CHAPTER II

Diaspora Space

Our identity is at once plural and partial.

Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homeland* 15)

It is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and eyebrows of belonging. (Rushdie, *Shame* 64)

Salman Rushdie has begun his migrancy since his early years’ study in England, where he faces the dilemma of cultural displacement. He wavers between his motherland, India and his academic nourishing country, Britain. The politics of home is always the main concern in his writings. After the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, Khomeini’s declaration of *fatwa* reinforces Rushdie’s migrant life in turmoil. However, migrancy does not choke up his writing enthusiasm; on the
contrary, his unique identity, a diasporan, helps him re-open a new space which inspires in him a new vision of criticizing and bearing diverse cultural distinctiveness in his writing. In *Imaginary Homeland*, the collection of his essays, Rushdie claims that migrants celebrate “mongrelization” and worry about “absolutism of the Pure.” His notion, “[M]elange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world,” reflects Rushdie’s philosophy to face the world (*IM* 394). Instead of pursuing a pure and original root, he chooses to embrace mélange, plurality, and hybridity, which allows him to have “an authentic speaking voice” against the monolithic worldview and to “view the globe as a whole” (Fenwick 184-5). Although migrancy exposes diaspora to cultural displacement, fragmentation and discontinuity (McLeo 216), Rushdie deems it as a positive and liberating experience for diasporans to “seek freedom” in the world (Cook). Different from the aim of other diasporans, home-finding is not Rushdie’s primary concern. According to Mark Edmundson, “homelessness” offers Rushdie more “metamorphosis, change, the ability (and the need) to be other than one was” (qtd. in Cook). In this way, the diasporic identity for Rushdie is a positive subject position not a suffering stigma.

Refusing to be pinned down in a confined subject position, Rushdie takes advantage of his diasporic identity to liberate himself from designation. Diasporic identity, a fluid metaphor, its exuberant connotations can never be exhausted. It encompasses *incommensurable* cultural differences which are hard to be systematized and homogenized. Diasporic identity provides Rushdie with a political and ethical third space, a diaspora space, which is a site of *confluence*—the intersectionality of “diaspora, borders, and dis/location;” it is a site where “multiple subject positions are
juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed” (Brah 208). The space debunks the myth of purity and absolutism; it is a space embracing heterogeneity and hybridity. Its nature echoes Homi Bhabha’s notion of “the liminal space” and “hybridity,” which denies monolithic voices in colonial discourse by cultural difference. In this chapter, I will focus on how Rushdie deals with his ambivalent identity and what effect such identity will have on him. The following sections will be divided into three parts—the definition and evolution of diaspora, a diaspora space, and the representation of diasporic identity in *East, West*.

**Diaspora**

When it comes to diaspora, most people identify it as a “contact zone” of nations, cultures and regions. It relates to such terms as creolization, transculturation, border-crossing, and hybridity (Clifford 303). According to *OED*, diaspora, whose original meaning, dispersion, comes from ancient Greek, διασπόρα (διασπολεῖν as a verb; δια= through; πορείν= to sow, scatter), and first appear in Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 28.1 It originally refers to the miserable status quo of wandering Jews, who are served as a collective community in migration. With the change of time, people recognize the nomadic

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1 According to the story in the Holy Bible, after Exodus, Moses announces God’s command to Israelis—they should obey and worship the only God, Jehovah, who will lead them to the Promised Land and bestow them blessings. However, if they disobey God’s command they will be cursed. One of the penalties is to be scattered around the world—“Thou shalt be a diaspora (or dispersion) in all kingdoms of the earth” (Deuteronomy 28: 25). From then on, “diaspora” implies a hint of “curse, with a perpetual otherness amid others, with blindness, madness and defeat, with a spreading that weakens (Israel 2).
experience does not belong to the Jews only but to the people who are dispersed from their homelands into a new region as well, including migrants and exiles whether or not they are forced or voluntary to move away from their homelands. Therefore, diaspora, to some extent, becomes a collective experience of migration and exile. It is mentioned a lot in colonial and postcolonial discourse. According to Bill Ashcroft and Gareth Griffiths, diaspora has a power to interrogate and subvert essentialist models, binary-oppositional values, or unified and fixed cultural forms by its “hybrid” nature; those, who come back to the metropolis from the former colonized countries, threaten the cornerstone of the dominant imperial culture most (70).

Based on many discussions and interpretations, the definition of diaspora has now met the temporal consensus—it resists assimilation and integration from any fixed meaning\(^2\) (Brah 178-210; Clifford 302-38; Israel 1-22). The insight is usually discussed in two aspects: the formation of diaspora in the complex socioeconomic and historical context, and the politics of home/nation-state.

When we refer to diaspora, we cannot skip the process of self-formation. The history of self-identity formation has evolved from the concept of a continuous, holistic and essential self-identity into a discontinuous, fragmented and social discursive formation one. The latter now occupies the mainstream position of

\(^2\) William Safran in *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of the Homeland and Return* gives diaspora, “the expatriate minority communities,” six definitions: (1) that are dispersed from an original “center” to at least two “peripheral” places; (2) that maintain a “memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland”; (3) that “believe they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host country; (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and (6) of which the group’s consciousness and solidarity are “importantly defined” by this continuing relationship with the homeland (qtd. in Clifford 304-5). The definition is attacked by other critics for neglecting the complex discursive and historical features of diaspora and his insistence on returning of the “homeland” (Clifford 306).
self-identity formation discourse. When human self-identity is no longer deemed as oneness, cultural identity is interrogated on the spot. Similar to self-identity, the formation of cultural identity is classified into two categories—the holistic one and the discontinuous one. Stuart Hall in his essay, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, clearly elaborates the distinction between the two opposite viewpoints. The first perspective on cultural identity focuses on the unity of a cultural group. The people unite their communal experience of dispersion and fragmentation. Based on the shared memory, they shape an imaginary liaison to reconstruct their broken past history. Through the liaison, they are able to maintain their identities in foreign countries and become rebellious forces in the western culture. The second one spotlights the diversities of cultures. There are similarities and diversities within the same cultural identity. We cannot designate one’s own cultural identity exactly, for personal experiences are ruptures and discontinuities (Hall 223-5). As Hall states, Cultural identity, [. . .], is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being.” It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture.

