



A MODERN MAN IN SEARCH OF AN IDENTITY: MR STONE OF THE KNIGHTS COMPANION

Kimlik Arayışındaki Modern İnsan: Şövalyeler Birliğinden Mr Stone

Reyhan ÖZER TANIYAN*

ABSTRACT

This article will analyse V. S. Naipaul's *Mr Stone and The Knights Companion* (1963) which has special importance for being the first novel that Naipaul does not draw from his hometown, Trinidad experiences. Although this novel deals with the problem of belonging, rootlessness and relatedly the search for identity like those before penned, it is quite different in structure, setting and characterisation. The setting is England, and the main character is an old Londoner. These radical changes in the setting and the character indicate that he writes this very specific novel as a farewell to his cultural materials as well as a welcoming gesture to modernist traces in literature. With this understanding and sensibility, it can be inferred that the novel embodies Naipaul's inner conflict in his identity process through an English man, Mr Stone, by referring to the proclaimed modernist literary names. Therefore, the leading aim of this article is to try to read this novel by mimicking modernist works as a reflection of Naipaul's ambivalent identity during his authorship.

Keywords: *Mr Stone and The Knights Companion*, identity, V. S. Naipaul, ambivalence, modernist influences.

ÖZ

Bu makale V. S. Naipaul'un memleketi olan Trinidad deneyimlerinden yola çıkarak kaleme almadığı ilk roman olarak önemli bir yere sahip *Mr Stone and The Knights Companion* adlı romanı ele almıştır. Roman her ne kadar yazarın daha önceden kaleme aldığı romanları gibi ait olma, yersizlik yurtsuzluk problemleri gibi ve bunlara bağlı kimlik arayışı konuları ele alsada yapısal, mekânsal ve karakterler bakımından diğerlerinden oldukça farklıdır. Mekân İngiltere, ana karakter de eski bir Londralıdır. Karakter ve mekandaki bu radikal değişiklikler yazarın eski kültürel materyallerine bir veda ve yazıldığı dönemdeki modernist izlere bir merhaba olarak yorumlanır. Bu anlayış ve duyarlılıkla, romanın Naipaul'un İngilizleşmedeki içsel kimlik zıtlıklarının modernist isimlere de gönderme yaparak ana karakter Mr Stone üzerinden tezahür

* Asst. Prof. Dr., Pamukkale University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, Denizli/Türkiye. E-mail: rotaniyan@pau.edu.tr. ORCID: 0000-0002-0285-1787.

ettiği çıkarımı yapılabilir. Bu nedenle, bu makalenin öncelikli amacı modernist eserleri taklit eden bu romanı Naipaul'un yazarlık kariyerindeki ikircikli kimliğinin bir yansıması olarak okumaya çalışmaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Mr Stone and The Knights Companion*, kimlik, V. S. Naipaul, ikirciklik, modernist etkiler.

Introduction

With the outbreak of World War I, and afterwards, the subjugated nations, especially the Dominions, set their policy for independence and liberation from the British Empire, and they were recognised at the 1923 Imperial Conference (McIntyre, 1977: 187). Thus, the recognition of the non-West in the twentieth century “represented a new accessibility of what had once been disavowed as strange” (Boehmer, 2005: 133). This new accessible identity of once colonised societies can be thought to be “recoverable intact, unadulterated by the depredations of colonialism”, because it is “embedded in its cultural origins” (Boehmer, 2005: 96) despite the imperial suppression for a long time.

However, one could hardly witness the existence of authentic identity in the colonised nations. It is essential to keep in mind the fact that their identity was to be developed and changed along with their culture within the frame of a reinterpreted and rewritten history, an imposed language and religion. The values, attitudes and cultural practices which were inherited from the coloniser have over the years been translated, adopted, appropriated, and hybridised in literary works, whether or not those discourses bear a colonial or anti-colonial sense. This means that the focus of the literary works has become dual: those with “retreat and disillusion on the side of empire” are juxtaposed with the “resistance and reconstruction [...] of those who spoke for the colonized” (Boehmer, 2005: 97). Yet, for the literary works of V.S. Naipaul, it seems unfair to say that he writes with the former or the latter tendency. His works can be categorised as for/against empire and this fact not only makes him a unique writer but also a controversial one, too.

