

# From Double Consciousness to Diasporic Consciousness: A Du Boisian Reading of V. S. Naipaul

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## Abstract

*This paper extends W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness to theorize "diasporic consciousness" as a more layered, geographically unmoored form of split subjectivity. Through close readings of V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) and *The Mimic Men* (1967), it is argued that the Indo-Caribbean diasporic experience demands a conceptual vocabulary that accounts for multiple displacements, colonial mimicry, and the absence of a recoverable homeland. While Du Bois's double consciousness emerges from the African American's dual positioning within and against American society, diasporic consciousness reflects a triadic fracture: the colonized subject's relationship to the imperial center, the ancestral homeland, and the adopted colonial territory. This comparative analysis reveals how Naipaul's protagonists embody a consciousness that is not merely doubled but multiply refracted, offering critical insights into postcolonial subjectivity and the phenomenology of diaspora.*

**Keywords:** diaspora, vocabulary, scholars, American, Trinidad.

## 1. Introduction

In the opening chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois articulates one of the most enduring concepts in American social thought: double consciousness, "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" [9]. For Du Bois, the African American exists in a state of perpetual internal division, simultaneously American and Black, citizen and outsider, self and other. This formulation has proven remarkably generative, traveling far beyond its original context to illuminate experiences of marginalization, hybridity, and split subjectivity across the postcolonial world. Yet as scholars have extended Du Bois's framework to diasporic and transnational contexts, questions arise about whether double consciousness adequately captures the complexity of subjectivities shaped by multiple displacements, colonial mimicry, and the absence of a singular, recoverable homeland.

This paper proposes "diasporic consciousness" as a conceptual extension of Du Bois's double consciousness—one that accounts for the layered, geographically unmoored experience of subjects formed through colonial indenture, migration, and cultural displacement. This concept is developed through a close reading of V. S. Naipaul's novels *A House for* [4] and [14], which chronicle the lives of Indo-Caribbean men navigating the psychic terrain of postcolonial Trinidad and the broader Caribbean. Naipaul's protagonists—Mohun Biswas and Ralph Singh—embody a consciousness that is not merely doubled but multiply refracted, caught between the colonial metropole, an ancestral India that exists only as myth and memory, and a Caribbean present that offers neither full belonging nor

authentic cultural ground [13].

The argument proceeds in three movements. First, Du Bois's double consciousness is situated within its historical and theoretical context, examining both its explanatory power and its limitations when applied to diasporic subjects. Second, through close textual analysis of Naipaul's novels, it is demonstrated how his protagonists experience a triadic rather than binary split: they are alienated from the imperial center (Britain), disconnected from an ancestral homeland (India), and unmoored within their immediate environment (Trinidad and the Caribbean). Finally, diasporic consciousness is theorized as a distinct but related concept, one that preserves the phenomenological acuity of Du Bois's insight while extending it to account for the plural, non-binary dislocations of the colonial diaspora. The broader stakes of this argument concern not only Naipaul scholarship but the future of postcolonial theory itself: if our conceptual frameworks are to remain adequate to the diversity of colonial and diasporic experience, they must be capable of accounting for subjects whose consciousness is not merely split but shattered across multiple, irrecoverable geographies.

V. S. Naipaul, the Trinidad-born, Oxford-educated Nobel laureate of Indian descent, occupies a singular position in postcolonial literary studies. His work has generated fierce critical debate—celebrated for its unflinching psychological realism and condemned for its apparent contempt for the postcolonial world—but it has rarely been read systematically through a Du Boisian lens. This paper argues that such a reading is not only possible but necessary, for it illuminates dimensions of Naipaul's fiction that neither purely postcolonial nor purely psychological readings have fully captured: the specific

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phenomenology of a consciousness formed at the intersection of indenture, colonialism, and diasporic displacement.

