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Theorizing Diaspora

A Reader

Edited by
**Jana Evans Braziel and
Anita Mannur**

Nation, Migration, Globalization: Points of Contention in Diaspora Studies

Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur

India always exists off the turnpikes of America.

Agha Shahid Ali

*I have seen Cubans everywhere, scattered from Tierra del Fuego to Iceland
... We have taken root where exile threw us ...*

Virgil Suarez

Diaspora, Paul Gilroy reminds us, “is an ancient word” (1994: 207), but as the poetic lines of Agha Shahid Ali and Virgil Suarez reveal, its new currencies in globalist discourses confound the once (presumed to be) clearly demarcated parameters of geography, national identity, and belonging. Etymologically derived from the Greek term *diasperien*, from *dia-*, “across” and *-sperien*, “to sow or scatter seeds,” diaspora can perhaps be seen as a naming of the other which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile. First used in the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alexandria (circa 3rd century BCE) to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine, diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries.¹ The term “diaspora,” then, has religious significance and pervaded medieval rabbinical writings on the Jewish diaspora, to describe the plight of Jews living outside of Palestine.

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Another early historical reference is the Black African diaspora, beginning in the sixteenth century with the slave trade, forcibly exporting West Africans out of their native lands and dispersing them into the "New World" – parts of North America, South America, the Caribbean and elsewhere that slave labor was exploited – through the Middle Passage. These early historical references reveal that diaspora is not always voluntary.² The movement of people across the globe in the early modern period resulted in conquests, genocides, and the trade of spices, sugar, and slaves. The Middle Passage marks one trajectory of this triangulated form of circulation – raw resources for goods for peoples – inhumanely buying and selling manufactured products for human lives. Some scholars estimate that as many as 12 million West Africans were sold into slavery and forcibly exiled to the "New World" during the almost 400-year period of legalized slavery which began in 1502 (when Ferdinand and Isabella allowed Nicholas de Ovando, the Spanish governor of Hispaniola, to import African slaves to the island) and ended in the mid-nineteenth century (Britain legally abolished slavery in 1833, but slavery continued in the British Caribbean until 1834; Spain and Portugal illegalized slavery in 1840, although Portuguese ships continued to illegally import slaves into its South American colonies until the late nineteenth century; and slavery was abolished in the US in 1865). This early transatlantic African diaspora resulted in numerous fractured diasporas in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, as Black Africans migrated from south to north in North America and across the Western hemisphere – from Port au Prince to Montréal, from Kingston to New York – and from west to east across the Atlantic ocean again – from Trinidad to London and elsewhere. Diaspora, in the rapidly changing world we now inhabit, speaks to diverse groups of displaced persons and communities moving across the globe – from Kuala Lumpur to Sydney, Harare to Toronto, Paris to Marrakesh, Budapest to Santo Domingo, or even Calcutta to Tijuana, just as earlier in the twentieth century it mapped the movements of Palestinian refugees from Jerusalem to Amman or Beirut, and Pakistani refugees from Karachi to Dar es Salaam.

Theorizing Diaspora(s)

In the last decade, theorizations of diaspora have emerged in area studies, ethnic studies, and cultural studies as a major site of contestation. Since the journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* was inaugurated in 1991, debates over the theoretical, cultural, and historical resonances of the term have proliferated in academic journals devoted to ethnic, national, and (trans)national concerns. A glance through recent academic journals reveals

an increasing preoccupation with theorizations and problematizations of diaspora and nation. The explosion in various fields – literature, sociology, anthropology, film studies, queer theory, area studies, ethnic studies – in work about diaspora makes it difficult to ascertain how and why the term is being deployed in critical scholarship. It is often used as a catch-all phrase to speak of and for all movements, however privileged, and for all dislocations, even symbolic ones. Following the lead of the theorists included in this collection, we caution, therefore, against the uncritical, unreflexive application of the term "diaspora" to any and all contexts of global displacement and movement; some forms of travel are tourism, and every attempt to mark movements as necessarily disenfranchising become imperialist gestures.³

What do we mean by diaspora? How is diaspora historicized and politicized, and how does it connect with ideas of nationalism, transnationalism, or transmigration? In thinking through the category of diaspora and its link to geopolitical entities such as nation-states, it is thus crucial to consider the important role of nation formation and constitution during the post-World War II era. While cultural and literary critics have been increasingly concerned with how to rethink concepts of nationhood and national identity, such critical analyses should also interrogate contemporary forms of movement, displacement, and dislocation – from travel to exile. Indeed, these questions are inextricably linked to a theorization of diaspora. Mass migration movements, the multiple waves of political refugees seeking asylum in other countries, the reconfiguration of nation-states, particularly in Central Europe and the Balkan states, demand that the concept of nationhood take account of the specific geopolitical circumstances that precipitate the movement of people and communities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

We suggest that *theorizing* diaspora offers critical spaces for thinking about the discordant movements of modernity, the massive migrations that have defined this century – from the late colonial period through the decolonization era into the twenty-first century. Theorizations of diaspora need not, and should not, be divorced from historical and cultural specificity. Diasporic traversals question the rigidities of identity itself – religious, ethnic, gendered, national; yet this diasporic movement marks not a postmodern turn from history, but a nomadic turn in which the very parameters of specific historical moments are embodied and – as diaspora itself suggests – are scattered and regrouped into new points of becoming.

