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V. S. Naipaul's Biography, Autobiography, and Autobiographical Novel

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I Biography

> Facts can be realigned. But fiction never lies; it reveals the writer totally.
> (V. S. Naipaul *Eva Perón*, 67)

> All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another.
> (Héléne Cixous, *Rootprints*, 178)

Direct and indirect references to biographical and autobiographical experiences of V. S. Naipaul are closely reflected in his writings. The present paper will shed light on the definitions and expressions regarding V. S. Naipaul's autobiographical and biographical writings about him by other authors such as Patrick French, Paul Theroux, and others. I shall also examine how the biographical details based on someone's study and research may be different from the autobiographical accounts given by the author

himself. It is well-known that V. S. Naipaul has not written his autobiography but there are personal accounts at different places in his nonfiction, and travelogues.

It will be very interesting to shed light on the genre of biography, in general, and French's biography of Naipaul, in particular. To begin with, biography (*bios*: life, *graphein*: to write, from the Greek; *biographia*, from Latin) is the process of recording and searching people's life and history, which has a beginning, middle, and end, interweaving loose threads into one pattern. Biography needs a researcher to investigate someone else's life to make sense of it. The first pioneers of biography were the Roman historians Plutarch, Tacitus and Suetonius. The biographer may include relevant material such as "the subject's own writings (especially diaries and letters), his laundry bills, official archives, memoirs of contemporaries, the memories of living witnesses, personal knowledge, other books on the subject, photographs and paintings" (Cuddon 83).

Therefore, biography has a wide range of enthusiastic audience: in part because of the fact that people learn a great deal about famous or influential persons' lives, and in part because of "the universal interest in gossip, scandal, the desire for illumination, emulation, moral instruction*"* (Rovit 3). Both of biography and autobiography present a portrayal of the person being discussed with a clear picture of his/her real society, culture, and traditions. The biography may be written after the person's death such as Peter Ackroyd's *Shakespeare: The Biography* (2006), or during the person's life, such as Patrick French's *The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul*

(2008) by collecting accurate facts from related documents, diaries, statements, and interviews with the subject or with family members, friends, and acquaintances, living in an equal and contemporary period. French comments on the material of the present biography as:

> [I] saw it would be a big and potentially fraught project, perhaps the last literary biography to be written from a complete paper archive. His [Naipaul's] notebooks, correspondence, handwritten manuscripts, financial papers, recordings, photographs, press cuttings and journals (and those of his first wife, Pat, which he had never read) had in 1993 been sold to the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma … The archive ran to more than 50,000 pieces of paper. (Outlook 48, Mar 31, 08)

Occasionally, the living subject authorizes a biographer as Naipaul authorizes Patrick French, for example. The result is an authorized biography, which is defined by Winslow as "a life written by a biographer who has been chosen or approved by the person or persons who have authority over the subject's estate or literary remains, possibly a surviving family member or executor" (3). In the case of Naipaul, French's well-documented biography reveals and explores most exciting facts about Naipaul's life, achievements, and central personality, which help the reader to determine the central paradox of Naipaul's writing. It becomes clear that this biography emphasizes the highly personal nature of his writing.

George Eliot diagnosed the biographers as "a disease of English literature" (qtd. in Cline, 8). But this is odd when we apply it to French's biography, which possesses relevance between Naipaul's life and works, showing literary, cultural, and historical facts and contexts. It is a unique literary biography, which presents a detailed picture of

the making of Naipaul's life, literary sensibility and topics, and the shaping of his identity, with specialist insights into his writings. French's biography is literary which is different from nonliterary biographies. Explicitly, literary biography becomes so popular and there is no end to the making of other types of biographies. In fact, there is a diversity of literary, political, historical and business biographies, written about the prominent figures in those fields. In this connection, literary biography, to a large extent, deals with writers, whether insiders like Dickens or outsiders like Naipaul, whose writings reflect a critique of literature:

