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England as a New Homeland: Re-Imagining Home, Memory, and Belonging in the Diasporic Experience

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Abstract

A home is often imagined as the place where one stands, and ideally where one's heart finds rest as well. Yet what is lost can rarely be restored in its original form; instead, people recreate versions of it less tangible than towns or villages, existing instead as unseen, inner landscapes shaped by memory. These imagined places, these mental Indias or homelands, arise particularly within diasporic writing in English, where the idea of "home" has expanded and transformed alongside the history of human civilisation. Within diasporic life, identity becomes an unsettled state, marked by adaptable qualities that shift according to the demands and pressures of the Western world. These identities are nourished by intersecting narratives, locations, and senses of belonging. Diasporic individuals feel a persistent desire to rebuild their own vision of home, carving out an inner imaginative territory. This process requires them to reshape their internal worlds, where buried memories of the past operate as the emotional core of nostalgia that inspires the reinvention of a dreamed homeland. As a result, diasporic identity becomes layered with contradictions, marked by ambiguous feelings of ownership and connection that generate ideological struggles for those attempting to understand themselves. In the novels examined in this study, England appears repeatedly as the shared geographical backdrop. Rather than simply recovering what is lost, these narratives highlight how diasporic writers challenge and resist rigid spatial and temporal constructions that once defined identity and belonging.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have celebrated the conceptual importance of diasporic perspectives, treating them as a universal condition of being, one that unsettles earlier assumptions about permanent rootedness and fixed territorial identities. As a result, contemporary criticism has invested deeply in re-evaluating what we understand by 'home' and 'belonging,' shifting attention from static notions tied to geography toward the fluid, shifting landscapes of the mind. These inner landscapes emerge from lived encounters, personal histories, and relational bonds rather than from rigid monocultural spaces or narrowly defined localities.

Diasporic individuals constantly grapple with the challenge of gathering together the scattered fragments of their distant past. Their memories appear in incomplete shadows, compelling them to recollect, reinterpret, and re-stage what has been lost over time. Consequently, the desire to locate, preserve, re-examine, and redefine one's sense of origin becomes a central pursuit within the unfamiliar cultural environments they inhabit. This essay attempts to chart the diverse processes and complexities that shape the diasporic imagination of 'home'—a home that forms not only as a physical place but most significantly within the mental and emotional worlds of those living away from their native soils. Here, identity emerges neither as singular nor stable but as layered, hybrid, and continuously in flux.

The diasporic sense of self is marked by an uneasy mix of attachment and alienation, belonging and estrangement, creating ideological tensions as individuals negotiate their shifting positions between cultures. Through such negotiations, diasporic subjects constantly remake their internal pictures of 'home' and 'homeland,' challenging inherited definitions of memory and belonging. This study places particular emphasis on how England becomes a significant site in diasporic writing, i.e. a landscape that houses new identities even as it stands in dialogue with memories of distant origins.

This research adopts a postcolonial and diasporic framework to examine how ideas of 'home,' 'memory,' and 'identity' are reworked in the narratives of those living away from their place of birth. Focusing on the fluid, hybrid, and fragmented nature of diasporic subjectivity, the study interrogates the supposedly immutable concepts of cultural belonging and native rootedness. Through this lens, the project aims to reveal how diasporic writers situate themselves within England, transforming it into a space where the emotional, cultural, and ideological dimensions of identity are renegotiated.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of 'home' stretches back to the earliest stages of human civilisation, yet across time it has continually expanded and taken on layered meanings, particularly in the literature produced by contemporary diasporic communities writing in English. Because of this evolving significance, scholars have repeatedly emphasised the need to revisit and reinterpret our understanding of home and belonging. Within the diasporic condition, identity does not appear as a fixed or settled category; instead, it assumes a fluid form capable of adjusting itself to the complex social and cultural circumstances of life in the West. This fluidity requires a reorientation of the internal emotional world, where the residues of memories function as the core of nostalgia and motivate the imaginative reconstruction of distant homelands.

Those living in diaspora face the persistent challenge of gathering together the scattered traces of their earlier lives. They must repeatedly recall, rewrite, and reinterpret the broken images of a past that continues to shape them. Most diasporic narratives, therefore, are deeply anchored in a yearning to re-create the past, often through memories shared within families and communities. The physical details, the cultural peculiarities, the stories, histories, and myths tied to one's homeland leave enduring impressions on the collective consciousness of diasporic people. These fragments of memory, though shifting and unstable, are continually reworked to make sense of life in unfamiliar, foreign environments.