Naipaul's first novels –those with Trinidad settings; *The Mystic Masseur* and *A House for Mr Biswas*–were written during the independence and post-independence period of the colonised lands. In these novels, Naipaul focuses on the issue of identity and deals with his characters' struggle for recognition and individuality as free men. These novels overlap the historical pro-

cess of Trinidadian independence with the individual life of the colonised people. Yet, there is always a scornful attitude towards formerly colonised societies in Naipaul's discourse. This mockery is followed by an obvious sympathy towards the British culture embedded in his non-fiction works.

In his previous works, he stresses the strivings of colonised nations with insignificant and impetuous West Indian characters to find fulfilment, and this is depicted in *The Mystic Masseur* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. Mohun Biswas, wrong by birth with his grotesque being, struggles for a place in life and he tries to *exist* despite his homelessness. Likewise, Ganesh Ramsumair a mystic healer of illnesses struggles to achieve a *respectable* role in society. He is representing the dilemma of having a British education and being gifted with mystical talents. Mainly the works comment on the dilemmas of colonial dispossession and the ambivalence of the colonised characters. As a West Indian, Naipaul is educated in the British school system and influenced by British values, thus becoming a hybrid character. He situates himself in an in-between position with the Western tradition, and he maintains an ironic distance from his society. Relatedly, his narrative depicts a picaresque picture of a society enriched with tragicomic events and caricatured characters. However, while Naipaul develops a receptive attitude towards the Western tradition gained within the imperial system, the same imperial ideology marks him inferior too. No matter how much distance he puts between his colonised traditional background and colonial education, he can never achieve perfect Britishness. He fails to be a perfect British individual despite all his efforts to alienate himself from his colonised cultural inheritance. He is still regarded as different and as a foreign Other. Therefore, Naipaul wants to leave behind his past with an attempt to write in the authentic and typical British style for self-reconstruction in his adopted country. He starts his new style in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963) written in the English novel tradition since “the implicit subject matter of the whole tradition of the English novel—the creation, maintenance, decay, and cross-fertilization of the national identity—is, at last, made explicit to prove the Englishness of the writer” (Parrinder, 2006: 405).

Thereby, Naipaul's choice to write, though implicitly, within the English novel tradition in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*¹ can easily be related to his wish to be recognised as “a reformed, recognizable Other” (Bhabha, 1984: 127) which is colonial mimicry. However, his style which he mim-

¹ To be called MSKC, henceforth.

ics the English novelists is to be viewed “as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1984: 127). He writes following the tradition of the English novelists and his discourse recalls again the ambivalence which is constructed through “the discourse of mimicry” (Bhabha, 1984: 127).

Mr Stone And the Knights Companion as A New Style

Although *MSKC* deals with the problem of belonging, rootlessness and relatedly the search for identity like his previous novels, it is different from the other novels in terms of structure, setting and characterisation. The setting is England, which Naipaul uses for the first time, the main character is an old Londoner. These radical changes in the setting and the character indicate what Patrick French briefly asserts in Naipaul’s biography. He argues that Naipaul has written *MSKC* with a consciousness that it is a departure from his cultural background with a referential quotation from Naipaul: “I had used up my Trinidad material, my childhood material. Then I had gone and done [...]” (qtd. in French, 2008: 218- 20).

With this understanding and consciousness of the reality that he is from the colonised lands, Naipaul reflects on his ambiguity, ambivalence, his inner conflicts, and distress about his identity as a colonial individual defining to be recognised as an Englishman. He problematises the adaptation of an English identity.

In these new attempts at his authorship, he understands that his colonial past haunts him although his British education has made him behave and think like the British. These “unsettled, unrooted” feelings (King, 2003: 58) make him question his life and his purpose in being a writer. He writes “the story of a struggle for self-assertion, its excitements, rages, passion, problems, irritations, defeats and concludes, sometimes triumphantly, sometimes with frustration, with ambivalence towards the worth of the struggle” (King, 2003: 58) through his stories in a changing world. In the beginning, he gains fame and appreciation with his books in his early career, but the more he gets acquainted with England, the lonelier he gets. To fill the psychological emptiness in his life, he acts as a mimic man and as an Anglicised writer. As Rob Nixon has argued, Naipaul is,

persuaded by his theory of mimicry that ex-colonies cannot sustain popularly rooted cultures of their own or generate inventive syntheses, he misreads a class-based dimension of the national condition for the state of the nation en masse. So, he portrays the

members of a spread of classes as manifesting a monolithic ‘colonial’ psychology that parrots metropolitan cultural values (1992: 138).

