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THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL: BİR YERE
AİT OLMA ÖYKÜSÜ

THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL: A STORY OF
BELONGING TO SOMEWHERE

Yazar

Sevcan IŞIK

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Not: Yazar, bu çalışmada etik iznine gerek olmadığını beyan etmiştir.

Öz

Bu çalışma V. S. Naipaul tarafından yazılan *The Enigma of Arrival* adlı romanı bir yeri anlamlandırma çabası olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Roman, otobiyografi ve kurgu karışımıdır. Dolayısıyla, başkarakter aynı zamanda yazar Naipaul'dur. Roman, başkarakterin yazar olma çabasını anlatmaktadır. Başkarakter, ülkesi Trinidad'ın artık çürümekte olduğunu ve bir yazar için yeterli materyal bulundurmadığını düşünerek İngiltere'ye İngiliz edebiyatı okumaya gider. Ancak, İngiltere'yi umduğu gibi bulamaz ve hayal kırıklığına uğrar. Dickens ve Thackeray gibi yazarların romanlarında tasvir ettiği gibi büyük binalar bulmak yerine İngiltere'nin tıpkı kendi ülkesi gibi çürüdüğünü görür. Böylece, İngiltere'de yurtsuz ve depresif hisseder. Bu hislerinden kurtulmak için İngiltere'de yıllarca seyahat eder ve İngiltere'de yaşayan bazı İngilizlerin de tıpkı kendisi gibi yurtsuz hissettiğini görür. Daha sonra, İngiltere'nin Salisbury şehrinde bir kulübe kiralar ve orada insanların ve yerlerin çürümek yerine sürekli bir değişim ve akış içinde olduğunu gözlemler. Böylece, İngiltere'yi kendisine bir yurt adayı olarak görmeye başlar ve kendi kültürünü reddetmeden İngiliz kültürüne uyum sağlamaya başlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*, yurtsuzluk, yabancılaşma ve sömürgeleşme

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the novel *The Enigma of Arrival* by V. S. Naipaul as a story of making sense of place. The novel is a mixture of autobiography and fiction. Thus, the protagonist is Naipaul, the writer, and the novel recounts the protagonist's attempt to become a writer. The protagonist moves to England to study English literature as he thinks that his native land, Trinidad is in decay and does not have valuable material to write about. However, he is disappointed with England because he cannot find England as he expects. Instead of finding grand buildings described in the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, he finds that England is in decay like his country. As a result, he feels displaced and depressed in England. In order to overcome these feelings, he travels for years in England and he realizes that not only himself as an ex-colonized living in ex-colonizer Britain but also English people feel displaced in their country. Then, he rents a cottage in a city in England named Salisbury where he observes that places and people are not in decay but in a constant change, and in flux. He learns to adapt England as a candidate to be his home and integrates himself into its culture without rejecting his own culture.

Keywords: V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*, displaced, alienation and colonization.

INTRODUCTION

Identity and sense of belonging are the important concepts studied in both colonial and post-colonial works. In terms of identity, there are numerous definitions of identity. Identities are considered “as social constructs – culturally and interactionally defined meanings and expectations – and as aspects of self-processes and structures that represent who or what a person or set of persons is believed to be” (Vryan, 2007). Identity may also be conceived in the context of binaries such as self/other or black/white. For instance, especially during colonialism, “identity is based on a distinction of the self from what is believed to be not self” (Boehmer, 2005, p. 76). In other words, “all post-colonial societies realize their identity in difference rather than in essence” (Ashcroft et al. 1989, p. 167).

In terms of the sense of belonging, it may be thought as “a unique element of interpersonal relatedness” explained being “the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment” (Hagerty et al., 2002, p.794). As seen, there are two significant elements of sense of belonging: “(a) valued involvement or the experience of being valued and needed, and (b) fit, the person’s perception that his or her characteristics articulate with or complement the system or environment” (Hagerty et al., p. 794). Moreover, it may also be implied that sense of belonging includes “psychological, social, spiritual, or physical involvement; attribution of meaningfulness; and the establishment of a foundation for emotional and behavioural responses” (Hagerty et al., p. 794). Therefore, based on the preceding definitions, it can be inferred that identity and sense of belonging are essential components of an individual's position in regard to social conceptions and perception of who he or she is. It's also worth noting that identification and belonging are inextricably linked, fostering and strengthening one another. In colonial and post-colonial environments, where the person is exposed to a multi-cultural community with restrictions and fault lines, these notions assume undeniable significance. As a result, analyzing literary texts in order to gain a better understanding of the relationships between the dominant culture and the individual, and of the senses of belonging and identity, helps realizing the development of how the colonized and the colonizer are influenced by the rising conflict that occurs from the colonial period.

