



Memory as Architecture: Belonging and Diaspora in Ishiguro, Kureishi, and Gunesequera

Dr. Gurudev Meher

Associate Professor, Ravenshaw University, Mail id: gurumeher2008@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Diasporic individuals experience an unrelenting impulse to re-create their own vision of the homeland, shaping an inner imaginative territory connected to inherited culture, memory, history, and tradition. Their sense of self is forged through the continual act of tracing, preserving, interrogating, and reconfiguring their origins while negotiating life within unfamiliar cultural landscapes. In this process, memory becomes the principal mechanism through which diasporic identity is understood, navigated, and reconstructed. Marked by ambivalent attachments and unstable forms of belonging, diaspora relies on memory as the emotional scaffolding upon which both home and self are rebuilt. Memory revives scattered, shifting, and partially disintegrated impressions of the homeland, transforming them into a reconstructed communal consciousness that surpasses fixed geographical boundaries. Through this dynamic re-envisioning, a new global sense of belonging emerges. The writings of Ishiguro, Kureishi, and Gunesequera illustrate how memory functions as the foundational structure of diasporic identity; hybrid, fractured, fluid, and continually evolving.

INTRODUCTION:

The idea of 'home' stretches back to the earliest phases of human civilization, yet in contemporary fiction by the new diasporas in the West, it has taken on fresh layers of meaning. Within diasporic



consciousness, the concept of home becomes deeply entwined with memory, for displaced individuals continually negotiate their attachments to both past and present. Diasporic identity, therefore, arises as an unsettled, shifting position, capable of adapting to multiple discourses, locations, and forms of belonging in Western environments. The diasporic subject repeatedly experiences the urge to recreate an imagined homeland, and this reconstruction draws its life from inherited culture, history, memory, and tradition. In this sense, memory becomes the central channel through which the self-interprets and manages its dual orientation toward earlier roots and contemporary realities.

This imaginative reconstruction involves reshaping the inner emotional landscape, where buried memories of the past generate nostalgia and motivate the invention of an imagined homeland. Diasporic subjects constantly retrieve, revise, and re-stage the fragmented remnants of a distant past; a past that refuses to vanish and a present that struggles to crystallize into a fixed identity. Memory, therefore, is not merely recollection; it becomes an affective and creative force through which diasporic belonging takes shape.

In the fiction of Ishiguro, Kureishi, and Gunesequera, England becomes a newly inhabited terrain of belonging rather than a point of original identification. Yet this belonging is always mediated by memory, which reframes and reconstitutes the subjects' identities. These writers reveal how diasporic identity remains fluid, hybrid, and continually reshaped by the operations of memory. Memory anchors identity even as it destabilizes it by allowing diasporic individuals to attach themselves to new environments while simultaneously reminding them of continuing estrangements.

Stuart Hall's insight that cultural identity is always in process never complete, always shifting is central to understanding this condition. Identity is not grounded in essence but emerges as a discursive positioning shaped by history, power, and forms of enunciation. Bhabha's notion of the 'in-between' similarly emphasizes how culture is formed in the hybrid, connective spaces that link rather than separate different identities. James Clifford's move away from the idea of a single homeland toward the reconstruction of multiple homelands liberates diasporic thought from restrictive essentialisms, while Avtar Brah's 'diaspora space' conceptualizes the intersecting temporalities of past and present that produce diasporic subjectivity.

Diasporic belonging, in this framework, is not tied to geography alone but extends across emotional, temporal, and symbolic domains. The boundary between 'home' and 'away' becomes porous, creating multiple and overlapping identifications that challenge the singular, nostalgic conception of belonging. As Robin Cohen notes, the homeland often becomes a 'homing desire,' a lyrical but placeless emotional



terrain. The diasporic subject thus carries a dual ontology; looking simultaneously toward cultural memories of origin and toward the sociopolitical conditions of relocation. Memory then acts as the architectural structure that connects these dispersed temporalities and locations.

In this context, the selected works of Ishiguro, Kureishi, and Gunesekera offer fertile ground for examining how memory organizes diasporic identities. Despite their distinct cultural backgrounds, all three authors portray England as a transformative environment marked by both belonging and alienation. Because a comprehensive study of their entire careers is not feasible, this article concentrates on two key novels from each author in which home, memory, and identity are foregrounded. Ishiguro's protagonists reshape internal landscapes structured by memory; Kureishi's characters reveal the inadequacy of stable notions of home compared with fluid, hybrid belonging; Gunesekera's figures remain suspended between competing desires and locations, rebuilding identity through emotional memory.