As these images of the homeland are revived and reshaped, they begin to transcend strict geographical boundaries. 'Home' is no longer imagined as a precise location but becomes a fluid, evolving concept; less rigid, less absolute, and more relational. In this sense, the idea of the homeland is transformed into an imagined terrain defined by memory and emotional attachment rather than by physical space. James Clifford's rejection of the notion that people must be tied to an original point of return becomes especially significant here; his approach releases the diaspora from being bound to a single origin, allowing more flexible understandings of cultural identity. Stuart Hall similarly dismisses the idea of culture as an unchanging essence rooted in a primordial sense of home. Instead, he views identity as something shaped through continual interaction, conflict, and negotiation between cultures.

For Hall, diasporic identity is characterised not by purity or a singular origin but by necessary multiplicity; heterogeneity, diversity, and change. The diasporic subject is defined through difference, transformation, and the dynamic relationships that emerge between varying cultural contexts. This perspective moves away from essentialist notions of identity and belonging, encouraging an understanding of diaspora as an ongoing process rather than a return to a presumed original whole.

The present study adopts this postcolonial and diasporic approach in its examination of "home" and "homeland" within the identity-making processes of diasporic characters. Its primary aim is to foreground the significance of England as a major site of diasporic reorientation and self-definition. To pursue this, selected works by three prominent diasporic authors—Kazuo Ishiguro, Hanif Kureishi, and Romesh Gunesekera—have been chosen for close analysis. Given the vastness of their literary output, the study necessarily focuses on specific texts. Two of Ishiguro's novels—*The Remains of the Day* and *When We Were Orphans*—are particularly relevant for the themes explored here. Similarly, the early works of Hanif Kureishi, namely *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, provide rich material for analysing questions of home and hybrid identity. From Gunesekera's oeuvre, *Reef* and *The*

Sandglass have been selected due to their deep engagement with displacement, memory, and the search for belonging.

Across all six novels, England appears as the central landscape in which characters grapple with memory, belonging, and cultural identity. It becomes the setting where new forms of attachment take shape and where characters negotiate their diasporic identities by reimagining home, negotiating the pull of memory, and confronting the ambiguities of belonging in adopted spaces.

HOME

'Home' can be understood as a constellation of sensory impressions and places of dwelling that exist simultaneously in the past and the present. It refers not only to the physical site where one resides, which is shaped through lived experiences, but also to the symbolic and emotional space formed through personal attachments and feelings of belonging. For diasporic individuals, the idea of home evokes an intimate emotional landscape, a territory they long to be connected with even when geographical distance separates them from their origins. Within diasporic discourse, home thus becomes a complex and multi-layered experience, marked by multiple identifications rather than a single, unified centre.

In this reconfigured understanding, the boundary between home and away grows thin, permeable, and constantly shifting. Home ceases to be understood as a fixed or immovable place; instead, it emerges through connections, collective memories, and cultural impressions that anchor one's evolving sense of identity and rootedness. Because the traditional idea of a stable, permanent home no longer aligns with lived diasporic realities, it gives way to a fluid notion of dwelling; one shaped by movement, memory, and continuous negotiation.

The concept of home becomes a semiotic and symbolic terrain, a site where the diasporic subject attempts to reconcile the layered images of the past with the contested, often fragmented experiences of the present. As individuals' cross borders, both literally and metaphorically, they bring with them memories, desires, and cultural practices that reshape their sense of place. Consequently, home is reimagined not as a static point on a map but as an evolving condition, i.e. a space constructed through numerous journeys across physical, emotional, and imaginative landscapes.

Diasporic homes are therefore not singular or fixed entities; they are built and rebuilt constantly as identities shift and as new experiences reshape older attachments. For many displaced individuals, home becomes an ongoing project; something continuously made and remade through changing configurations of belonging. These homes exist simultaneously in the mind, the body, and the environment, reflecting the mobile, often unsettled lives of those navigating multiple cultural worlds.

MEMORY

Diasporic individuals experience a continual longing to recreate their own vision of the homeland, crafting an imaginative realm that allows them to regain some sense of belonging. This process requires them to reshape their inner emotional landscape, where deeply buried memories of the past act as the central force behind nostalgic yearning. Memory becomes the foundation upon which the diasporic subject rebuilds an imagined home, even when the original place may be unreachable or transformed beyond recognition.

