields 163). For example, the architecture of “modern”/post-Independence India which, as a practice produces and organizes (both technically as well as conceptually) the postcolonial space of India, functions—in Naipaul’s description of it (i.e., the architecture of modern India) in *IWC*—as a scientific yet, abstract representation of space. On the other hand, the space of the nation-state as delineated by him in *IMMN* transcends the commonsensical spatialisations of everyday life as well as the (more or less) established “frontal” relations between individuals and objects in a

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85 This follows from the fact that Naipaul acknowledges the implicit intervention of the “modern state” in the social lives of its habitants through a system of structures (or, buildings): “The machinery of the modern state exists. The buildings exist; they are labelled; they sometimes anticipate need, and such anticipation can often be its own sufficient fulfillment” (*AD* 81).

86 Naipaul’s forebears, who emigrated to Trinidad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, faithfully replicated the familiar, native building styles amidst the foreign setting of their adopted homeland. For them, the creation of such spatiality not only acted as an enabler of social continuity, but also anticipated a specific spatial performance associated with the Indian Diaspora of the Caribbean.
given spatial context. The postcolonial space that is textually produced in IMMN derives its logic from an implicit, veiled network of signs. Here, resistance is symbolic as in the case of Namdeo’s poetry and in Kakusthan’s choice of a vocation, for instance. But most importantly, such space—apart from being the site of social struggle and identity formation—is also effectively localized and freed, as it were, from its “governing spatialisation” (Shields 165). Consequently, it is imagined as the prophetic site of “a million mutinies”—the incidence of which is to be taken as a true signal of India’s modernity.

2.4. Naipaul's Narrative Technique in the India Trilogy

This section of the thesis focuses on Naipaul’s narrative technique with respect to his travel writings on India. In his India trilogy, Naipaul adopts a style that is part autobiographical, part satiric and often densely allusive. Interestingly, his treatment of the genre of travel writing in relation to India marks a distinct departure from traditional travel writing in its ardour for experimentation with a wide range of narrative techniques. Of India, Naipaul writes in AD: “It was the country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real, a country out in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad. . . . It was a country suspended in time; it could not be related to the country discovered later . . .” (21). Two pages later, he declares: “More than in people, India lay about in things . . .” (23; emphasis added) listing the various domestic artefacts imported from the country and preserved by way of tradition. Through this list of things—string beds, brass vessels and “all the paraphernalia of the

