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Title: A journey to the authentic self as told by V.S. Naipaul’s *Miguel Street, A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men.*
Abstract

This research will explore the journey to the development of an authentic self in postcolonial literature. In West Indian literature, the themes of identity and hybridity govern literary discussions with few information on the colonial as an individual being. This research aims to discuss the personal experience of the individual as he attempts to develop an authentic self in a West Indian society. An analysis of VS Naipaul’s *Miguel Street, A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* explores the gradual development of this human philosophy as the protagonists mature from an awareness of their objectivity to the absurdity of existence. The three stages of authenticity - An Awareness of Objectivity, Encounters with Boundary Situations and The Absurdity of Existence – coupled with a study of the novel’s interpretation of travel and knowledge, illustrates the journey from a universal experience to a unique, West Indian one. To examine this human philosophy Wilson Harris’ ‘Limbo Anancy Syndrome’, Derek Walcott’s view of the creative elements of mimicry and Naipaul’s theory on ‘Cultural Dependency’ work to discuss the nature of the colonial’s ‘objective being’ and explain his attempts to creating a ‘subjective self’. Resultantly, Naipaul’s novels reveal the common themes of displacement and rootlessness that connects inhabitants of the Caribbean diaspora. Thus, this study highlights the Empire’s influence on the Caribbean society and the colonial’s struggle with historical knowledge and escapism which hinders his development of the ‘self’.
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Introduction

Freedom, self-development and awareness are the nuclei of existential philosophy. Fathered by Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, existentialism ‘speaks of a personal freedom’¹ that defines man’s journey of developing the ‘self’ and creating and authentic existence. Now critiqued by numerous theoreticians, Kierkegaard’s question, ‘Who am I and why am I here?’, provided the introductory debate which suggests that “real knowledge is rooted in personal existence” (Beck 128). For this reason, Kierkegaard believes that man’s greatest accomplishment is to attain his freedom², steering his own course in life to determine his existence. Kierkegaard describes existence as a “category of being” (Dufrene 52) achieved through an accumulation of knowledge and experience. Upon achievement of this classification man evolves into “The Individual”, a stage of authenticity developed through his willingness to make decisions and choices. From this Kierkegaardian perspective, man is perceived to be born in a state of incompleteness and confusion, “thrown into existence, [travelling] without a compass” (Coates 231), until he accepts his predestined purpose to create himself. In 1927 seminal thinker, Martin Heidegger, expanded this theory to argue the existence of two stages of beings within man: the “objective being”, Sein, into which man is born; and the “subjective being”, or Dasein, achieved through personal growth (Heidegger 5; 11). By this account, at birth man is a model of Sein, with a potential existence that weighs on his decision to remain one of the crowd (Killinger 307), or accept and engage in the authentic journey.

Literary critic, Jean Paul Sartre, elaborates that the “freedom of man depends not on situation but on attitude” (Killinger 304). Centering on the relationship between attitude and

¹ Killinger 303.
² Killinger 305.
experiences, Sartre defines experience as “an encounter with nothingness”\(^3\) (Killinger 308) which impales man in a wave of insignificance, forcing him to recall his origin. ‘Nothingness’ stands as a challenge to the ‘subjective being’, pressing him to make another foregrounding decision – to ensure the sustainment of Dasein or return to objectivity. While Sartre acknowledges that nihility challenges the ‘subjective being’, Karl Jaspers’ theory of Boundary Situations features the defining moments in an individual’s life that precedes ‘nothingness’. These moments - such as grief, sickness, anxiety and the inevitability of death – drive man to make decisions that can potentially stunt the growth of his ‘self’. Resultantly, Boundary Situations unveil the absurdity of existence due to the cyclical nature of these experiences. Albert Camus interprets absurdity as “the objective world around man” (Killinger 309) and thus, man must ensure that there is a tension between himself and the absurd to keep the subjective alive (Camus 47). The development of the ‘self’ is therefore continuous, since at each successful outcome of a Boundary Situation, man is confronted with a ‘new situation’ that must undergo this process again. These philosophies are evocative of the enticement of objectivity as Dasein is achieved from man’s decision to accept the fragility and uncertainty of authentic development. In the context of this research three stages of authenticity are identified – An Awareness of Objectivity, Encounters with Boundary Situations and The Absurdity of Existence – to explore the development of the authentic self in the colonial\(^4\) individual.

\(^3\) In \textit{Man in the Modern Age} Karl Jaspers clarifies his definition of ‘nothingness’ in the excerpt; “it may seem essential that in his consciousness [man] shall be confronted with Nothingness; he must recall his origin. Whereas the outset of his historical course he was in danger of being physically annihilated by the natural forces, now his very being is menaced by a world he has himself established” (93-94).


\(^4\) Based on Naipaul’s view that to ‘be colonial means to be speared knowledge’ (“Prologue to An Autobiography” 66), the colonial in this text refers to the Caribbean individual who has yet to experience a sense of awareness and self-identity.
Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul’s fiction allows these stages to be examined as significant themes within his novels. These stages strive to provide an observation of the development of Naipaul’s characters within his texts and investigate the adjustments required to accurately convey the colonial experience. Conceived from an appreciation of Naipaul’s literature, and the truncated journeys of his characters, this thesis attempts to uncover and appreciate Naipaul’s depiction of attaining the authentic self, specifically from a colonial perspective. An investigation of this human philosophy within West Indian literature is designed to contribute further study to the numerous discussions on identity, with emphasis on authenticity and selfhood. V.S. Naipaul’s novels *Miguel Street*, *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* reveal the gradual development of the themes objectivity, boundary situations and the absurdity of existence, in the texts’ structure and treatment of knowledge, to show the complex development of the authentic self in the colonial individual.
CHAPTER I

Miguel Street– An Awareness of Objectivity

Naipaul’s early novel, *Miguel Street*, is a portrayal of the characters’ awareness of their objectivity, reflecting the “Caribbean’s inability to generate real history” (Nixon 6). This novel depicts the first stage of the journey as the protagonist is presented with the decision to travel to Europe or reject an opportunity for self-development. Written in 1955, the novel is a tribute to Naipaul’s childhood home, illustrating a pre-colonial Trinidad society and its workers, shopkeepers and peasants with the “clearest and unfailingly lucid insight” (Walsh 3). This declaration is illustrated in a composition of 16 sketches based on the street’s inhabitants that concludes with the author’s decision to leave Trinidad. Designed without a fixed storyline, the plot’s structure underscores Rohelhr’s argument of the significance of form in a novel, as “different [for] each writer and for each work” (1), to effectively convey the author’s intent. Accordingly, the portrayal of multiple stories by a third person narrator explores the effect of his interactions with several characters which inspires his departure from the island. A compilation of recollected experiences, these stories present a subjective omniscient perspective of life on the street; a skill Naipaul believes can only be executed through reflection and introspection. *Miguel Street* employs this narrative technique to explore the effects of knowledge and travel on the characters Popo, B. Wordsworth, Laura, Elias and Hat, to expose the author’s treatment of their awareness of objectivity.