## 2. Literature Review

The research on Du Bois's double consciousness has grown considerably since its initial articulation in 1903, branching into political theory, sociology, literary criticism, and diaspora studies. Vilashini Cooppan's influential essay "The Double Politics of Double Consciousness" (2005) identifies a productive tension within Du Bois's formulation between nationalist and globalist impulses, arguing that double consciousness is not merely a psychological condition but a political one, shaped by the specific historical circumstances of African American life under racial capitalism [7]. This political dimension is crucial, for it reminds us that double consciousness is not simply an experience of cultural hybridity but a response to specific structures of domination and exclusion.

Emmanuel C. Eze's philosophical treatment of double consciousness in *Callaloo* (2011) pushes further, situating Du Bois's concept within a broader tradition of Western philosophy while simultaneously marking its departure from that tradition. For Eze, double consciousness represents a unique epistemological position—a way of knowing that is simultaneously inside and outside the dominant culture—that has implications for the theory of knowledge more broadly [10]. This epistemological reading is particularly relevant for thinking about Naipaul's fiction, where the question of what it means to know one's own culture from the inside while being simultaneously estranged from it is central.

Marc Black's comparative study of Fanon and [9] opens a productive dialogue between two of the most important theorists of colonial and racial consciousness, arguing that while Fanon's account of the colonized subject's psychic condition shares much with Du Bois's double consciousness, it is more explicitly attentive to the violence of colonial subjection and the possibility of revolutionary transformation [5]. This comparison is instructive for reading Naipaul, whose protagonists share with Fanon's colonized subject a profound sense of psychic damage but lack the redemptive revolutionary horizon that Fanon envisions.

Samir Dayal's essay "Diaspora and Double Consciousness" (1996) is perhaps the most direct engagement with the question this paper addresses. Dayal argues that diaspora as a condition necessarily involves a form of double consciousness, but that diasporic double consciousness differs from Du Bois's formulation in important ways: it is more explicitly spatial, involving a relationship to multiple geographic locations rather than simply to two cultural identities within a single national space [8]. This spatial dimension is crucial for understanding Naipaul's protagonists, whose sense of displacement is inseparable from their relationship to specific places—Trinidad, India, Britain—and from the impossibility of fully belonging to any of them.

On the Naipaul side of the equation, the critical literature is extensive. Mohammed Farman Ullah Bhuiyan's postcolonial reading of *A House for* [4] and [14] provides a comprehensive account of the psychic trauma experienced by Naipaul's protagonists, arguing that their condition is best understood through the lens of diaspora and indenture rather than simply colonialism [4]. This framing is important because it distinguishes the Indo-Caribbean experience from other colonial experiences, highlighting the specific historical circumstances of Indian indenture in the Caribbean and their lasting psychic consequences.

Nabil Baazizi's reading of [14] develops the metaphor of shipwreck and uprootedness that runs through the novel, arguing that Ralph Singh's condition is one of radical homelessness—a state in which no place, not even the place of one's birth, can serve as home [3].

B. P. Giri's analysis of colonial displacement in *A House for* [4] focuses on the relationship between subjectivity and space, arguing that Biswas's obsessive desire for a house of his own is not simply a material ambition but a psychic one—a desire for a stable subject position in a world that denies him one [11]. Bimal Kishore [18] extends this reading, situating Biswas's alienation within the broader context of colonial fragmentation and arguing that his condition is representative of a specifically colonial form of selfhood [18]. [16] adds a cultural dimension, examining how the displacement of Hindu cultural practices in the Caribbean context compounds Biswas's sense of alienation and contributes to his fragmented identity [16].

