

# New Cultural Studies and Diasporic Criticism: A Desperate Effort to Preserve Broken Roots

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## ABSTRACT

Theorists differ in how they conceptualize immigrants' cultural identities and dispersion. Since they concentrate on various facets of immigrants' lives, diaspora theories may be divided into four types. The stipulated movement of non-natives, especially the victimization of Jews, Africans, and Armenians, is described in the first classical period. The second conception considers the diaspora's inhabitants' social, cultural, and historical diversity. While rejecting the second phase and destroying bipolar ideas of the home and host nation, the third group of theorists celebrates the discrepancies and fluidities of immigrants' personalities in the diasporic third space. On the other hand, the fourth conception focuses on the historical exploitation of people in developing nations and the importance of their origins. Immigrants' cultural identities are primarily shaped by their past experiences and current negotiations. This article briefly overviews several conceptualizations of immigrants' cultural identities and dispersion.

Human migration across borders has been a recurring phenomenon throughout human civilization. Diasporas, or communities of immigrants residing outside their native country, are also the result of these movements. Diasporic communities are thriving due to recent advancements in digital technology, international trade, labor movements, and quick transit modes. The many causes and stages of international migrations are supported by conceptualizations of diaspora and immigrants' subjectivity. Robin Cohen (2008) examines several theoretical postulations while documenting four stages of the diaspora. Only the victimhood diaspora—immigrants who were forcibly removed from their home countries—is included in the first classical period. By taking into account the historical, cultural, and social variety of immigrants, the second phase expands the victimhood diaspora. By dissolving the dualistic notions of the home and host countries, immigrants create their cultural identities, according to the third social constructionist phase. In diasporic third space, it honours the ambiguities and fluidities of immigrant identities. On the other hand, the significance of the historical exploitation of people in developing nations is emphasized in the fourth consolidation phase. In a similar vein, Stuart Hall (1994) highlights the importance of both past acquaintances and current strategies in developing the theory of cultural identity, which includes the cultural identities of immigrants. This article concisely overviews several conceptualizations of immigrant cultural identity and dispersion.

Keywords: culture, empathy, criticism, diaspora, belongingness, alienation

## INTRODUCTION

"Diaspora" is derived from a Greek term "to disperse." Relating a community or culture to a different geographic and cultural area is known as diaspora. In diasporic writing, there are two primary movements. There are two types of moves: temporal and spatial. The Temporal Move involves gazing ahead to the future, which signifies prolepsis, and backward, which signifies analepsis. Re-territorialization, or the restructuring of a location or territory, and de-territorialization, or the loss of territory that has undergone re-territorialization, are the two components of the Spatial Move. Therefore, the book of the diaspora incorporates space, which shifts between the homeland and outsiders, between the known and the unknown, and between the ancient and the modern.

Diaspora writers have long produced novels, short tales, travelogues, poetry, and prose in post-colonial literature.

The so-called diaspora literature originated from the longing for "homeland" or "root" and an odd and peculiar devotion to their customs, religion, and language. Writers highlighting the Indian diaspora have been the subject of their well-known works over the last 10 years. Indians have the second-largest diaspora in the world. About 25 million people make up the diaspora and live in the world's well-known locations. New Cultural Studies embraces Interdisciplinary, politically engaged, and focused on everyday culture, power relations, identity formation, and resistance. Influenced by postmodernism and post-structuralism. Diasporic Criticism talks about examining literature by and about diasporic communities, emphasizing displacement, hybridity, memory, cultural negotiation, and identity politics.

Two classes of Indian writers from the contemporary diaspora may be distinguished. One category consists of people who have spent some time in India and have moved away from their cultural possessions. Those who were raised outside of India make up the other group. From the outside, their nation appears to them as a bizarre starting point. While the authors in the second group were uprooted, those in the first group experienced real dislocation. Both author groups have produced a significant amount of English literature. These authors explored the issues of assimilation, cultural adaptation, alienation, and displacement when they created immigrant characters in their books.

