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METROPOLITAN ORIENTATION AND SENSE OF NATIVENESS

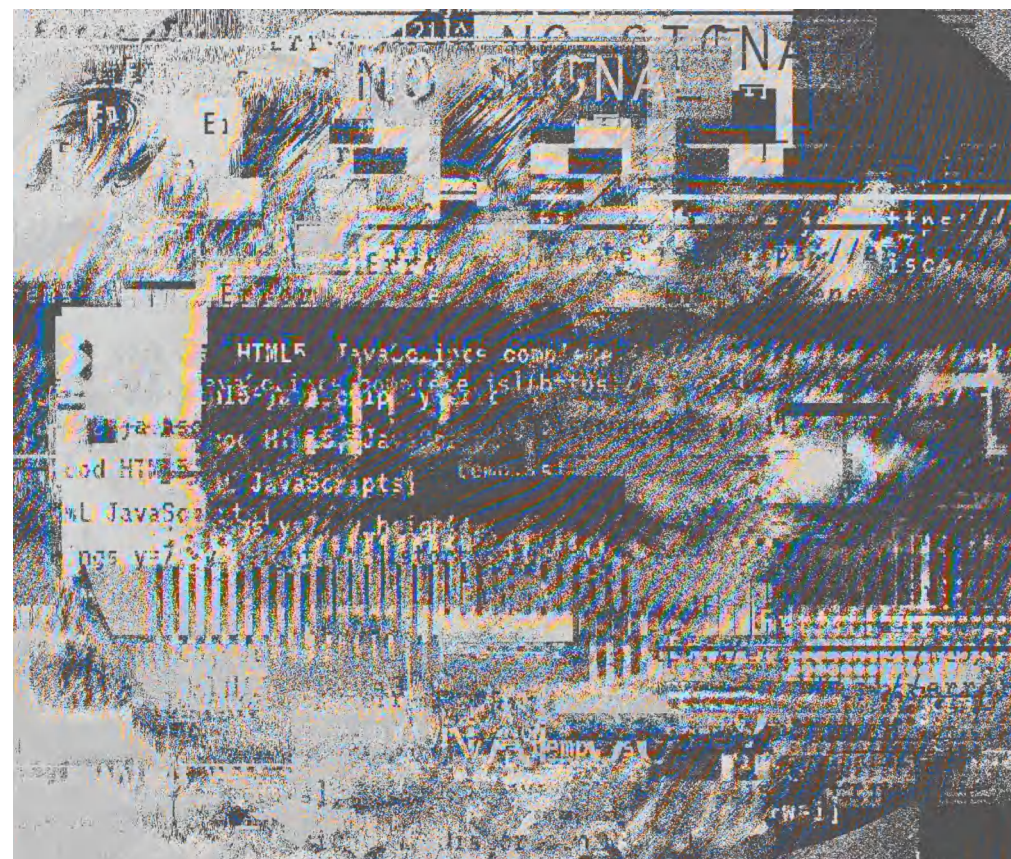
With Reference to V. S. Naipaul



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■ Lei Yanni



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Introduction to the Author

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Foreword

The present world's division into developed countries and developing countries has its historical origin. If we trace the global history several centuries back, we can find that colonial domination may be one of the main reasons for this division. The nearest event which led to the division was the world-wide national independence movement beginning from the late 1940s. For example, India got its independence from Britain in 1947; the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949; Trinidad of the West Indies became independent in 1962 etc. The movement was prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, up till the 1970s. During the period, many countries managed to break away from the colonial dominance and obtained national independence. The famous postcolonial scholar Edward W. Said mentioned this special phenomenon of the twentieth century in the Introduction of his work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). He says, "Yet it was the case nearly everywhere in the non-European world that the coming of the white man brought forth some sort of resistance. What I left out of *Orientalism* was the response to Western dominance which culminated in the great movement of decolonization all across the Third world. Along with armed resistance in places as diverse as nineteenth-century Algeria, Ireland, and Indonesia, there also went considerable efforts in cultural resistance everywhere, the assertions of nationalist identities, and, in the political realm, the creation of associations and parties whose common goal was a self-determination and national independence"(Said, 1993: xii).