The selections from the increasing corpus of critical writings on diaspora included in *Theorizing Diaspora* do not merely reiterate different theories about national community and diaspora, but revisit some of the crucial theoretical writings on diaspora and nation, inquiring why diaspora has become such an important category of critical analysis in the social sciences,

literature, and the humanities. Mediating between different theorizations of diaspora, this volume asks how we can understand the widescale dispersal and migration movements that were emblematic of the twentieth century. Comparatively examining some of the theoretical arguments that have acquired an almost canonical status in studies of diaspora, nationalism, and transnationalism, this volume offers strategies for rethinking the idea of national community to respond more explicitly to the question: why is diaspora studies important? Why is it accorded so much importance now? In addition to historicizing different migrations and modern paths of displacement, this volume also historicizes the variant movements of migration and diaspora studies.

Once conceptualized as an exilic or nostalgic dislocation from homeland, diaspora has attained new epistemological, political, and identitarian resonances as its points of reference proliferate. The term "diaspora" has been increasingly used by anthropologists, literary theorists, and cultural critics to describe the mass migrations and displacements of the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in reference to independence movements in formerly colonized areas, waves of refugees fleeing war-torn states, and fluxes of economic migration in the post-World War II era. *Diaspora*, *diasporic*, and *diaspora-ization* (Stuart Hall) are contested terms, the meanings and multiple referents of which are currently being theorized and debated. The theorists anthologized here – as well as scholars engaging in dialogues about migrant subjects⁴ or migratory subjectivities⁵ – are all important voices in the ongoing dialogue surrounding the field of diaspora studies.

Most recent theorizations of diaspora, notably the essays collected here, have been marked by the ambiguities of the term diaspora itself – a term which literally (and on an historical level, negatively) denotes communities of people dislocated from their native homelands through migration, immigration, or exile as a consequence of colonial expansion, but etymologically suggests the (more positive) fertility of dispersion, dissemination, and the scattering of seeds. For example, Paul Gilroy remains critical of earlier critical formations of the African diaspora that see all African diasporic individuals everywhere – scattered across several continents – as linked by a common heritage, history, and racial descent; for Gilroy, such African diasporic conceptions homogenize difference and form the kind of "ethnic absolutism" of which he is so critical in *The Black Atlantic*. Like the critical terms *rhizome*, *créole*, *creolization*, *hybridity*, *heterogeneity*, *métis* and *métissage*, then, diaspora has emerged as an internal critique of the binarisms (colonizer/colonized; white/black; West/East) that circulated and found currency within colonial discourse and that persist even within some spheres of postcolonial studies: or as Gilroy critiques, Africa vs. Europe, or alternately, Africa vs. America.

Speaking to different communities than postcolonies,⁶ recent theorizations of diaspora also seek to represent (and problematize) the lived experiences (in all their ambivalences, contradictions, migrations, and multiple traversals) of people whose lives have unfolded in myriad diasporic communities across the globe. Diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity – cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national – and these subjects are defined by a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and diaspora. For Hall, the diaspora 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 in and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity." For Gilroy, "the politics of transfiguration" that diaspora necessitates "strives in pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable; to present the unrepresentable." For other scholars, this hybridity opens diasporic subjectivity to a liminal, dialogic space wherein identity is negotiated (Clifford, Gilroy, Hall, Mercer, Ifekwunigwe, Radhakrishnan). Kobena Mercer theorizes a diasporic "critical dialogism" that challenges "the monologic exclusivity on which dominant versions of national identity and collective belonging are based"; this critical dialogism, according to Mercer, allows for a "powerfully *syncretic* dynamic, which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture and *creolizes* them, disarticulating given signs and rearticulating their symbolic meaning otherwise." Thus, diasporic subjects experience double (and even plural) identifications that are constitutive of hybrid forms of identity (Chow, Gopinath, Ifekwunigwe, Manalansan); hybrid national (and transnational) identities are positioned with other identity categories and severed from an essentialized, nativist identity that is affiliated with constructions of the nation or homeland.

Diaspora does not, however, transcend differences of race, class, gender, and sexuality, as one scholar has suggested,⁷ nor can diaspora stand alone as an epistemological or historical category of analysis, separate and distinct from these interrelated categories. More complexly, diasporic scholars have suggested innovative and nuanced ways of thinking across the once-demarcated terrains of identity and exploring the imbrications of ethnic and national categories, while offering insights into the cultural constructions of identity in relation to nationality, diaspora, race, gender, and sexuality; of course, class inflects, if not haunts, the formation of all of these categories. To that end, class disrupts and complicates – often in productive ways – the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

Diaspora has been theorized from many diverse points of departure – East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Asian Pacific, Caribbean, South American, Latin American, African, and Central European. Recent uses of the term move from essentialist notions of homeland, national or ethnic

identity, and geographical location to deployments of diaspora conceptualized in terms of hybridity, *métissage*, or heterogeneity. After all, a Cap-Haïtien diasporic living in Miami may embrace both Haiti and the US, and more flexible or diasporic notions of citizenship are needed to probe the multiple belongings created in diaspora, as both Michel Laguerre (1998) and Aihwa Ong (1999) note. By addressing the conditions that allow and oblige people to inhabit more than one of these national spaces, theorizations of diaspora have acquired an increasingly important space within critical discourse on race, ethnicity, nation, and identity.