Diaspora or immigrant writing is significant between the nation and the culture. A strong network connects the globe, and diaspora writing offers several advantages. The quest for identification, familial and marital ties, nostalgia, and erasing or integrating the multicultural surroundings are among the most significant aspects of diaspora writing. English-Indian authors, including Sunetra Gupta, Amitav Ghosh, Anjana Appachana, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Bharati Mukherjee, and Anita Desai. Leading authors in the Indian diaspora writing tradition include Anita Nair, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

The lifestyles of the two main characters, Jasmine and Dimple, depict Bharati Mukherjee's struggle as an immigrant to fit in with a foreign nation's customs, culture, and society. The researcher highlighted the issues with the main characters, Dimple and Jasmine, who started to leave their home countries and establish themselves in new, strange places. Your dissatisfaction, assimilation, sense of belonging, nostalgia, and disillusionment are also shown. Bharati Mukherjee's short tale collection, "The Middle Man and Other Stories," centers on individuals between two different civilizations. The shape and effects of cultural displacement are examined in these tales. Bharati Mukherjee is also frequently criticized. Shauna Singh Baldwin writes poetry, prose, short stories, and novels. She stands in for the three distinct settings of the main protagonists' experiences in India, the US, and Canada. Baldwin used various storytelling techniques to develop the themes of exile and cultural interchange.

### Textual Example: White Teeth by Zadie Smith

- **Narrative Overview:** The novel explores the lives of two families (one Bangladeshi, one white British/Jamaican) in multicultural London.
- **Themes:**
  - **Hybridity:** Identities are shaped by colonial history, immigration, and multicultural urban life.
  - **Displacement:** Characters struggle with cultural belonging (e.g., Millat vs. Magid Iqbal, twin sons of Bangladeshi immigrants—one becomes a radical, the other a secular Anglophile).
- **Narrative Technique:**
  - Polyphonic structure (multiple perspectives).
  - Satirical tone that critiques British multiculturalism.
- **New Cultural Studies Lens:**
  - The novel critiques state narratives of assimilation and tolerance.
  - Focus on how identity is mediated through culture, race, and class.

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- **Diasporic Criticism Lens:**

- Explores generational differences in diasporic identity.
- Emphasizes the psychic toll of navigating contradictory cultural expectations.

In general, diaspora refers to large-scale population migration and the settlement and community that results from such migration. It originally referred to the Jewish community's dispersion. Later on, the phrase came to encompass a variety of community-building and international migration. Scholars disagree in a number of ways when it comes to understanding the problematic cultural identities of immigrants and diaspora.

In the third realm of diaspora, the interaction between immigrants' history and present shapes their cultural identity. According to Hall's (1994) conceptualization, immigrants' cultural identities are partly formed by their shared historical experiences, cultural practices, and current interactions. However, different theorists have different theories on diaspora, which impacts how immigrants' cultural identities are conceptualized.

## **BODY**

The first classical phase of Cohen's classification focuses more on the reasons behind migration and dispersal. The study of the Jewish people's terrible experience and forced dispersal was the primary application in the past. The classical meaning began to progressively expand in the 1960s and 1970s. The dispersion of Irish, Armenian, and African people started to be included. "A cataclysmic event traumatizing the group as a whole has shaped the central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of a merciless tyrant." (Cohen, 2008, p. 1) is how these immigrants conceptualized their dispersal. The traumatic reasons for dispersion are the primary focus of this phase.

Forced relocation, traumatic historical experiences, shared memories of the homeland, challenges assimilating into the new cultural environment, a need to return, and an unwavering bond with the place of origin are all considered aspects of diaspora in the classical sense. Cohen (2008) notes, meanwhile, that this paradigm overlooks the diversity of the diaspora. Diaspora is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Diasporic experiences are influenced by class, gender, and generation of individuals, as well as temporal, cultural, and geographical aspects.

In addition to painful historical experiences, people's pursuit of improved life prospects through employment and economic ventures is another factor contributing to the current diaspora. The second stage of Cohen's notion of diaspora takes historical, cultural, and social diversity into account. Safran breaks down the group experience into six categories. Dissemination from a particular origin, preservation of a collective memory of the homeland, alienation and marginalization in the second space, a desire to return home, dedication to the safety and prosperity of their homeland, and ethnic and communal consciousness and solidarity are some of the characteristics shared by Safran. The immigrants experience feelings of loss, nostalgia, and alienation as an outcome of their ongoing awareness of their own country.

Cohen (2008) criticizes the second-stage thinkers. "Decompose two of the great building blocks hitherto circumscribing and defining the diasporic concept, namely 'homeland' and 'ethnic/religious community'," is the goal of Cohen's postmodernist theory (p. 1). In *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Brah (1996) refers to the diasporic consciousness as a homing urge. In the imagination of the diaspora, her home "is a mythic place of desire." It is a place of no return in this sense, even though the region thought to be the "origin" may be visited (1996, p. 188). Thus, rather than talking about her homeland, she talks about the longing to go home. Home has evolved into a place of longing and has largely lost its meaning. Her story, which is a historical account of travels, reflects many relationship structures both inside and across diasporic formations; as a result, it is diverse, contentious, and unique in the process of creating a shared "we." She reiterates that immigrants overseas would not necessarily want to return to their native country, in contrast to many diaspora opponents. After claiming citizenship in the second space, members of a diasporic group gradually lose interest in going back to their original country.