In the 1960s and 1970s, along with this national independence movement was the immigrant trend from the former colony to the former colonizer's country, in other words, the metropolitan country. This move from the margin to the center produced a large number of homeless wanderers and exiles. In the section "Movements and Migrations" in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said describes the contemporary global

situation, which Said sees as characterized by unstable patterns of domination and interdependence, where both theory and real life embody migrancy and exile. Said writes, “For surely it is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history, most of them as an accompaniment to and , ironically enough, as after thoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts. As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness. And insofar as these people exist between the old and the new, between the old empire and the new state, their condition articulates the tensions, irresolutions, and contradictions in the overlapping territories shown on the cultural map of imperialism” (332).

This move from the margin to the centre in real life in the postcolonial era makes postcolonialism the hot topic in the academic world. In the academic world, there appeared the study on postcolonialism, which can either be a political term or a literary critical term. Simply speaking, postcolonialism studies the subverted relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. It critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship and sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives (Boehmer 3). As early as 1957, Frantz Fanon had published his work *Black Skin, White Masks*. His other book *The Wretched of the Earth* came out in 1961. These two books later became the two foundational works in the field of postcolonial study. In 1978, Edward Said published his renowned book *Orientalism*. Since then, there has been a trend of the study on postcolonialism in western countries. Apart from Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, the leading recognized researchers in this field also include Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha, Elleke Boehmer, Ania Loomba and Stuart Hall etc. They have published quite a few works on the theory of postcolonialism and they have contributed a lot to the study of postcolonial theory.

Generally speaking, these postcolonial scholars acclaim the end of the colonial dominance and cheer for the independence of third-world countries. And they study on how the native colonials can manage to subvert the colonial control both in politics and in ideology. Some of them are very concerned with the practical situations in the

former colonies. For example, Franz Fanon took part in the Algerian independence movement. His experiences in the Algerian struggle against French colonial control contributed a lot to his study on postcolonialism. Similarly, Edward Said's activities on behalf of Palestinian rights show that he is directly concerned with contemporary political realities. However, there are some deficiencies in the prevailing postcolonial study. One of the deficiencies lies in the neglect of the realistic situations and the concrete problems in those poor Third-world countries. There exist some scholars who work on abstract theories and carry out the elaborate theoretical deduction and inference. It is an irony that there is the sharp contrast between academic success in postcolonial theory in developed countries and the realistic backwardness in developing countries. For example, Homi K. Bhabha does not care much about contemporary realities. Instead, He focuses on postmodernism theories. He restricts himself to the realm of postcolonial and cultural theory. In his mimicry theory there is an obvious neglect of the practical situations in those former colonies. Another deficiency in the postcolonial study is the unawareness or absence of the sense of nativeness. Sense of Nativeness is a theory which I think may be applied to the postcolonial study. This theory was first put forward by the Chinese Professor Ou Hong of Sun Yat-sen University. Simply speaking, according to Professor Ou, the core of Sense of Nativeness is the sense of a nation or a culture, that varies according to the change of time and people, including an individual's sense of belonging to a certain class (Ou, 1988: 10). In fact, the sense of nativeness has always played an important role in this turbulent postcolonial world. Yet in Said's critical opinion on exile, we can not find the role of sense of nativeness. Said's total neglect of sense of nativeness leads him to stating the pleasures and privileges of being an exile. In Said's universal or cosmopolitan standpoint there is an obvious absence of Sense of Nativeness. Also in Bhabha's mimicry theory, there is the absence of Sense of Nativeness. Bhabha's neglect of practical realities in Third-world countries result in the absence of Sense of Nativeness.

We cannot find these two deficiencies in Franz Fanon's postcolonial study. On the one hand, Fanon was consciously and enthusiastically engaged in the Algerian anti-colonial struggle, which made him very concerned with the practical realities in his study. On the other hand, in Fanon's opinion on how to construct national culture

which was expressed in his work *The Wretched of the Earth*, we can find Fanon pays much attention to the function of Sense of Nativeness in the course of avoiding the pitfalls of national consciousness and constructing healthy national culture. As a forerunner in contemporary postcolonial study, Fanon has laid a solid foundation for the study and research in this field.