> Literary biography also has an implicit appeal to readers as would-be authors, to the wish-fulfillment of being able to write poetry or fiction ourselves. Whether the writer's life is seemingly mundane and ordinary, hemmed in by convention or prejudice, dogged by frustration and disappointment, or cut short by tragedy, we tend – despite the facts – to accept it as the essential condition of the creative being, romanticizing the quality of the life into an inevitable pattern that reflects the works and which, because it does so, becomes a pattern at some level to be envied. If life could be lived vicariously, the writer's life is the one we would choose; as biography, it offers a secondary life to share and enjoy alongside the secondary worlds created in the writer's works. (Benton 3)

African, Negro American, and Caribbean writers, including Naipaul, Achebe, Ngugi, Baldwin, John Williams, and others, project their lives in their autobiographical writings in order to achieve a sense of identity. Modern biographical works such as Ackroyd's *Dickens* (1990) and D. J. Taylor's *Thackeray* (1999) show the modern imaginative, inventive, and speculative approach to literary biography. The rise in a 'life-writing' approach to fiction and nonfiction is witnessed in the late of twentieth century: "Such books use the autobiographical mode and are written in a meditative, confessional style, while their authors often seek neither to equate the narrator with themselves nor to

pretend that the narrator is simply a fictional character" (Childs *Heritage*, 218). This is applicable to Naipaul's semi-autobiographical novels such as *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987).

French keeps track of Naipaul's feelings, thoughts, and notices- through reporting, witnessing, and annotating- to present both subjective and objective biographical records of Naipaul's life. That is to say, subjective records are verified by Naipaul and objective ones are verified by "third person", i.e. close relatives, friends, and, may be, the community. In this context, we must also refer to Proust who says that the produced book is of "a different self from the self we manifest in our habits, in our social life, in our vices. If we would try to understand that particular self, it is by searching our own bosoms, and trying to reconstruct it there, that we may arrive at it" (qtd. in Saunders, 101). In his Nobel Lecture, Naipaul stresses on Proust's words that we have to keep in mind:

> Whenever we are reading the biography of a writer — or the biography of anyone who depends on what can be called inspiration. All the details of the life and the quirks and the friendships can be laid out for us, but the mystery of the writing will remain. No amount of documentation, however fascinating, can take us there. The biography of a writer — or even the autobiography — will always have this incompleteness (Naipaul *Tow Worlds*, 4).

The best definition of Naipaul's writing, as he admits, is noticed also in Proust statement, which says:

> It is the secretions of one's innermost self, written in solitude and for oneself alone that one gives to the public. What one bestows on private life — in conversation … or in those drawing-room essays that are scarcely more than conversation in print — is the product of a quite superficial self, not of the

> innermost self which one can only recover by putting aside the world and the self that frequents the world. (qtd. in Naipaul *Tow Worlds*, 5)

When Naipaul was at Tulsa University in 1994, he said the writing self is elusive: "The lives of writers are a legitimate subject of inquiry; and the truth should not be skimped. It may well be, in fact, that a full account of a writer's life might in the end be more a work of literature and more illuminating- of a cultural or historical moment — than the writer's books" (*Outlook*, 48, Mar 31, 08). In 1990s Naipaul granted numerous interviews to young journalists, in which he discussed his infidelities for the first time. His interview with Stephen Schiff, Jusswalla writes, is "warm, passionate, revealing— opening up areas of his private life— his relationship with his wife and the great passion of his life, an "other" love, a1most as if he were priming Schiff to write the much-touted biography for which Naipaul had been searching for an author" (ix). Then, Naipaul gave consent and revealed himself freely through numerous interviews to French, who considers Naipaul as "outwardly the frankest" (Bewes 76). French adds that Naipaul "believed that a less than candid biography would be pointless, and his willingness to allow such a book to be published in his lifetime was at once an act of narcissism and humility" (*Outlook*, 48, Mar 31, 08). French illustrates that the way he wrote his biography on Naipaul was by illuminating aspects of his life and giving glimpses of the subject in the form of a story:

> My approach to writing biography is as it was when I began my first book. I write then that the aim of the biographer should not be to sit in judgment, but to expose the subject with ruthless clarity to the calm eye of the reader. Since writing about a writer for the first time, I have become doubtful about the notion that an artistic