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipul (1932-2018) was born in Trinidad into a family of Indian Brahmin origin. He grew up in the Hindu ghettos of the West Indies. He explains his origin being as extremely simple and extremely confusing at the same time by stating “Trinidad is a small island in the mouth of the great Orinoco River of Venezuela. So Trinidad is not strictly of South America, and not strictly of the Caribbean. It was developed as a New World plantation colony. 150,000 out of 400,000 people were Indians, Hindus and Muslims, nearly all of peasant origin, and nearly all from the Gangetic plain” (qtd. in Ali & Gopal, 2013, p. 1). Although he was born in Trinidad it is not easy to define Trinidad as Naipaul’s home because he was exiled from his ancient cultural roots with his family’s moving from India to Trinidad at his very birth, and he experienced another exile when he left Trinidad for England to study in Oxford (Gupta, 2014, p. 307).

Moreover, he became an outsider in England as he could not identify himself with the ex-colonizer country. As seen, it is not easy to decide on Naipaul’s home; however, it is possible to take Trinidad as his birthplace, India as his ancestral place and Britain as his place of education. Both because he got his education in England and because he wanted to reach a wider audience, he wrote his works in English. However, he said, “the English Language was mine, the tradition was not” (Ali and Gopal, 2013, p. 3). He was regarded as one of the most proficient novelists and essayists from the English-speaking Caribbean. He was awarded the 2001 Nobel Prize for literature as he unearthed the oppressed people’s histories. He was famous for writing about colonial legacy in the once colonized countries. Especially, he was mostly interested in the identity problem of an outsider and people’s confusion of culture in third world countries. In other words, he focused on creating and discovering the self instead of dealing with the problems of exile, insecurity, and marginality experienced by the colonial people.

Furthermore, while he was appraised by the First World critics Naipaul was harshly accused of being the spokesperson of the West by the Third World critics. Although he mainly dealt with the problems of the

Third World countries in his early works, he dealt with the themes such as displacement, change, decay and solitude and so on in his later works as a result of his feeling of alienation, and displacement. Especially in his early works, he resorted to his childhood and the West Indies in terms of setting, material, and characters. He was reported to be a “candid in his comments about his evolution as an author. He began as a chronicler of West Indian street life and slowly grasped the deeper issues of alienation and exile that dominate his later works” (Gupta, 2014, p. 307). Despite the fact that he continued to use West Indian material in his fiction, he started to use different settings and characters as a result of his extensive travelling after 1960. It is stated that “his prolific writing continued alternating between autobiographical fiction and reportorial non-fiction based on these travels. The unifying persona is that of an alienated ex-colonial, cut off temperamentally both from his native roots and from the European culture upon which he attempts to graft himself”¹.

It is the case in *the Enigma of Arrival* in which he dealt with exile, alienation, disillusion, and displacement. The novel includes characters that are hopeless and fail at the end of their attempts to survive in the face of change and the transience of everything, which also shows his pessimistic vision of human beings. For instance, Jack, Brenda, Alan and Mr. Phillips die in the novel. Pitton does not die but he is not a happy person. Apart from people, the landscapes also decay and die. For instance, the protagonist-narrator observes the change and deterioration in the manor and in Jack’s garden. In short, he understands that people and places are subject to change and they have an interdependent relationship. This perspective is of great importance for the protagonist-narrator in creating his ‘self’ and in interpreting the world around himself.