Thus, this article positions diasporic fiction at the intersection of memory, identity, and home, examining how memory generates, disrupts, and remaps diasporic belonging in contemporary British literature.

The concepts of home, identity, and belonging recur throughout this article as inherently unsettled categories shaped by shifting positions and adaptive strategies within the West. Diasporic subjectivities emerge through a web of intersecting discourses, geographical displacements, and layered affiliations. They continually negotiate the profound desire to reimagine their homeland, constructing an interior, imaginative space connected to inherited history, tradition, memory, and culture. This imaginative reconstruction relies heavily on the reshaping of the inner emotional terrain, where suppressed memories of the past operate as the hidden engine behind nostalgia and the reinvention of an imagined homeland. Through this process, diasporic individuals remain engaged in the task of retrieving, rewriting, and re-enacting the scattered fragments of a bygone past, fragments that persistently resurface despite temporal distance.

The article argues that the subjective worlds of displaced individuals reflect complex networks of belonging in which multiple identifications coexist. These identifications challenge the fixed, bounded, and nostalgically exclusive frameworks that once dominated theories of home. Instead, diasporic identity is shown to be anchored in a dual epistemology: diasporic subjects simultaneously face backward toward cultural memories of origin and forward toward the sociopolitical realities of their adopted societies. Home becomes a semiotic and symbolic terrain where fluctuating memories of the past meet the often-contradictory realities of the present. The reconstruction of home thus unfolds through shifting forms of identification that repeatedly displace conventional ideas of fixed belonging.



Within this framework, memory becomes the central architectural force in shaping diasporic identity. The revival of fluid, disjointed images of the homeland allow diasporic individuals to transcend the rigid boundaries of geography and form a reconstituted communal consciousness grounded in global forms of belonging. This sense of community consciously distances itself from exclusionary nationalisms and absolute claims to purity. Memory participates in this reconfiguration by producing fragments that are not pure embodiments of the past but flexible interpretations shaped by the demands of the present. These fragments are constantly modified as diasporic subjects seek to make meaning within unfamiliar environments.

Thus, memory functions as both archive and active agent: the suppressed recollections of childhood, the shadowy remnants of distant homelands, and the shifting shards shaped in the present all collectively shape how diasporic individuals trace, preserve, question, and reimagine home and identity in a foreign land. This reconstruction extends beyond nostalgia, becoming transformative, for home itself is not a simple façade of rootedness. Rather, diasporic selves must continuously reconcile the global with the local, the personal with the political, and the emotional experience of ‘here’ with the imagined resonance of ‘there,’ crafting ever-changing cultural and emotional geographies.

In this sense, whether fragmented, reconstructed, repressed, or nostalgic, memory becomes the primary architectural structure within which diasporic identity is envisioned, sustained, and continually renegotiated.

The theoretical grounding of this study is built upon the conceptual models formulated by critics such as Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, James Clifford, Avtar Brah, and Paul Gilroy, whose analyses of identity, hybridity, diaspora, and cultural translation offer the critical scaffolding for this discussion. Accordingly, the emphasis rests not on the roots or the singular point of origin but on routes, the shifting and fluid pathways shaped by movement, displacement, and continuous encounters across cultural boundaries. As a result, terms such as hybridity, fluidity, heterogeneity, fragmentation, in-betweenness, ambivalence, translation, permeability, reinvention, reconfiguration, and reconstruction become key coordinates guiding the analysis of how home and identity are conceptualized within diasporic contexts.

Stuart Hall, in his influential essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” asserts that cultural identity exists in a constant state of becoming. It is never fixed, never complete, and perpetually in transition. Hall contends that cultural identity is dynamically formed within relations of power, historical processes, social interactions, and lived experiences. It is neither pre-given nor ahistorical, nor does it transcend place, culture, or time. Drawing on Lacan’s theory of enunciation, Hall emphasizes that the speaking



subject and what is spoken do not fully coincide; identity is not an essence but an articulation—an act of positioning within discourse. Cultural identity, therefore, cannot be reclaimed by simply returning to a primordial homeland or a pure ethnic origin. Instead, it is shaped through the specific, historically grounded contexts in which individuals find themselves.