> creator should be expected to be plain himself … Sometimes, a critic or biographer can see things the author cannot. (xvii-xviii)

This biography covers three important stories of Naipaul's life. One is a historical saga about his birth, childhood, and early life with his mother's family, which has been depicted in most of his writings. It describes his education at QRC and Oxford, and then at his work the BBC and other places in UK, showing his will and efforts to be an influential writer in English. Secondly, it includes a span of his relationship with Patricia Hale, starting with correspondence and ending in marriage. The biography narrates her support for Naipaul, on the one hand, and her sympathetic and sad story with him, on the other. Having unsatisfactory sexual life with Pat, Naipaul turns to prostitutes. Rather, he had a humiliating long-term relationship with Margaret Gooding, who was kept as a mistress for almost twenty-four years. The awareness of such affairs and of his cruelty causes tears and wounds to Pat, who starts to take pills and to undergo medical treatment. The third story concerns his journeys and travel writings, describing his journeys in the world, the friends he made, the helpers he utilized, the critics he encountered, and so on. Naipaul's experience in Trinidad, England, and the countries he visits, depicts the migrations, dissatisfactions and restlessness, and the cultural and social changes of the nations. Therefore, through French's biography we can notice that Naipaul has depicted a detailed knowledge about his family story in his novels and autobiographical essays, which are based on real people and events.

On the other hand, French's biography exposes Naipaul as a 'monster'. Paul Theroux, who had an over-thirty-year relationship with Naipaul, wrote books, reviews

and essays on Naipaul. *Sir Vidia's Shadow* (1998) is an account of Theroux's wounding relationship with Naipaul. As regarding the present biography, Theroux comments that:

> It is not a pretty story; it will probably destroy Naipaul's reputation for ever, this chronicle of his pretensions, his whore mongering, his treatment of a sad, sick wife and disposable mistress, his evasions, his meanness, his cruelty amounting to sadism, his race baiting. Then there is the "gruesome sex", the blame shifting, the paranoia, the disloyalty, the nasty cracks and the whining, the ingratitude, the mood swings, the unloving and destructive personality…. (*The Sunday Times* 6 Apr. 2008)

Anyone who happens to deal with Naipaul comments that Naipaul is not a nice man to know and now, especially after the publication of French's biography, readers and audience become sure of this view. However, Amitabh Thakur says "We read Naipaul not for the kind of person he is but for what he wrote. We may not agree with his views, but we can't ignore him. From the extracts produce from French's biography, he [Naipaul] comes across as arrogant, conceited, selfish, self-centred. But, if he can produce those gems, does it really matter?" (*Outlook* 15, April 14, 08)

While Pat is in remission after mastectomy, Naipaul states in an interview with *The New Yorker* in 1994 that he had been "a great prostitute man", mongering among the whores since his marriage. This injures Pat and widens her emotional wounds. Naipaul admits to his biographer: "I think that consumed her. I think she had all the relapses and everything after that. She suffered. It could be said that I killed her . . . I feel a little bit that way" (The Telegraph 21 Mar 2008). On the day of her cremation, Naipaul married Nadira Khannum Alvi, a Pakistani journalist, whom he met recently, and gets rid of his

long-suffering mistress, Margaret Gooding. Paul Theroux remarks and cites some excerpts from Pat's diaries to show her unrelenting torment and painful life with Naipaul:

> How do we know so much of Pat's awful obsessively kept from 1972 to 1995, when writing was her solace. "You are the only woman I know who has no skill," Naipaul told her. "You behave like the wife of a clerk who has risen above her station." As though to prove him wrong, Pat bitterly referred to Naipaul as "the genius" in her covert diary. French believes that Naipaul never read it, although he sold it with his papers for a hefty price. In terms of telling Pat's story, it does this poor woman complete justice. Let us not forget that much-reported admission when Naipaul said, almost swanking, "It could be said that I had killed her . . . I feel a little bit that way." (Theroux, *Dialogue*, 28)