For Nixon, Naipaul thinks that once colonised societies cannot have solid cultures and identities. Although Nixon’s comment about Naipaul and his misconception of colonised societies is acceptable, it is wrong to make a generalising outcome for his style since his discourse and style show an alteration within years. The only agreeable part of Nixon’s point is that Naipaul manifests monolithic colonial psychology that “parrots metropolitan cultural values” in the second phase of his writing career. He mimics the dominant culture especially after understanding that there is a huge gap between his roots and his recent stance as a mimic man. Such a distance leads him to mimic the dominant culture. Hence, to fully adopt this new culture, he prefers to write through the coloniser’s eyes.

MSKC, therefore, is a novel in which Naipaul depicts his relationship with his adopted culture in the country. In the novel, Naipaul mimics English manners, and he deals with the structure of the English nation, culture, and style to objectify his “one yet many of national life” (Bhabha, 1990: 49). He wants to write stories that take place in England. Additionally, he creates English characters, because such a “presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation” (Bhabha, 1990: 49). Naipaul fantasies an English community to allow himself a new nation with a novel which is enriched an English setting and characters that he does not know in detail. Thus, he feels anxiety about his inadequate knowledge of his “adopted country to make a success of the novel” (French, 2008: 219).

The character, “Mr Stone epitomizes the well-known aspects of English life, especially the dreariness, routine, security and resignation of the poorly paid, somewhat lower middle-class staff in an organization, whether business or government” (King, 2003: 60). He is an Englishman, a real one with a proper job. He works as Head Librarian at Excal Corporation, and he lives in the heart of England. More precisely, Mr Stone is a typical Eurocentric English man who has prejudices against the colonised people. For instance, he feels uneasy and disturbed when “the streets were full of young people in art-student dress and foreigners of every colour” (Naipaul, 1963: 26). He is not comfortable with such diversities, and he is reassured when he finds out that the party to which he is invited is being held at a hotel with a “‘Europeans Only’ card below the bell” (Naipaul, 1963: 26). As

noted in the novel, he feels satisfied because even such a detail is “a refuge of respectability and calm” (Naipaul, 1963: 26).

With his new discourse, the focus of the novel is on the story of an English man who is anxious and fearful about his upcoming retirement. His anxiety about a new retired life by leaving old habits behind turns into the main concern of the novel. Mr Stone comes out with “the idea of the Knights Companion” (Naipaul, 1963: 57) to overcome the disparity of his loneliness. Such a concern reminds the current anxiety of Naipaul. He hints at the discouragements and failures of the colonised person in the colonial world with the figure of Mr Stone who should be tough enough to resist difficulties as his name suggests. Like Mr Stone, they somehow restart a new life with great hopes, but they end their journey toward a renovated life with despair. Likewise, this idea can be best associated with the recent decision of Naipaul in writing a standard English novel to cope with his sense of ambivalence of homelessness.

Mr Stone’s idea of companionship, which is an allusion to Roundtable knights of early English history, is the result of a desire to feel an attachment to society and to dismiss loneliness. The Knights Companion is designed to keep in touch with retired company employees to relieve their loneliness. With the success of this idea, Mr Stone is promoted, hence, he feels renovated and hopeful. However, Mr Stone faces the reality of life and is excluded from the project. In short, such a fantasy ends with an ultimate return to his desperate and lonely days again.

[P]articipation denied him. It was like his success from which at its height he had felt cut off, and which reminded him only of his emptiness and the darkness to come. A new confirmation of his futility presently arrived. For reasons which in his mind were confused – his restlessness, his fear of imprisonment at home (Naipaul, 1963: 106–7).