The Enigma of Arrival recounts the writer’s attempt to become a writer and to adjust to living in England. Thus, it is a mixture of autobiography and fiction. For instance, Levy claims “the protagonist is both Naipaul, a writer and traveller of international renown, the facts of whose writing life are known and verifiable, and an unnamed, coming-into-existence being who is inserted into the cycle of history, life and death” (Levy, 1995, p. 97). As Levy suggests, the protagonist-narrator has common things with Naipaul, the writer. That is, both of them come from Trinidad to London, which makes them ‘other’ as being a Third World colonial in Britain. They both win a scholarship to Oxford and study there to become a writer. They settle in Wiltshire in England and write their experiences in their novels. Thus, the protagonist is both a fictional and autobiographical character. In this sense, Naipaul mentions “the story had become more personal: my journey, the writer’s journey, the writer defined by his writing discoveries, his ways of seeing, rather than his personal adventures, writer and man separating at the beginning of the journey and coming together again in a second life just before the end” (Benoit, 2007, p. 45). Similarly, while he was accepting the Nobel Prize in Stockholm Naipaul reveals:

I said earlier that everything about me is in my books. I will go further now. I will say I am the sum of my books. Each book intuitively sensed and, in the case of fiction, intuitively worked out. Stands on what has gone before, and grows out of it. I feel that at any stage of my literary career it could have been said that the last book contained all the others. (qtd. in Ali & Gopal, 2013, 1).

Nonetheless, it is insufficient to say the novel as solely an autobiographical work as it is enriched with themes of change, exile, decay, individual will and flux as well as with explanations about man’s shaping himself, individuals’ adapting to the places and creating meanings out of places and human beings, etc.

As for the name of the book, it is an interesting title that gives a clue about the content of the novel. When the narrator is in the cottage, he finds a paperback booklet which is from a series called ‘The Little Library of Art’. It is about Giorgio de Chirico’s early paintings and one of which is entitled ‘The Enigma of Arrival’. The name was given to the painting by the poet Apollinaire. The protagonist says “I felt that in an indirect, poetical way the title referred to something in my own experience” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 91). The painting is described by the protagonist as being “a wharf; in the background, beyond walls and gateways there is the top of the mast of an antique vessel; on an otherwise deserted street in the foreground there are two

¹ http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/V_S_Naipaul.aspx

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” (Naipaul, p. 92). Therefore, Naipaul interprets the situation of modern man by using the words ‘desolation’ and ‘mystery’. As a result, in the following part, the novel will be analyzed in terms of reflecting the fact that not only Naipaul himself but also all humans are a sort of immigrants as they do not stay somewhere permanently, which brings the ideas of journey, change, flux and decay to Naipaul’s mind to understand the cycles of life and death in life.

THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL: A STORY OF BELONGING TO SOMEWHERE

From the very beginning of the novel, a strong sense of displacement catches the readers. Naipaul relates self and space in this novel by introducing the protagonist-narrator as well as the other characters. In the case of the narrator, he cannot compose a union with England and cannot find a place to call home at the beginning. Therefore, he feels depressed and disappointed. After he has travelled for a long time, he rents a cottage in Salisbury and reflects the detailed descriptions of his surroundings as well as his feeling of alienation which can be defined as “a feeling of separation or isolation, associated with minorities, the poor and other groups of periphery who have limited power to bring about changes in society” (Ali and Gopal, 2013, p. 2). He gives detailed descriptions of the places he has visited because he tries to familiarize himself with the surroundings in order to get rid of his feeling of estranged. For instance, when he comes to Salisbury, he says “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” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 12). He means that he knows where he is but he is not familiar with this place. One knows himself by defining the other. That is, one is self because he is not the other, or he is the other because he is not the self. Thus, this unfamiliar place reminds him of his otherness and of his colonial background. While he is watching outside the cottage, the narrator remembers his life as a young man in Trinidad because he sees snow which reminds him of “a climate quite different” (Naipaul, p. 45). It also reminds him of a beach in Trinidad. He describes the snow in detail as something melting and taking shape, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for identity as the narrator’s identity is reconstructed as he travels.