II Autobiography

Autobiography is written by the source subject about oneself to depict their semi-real life or a historical event in a narrative form. Autobiography is written to reveal the author's experiences or to justify facts or events to the public. Naipaul has recorded his life in multiple settings and presented many various contexts: Caribbean: Trinidad, Jamaica and Tobago; Asia: India, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia; European: England; African: Congo, Ivory Coast; and the like: "Autobiographical discourse is not only culturally conditioned; it is also symptomatic of the cultural moment. Thus it is important to explore the varieties of self-presentation, and not assume a fixed paradigm" (Ghazoul 6). Naipaul's themes and subject matter reflect his homelessness; he has become a man of the world, a representative of modern human condition in his exile and travels. His travel writings include both ethnographic and biographical account. He exposes the problems of the postcolonial world, mixing autobiography and fiction, writing facts and true experiences about himself, usually, in a confessional way: "A

writer after a time carries his world with him, his own burden of experience, human experience and literary experience (one deepening the other); and I do believe – especially after writing 'Prologue to an Autobiography' – that I would have found equivalent connections with my past and myself wherever I had gone" (Naipaul, *Center* ix). Northrop Frye stresses on the fact that most autobiographies are inspired by a creative and fictional impulse, in which certain events and experiences in the author's life are selected to compose an integrated pattern, in which the author identifies himself and shows the coherence of his character and attitudes: "We may call this very important form of prose fiction the confession form, following St. Augustine, who appears to have invented it, and Rousseau, who established a modern type of it" (8).

Naipaul's work is considered as a history and a record of numerous events- true or false- in the Caribbean, England, India, Africa, the Islamic world, and southern United States. His historical autobiographical writing establishes his persona as a postcolonial commentator:

> The emphasis is important because Naipaul's use of biographical information in his writing constructs an over-determined relation between notions of the Author and the multiple usages of what is called the colonial subject. It is a deliberate and brilliant ploy that allows his anxiety about being a Writer to substitute for a more historically exacting engagement with his topics. (Mustafa 13)

Explicitly, Naipaul stresses on the reader's familiarity with the writer's detailed life in order to understand and illuminate his work thoroughly: "I feel that any statement I make about my own work would be misleading. The work is there: the reader must see what meaning, if any, the work has for him. All I would like to say is that I consider my

nonfiction an integral part of my work" (biography.jrank.org). Autobiography is important for many varied reasons, but one essential factor is that it "can capture and address many contemporary concerns, for example the status of the subject, the relations and representations of ethnicity and gender, and perhaps most importantly questions the individual's relationship with his or her past" (Gudmundsdóttir, 1). Further, readers can approach the meaning of the literary work by getting the central message through the subject. Investigating the self is part of identity the writer seeks to establish by depicting his/her life experiences on papers either directly, in which readers can realize the autobiographer's experiences and his/her self-narration, or indirectly, in which readers can recognize the fictionalization of the autobiographer's self. Paul John Eakin writes that "the self and its experiences may somehow be represented in a text" (Eakin *How,* 99). Mostly, autobiographies deal with real people and events, and real search of the self. Therefore, literary theory has acknowledged autobiography as literary genre with its own characteristics.

Before 1960s autobiography was considered as inferior to postmodern literary genres. In fact, there are two major reasons for the canonization of autobiography. The first reason is generated from the fact that autobiography was a generally perceived term in the European and American Literature in the 1970s and 1980s: '*This turn to autobiographical writing is particularly noticeable among those contemporary novelists who appear to be playful practitioners of fictional games or who—from the perspective of their ethnic or marginal backgrounds seem to be in search of their ethnic identity within*

a dominant white culture' (Hornung 9). This enabled critics to study autobiography from new perspectives, creating new methods at the same time. The second reason came with the development of 'feminist and minority criticism', and bringing to light the previously uncanonical texts, '*many of which are autobiographical, such as women's letters, fiction, and diaries, and African-American slave narratives*' (Hassan 8).