Those living in diaspora constantly confront the challenge of retrieving, rewriting, and performing the scattered remnants of a past life that has long drifted beyond their grasp. As a result, many diasporic narratives rely on reconstructing earlier experiences through shared memory stories retold across generations, cultural practices preserved within families, and recollections passed among communities. The physical features, distinct customs, historical narratives, and myths tied to one's country of origin leave a lasting imprint on the collective memory of diasporic groups.

These fragments of memory, though rarely stable or complete, are continually reshaped to help individuals understand and adapt to the new conditions of life in an unfamiliar environment. As these memories are revived and reinterpreted, they form shifting and sometimes fragmented images of the homeland that stretch beyond rigid geographical borders. In this imaginative reconstruction, the homeland becomes less a physical territory and more an emotional aspiration, a 'homing desire' that fuels the need for connection.

Over time, this remembered home transforms into a space that is not anchored in physical geography but exists more powerfully in the realm of sentiment and imagination. Home becomes a lyrical, almost intangible place shaped by longing rather than location. Through this process, the homeland is reimagined as a fluid and poetic memory, rather than a fixed and absolute site, allowing diasporic individuals to preserve a sense of belonging irrespective of physical displacement.

IDENTITY AND BELONGINGNESS

'Home' may be understood as a collection of sensory experiences and dwelling spaces—those rooted in memory as well as those shaped in the present. It represents both the physical environment formed through lived interactions and the symbolic sphere of emotional ties and personal attachment. For the diasporic individual, home becomes an emotional geography, a place of yearning and connection that persists regardless of distance. Within diasporic discourse, therefore, the idea of home signifies a complex and intricate sense of belonging marked by multiple, intersecting identities rather than a singular centre of origin.

The boundary between home and foreign space becomes increasingly fluid, dissolving into a permeable border where distinctions blur. Home is no longer imagined as an external space alone; it becomes embedded within the self, an inseparable part of one's inner world. The cultural identity of diasporic individuals reflects this multiplicity, shaped by the coexistence of several homelands and layered senses of origin. Their identity is marked by a state of ambiguity, defined by attachments to disparate cultural worlds that result in emotional conflicts and ideological tensions.

Diasporic subjects often find themselves caught between differing versions of home, balancing the pull of contrasting affiliations that shape their understanding of self. The intermediary space between their adopted country and place of origin is filled with ambivalence, oscillating perceptions, and unresolved contrasts. Home thus becomes a symbolic site in which individuals negotiate overlapping images of their past and the often-dissonant realities of their present circumstances.

The mobility and economic possibilities associated with diaspora thrust individuals into continuous motion, where a sense of instability becomes naturally linked to their notion of home. As people navigate new environments, home evolves into a space defined not by permanence but by movement emerging through experiences accumulated across borders. The shifting, fragmented images of the homeland transcend fixed geographical boundaries and contribute to the formation of a broader communal identity shaped by global networks of belonging.

Consequently, home as a native point of identification becomes deconstructed into a flexible, non-absolutist concept that reflects dynamic exchanges between communities and cultures. Through these encounters, the cultural identity of 'New World' diasporic groups emerges not as something pure or immutable but as something shaped by continual mediation and transformation. Diasporic identity is thus characterised by heterogeneity and diversity; it is constructed not through notions of origin or purity but through the ongoing negotiation of difference. These identities continuously recreate themselves through change, adaptation, and new forms of articulation.

In the selected novels, England operates as the primary setting where protagonists attempt to establish a sense of belonging in a space different from their original homeland. This research emphasises England not as a point of origin but as a new centre of emotional and cultural connection. Despite their struggles with racial discrimination or cultural tension, many characters eventually find themselves increasingly rooted in England, even while sustaining emotional ties to their countries of birth. Diasporic individuals remain driven by a desire to reshape their vision of home, connecting it with tradition, memory, and cultural inheritance. Through this process, the repressed memories of the past emerge as the emotional force behind the continued creation of an imagined homeland.

HANIF QUREISHI

Two of Hanif Kureishi's novels—*The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*—have been selected for this study because they offer rich and expansive explorations of his multiple notions of 'cultural home.' In these works, Kureishi dismantles the idea that home and identity must be fixed, stable, or rooted in a single origin. Instead, he foregrounds a hybrid, cosmopolitan sensibility that thrives on mixture, negotiation, and cultural crossings. Through his characters, he highlights how rigid, essentialist ideas of belonging lose their relevance in increasingly diverse and mobile societies.