Hall envisions the emergence of a ‘New World’ across the globe—a continually shifting meeting ground where cultures intersect, collide, and negotiate. This “place of many, continuous displacements” (Hall 19) becomes the locus for evolving cultural identities within diasporic communities. Hall firmly rejects William Safran’s linear and essentialist model of diaspora, arguing instead that diasporic identity is distinguished not by purity or fixity but by diversity, heterogeneity, and a perpetual state of transformation. Diasporic identities, with their shifting configurations of home and belonging, continually produce themselves anew through adaptation, mediation, and difference.

Homi Bhabha’s theorization of hybridity similarly challenges fixed notions of cultural identity, national belonging, and stable origins. His notion of the contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures underscores the productive tensions inherent in cultural interaction. Bhabha’s hybrid space is not merely a fusion but a dynamic, ambivalent realm where identities interact, resist, overlap, and unsettle authoritative cultural narratives. Hybridity disrupts the totalizing claims of cultural purity and instead highlights the multiplicity of signs, symbols, and ways of living that characterize modern diasporic realities.

Bhabha’s view of cultural transformation resonates with Hall’s notion of identity as a process of ‘suturing,’ in which the subject takes up positions while remaining aware that these identities are constructed representations. Identity is marked by gaps, incongruities, and a persistent sense of incompleteness, reflecting the inherent instability of the self. Papastergiadis elaborates on Bhabha’s idea by describing hybrid identity as one formed not through the simple accumulation or blending of elements but through the interplay of displacement and translation. Hybridity emerges from the untranslatable residues and resistant elements that persist within cultural interaction to those fragments that refuse assimilation and instead generate new modes of identification.

James Clifford similarly reimagines diaspora by shifting the focus from a singular, sacred homeland to the construction of multiple homelands. His departure from origin-bound narratives marks an important theoretical liberation, freeing diaspora from rigid nativist ideologies. Clifford argues that diaspora becomes a signifier for new cultural possibilities, a framework through which dispersed individuals



negotiate hybrid positionalities. By rejecting the linear myth of return, Clifford emphasizes the mobile, reconstructed, and layered nature of diasporic identity.

Avtar Brah's conception of 'diaspora space' further contributes to this theoretical landscape. She defines diaspora space as the site where diasporic communities, indigenous populations, and new migrants coexist, interact, and contest meanings of belonging. In this space, home becomes a fluid, negotiated construction shaped by emotional investments, cultural memories, and lived experiences rather than a singular geographic point. Brah's framework foregrounds the entanglement of displacement and dwelling; revealing how memory, migration, and locality intersect to create dynamic diasporic subjectivities.

Paul Gilroy's theory of the Black Atlantic advances another layer of understanding by challenging nationalist models of racial and cultural identity. Gilroy critiques essentialist notions tied to singular origins and instead proposes a transnational model shaped through routes of travel, histories of displacement, cultural translation, and the interplay of memory and movement. His emphasis on double consciousness and intercultural exchange helps illuminate the fluid and multidirectional nature of diasporic identity.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives establish the foundation for the present study. The framework emphasizes ambivalence, hybridity, constructed homelands, diaspora space, and memory as key forces shaping diasporic identity. It rejects fixed, essentialist, and territorially bound definitions of identity in favour of a more plural, fragmentary, and transformative understanding of diasporic subjectivities. The analysis foregrounds how memory, cultural negotiation, mobility, and the fluid dynamics of belonging collectively shape the spatio-temporal landscapes of home and identity.

Within this framework, cultural memory is understood as both collective and transient; a resource not for preserving a monolithic narrative of the past but for reconfiguring identity in the present. This shift marks a broader ideological transformation from viewing history as static to analysing the multiple representations of history that animate diverse cultural discourses of the twentieth century and beyond.

From these discussions, it becomes clear that memory is a vital determinant of diasporic identity; capable of being reshaped through the pluralistic processes of remembering within contemporary sociopolitical contexts. Migrants living in fluctuating states of belonging come to recognize that no system of meaning or knowledge is total, absolute, or pure. Instead, identity emerges within hybrid, constantly renegotiated



configurations. Diasporic narratives therefore craft new frameworks of belonging that better represent migrant experiences than older, totalizing cultural models.

Diasporic individuals do not secure identity through rootedness in a single place, nation, or ethnicity; instead, they must continuously forge itinerant cultural routes that connect multiple temporalities and geographies. These routes allow them to form emotional, cultural, and imaginative ties across past, present, and future without assuming a linear progression. As McLeod observes, diaspora replaces the “grounded certainties of roots with the transnational contingencies of routes” (215). These dynamic configurations of identity intersect with poststructuralist theories, merging diaspora’s contextual realities with conceptual concerns about representation, discursivity, and the instability of meaning.