Autobiography has been greatly redefined by literary and cultural critics. Such definitions run from restrictive to meaningless significance, though it is hard to get unique definitions as Paul John Eakin observes that those "definitions of autobiography have never proved to be definitive, but they are instructive, reflecting characteristic assumptions about what may well be the slipperiest of literary genres" (Eakin *How*, 1-2). It should be noted, however, that autobiography definitions are laden with problems and some critics suggest that autobiography should be removed from literature since there is "no such thing as self-expression in literature" (Frye 72). Northrop Frye argues that Wordsworth's poems have no self-expression because the imagination, the sense of human vision and emotion occur first in the author's mind and later become in our minds, as well. Therefore, modernists suggest that autobiography is defining itself out of existence as in, for example, Michael Sprinker's essay *Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography*. But there must be some middle ground between the belief that most literature is a form of self-expression and that self-expression in literature does not actually exist. Linda Anderson adds that:

> Autobiography has been at the centre of the debates, which, drawing on mainly French theories of psychoanalysis, poststructuralism and feminism, have

> interrogated the self-evident nature of the subject and knowledge. Poststructuralism, in particular, by positing language or discourse as both preceding and exceeding the subject, deposed the author from his or her central place as the source of meaning and undermined the unified subject of autobiography. (6)

Psychoanalytically, autobiography is like a story of self-analysis told to the analyst and to himself. Freud presents psychoanalysis of his life in *An Autobiographical Study* (1925) and frames the study of psychoanalytical novel. While Roland Barthe's *The Death of the Author* (1968) and Michel Foucault's *What Is an Author?* (1969) dismiss the notion of the author; Eugen Simion's *The Return of the Author* (1996) asserts that the author's presence is 'inescapable'. In addition, the book "is not just an exposition showing that the author is present despite disclaimers to the contrary, but is itself a demonstration of how the critic approaches a writer's work without ignoring the person who is the writer" (Simion 6).

It would be interesting to shed light on the definitions of autobiography. Donald J. Winslow defines autobiography as "the writing of one's own history, the story of one's life written by oneself … before the term was introduced such words as apologia, apology, confessions, and memories were used" (3). John Pilling writes in *Autobiography and imagination: Studies in Self-Scrutiny* (1981) that autobiography is, in most cases, liberally when applied to any kind of personal writing, revealing facts of the author's life:

> There is also another shadowy area obtaining between autobiography (however defined) and the novel which is known, for one reason or another, to take its life from the facts of its author's life. [Thus] I feel bound to acknowledge that I am concerned with what I take to be observable species existing within the bounds of a more or less ill-defined genre. (1)

Georges Gusdorf, who is considered the dean of autobiography, famously defines autobiography in his 1956 essay *Conditions and Limits of Autobiography* as "the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image" (qtd. in Behrendt, 148). In Philippe Lejeune's *The Autobiographical Pact* (1973), he defines the genre of autobiography as: "A retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality" (qtd. in Anderson, 2). On the other hand, autobiography, according to Elizabeth Bruss, "is dependent on distinctions between fiction and nonfiction, between rhetorical and empirical first-person narration. But these distinctions are cultural artifacts and might be differently drawn, as they indeed once were and might become again, leading to the obsolescence of autobiography or at least its radical reformation" (qtd. in Adams, xiv). However, it is difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction.

Generally speaking, those definitions may be ill-conceived but we can infer that the huge amount of the transparently autobiographical material in the author's work, e.g. Naipaul's, can "frequently choose to sacrifice both their privacy and a large degree of their artistic detachment in order to achieve what they consider more important – the therapeutic benefits of a public confession, a desire to recapture and relive past experiences, or, simply, the easy availability of the material" (Diment 57). In fact, Naipaul has revealed his outer and inner life in a way that greatly enriches his work with strong autobiographical elements. His inner conflict and outer life are much fictionalized and easily recognizable as his own since the characters resemble him in many

circumstances. Autobiography, according to Paul de Man, "always looks slightly disreputable and self-indulgent in the company of the major genres – the novel, poetry and drama – never quite attaining aesthetic dignity nor even providing an empirically useful way of understanding texts since each specific instance seems to be an exception to the norm'' (qtd. in Anderson, 12). However, Lejeune finds it difficult to distinguish between autobiography and autobiographical novel, as a result he develops his understanding of the autobiographical genre, which essentially is (as summarized in Paul John Eakin's *Touching the World*):

