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Research Article

Creation of Third Space: A New Forged Identity in *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*

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Abstract

*This paper discusses the notion of the third space as the place of identity construction using some illustrative examples from *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee and *Seasons of Flight* by Manjushree Thapa. Through the use of key ideas presented by Homi K. Bhabha, this paper reviews how the two protagonists, Jasmine and Prema, who are South Asian women migrants in the United States, encoded transnational displacement in their creation of hybrid identities. These characters change displacement to an act of self-reinvention by refusing the negative East/West and home/exile binary relations. The study employs close reading of its text, exploring such characteristics as linguistic hybridity, symbolic reinvention and nonlinear narrative distributions, which reflect the fluid identities of the protagonists. The paper, inspired by the scholarship on diasporas, claims that in creative works by Mukherjee and Thapa, the third space is addressed as the space of the agency, which contests the nationalist patterns of belonging. Through cultural negotiation and evocation of memory, the novels bring about an innovative view of migrants, taking a radical stance in belonging to a globalized world through the process of building dynamic identities.*

Keywords : *Third Space, Hybrid Identity, Transnationalism, Cultural Negotiation, South Asian Diaspora*

Introduction

In the globalized world where migration and cultural mobility is the order of the day, the idea of fixed single identities has been hard to hold on to. This displacement is crystallized in contemporary diasporic fiction in which characters remain bound to neither their native places nor the countries to which they have migrated. The tension between two opposites may be traced in *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee and *Seasons of Flight* by Manjushree Thapa where the presented characters demonstrate a paradigmatic example of identity exploration in the process

of transnational migration. Jasmine, a reinvented Indian widow in America, and Prema, a Nepali migrant going through the promises, and perils of the U.S, describe Homi K. Bhabha, who explained the third space as a place of liminality that allows cultural hybridity to flourish (Ibid. 37). They tell of a rejection of old binaries of East/West and home/exile as disclosure of identity as neither the fixed inheritance nor a negotiation in progress. This paper will put these stories under the scrutiny of the transnational and postcolonial theory to demonstrate that, by making their heroines agents of self-creation by forging new identities, Mukherjee and Thapa have turned the displacement into a form of creative potentiality.

Hypothesis

The third space is not merely a theoretical abstraction, and it is a survival strategy. Bhabha's framework illuminates how marginalized individuals, particularly female migrants, resist assimilationist pressures by blending cultural codes to craft new selves (Bhabha 41). For Jasmine and Prema, this process is fraught with violence, erasure, and rebirth-Jasmine sheds her past through literal and symbolic name changes (Jyoti, Jasmine, Jane), while Prema oscillates between Nepali tradition and American individualism. Yet both novels resist portraying hybridity as mere compromise. Instead, they frame it as a site of agency, where memory and adaptation collide to produce identities that transcend geographic and ideological borders. This paper traces how Mukherjee and Thapa deploy literary form (e.g., episodic structure, symbolic imagery) to mirror their protagonists' fragmented yet dynamic selves, ultimately asserting that the "third space" is not a void but a crucible for reinvention. In doing so, it critiques nationalist narratives that equate identity with territorial belonging, offering a radical alternative for understanding belonging in a globalized world.

Methodology

Methodologically, this paper employs close textual analysis alongside transnational and postcolonial frameworks to interrogate how Mukherjee and Thapa construct hybrid identities. Through comparative reading of *Jasmine* and *Seasons of Flight*, I examine three key dimensions: (1) linguistic hybridity (code-switching, translation gaps), (2) symbolic acts of reinvention (name changes, bodily transformations), and (3) narrative structure (nonlinear timelines, disrupted geographies) that mirror third-space subjectivity. This approach draws on Bhabha's notion of cultural translation to reveal how the novels formalize dislocation in their very aesthetics-where fractured storytelling becomes a metaphor for migrant consciousness (Bhabha 55). By centering passages where Prema and Jasmine actively manipulate their identities (e.g., Jasmine's adoption of "Jane" or Prema's curated American persona), the analysis demonstrates how hybridity operates as a tactical performance rather than passive assimilation. The study further contextualizes these literary choices within broader diaspora scholarship (Hall 225; Vertovec 17), bridging textual details with socio-historical forces of globalization and gendered migration.