## **Textual Example: *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston**

- **Narrative Overview:** A memoir-like narrative exploring the intersections of Chinese folklore, family

history, and the Chinese-American immigrant experience.

- **Themes:**

- **Cultural memory:** Stories passed down from China blur into the narrator's American life.
- **Silencing and voice:** The narrator struggles to speak in both a literal and figurative sense.

- **Narrative Technique:**

- Nonlinear narrative.
- Blending of myth and autobiography (e.g., the story of Fa Mu Lan with personal narrative).

- **New Cultural Studies Lens:**

- Highlights how culture is produced and contested through storytelling.
- Questions dominant narratives of national and gender identity.

- **Diasporic Criticism Lens:**

- Shows how diasporic subjects reconstruct identity through fragmented memory.
- Examines intergenerational trauma from migration and assimilation.

Indigenous people, immigrants, and their descendants make up Brah's diaspora. In communities in the second space, diasporans and indigenous people share a similar cultural space. Hall (1994) claims that the diasporic experience is "defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not the despite, or difference; by hybridity" (p. 235), which is in line with the heterogeneity of the diaspora. He continues that diasporic recognitions are those "which are continuously creating and regenerating themselves anew, through change and distinction" (p. 235). Similarly, Bhabha (1994) dispenses with the bipolar structure of the first and second spaces and goes for a tripolar one that initiates the in-between space.

As a result, it is now more closely associated with living abroad and less with the idea of exile. In the third space, it serves as a platform for the imaginative blending of cultures and the creation of fresh, blended identities. However, the suffering of the poor in the diaspora is ignored by this idea of hybrid identity creation. The rich and the impoverished have different experiences. Compared to the rich, the disadvantaged suffer more. They have experienced exploitation and injustice on all levels—economic, political, and cultural. Social constructionist theorists only look at how immigrants' cultural identities are formed, neglecting the injustice and prejudice committed by dominant groups. They do not adequately portray the whole spectrum of immigrant experiences, including economic, social, and political injustice. In the fourth stage of Cohen's divide, the discourse of diaspora has replaced the political agenda and economic exploitation.

By bringing back the confrontational aspect in the fourth phase, Cohen suggests that a strong political objective is being resurrected. Kral (2009) uses Marxist ideas to argue that post-colonialism is a depoliticization strategy. By highlighting an open field of cosmopolitanism, he connects postcoloniality to a persistent issue of erosion in the idea of country. However, in doing so, it abandoned the idea of class and became depoliticized. At a period when globalization has become more predatory, this has had major repercussions. In *Elites and Institution in the Armenia Diaspora History*, Tololyan (2000) adopts a position that is somewhere between radical and social constructionist. Following the same middle route, Cohen (2008) contends that in diasporic studies, the importance of origin and hybrid/transcultural third spaces are equally significant. In terms of the development and characteristics of diasporic groups in the second space, he expands on Sabran's (1991) six qualities to nine. Cohen agrees with Safran (1991) on ethnic people's yearning to return, sense of unity, idealization and collective memory of their homeland, and dispersal from it. He disagrees, though, in that he recognizes both the diaspora's creative potential and the problematic connection in the second space.

In conclusion, the term "diaspora" now refers to the third dimension of identity development rather than just the dispersion of a community. Beginning with the horrifying experiences of forced immigration, it gradually

expands to include many forms of cross-border movement and settlement, both voluntary and involuntary. Diaspora theorists expand the idea by including the political, historical, and cultural diversity of immigrants into their hypotheses. The following set of thinkers focuses on breaking down the dichotomy between home and host nation in order to help immigrants develop their flexible cultural identities. Another theory of diaspora that challenges them highlights the importance of immigrants' places of origin. The cultural identity of immigrants continues to be a relevant topic in these theoretical discussions.

### Textual Example: The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Díaz

- **Narrative Overview:** The novel chronicles the life of Oscar, a Dominican-American nerd, through family histories shaped by dictatorship and migration.
- **Themes:**
  - **Language and cultural code-switching:** Use of Spanglish, slang, and academic language.
  - **Colonial legacy:** The Trujillo dictatorship as a symbol of postcolonial trauma.
- **Narrative Technique:**
  - Unreliable narrator (Yunior) with digressive footnotes.
  - Intertextuality with comics, sci-fi, and Dominican history.
- **New Cultural Studies Lens:**
  - Explores how popular culture (sci-fi, gaming) becomes a site of identity-making.
  - Subverts traditional literary norms with non-canonical language.
- **Diasporic Criticism Lens:**
  - Emphasizes on generational impact of diaspora and dictatorship.
  - Language becomes a tool of resistance and remembrance.