The author introduces this awareness of objectivity in Chapter Two as Popo tells of his determination to create ‘the thing without a name’:

5 “Prologue to an Autobiography” 66.
“One day I said to Popo, ‘Give me something to make.’ ‘What you want to make?’ he said. It was hard to think of something I really wanted. ‘You see,’ said Popo. ‘You thinking about the thing without a name’” (Miguel Street 15).

‘The thing without a name’ is indicative of man’s desire to create an authentic existence out of his ‘objective being’. However, Popo is confronted with the predicament that he is unaware of what to create; categorizing the arbitrary act of ‘[thinking] of something you really want’ as the criteria for making ‘the thing’. Additionally, this creation is a metaphor for the relationship between the Caribbean and its blend of inhabitants. The colonial is born into a society whose history stems from a borrowed culture and forced migrations, encumbering him with a preoccupation with the past, conditions of historylessness and dislocation (McWatt 12). Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, elaborates that this ‘loss of the stable sense of self’ decentsers the individual and constitutes a ‘crisis of identity’ that begs the question ‘Who am I?’ 6. Thus, Popo becomes the ‘thing without a name’, an ‘objective being’ struggling to determine his existence in a society that fails to provide a stable foundation. This story defies Kierkegaard and Heidegger’s introductory arguments on authenticity7, and highlights the effects of the colonial experience on self-development. The colonial, unlike his European counterparts, is born into a society that holds no knowledge of itself8, thus limiting his own opportunity for personal growth. Therefore, Popo is forced to remain incognito, not by his apathy for self-discovery but the society’s failure to provide an apt environment – one Naipaul states “was no plot by the authorities to keep us in our darkness [but] was more simply that the knowledge wasn’t there” (“Two Worlds” 186).

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6 Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity” 597
7 Kierkegaard and Heidegger share the view that man should ‘steer his own course in life’ and exceed becoming ‘one of the crowd’ (Killinger 304).
8 Naipaul emphatically expresses this view in his essay “Prologue to An Autobiography”; “The English or French writer of my age had grown up in a world that was more or less explained. He wrote against a backdrop of knowledge. I couldn’t be a writer in the same way because to be colonial [was] to be spared knowledge” (66).
This theory is reinforced by Popo’s delight in “standing up in front of the shop sign ‘Builder and Contractor, Carpenter and Cabinet Maker’” (Miguel Street 16) as the character’s historylessness fuels his fear to commit to a title and “choose [his] existence” (Killinger 231). Similarly, B. Wordsworth dreams to establish his sense of self through poetry:

“I hope to distil the experiences of a whole month into that single line of poetry. So in twenty two years, I shall have written a poem that will sing to all of humanity” (Miguel Street 50)

However, this poem he labels ‘the greatest poem in the world’ does not materialize. Naipaul’s B. Wordsworth, full name ‘Black Wordsworth’ (46), is a symbolic representation of the Street’s production of ‘shadow’ characters9. A ‘colonial’ representation of English renown poet laureate, William Wordsworth10, ‘B’ attempts to create an existence for himself within a shadow that fades him into insignificance upon his death:

“I walked along Alberto Street a year later but could not find no sign of the poet’s house.[.] It was as though B. Wordsworth never existed” (52).

Naipaul’s allusion to William Wordsworth highlights the colonial’s need to merge with ‘another being’ to incite creation. B’s insignificance in death is the consequence of ‘shadowing’ another’s life as a means of creating the ‘self’11. Naipaul refers to this tragic downfall as ‘Caribbean Dependence’ since to be dependent on the goods of others encourages a half-made society of dependent people who will never create (The Writer and the World 137-38). Popo and

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9 Naipaul furthers this concept of the ‘shadow character’ in Hat’s portrayal of Rex Harrison; “Hat recalled Rex Harrison, and he had done his best to strengthen the resemblance. He combed his hair backwards, screwed up his eyes and he spoke very nearly like Harrison” (Miguel Street 12-13)
10 Naipaul highlights this mimicry in the phrase; “White Wordsworth was my brother. We share the one heart” (Miguel Street 46)
11 Walcott reiterates this view in is essay “What the Twilight Says” where he states; “Once the New World black had tried to prove that he was as good as his master, when he should have proven not his equality but his difference” (9).
Wordsworth’s search for ‘self’ through creation tells of their determination to create themselves into existence; their characteristics of namelessness, wood-work and poetry indicative of their personal struggle with development. Aware of their objectivity, these colonials show the influence of ‘incompleteness’ on their desire to create that results in the abandonment of their creation.

Furthermore, the narrator’s recollection of Laura’s rapidly increasing family\textsuperscript{12}, and the tragic fate of her eldest daughter Lorna, denotes the reproductive nature of objectivity within the text. A lifestyle of regular child bearing, Laura maintained a philosophy when raising her children that supported Kierkegaard’s views; “It have nothing like education in the world” (\textit{Miguel Street} 90). Disregarding her own subjectivity, Laura’s primary focus was encouraging the personal development of her children, one that can only be acquired through knowledge. Despite her efforts, the reduction of her daughter, Lorna, to a pattern of ‘generational replacement’\textsuperscript{13} highlights the restrictive nature of colonial life. This announcement of Lorna’s pregnancy forces Laura to confront her own objectivity, her tears a symbol of her awareness of her fixed, limited existence and her daughter’s inevitable descent into insignificance. Through Hat’s declaration, “life is a helluva thing. You can see trouble coming and you can’t do a damn thing to prevent it coming. You just got to sit and watch and wait” (\textit{Miguel Street} 91), this notion of a ‘generational condition’ is depicted as promoting objectivity and restricting the development of an authentic existence within the Third World. Cultural theorists have argued the fixed nature of the colonial experience

\textsuperscript{12} The text captures this Caribbean concept in the phrase;

“No Laura had eight children. There is nothing surprising in that. These eight children had seven fathers. Beat that! [I] would notice her belly rising for months. Then I would miss her for a short time. And the next time I saw her she would be quite flat. And the leavening process would begin again in a few months.” (\textit{Miguel Street} 84)

to establish the role of West Indian history on the individual. Now an ethnic and cultural tabula rasa, the West Indian population consists of migrants ‘from elsewhere’ resulting in their psychological displacement and an absence of ‘societal knowledge’ (Murdoch 575; Hall, “Culture and Identity and the Diaspora” 234). In consequence, displacement becomes a collective, cyclical experience for the colonial Sein fueled by the society’s historylessness.

