

## ABSTRACT

### “READING POSTCOLONIAL SUBJECT POSITIONS IN VS NAIPAUL’S FICTION: TOWARDS A CONTRACTUAL SPACE”

Studies on diaspora and migration have raised questions about the nature of the postcolonial detritus and the role of postcolonial intellectuals in the construction of a critical diasporic consciousness. In an increasingly migratory and globalised world, multicultural mixes resulting from diverse trans-continental movements have created enabling conditions for migrant postcolonial literature. Diasporic writings deal with discordant amalgamations of relationships, nationalities, classes that produce conflict and negotiation of spaces between the old and the new, between home and new country. The cross-cultural interaction that takes place in the space of *in-between*, in this sense, forms and transforms the subject positions.

This project seeks to examine how the postcolonial subject tries to negotiate particular social, political and geographical dislocations. From his own position of displacement, Naipaul turned his attention to other dispossessed individuals in the ‘half-made’ societies of the world. His works deal with the trauma of uprooted individuals, their psychic chaos, their quest for identity and the overall postcolonial confusion. VS Naipaul’s fiction deals with the articulation and negotiation of multiple identities which results in a critical reflection on the stereotyping of non-whites and diaspora. Other categories such as class, ethnicity and the heterogeneity of interests of the diasporic people in an alien territory questions the fixed, essential quality of diasporic existence. Naipaul’s fiction also hints at the heterogeneity and hybridity at the heart of essential European identity. But the emphasis on the suffering of displaced Europeans is not intended to undermine the predicament of the colonized people. Rather, this project focusses on the destabilizing of colonial subjectivity, foregrounding the ‘adulteration’ and mutual transformation of colonizer and the colonized.

This project argues that rather than looking at the detrimental aspects of colonial movements, as done with reference to Naipaul’s ‘colonial detritus,’ one could perhaps look at the detritus as a transformational space that ‘mutates’ and ‘enables’. Naipaul’s novels move from the dark days of colonialism to the new lives in contested and contractual spaces opened up or vacated by the colonial. The Naipaul corpus, on closer

analysis, contests many of the prevalent Naipaul myths. This study divides fourteen Naipaul's novels from *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), to *Magic Seeds* (2004), into five identical and thematically related clusters and shows how they critique and explain the post colonial subject in its many mutant modes.