Saman Hashemipour's comparative study (2018) is particularly relevant to the present argument, as it explicitly applies Du Bois's double consciousness to Naipaul's fiction alongside other postcolonial writers. Hashemipour argues that Naipaul's "One out of Many" demonstrates a form of double consciousness in which the protagonist is caught between an Indian cultural identity and a Western one, unable to fully inhabit either [12]. While this reading is productive, it remains within a binary framework that the present paper seeks to complicate and extend. James M. Thomas's recent work (2020) on Du Bois's double consciousness and the "Jewish question" is instructive for thinking about how double consciousness can be extended to other marginalized groups, demonstrating both the concept's flexibility and the importance of attending to the specific historical circumstances that shape different forms of split subjectivity [19]. Wisam Kh. Abdul-Jabbar's methodological chapter (2019) provides a useful framework for integrating postcolonial theory and double consciousness in literary analysis, arguing that the two frameworks are complementary rather than competing [1]. Cristina-Georgiana Voicu's work on postcolonial identity (2014) and Shadi Neimneh and Halla A. Shureteh's analysis of Edward Said's memoir (2021) provide further theoretical grounding for thinking about the relationship between identity, displacement, and postcolonial consciousness.

What emerges from this survey is a rich but incomplete picture. The scholarship on Du Bois has been increasingly attentive to the diasporic dimensions of double consciousness, and the scholarship on Naipaul has been increasingly attentive to the psychic dimensions of his protagonists' displacement. What has been lacking is a sustained attempt to bring these two bodies of scholarship into direct dialogue—to read Naipaul through Du Bois while simultaneously using Naipaul to extend and complicate Du Bois. This is the gap that the present paper seeks to fill.

## 3. Research Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology that combines close reading with conceptual analysis and comparative literary criticism. The primary texts under examination are Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) and [14] read alongside Du Bois's *The Souls of* [5] as the foundational theoretical text. The methodological approach is informed by Abdul-Jabbar's framework for integrating postcolonial theory and double consciousness [1] which argues that literary analysis must attend simultaneously to the formal

features of texts and to the historical and theoretical contexts in which they are produced and received.

Close reading, as practiced here, involves sustained attention to the language, imagery, and narrative structure of specific passages, with particular attention to moments where the text's formal features enact or illuminate the psychic conditions it describes. This approach is particularly suited to Naipaul's fiction, which is notable for its precise, controlled prose and its use of irony and indirection to convey psychological states that are rarely articulated directly by the characters themselves. The close readings are informed by postcolonial theory, particularly by the work of [8], [3], and [4], whose analyses of diaspora, uprootedness, and psychic trauma provide the critical vocabulary through which the texts are read.

Conceptual analysis is employed to develop the concept of "diasporic consciousness" as a theoretical extension of Du Bois's double consciousness. This involves a careful examination of Du Bois's original formulation, an analysis of its strengths and limitations, and a systematic attempt to extend it to account for the specific conditions of the Indo-Caribbean diaspora as represented in Naipaul's fiction. The conceptual development draws on the work of Cooppan, Eze, Dayal, and Black, whose analyses of double consciousness in different contexts provide the theoretical resources for this extension.

Comparative analysis is employed to bring Du Bois's African American context and Naipaul's Indo-Caribbean context into productive dialogue, identifying both the structural similarities between the two experiences and the significant differences that require conceptual extension. This comparison is not intended to flatten the differences between the two contexts or to suggest that the African American and Indo-Caribbean experiences are equivalent. Rather, it is intended to illuminate both contexts by placing them in relation to each other, and to use the comparison as a lever for developing a more adequate theoretical framework for understanding diasporic subjectivity.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Du Bois's Double Consciousness: Foundations and Limits

Du Bois's concept of double consciousness is deceptively simple in its formulation but extraordinarily rich in its implications. Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Du Bois describes the African American's experience of selfhood as fundamentally divided: "One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois 3). The power of this formulation lies in its capacity to capture a specific phenomenological experience—the experience of seeing oneself through the eyes of a hostile other—while simultaneously situating that experience within a historical and political context. Double consciousness is not simply a psychological condition; it is a condition produced by specific historical circumstances, by the legacy of slavery, by the structures of racial capitalism, and by the particular form of American democracy that simultaneously extends and withholds the promise of full citizenship.