> A contract between author and reader in which autobiographers explicitly commit themselves not to some impossible historical exactitude but rather to the sincere effort to come to terms with and understand their own lives. The formal mark of this commitment to autobiographical discourse is the identity posited among author, narrator, and protagonist, who share the same name. (24)

In his *Seech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986), Mikhail Bakhtin distinguishes between different kinds of a novel of emergence. For him, the biographical (and autobiographical) type "takes place in biographical time and passes through unrepeatable, individual stages … Emergence here is the result of the entire totality of changing life circumstances and events, activity and work. Man's destiny is created and he himself, his character, is created along with it," opposing the other type that shows "a typically repeating path of man's emergence from youthful idealism and fantasies to mature sobriety and practicality" (22).

We can observe that Naipaul's work can be placed between Backtin's Definition and Jerome H. Buckley's overriding definition of what he terms 'ideal' autobiography:

> The ideal autobiography presents a retrospect of some length on the writer's life and character, in which the actual events matter far less than the truth and depth of his experience. It describes a voyage of self-discovery, a life-journey confused by frequent misdirections and even crises of identity but reaching at last a sense of perspective and integration. It traces through the alert awakened memory a continuity from early childhood to maturity or even to old age. (qtd. in Diment, 54-5)

Naipaul's autobiographical work concentrates on self-discovery, identity crisis, and a continual memory from his early childhood to old age, each of which is a related part of the material of an 'ideal' autobiography.

III Autobiographical Novel

In an autobiographical novel, the author, consciously or unconsciously, makes use of the techniques and conventions of storytelling. The critic Jan Zlotnik Schmidt believes that "all writing is autobiography, reflecting self-interest, interpretation, and narrative" (119). All writing, according to Nietzsche, is "confessional". T. S. Eliot is famous for pleading and escaping from personality but we must note that he also asserts that "The creation of a work of art … consists in the process of transfusion of the personality, or, in a deeper sense, the life, of the author into the character" (157). Bruce King argues that Naipaul's work possesses an autobiographical and confessional layer and there has been "the need to build upon, order and analyse facts and experience. There has always been the temptation to merge literary genres, to mix autobiography, self-analysis, fiction, facts, reportage, social and cultural analysis, to create a meta-narrative which would explain the various influences on how it came into being" (King 137).

Naipaul's novels, to a large extent, are realistic in the sense that they are based on known facts, people, and events. This makes us regard most of them as essentially autobiographical because of the paramount importance of the realization of his self. Naipaul clarifies the way he writes in an interview with Andrew Robinson (1992):

> Simple people write simple things. The thing is, I am not a simple man. I have an interesting mind, a very analytical mind. And what I say tends to be interesting. And also very true. That's all that I can do about it. I can't lie. I can't serve cause. I've never served a cause. A cause always corrupts. (qtd. in Jussawala, 138)

To give an example, showing the nature of Naipaul's autobiographical writing, let us consider his early fiction and French's biography. The result is that fact and fiction are blurred in Naipaul's novels, which reveal Naipaul as a realist writer, who depicts many factual moments, events, memories, and circumstances in his works. Naipaul's realism is contrasted with Salman Rushdie's *Magic Realism*. Instead of using magic realism, Naipaul has created a new literary form; a blend of fiction, reportage and autobiography. He uses previous experience as guide in discovering new lands and peoples, in which he finds truth about himself in his writing:

> A writer after a time carries his world with him, his own burden of experience, human experience and literary experience (one deepening the other); and I do believe – especially after writing 'Prologue to an Autobiography' – that I would have found equivalent connections with my past and myself wherever I had gone. (Naipaul *FC*, 10)