Fruitless repetition is outlined in Elias’ development to briefly examine the impact of knowledge on the objective being. In the novel, this chapter discusses the influence of the colonial situation on the lives of the characters and their inability to escape the bounds of predetermined occupation routes: the choice between a cart driver and a sweeper.

“One day I was sweeping the pavement in front of the house where I lived, and Eddoes came and wanted to take away the broom from me…Eddoes said, ‘This is my job, boy. I have experience. Wait until you big like me’.” (Miguel Street 30-31).

This interaction with Eddoes illustrates the high esteem in which these positions are held and the character’s acceptance of his fate, thereby stimulating the narrator’s desire to ‘be as big as Eddoes’. Exemplifying Kierkegaard’s theory of ‘The Individual’ – a category of authenticity where man decides to “stand out from the crowd” (Coates 230) – the narrator’s decision to follow Eddoes’ footsteps points to his acceptance of the inauthentic. In contrast, Elias is praised for challenging this view as he aims to become more than the street intends. Described as “not that sort of boy…Elias was different, [he] had brains” (Miguel Street 31) and his dedication to education and becoming a doctor stimulated his evolution beyond the objectivity of the street. Working diligently alongside his tutor, Mr. Titus Hoyt I.A., Elias extended Laura’s philosophy and was awarded a ‘third grade’ at the Cambridge School Certificate. This achievement made Elias a powerhouse with an aim for unlimited success - a higher grade - yet, he was defeated by the unfamiliar “litritcher and poultry” (31). Although aware, determined and motivated to escape the comfort of an
inauthentic lifestyle, Elias became a “street aristocrat [driving] the scavenging carts” (35); continuing this pattern of a generational life despite the shared view that knowledge equates self-development.

Alternatively, this ‘generational condition’ continues to subject the young residents of Miguel Street into a colonial objectivity. Naipaul’s portrayal of the character Hat, however, contrasts the actions of his previous counterparts as he capitulates to Killinger’s philosophy of “freedom with suffering” (305). This theory propounds the idea of a preference for inauthenticity over authenticity due to “the magnitude of responsibility [that] the experience can carry” (305). Hat reveals his acceptance of his limited existence in the extract:

“Edward stopped working in the cow-pen and got a job with the Americans at Chaguaramas. Hat said, ‘Edward, I think you foolish to do that. The Americans ain’t here forever and ever. It ain’t have no sense in going off and working for big money and then not having nothing to eat after three four years’.” (143)

An integral part of the life of the Street, Hat represents the individual’s “flight from personal responsibility” (Coates 232) and content with his objectivity. Contradicting his neighbors, Hat declares his refusal to commit to the journey of self-development; a journey, he is aware, will experience a share of declivity. Thus, Hat represents an alternative to man’s objective awareness, providing a false sense of stability for the youth of the street. Well known for his role as mentor and father figure14, Hat’s Sein inspires the narrator’s acceptance of his own limitation pending his mentor’s imprisonment at Carrera – “When Hat went to jail a part of me had died” (Miguel Street 165). Prior to Hat’s imprisonment, the narrator was ensnared in a colonial patterning that mimicked Elias. He was awarded a ‘second grade’ at the Cambridge Exam which permitted him furlough

14 Hat occasionally took the children of the street to cricket games at the Oval where “‘people shouted, ‘They is all yours, mister?’ Hat smiles, weakly, and made people believe it was so” (Miguel Street 155).
from Miguel Street with “a job in the Customs” (35). Now an embodiment of success, the narrator
stimulated jealousy and inspiration amongst his peers only for his mythic achievement to be
devoured by Hat’s removal. With his stability shattered and decline now inevitable, his abuse of
drugs, alcohol and acts of delinquency provoked his migration to Europe;

“‘You getting too wild in this place’ [I] said to my mother, ‘Is not my fault really. Is just
Trinidad. What else anybody can do here except drink?’” (166-167)

The narrator’s departure from the island envelops the claims of the characters of the street – the
island holds you in a fixed state of objectivity. This is contrasted by the structure of the novel
whose versatility aids in underscoring the static nature of colonial life. While each story is a new
and unique one, each experience notes the awareness of objectivity and the importance of
knowledge.

*Miguel Street’s* exploration of the relationship between objectivity and knowledge, reveals
the character’s shared experience of displacement and insignificance. Concluding with the
narrator’s migration, Naipaul’s text opens the discussion of travel as the only escape from this
objective pigeonhole, forcing the displaced to leave ‘dis place’ to stimulate self-development.
Thus, travel becomes the aim of the ‘colonial objective’, a journey that is expected to impose
awareness on the individual.
CHAPTER II

A House for Mr. Biswas – Encounters with Boundary Situations

Karl Jaspers holds that human existence is a search “for unity, destined to fail time and again” (Jaspers, Von de Wahrheit 703); a cyclical process that disrupts stability and forces one to re-evaluate his Dasein. Suitably, Boundary Situations, or Limit Situations, represents an awareness of one’s subjectivity. In Philosophie II, Jaspers writes; “experiencing limit situations and existing are the same” (204), thus, Boundary Situations illuminates the finiteness of the individual, encouraging one to experience nihility. Sartre defines this experience of ‘nothingness’ as a period in which man questions his existence and battles with the decision to act upon his situation or ignore it (Sartre 16; 35). These situations are an integral and inescapable part of life, therefore, as a ‘subjective being’ “man is always in a specific situation” (Jaspers, Philosophie II 209). Categorized as inevitable events, these Limit Situations of death, grief and anxiety allows one to question the order-sustaining structure of life. Selfhood and awareness, however, can only be achieved if a Limit Situation is experienced “with open eyes”; for whilst Limit Situations disrupt the continuity of one’s life, it presents an opportunity for self-development. A House for Mr. Biswas extensively depicts the frequency of these Situations on the journey to selfhood. It demonstrates the cyclical nature of the authentic journey that explores the unpredictability and magnitude of the experience on Mohun Biswas’ life.

A portrayal of Naipaul’s interpretation of the European bildungsroman, this text highlights the connection between the post-colonial subject and the issue of knowledge. In outlining Biswas’ journey, Naipaul uncovers the importance of travel and experience on an authentic existence.

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15 See Being and Nothingness pages 17-19 where Sartre defines ‘nothingness’ as determined by a period in which man becomes ‘aware’ and questions his significance.

16 Jaspers, Philosophie II 209.
When examined individually, each journey shows the development of Boundary Situations and experiences of nihility in relation to the character’s decisions. Scott Cohen’s sociological research, of the significance of travel on self-development, argues that a main indicator for travel is to evade the pressures of the home society (29). However, whilst Cohen focuses on touristic travel outside of the home country, Biswas’ journey highlights the effect of inter-migration on the individual. In this journey, special focus is applied to Arwacas, The Chase, Green Vale and Port of Spain which reflects the extent of the protagonist’s decisions on his outcome.