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87 While Namdeo’s poetry was subversive in its conscious rejection of the established norms of artistic representation and in its criticism of the society in general, Kakusthan—despite hailing from a traditional (hence, rigidly caste-conscious) Brahmin family near Madras—worked in a business company.
prayer room”—he initiates the reader into the country of his forefathers—a largely “featureless” region jcastposed against his personal attitudes concerning it. Naipaul’s analysis of India, as Helen Hayward (2002) has pointed out, “can be seen to belong to an established tradition of representing the exotic which treats other societies and landscapes as a backdrop for a playing-out of the traveller’s own psychological conflicts, and for a definition and analysis of the self” (112). According to Hayward’s analysis, Naipaul’s narration of India takes shape from his own internal conflicts and the unlikely juxtaposition of a wholly internalized notion of the country with that based on empirical evidence. The “miniature India” of Trinidad—the very society that had kindled (in Naipaul) a sense of difference with regard to race, caste and social hierarchy together with an early consciousness of the Self—is apparently projected on the India he encounters on his visit with the result being that his actual visit to the country transmutes into an occasion of seeking substantiation of his beliefs. This constant projection of his internal angst onto the material he studies, analyses and writes about leads to an interesting finding: the fact that Naipaul vacillates between an apparent disdain for Indianness and the occasional recognition within himself of the very (Indian) traits he is otherwise so critical about hints at the instability of the narratorial voice. In AD, Naipaul writes: “And in India I was to see that so many of the things which the newer and now and perhaps truer side of my nature kicked against—the smugness, as it seemed to me, the imperviousness to criticism, the refusal to see, the double-talk and double-think—had an answer in that side of myself which I had thought buried and which India revived as a faint memory” (30-31; emphasis in original). This awkwardly confessional passage is not the only case to the point and the vacillation between antithetical positions—that between cold criticality and blunt recognition, for instance—forms an interesting counterpoint to the primarily passive act of reportage.
A significant aspect of Naipaul’s narrative strategy is the use of allusion, the most obvious (perhaps) example of this being the evocation of Josef Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in the title of *AD*. The relationship is, however, indicative as it would be rather naïve to read Conrad’s Africa into Naipaul’s India. Given the similarities (there are a few: both Conrad and Naipaul travel from the “centre” to the “periphery;” both Naipaul and Marlow (Conrad’s fictional surrogate) embark on a journey the course of which is punctuated by multiple instances of self-discovery and epiphany), one must also be wary of the differences (Conrad’s book is a fictional account of Marlow’s journey to Africa whereas Naipaul’s book is a more straightforward travel account of his first impressions of India; Conrad’s relation to Africa and Naipaul’s to India are rooted in very different histories and circumstances etc.). Considering Naipaul’s use of symbolism, the title of *AD* (like that of Conrad’s book) can be taken to hint at a metaphorical darkness, the final sealing off of a world no longer his and the final obsolescence of its ancient tradition. Yet, the darkness as a form of negation is allowed to persist and in moments, even to blur the frontiers of knowledge. Although Naipaul does acknowledge that he has travelled “lucidly” over the area of darkness (India), yet he writes off at least a part of that apparently lucid experience of travel by admitting (almost immediately, in the following sentence) that “something of (the) darkness remains, in those attitudes, those ways of thinking and seeing, which are no longer mine” (*AD* 24). By pairing binary opposites such as, “lucidity” and “darkness” within the context of the narrator’s epistemological grasp of his material, the narrative aspires to arrive at a synthesis—a reconciliation of truths common to different—even opposed—worldviews.

Another notable aspect of Naipaul’s narrative technique is his use of images as symbols. This is also central to his project of enunciating India through a method of aggregating the act of
speech with that of seeing. Naipaul's narrative technique takes advantage of the determinability of language on the one hand, and the primacy of the visible form on the other. For example, in the section titled “The Colonial” in _AD_, Naipaul writes of Indian symbolism:

> When action is (so) symbolic, labels are important, for things and places as well as for people. An enclosed open space, its purpose made clear by its fixtures, nevertheless carries a large board: CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUND. Another open space with a stage at one end has the sign OPEN AIR THEATRE. The jeep that leads a state governor’s cavalcade is marked in white: PILOT JEEP. (_AD_ 80)

“Decoding” India, as Naipaul shows us, concomitantly translates into a process that involves a nuanced pairing of the signifier and the signified. At the textual level, the passage conveys the particularly unsettling effect of getting to know one’s surrounding principally through labels—an approach adopted as much by primers for the odd initiate as by the nation where symbolism transcends action and where—language being suspect—there is a continual deferral of meaning.

As Helen Hayward notes in _The Enigma of V. S. Naipaul_ (2002), _AD_ is a “narrative of unfulfilled expectations” (113). To Naipaul it stands for “the land of (his) childhood” and a “land of myth”—a place that is essentially elusive and unknowable. His narration of India subsumes the incompatibility between the image of India he carries within himself and that which he encounters in the course of his physical travel to the country. At the textual level, the juxtaposition of these discordant notions underlines the tension subsumed in the exilic writer’s effort to access, through his writings, the ever elusive idea of home or _Heimat_. The frustration and helplessness arising out of this inability to secure a sense of home is interestingly evoked in a dream in which Naipaul sees himself standing before “an oblong of stiff new cloth” that lay on
a table out of which he is to cut “a smaller oblong of specific measurements” in order to cause the cloth to unravel “until the whole trick was undone” (see AD 289-90). But despite being certain of the existence of the clue to the puzzle and despite his efforts to find it, he never actually does. Similarly, in India—as his prose conveys—he is unable to find the clue to his “re-housement,” the strain of his efforts reflecting in the ambivalent, often self-contradicting language with vague but discernable echoes of the disappointment and disenchantment felt by the young narrator in James Joyce’s short story, “Araby.”