Literature Review

Jasmine and *Seasons of Flight* intricately explore the creation of a "third space," a realm where new, forged identities emerge as a result of the interplay between the homeland's culture and the culture of the new land. In these novels, the heroines navigate the complex world of transnationalism, cultivating hybridized identities that bridge the gap between their origins and their places of settlement. This "third space" is not just a physical location but a mental and emotional construct, serving as a platform for cultural negotiation, adaptation, and transformation. The characters, Jasmine and Prema, exemplify the fluidity of identity in an era of increased migration and global interconnectedness, demonstrating how individuals can blend aspects of their original

culture with those of their new environment to construct a unique and dynamic identity reflective of the contemporary globalized world.

Elizabeth Bronfen and Benjamin Marins define hybridity as “a dynamic blend of traditions and chains of signification, incorporating various forms of discourse and technologies, and arising from techniques of collage, sampling, and bricolage” (Bronfen and Marins 45). In essence, it encapsulates the intricate interplay between old and new, as well as the fusion of different discourses. Hybridity fundamentally challenges conventional notions of identity homogeneity and purity, questioning the binary existence of identity itself. Robert Josef Raab and Martin Butler C. Young emphasize that hybridity “signals the impossibility of essentialism,” suggesting that it is an essential characteristic of human cultures (Raab and Young 112). Renato Rosaldo further underscores the ubiquity of hybridity in human cultures, positing that all cultures continuously undergo processes of transculturation, characterized by “two-way borrowing and lending between cultures” (Rosaldo 78). Instead of framing the debate in terms of hybridity versus purity, he argues that it is “hybridity all the way down,” highlighting the interconnected nature of cultures (Rosaldo 79).

A prominent proponent of the idea of hybridity as the “third space” is cultural critic Homi K. Bhabha. He conceptualizes hybridity as the result of combining the first space (the place of origin) and the second space (the place of settlement). Bhabha contends that hybridity is not merely an outcome of separate imaginative moments but rather embodies the “third space” itself, an in-between realm that fosters the emergence of alternative positions (Bhabha 56). This third space is a site of resistance as well as of acculturation, a space and place where cultural meanings and symbols can be made to circulate again and again in the dynamic ways of reinterpretation and appropriation. Finally, the idea of hybridity as the third space reflects the multilayered, multiple perspective of identity in the ever-connected globalized society. Homi K. Bhabha emphasizes the role attributed to hybridity as the so-called third space that promotes the development of the alternative authority that refers to the change of the binary ideas of the identity (Bhabha 58). The idea of hybridity is possible because of the challenges of the current globalized society, especially among the migrants and the way they relate with the new context. F. Falcon elaborates on the formation of hybrid identity, emphasizing the need to break free from established European paradigms. He suggests that identity is shaped in the new land through a dynamic fusion of native and foreign elements, creating a fluid and evolving sense of self (Falcon 92).

The fluidity of identity engendered by migration and transnational movements is elucidated by Ahmed et al. Transnational exchanges generate the fluidity of nomadic identity, underpinned by shared histories, homeland memories, alienation in host countries, a desire for eventual return, and ongoing support for the homeland (Ahmed et al. 134). Cultural exchange between migrants and their host countries results in the development of hybrid cultures and identities.

H. H. Sarhan emphasizes the connection between hybridity and cultural interaction, particularly within the context of colonialism and postcolonial literature. Hybridity is seen as a normal outcome of interactions between different cultures, often initiated during colonial periods (Sarhan 203). The study of hybridity is crucial for understanding the interchanges that transpire in the wake of colonialism.

Amardeep Singh expands on the uses of hybridity, drawing parallels from biology to literature. He clarifies that hybridity signifies a blending of Eastern and Western cultures, with a particular focus on colonial subjects from Asia or Africa who find a balance between the cultural attributes of both worlds (Singh 67). Although the term originated in biology, its contemporary

significance lies in its broader application to various forms of cultural mixing between East and West.

Stuart Hall's perspective on diasporic hybrid identity underscores the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of identities within the diaspora. These identities are in a constant state of flux, shaped by ongoing transformation and difference as migrants strive to establish authentic and fixed identities in their new lands of settlement (Hall 225). The notion of a fluid and ever-changing diasporic identity challenges the traditional concept of identity as a static and singular construct.