Scholars of the Jewish diaspora and the African diaspora, seen most clearly in the contributions of Black British Cultural Studies, are also rethinking earlier notions of diaspora as grounded in the fixed or metaphysical-geographical foundations of home, identity, and exile. Such models privilege the geographical, political, cultural, and subjective spaces of the home-nation as an authentic space of belonging and civic participation, while devaluing and bastardizing the states of displacement or dislocation, rendering them inauthentic places of residence.

While diasporic studies has emerged as an important new field of study, it is not without its critics. Theorizations of diaspora have been hotly contested and critiqued. The term "diaspora" has been critiqued as being theoretically celebrated, while methodologically indistinct and ahistorical. Some scholars, arguing that diaspora enters into a semantic field with other terms and terrains, such as those of exile, migrant, immigrant, and globalization, have asserted that diasporic communities are paragons of the transnationalist moment;⁸ other critics have resisted and critiqued such celebratory models for thinking diaspora, noting that such celebrations are often ahistorical and apolitical, failing to note the different contexts allowing or prohibiting movement globally (and even locally). For example, Bruce Robbins (1995) offers a close reading of four journals – *Diaspora*, *boundary 2*, *Social Text*, and *Public Culture* – that have "broken new ground in stimulating and supporting work in the international area, the nonspecialist area beyond area studies, and each of them sees the work it publishes as in some senses adversarial" (p. 97). In his analysis he describes *Diaspora* as "one of the four journals which has gone furthest – though never without qualification – toward celebrating transnational mobility and the hybridity that results from it as simple and sufficient goods in themselves" (p. 98). While Robbins's description of *Diaspora* as a journal that "celebrates transnational mobility" is itself somewhat problematic, the article importantly asks: how and why do reputed academic journals contribute to and also map out the terrain of intellectual engagement centering around the question of nation formation and migration within a transnational frame? And how do these journals valorize certain

types of theorizations of nation – specifically those centered on global mobility – over others?⁹

In its multiple uses, as Robbins astutely notes, the term "diaspora" has occasionally been used in an ahistorical and uncritical manner that fails to attend to the historical conditions that produce diasporic subjectivities. Analogous to the problematic use of the term *border* within branches of area and ethnic studies in general, the term "diaspora" risks losing specificity and critical merit if it is deemed to speak for all movements and migrations between nations, within nations, between cities, within cities *ad infinitum*. While not losing sight of this important point, our objective is to examine, within an interdisciplinary frame, both the historical phenomena of migrations and diasporas and how these movements also inflect identity formation in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. If we are to take the lessons of interdisciplinarity seriously, it is also incumbent on us to examine how work in ethnic studies, communication studies, area studies, and cultural studies, as well as sociology and anthropology, provides us with the tools to understand the lived experiences of diasporic subjects.

Why Diaspora Studies Now?

In response to this question, we propose two important premises upon which to ground the urgency of theorizing diaspora. ^{1.} First, diaspora forces us to rethink the rubrics of nation and nationalism, while refiguring the relations of citizens and nation-states. ^{2.} Second, diaspora offers myriad, dislocated sites of contestation to the hegemonic, homogenizing forces of globalization.

Diaspora forces us to rethink the rubrics of nation and nationalism, while refiguring the relations of citizens and nation-states

In the last century, under the pressure of monumental transnationalist and global shifts (economically, politically, geographically), the nation as a political ideal and as a state form has undergone significant transformation, if not massive ideological erosion. The shaping of national identities occurs within many discursive frames – juridical, political, civic, economic, and literary. Such deterritorializations of nationalism and nation-states, however, do not place us within a decisively postnationalist world. Diaspora has been loosely associated with other terms, particularly transnationalism, to describe the disjunctures and fractured conditions of late modernity; however, diaspora needs to be extricated from such loose associations and its historical and

transnationalism
 theoretical specificities made clear. While diaspora may be accurately described as transnationalist, it is not synonymous with transnationalism. Transnationalism may be defined as the flow of people, ideas, goods, and capital across national territories in a way that undermines nationality and nationalism as discrete categories of identification, economic organization, and political constitution. We differentiate diaspora from transnationalism, however, in that diaspora refers specifically to the movement – forced or voluntary – of people from one or more nation-states to another. Transnationalism speaks to larger, more impersonal forces – specifically, those of globalization and global capitalism. Where diaspora addresses the migrations and displacements of subjects, transnationalism also includes the movements of information through cybernetics, as well as the traffic in goods, products, and capital across geopolitical terrains through multinational corporations. While diaspora may be regarded as concomitant with transnationalism, or even in some cases consequent of transnationalist forces, it may not be reduced to such macroeconomic and technological flows. It remains, above all, a human phenomenon – lived and experienced.