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Jhumpa Lahiri is well-known for her books, including *The Explainer of Disease*, *The Man of the Same Name*, *The Unusual Land*, and *The Lowlands*. In her book *The Namesake*, she details the struggles and tribulations of a Bangladeshi couple who came to the US in search of a tranquil existence. Cultural identity, tradition, dislocation, and family expectations are all shown in this book. Themes of loss, desire, recollection, and nostalgia are common in her books. *The lowlands* is a timeless tale that depicts people's feelings, convictions, weaknesses, wants, and hardships; these are all united and given life by straightforward language, fluid narrative flow, and multifaceted viewpoints. The novel *The Unusual Land* narrates the lifestyle of the protagonist Ruma and the Indian culture.

The O'Henry Festival prize went to Anjana Appachana, a diasporic author in the United States. She is the author of the novel *Listening Now* and the collection of short stories *Incantations*. She addresses the problems Indian women confront both domestically and internationally. In her debut book, *Listening Now*, she examines the issues faced by three-generation women and how they managed to get by with the support of their friends and family. Her anthologies of short stories perfectly captured both conventional and contemporary ladies. She portrays the mother in a traditional role in her short stories.

Nine novels, two plays, and a collection of short tales have been published by the renowned and best-selling novelist Anita Nair. In addition, she wrote the script for the movie based on her book *Lessons in Forgetting*. Her powerful female characters embrace their uniqueness and challenge society's expectations. Through their work, female authors open up new possibilities for women. In 1995, she won the American Book Award for her collection of short stories, *Arranged Marriage and Other Stories*. Both India and the United States are the settings for her works. Her primary area of interest is South Asian migrants' experiences.

In her works, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni masterfully depicts the matrix of diasporic awareness, including cultural struggle, questioning, loneliness, alienation, and rootlessness. She examines and draws attention to



issues such as racism, economic inequality, divorce, miscarriages, homesickness, longing, disappointments, etc. Her characters are physically torn between the two realms, making it difficult for them to move their possessions to either one. Maintaining national ideals amid the unfamiliar environment of the adopted country frequently causes mental anguish, conundrums, and unresolved issues that eventually result in an identity crisis. People who are "in between," or more specifically, immigrants, are frequently described using the metaphor of "Trishanku." Since their instinctive perception of their home culture often clashes with their logical comprehension of a foreign society, migrants are typically engaged in an identity crisis. They attempt to examine and reconsider the customs and culture of their native countries in an unfamiliar setting.

The female characters created by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni embody the global cosmopolitan citizen, who traverses between eastern and western cultures and environments, struggles with identity, and attempts to blend in. She created the tale of dreams, wants, hopes, and expectations in her February 17, 1998, novel *The Mistress of Spices*. The main female character, Tilo, was born in a distant location and journeys back in time to Oakland, California. This novel's author presents Tilo as a successful survival in a strange environment. Chitra portrays Tilo as a courageous young woman who defies authority and supports the other female immigrant characters throughout their difficult times. She describes, for instance, the lives of those female immigrant characters who suffer from drug abusers, racist husbands, and general difficulties. Overall, the researcher thought this book was a story of happiness and sadness.

Second, two cousins (Sudha and Anjali as Anju) are portrayed by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as giving their lives for one another in the book *Sister of My Heart*. From a young age, these two cousins have easy access to anything they desire. They receive camaraderie from their neighbours and, most importantly, from the people in their town, affection from their three mothers, and respect from their younger children and domestic servants. She illustrates the hardships faced by women due to antiquated Indian traditions, arranged marriages, being separated from their three moms, late pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, etc., using these two characters. In her book *The Mistress of Spices*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni uses the exotic portrayal of Tilo, the heroine, to highlight the suffering of the migrants. *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh illustrates the level of rootlessness that persons who were born and reared abroad face.

The lives of first-generation and second-generation immigrants in the US have been accurately challenged by second-generation Indian authors like as Jhumpa Lahiri, Sunetra Gupta, Hari Kunzru, and Meera Syal. This is made feasible by the fact that their works no longer primarily address important concerns like racial intolerance and religious prejudice. The Indian diaspora's family unit produced varying degrees of grief, stress, and dilemma for its members, primarily the children of these unlucky and broken homes... Several topics and facets of immigrant life are brought up in Indian diasporic literature.