In both AD and IWC, Naipaul vacillates between the positions of an insider and an outsider—a crucial aspect of his narrative strategy that Rob Nixon analyses at length in his London Calling. Nixon attributes this oscillation between the roles of the insider and the outsider to Naipaul’s strategy to gain increased authorial control: “For in satisfying his desire to stand out, to be unrepresentative, he can also act in ways that are representatively Indian. So, again, one witnesses him striving to describe his cultural identity as a fusion of the insider and the outsider” (London Calling 86). Nixon’s verdict is, however, in favor of the proposition that Naipaul is more at ease in the role of the “disdainful outsider than as the would-be insider” (86). He backs up his argument by underlining Naipaul’s predilection for the term “neutrality” over “indifference”—a preference which, he argues, betrays his (Naipaul’s) desire to identify with the “impartial onlooker” characterized by a neutral worldview. Furthermore, Nixon has accused Naipaul of having trivialized “the relationship between the forms of representation and the power to represent”—a claim that rests on his documentation of Naipaul’s “fixation with visual authority” (see London Calling 87). What Nixon is trying to communicate really is the fact that

88 Timothy Weiss (1992) has compared the narrator of stories such as, “The Pyrotechnicist” in Naipaul’s Miguel Street (1959) with that of the boy-narrators of Joyce’s “Araby” or “An Encounter” in Dubliners (1914).
Naipaul’s positioning in, at least, the first two books of the India trilogy reflects a covert correspondence between a divided self—the “seeing” and the “not seeing” in Nixon’s terms—that construes its cultural identity as an amalgam of the insider and the outsider. This relentless oscillation between contradictory positions—that of the neutral autobiographical persona and the ethnographic observer—is also to be found in Naipaul’s affinity with Victorian travellers—an aspect of his writing that Nixon indicts as a strategy of “affirming dominant metropolitan preconceptions about Third World societies” (88). That Naipaul’s strategy of positioning himself within the tradition of Victorian travel writing demonstrates a tendency of objectifying the Other is evident from the following passage in MP in which he quotes Froude:

‘The two races (Indian and Negro),’ Froude observed in 1887, ‘are more absolutely apart than the white and the black. The Asiatic insists more on his superiority in the fear perhaps that if he did not the white might forget it.’ Like monkeys pleading for evolution, each claiming to be whiter than the other, Indians and Negroes appeal to the unacknowledged white audience to see how much they despise one another. (78)

In this case, Naipaul’s cognitive styling of the authorial persona reflects his desire to derive textual authority from the imperialistic tradition of Victorian travel writing—a fact that tends to problematize the reading of his texts from any perspective that relies overly on the premise of artistic detachment. However, the textual construction of “anthropological authority” is, to an extent, accomplished through a distinct experiential element—the act of directly surveying the

89 For more on this, see Nixon; especially, ch. 3.
life of a culture under inquiry. By shunning subjective entanglement in his material, Naipaul effectively uses yet another rhetorical trope, irony. Recounting a scene of poverty common in Indian villages at the time, he notes: “I had seen Indian villages . . . the baby in the dust, swollen-bellied, black with flies, but *wearing its good-luck amulet*” (*AD* 42). In his India trilogy, Naipaul also uses the same studied detachment from his subject for the purpose of satirizing Hinduism as practised in the Trinidad of his childhood and the cultural and the social attitudes he encounters in India. Writing of one Babu in his grandmother’s house in Trinidad, Naipaul recalls how caste differences—despite their apparent irrelevance in a locale foreign to India—were scrupulously preserved to the extent of making a virtue of narrowness. This included the impossible and farcical idea of establishing a miniature India in Trinidad at the cost of wilfully letting one’s world contract and dwindle to the point of extinction. As demonstrated by this particular example and as Naipaul suggests elsewhere, this fierce attempt to preserve the ancient reflected in an uncompromisingly inward-looking approach has an effect contrary to the one intended. Reflecting on the possible causes that led to the contraction of the culture of his childhood, Naipaul declares: “It had to; it fed only on memories . . .” (*AD* 30). This section of the thesis also touches upon elements of irony and satire as evident in Naipaul’s India trilogy. As John Clement Ball writes in his *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: V. S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie* (2003): “Two of the chief distinguishing features of postcolonial texts,