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However, it is not easy for the protagonist-narrator to feel belonged to England because no matter how many places in England he travels, all of them are new and different to him. For instance, when he comes to Salisbury he has been in England for many a year. Yet, he says “after all my time in England I still had that nervousness in a new place, that rawness of response, still felt myself to be in the other man’s country, felt my strangeness, my solitude” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 13). In order to get rid of these feelings, he takes walks in the surroundings every day and learns the place very well. He mentions “the solitude of the walk, the emptiness of that stretch of the downs, enabled me to surrender to my way of looking, to indulge my linguistic or historical fantasies; and enabled me, at the same time, to shed the nerves of being a stranger in England” (Naipaul, p. 18). He cannot help feeling like a homeless person because he does not have an actual home, that is, a permanent place to stay and to belong to. The sense of homelessness is constantly felt when the narrator describes his surroundings. While he is describing the outside as new or different, he refers to himself as foreign. In this context, Bijender Singh (1993) states “Naipaul has stashed his legacy inside him and poured it in the form of brilliant works where the house has more significance than being only a place as Gerhard Stilz contends ‘a house is a place in space but also in society” (p. 455). The protagonist does not have a place in society because he knows that he is different from English and does not share their past. For instance, he mentions

That idea of ruin and dereliction, of out-of-placeness, was something I felt about myself, attached to myself: a man from another hemisphere, another background, coming to rest in middle life in the cottage of a half neglected estate full of reminders of its Edwardian past, with few connections with the present. An oddity among the estates and big houses of the valley, and I a further oddity in its grounds. I felt unanchored and strange...I felt that my presence in that old valley was part of something like an upheaval, a change in the course of the history of the country. (Naipaul, 1987, p. 19)

While he is describing the landscape, he says “it was not like the almost instinctive knowledge that had come to me as a child of the plants and flowers of Trinidad; it was like learning a second language” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 32). If he was English and born there, he would already know them. As mentioned, learning the landscape is like learning a language, which is a second language, not one’s mother tongue. It also means having a new perspective or a new consciousness towards the world. One learns his first language instinctively but learning a second language requires consciousness, which, in turn, gives a new understanding of the world. This can be taken as a new identity as well because identity is not a stable thing but it is subject to change as a result of varying reasons. For instance, Ashcroft explains that themes of place, displacement, and preoccupation with creating self are found in post-colonial works of literature regardless of their historical and cultural differences. Ashcroft (1989) continues

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or ‘voluntary’ removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of postcolonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. (p. 9)

The sense of displacement is felt when the protagonist-narrator returns to his birthplace after six years he has spent in England. He finds his colonial birthplace very different from what he has imagined during the years he has spent in England. He confesses “but after my six years in England, to come upon Barbados like this, suddenly, after thirteen days at sea, was less like coming upon a landscape than like seeing very clearly an aspect of myself and a past I thought I had outlived. The smallness of that past, the shame of that smallness: they had not been things I could easily acknowledge as a writer” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 163). This disillusionment has already happened before when he arrives in England because there is a discrepancy between his imaginative England that he has read in books and the real England in which he lives now. Before coming to England, he knows London through the detailed descriptions of English novelists Dickens or Thackeray. Moreover, he expects to see the grand buildings left from the Victorian age but he sees only a few remaining ones. He thinks that places will make him feel in this or that way. However, human beings and places constitute a union. That is, it is not the place but the individual who may feel displaced or alienated as a result of his/her relationship with the place.

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One can make a home out of a place as in the case of Jack. For instance, because the protagonist-narrator observes that Jack seems “solid, rooted in his earth” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 21) the protagonist envies Jack who engages in gardening. In addition, in contrast to the narrator who wanders around England to feel belonged to somewhere, Jack chooses to create his own life and his own world (Naipaul, p. 68). This helps the narrator to change his perspective towards the place in time. That is, one can feel belonging to somewhere through his creating a world. One does not have to be born in a place to belong there. For example, while the protagonist regards Jack’s life as “genuine, rooted, fitting: man fitting the landscape...as remnant of the past” (Naipaul, p. 19) at the beginning, he, then, realizes

Jack was living in the middle of junk, among the ruins of nearly a century; that the past around his cottage might not have been his past; that he might at some stage have been a newcomer to the valley; that his style of life might have been a matter of choice, a conscious act; that out of the little piece of earth which had come to him with his farm-worker’s cottage (one of a row of three) he has created a special land for himself, a garden where (though surrounded by ruins, reminders of vanished lives) he was more than content to live out of his life and where, as in a version of a Book of Hours, he celebrated the seasons”. (Naipaul, 1987, pp. 19-20)