Mr Stone’s success is interrupted when he is withdrawn from the project. Such a result makes him feel alone and depressed again. Till his retirement, he turns to his previous routine; from work to the house where there is no one to share his loneliness. The house is empty both metaphorically and literary because his wife is not there because of the distance they feel from each other. There is an always illustrated scene of emptiness and loneliness. It can be deduced that such scenes, unlike the previous ones, make this novel more complicated and philosophically richer. The atmos-

phere is more serious, complex, and gloomy. These are quite relevant characteristics of the modern age. Moreover, these alterations in his style should be read as indicators of Naipaul's personal development in which he is more serious and more confused about his place in England. It is quite apparent that Naipaul aims at more complexity of personality, feelings, and psychology when compared to his previous works. The comic relief of the previous works is deepened and silenced. The story is enriched in depth but is shortened in pages. As he points out:

After Mr Biswas, I felt the need to react against this luxuriance and expansiveness, so instead, I set out in Mr Stone and the Knights Companion to write an impressionist novel pared to the bone. You can't skip a paragraph of the book, I think, and find that you haven't missed something important [...] The book could easily be twice the length, but I determined to put nothing inessential, however alluring; no more dialogue than was absolutely necessary, no picturesque description, nothing. (1964: 11).

Unlike the previous novels, Naipaul determines to include nothing inessential in his new novelistic style with his decision to get rid of the irrelevant length of the novel. *MSKC* may be said to be written with contradictory qualities when compared to the previous novel, *A House for Mr Biswas*, regardless of the topic they target. Both novels are constructed on a single person, Mr Stone, and Mr Biswas, who feel alienated and rootless. Besides, to illustrate his estrangement and dislocation, Naipaul portrays an older man defined by a sense of being and despair. As an older man at the age of sixty-two, Mr Stone is obsessed with the fear of death and aimlessness. He is a depressing figure as a character who is approaching retirement and is afraid of death and despair. There is always a sense of decay, and the general atmosphere is gloomy as an indicator of Mr Stone's approaching old age, and even this makes him feel desperate and decayed. "He was in the habit in odd moments of the solitude" and "the years had gone" (Naipaul, 1963: 15-6).

Such a notion of indifference, as stated above, and relatively nothingness that come with the ontological references can easily be associated with the psychological condition of post-1950 England where colonised people achieve to live as free individuals. Yet, the senses of dislocation, placelessness and homelessness, in which once colonised characters are trapped, are recounted through Mr Stone's desire to gain an identity. The condition of characters and the narratives of such characters who are dis-

located from their native environments are defined in such terms as out of place, dislocation (Ashcroft, et al. 2007: 65), estranged, exile (Ashcroft, et al. 2007: 85) and in-between. These themes are not alien to Naipaul's works, since they are widely embedded in the Naipaulian discourse through which he arrives at ambivalence. What is new in this novel is that they are embedded in the idea of having an English identity rather than just having an identity.

Naipaul forms an ontological story of Mr Stone and his awakening to self-awareness of his identity in this novel within the small, restricted world of a librarian. The awakening occurs as Mr Stone approaches his retirement when he gets old. Finding a new meaning and a new purpose to define himself before his retirement creates the drama of his situation in which he gets nothing.

Nothing that was pure ought to be exposed. And now he saw in that Project of the Knights Companion which had contributed so much to his restlessness, [...] All passion had disappeared. All action was a betrayal of feeling and truth. There remained to him nothing to which he could anchor himself. (Naipaul, 1963: 118-9).

The faint and artificial rendering of the emotion is reflected in the practice of the Knights Companion Project through which Mr Stone aims to have a sense of belonging. This Project is contrasted both with his true despair which lies too deep in the formulation of belonging and with his awareness that dissipates into the void of belonging nowhere. Hence, with such an organization, he tries to belong somewhere and fulfil his desire for identity. However, his organization turns into a failure and betrayal. As seen above, with such a betrayal, his world shutters and, there remains nothing to which he could anchor himself, even his late marriage. All his desire to struggle to avoid the emptiness he is trapped in has gone away. "Every ordered week reminded him of failure [...]" (Naipaul, 1963: 46). Moreover, his marriage turns into a failure and disappointment. His wife, Mrs Springer, even with her name implying spring and renewal do not take him out of the routine of his life. His last possibility of success is a short-lived one because his colleagues "[took] the one idea of an old man ignoring the pain out of which it was born and now he was no longer necessary" (Naipaul, 1963: 100). His companion idea gradually ends in disappointment. For the disappointment of Mr Stone, it is stated that "the notion that he was before betrayed by what was solid and permanent in the mundane order of things is now enhanced by seeing the purer creative order humbugged as well and

he is left, inevitably and despairingly, with a sense of impermanence and disorder” (Morris, 1975: 50).