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91 Babu belonged to the warrior caste but worked as a labourer. Naipaul’s jab is directed at the almost manic adherence to the ancient Hindu caste divisions by a society that was physically located far away from India. See *AD* 22-23.

92 In an interview with Derek Walcott (1965), Naipaul averred: “I am not a satirist. Satire comes out of a tremendous impulse of optimism. One simply does not indulge in satire when one is awaiting death. Satire is a type of anger. Irony and comedy, I think, come out of a sense of acceptance” (*The Sunday Guardian* [Trinidad] 5).
as theorized in the emergent discourse of postcolonialism, are oppositionality and referentiality” (2). While oppositionality is articulated as resistance and counter-discourse, referentiality relates to signification in a way that accentuates the “difference” subsumed in postcolonial texts and contexts. In pointing out the unwavering tendency of even the most revolutionary satire to gaze back “nostalgically” upon a “privileged golden age,” Ball quotes Frank Palmeri to reinforce the idea: “Satirists discover in the past an image of pristine integrity, in relation to which their contemporary situation signifies a falling off into ambiguity and doubleness” (Satire in Narrative 1). Both Ball and Palmeri’s views of satire seem to be hinged on the tendency to appraise the present against a sanctified, orderly Past, the nostalgia for which is a function of the way in which the Present is perceived—as imperfect, chaotic and profoundly disturbing. It is in the struggle between these two opposite realms—a conjectural golden age of perfection and its grotesquely distorted Other (i.e., the present moment from which the satiric discourse issues)—that the essence of modal satire is ensconced.

Naipaul’s use of satire is, to a great extent, directed at uncovering the disorders of the world he traverses. Commenting on the “Indian habit” of defecating in the open, he writes:

Indians defecate everywhere . . . they never look for cover. . . . A handsome young Muslim boy, a student at a laughable institute of education in an Uttar Pradesh weaving town, elegantly dressed in the style of Mr Nehru, even down to the buttonhole, had another explanation. Indians were a poetic people, he said. He himself always sought the open because he was a poet, a lover of Nature . . .” (AD 70-71)
As if the explanation that the act of defecating in the open has its roots in some obscure notion of “religious self-denial” were not sufficiently outrageous, Naipaul marries the grotesque with the absurd as part of his critique of what he terms as the collective blindness of Indians. The propensity towards judgmental writing is substantially mitigated in *IMMN*, the third and the final book of his India trilogy. Here, Naipaul’s method is more indirect with the characters speaking for themselves, telling their own stories. This situates the narrative at a greater remove from traditional travel writing that primarily engaged in the objective scrutiny of the subject under investigation. In *IMMN*, a progression from the monologic to the dialogic mode of narration can be discerned although Naipaul’s treatment of his material does, occasionally, betray an aloofness that could be interpreted as the formal disavowal of the artistic responsibility to demonstrate a more intimate engagement with the subject at issue. Specifically in this book, Naipaul inverts the monologic dimension of travel writing to a dialogic one which, alternatively, indicates a shift from an overly presumptuous stance (in the first two books) to a distinctly revisionist one (in the final book). However, here too, one is likely to discern the same gap between evidence and conclusion that Nissim Ezekiel wrote about in his critical review of *AD* (“Naipaul’s India and Mine” 193-206). Ezekiel’s contention that Naipaul’s conclusions with regard to India is less reprehensible than the manner by which he arrives at them rests on the premise that the conclusions in question appear to be rather hastily formed generalizations that do little to substantiate the claims made in the book. Ezekiel (1976) writes: “My concern with Mr. Naipaul's criticism of India has been to analyse the way the job is done. I have made it clear that it is an unsatisfactory way, from my view, and heavily flawed in detail” (204). Ezekiel’s remarks points at one of the foremost dangers of producing a representative text, the regression into a monologic
mode—an instance where the author’s carefully constructed self-referentiality backfires on account of his misinterpretation/misreading of the cultural realities of the Other.