As seen, Jack does not feel alienated but the protagonist comprehends that this is not because Jack was born there or not because he has been here since it starts to exist but because he makes sense of the place, that is, his garden. The past of the place or of the country may not belong to Jack or he may have arrived at this valley at some time in past for some reason. Moreover, most of the time, it is not possible to have

the past of the place one currently lives in but it does not necessarily mean that one should feel him/herself as homeless or displaced. One can create his/her own land just like Jack. In this context, the protagonist says “land is not land alone, something that simply is itself. Land partakes of what we breathe into it, is touched by our moods and memories” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 301). He also realizes that people and places can be understood in context. Interestingly enough, people and places are in constant change. He decides to see the world as a place or persistent cycles including change, flux and decay. For instance, the protagonist becomes mature and observes that both his native colonial country and imperial England are in decay. The novel shows us these phases in the life of the protagonist, which is a sort of self-discovery and which shapes his identity.

Furthermore, the opposite of this situation may also emerge. That is, one can feel alienated without being displaced as in the case of Pitton. He is English and lives in his birthplace, that is, home but he cannot feel belonged neither to the village nor to the town in the novel. He feels alienated and displaced. Even though the protagonist feels that he is a stranger and other people in the valley belong to there, he, then, realizes that this is not completely true. Contrarily, he sees “how tenuous, really, the hold of all of these people had been on the land they worked or lived in” (Naipaul, 1987, p.99). He also observes that people do not make homes in the valley but they come for temporary jobs and thus temporary homes. In this sense, it may be claimed once more that all men in the modern age are a sort of immigrants. They come to a place, work there and leave for another place. Thus, geography is not the first and foremost marker of feeling oneself at home anymore.

After Jack dies, the garden deteriorates because those who come after him do not take care of it properly. People just do their work and leave. The narrator’s realization of the decaying and changing of places is of great importance in the sense that it is people who make sense of place. In contrast to the feeling of discomfort with the idea of change and feeling nostalgia for the past he decides “I had trained myself to the idea of change, to avoid grief; not to see decay” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 300). Moreover, he accepts that the perfection of the past and the ruins of the present stay side by side. For instance, he states

New to the valley, overwhelmed by the luck of the near-solitude I had found in this historical part of England, the solitude that had done away with my stranger’s nerves, I had seen everything as a kind of perfection, perfectly evolved. But I hardly begun to look, the land and its life had hardly begun to shape itself about me, when things began to change. And I had fallen back on old ideas, ideas now not so much of decay, as of flux and the constancy of change, to fight the distress I felt at everything- a death, a fence, a departure- that undid or altered or threatened the perfection I had found. (Naipaul, 1987, p. 51)

Once the protagonist realizes the decay and change in places he also sees the decay and change in human beings with the death of Jack. For instance, the protagonist’s landlord has a big manor but he is ill and withdrawn being obsessed with the past when he enjoyed the greatness of the manor. However, his land is decaying just like himself. He has glory with his manor in past and he can be regarded to symbolize the imperial England which is dwelled by foreigners and former colonials now. Because the landlord of the protagonist symbolizes Imperial England, the protagonist as a former colonial living in England assumes “whatever he saw would have been different from what I saw” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 233). That is, the narrator does not think of the change as decay but sees it as a ‘flux’ despite the fact that the change in the manor is a kind of decay for the landlord. This philosophy comes from Naipaul’s Indian background and it claims “creation and destruction are different aspects of the same god” (King, 1993, p. 142).

In addition to Jack’s death and the decaying of his landlord as an old man, the death of the protagonist’s sister plays an important role in making the protagonist realize the mortality of human beings, that is, death. At the end of the novel, he returns to Trinidad for the cremation of his sister. He states

...the sacred places of our childhood...I had lived in them imaginatively over many books and had in my fantasy set in those places the very beginning of things, had constructed out of them a fantasy of home, though I was to learn that the ground was bloody...Every generation now was to take us further away from those sanctities. But we remained the world for ourselves; every generation does that, as we found where

we came together for the death of this sister and felt the need to honor and remember. It forced us to look on death. (Naipaul, 1987, p. 318).