Thus, his last struggles before his retirement to find meaning and sense for his life result in decay and demise, especially with the death of his companions through which “he had a realization [. . .] that all to which man linked himself [. . .] flattered only to deceive” (Naipaul, 1963: 42). Mr Stone understands that his struggle is futile. His failed and unhappy marriage as well as his unsuccessful attempt with such a companion bring him more despair, a feeling of loneliness and isolation. He sees “the order of the universe” is not “by creation that man demonstrated his power and defied this hostile order, but by destruction.” (Naipaul, 1963: 125).

As John Thieme has noted dissolution of death lead him to “the fundamental existential problem of growing old” (1984: 499), and thus also compared the plot to T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” (1984: 503) since this reminds T. S. Eliot’s works which bear an emphasis on death, demise, and dissolution. Naipaul recalls Eliot by “those who doubt the coming of the *Spring*” (original italics, Naipaul, 1963: 20) to reflect Mr Stone’s paradoxical situation in which he aims at rejuvenating, but gains death and decay like in Eliot’s first quatrain in “The Waste Land”². For the memories and recalled times, he uses “the words magnified and gave a focus to his uneasiness. They recalled a moment – then, memory and fear quickening, he saw that they recalled several moments, which had multiplied during the last year – of unease, unsettlement (Naipaul, 1963: 20).

As seen above, the general atmosphere of the novel in which despair, pessimism and dislocation dominate can be associated with Eliot’s works through the special connotations done by Naipaul. For instance, Mr Stone’s growing age recalls the lines of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” in which the speaker grasps that his decay is approaching:

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully! /Smoothed
by long fingers,

Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers, /Stretched on the floor, here be-
side you and me (Eliot, 1980b: 74-78).

I grow old... I grow old ... (Eliot, 1980b: 120).

² April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the death land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring/Dull roots with spring rain (Eliot, 1980a: 1-4).

As the poem suggests, time passes, and it passes so fast that it is so difficult to grasp the passage of time and day. Metaphorically, it is said that days pass without giving a clue whether it is afternoon or evening. The rapid passage of time causes confusion about the past, present, and future. Moreover, with the personification of day, the mortality of time is emphasized. Through the end of the day, in the evening, the personified day gets tired or sick. Day, like the lifetime of a person, is getting old through the evening, and it comes to an end. Therefore, at the end of the poem, the theme of growing age is stressed once more. The speaker confesses that time is passing and, he is growing old. Maybe not as poetic as Eliot does, Naipaul also describes the passing of time and Mr Stone's old age with a similar description:

There was a tree [. . .] by which he noted the passing of time, the waxing and waning of the seasons. The contemplation of this living object reassured him of the solidity of things. He had grown to regard it as part of his life, a marker of his past, for it moved through time with him. The new leaves of spring the hard green summer the naked black branches of winter none of these spoke of the running out of his life. They were only a reminder of the even flowing of time of his mounting experience, his lengthening past (Naipaul, 1963: 16-7).

Naipaul illustrates the passing of time with a description of a tree in the backyard of his house. Through the seasonal changes of the tree, he grasps the time shifts that give him solidity. Like the personified image of time in Eliot's poem, Naipaul reflects the passage of time through the leaves or naked branches of a tree. He says that these are the only reminders of his flowing days though they are speechless. The despair of growing old and flowing past is seen traced in both works. Moreover, it is said that Naipaul's "rootlessness and estrangement contribute to the widespread contemporary experience of alienation even among those who in the old world may have once felt inheritors of a tradition in the sense that T.S. Eliot defined it" (Thorpe, 1976: 384). Naipaul, like many other literary names, chooses Eliot to reflect the despair, rootlessness, and darkness of his fictional characters. Eliot's poems are the best way to describe the situation of Mr Stone and the writer himself in depth. Moreover, it is because of "Eliot's synthesis of past, present, and future. [It] is idealistic [...] his central idea is valid: how we formulate or represent the past shapes our understanding and views of the present (Said, 1994: 4).