**Arwacas: Hanuman House**

Biswa’s admittance into the Tulsi household originated with the love letter “I love you and I want to talk to you” (*Biswa* 85). Following an exchange of “stares a few times” (83) Biswa’s love letter represents his determination to create more of himself in a society that pressed his pursuit of a wife and family. Consequently, this faint disturbance at the edge of the Tulsi web was sufficient for his lifelong involvement.

“‘So you really do like the child?’ [He] felt it would be graceless to say no. ‘Yes [I] like the child’. Incomprehension, surprise, then panic, overwhelmed Mr. Biswa.” (90)

Bullied into a relationship with ‘the child’, Biswa was recruited by the Tulsis, a colonial Hindu mafia, which consequently resulted in his loss of freedom and pursuit of individuality. The Tulsi clan is a symbol of authority in Biswa’s society, and entrapped by their expectation of becoming a Tulsi-husband, the protagonist descends into a permanent depression that fuels his regret of the “weakness [and] inarticulateness [he exhibited] that evening” (91). The “complex net of relationships and transient alliances”17 at Hanuman House allowed its residents to float aimlessly through life unnoticed, suffocating them with a feeling of “loss, unimportance and fright” (91) that

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17 Walsh 34.
became Biswas’ Limit Situation. Aptly, his decision to “paddle [his] own canoe” (107) represents Biswas’ personal revolution against the Tulsi empire. Fashioned in keeping his occupation as a sign painter, this rebellion provided a temporary escape from the mockery and distaste expressed by the authority figures of the home. Nonetheless, his attempts to coexist in Hanuman House’s shared community is plagued with nihility; “suppose that at one word I could just disappear from this room, what would remain to speak of me?” (131). This provokes the protagonist to forge an existence through a physical attack on the family’s prized son, Owad18 as a form of resistance, terminating his residence to a temporary exile in The Chase.

The Chase

The Chase, as a symbol of Mr. Biswas’ loneliness and a reflection of his childhood home19, instantly consumed him with the feeling that “he had never thought it would be like this when he found himself an establishment of his own” (145). Provided by the Tulsis, Biswas’ ownership of his first home was diminished by the family’s persistent control over him.

“Mr. Biswas found himself a stranger in his own yard. But was it his own? Mrs. Tulsi and Sushila didn’t appear to think so. The villagers didn’t think so. They had always called the shop the Tulsi shop, even after he had painted a sign and hung it above the door:

_The Bonne Esperance Grocery_

_M. Biswas Prop_

_Goods at City Prices._” (151)

Not unlike _Miguel Street_’s Popo, Biswas attempts to create an identity beyond the Tulsi clan by painting a sign he hung above the door, but his identity never changed. A canonical powerhouse, the Tulsis were the four plastered mud walls and old thatch roof that confined him in a darkened soot stained nonexistence. However,

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18 The importance of Owad is expressed in the phrase, “‘the first thing I hear is that you try to beat up Owad. I don’t think we can stand you here any longer’” (_Biswas_ 140).

19 This is expressed in the line; “For Mr. Biswas it was like returning to the village where he had spent his early years” (_Biswas_ 141).
“Biswas continued to feel [that] it was temporary and not quite real, and it didn’t matter that the house was arrange. [Real] life was to begin for them soon, and elsewhere. The Chase was a pause, a preparation.” (147).

Granted that his insignificance displaced and alienated him, this temporary residence gave momentum to his journey home, re-evaluating his destination to not only a house but one fashioned from his own design. This change in perspective echoes the existentialist view that self-development can be achieved through experience (Killinger 304; Cohen 36), improving man’s decision making process and self-development. Jaspers’ conclusion that Limit Situations “are unbearable for life” (Psychologie II 229) forces the individual to determine whether he must accept the situation and develop himself or remain stagnant. Biswas’ rebellion against the Tulsis and his awareness of the brevity of The Chase shows the character’s acceptance of his situations and his determination to conquer them. The protagonist’s displacement returns him to “a nonentity, a blank void” (Biswas 90) that inspires his escape from the House. Stimulated by his developing perspectives, this character opts to ‘insuranburn’ the expectations he held for his existence and physically redirect his path.

Green Vale

The Sugar Estate of Green Vale embodies the history and tradition of the Caribbean. Inspired by his experiences in the Tulsi house and Chase mud home, the protagonist arrives at the estate as a driver, overseer and representative for the clan. This leads to Babin’s concept of “regional pride, nation consciousness and the search for identity” (69) to constitute the prominence of displacement in West Indian fiction and the Caribbean society. Miguel Street’s portrayal of this experience of

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20 Naipaul’s use of the term ‘insuranburn’ in, A House for Mr. Biswas, suggests the only remaining option for the individual to profit from a failed endeavor. The research incorporates this meaning to highlight the character’s decision to gain from his limit situation, underscoring his determination for self-development.
insignificance connects both novels to reflect the shared world of the colonial despite his journey. The rurality of the Vale, and its historical symbolism, accentuates Biswas’ descent into madness as he attempts to build himself, and his home, on a foundation of fear and incompleteness. Alone and imprisoned in his barrack home, Biswas plunged into a stillness he believed only movement and travelling could destroy. He no longer prolonged the construction of his home for fear that “unless he started his house now, he never would. His children would remain at Hanuman House, he would remain in the barrack room and nothing would arrest his descent into the void” (237). Thus, construction became a testament to developing his authentic self and an escape from the provisions of Hanuman House as it “challenged the alertness of the [barracks] and the objects in it” (229). The house is destined to symbolize a solid foundation for his children, and cement the potential for self-development. Alternatively, the construction and redesign of his ideal home to accompany the rusted galvanize sheets, and walls of cedar wood instead of pitchpine (259) creates an obstruction for the character. Biswas’ route to selfhood now mirrored the characterless ‘shacks’ that typified the homes that littered the island, symbolizing his insignificance and inability to develop an authentic ‘self’.