The neglect or unawareness of the existence of the sense of nativeness has much to do with the conflict between globalization and sense of nativeness. Globalization (or globalisation) is a term used to describe the changes in societies and the world economy that result from dramatically increased international trade and cultural exchange. In specifically economic contexts, it is often understood to refer almost exclusively to the effects of trade, particularly trade liberalization or “free trade”. Although all three aspects are closely intertwined, it is useful to distinguish economic, political and cultural aspects of globalization. The other key aspect of globalization is changes in technology, particularly in transport and communications, which are increasingly creating a global village (Net 2). However, I think behind the glorious vision of globalization is just monopoly and hegemony.

The postcolonial scholar E. San Juan, Jr. holds the opinion that “globalization is a recently retooled program of universal commodification, imperialism for the twenty-first century. It functions as the paradigm of a supranational process of homogenizing the world under the political and ideological hegemony of monopoly capitalist states through multilateral agencies (World Bank/IMF, WTO, United Nations) and transnational banks and firms” (Juan 198-199).

Juan continues to say, “Proponents of globalization hold that national borders, nation-states, and nationalism have now become obstacles to Western-oriented development. With the help of neoclassical economic theory, the theory of globalization seeks to break down nation-state barriers to the encroachment of capital—in fact, the most widespread myth is that market forces released by uninhibited trade have made nation/nationality obsolete, residual, or inutile. One may ask: are Japan, Germany and the United States no longer enjoying nation-state sovereignties? David Harvey opposes this myth by asserting that ‘globalization is really a process of uneven geographical and historical development that creates a

variegated terrain of anti-capitalist struggles' that need to be synthesized in such a way as to respect the qualities of different "militant particularisms" (such as those to be found in urban social movements throughout the world) while evolving strong spatial bonds and a global socialist politics of internationalism' " (Juan 199-200).

Thus, globalization is only for the facility of "Western-oriented development". I think in the so-called globalization is the strong metropolitan orientation. Hence the conflict between globalization and Sense of Nativeness is in fact the contradiction between metropolitan orientation and Sense of Nativeness. I regard this contradiction as the central clue to my dissertation. This clue can thread up my discussion of the three problems in the postcolonial study. The first problem is the pitfalls of national consciousness and the construction of national culture. The strong metropolitan orientation as is held by the native intellectuals in the newly-independent Third world countries leads inevitably to the pitfalls of national consciousness. The sense of nativeness can serve as a solution both to the pitfalls and to the culture construction in these countries. The second problem is Bhabha's mimicry theory. Bhabha's neglect of the backward social realities leads to his abstract description and deduction about mimicry as a strategy for colonial resistance. In fact, mimicry only reflects the dependence on the former colonizers, the metropolitan countries. Lying behind mimicry is the harmful metropolitan orientation. A thorough understanding of the practical situations in the Third world countries may be helpful for the national development. And the sense of nativeness is the basis for this thorough understanding. Therefore, the sense of nativeness can play an important part in the national development in culture, economics and politics. The third problem is the opinion on exile as is represented by Said and Rushdie. They think the exiled do not need to be faithful to one nation and one culture. In their opinion, the exiled can go freely in and out of a variety of cultures, while attaching themselves to none of these cultures. It seems they have a universal or cosmopolitan standpoint about exile. In fact, this universal standpoint is only a reflection of their unconscious metropolitan orientation, which puzzles them in their selection of individual cultural identity. In my opinion, for the exiled, wherever they go, they are with the sense of nativeness, in spite of their negation of it. In short, all through these three problems, there exists the contradiction between metropolitan orientation and Sense of Nativeness. Thus I set the title of the

dissertation as “Postcolonial studies: Metropolitan Orientation and Sense of Nativeness”.