Bhabha similarly advocates for a new conceptual space in which to locate emerging ethnicities one formed through the “great history of the languages and landscapes of migration and diaspora” (*The Location* 235). In this vision, identity becomes an ongoing, elaborative process shaped by difference, liminality, and cultural translation.

Bhabha’s diasporic logic of transformation aligns closely with Hall’s theorization of ‘suturing,’ which exposes the partial, contingent nature of subject positions in the making of identity. For Hall, identities are constructed through discursive positioning, and although subjects must adopt these positions, they are always aware however faintly that such representations are incomplete, shaped by gaps, ruptures, and absences. Representation is always articulated across a division, from the location of the Other, and thus can never fully coincide with the subjectivities invested in it. Hall’s framework therefore describes identity through terms such as construction, representation, discontinuity, and incongruity, marking a fundamental departure from any notion of stable or singular selfhood.

According to Bhabha, migrants living along borders at the margins of nations and cultures require a new art of the present, one that acknowledges and works within the contradictory logics of border life. Borders represent sites of connection as well as separation, thresholds charged with conflicting forces of belonging. For Bhabha, the concept of ‘beyond’ describes these zones of transition:

“the ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past... we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (*The Location* 1).

This in-between space, variously described as liminal, interstitial, or hybrid, dissolves binary structures. Rather than opposites, cultural differences coexist, intermingle, and reshape one another. Bhabha urges



critics to move beyond narratives of originary purity or initial identity, insisting that the in-between site of cultural translation provides fertile terrain for negotiating singular or collective forms of selfhood. From this perspective, identity is a discursive outcome, emerging through the articulation and elaboration of cultural differences. The migrant situated at the border becomes a pivotal agent of change, reworking inherited ideas through the contrary, transformative logic of hybridity.

In the context of England as a destination for relocation, the nation becomes a contested landscape of belonging where identity is never static. Instead, identity is negotiated within shifting arrangements of race, culture, migration, and memory. Britain's minority communities including second- and third-generation descendants of migrants have played a major role in forging a diasporic space that challenges narrow narratives of national belonging. Their presence disrupts the exclusionary, homogenizing myths of cultural rootedness, rejecting any essentialist conception of homeland as the sole site of authentic identity.

These diasporic articulations foreground multiplicity, hybridity, and shifting cultural boundaries, destabilizing the binary oppositions embedded in fixed narratives of home. For diasporic individuals, identity is tied to multiple homelands and is characterized not by purity but by an acceptance of heterogeneity and diversity. The physical landscapes, cultural practices, histories, and mythologies of the homeland leave deep marks on diasporic memory. These memories do not remain intact as pristine embodiments of the past; instead, they evolve, adapt, and undergo transformation to accommodate the realities of a new environment.

Economic mobility and the ease of transnational movement further accelerate this fluidity. Lives shaped by continual relocation create states of instability in which home becomes an outcome of multiple journeys rather than a single stable location. Within this context, the diasporic experience in England becomes a site for remapping identity, shaped by the long histories of language, migration, and cross-cultural encounters.

Every character in these novels experiences a persistent longing to belong; an internal pressure to feel at home within their chosen landscapes of identification. As Prins observes,

“you have to escape and go where you can find yourself, or you stay and transform what is around you until it becomes your own” (Bhabha 37).



This act of transformation depends, however, on a reconfiguration of the inner emotional terrain. Home ceases to be a fixed geographic site and instead becomes an emotional construct, defined by the mutable frameworks of memory and desire.

CONCLUSION:

As previously stated, the primary aim of this research is to foreground the significance of home and belonging within diasporic consciousness and to examine their representation in the fiction of Asian diasporic authors such as Kazuo Ishiguro, Hanif Kureishi, and Romesh Gunesequera. Their works illuminate the complexities of individual and collective memory in shaping identity within contemporary multi-ethnic Britain; a society characterized by cultural instability and vibrant heterogeneity shaped by ongoing migration. Although these writers differ widely in theme and technique, they share a common engagement with the fluid poetics of negotiation and cultural mediation. The characters they depict recognize and navigate the interplay of difference, ambivalence, and heterogeneity inherent in diasporic displacement, migration, and resettlement. In doing so, they interrogate entrenched binaries and destabilize rigid interpretations of identity and belonging within unfamiliar cultural landscapes.

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