

V. S. Naipaul:
A Bibliographical Update (1987-94)

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THIS IS A bibliographical update of my *V. S. Naipaul: A Selective Bibliography with Annotations: 1957-1987*, covering the period 1987-94. Since 1987 (when *An Enigma of Arrival: A Novel in Five Sections* appeared), Naipaul has published three books—*A Turn in the South* (1989), *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), and *A Way in the World* (1994)—and more than 18 substantial pieces, in addition to delivering various lectures and acceptance speeches. This checklist is arranged in six parts. Part I contains Naipaul's most recent writings and comments, listed under three headings: published books, articles, and interviews, with entries given *chronologically*. Part II covers recent bibliographical listings of his work. Part III includes 16 full-length books written about him. Part IV lists articles on him in books, reference volumes, journals, and magazines. Part V has book reviews and critical studies of his individual books. And Part VI itemizes doctoral theses exclusively or partly on him.

Conference papers have featured prominently in the spate of attention Naipaul continues to generate; these papers are usually quite elusive to trace, particularly if they are not published collectively and within a reasonably short time frame. Thus this checklist omits offerings on Naipaul from conferences and all foreign-language citations. It also excludes newspaper articles with imprints prior to 1987.

The Enigma of Arrival spans Naipaul's life in England and echoes a finality in his writing career. The protagonist of this novel writes: "with time passing, I felt mocked by what I had already done; it seemed to belong to a time of vigour, now past for good. Emptiness, restlessness built up again; and it was nec-

essary once more, out of my internal resources alone, to start on another book, to commit myself to that consuming process again" (94). During a conversation with James Atlas in 1987, Naipaul admitted that he was close to the end of his creativity, that death was very, very final, and he had put all his affairs in order. *The Enigma of Arrival* also reflects a deep nostalgia. Naipaul writes glowingly of the Wiltshire community and the neighbourly feeling of the place: the gardener, the servants of the manor house, the car-service owner. The novel demonstrates also Naipaul's experiment with form; he has insisted that it is essentially a novel with an "autobiographical crust."

When Naipaul returned to Trinidad in 1992 to deliver a lecture under the auspices of the Beryl McBurnie Foundation for the Arts, he stated that the novel as an art form has reached its zenith, that "even when written by sensitive intelligent men" novels turn out to be "versions of what went before, and quite devoid of any atmosphere of discovery" (Johnson 3); and he suggested to his audience that travel writing is the most appropriate genre to replace the novel form. Some critics responded to this by pointing out that Europeans contrived this technique of travelling across the globe writing about the strange and exotic colonies; they saw Naipaul's work as not being devoid of this taint either, since his unforgiving delineations of Third World societies were much the stereotyped image the West has portrayed of those societies (Yeates 12). When Naipaul was awarded the British Literature Prize in 1993, responses within the Caribbean emanating from the literary and academic community seemed mixed. One local journalist wrote: ". . . we resent Naipaul's criticisms, but claim his achievements. Alienated by his bleak, unsentimental vision, we see him in isolation, overlooking the fact that his themes of meaninglessness and the threat of chaos are also the themes of much modern American and European literature. If Naipaul has portrayed life in the Third World as nasty, brutish and short, in these post-oil boom days [in Trinidad] it's harder to contradict him" (Raymond 16).

In recent years Naipaul's work has attracted attention in the United States. But his popularity there, in spite of his literary prominence, has not been as widespread as might be expected,

even in academic circles, though he has continued to write for the *New York Review of Books* and, to a lesser degree, *The New Yorker*. It was no accident that he chose to travel through the southern United States and subsequently to write *A Turn in the South*. Recently, he sold his entire collection of manuscripts, correspondence, and miscellaneous papers to the University of Oklahoma, Tulsa, highlighting somewhat his enigmatic nature. Perhaps this decision was an attempt to broaden his literary base still further in the United States, though he may have more compelling reasons for permitting these significant manuscripts to reside in the United States. However, *A Turn in the South* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* appear to have generated less controversy of the type that has surrounded much of his earlier writings. He regards *India: A Million Mutinies Now* as very carefully composed, informed by a thread of enquiry that gives it a very special shape.

A Way in the World ranges over Naipaul's entire life, is a further experiment with form. Naipaul believes that as one's knowledge of the world changes and so must the forms of writing in order to meet the demands of the experiences accumulated. Commenting on the form of one of his early novels, *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963), he laments over what he describes as a waste of good material; he is reported to have expressed an interest in reworking that book. In 1983, he indicated to Bernard Levin that in his maturity he would like to write some comic novels before terminating his career. *A Way in the World* then, despite its recapitulative tone, is very likely not his final work.

Between 1989 and the present time, Naipaul has been the recipient of several other notable awards. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago granted him its highest national award, the Trinity Cross, in 1989; Queen Elizabeth II knighted him the following year, and at Oxford University's Encaenia he was also awarded the D.Litt; he received these three honours in 1990. In 1993, as was noted above, he became the first recipient of the British Literature Prize. The Nobel Prize continues to elude him; he was again shortlisted in 1994. But he continues to receive other honours. In 1995, *A Way in the World* won him the best book prize for fiction in the Canada and Caribbean Division of the Commonwealth Writers Award.

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