Cooppan's reading of double consciousness as a political as well as psychological condition is particularly important here. She argues that Du Bois's formulation contains within it a tension between a nationalist impulse—the desire to affirm a specifically Black American identity—and a globalist one—the desire to connect that identity to a broader African and human community [7].

This tension, Cooppan argues, is not a weakness in Du Bois's theory but a strength, for it reflects the genuine complexity of the African American's position in a world shaped by both national and global structures of racial domination.

Eze extends this reading by situating double consciousness within a broader epistemological context, arguing that it represents a unique way of knowing that is simultaneously inside and outside the dominant culture. For Eze, the African American's double consciousness is not simply a burden but a resource, a form of critical perspicacity that enables a deeper understanding of the contradictions of American society than is available to those who occupy a more comfortable, unquestioned position within it [10]. This epistemological reading is important for the present argument because it suggests that the split subjectivity of double consciousness is not simply a source of suffering but also a source of critical insight—a point that is equally relevant for understanding Naipaul's protagonists.

Black's comparison of Du Bois and Fanon illuminates the limits as well as the strengths of Du Bois's framework. For Fanon, the colonized subject's psychic condition is shaped not simply by the experience of being seen through the eyes of a hostile other, but by the violence of colonial subjection—the systematic destruction of the colonized subject's culture, history, and sense of self [5]. While Du Bois's double consciousness captures the phenomenological experience of this destruction, it does not fully account for its structural causes or its revolutionary possibilities. This is one of the points at which the framework requires extension when applied to the colonial diaspora: for Naipaul's protagonists, the experience of split subjectivity is inseparable from the specific history of colonial indenture and its aftermath, a history that is both more violent and more geographically complex than the African American experience that Du Bois describes.

The most significant limitation of Du Bois's double consciousness, for the purposes of the present argument, is its essentially binary structure. Double consciousness is, by definition, a condition of twoness—two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings. This binary structure is adequate to the African American experience as Du Bois describes it, where the fundamental tension is between two identities within a single national space. But it is less adequate to the experience of the Indo-Caribbean diaspora, where the subject is caught not between two but between three or more cultural identities and geographic locations, none of which can serve as a stable ground of belonging. It is this inadequacy that motivates the conceptual extension proposed in this paper.

### 4.2 Naipaul's Indo-Caribbean Context: Indenture, Displacement, and Mimicry

To understand the specific form of consciousness that Naipaul's fiction represents, it is necessary to understand the historical context from which it emerges: the system of Indian indenture in the Caribbean, which brought hundreds of thousands of Indians to Trinidad and other Caribbean islands in the decades following the abolition of slavery. As Bhuiyan notes, the indenture system created a uniquely complex form of diasporic subjectivity, one shaped by the traumatic rupture from an ancestral homeland, by the experience of colonial subjection in a new and unfamiliar environment, and by the encounter with other colonial subjects—most notably the Afro-Caribbean population—who were themselves the products of a different but equally traumatic history of displacement [4].

The result of this history is a form of identity that is multiply displaced: the Indo-Caribbean subject is neither fully Indian nor fully Caribbean, neither fully colonial nor fully postcolonial, neither fully at home in the ancestral culture nor fully at home in the adopted one. As Prasai argues, the displacement of Hindu cultural practices in the Caribbean context—their transformation from living traditions into nostalgic fragments—compounds this sense of alienation and contributes to a fragmented identity that cannot be healed by a simple return to origins, because the origins themselves have been transformed beyond recognition [16]. This is the historical and cultural context that Naipaul's fiction inhabits, and it is this context that makes the extension of Du Bois's framework necessary.

