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NEW DIRECTIONS IN DIASPORA STUDIES. REVISITING THE PAST, REVIEWING THE PRESENT AND LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

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Interest in diaspora studies has been steadily growing, especially given the current context of unprecedented global migration. We live in an era marked by widespread violence and forced displacement, where countless individuals are compelled to leave their home countries in search of safety, stability, and a chance at a peaceful life, while countless countries make necessary adjustments to receive, accept or negate these individuals, in the back and forth game of emigration-immigration.

Diaspora studies as a field of study aims to keep up with the ever-expanding terminology associated with the multitude of ramifications the concept of diaspora has come to acquire in order to reflect the complexity of movement patterns. As such, researchers in the present volume have assembled interdisciplinary research that links sociological, historical and political approaches with those of literary studies, pedagogy, philosophy, in order to identify and address current evolutionary trajectories of diaspora; there is even the suggestion mentioned by the editors in the Introduction to the volume, that the term 'diaspora' itself, through these disciplinary dispersions and disseminations, is becoming 'diasporised'. Thus, the collection of essays marks new territory by opening up to theoretical spaces and critique looking at the importance of memory and diasporic acts of remembrance, the condition of 'post-memory', how third and fourth generation diasporans live and continue to shape their identities.

The volume is divided into 3 Parts, namely: *New Directions in Diaspora Studies* reuniting 4 essays *Revisiting the Past* comprising 4 essays and *Reviewing the Present*, featuring 17 essays. The Parts are preceded by a Foreword and Introduction.

In Part I, *New Directions in Diaspora Studies and Diaspora Studies Now: Where Do We Go From Here?*, scholars address the evolving landscape of diaspora studies, questioning the foundations of the field and advocating for a more inclusive, intersectional approach. These works critique traditional frameworks that have focused largely on linear migration stories, instead suggesting that modern diasporic

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experiences are multifaceted, involving circular migration, digital connections, and complex emotional landscapes that transcend borders. Furthermore, mapping identity through memory, explores memory as a tool for reconstructing identity, as highlighted in *Maps of Memories: Re-constructing Identity through Remembering and (Re)defining Post Diaspora*. The works focus on the ways that collective and individual memories serve as anchors for diasporic communities, allowing individuals to negotiate and affirm their identities within new cultural contexts. In terms of the changing perspectives on migration and human mobility, in *Re-defining Diaspora Studies: Changing Landscape of Mobility and Migration*, diaspora refers to profound psychological and cultural shift.

As mentioned at the outset, migration patterns have transformed due to global conflicts, environmental issues, and economic pressures, requiring scholars to rethink the diaspora concept in ways that accommodate these new realities.

In the Second Part, the collection of essays approaches complex themes such as the one of borders, memory, and identity within diasporic communities, using both fiction and non-fiction to explore the experiences of returnees, the legacy of colonialism, and the persistence of cultural belonging across generations. For example, *The Spiral Route of Returnees* looks at the cyclical journey of individuals returning to their ancestral lands, stressing the layered and conflicted sense of belonging and identity that shapes the experience of returning "home." This return is not a simple act but rather a spiral, suggesting a journey filled with repeated weighing up and different perspectives. Or, to add another example, *'Good fences make good neighbours': Revisi(t)ing Borders as Entrenched in M.G. Vassanji's Non-Fiction* addresses the concept of borders—not just as geographical boundaries, but as emotional and cultural fissures that disperse communities and confuse identity.

Colony, Cane-field and Coolies: Indenture, Indo-Caribbean Diaspora, and Belongingness in David Dabydeen's 'The Counting House' focuses on the Indo-Caribbean diaspora and the legacy of indentured laborers who were transplanted into Caribbean colonies. This essay takes the Indo-Caribbean Guyanese novelist David Dabydeen's *'The Counting House'* (1996) as its case study and shows how the colonial economy contributed to forming serfdom in the Caribbean cane-fields and how these plantations stood for the Empire in miniature, where exploiting the dislocated became common practice.

Part III of the book is the most consistent in the number of essays, reflecting the Editors' need to dwell more on present circumstances and present forms and connotations of diaspora affiliated terms and meanings. What stands out in this Part is the significant contribution of Romanian scholars: Roxana Marinescu, Ecaterina Balica and Angelica Marinescu look at postcommunist Romanian diaspora through the lens of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities', or at violence and media representation of violence in the host lands such as Italy, as well as the homeland of

the immigrants – Romania, or at the religious practices of the Indian diaspora in Romania and how this smaller diasporic community contributes to Romania as a former communist country in Europe.

The diasporic experience is further enhanced by essays that examine the complex intersections of identity, culture, and belonging as experienced by, for example, South Asian diasporic communities, through literature and film. Just to offer a brief idea, *Analyzing Criminalization as a Medium of Assimilation in the Film 'Provoked'* explores how banning serves as a forced path to assimilation for immigrants, especially women, within hostile environments. *The Politics of Naming and Identity Creation in Bharati Mukherjee's 'Jasmine'* discusses the transformative power of naming in identity formation. Mukherjee's protagonist reshapes her identity by use of multiple names, each drawing different angles of her diasporic journey. *Weltanschauung: Justifying Parabolic Reality in Deepa Mehta's Videsh: 'Heaven on Earth'* explores the use of a parable to present a worldview which depicts harsh realities of immigrant experiences. And so on, many other written and visual instances that encompass, in a kaleidoscope manner, the multi-faceted, multi-layered aspects of diasporic identity in contemporary settings.

Overall, the volume under review depicts a wide path forward for diaspora studies, offering a complex, multi-angled understanding of identity, culture, and community in present context. With its fluent, overarching look at diaspora in the past, in the present and way(s) forward, the volume becomes the sort of book that can be regarded as essential reading for students and scholars alike, in how we may see diaspora, stressing its importance as both cultural and personal journey, but also altering factor of lives, societal fabric, politics, economics.