as opposed to...
 Part of the value (and necessity) of thinking about different diasporas in transnational settings is that it offers an alternative paradigm for national (or multinational, transnational, and even postnational) identification. Where diaspora and diasporic persons are often considered imitations of the real citizens in the home state, theories of diaspora and transnationalism since the 1990s have offered ways out of the trappings of this hierarchical construct of nation and diaspora. Within some early scholarship grounded in more traditional foundations of nation, exile, and identity, diaspora stands in a hierarchically subordinate relation to nation or homeland, regarded as “the bastard child of the nation – disavowed, inauthentic, illegitimate, and impoverished imitation of the originary culture.”¹⁰ These theorizations also create new configurations of nation and diaspora. For Hall, the Caribbean is triply traversed by a *Présence Africaine*, *Présence Européenne*, and a *Présence Américaine*, as well as the multiple cultural striations of Indian, Chinese, and Middle Eastern influences and the erased presences (through decimation and genocide) of the Arawak, the Carib, and other indigenous Amerindians; for Gopinath, diaspora can “be seen as part of the nation itself,” and this destabilized border “allows the nation to be rewritten into the diaspora.”¹¹

Established generations of diasporic populations across the globe – Jewish, African, Chinese, Japanese – have been grappling with these questions. Future generations descended wholly, or in part, from immigrants from South Asia; economic and political refugees from Haiti, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe will all have to grapple with similar questions as youth of these ethnicities are born and raised in diasporic contexts and enter into adulthood.¹² How will their memories of the homeland, marked by ambiva-

lence and contradiction, operate? How will they relate to the cultural heritage of their parents? Will they reject aspects of the home country culture? Will they embrace other aspects? What types of alliances will they seek to establish? To fruitfully analyze such questions and problematic dynamics, diaspora studies will need to move beyond theorizing how diasporic identities are constructed and consolidated and must ask, how are these diasporic identities practiced, lived, and experienced?

In such contexts, prevailing metaphors applied to the diasporic individual or diasporic communities must be rigorously interrogated. Janus, the figure from the Greek pantheon whose gaze is simultaneously directed both forward and backward, suggests a certain temporality; the figure at once looks to the future and the past. Indeed this is a seductive metaphor for the immigrant, exile, refugee, or expatriate; but how useful is this metaphor in light of the fact that hybridity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity (to evoke Lisa Lowe’s influential essay) characterize the situation of many diasporic communities and individuals? As in the case of Haitian, Cuban, Vietnamese, and Khmer refugees who emigrate under complicated, deeply painful and troubling circumstances, what happens when one cannot or does not want to look back for political or economic reasons?

What happens when future generations do not know how to look back, or as Karin Aguilar-San Juan notes, if looking back means looking back to a place *within* the United States where they spent their childhood and not to some primordial beginning in the home country?¹³ Khojah Ismaili Muslim diasporic communities in East Africa, the Caribbean, and North America that emigrated under the leadership of Aga Khan III in the nineteenth century from Kutch, Sindh, Katiawar, and Gujarat do not necessarily accord much importance to connections with South Asia, making questions of looking back to India as a homeland irrelevant, or at best, inappropriate.¹⁴ Or, as one of our undergraduate students interjected during a class discussion about homeland in relation to the Jewish diaspora: “Where, Brooklyn?”

For Vietnamese refugees – the thousands who evacuated Vietnam with American troops after the fall of Saigon in 1975, and for the nearly 2 million Southeast Asian refugees who fled Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia between 1976 and 1979 – the possibility for a nostalgic return to the homeland is complicated by war, military alliances, anti-communist sentiments, and the psychic and physical brutalities suffered during the war and after. For the Amerasian children of the Vietnam War (culturally, nationally, and genealogically disinherited from their country of birth, and often ambivalent toward their country of adoption), the double-gaze of here/home is one of skeptical resistance with the signified references of here and home unclear at best. As Vietnamese American author Christian Nguyen Langworthy writes in the

poem "In this Country Revised," "you fall into dust / as Amerasians without / documented names – / traceless."¹⁵

In contrast, exiles of the Haitian diaspora frequently hoped for return, despite the brutality of the Duvaliers and the Tonton Macoutes, or even in the years after 1986 (when Jean-Claude Duvalier himself was exiled) as the country still suffered under the Macoutes, while seeking to restore greater equality to the Haitian people. Indeed, the territorial configuration of the Haitian homeland cartographically and legislatively includes its citizens in diaspora, with the diaspora being designated the 10^e Département of Haiti.¹⁶ Such movements, however – *from home to here to where?* – remain haunted by an uncertain relation to origin and place. For Dany Laferrière, a Haitian-Québécois writer (who now migrates between Montréal and Miami), returning home is an ambivalent move: "I've been waiting a long time for this moment: to be able to sit down at my work table (a wobbly little table underneath a mango tree, at the rear of the yard) and speak calmly of Haiti, at length. Better yet: to speak of Haiti in Haiti." These words, the opening line of a novel written on returning to Haiti after a twenty-year absence, a novel entitled *Pays sans chapeau* (*Down Among the Dead Men*), do not unambiguously suggest the comforts of home, but also evoke the memories and violence of flight: "I'm at home with this music of green flies working on the body of a dead dog, a few meters past the mango tree. I'm at home with this mob tearing itself to bits like mad dogs . . . In Port au Prince, silence exists between one o'clock and three o'clock in the morning."¹⁷ War refugees are not the only types of diasporic subjects ambivalent about "looking back"; other migrants with complex motivations for emigrating and troubled relocations in new countries also experience such apprehension.

