Hybrid Governances: Locating the “Authorized Other” in *A House for Mr. Biswas*

Kaneesha Cherelle Parsard  
B.A. Candidate in English and Africana Studies, 2011  
University of Pennsylvania  
kparsard@sas.upenn.edu

Caribbean histories of overlapping Diasporas and resulting hybridities appear to indicate the decline of the nation-state as a site of analysis, in favor of more transnational and international processes of power. Indeed, while the rest of the globe was marked by specific hues, denoting imperial belongings, the Caribbean existed independently of such particularities—and, therefore, outside of singular national narratives. Nonetheless, this paper, taking up V.S. Naipaul’s rendering of postcolonial Trinidad in *A House for Mr. Biswas*, locates Mr. Biswas at the intersections of state power and state-sanctioned oppression, eliciting a hybrid form of governance that works in and through the nation-state. I will explore how “douglarization”—an expression of national hybridity particular to Trinidad—casts him as what Homi Bhabha terms an “authorized…[Other]”—an intermediary figure who, in his uniquely racialized, Indo-Trinidadian body, operates as an instrument of state power. Mr. Biswas, employed in his adult life as both journalist and civil servant, is charged with compiling the narratives of (often black) “Destitutes” and, later, working as a community organizer in similarly racialized urban communities. Because Mr. Biswas works in “conditions not too far from his own,” I seek to illustrate how Mr. Biswas helps to define, racialize, and naturalize the term “Destitute” and, as an instrument of such hybrid governances, illuminates the racial ambiguity of space and place in the postcolonial, hybrid Caribbean.

**BIO**

Kaneesha Parsard is a third-year undergraduate in the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. A double major in English and Africana Studies, her research interests broadly encompass the literary traditions of the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean, and specifically engage the presence (or absence, rather?) of Afro-Indo mixed-race subjects in said traditions. Kaneesha is also the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, the Penn Humanities Forum Undergraduate Research Fellowship, and the Penn College Alumni Society Research Grant. After completing her undergraduate degree, Kaneesha plans to pursue a doctorate in English or comparative literature.