In line with Stuart Hall's view on the continuous flux of identity, Chiang and Linda Jakubowicz underscore the complex nature of identity in modern times. Chiang emphasizes that identity is a multifaceted construct mediated by representations, practices, memory, and imagination, and it evolves through narratives that inevitably have political dimensions (Chiang and Jakubowicz 154). In the late modern era, returning to one's original root culture is not a straightforward option, as identities are shaped by the interplay between the homeland culture and the culture of the new land. Chiang's insights emphasize the intricate processes through which identities are formed and the complex relationship between the real and the imaginary in shaping one's sense of self.

Chin-Yun Chiang further elucidates that geographical and cultural displacement leads to the creation of new cultural forms and identity constructs. When migrants navigate a new environment, they engage in a process of combining local and global influences to establish a novel cultural identity (Chiang 88). This merging of diverse elements fosters the emergence of local-global cultural dialects, showcasing the adaptability and dynamism of identity formation in the face of cultural displacement.

The idea of an imaginary alternative world as a product of hybrid identity formation is echoed by Benedict Anderson, who discusses the concept of "imagined communities." In the context of nations, Anderson argues that they are "cultural constructs with real consequences" (Anderson 6). The alternative world, like imagined communities, is born from the fusion of new and root worlds, linking migrants with their cultural origins and the culture of the land of settlement. It provides a sense of comfort and continuity in an alien land. Additionally, Farhzad Monfared emphasizes the inevitability of hybridity as a result of cultural encounters in the third space, which emerges as "a product of cultural negotiation" (Monfared 112). In this space, migrants must balance assimilation with their existing cultural identities and memories of their homeland, ultimately creating a new culture and an alternative world to ease their adjustment to the newness and changes they encounter in their place of settlement. The key point of the imaginary alternative world is the multifacetedness and strength of identity under the threat of displacement and human desire to connect with the place and stability. Within the scope of transnationalism and immigration, the fusion of various cultural and geographical worlds will lead to a distinctive sense of identity which could be regarded as an alternative to the conventional phenomenon of nationalism. Transnationalism, by its nature, invites the merging of diverse elements, where individuals navigate through a mosaic of cultural influences and negotiate their sense of self. Unlike nationalism, which often seeks to create nations where they did not previously exist, transnationalism thrives on the amalgamation of multiple nationalisms, resulting in the formation of complex and hybrid identities.

Discussions

Benedict Anderson's insights into the nature of nationalism as an "imagined community" further illustrate the parallels between transnational identities and the concept of nationalism. A

nation, in Anderson's perspective, is essentially "an imagined political community," characterized by a shared sense of belonging among its members, despite their limited direct interactions with one another (Anderson 6). Similarly, in the diaspora context, individuals living with the imaginary alternative world create their own form of imagined community, connected by shared sentiments and experiences. These communities, whether based on a nation or an alternative world, demonstrate the power of human imagination in fostering a sense of belonging and unity among individuals who may never physically meet but still carry a profound collective feeling.

Ultimately, the diaspora community seeks a sense of joy and fulfillment in their alternative world, much like how traditional nations find a sense of unity and solidarity through their shared national identity. Here, the very idea of the imaginary second world then echoes the flexibility and capacity of the identity to adapt to transnationality and migration, which pay great attention to the elusiveness and the constant changes of human relations and communities. *Seasons of Flight*, by Manjushree Thapa and *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee are literary works, which epitomize the spirit of the South Asian diaspora. The authors of such novels have creatively fashioned main characters who represent the struggles and hardships encountered by individuals who have gone miles away to settle in new lands. As we follow the stories, we realize Prema and Jasmine are as oil containers through which the authors are expressing the diasporic experience in a deep multidimensional way by demonstrating displaced, transnational and hybrid people that develop the characters of the South Asian writers in diaspora. There is an amazing parallel of the stories the same authors are narrating themselves, Manjushree Thapa and Bharati Mukherjee. Manjushree Thapa, born in Nepal has made her own diasporic journey, where she is currently living in Canada and Bharati Mukherjee, born in India as an Indian has made her own diasporic journey by marrying a Canadian and settling in the United States. They do so through the prism of their respective characters, Prema and Jasmine wherein they both consider in exquisite detail, the tension of the struggle of identity and the subtle and complex games of adjustment, negotiation and identity that becomes a way of life as a diaspora. Leaving their homeland, these writers, similarly to their fellow writers, found themselves in unknown waters of migration and thus embark to get hold of the opportunity that opened in the new locations.