Naipaul also attempts to figure out how his past shapes his present through Eliot's dilemma of whether the past is relevant to shape the present. With his ambivalent stance, Naipaul wants to focus on the synthesis of the past and present. Since "Eliot's ideas about the complexity of the relationship between past and present are particularly suggestive in the debate over the meaning of imperialism", and they are "so controversial, so fraught with all sorts of questions, doubts, polemics, and ideological premises as nearly to resist use altogether" (Said, 1994: 5), Naipaul chooses Eliot's ideological concepts and questions for his novel to grasp the complexity of imperialism that makes him an ambivalent character. While Naipaul uses his past as material for his earlier books, he pays more attention to Englishness by leaving his Trinidad experiences behind. Moreover, he prefers completely English materials both in form and context. Thus portrays an Anglicised Naipaul who adorns Western doctrines and literature. However, his choice of Eliot, especially "The Waste Land" for his novel, reflects his ambivalent mind as a debate over the influence of imperialism and as a conflict of past and present, and East and West. He tries to expand his feeling of diasporic uprootedness. Naipaul's canonical references from the English literature disguise him as a mimic writer addressing white readers. The very high modernist references are covers of his previous material.

Conclusion

Naipaul models Eliot on his new writing style which is planned to be an example of Western literature. It is known that "Naipaul belongs to a generation of writers who received their university education during a time when the use of myth and literary allusions by Joyce, Eliot and Yeats was in fashion" (King, 2003: 134). Hence, Naipaul uses Eliot's poems, especially "The Waste Land" to "show his awareness of being part of a tradition of English literature which praises the order represented by houses" in his previous novels. He also "questions the applicability of such a tradition to the decolonized West Indies, wonders whether his lamentation of the passing of order is like and influenced by his reading of T. S. Eliot. There is both recognition of and criticism of influence" (King, 2003: 82). His desire to be a part of the tradition and his criticism of such an influence are the perfect indicators of Naipaul's situation. He aims to write a novel canonical without indicating his colonised past.

Therefore, his ambivalent stance shows itself, again, in the point of whether he uses Eliot's work consciously or not. He wants to be an English writer, and he wants to avoid being classified as a writer with Eastern ori-

gins. This illusion leads him to see the world as a scene of binary opposition and blinds him to see the reality that he is a combination of these contradictions. His indifference to his own culture and his fondness for Western references are an illusion and an indicator of the fact that he is not able to combine both sides of his identity. Thus, such a situation is both the cause and effect of his in-between and ambivalent situation.

In his article “London”, Naipaul explains the problem of “being a regional writer” (1972: 14) in England. His attempt to articulate the canonical works in this novel demonstrates his dilemma. Even in his most Anglicised attempt to be an English writer, Naipaul reflects on the duality of his heritage and the difficulties that he encounters in trying to untangle them. His character cannot fit into society, and he is excluded from society like Naipaul who cannot fit into England exactly. Mr Stone returns to his lonely house where he begins, but Naipaul returns neither to his roots nor does he adopt his new country completely. Hence, the restrictions and the difficulties he feels are illustrated in his novel. Additionally, as Walter Clemens addresses neither Naipaul nor his fictional selves are rooted:

Himself a kind of displaced person, Naipaul’s forte is the uprooted, the dislocated modern man, torn between tradition and modernity, between local roots and the cosmopolitan demands and opportunities of the twentieth century [...]. His protagonists are most often motivated by a variety of personal concerns: [one of which is] coping with rootlessness [...] (1982: 13).