Naipaul's own biography is inseparable from this context. Born in Trinidad in 1932 to a Hindu family of Indian descent, educated at Oxford, and resident for most of his adult life in Britain, Naipaul embodied the very condition of multiple displacement that his fiction explores. As Tahmina Ahmed [2] notes, Naipaul's trajectory from exile to global citizen is marked by a persistent sense of homelessness—a sense that no place, not even the places of his formation, can serve as a stable ground of identity [2]. Roshan Cader's study of Naipaul's homelessness and exiled identity provides a biographical context for reading his fiction, arguing that the sense of displacement that pervades his novels is not simply a literary device but a direct expression of his own psychic condition [6].

The concept of mimicry, as developed in postcolonial theory, is particularly relevant to understanding Naipaul's protagonists. Naipaul's own use of the term in *The Mimic Men* predates Homi Bhabha's theorization of colonial mimicry, but it anticipates many of Bhabha's key insights. For Naipaul, mimicry is not simply a strategy of survival or resistance but a psychic condition—a form of selfhood in which the subject can only constitute itself through imitation of another that it can never fully become. This condition is closely related to double consciousness, but it adds a dimension that Du Bois's framework does not fully account for: the dimension of performance, of the self as a construction that is always already in relation to an imagined audience.

#### 4.3 Close Reading: A House for Mr. Biswas and the Architecture of Belonging

*A House for Mr. Biswas* opens with an image that encapsulates the novel's central concern: Biswas, at the end of his life, lying in "his own house" (Naipaul, *A House* 1). The house is mortgaged, dilapidated, and falling apart, but it is his, and the novel's entire narrative arc is shaped by the struggle to achieve this precarious possession. This image is not simply a domestic one; it is a psychic one. The house represents not merely a material shelter but a stable subject position—a place from which to say "I am here, and this is mine." The tragedy of the novel is that even this modest claim is perpetually deferred, contested, and ultimately achieved only in a form that is already compromised.

Biswas's desire for a house is inseparable from his sense of self. As Giri argues, the house functions in the novel as a symbol of subjectivity itself—a stable, bounded space that corresponds to the stable, bounded self that Biswas desires but cannot achieve [11]. This reading is confirmed by the novel's language: Biswas does not simply want a house; he wants to be "a man on his own," a self-sufficient subject who is not dependent on the Tulsi family into which he has married.

The Tulsi household, with its communal structure and its absorption of individual identity into the collective, represents for Biswas the antithesis of selfhood—a space in which the individual is dissolved rather than constituted.

What makes this desire specifically diasporic is its relationship to the question of origins. Biswas's desire for a house is not simply a desire for material security or social status; it is a desire for a place that is authentically his own—a place that is not borrowed, inherited, or imposed. But in the context of the Indo-Caribbean diaspora, such a place does not exist. The ancestral homeland—India—is not a living reality for Biswas but a mythic one, present only in the fragments of Hindu ritual and cultural practice that have survived the crossing. As Shrivastwa notes, the fragmentation of Indian cultural identity in the Caribbean context means that Biswas cannot ground his sense of self in an ancestral tradition that remains intact; the tradition itself has been fragmented by the experience of indenture and displacement [18].

The novel's most revealing passage in this regard comes when Biswas, working as a journalist, writes a series of articles about the conditions of rural Trinidad. The act of writing is itself significant: it is an attempt to constitute a self through language, to assert a perspective and a voice in a world that denies him both. But the language Biswas uses is not his own; it is the language of the colonial education system, the language of English literary culture, the language of another that he has internalized but cannot fully inhabit. This is the double consciousness that Du Bois describes, but it is complicated by the additional layer of cultural displacement: Biswas is not simply caught between an Indian identity and a British one, but between an Indian identity that is already fragmented, a Caribbean identity that is not fully available to him, and a British identity that is definitively closed.

Intan Novita Sari and Rina Saraswati's analysis of double consciousness in *A House for* [4] provides important support for this reading, arguing that Biswas's condition is directly shaped by the indentured system and its legacy of displacement. They demonstrate how the novel's narrative structure—its constant movement between past and present, between memory and anticipation—enacts the split temporality of double consciousness, in which the subject is never fully present to itself because it is always caught between a past that is lost and a future that is deferred [17]. This temporal dimension is crucial, for it shows that diasporic consciousness is not simply a spatial condition—a matter of being between places—but a temporal one: a condition of being between times, between a past that cannot be recovered and a future that cannot be reached.