To illuminate this point, it would be interesting to conduct a comparison of Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*, for example, and Dickens's David Copperfield. It is easily to infer that the authors' experienced lives run from their birth till they become adult and heroes of their families. David Copperfield is an autobiographical novel not

only of the parallels of Dickens's life but also "it expresses through the deployment of conventional narrative personae and through the allegorical tenor of its language Dickens's over-riding concern with the realization of his self, the achievement of true being" (Diment 54). William C. Spengemann suggests a developmental model of autobiography, which is based on 'historical', 'philosophical' and 'poetic' modes that are concerned with allegories. According to him, Sartor Resartus and David Copperfield are shaped as fictional autobiographies not because of their inclusion of autobiographical material "but their efforts to discover, through a fictive action, some ground upon which conflicting aspects of the writer's own nature might be reconciled in complete being" (qtd. in Diment, 54). Therefore, we call *A House for Mr. Biswas* an autobiographical novel because of the presence of the recognizable autobiographical elements, true factual material, and presentation of Naipaul's inner and outer life:

> If by "genuineness" of an autobiography we understand the degree to which the author is willing to penetrate and reveal the deepest layers of his or her consciousness, then the profoundly confessional nature of many of the classic works of the doppelgänger may make them even "truer" autobiographies. (Diment 56)

Like Laura Marcus, Linda Anderson focuses on the 'intentionality' of the autobiographical writing and its role in the connection between author, narrator and protagonist. Intentionality also "signals the belief that the author is behind the text, controlling its meaning; the author becomes the guarantor of the 'intentional' meaning or truth of the text, and reading a text therefore leads back to the author as origin" (Anderson 2). This means that the author's honest intention assures the truth and

seriousness of the writing and that the author is trustworthy: "autobiographies are seen as providing proof of the validity and importance of a certain conception of authorship: authors who have authority over their own texts and whose writings can be read as forms of direct access to themselves" (Anderson 3). Naipaul comments on his writing process as:

> The reason is that they define how I have gone about my business. I have trusted to intuition. I did it at the beginning. I do it even now. I have no idea how things might turn out, where in my writing I might go next. I have trusted to my intuition to find the subjects, and I have written intuitively. I have an idea when I start, I have a shape; but I will fully understand what I have written only after some years. (Naipaul *Two Worlds*, 6)

For Naipaul, a novel is an "investigation of society which reports back to society how it is changing" (King 5). Mustafa remarks that by "Inaugurating the autobiographical inflection that will come to full measure in the next decade, Naipaul's reflections are a mixture of literary critique and professional self-definition" (141). In some of his writings we can notice that he is discerningly identical with the protagonist, inextricably portraying private and/or public events of his family life. Therefore, I intend to show to what extent the author has greatly depicted his life in his writings and to what extent he has used his imagination. I do not aim at reflecting the author's life as he lived it but at signifying the related literary elements between his life and his writings. From this perspective, I propose to conduct a close unbiased, factual, and accurate reading of the texts in question of those autobiographical elements.

Naipaul's insight, vision, and writing are based on his knowledge of history, which through reimagining and changing become part of the core of his writing career.

Further, Naipaul develops an imaginative formulation of his vision of fiction through Conrad, that leads him to observe, “When art copies life, and life in its turn mimics art, a writer’s originality can often be obscured" (Naipaul *Eva Peron*, 233). Bruce King argues that Naipaul’s characters are real and historical, especially in his West Indian fiction: “‘Man-man’ was a well-known character in Port of Spain who has been written about by several Trinidadian authors. The Mystic Masseur is based upon an Indian masseur who became a famous Trinidadian politician. Biswas is modelled on Naipaul’s family history” (18). The narrator of Naipaul’s first novel *The Mystic Masseur* reminds us of the boy-narrator of *Miguel Street*, adopting the posture of a ‘biographer or mock-biographer’. Fawzeya Mustafa argues that “Both the tone and the fact that the narrator's source material is primarily made up of the protagonist's autobiography and self-promotional publications immediately establishes the satirical cast of *The Mystic Masseur*” (44).