Kureishi's protagonists often grow up or reside in England, treating it as the centre of their lived experience even as they must navigate moments of racial hostility or cultural misunderstanding. Despite these occasional experiences of discrimination, they frequently arrive at a sense of ease or comfort in England, accepting it as the place where they feel most at home. In his narratives, home is shown not as an inherited or predetermined location but as an evolving space shaped by personal growth, relationships, and everyday interactions.

Diasporic identity, for Kureishi's characters, is marked by ambivalence, i.e. a blend of attachment to certain cultural inheritances and a simultaneous desire to break free from restrictive notions of ethnic or familial expectation. This ambiguity generates a continual negotiation between multiple forms of belonging. The boundary separating home from foreign territory becomes faint and porous because, for these characters, home is ultimately intertwined with their inner emotional and psychological landscapes. It is not something external to the self but embedded within it.

Through his storytelling, Kureishi exposes how simplistic definitions of cultural identity fail to capture the reality of diasporic life. His characters encounter competing values, shifting loyalties, and contradictory attachments, yet they find ways to navigate these complexities without retreating into essentialist understandings of 'origins.' Instead, they embrace hybrid identities that draw from a variety of cultural sources. Home becomes a flexible, lived experience constructed through imagination, social participation, and the ability to move fluidly between worlds.

The novels reveal how diasporic subjects fashion belonging in places once regarded as foreign, blending their pasts with the possibilities of their present surroundings. By challenging the myth of a singular, unchanging homeland, Kureishi's works demonstrate how new forms of identity emerge from the interaction of diverse cultures. Ultimately, his characters show that home is a dynamic, self-fashioned space, always in the process of being reinvented.

ROMESH GUNESEKERA

Several of Romesh Gunesekera's works lend themselves particularly well to a diasporic reading, and for this study, two of his most acclaimed novels—*Reef* and *The Sandglass*—have been chosen. These narratives offer profound insights into the experiences of individuals caught between competing desires, contrasting geographies, and unresolved emotional legacies. Gunesekera's protagonists often occupy uncertain positions, suspended between the pull of their homeland and the demands of unfamiliar spaces, revealing the complexities of identity formation within diasporic contexts.

In these novels, characters constantly attempt to reshape the inner terrain of their thoughts and emotions as they search for meaning, belonging, and continuity. Their journeys are marked by shifting allegiances, divided memories, and a recurring need to reconcile the divergent pieces of their lives. Gunesekera illustrates how diasporic lives are shaped by competing attachments; each home offering comfort yet also demanding

sacrifice. This duality creates an internal tension that reflects the psychological reality of the diaspora.

The diasporic individual, as portrayed by Gunesekera, is perpetually navigating a space of in-betweenness. Their identities unfold along a continuum of ambivalence, as they carry within them both the imprint of their place of origin and the influences of the new environments they inhabit. The intersectional region where diaspora meets homeland becomes charged with emotional conflict, marked by contradictory perceptions and unresolved longings. It is within this fluctuating space that the diasporic imagination seeks to make sense of belonging.

In Gunesekera's fictional universe, the homeland is neither fully left behind nor wholly accessible. Instead, it survives as a constellation of memories, some vivid, others fading, constantly reshaped by distance, nostalgia, and the pressures of present circumstances. As the protagonist moves through different settings, these fluctuating images of home extend beyond their geographical coordinates, eventually forming a broader and more fluid concept of communal identity.

The very idea of home becomes deconstructed into flexible, non-absolutist meanings that resist strict definitions. It is transformed into a space shaped by movement, by the interplay of past and present, and by emotional reinvention. As the characters navigate multiple worlds, they reveal how diasporic identity cannot be anchored in fixed notions of belonging but is instead continually re-formed through cultural interaction and personal experience. Home becomes a mutable idea; one that allows for plurality, contradiction, and growth.

Ultimately, Gunesekera's novels highlight how those living in diaspora can construct new communal realities grounded not in certainty or singularity but in hybrid forms of cultural identity. Through the shifting, fragmented images of homeland and the negotiation of new environments, his characters demonstrate how diaspora produces identities that are dynamic, transformative, and defined by the continual reconstruction of home and self.