The narrator feels both an outsider and an insider at the same time in his hometown. He observes the cremation ceremony of her sister whom he has not seen for a very long time and reveals “something else was new to me: the pundit was being ‘ecumenical’ in a way he wouldn’t have been when I was a child, equating Hinduism – speculative, many-sided, with animist roots – with the revealed faiths of Christianity and Mohammedanism...It was his way, in a changed Trinidad, of defending our faith and ways” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 313). As it is seen, he says ‘our faith and ways’. He does not reject his indigenous culture to fit into England. He is integrated into England but he keeps his indigenous culture as well. In other words, he becomes a hybrid person. In order to keep it, he does not have to live in Trinidad. For instance, he claims that “men need history; it helps them to have an idea of who they are. But history, like sanctity, can reside in the heart; it is enough to know there is something there” (Naipaul, p. 318).

Moreover, as Naipaul states, “but it is only his sister’s death that can transform the convergence of end and beginning in the narrator’s life cycle into an arrival that makes the writing of *The Enigma of Arrival* possible” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 102). The narrator explains

It forced me to face the death I had been contemplating at night in my sleep; it fitted a real grief where melancholy had created a vacancy, as if to prepare me for the moment. It showed me life and man as the mystery, the true religion of men, the grief and the glory. And that was when, faced with a real death, and with this new wonder about men, I laid aside my drafts and hesitations and began to write very fast about Jack and his garden. (Naipaul, 1987, p. 318)

This quotation shows both the endless cycle of death and life, and the cyclical structure of the novel, namely, the ending brings a new beginning. That is, although the narrator wants to be a writer throughout his life, he defers to write a book as he feels that he never arrives at a place he can call home. For instance, he mentions “as a child in Trinidad I had put this world at a far distance, in London perhaps. In London now I was able to put this perfect world at another time, an earlier time” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 121). Thus, he decides to write after witnessing the change and the decay in places and the deaths of people. He explains “my theme, the narrative to carry it, my characters- for some years I felt they were sitting on my shoulder, waiting to declare themselves and to possess me. But it was only out of this new awareness of death that I began at last to write. Death and the way of handling it – that was the motif of the story of Jack” (Naipaul, p. 309). He also realizes that he can overcome his sense of displacement, strangeness and alienation through writing because he creates his own life and his own world, that is, he reconstructs his identity through writing. Thus, the novel can be considered as a reflection of the writer’s constant attempt to construct order and stability in a world of change and chaos.

Conclusion

At the beginning of his writing career, the narrator does not believe that his native land does not have material valuable enough for his writing. That is why he does not include the black man causing trouble in the ship in his diary. He explains it as follows: “but that topic of race...formed no part of ‘Gala Night’. It was too close to my disturbance, my vulnerability” (Naipaul, 1987, p. 115). Besides, he was eighteen then and felt inferiority. The reason why he felt inferiority may be caused by his British education that imposes the greatness of British literature and culture over the Eastern ones. As a result, he tries to imitate British literary tradition because he believes that he should follow the great English writers; however, he, soon, gives up finding it insufficient to express his peculiar experience and his time. In addition, by excluding the things related to his native land and culture the narrator aims to make a distance between a writer and a man, which is the way to be a writer in his understanding. However, he recognizes “to be that kind of writer (as I interpreted it) I had to be false; I had to pretend to be other than I was, other than what a man of my background could be” (Naipaul, p. 134). As seen, he rejects his indigenous culture as subject matter at the beginning and he also rejects the cottage in Salisbury as his home. Nonetheless, he embraces both of them later. For instance, he discloses “and in that place, where at the beginning I had looked only for

remoteness and a place to hide, I did some of my best work. I travelled; I wrote. I ventured out, brought back experiences to my cottage; and wrote. The years passed. I healed” (Naipaul, p. 96). Thus, it can be summed up as “the result is a process of learning how to see the world through his eyes and the rediscovery of himself as a writer” (Matthes, 2005, p. 10). As a result, the narrator-protagonist rejects his birthplace with the aim of being a writer and he also rejects England as he does not find what he expects from it. Thus, he cannot make sense of England at the beginning, which is resulted in a feeling of displacement and alienation. Nonetheless, he learns to adapt England as a candidate to be his home and integrates himself into its culture without rejecting his own culture. That is, he handles his feeling of being alienated and displaced through reconstructing his identity by mingling his Hindu background and his western individualism and by writing his personal experiences in his novel.

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