The novel's conclusion, in which Biswas achieves his house but only at the cost of his health and his financial security, is deeply ambiguous. On one level, it represents a kind of triumph—the achievement of the stable subject position that has been the goal of the entire narrative. On another level, it represents the ultimate irony of the diasporic condition: the place that is finally achieved is already compromised, already falling apart, already mortgaged to a future that may not arrive. The house that Biswas achieves is not a home in any full sense; it is a simulacrum of home, a material object that gestures toward the psychic condition of belonging without fully instantiating it.

#### 4.4 Close Reading: The Mimic Men and the Geography of Exile

If *A House for Mr. Biswas* explores the diasporic condition through the metaphor of domestic space, *The Mimic Men* explores it through the metaphor of geography and political power. Ralph Singh, the novel's narrator and protagonist, is a Caribbean politician who writes his memoirs from a London hotel room, looking back on a life of political failure and personal displacement. The novel's structure—a retrospective narrative written from a position of exile—enacts the condition it describes: Singh is always already at a remove from the events he narrates, always looking back at a life that has escaped his grasp.

Baazizi's reading of the novel as a meditation on uprootedness and shipwreck captures its central metaphor with precision. The novel's title itself is a key: the "mimic men" of Naipaul's Caribbean are men who can only constitute themselves through imitation—of the colonial metropole, of the political ideologies imported from Europe, of the models of selfhood offered by a culture that is not their own [3]. This mimicry is not, as Bhabha would have it, a form of resistance or subversion; for Naipaul, it is a form of psychic damage, a condition in which the self is always a copy without an original, always performing an identity that it cannot authentically inhabit.

The novel's most powerful passage comes early, when Singh reflects on his experience of arriving in London as a young man: "I had seen the city first as a dream, the dream of the simple, the dream of the poor, the dream of those who had been left out of the civilization. Now I was here, and it was a real city, and I was a stranger in it" (Naipaul, [14]). This passage encapsulates the structure of diasporic consciousness as the novel develops it: the gap between the imagined metropole—the center of civilization, the place where authentic selfhood is possible—and the real metropole, which turns out to be just as alienating as the colonial periphery. Singh arrives in London hoping to resolve the split in his consciousness, to find the place where the two halves of his divided self can be reconciled. What he finds instead is that the split is irreducible: London is not the place of resolution but simply another location of displacement.

This experience is structurally different from Du Bois's double consciousness in an important way. For Du Bois, the African American's double consciousness is produced by the experience of living within a society that simultaneously includes and excludes him—by the gap between the promise of American democracy and the reality of racial discrimination. The tension is internal to a single national space. For Singh, the tension is spatial in a more radical sense: it is produced by the gap between multiple geographic locations, none of which can serve as a stable ground of identity. He is not simply caught between two identities within a single space; he is caught between multiple spaces, each of which offers a partial and inadequate image of selfhood.

The novel's political dimension adds another layer to this analysis. Singh's career as a Caribbean politician is a sustained attempt to constitute a collective identity—a Caribbean identity—that can serve as the ground of political action. But this attempt is doomed from the start, because the Caribbean itself, as Naipaul represents it, is a place without authentic cultural foundations—a place shaped entirely by the history of colonialism and its aftermath. As Cader argues, the homelessness that characterizes Singh's individual condition is also a collective one: the Caribbean, as a space produced by colonial displacement, is a place that cannot serve as home for

anyone, because it has never been allowed to develop the organic cultural traditions that would make genuine homecoming possible [6].