Confounded, this experience changed Biswas’ perspectives and feelings toward the house;

“a great calm settled on him, and he made a decision. He had for too long regarded situations as temporary; henceforth he would look upon every stretch of time [as] precious… every thought had to be given to every action.” (266)

This declaration exemplifies Jaspers’ perceptive that “man [loses] himself in various workday cares, concentrating upon immediate aims” (Killinger 308) with no time to contemplate ‘life as a

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21 This determination is expressed in the excerpt; “He determined to put his money aside, and add to it, until he had enough to build his house…a real house, made with real materials; wooden walls [and] a galvanized iron roof [with] a wooden ceiling.” (Biswas 210)
whole’. A decline into ‘nothingness’ forced Biswas to determine his life as ‘precious’, not to be wasted on the impossibility of a home that now clouds his ability to “bring light and find meaning”\(^{22}\) in this situation. No longer inspired to ‘insuranburn’ Biswas was trapped in the incompleteness of this structure that quickly “surrendered [him] to the darkness” (Biswas 267). Unlike his previous experiences with Boundary Situation, Green Vale introduced the impossibility of selfhood. This confrontation unleashed the madness which became the catalyst that altered his authentic development. Coupled with the theme of indentureship that inspired the Vale’s Sugar Estate, Biswas’ downfall reflects the relationship between the rurality of the Caribbean and its preservation of man’s objective being. Whilst travel promises an escape from the feelings of alienation and displacement (Cohen 29) this protagonists’ journey leads one to conclude that those determined for self-development “shouldn’t remain in this backward place” (Biswas 301) but move to a city of promise for escape.

**Port-of-Spain**

Reminiscent of Miguel Street’s portrayal of England as a refuge, for Mr. Biswas Port-of-Spain provides a stability that allows him to climb the final gradient of his life; one that incentivized a profitable career in journalism and the academic success of his children. The progressive development this city represents provides a motivating environment that compliments Biswas’ mental state (Walsh 40). Mr. Biswas’ residence in Port-of-Spain saw the growth of his material possession which correlates with his own person growth. Alfred Gell’s study on the adoption of ‘Western lifestyle phenomena’ discusses the consumer behaviors of Sri Lankan fishermen’s desire to attach personal expression to goods; “a status seeking attempt to keep up with the Joneses” (114). In the context of the text Biswas’ purchase of his ‘Perfect’ car and

\(^{22}\) Jaspers, *Philosophie II* 203.
acquisition of a specific home recognizes his societal obligation to create himself by mirroring Western desires. Consequently, Mr. Biswas’, like B. Wordsworth, attempts to create a ‘self’ through inspiration from the Empire, a proven flaw in the authentic journey. The character’s decline is confirmed in the impulsive purchase of his St. James home; a poorly designed structure on ‘reclaimed swampland out of discarded frames found on an abandoned airfield’ (Biswas 9). Blinded by the disbelief that he had finally ‘made it into the world’, Biswas failed to notice the grossness’ (570) and hazardous vulnerability of a house he initially considered “something so new, so clean, so modern, so polished” (571). Presumptively, the disclosure of the home’s incompleteness, its unlit hallways and an uneven staircase, announces the cyclical nature of the authentic journey. Ending this journey in re-construction, Naipaul’s depiction of Mohun Biswas details the repressive role of the colonial experience on self-development. Moreover, the threat of Hanuman House on Biswas’ existence reveals the psychological development he acquired from the journey, proposing that Boundary Situations ensures an “awakening experience for the individual” (Jaspers, Philosophie II 204)

Man’s potential to “exist as a subject – a self-determining agent” (Killinger 304) is based on his ability to uncover the knowledge of his ‘true self’. This knowledge is rooted in man’s personal existence, manifesting an awareness of his inescapable finiteness (Beck 128). It is through knowledge that man becomes the master of his world, responsible for his rehabilitation and restoration. For the colonial, however, Naipaul discusses the impossibility of this self-knowledge due to an absence of his historical knowledge.

“All children, I suppose, come into the world like that, not knowing who they are. But for the French child, say, that knowledge is waiting” (“Two Worlds” 189); however, for the West Indian child, the author recognizes historylessness and displacement as the result of the wave of migration that built the Caribbean. Naipaul models Biswas’ early life to echo
this phenomenon and its disastrous effects on the individual. Written over a period of three years, the text holds a deep poetic truth that “creates a world, peoples it and shapes its progress” (Walsh 31). Biswas’ journey commences with the loss of “the only house to which [he] had some right” (Biswas 40), setting the tone of displacement in a childhood that “was forked at the roots” (37) and his relocation to Pagotes. Exhibiting history’s influence, Bipti’s act of forfeiting her home to her Columbus-inspired brother-in-law\(^{23}\) symbolizes the abandonment of the only personal history Biswas possessed, stripping her son of a stable foundation in which to build his ‘self’. Additionally, their departure echoes themes of indentureship and slavery, and the loss and displacement that followed. Like these early inhabitants, Biswas was uprooted from his ‘home’ and transplanted in a shared space that exhausted his individuality. This early life in Pagotes saw the official establishment of the character’s existence in the development of a “buth sutificate” (43) and enrolment at the Canadian Missionary School. Education was categorized as a form of “provision and protection” from the limitations of society, however, this protection was strengthened by the European-inspired curriculum that plagued the school system;

Mr. Biswas was taught other things. He learned to say the Lord’s Prayer in Hindi from the ‘King George V Hindi Reader’, and he learned many English poems by heart from the ‘Royal Reader’. At Lal’s dictation he made copious notes, which he never seriously believed, about geysers, rift valleys, watersheds, currents, the Gulf Stream, and a number of deserts. He learned about oases, which Lal taught him to pronounce ‘osis’, and ever afterwards an oasis meant for him nothing more than four or five date trees around a narrow pool of fresh water, surrounded for unending miles by white sand and hot sun. He learned about igloos. In arithmetic he got as far as simple interest and learned to turn dollars and cents into pounds, shilling and pence. The history Lal taught he regarded as simply a school subject, a discipline, as unreal as the geography.” (46)