Any serious analysis of Naipaul’s narrative technique with regard to his India trilogy naturally warrants a discussion on his literary models. Naipaul’s idea of India is derived, to a great extent, from the writings of R. K. Narayan. “The virtues of R. K. Narayan,” writes Naipaul, “are Indian failings magically transmuted” (AD 232). It is a natural point of attraction—failure being a recurring theme throughout Naipaul’s oeuvre. But his reading of Narayan subsumes his expectations with regard to India: “[T]he India of Narayan’s novels is not the India the visitor sees. He tells an Indian truth. Too much that is overwhelming has been left out; too much has been taken for granted” (AD 232). He notes the contradictions in Narayan’s writings—the apparent tension between his form and attitude—that often shows up in his own. It is worthwhile to note the similarities between Narayan’s India and the Trinidad of Naipaul’s boyhood as the echoes of these worlds resonate sonorously in Narayan’s portrayal of Indian life and manners and Naipaul’s rendition of the Indian community he belonged to in Trinidad. “Narayan’s India,” Naipaul writes in IWC, “with its colonial apparatus, was oddly like the Trinidad of my childhood” (IWC 11). However, Narayan’s novels—despite their compelling portrait of India—as Naipaul goes on to admit, did not prepare him for the distressing reality of the country—a feature that he attributes to Narayan’s reluctance to entertain “overwhelming truths.” His readings of Narayan’s novels, as Hayward has pointed out, depict “his own thesis of a crisis in Indian civilization” (The Enigma of V. S. Naipaul 126). In other words, it is either through a championing of Narayan’s illustration of Hinduism or through the identification of recurring patterns confirming the “final corruption of Hinduism” in Narayan’s works that Naipaul invests his own account of India with an artistic tenability which, given the support of an antecedent
tradition, naturally seems to fall in place. Reading Narayan’s novel Mr Sampath (1949) at the time of the (Indian) Emergency, Naipaul reckons “a foreshadowing of the tensions that had come to India, philosophically prepared for defeat and withdrawal (each man an island) rather than independence an action, and torn now between the wish to preserve and be psychologically secure, and the need to undo” (IWC 16). Earlier, while analysing the idea of India in AD, he had written:

To preserve this conception of India as a country still whole, historical facts had not been suppressed. They had been acknowledged and ignored; and it was only in India that I was able to see this as part of the Indian ability to retreat, the ability genuinely not to see what was obvious: with others a foundation of neurosis, but with Indians only a part of a greater philosophy of despair, leading to passivity, detachment, acceptance. (200)

Interestingly, this passage situates the narrator at a farther remove from the position of the insider. For unlike the insider—in this case, necessarily an Indian—he not only affirms what he sees but also functions as the all-seeing ethnographic eye of the narrative. In Narayan’s novels he discovers an avowedly Hindu response to the world—the pervasive desire to ignore the obvious, the inclination to withdraw—a position he both defects from and aligns with. While, on the one hand, he pronounces Narayan’s novels as deeply religious, on the other, he identifies with the “total Indian negation”: “It was only now, as my experience of India defined itself more properly against my own homelessness, that I saw how close in the past year I had been to the total Indian negation, how much it had become the basis of thought and feeling” (AD 290). This relentless oscillation between the positions of an insider and an outsider is perhaps matched by another writer, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, whose idea of India corresponds to that of Naipaul. As Chaudhuri’s
narration of India superimposes the persona of the author on the subject of inquiry, Naipaul’s narration of his experience of India functions as an occasion of re-writing the Self. In *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951), Chaudhuri’s tone is at once detached and patrician: “I have only to look within myself and contemplate my life to discover India . . .” (461)—Naipaul’s in *IWC* emphatically reinforces his thesis of a decaying civilization: “India is without an ideology . . . it is shot through with ambiguous beliefs that can either exalt men or debase them” (155).