This reading connects to Ahmed's analysis of Naipaul's trajectory from exile to global citizen, which argues that Naipaul's later work represents an attempt to transcend the condition of displacement by embracing a cosmopolitan identity that is not tied to any particular place [2]. But as Ahmed also notes, this transcendence is always partial and always purchased at a cost: the cost of a certain kind of rootedness, of the possibility of belonging to a specific community and a specific place. The "global citizen" of Naipaul's later work is not a figure of freedom but of homelessness elevated to a philosophical principle—a response to the impossibility of belonging that transforms that impossibility into a virtue.

#### 4.5 Theorizing Diasporic Consciousness: Beyond the Double

The close readings of Naipaul's novels in the preceding sections suggest that the concept of double consciousness, while illuminating, requires extension to account for the specific conditions of the Indo-Caribbean diaspora. I propose the concept of "diasporic consciousness" as this extension, defined by three key characteristics that distinguish it from Du Bois's original formulation.

The first characteristic is multiplicity. Where double consciousness is defined by its binary structure—two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings—diasporic consciousness is defined by its plural structure. The Indo-Caribbean subject is not caught between two identities but between three or more: an ancestral identity (Indian) that exists only as a fragment, a colonial identity (British) that is definitively closed, and a local identity (Caribbean) that is itself a product of colonial displacement and therefore cannot serve as a stable ground of belonging. This multiplicity means that diasporic consciousness cannot be resolved by the synthesis or reconciliation of its constituent parts; there is no possible integration of the fragments because the fragments themselves are too numerous and too heterogeneous.

The second characteristic is the absence of a recoverable origin. Du Bois's double consciousness, while painful, is oriented toward a possible future in which the two halves of the divided self might be reconciled—in which the African American might be both fully Black and fully American without contradiction. This orientation toward reconciliation is possible because both halves of the divided self are present realities: the African American community and the American national community are both living, available identities, even if their coexistence is fraught with tension and conflict. For the Indo-Caribbean subject, by contrast, one of the constituent identities—the ancestral Indian one—is not a living reality but a mythic one, available only through the distorted medium of diasporic memory and cultural fragment. As Dayal argues, the diasporic subject's relationship to the homeland is always already mediated, always already a reconstruction rather than a recovery [8]. This means that diasporic consciousness cannot be resolved by a return to origins, because the origins themselves are not available in their original form.

The third characteristic is the mimicry without resolution. In Du Bois's framework, the African Americans' adoption of American cultural norms and values is a form of accommodation that is always in tension with the desire to affirm a specifically Black identity.

This tension is painful, but it is also generative: it produces the “double aims” that Du Bois describes, the attempt to be both a good American and a good Black person, which, while exhausting, is at least oriented toward a recognizable goal. For Naipaul's protagonists, the mimicry of colonial cultural norms is not oriented toward any such goal; it is a form of performance without a performer, an imitation without an original. As Hashemipour's comparative analysis demonstrates, Naipaul's characters who attempt to inhabit Western cultural identities do not experience this as a strategy of accommodation or resistance but as a form of self-erasure—a process in which the self is dissolved in the act of imitation rather than constituted by it [12].

The concept of diasporic consciousness, as developed here, is not simply a more pessimistic version of double consciousness; it is a structurally different concept that captures a different form of psychic experience. Where double consciousness is a condition of tension between two available identities, diasporic consciousness is a condition of fragmentation among multiple unavailable ones. Where double consciousness is oriented toward a possible future reconciliation, diasporic consciousness is characterized by the absence of any such orientation. And where double consciousness produces a specific form of critical insight—the ability to see American society from both inside and outside—diasporic consciousness produces a more radical form of estrangement: the ability to see all cultures from the outside, because none of them is available from the inside.

This is the original argument of the present paper: that diasporic consciousness, as exemplified in Naipaul's fiction and theorized through an extension of Du Bois's framework, represents a distinct and important form of split subjectivity that requires its own conceptual vocabulary. The concept of diasporic consciousness preserves the phenomenological acuity of Du Bois's insight—its attention to the specific experience of seeing oneself through the eyes of a hostile other—while extending it to account for the plural, non-binary dislocations of the colonial diaspora. In doing so, it offers a more adequate framework for understanding not only Naipaul's fiction but the broader range of postcolonial literary and cultural production that emerges from the experience of multiple displacement.