Diaspora offers myriad, dislocated sites of contestation to the hegemonic, homogenizing forces of globalization

In the context of late modernity or late capitalism, capital has gone global; and while distinctions need to be made between diaspora as an epistemological and historical category of analysis and other related (however inaccurately) terms such as globalization and global capitalism, clearly some diasporic zones are located (at least partially) within the movements and mechanisms of global capitalist forces. With the signing of intercontinental trade agreements such as NAFTA and GATT, and the formation of transnational alliances such as the European Union, we have entered a period of historical globalization wherein multinational corporations export industry and manufacturing jobs, economic migrants stay home and

migrate, and the international division of labor more sharply divides *those who have* and *those who have not*, even as it simultaneously rigidifies and erodes First World/Third World economic divisions, creating "first-world zones" in formerly "developing" countries and "third-world zones" in supposed "First World" nations. As the World Trade Organization negotiates financial treaties globally, environmental, labor, and anarchist protests in the US (Seattle, Washington DC, New York), Italy, Switzerland, and elsewhere resist such globalization and global capitalism locally. The boundaries of local/global, like those of nation/diaspora, are no longer so clearly distinguishable.

Diaspora and diasporic movement, then, must be examined within the contexts of global capitalism. For example, economic migrants such as Thai sex workers who relocate to Japan in order to secure more viable economic futures live in the volatile and precarious relations of nation, diasporic location, political disenfranchisement, and capitalist underclass. Many such sex workers travel to Japan on tourist visas and never return to Thailand for socioeconomic reasons.¹⁸ As economic migrants who maintain financial and emotive links by sending money to their families in Thailand, the threat of deportation is particularly strong. Going back – psychically or physically – has markedly different valences for economic migrants such as the Thai sex workers, as well as for sex workers in many (though not all) settings.¹⁹ Often, diasporic sex workers support their families at home, creating a diasporic-economic context in which these women are trapped by the pressures of family, nation, and economic necessity.²⁰ This form of sexual-economic migration defines only one of the economic situations of diasporic zones within the mixed zones of global capitalism.

Diasporas are frequently marked by the flows that are transhuman or transmigrant – flows that are ideological, financial, political, and national. Sun Yat Sen and Yasser Arafat, as one scholar notes, are important sources of transnational capital,²¹ and such transhuman flows demand a rethinking of diasporic-scapes in relation to ideologies of nationalism, transnationalism, and global capital. In theorizing future trajectories of diaspora and diaspora studies, it will be crucial to schematically analyze the role of cybertechnology and the World Wide Web within such ideological and capitalistic formations: how, for example, do supporters of specific organizations such as the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) and LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), who are committed to positing a different version of the homeland, use cyberspace to promote alternative visions of the home and the homeland, while also moving capital across such divides? How does their presence on the World Wide Web allow for faster or easier transnational flows of money? At such a level the neat demarcations of local capital and global

capitalism become blurred, as do micropolitical actions and choices within an international or transnational frame.

We are in a unique historical moment wherein different diasporic trajectories intersect and overlap. The accumulation of political, sociological, anthropological, historical, and literary scholarship on diasporic communities from Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere – as exhibited in the Select Bibliography included at the end of this volume – creates fertile sites from which to theorize and problematize diaspora. Theorizations of diaspora, however, must emerge from this base of scholarship, historically grounded in different diasporic locations, rather than purely postmodern theoretical abstractions of displacement and movement. Heeding Caren Kaplan's caveat in *Questions of Travel* against overly abstract theorizations of diaspora that are not historically located, Anita Mannur has compiled the select bibliography as a means of facilitating future work in the field of diaspora studies.

Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader

By mapping the trajectory of diaspora studies since the early 1990s, *Theorizing Diaspora* hopes to contribute to future diasporic paths and theorizations of the multiple migratory subjectivities lived in diaspora. As one of the only collections devoted exclusively to diaspora as a theoretical term, *Theorizing Diaspora* comprises the critical forays and multiple theoretical shifts in contemporary theorizations of diaspora in its multiple valences – ideological, social, cultural, national, transnational, and postnational – and establishes new terrains for the field of diaspora studies. *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* collects the tenor and trajectories of these critical debates, offering readers a selection of disparate and challenging ideas on diaspora.

Although numerous books addressing the historical perspectives of the Jewish and Black African diasporas, and increasingly, the South Asian diaspora, have been published, theoretical perspectives on diaspora developing within the rubric of postcolonial theory are less established. *Theorizing Diaspora* complements and builds on the work of these scholars and theorists. The unique contribution of this text is that it anthologizes many of the most influential voices discussing diasporic communities and conceptualizing diaspora as an emergent theoretical space. It presents in one volume the divergent strains of multiple diasporas – Jewish, Black African, Chinese, South Asian, Filipino, and Caribbean – and collects several key essays that contribute to the ongoing dialogue on diaspora, transnationalism, and migrant subjectivity. While there are certainly other diasporic contexts and

communities that could be included in this volume, our aim was not to simply provide a smorgasbord of all contexts, and the selection has been informed by our own intellectual and personal interests in Caribbean, African, South Asian, and Asian American diasporas. Written by anthropologists, literary theorists, and cultural critics trained in the humanities and social sciences, primarily in North America and Britain, all of the essays included here have been previously published. Essays by renowned scholars are paired with more recent essays that are fast becoming crucial for critics interested in rethinking nationhood, citizenship, and ethnicity in non-hierarchical, non-heteronormative, and non-patriarchal forms. All noted articles have substantially shaped the trajectory of diaspora studies, marking multinational and interdisciplinary theorizations of diaspora and reflecting the methods, methodologies, and perspectives of scholars in anthropology, cultural studies, ethnic studies, gender studies, literary studies, film and performative studies, postcolonial theory, queer theory, and other disciplines.