Narration in *AD* is predominantly monologic and although Naipaul does acknowledge the presence of a “companion” in the passing, he carefully resists the emergence of multiple points of view. The ambivalent switching between the I/we, though often apparent, therefore never opens up into a dialogue between different levels of consciousness but operates—as Farhad Idris has pointed out—at the level of a “single consciousness, (and) what Bakhtin would call a “unitary” consciousness” (Idris 147). According to Peggy Nightingale (1987), this “complex manipulation of point of view” resulting from the ambivalent usage of the I/we and our/your has an important rhetorical function—it allows the author to claim the positions of both insider as well as outsider and to assume a voice that appears, at the same time, to identify with and condemn Indian attitudes. The presence of the “companion”—she is Naipaul’s wife Patricia Hale,94 who travelled with him to India in 1962—is neither accidental nor—as Idris maintains (137)—an “authorial slip;” on the contrary, Naipaul manipulates the presence of his companion who, in a way, also qualifies as the absent traveller in the narrative, to reinforce his “orientalist construction of India” (Idris 138). The example that Idris provides from the text in order to make

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94 Although Naipaul never clearly mentions that he travelled with his wife Pat to India in 1962, biographical sources reveal this information. The text of *AD*, however, is less ambiguous about the gender of the author’s travelling companion which is indicated in his use of personal pronouns such as “she” and “her.”
his point clear is the instance when in the section entitled “A Traveller’s Prelude: A Little Paperwork” in *AD*, Naipaul’s companion faints in her chair in a government office. Naipaul is there to obtain a liquor permit—an occasion that he uses (in his narrative) to highlight the onerous nature of the Indian bureaucracy. But, it is something more than that—it is an idea central to the narrative, that of hierarchical social structuring, an idea that is to be developed later in the course of the narrative (through lengthy analyses on caste and class) that Naipaul is seen here to be preparing the ground for. The presence of a woman, whose plight in this particular instance is further accentuated by the general imperviousness of the clerks (“A clerk was a clerk; a messenger was a messenger” (*AD*, 15)) underlines the pervasive callousness that Naipaul lashes out at. Without his companion’s token presence, his views concerning India and Indians might even appear downright prejudiced. On the other hand, allowing his companion to speak would be to share his distinctive authority with someone else. Therefore, we—the readers—are only made aware of the companion’s presence within the text, but the same cannot be said about her individual viewpoint of which nothing is revealed. The “we” seems to function from within the “I”—both growing out of a single consciousness. Similarly, Naipaul’s use of your/our speaks of a constant switching between the positions of the outsider and the insider. However, despite the adoption of this double-voice, Naipaul completely eschews Bakhtin’s “heteroglossia,” which, as Bakhtin describes it in his *Dialogic Imagination* (1975), is “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (234). As a matter of fact, his double-voice does not achieve dialogism as it serves not two speakers (your/our) but one. It is only the author’s speech that is intended to be heard—the potential of dialogue being, from the beginning so to speak, only a finely-crafted deception.95

95 Farhad Idris has suggested that travel writing being a rhetorical genre, Naipaul’s “double-voiced
The following chapter analyses Naipaul’s treatment of the genre of travel writing and its dialogic relationships with history, autobiography and anthropology as evident in and established through his India trilogy.

utterances fail to achieve dialogism” (146).