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\(^{23}\) Dhari, Biswas’ uncle, upon his brother’s death “went on forking, rocking the implement in the earth, tearing the roots that kept the earth firm…. ‘He is only after your father’s money. Let him look’” (Biswas 37-38). This echoes Christopher Columbus’ voyages in search for riches.
The limited reach of these disciplines expose the gap between what is taught at school and the reality of the students. Education becomes a conversion experience for the colonial, depleting his sense of ‘self’ and encouraging his displacement. Likewise, this conversion process is performed through the child’s recitation of Christian prayers in Hindi; redirecting his relationship with his Indian heritage to promote European culture. Derek Walcott supports this perspective as he describes Caribbean writers as natural assimilators who knew of the “literatures of empires [through] their essential classics” (“What the Twilight Says” 4) and whose Caribbean culture is ‘hidden in the elation of discovery’. Ironically, the significance of the arithmetic equation *ought  onwards are ought*, echoed throughout Mr. Biswas’ journey, signifies the psychological turmoil experienced by the West Indian determined to develop beyond Sein. This point of view connects with Naipaul’s early exploration of this theme and society’s role in the propagation of objectivity. Subsequently, these novels reveal the dominance Euro-based knowledge and education maintains when muffling the West Indian’s ‘self’. Education, as a process for recreation and adaptation, encouraged Biswas’ reliance on canonical literary works, transposing its contents to his own colonial narrative; “[he] discovered the solace of Dickens. Without difficulty, he transferred characters and settings to the people and places he knew” (254). On beginning his journey, exposure to this foreign knowledge fostered a disconnection with reality and an unfamiliarity with the local landscape. ‘Home’ therefore, represents beyond the development of a four-poster structure but the unearthing of an identification with the ‘self’ one was encouraged to abandon. Derek Walcott’s poem “Home” expresses this shared definition in the lines; “I do not live in you, I bear / my house inside me, everywhere” (40). This view reshapes Biswas’ search for tangible ownership to the acquisition of a spiritual serenity that will accompany the wanderer throughout his journey. The colonial ‘object’ is then trapped in a “colonial zone of par excellence” (Santos
49), a realm of incomprehensible foreign beliefs and behaviors that continue to exclude him. Unlike the characters of British writer Samuel Smiles’ self-help texts, which inspired Biswas, the protagonist’s attempt to work hard and be rewarded is limited by his colonial past. On this account, knowledge through education unarms the colonial prior to his journey. This results in an escape into the imaginary world of the Empire that redesigns the universal ‘objective being’ to a convoluted, shared colonial one.

Combined with the events of travel, Boundary Situations and ‘nothingness’, knowledge differentiates the colonial journey to selfhood from its universal hypothesis. Inspired by one’s colonial past, themes of displacement and insignificance impregnate the journey with a cultural loss that further shipwrecks the individual. A result of these disadvantages, the absurdity of an authentic existence is implied by Biswas’ possession of his St. James home; indicating that each limit situation is merely a prologue to an upcoming experience.

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24 Author Samuel Smiles was Biswas’ favorite author whose work he actively applied to his own life;

“He stayed in the back trace and read Samuel Smiles. He had bought one of his books in the belief that it was a novel, and had become an addict. Samuel Smiles was as romantic and satisfying as any novelist, and Mr. Biswas saw himself in many Samuel Smiles heroes: he was young, he was poor, and he fancied he was struggling. But there always came a point when resemblance ceased. The heroes had rigid ambitions and lived in countries where ambitions could be pursued and had a meaning. He had no ambition, and in this hot land, apart from opening a shop or buying a motorbus, what could he do? What could he invent?” (Biswas 190)
CHAPTER III

*The Mimic Men – The Absurdity of Existence*

American philosopher Charles Guignon expounds authenticity as the unveiling of the ‘real me’ entrapped within the individual; a result of “introspection, self-reflection and meditation” (4). In his study, Guignon warns of the un-fulfilment of this journey that “turns out to be a set up for disappointment and failure” (5). Albert Camus refers to this experience as the absurdity of existence initiated by man’s desire for subjectivity (Killinger 309). Mr. Biswas’ failure to attain an impeccable home supports this hypothesis through the continuity of his journey due to compulsory renovations on the home. Thus, for one to achieve an authentic existence, man must simultaneously accept and rebel against the absurdity of life for “living is keeping the absurd alive” (Camus 38). Naipaul’s confessional novel, *The Mimic Men*, chronicles the life of protagonist Ranjit Kripalsingh and his journey from the island of Isabella to his self-exile in Europe. Creating his memoir, Kripal’s recollection of his journey, as an original representation of the absurdity of his existence, is observed through his travels and perspective on knowledge through mimicry.

Naipaul explores two forms of travel experiences within the novel – physical migration and psychological journeying. Kripalsingh’s physical migration began with his attainment of an international scholarship that encouraged his movement from “the narrowness of island life” (*Mimic Men* 69) to a city he declares “the world” (18). The island of Isabella represents a land awaiting discovery, removed from the development and excitement experienced by the rest of the world; therefore, “to be born on an island like Isabella, is to be born to disorder” (127). Kripal saw travel as a means of escaping the limitations of colonial life. Author V.S. Naipaul, shares this desire for escape in his essay “The Middle Passage” where he writes;

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25 The narrators’ perspective of the island is expressed in the phrase; “Here the island was like a place awaiting Columbus and discovery” (*Mimic Men* 120).
“I had never wanted to stay in Trinidad. When I was in fourth form I wrote a vow on the end of my *Kennedy's Revision Latin Primer* to leave within five years.” (41)

This experience, a shared one amongst many West Indian scholars\(^{26}\), reiterates the theme of travel and escapism in fiction and reality. Consequently, the Caribbean is rendered an environment that devours the prospects of its inhabitants, holding them to a life of uncertainty and dependence on the Empire. *Miguel Street, A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* suggests that the desire for travel and movement is imbedded in Caribbean culture. Naipaul’s treatment of place and displacement echoes the discussion of Ashford, Griffiths and Tiffin which studies the influence of the ‘Western Canon’\(^{27}\) on eroding the colonial’s sense of ‘self’. Inspired by the mass efflux of colonials to Europe, Walcott predicts the potential success of these journeys when one moves from exile to homecoming. Walcott applauds the colonial’s travel to the Empire as he determines that dependence ensues when one uses history as a means of discovery (Izevbaye 70; Walcott, “What the Twilight Says” 30). Thus, to dive into the rabbit hole of a past the colonial has little access to prompts the question, ‘Where would it end?’. Travel offers the colonial an opportunity for rediscovery since the West Indian must “remember our experience of different empires” (Walcott, “Caribbean Culture or Mimicry?” 4) to build an awareness of their limited existence. Kripalsingh’s desire “to get away, to a place unknown, among people whose lives [I have] never

\(^{26}\) Brathwaite shares this experience in his essay “Timehri” were he states; “When I saw my first snow-fall, I felt that I had come into my own; I had arrived; I was possessing the landscape” (275).