The two heroines, Prema and Jasmine, are presented in the light of typical representatives of the diaspora, struggling with the dizzying challenge of identity, which is so frequent in the experience of the immigrant and the journey to the new land. It is a case of having to fit existing in two worlds because new immigrants have to make their original cultural identities less and shorter than the norms and values of the new countries where they now reside. The duality of this inherently gives rise to the hybrid transnational identities, prompting them to create an imaginary extra world that is more dynamic. In this world, there is a harmonious relationship that is established between the place they call an original home and their new home and they are given a third space where they can be who they truly are. This process, which is examined in the novels, is the core of the immigrant experience, trying to find a balance between the cultural baggage of their former selves and the tantalizing glory of the new, and shape a story that is their own, their identity. Trying to dig deeper into these stories, we will sort out numerous layers of identity, culture, and belonging, which make up the life of these two outstanding protagonists, and, consequently, diasporic experience of South Asian authors. In their narratives, the authors bring us on a trip that does not stop on geographical basis leaving the readers to ponder about the intricacies and details of identity in a world that is becoming more and more connected. *Seasons of Flight* and *Jasmine* equally and closely entwine around characters based in the East and the West revolving around the main characters of South Asian descent. Prema and Jasmine are the heroines with the help of

whom the readers learn about the complexity of cultural negotiation, exchange, and assimilation. Interaction between characters in the stories builds up fluid links that create the dynamic interaction in the Eastern and Western cultures. Following the heroines and their negotiations between various cultural influences, the movements can be seen clearly illustrating the process of the so-called phenomenon of the West luring the East and the East luring the West and, thus, depicting abundant filmilee of cross-cultural interactions (Bhabha 114). Migration as one of the central themes in these transnational writings has dramatic impacts on the way the plot is structured. The story of Prema in the *Seasons of Flight* is the power of migration in changing lives because she leaves her old life in Nepal to seek a new American identity. All her various jobs indicate her various identities and like the transition between the various occupations, the transition between identities is fluid in her quest to attain a concrete identity in her new home (Thapa 89). And as she continues to go through the tangles of her relationships, Prema is consumed by the feeling of crisis and insecurity, which leads her to go on a journey to find herself.

However, the immigrant finally achieves a level of hybridity by incorporating her original culture in the American one and leading a dual identity where she exists in the third world or an alternate reality between the two worlds (Bhabha 56). Migration in the literary narrative of the *Seasons of Flight* becomes a key figure in driving the action of a literary narrative by triggering a rife search of a new identity on one hand and causing an identity crisis by eliciting the formation of a complex and fantastic world on the other hand. The story seamlessly unfolds as Prema undertakes her journey to the United States, a foreign and unfamiliar land where opportunities beckon. Her passage from the rural landscapes of Nepal to bustling Kathmandu and eventually to American soil signifies a gradual metamorphosis of her traditional identity into a modern American one (Thapa 112). Her innate opportunism drives her to seize every chance that comes her way. Yet, as she begins to assimilate into American life, the stark differences from her Nepalese roots thrust her into an identity crisis, and she embarks on an arduous journey to reconcile her origins with her newfound American identity, ultimately forging a hybrid transnational persona that marries the worlds of her origin and settlement.

Similarly, the character of Jasmine in Mukherjee's eponymous novel undertakes a migration to America from India, motivated by the solemn task of fulfilling her late husband's posthumous wish. His dream of furthering his education in the United States was tragically cut short in a Sikh terrorist bombing (Mukherjee 27). Jasmine's adjustment to her new American life is a testament to her resilience in the face of numerous hardships. Throughout her settlement process, she grapples with a displaced identity, enduring trials and tribulations unique to her foreign surroundings. Despite these challenges, she steadfastly forges ahead, never contemplating a return to her homeland. Jasmine's evolving identity is marked by the ever-changing names she acquires in different American locales, reflecting the intricate layers of her self-transformation. Known as Jyoti in her familial abode, Jasmine in her husband's home, and adopting the aliases Jazzy, Jase, and Jane in her various American residencies, her story is one of constant evolution and adaptation (Mukherjee 154).