In the course of discussing the three problems, I will use the British writer Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul’s works as examples. Also, I will take Naipaul’s writing experience and his own feeling as an exile as the example. Naipaul’s works include fiction and travel notes and social commentaries. His works reflect the problems encountered by third-world countries after independence in the 1950s and 1960s, such as poverty, overpopulation, corruption, unemployment, backwardness and the mimicking of former colonizers. His works are the realistic reflection of the Third-world countries. They are closely related to the prevalent theory of postcolonialism. Although the views expressed in his works are biased and prejudiced to some extent, his disclosing of the dark side of the newly-independent third-world countries can be of great referential importance. And his own writing experience can help to clarify the problems existing in Said’s view on exile. The study of Naipaul and his works will illuminate some difficult problems in postcolonial studies.

The dissertation includes five parts. The first part explains the definitions which are related to postcolonial studies. It also outlines the methods used in the present postcolonial study. The second part is the brief introduction to V. S. Naipaul and his works. It also includes criticism on Naipaul and his works. The third part deals with Frantz Fanon’s view on the pitfalls of national consciousness and the construction of national culture. The fourth part is to deconstruct the mimicry strategy. The fifth part discusses the relationship between exile and Sense of Nativeness in the postcolonial world. All these five parts help to clarify the opposition or contradiction between metropolitan orientation and Sense of Nativeness in the field of postcolonial studies. The dissertation points out that the theory of Sense of Nativeness is important in the postcolonial study and it can help to solve some difficult problems in postcolonial study, whether it is in the construction of national consciousness and national culture, the construction of a healthy post-independence nation or in the awareness of individual cultural identity.

Chapter 1 Some concepts in Postcolonial Studies and Sense of Nativeness

1. Some Concepts in Postcolonial Studies

In the present academy of postcolonial study, there often appear various nouns related to each other, such as imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, postcolonial, postcolonialism etc. It is necessary to make out the exact meanings of these nouns.

The postcolonial scholar Elleke Boehmer points out in her book *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* the different meanings of these nouns. She says, “imperialism can be taken to refer to the authority assumed by a state over another territory—authority expressed in pageantry and symbolism, as well as in military power. It is a term associated in particular with the expansion of the European nation-state in the nineteenth century” (2). As to colonialism, she explains that it “involves the consolidation of imperial power, and is manifested in the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands” (2). Boehmer also explains postcolonial literature and postcoloniality. She says, “rather than simply being the writing which ‘came after’ empire, postcolonial literature is that which critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives...postcolonial literature, therefore, is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire. Especially in its early stages it can also be a nationalist writing. Building on this, postcoloniality is defined as that condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical subjects” (3).

Another postcolonial scholar Ania Loomba also defines the terms colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and postcolonialism in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. According to Ania Loomba, colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods (2). "Postcolonial" refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena (19). In her opinion, "colonial discourse" indicates a new way of thinking in which cultural, intellectual, economic or political processes are seen to work together in the formation, perpetuation and dismantling of colonialism (54).

Colonialism is predicated within the concept of imperialism, a concept that is itself predicated within larger theories of global politics. In his work *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said uses imperialism to mean "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (9).

The term "postcolonial studies" is now generally accepted as the name of a field of interdisciplinary studies which encompasses a wide variety of types of analysis. What links them is a concern with the imperial past, with the different varieties of colonialism within the imperial past within the imperial framework, and with the links between the imperial past and the postcolonial present. The study is often approached through various theoretical perspectives. The field as a whole assumes a continuity between the colonial and postcolonial periods, and is concerned with all aspects of the relationship between the imperial or postcolonial center or metropolis and the colonial or postcolonial periphery.

One of the most substantial and disciplinary areas in postcolonial studies is the study of "Commonwealth literature". This study has much to do with bringing post-colonial studies into being a discipline, and it continues to play a role in shaping theoretical debate within the field. The postcolonial scholar Stephen Slemon traces the origin of the study on Commonwealth literature in his article "Post-colonial Critical Theories", "Commonwealth Literature Studies date formally from the mid-1960s...Part of what brought this field into being was pure instrumentality: a number of young writers and critics from Commonwealth nations happened to be in England at this time, many of them on Commonwealth academic scholarships, and they came together at a