\(^{27}\) In her research paper “Who is Afraid of the Canon?” Marie-Densie Shelton describes the canon as a term “commonly used [to] legislate knowledge and draws clear dividing lines between categories of good and bad, worthy and worthless, we and them, masters and the subaltern” (136). The term ‘Western Canon’ thus refers to the authoritative Empires that controlled the Third World. Shelton, Denise, Marie. “Who is Afraid of the Canon?”, *Pacific Coast Philosophy*. vol.32, no.2, 1997, 136-139. JSTOR: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1316492.
entered” *(Mimic Men* 156) illuminates Walcott’s hypothesis as he yearns to forge a connection with the worlds described in his literature of the Empire. Whilst Naipaul explored the effects of inter-migration in *Biswas*, this experience of European travel affords the colonial an opportunity to interact with the world that dominates his society. For the protagonist, London is freedom, “there was no one to link my presence with my past”, motivating Kripal’s desire to create his own identity and “choose the character that was easiest and most attractive” (19) 28. Nonetheless, these feelings of displacement and rootlessness accompanied Kripal to Europe;

> “I found myself longing for the certainties of my life on the island of Isabela, certainties I had once dismissed as shipwreck. Shipwreck: I have used this word before. With my island background, it was the word that always came to me. And this was what I felt I had encountered again in the great city: this feeling of being adrift, a cell of perception, little more, that might be altered, if only fleeting by any encounter.” (26)

Supporting Walcott’s theory that exile can encourage growth and development, Kripal’s fixed state of ‘shipwreck’ signifies that the Empire is unable to secure one’s authentic development and selfhood. Still, Kripal informs that “the idea of the city remains” (17) despite one’s rootlessness. Aware of the journey, the protagonist admits to the tenacity of the colonial’s search for the self, a pursuit he undergoes in vain. Walcott recognizes this awareness in the wake of European travel to improve one’s perception of his ‘self’ and connect him to the island he once escaped29. The poet’s

28 Naipaul’s 2001 novel *Half a Life* reiterates this perspective in the detailed explanation of protagonist Willie Chandran’s experience in London;

> “No one he met, in the college or outside it, knew the rules of Willie’s own place, and Willie began to understand that he was free to present himself as he wished. He could, as it were, write his own revolution…. He could, within reason, remake himself and his past and his ancestry.” (57).

29 Walcott expresses this in the phrase;

> “For imagination and body to move with originality we must being again from the bush. That return journey, with all its horror of rediscovery, means that annihilation of what is known…. Out of it, with patience, new reverberations would come.” (“What the Twilight Says” 23).
The Prodigal delicately encapsulates this perspective in the persona’s exchange with his European neighbor after his return from a visit to Italy; “‘Why didn’t you stay long? / I said: ‘I have an island.’ ‘And it was calling you?’/ To say yes was stupidness but it was true’” (31). The poem, a record of the persona’s voyage to finding himself, advocates that “wandering the village in search of another subject / other than yourself, it is yourself you meet” (6). Once ignored, the relationship between the persona and his Caribbean past is reignited by his exploration of Europe, resulting in his act of homecoming. However, Naipaul does not support this outcome as Kripal, after innumerable journeys between snow and sea, seeks comfort in self-exile in a London hotel surrounded by colonials who share this fate.

Writing is an outlet for improvement that imposes order and expression to Kripalsingh’s story. This character, like his creator, employs memory as an influential writing tool that captures his candid passion and confusion in the work30. Olive Senior endorses this perspective with the view of writing as an art-form that questions experience and allows the writer to interrogate his experiences and share the questions and answers with his audience (Senior 158). Through this perspective, one can infer that the synchronous simplicity and confusion of the colonial’s background initiates a relationship between the text and its author. This is the confessional element of The Mimic Men, the comingling of mental and spiritual travel that allows the author to revisit his experiences “of guilt, shame and naïve innocence in a quest to understand the source of his current trauma” (Rohlehr, “Where is Here?” 7). Accordingly, this psychological development extends the individual’s journey, allowing a recollection of forgotten experiences and an

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30 In his 2001 Nobel Prize lecture “Two Worlds”, Naipaul declares; “I will say I am the sum of my books. …I feel that at a stage of my literary career it could have been said that the last book contained all the others” (182-183).
exploration of the themes of discovery, the New World and slavery that permits introspection and personal growth\textsuperscript{31}.

“I thought of writing. It was my hope to give expression to the restlessness [which] this great upheaval has brought about” (\textit{Mimic Men} 32).

Naipaul’s \textit{Miguel Street} exemplifies this quote as the author experiences the return of lost memories when he attempts to write the “Bogart” chapter\textsuperscript{32}. Comparably, the three-part layout of \textit{The Mimic Men}, enwraps the protagonist’s colonial life within his European experiences, highlighting the significance of the colonial experience as the heart of the journey\textsuperscript{33}. Forced to assume an identity that reflects another, the colonial experience is the focus of Kripal’s mimic development and feeling of insignificance, influencing his decision and motivating ambition. Furthermore, engulfed in the European encounters that constitute Part One and Three, this structure underscores the importance of the Caribbean and European experience on the development of the West Indian’s story;

“To become a writer [I] had thought it necessary to leave. Actually, it was necessary to go back. It was the beginning of self-knowledge” (“Prologue to an Autobiography” 79).

Psychological travel allows Kripal to dance between the past and the present, inducing the character’s self-development. Notwithstanding his exile, “long after the fertilizer from the metropole have drenched [his] soil” (Nettleford 245), the writer psychologically journeys to the

\textsuperscript{31} Naipaul’s 1986 essay, \textit{The Enigma of Arrival}, references this view in the phrase; “Emptiness, restlessness built up again; and it was necessary once more, out of my internal resources alone, to start on a book, to commit myself to that consuming process again.” (27)


\textsuperscript{32} Naipaul explains his experience when writing the chapter in the phrase; “When I began to write about Bogart’s street I began to sink into a tract of experience I hadn’t before contemplated as a writer.” (65)

\textsuperscript{33} Rex Nettleford supports this view as he sees Naipaul, and Walcott, as “writers with something unique to say about the human condition, where they come from and how they were socialized” (240).
Caribbean to reflect. This theory of returning to the past to ‘keep the absurd alive’ intimates Wilson Harris’ ‘Limbo Anancy Syndrome’ on the importance of historical awareness on developing Caribbean identity. However, whilst Harris’ syndrome describes a ‘gateway’ between the New World and the colonial’s African past (152) Kripal’s limbo between his Isabellean past and European present provides the colonial with a return that features his personal experiences. This technique corroborates the view that the colonial ‘self’ is influenced, not by one, but many cultural experiences; “I who am poisoned with the blood of both, / Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?” (Walcott, “A Far Cry from Africa” 18). Kripalsingh’s journey to Europe is, therefore, an integral component in ‘self’ development, enabling one to experience a sense of awareness and discovery.

The text’s conclusion with the dates, August 1964-July 1966, not only refers to the period in which Kripal wrote his memoir, but references the layout of a diary entry, that reiterates the repetitive nature of writing. Camus’ 1942 philosophical essay, The Myth of Sisyphus, further illustrates the absurdity of existence through the description;

“a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it, and push it up a slope a hundred times over; face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay–covered mass…At the very end of his long effort [the] purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit” (120-121).