A compelling aspect of diasporic literature is the depiction of life in exile, a theme echoed in Jasmine's narrative. While in America, she deliberately severs contact with her family and relatives in India, courageously facing challenges with a determined self-reliance (Mukherjee 201). She fully embraces the consequences of her choices and actions, to the extent of contemplating vengeance against her assailant. Her pursuit of a new identity commences upon her arrival in America, marked by a profound physical and emotional transformation, as she tenaciously strives to adopt an

American identity. Within the novel, transnationalism manifests not only through migration but also through Jasmine's ever-shifting identity and nomenclature. An Eastern soul dwelling in the Western realm, she grapples with a palpable sense of exile. In her journey of self-discovery, she adroitly blends her Eastern roots with Western influences, crafting a unique hybrid identity within the sphere of settlement (Bhabha 72). The narrative masterfully interweaves characters, settings, and languages from both the East and the West, revealing a tapestry of transnationalism and the ever-evolving identity of the protagonist. The novel illuminates the profound quest for identity amidst unfamiliar terrain, as an anonymous soul endeavors to carve out her place in a foreign land.

Prema and Jasmine, the heroines of *Seasons of Flight* and *Jasmine* respectively, offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on the South Asian diaspora's experiences in America. Prema, an unmarried South Asian woman exploring America as a legally authorized migrant, enjoys relative freedom to experiment with American life (Thapa 78). However, her journey as a first-generation immigrant is marked by identity crises, dislocation, and the struggle to reconcile her Nepali heritage with her new transnational reality. Despite these challenges, Prema ultimately constructs a hybrid identity, fusing elements of both cultures. She cultivates what Bhabha terms a «third space»—an imaginary alternative world where memories and nostalgia bridge her homeland and adopted country, allowing her to settle in America without fully relinquishing her roots (Bhabha 56).

In contrast, Jasmine's experience as an undocumented widow fulfilling her late husband's dream presents a more constrained and perilous path (Mukherjee 34). Her status as an illegal immigrant limits her choices, exposing her to hardships ranging from sexual assault to the constant threat of deportation. Yet, like Prema, Jasmine undergoes a profound transformation, shedding and adopting identities as symbolized by her evolving names—Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, and Jane (Mukherjee 112). Her resilience mirrors Prema's, as both heroines forge hybrid identities and imaginary worlds to navigate their displacement. However, Jasmine's trajectory highlights the additional burdens faced by marginalized migrants whose stories have been complicated by the processes of doing and undoing identity.

These novels illuminate the South Asian diaspora's adaptive strategies in America, where transnational identities emerge through the interplay of memory, nostalgia, and cultural negotiation. By centering their protagonists' fluid self-conceptions, Thapa and Mukherjee challenge fixed notions of nationhood and national identity. In doing so, they expose the limitations of the Westphalian nation-state model in a globalized era where, as Anderson argues, all communities are “imagined” yet politically consequential (Anderson 6). The heroines' hybridity—Prema's deliberate cultural fusion and Jasmine's survival-driven metamorphosis—exemplifies the “bidirectional” nature of migration: immigrants not only assimilate but also transform their adopted societies (Vertovec 22).

This cultural reciprocity demands a reevaluation of traditional frameworks. In today's post-Westphalian world, transnationalism offers a more nuanced lens for studying migration's cultural repercussions. As Hall observes, diasporic identities are “constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew” through difference (Hall 225). Novels like *Seasons of Flight* and *Jasmine* literalize this theory, depicting characters who hybridize their root cultures while influencing their new communities. Immigrants, these narratives assert, are not passive recipients of culture but active agents in its evolution.

Conclusion

In an era of global citizenship, the constructs of static national boundaries,

monolithic identities, and “pure” cultures have been rendered obsolete. *Seasons of Flight* and *Jasmine* exemplify the urgent need to redefine identities through multiculturalism, transnationalism, and the “third space.” Their protagonists embody the dynamic, hybrid identities that characterize our interconnected world. As cultural encounters intensify, these literary narratives hint to a future where identity is perpetually *in process*.

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