IV Differences and Similarities

Biography and autobiography are somewhat similar and different in meanings and connotations. They are similar in unfolding the life and career of a particular subject, depicting factual events and bringing the audience closer to the persons they want to know about. If the work is written by someone else about the subject, this is called biography but if the subject creates the work him/herself this is known as autobiography. Therefore, the difference technically lays on who composes the work.

Autobiographies are also different among themselves regarding the artistic and reporting approach and whether they are informative, documentary, or entertaining. The author may escape presenting some unpleasant facts and unwanted information. Biographies, in most cases, deal with hard facts, exposing everything about the subject. French's biography on Naipaul, a living subject, is termed 'authorized biography' and it reveals the controversial personality of Naipaul. Here, French tries his best to gather as much information as he can, covering Naipaul's entire life. Therefore, biography "connotes a relatively full account of a particular person's life, involving the attempt to set forth character, temperament, and milieu, as well as the subject's activities and experiences" (Abrams 22).

The account of an individual's life can be either presented in a form of autobiography or memoir, each of which gives readers an insight into the subject's mind. It would be interesting to distinguish between the two terms. It is clear that autobiography deals with the subject's self-written account from cradle until the time of writing the work. It also refers to the subject's relationship with his family, friends, and the community and giving an informative background about his/her study and career. By contrast, memoirs focus on the subject's self-written account of random phases, feelings, and events, which have a great impact on his/her life, but without much concentration on specific details. Autobiography runs parallel with the events timeline, while memoirs are not strict with chronology and the author jumps forward and backward to vividly recollect impacted personal and emotional events on him/her. So, it is true that

"autobiography may let the reader draw his or her own conclusions about the author acted a certain way through the background and related information given in the book, doing the same in a memoir will be difficult for the reader as the book is a set of independent recollections" (differencebetween.net). M. H. Abrams distinguishes between forms of personal accounts such as biography, autobiography, memoir, diary, journal and the like:

> **Autobiography** is a biography written by the subject about himself or herself. It is to be distinguished from the **memoir,** in which the emphasis is not on the author's developing self but on the people and events that the author has known or witnessed, and also from the private **diary** or **journal,** which is a day-to-day record of the events in one's life, written for personal use and satisfaction, with little or no thought of publication. (22)

An autobiographical novel is based on the subject's life and personal experiences. It is distinguished from an autobiography and memoir by being partially fiction, in which names, locations are changed and events are dramatically and thematically rewritten with close resemblance to that of the subject's personal experiences. The most important point in autobiographical novel is modeling the protagonist after the subject and events timeline in his/her life, including family conflicts, sex, and other private scenes. The plot, settings, and narration and realism play important roles in constructing the autobiographical novel or; otherwise, "if all books were merely the author's biography retold with the names changed there would be no such thing as fiction" (Wolfreys 88).

Autobiographical novel is different from autobiography in that in the former the subject reconstructs talks and may "describe early life without participating the future, and can, in principle, evoke the child's experience with complete freshness in itself, without reference to what he is to become" (Roy 136). On the other hand, in semi-

autobiographical novel the protagonist's life and timeline are not quite identical with true events. When biography, autobiography, or memoir is written about a famous person, then it becomes best-selling because it would not be interesting to read common persons' lives. Biography, autobiography, and memoir are all non-fictional literature.

To conclude, Naipaul's writing is self-referential, in the sense that he is aware of the private sources of his imagination and his reading of history to reveal them in a mixed autobiography with facts and fiction. His books and essays become significant with new forms of blurred, mixed, and blended literary genres, which can be noticed in most of his books, combining autobiography, travel writing, analysis and fiction. French's biography is objective and more reliable as it presents all significant events in Naipaul's life. Naipaul certainly makes his own selection and exercises his choice with personal inference, which he makes selection in his autobiographical material, which is not presented directly in the first person. It is clear that in autobiographical novel the writer represents his personal experiences and events in the form of a novel. If we examine the above statement, we find that the autobiographical matter must be fictionally presented according to the artistic norms and conventions of the novel.

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