The implications of this argument extend beyond Naipaul scholarship. As Voicu notes, the postcolonial paradigm has been increasingly attentive to the diversity of colonial and postcolonial experiences, moving away from totalizing frameworks toward more nuanced accounts of specific historical and cultural contexts [20]. The concept of diasporic consciousness contributes to this project by providing a theoretical framework that is sensitive to the specific conditions of the colonial diaspora while remaining in productive dialogue with the broader tradition of thinking about split subjectivity and divided loyalty. It is, in this sense, both a contribution to Naipaul scholarship and a contribution to the ongoing project of developing a postcolonial theory adequate to the diversity of colonial and postcolonial experience. Neimneh and Shureteh's analysis of Edward Said's memoir *Out of Place* provides a useful comparative frame for the concept of diasporic consciousness developed here. Said's memoir, like Naipaul's fiction, is a sustained meditation on the experience of being caught between multiple cultural identities and geographic locations, none of which can serve as a stable ground of belonging.

But where Naipaul's protagonists experience this condition as a form of psychic damage, Said transforms it into a critical resource—a position of perpetual outsiderhood that enables a form of cultural criticism that is unavailable to those who are more comfortably situated within a single cultural tradition [15]. This comparison suggests that diasporic consciousness, like double consciousness, is not simply a condition of suffering but also a condition of critical possibility—a form of estrangement that can, under the right conditions, be transformed into a resource for cultural critique.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that V. S. Naipaul's fiction demands a conceptual vocabulary that extends beyond Du Bois's double consciousness while remaining in productive dialogue with it. Through close readings of *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men*, it has been demonstrated how Naipaul's protagonists embody not merely doubled but multiply refracted subjectivity—a condition of fragmentation among multiple unavailable identities theorized here as “diasporic consciousness.” Diasporic consciousness is defined by three key characteristics: multiplicity (the subject navigates three or more identities rather than two), the absence of a recoverable origin (constituent identities exist only as myth and fragment rather than living reality), and mimicry without resolution (cultural imitation produces self-erasure rather than accommodation or resistance). These characteristics distinguish diasporic consciousness from Du Boisian double consciousness while preserving its phenomenological core: the experience of seeing oneself through the eyes of a hostile other, of inhabiting simultaneously the inside and outside of identity-shaping cultures.

The broader implications concern postcolonial theory's ongoing project of developing conceptual frameworks adequate to the diversity of colonial experience. The most productive theoretical work emerges not from mechanical application of existing frameworks but from encounters between theory and text that occasion conceptual innovation—the development of concepts more adequate to the complexity of lived experience.

Naipaul's fiction remains one of the most searching literary explorations of colonial displacement's psychic consequences. What it ultimately teaches us, and what diasporic consciousness seeks to capture, is that colonial displacement constitutes not simply a historical event but an ongoing psychic condition—one that shapes the very structures of consciousness through which displaced subjects experience the world. This is Du Bois's most enduring insight, which Naipaul's fiction both confirms and complicates: colonialism's history is not merely external events but inner lives, the specific ways political structures of domination become internalized and lived from within.

In extending Du Bois's framework to the Indo-Caribbean diaspora, this paper contributes to developing conceptual tools adequate to colonialism's complexity—frameworks accounting for the plural, non-binary, and geographically unmoored forms of split subjectivity that colonial legacies have produced. Diasporic consciousness is not a repudiation of Du Bois but a tribute: recognition that his insights travel beyond their original context and extend in response to new historical and literary evidence. It is not a replacement for double consciousness but its heir—inheriting Du Bois's phenomenological acuity while accounting for the full complexity of postcolonial experience.

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