Home, when thought of as the original ground of identity and as an imagined collective space, becomes reinterpreted as a fluid, non-absolute concept. It no longer holds the rigid, monolithic features traditionally attributed to it. Instead, it evolves into a dynamic site shaped by movement, displacement, and constant negotiation. The revived and constantly shifting images of the homeland expand beyond their fixed geographical coordinates and give rise to a renewed communal consciousness founded on global interconnections and shared emotional experiences.

The cultural identity of diasporic individuals, therefore, is tied not to a single homeland but to the plurality of places that have influenced their lives. Home becomes an emotional landscape that diasporans continuously revisit, reshape, and reinterpret. It is no longer a stable point of return but a space constituted through memories, relationships, and the rhythms of everyday existence. Within this framework, the idea of home cannot remain a singular, exclusionary construct; it transforms into a discursive and interpretive space that adapts to the shifting realities of diasporic life.

The experience of diaspora is defined by mobility, hybridity, and continuous transformation rather than by purity or fixed origins. Identities are forged through encounters between cultures, through negotiations that challenge the boundaries of conventional belonging. As individuals move between different geographical and cultural spheres, they find themselves reconstructing a sense of home that corresponds to their dynamic and itinerant realities.

This process of reconstruction widens the meaning of home, allowing it to include multiple geographies and emotional affiliations. The diasporic subject carries the memory of the past while navigating the demands of new environments. Identity thus becomes a hybrid formation: fluid, shifting, and fragmented. The stability once associated with the concept of home gives way to an understanding built on diversity and interaction.

In all the selected novels, England emerges as the central landscape in which characters negotiate their identities. It functions less as an ancestral homeland and more as a space of newly formed belonging. The protagonists, though originating from varied cultural backgrounds, ultimately settle in England and shape their lives within its social and cultural structures. Even when faced with racial prejudice or cultural tension, many characters develop a sense of comfort and connection with England, treating it as their permanent place of dwelling.

The diasporic individuals depicted in these works remain motivated by a persistent desire to re-envision their homeland, creating imaginative spaces connected to memory, cultural inheritance, and personal history. This process requires them to reshape their inner emotional worlds, where buried memories serve as the driving force behind their longing for an imagined homeland. As they retrieve, reinterpret, and reconstruct fragmented memories of the past, they continuously redefine their sense of home and belonging. The idea of home thus becomes an emotional territory; a landscape that is felt and imagined rather than simply located.

These novels further illustrate how diasporic subjects challenge essentialist conceptions of identity by refusing to confine themselves to rigid markers of origin. They operate within multiple cultural frameworks, shaping identities that are neither singular nor static. Home becomes a malleable form, emerging through adaptation, reflection, and the reworking of personal and collective memory. Identity is constructed not from purity or permanence but from the transformative power of difference.

Through these narratives, it becomes evident that the diasporic experience gives rise to continually evolving identities. By inhabiting diverse cultural terrains, characters rediscover home in new and unexpected ways. England becomes a shared site of settlement, a landscape where they develop hybrid histories and multilayered identities. These diasporic subjects carry within them the memories of their origins, yet they also cultivate roots in the spaces where they arrive, redefining home through movement, adaptation, and emotional resilience.

CONCLUSION

The continuous movements that shape the lives of diasporic individuals inevitably weaken earlier ideas of a fixed identity and a unified community. In such circumstances, home can no longer be imagined as a stable, exclusive point of origin; instead, it becomes a discursive, flexible space that adjusts itself to the shifting conditions of one's existence and experiences. Diasporic homes are therefore repeatedly formed and reformed as identities evolve and as the emotional and cultural components of belonging undergo transformation.

This article seeks to explore these spatial, temporal, and affective connections that migrants cultivate as they fashion multiple homes beyond the physical boundaries of the land they once inhabited. The terrain that lies between the diaspora and the homeland remains filled with layers of ambivalence, tension, and divided perception. Diasporic subjects often find themselves navigating the contrast between different versions of home and the competing bonds that accompany them. Their cultural identities are shaped by the coexistence of several homelands, each holding emotional resonance while also generating contradictory pulls.

Diasporic identities are never static; they are constantly being reshaped through encounters, negotiations, and new experiences. Transformation and difference lie at the heart of how these identities evolve. Home gradually becomes a concept defined by movement rather than by permanence, taking shape through a succession of journeys, i.e. literal, emotional, and imaginative. In this sense, the notion of home is persistently reinterpreted and reconstructed, emerging as a space that reflects the multiple trajectories of diasporic lives across the world.

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