The sense of belonging to a place or having a root is the most visited topic of the novel among other topics like alienation or despair. His dislocation, alienation and in-betweenness are given through references to the other works and connotations from the literary works. Yet, the sense of rootlessness and his desire to belong somewhere is reflected in another literary work that has its connotation even in the title of the work. With the Knights Companion in the title, Naipaul refers to the great legend of the English heritage, Knights of the Round Table. Moreover, it is again referred to in the novel: “Your Knights Companion can form a Knight’s Circle. A Round Table. They can have a dinner every year. They can have competitions” (Naipaul, 1963: 68). It is widely known that the Round Table is organised to “prevent quarrels among barons, none of whom would accept a lower place than the others” (Kibler, 1991: 391). By sitting around a table, none of the barons claims a higher status than the other one, and this creates equality. With no head for the knights around the table, equality and

the sameness of humans are aimed. Likewise, Naipaul desires a society in England where everyone is equal, and no one is superior to the other. By giving a reference to this old legend of English society, he asks for a community with no prejudices and ranks it as an outsider or stranger. He wants to be accepted as one of them with equal rights. On the other hand, although Naipaul achieves such acceptance for a while with his previous writings, like Mr Stone who achieves success with the organization of the companionship, and then is excluded, Naipaul is also excluded with the recognition of the fact that he belongs to neither Trinidad nor England. the idea of “there remained to him nothing to which he could anchor himself” (MSKC, 1963: 119) indicates both his and his character’s position. He can find nothing to anchor himself and to cover his sense of rootlessness. Although he starts this novel with the idea to write a novel on his new adopted country, where he thinks he belongs, he again experiences ambivalence of his condition although this novel is quite different from the previous ones: “references to Naipaul’s homelessness resonate with a slightly different, though related, ambivalence” (Nixon: 1992: 26). in the end, Mr Stone returns to his empty house which symbolizes his rootlessness and placelessness: “Once before the world had collapsed about him. [...] In the empty house he was alone” (MSKC, 1963: 125). Moreover, the house is a house, but not a home for his characters. Once again, neither Miguel Street nor Sikkim Street in Trinidad, neither Brixton nor London is a home for Naipaul, and he feels the ambivalence of his in-between situation once again.

References

- Ashcroft, Bill et al. (2007). *Post-colonial Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1984). “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse”. *Discipleship: A Special I. on Psychoanalysis*, 28: 125-133.
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1990). *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.
- Boehmer, Elleke (2005). *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Clemens, Walter C. Jr. (1982). “The Third World in V.S. Naipaul”. *Worldview*, 25(9): 12-14.
- Eliot, Thomas S. (1980a). “The Waste Land”. *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature. Vol. II*. Ed. Frank Kermode and John Hollander. London: Oxford University Press.

- Eliot, Thomas S. (1980b). "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature. Vol. II*. Ed. Frank Kermode and John Hollander. London: Oxford University Press.
- French, Patrik (2008). *The World is What it is: The Authorized Biography of V.S. Naipaul*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kibler, William W. (1991). *Chretien DeTroyes: Arthurian Romances*. Trans. Carleton W. Carroll. London: Penguin Classics.
- King, Bruce (2003). *V. S. Naipaul*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McIntyre, W. Donald (1977). *The Commonwealth of Nations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Morris, Robert K. (1975). *Paradoxes of Order: Some Perspectives on the Fiction of V. S. Naipaul*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Naipaul, V. S. (1963). *Mr Stone and The Knights Companion*. London: Andre Deutsch.
- Naipaul, V. S. (1964). *An Area of Darkness*. London: Andre Deutsch.
- Naipaul, V. S. (1972). "London". *The Overcrowded Barracoon*. London: Andre Deutsch, 9-16.
- Nixon, Robert (1992). *London Calling: V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Parrinder, Patrick (2006). *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from Its Origins to the Present Day*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Said, Edward W. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage.
- Thieme, John (1984). "Beyond History: Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands*". *Re-visions of Canadian Literature*. Ed. Shirley Chew. Leeds: Institute of Bibliography and Textual Studies.

The following statements are made in the framework of "COPE-Code of Conduct and Best Practices Guidelines for Journal Editors":

Author's Note: This article is a revised version of a chapter from the PhD thesis of the writer "V. S. Naipaul's ambivalent attitude towards British imperialism in his selected novels" (2015), Pamukkale University, Denizli-Türkiye.

Acknowledgment: I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ali Çelikel for his valuable contribution to my PhD thesis.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: The author has no potential conflict of interest regarding research, authorship, or publication of this article.