The book is organized into four thematic sections: *Part One: Modernity, Globalism, and Diaspora*; *Part Two: Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora*; *Part Three: Sexuality, Gender, and Diaspora*; and *Part Four: Cultural Production and Diaspora*. These sections are not meant, however, to establish rigid boundaries between the essays, as many of the thematic concerns are overlapping. Part One probes the economic, political, and cultural relations of diaspora and globalization as phenomena defining modernity; it includes Paul Gilroy's "The Black Atlantic" and Arjun Appadurai's "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." Part Two includes three essays that explore the subjective terrains of diaspora and migration and examine diaspora in relation to social constructions of ethnicity; in these essays, Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, R. Radhakrishnan, and Lisa Lowe demonstrate how notions of ethnicity and ethnic identity are fluid constructs that vary according to location. For example, Radhakrishnan examines Indian identity in diaspora in the US, and Lowe examines the fractured notions of the political construct "Asian American." Boyarin and Boyarin displace the Israeli homeland as an exclusive space for locating identity, reinscribing it onto filiation and generations of Jewish diasporic subjects. In Part Three Rey Chow, Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, and Martin F. Manalansan IV all suggest the ways in which gender and sexuality inflect diasporic formations. Chow cautions against celebratory notions of diaspora that do not address the roles of class and women in modern forms of movement. Ifekwunigwe deploys auto-ethnography as a feminist methodology for examining the lives of diasporic women, including herself, and she explores autobiography as a critical lens through which to complicate border crossings (gendered, racialized, nationalized). Manalansan troubles the nationalist framework of queer alliances (and histories) in the US, exploring

how both certain historical points of reference (for example, Stonewall) and sexual categories (being “out”) do not necessarily cohere for diasporic queer subjects. In Part Four essays by Stuart Hall, Kobena Mercer, and Gayatri Gopinath consider the cultural aspects of diaspora and diasporic communities in film, literature, and identity politics. Both Hall and Mercer use Black British cultural productions (film, specifically) to examine changing notions of blackness and identity within a diasporic context; Gopinath analyzes the heteronormative implications of nation and diaspora, as well as the ethnocentric implications of sexual identities and queer politics in literary and filmic media. We conclude the book with a postscript that examines the role of cyberscapes (and its interfacing of diasporas) in shaping some future diasporic paths.

Future Diasporic Paths

In the postnational world that we see emerging, diaspora runs with, and not against, the grain of identity, movement and reproduction . . . Many people find themselves exiles without really having moved very far – Croats in Bosnia, Hindus in Kashmir, Muslims in India. Yet others find themselves in patterns of repeat migration. Indians who went to East Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found themselves pushed out of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in the 1980s to find fresh travails and opportunities in England and the United States, and they are now considering returning to East Africa. Similarly, Chinese from Hong Kong who are buying real estate in Vancouver, Gujarati traders from Uganda opening motels in New Jersey and newspaper kiosks in New York City, and Sikh cabdrivers in Chicago and Philadelphia are all examples of a new sort of world in which diaspora is the order of things and settled ways of life are increasingly hard to find. The United States, always in its self-perception a land of immigrants, finds itself awash in these global diasporas, no longer a closed space for the melting pot to work its magic, but yet another diasporic switching point.²²

To think of the United States as just “another diasporic switching point,” as Appadurai does, rather than as the teleological end to which all the world aspires, is a refreshingly different and necessary intervention into theorizations of diaspora. To theorize living in the United States, or the West, as a mark of arrival is intensely problematic on numerous levels. Part of the value of using a framework (such as the one provided by Appadurai or other theorists of diaspora who grapple with the problematic issue of discerning a specific point of origin) is that it offers a way to theorize nationhood and belonging as a process always in change and always mediated by issues of class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. As we have entered into a new mil-

lennium, insisting that a nation is defined by its geopolitical boundaries is inherently reductive, exclusionary, and problematic; at the same time, we cannot ignore the very real ways in which communities are legally and politically bounded by nation-states and their (often multiple) movements across such borders, especially in the wake of September 11, 2001. People, capital, and information increasingly cross borders, challenging the notion that a national community is necessarily bounded by its geographic borders; but at the same time, these border crossings are informed by issues of class, race, and citizenship. What, for example, does it mean for a white English-speaking American female citizen to cross the US–Canada border, and what does it mean for a Pakistani American woman who wears *hijab*, or for a young Sikh American man crossing the same border to visit relatives on the other side? Although it is true that not everyone can cross borders with ease, and while it is also true that not everyone necessarily wants to traverse borders, it is also true that for reasons of necessity and sometimes choice, people do cross borders and see their lives unfolding in diasporic settings.