The heartbreaking experiences of both first and second generation immigrants in the US have been carefully documented by the ranks of second-generation diasporic Indian writers, such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Hari Kunzru, Sunetra Gupta, and Meera Syal. This is made feasible by the fact that these authors are no longer primarily focused on topics like racial intolerance and religious prejudice. Numerous authors from the Indian diaspora who write in English and other languages have included themes of a specific area, community, and cultural issues in foreign places of relocation in their works, showcasing the diversity of Indian culture. Indian diasporic writing has brought attention to a variety of topics and facets of immigrant life.

Indian cultural values are taught to children at home through customs, rituals, cuisine, beliefs, clothing, language, and other means, and first-generation parents demand that their children preserve these values. Children with a variety of cultural origins, such as Meena in *Anita and Me* and Gogol in *The Namesake*, find it difficult to differentiate between the two civilizations and are frequently the targets of racist justifications because of their dark colour. Neither India nor the country in which they were born and brought up can be identified as their "home." Characters similar to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni were presented by Jhumpa Lahiri in her novels.

### Textual Example: Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri

- **Narrative Overview:** A short story collection focusing on Indian and Indian-American characters

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navigating life between cultures.

- **Themes:**

- **Belonging:** Characters are caught between nostalgia for home and alienation in the host country.
- **Communication breakdown:** Emotional and linguistic miscommunications mirror cultural disjunction.

- **Narrative Technique:**

- Realist style with deep psychological insight.
- Subtle use of symbolism (e.g., food, clothing).

- **New Cultural Studies Lens:**

- Examines the mundane as political—e.g., dinner parties as sites of cultural performance.
- Addresses power dynamics in interpersonal relationships shaped by migration.

- **Diasporic Criticism Lens:**

- Investigates longing, loss, and the burdens of cultural heritage.
- Focuses on liminality of diasporic life—neither fully here nor there.

## CONCLUSION

The idea of diaspora has evolved from merely referring to a population's dispersion to referring to the development of identity in the third space. It mostly explains the painful experience of a certain group of individuals being forcibly dispersed during the initial phase. These immigrants have sought safety in the host nation after losing their own country. Their diasporic experience is influenced by the forced migration. The idea of diaspora expands throughout the second extended phase, including a variety of immigrant groups and their experiences. During this stage, historical pain, cultural, social, and political diversity, as well as a yearning for one's own land, are prioritized. The development of the immigrants' subjectivity is the focus of the third stage of the conception of diaspora. Theorists of this era emphasize the fluidity, volatility, and transience of human identity, drawing on the ideas of postmodernism. The diaspora is viewed as a hybrid cultural junction that they refer to as the third space, dismantling the conventional bipolar idea of the home and host nation. Another name for them is the social constructionist group. Nonetheless, the fourth phase theorists disagree with social constructionists since they depoliticize diaspora studies. They insist on the idea of origin to confront historical injustice and exploitation, while also partially accepting the principles of social constructionists. They are not exempt from the cultural background that they and their ancestors came from. Their concept of self is influenced by their common cultural codes and shared historical experience. Their subjectivities are continuously influenced by their current negations and interactions with the host country's citizens and foreign cultural practices. The list of writers from the diaspora is extensive and comprehensive.

Sometimes, readers of diasporic literature encounter strange and repulsive patterns in foreign life. They occasionally even learn about themselves from the main character and other strong characters in the piece. Thus, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni became a diasporic author of English literature in India after immigrating to the US. Her 1997 award-winning book "Mistress of Spices" tells the story of an Indian girl who works in an Oakland, California, spice store. She helps other immigrants by using the power of spices. As a result, every diasporic writer vividly portrays immigrant concerns in their creative works. By analyzing diasporic texts through both New Cultural Studies and Diasporic Criticism, we uncover how identity, power, and belonging are constructed and contested across borders—geographic, linguistic, and ideological. These perspectives allow a deeper appreciation of the fluid, hybrid, and often fraught realities of contemporary global existence.

## Cultural Implications:

Cultural Studies Lens	Diasporic Criticism Lens
Emphasizes power, representation, and cultural production in daily life.	Emphasizes displacement, hybridity, and transnational identity.
Deconstructs nationhood, gender norms, and race.	Explores longing, cultural memory, and diasporic trauma.
Engages popular culture and challenges high/low culture boundaries.	Focuses on border-crossing, migration narratives, and ethnic identity.

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