From this extract, the journeys of Naipaul’s characters reflect Sisyphus’ repeated struggle uphill, clearly depicting the philosophical view that subjectivity is achieved through persistence. Furthermore, whilst Walcott’s notable proclamation “We read. We travel. We become” (The Prodigal 31), implies a simplicity in the journey, Naipaul counteracts this phrase with his own – “educated, degreed, travelled” (Mimic Men 55). The author’s rejection of ‘becoming’ and ‘homecoming’ is the essence of Camus’ absurd existence. Travel is therefore continuous, and through this novel one can conclude the significance of the psychological journey over the physical
one; granting an awareness that “all landscapes eventually turn to land, gold of the imagination to
the lead of the reality” (9). Thus, destination will not secure Dasein if there is no introspection and
reflection of the journey one experiences.

Additionally, Naipaul’s use of mimicry reveals the colonial’s attempt to generate
knowledge from of his historylessness. Described as “two-dimensional [simple] versions of
themselves” (Mimic Men 13) ‘the mimic’ develops beyond Miguel Street’s B. Wordsworth to the
reinvention of Ranjit Kripalsingh to Ralph Singh; establishing a form of anonymity by employing
public and private identities.34 Echoing Biswas’ ought oughts are ought, Kripal’s transformation
is evidence of the colonial’s assumed insignificance and an attempt to create an opportunity for its
inhabitants through recreation. Mimicry, then, reduces the individual to a mere actor performing
on a stage for the approval of his audience. This perspective inspires Walcott’s theory that creation
succeeds mimicry. Sustained by the view that “everything is mere repetition” (“Caribbean Culture
or Mimicry?” 7), Walcott posits that mimicry stems from the dependence of the ex-colonial world
on the Empires that once dominated them. Out of one’s employment of Western traditions,
mimicry becomes a route for creation and self-discovery.35 Walcott employs this theory of
mimicry in the development of his epic poem Omeros. An allusion to Homer’s the Iliad and the
Odyssey, Walcott’s poem stands as a criticism of the West Indian writer’s reliance on European
authors and their structure. Kripalsingh’s journey supports Walcott’s claim as successful mimicry
and the replication of European education awarded him a scholarship to study abroad. This
experience affixed the protagonist in the society that once consumed his imagination, allowing

34 This establishment of two identities is seen in the declaration;
“‘Ranjit is my secret name,’ I said. ‘It is a custom among Hindus of certain castes. This
secret name is my real name but it ought not to be used in public’” (Mimic Men 100).
35 See “Caribbean Culture or Mimicry?” page 6-8 where Walcott argues this perspective using the
history of the birth of Carnival to explore the creative benefits of mimicry.
him to interact and identify with mimic men like himself\textsuperscript{36}, and develop an awareness that the phenomenon consumed his childhood and reduced aspects of his West Indian ‘being’. A representation of European knowledge, mimicry allowed the narrator to develop beyond the mere ‘impersonator’ to ‘The Individual’ with an awareness of both Western and Caribbean life. It is through mimicry that Kripal reveals the absurdity of existence, encouraging the narrator to write.

\textsuperscript{36} Kripal expresses this in his recollection of his London neighbor Lieni; “finger nails before the fancy mantelpiece mirror, stood clean and promised and almost ready. It was a transformation that always interested me.” (Mimic Men 10)
Conclusion

There is an intricate relationship between the character’s authentic development and the history of his West Indian situation. This study is an attempt to discuss the journey to authentic selfhood, from a colonial perspective, with a clear understanding of the effects travel and knowledge has on the Caribbean experience. It is suggested that, with this perspective, the colonial’s historical past, collective experiences of displacement and his practice of escapism can be observed in the construction and characterizations of each text. The selected novels, *Miguel Street*, *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men*, allows the reader to determine the gradual development of the protagonist as they embark on their journey to selfhood. Collectively, these novels can be used to illustrate an individual’s experience to authenticity as each text describes the three stages of the process – one’s awareness of his Sein, man’s confrontation with Boundary Situations and the continuity of the journey.

For the writer, Naipaul expresses this continuity through reflection as each text’s structure, though different, captures the distinctiveness of the journey for each protagonist. *Miguel Street’s* character-centered chapters project how the members of the street, and by extension the Caribbean, share experiences within their unique stories and illustrates how setting and interaction can influence the ‘objective being’ in making decisions. Biswas’ detailed history displays the relationship between Boundary Situations and experiences to reveal the unpredictability and continuity of each situation. Thus, Naipaul acknowledges man’s struggle to selfhood, disputing the myth that this journey has an end. In addition, *The Mimic Men* accurately builds this perspective as the protagonist recounts his journey which resulted in his self-exile and enlightenment. Accordingly, Naipaul’s use of travel, both physical and psychological, indicates the importance of ‘movement’ in the journey. Explored in each novel, Naipaul determines that to develop the Dasein
man must agree to accept the unknown challenges that accompanies existence, and learn from each experience. Naipaul’s use of physical travel, then, communicates that the Caribbean is unfit to provide a stable and secure environment for self-development. Furthermore, the author infers that while travel on its own does not guarantee successful ‘self’ development, it is mandatory to experience a sense of awakening. The individual is, therefore, required to perform journeys through memory and reflection, permitting him to observe and learn from his growth to develop a ‘self’ based on his experience. This underscores the role of knowledge as an integral theme in post-colonial study. The Caribbean’s history in colonialism positions the West Indian in a rage for identity as he scrambles to settle in a melting pot of varying cultures. For these characters, knowledge is sacred and unavailable, leaving him vulnerable to the teachings of Western ideologies. Suitably, this study suggests that an authentic existence is weighted with an additional stage embedded in the journey – the West Indian object must become aware of the experiences that built the Caribbean diaspora; European, Indian, African and more; which were integral in the creation of the society into which he was born.

An examination of Naipaul’s approach to this human philosophy opens the discussion on ‘place’ and selfhood. For this author, the journey forces the individual to develop beyond his West Indian objectivity and forge a connection with his inner ‘self’. However, the author’s employment of psychological journeying suggests that the physical positioning of the individual, be it Europe or the Caribbean, does not determine one’s ability to develop the ‘self’. For instance, Biswas and Kripalsingh’s journeys, experienced in Trinidad and Europe respectively, both resulted in an awareness of the absurdity of existence. This philosophy opens the discussion on the personal experiences of authentic development in other cultures and works of fiction. An investigation of these journeys allows one to differentiate or share Naipaul’s depiction of the authentic-self and
encourage an examination of the relationship between authenticity and identity. Nonetheless, one element remains the same: man’s discovery of his authentic self stands as a recurring reintroduction to himself; an interaction Walcott creatively expresses in the lines:

“The time will come/ when, with elation, you will greet yourself arriving/ at your own door, in your own mirror, and each will smile at the other’s welcome, / and say sit here. Eat. / You will love again the stranger who was yourself” (“Love After Love” 328).
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