Important distinctions still need to be made, then, between the political risks entailed in different forms of movement and migration, as well as between transnationalism (which can describe NGOs, multinational corporations, and dissident political organizations, as well as individuals) and diaspora (which is a human phenomenon). Scholars and theorists need to probe important questions related to diaspora: How, for example, do constructions of nation, diaspora, and transnation differ for different trans-migrational groups – exiles, refugees, immigrants, and migrants? How are voluntary diasporic subjects different from those whose lives have been mapped by exile, refugee camps, mass migration, and economic immigration? What are the subjective, psychological, and social dimensions of diaspora and other modern forms of geographical displacements and dislocations? What are the disjunctures – geopolitical, psychosocial, class and gender based – in these contemporary forms of mass movement? How is transnationalism invested in the movements of global capitalism, whereas diaspora remains a distinctly human – albeit intensely political – or trans-migratory, phenomenon? How, if at all, is diaspora striated by the transnational movements of global capital? How are these movements further striated and complicated by – as Appadurai’s taxonomy of modern *scapes* (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes) suggests – the multiple, intercontinental movements of ideology, information, and capital online? In other words, how is diaspora being remapped through cyberscape interfacing?

What, then, will be the course of future trajectories of diasporic studies? What paths remain to be explored in theorizations of diaspora, particularly

those that interrogate the classist, racist, heterosexist, and gendered foundations of nations, nation-states, and even of diaspora? What different types of communities and identitarian forms will be imagined and created as a result of these shifts? Some scholars even suggest that such movements will force redefinition of citizenship, arguing for models of flexible, diasporic, and even nomadic citizenship.²³ We end by posing specific questions that interrogate the foundations and the imbricated constructions of nationality, national identity, citizenry, and diasporic or migrant subjects.

First, how are geopolitical territories defined in relation to a people or *demos* that require "imported" foreigners as internal-external others (whether in the ancient Greek city-state or *polis* where the enslaved were predominantly migrant metic laborers – or in the "New World" where African slaves and Asian "coolies" were "imported" through the first and second Middle Passages; or in the contemporary transnationalist and geovirtual – if also politically real – terrains of global capitalism where the demarcated spaces of First and Third Worlds are reterritorialized, less as discrete national and continental borders and more as first- and third-world zones that traverse territories or nation-states and map the interstitial, international, and interpenetrating zones of enterprise and impoverishment)? How are boundaries predicated not merely on a geographical and political outside (i.e., other foreign territories), but also on the internal presence of non-citizen classes, such as immigrants, economic migrants, exiles, refugees, and illegal aliens?

Second, how are geopolitical boundaries and territorial identities predicated not merely on internal exclusion (as posed in the previous question), but also on constitutive forms of externalizing exclusion (such as forced economic migration, imposed or political exile, evacuation of refugees, and deportation of illegal aliens)? These constitutive forces of territorialization may be seen in mythic or literary accounts (as well as historical ones), such as Polyphemus's Cyclopan extraterritoriality, the forced exile of diasporic Jews from medieval Christian and European cities, and Dante's political-religious ostracization from Florence in the fourteenth century, to cite only a few well-known premodern examples.²⁴ (Post)modern correlates are mapped in the oceanic crossings of Haitian and Vietnamese refugees, or *les «boat peoples» vietnamiennes et haïtiennes*, and South Asians fleeing Uganda, Tanzania, and other parts of East Africa, as well as the many other migrants who have moved in transnationalist patterns across the globe.

Third, how do odyssey, sojourn, and travel differ from migration, diaspora, and exile, in that the former constitute forms of territorial conquest or "exploration," while the latter mark lines of deterritorialization, disposses-

sion, and displacement from territory, custom, protectorship, and citizenry? How do these differing and fluctuating movements map out hegemonic power relations of country, colony, state, and diaspora?

Fourth, how are these internal-external and constitutive forces of territorialization supportive of economic or class structures within given territories? For example, the African slave trade bolstered economic progress in the United States (especially the "cotton" South), Brazil, Argentina, the West Indies, and West African territories. Another early example is the spice and labor trades between England, India, and China, wherein economic laborers were brought to sustain the cane and cotton industries in the British-colonized Caribbean in the post-slavery period (from 1834 on). Or how economic migrants from Southern Europe and East Asia sustained the post-Emancipation economies of Brazil and the United States. Contemporary examples include economic migrants who move across the globe seeking work, but more significantly, the late global capital migration of multinational corporations to the source of cheap labor, seeking to keep costs low and to maximize their profit margins.

Finally, we end with our own caveat: in the wake of September 11, 2001, it is imperative that we ignore neither the question of national belonging and citizenship, nor how the ways in which academics must theorize diaspora have been altered. While it has never been advisable to use diaspora as a means of celebrating border traversals, it is even more pressing now to think about just how difficult it has become for certain individuals to cross borders. Diaspora studies, in this context, will have to rethink the contours of citizenship, migration, and belonging globally.

The migratory spaces traversed by migrants or refugees in a few decades mark diasporic zones that deterritorialize and reterritorialize the increasingly blurred borders of nations and nation-states.²⁵ Such deterritorializations are not without risks of and propulsions toward reterritorialization, however, as Caren Kaplan suggests.²⁶ The above questions are a response, in part, to Kaplan's call for more studies interrogating the discursive, political, and economic forces of territorialization and reterritorialization, and our questions formulate new parameters for historicized diasporic scholarship that addresses the intersectionalities and fissures of identity, whether those of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality.

