

ABSTRACT

Deconstruction, Imperialism and the West Indian Novel

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This thesis examines the influence of imperialist discourse on the West Indian novel, and argues that the hegemony of empire is crucial to the literary and ideological status of the West Indian novel. Methodologically, the thesis engages a deconstructive critique to analyse the ideological conflicts manifested in the West Indian novel. The analysis demonstrates that the dialectical struggle between language as self-reflexive object and language as representation combines with the discursive force of imperialist ideology to complicate narrative construction of selfhood in the West Indian novel.

The thesis proceeds by examining the value of Jacques Derrida's theory of *différance* in the context of West Indian subject construction. Chapter II links deconstruction with Michel Foucault's discussions of discourse and

power, effectively combining Derridean deconstruction with Foucauldian genealogy. Throughout the thesis, the Derridean deconstructive methodology is itself interrogated by West Indian critical insights and ontological strategies.

Chapters III, IV and V ground the earlier theoretical discussions by engaging analysis of selected West Indian texts. The thesis concludes that deconstructive strategies have long been employed by West Indians to salvage West Indian 'being' from its Eurocentric mis/representation of 'nothingness'.