Many questions still need to be addressed with regard to diaspora and diasporic communities: What is gained in theorizations of diaspora as a general framework for understanding the fractures of modernity and the disjunctures within notions of citizenship, nationality, and even capital? How are the myriad waves of transnational migration in the late twentieth century part of the regulatory flows of global capitalism? How do these migrations

form and deform modern *scapes* as hybrid discursive and political spaces created through disjunct and contradictory discourses around the issues of globalization, economic migration, political exile, and nomadic citizenships? If the structuring forces of capitalism (however disjunct) were implicated with those of colonialism (however hybrid), and if the deterritorializing movements of anti-colonialist sentiment and early decolonization emerged concomitantly with the revolutionary, anti-capitalist destratifications of Marxian social systems and state communist regimes, how and to what extent are the transnational fluctuations of diasporas and diasporized nation-states inextricable from the neocolonialist reterritorializations of global capitalism (such as free trade agreements, world financial markets, and the international divisions of labor, production, and profit)?

These earlier geopolitical, systemic, and ideological shifts (those of colonialism/capitalism and decolonization/communism) resulted in world migrations: settler migrations from colonial empire to colony; economic migrations from "third-world" zones to "first-world" countries; militaristic and imperialist (i.e., Superpower) occupations of and coups in war-torn territories (from Eastern Europe to Southeast Asia); and Cold War waves of political refugees fleeing homelands (in Vietnam, Cuba, Haiti, Algeria, Guatemala, Afghanistan, and elsewhere) and seeking asylum across the globe. The last century was defined by innumerable border crossings, crossings that destabilized the boundaries of nations and states, even as it bore witness to Holocaust, apartheid, the resurgences of ethnic nationalisms, as in Rwanda and the Balkan states, marked (and marred) by the brutal excesses and inhuman violations of ethnic cleansing.

In this cacophonous and interkinetic moment of late capitalism, spawning micropolitical and macrocapital reterritorializations economically and culturally on a worldwide level, the proliferations of cyber-information and technocapital virtually render the concept of border anachronistic; and yet, as age-old systems are deterritorialized, others emerge, reterritorialize, and establish new borders, however transient or *dromic*, as Paul Virilio claims. What do these fluxes promise or portend for future diasporic or transnationalist spaces? Where will we locate the time, speed, and movement of diasporas in the new century? Within or outside of the boundaries of deterritorialized nation-states? Or simply beyond such archaic constructions? As we have entered into the new millennium, such space-times and movement-trajectories are yet to be(come).

Perhaps, instead of us crossing borders, the borders (multiple and virtual vectors of energy, power, desire, and capital) will cross and criss-cross, deterritorialize and reterritorialize us. Perhaps, as Jerry Herron suggests, we will no longer go to the border: the border will (be)come to us.²⁷

Notes

- 1 See Durham Peters (1999: 23).
- 2 As Kaplan affirms, many may not know where *home* is in order to *stay there*: "For many of us there is no possibility of staying at home in the conventional sense – that is, the world has changed to the point that those domestic, national, or marked spaces no longer exist" (p. 7).
- 3 See Kaplan (1996) and Puar (1994).
- 4 Ganguly (1992).
- 5 Davies (1994).
- 6 We use the term *postcolonies*, not to monolithically homogenize the experiences of colonized spaces of the various European and American empires, but to distinguish it from other types of migrant communities. In this regard, there are multiple gradations of "decolonization" and autonomy, as well as conflicting and emergent neocolonial narratives within nation-states, both "Western" and "non-Western."
- 7 Urgo (1995).
- 8 Tölölyan (1996).
- 9 Robbins (1995).
- 10 Gopinath (1995).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 See Maira (2002) and Danticat (2001).
- 13 In her influential essay, "Going Home: Enacting Justice in Queer Asian America," Aguilar-San Juan (1998) thoughtfully meditates on how to talk about home. Noting that there is no place that she really calls home, she writes: "I was born in Boston but eventually left for Providence. I recently moved to southern California, which has always fascinated me. To go westward, is for an Asian American, to go home, in the sense that many Asian Americans have family in California, in Washington state, or farther west in Hawai'i. But my immediate family is scattered around the midwest" (p. 25). Her own story thus maps out a network of myriad affiliations that complicates the notion that there exists a fixed point of origin to which one can nostalgically harken back.
- 14 Kassam-Remtulla isolates numerous possible reasons for emigration. Although many Ismailis "left in search of better economic opportunities as traders and merchants in East Africa . . . they also left for many other reasons including famine, unemployment, religious persecution and political instability."
- 15 Langworthy, "In this Country Revised," from *The Geography of War* (Oklahoma City: Cooper House Publishing, 1995) 17. See also Tran, Truong and Truong Khoi (1998).
- 16 Adolphe (1995).
- 17 Laferrière (1996); translation by Homel (1997).
- 18 Watenabe (1998).
- 19 In the same collection, *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance and Redefinition*, also see Anarfi and Kempadoo for specific analyses of gender, migration, and sex work in different global contexts.

- 20 Wijers (1998: 75).
- 21 See Tölölyan (1991, 1996).
- 22 Appadurai (1996: 171).
- 23 See the following: Ong (1999); Laguerre (1998); Joseph (1999).
- 24 See Said (1984).
- 25 On this problematic, see Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992).
- 26 Kaplan (1996).
- 27 Herron (1993).

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