(225, emphasis added)

Instead of getting stuck in the “recovery of the past,” which may sustain the security of self identity, identities are the “names” we inscribe to them in different self positions; they are not transcending beings (Hall 225). Sharing the similar characteristic of discontinuous cultural identity, diasporic identity cannot be exactly defined.

Since we acknowledge that diaspora is un-definable, we ought to observe the
differences among it. Diaspora, generally, encircles a group of people who are dispersed from their homeland. They are co-opted as a communal unity within which historical and individual differences are effaced. However, tracing the trajectory of diaspora, we will find that diaspora is not a collective term only, it also encompasses a great number of covert differences—it composes multiple communities of dispersed people (Clifford 304). Paul Gilroy in “Diaspora and the Detours of Identity” proposes that when considering the issue of identity, the concepts of “the sameness within differentiation” and “the differentiation within the sameness” cannot be neglected (Gilroy 331). Although diaspora represents the communal shared experience of scattering people, the term itself contains nuances of historical and personal differences. In the first place, there are diverse types of diasporas, which are formed by altered cultural elements. They include African, Caribbean, Chinese diasporas and so on. In addition, differential economic conditions in different countries affect the living experiences of diasporans, and the change of history also transforms the diasporic circumstance. Diaspora, formed in relationality, is implanted within a “multi-axial understanding of power “(Brah 183, 189). To add up, if we take social, economic and political elements into consideration, we will find diaspora is impossible to be pinned down within a static meaning or context. It is always a metaphor in shift, a trace, the play of difference (Hall 228-29). It fits into the term, “the changing same”3 (Gilroy 335). The indefinable feature holds a

3 “The changing same,” derived from African-American writer, Leori Jones, provides a valuable motif for diaspora idea. The term, borrowed by Paul Gilroy, challenges the mechanical essentialism and oversimplified diversity discourse. It focuses on the indefinable trait and the flexibility of diaspora (Gilroy 335-36).
peculiar position to interrogate essential and oversimplified discourses.

The other aspect about the denial of fixed definition of diaspora is the politics of home by which the homecoming desire of diaspora is challenged. “Home” is no longer a term referring to just an individual lived-experienced shelter. It is a contesting site of power both in public and private spheres. “Home” contains two levels of meanings—the site of every day lived experience and an incantation of narratives of the “nation-state” (Brah 3-4). The former gives people a sense of “root” and “feeling at home,” which build up an “imagined community” for diasporans to return to—a mythic place of desire in diasporic imagination, a place of origin and no return (Brah 4; 192). The latter is favored by nationalists who take “home” as both subject and object to concretize the idea of nation-state. As Mary Layoun argues,

The rhetoric of nationalism as narrative persuades and convinces its audiences(s)—its implied readers and listeners—of the efficacy and desirability of its terms and of the “natural” relationship between those terms. Its appeal derives not just from the letter and word of truth and order (as “grammar”) but with letters and words in the sense of persuasion and likely possibility (as rhetoric). (qtd. in George 13, emphases added).

Nationalists exploit the literary meaning of “home” to include and exclude members in the territory. The process impels some subjects to imagine themselves being “at home” in a certain geographical location (George 14). In other words, those who are not circled into or outside the territory are categorized as Others. In the action of
excluding Others, cultural diversities and ethnicities\textsuperscript{4} will be erased and forced to assimilate into one unity of time and space (George 15). Edward Said argues that the place defined as a nation shirks the nuances of racial and cultural differences within it (8). A nation is an \textit{imagined community} (Anderson 1-8).

“Home-country” is an ideologically formulated artifact instead of a being in nature\textsuperscript{6} (George 17). Someone yearning for a home/nation is subconsciously to find a place which will offer the assurance of identity, security and stimulation (George 21). By excluding others, people will find a sense of “belonging” (Mishra 424-5)—“home is neither where they have to take you in nor where they want to take you in, but rather the place where one is \textit{in} because an Other(s) is kept out” (George 26-7). Therefore whether in national or interpersonal spheres, “home” is a contesting arena, containing the power struggle of exclusion and inclusion. It is not the shelter of comfort and peace; instead, it is a place of effacing differences and excluding minor voices.

\textsuperscript{4}Diaspora should be understood in terms of multi-axial perspectives, for it is formed by complicated historical, cultural and ethnical elements. Because of the heterogeneous nature of diaspora, diaspora embraces cultural differences and diverse ethnic paradigms. The distinctiveness of cultures and ethnicity will not be neglected. Especially in the postmodern era, the discourse of hybridization has taken place of that of homogenization. Hybridity becomes the main foci of the formation of diaspora (Hall 235). Thus, the hybrid nature of diaspora manifests the narrow monolithic discourse of “home” or “race.” The complete discussion about diaspora and ethnicity can be seen in Floya Anthias “Evaluating ‘Diaspora’: Beyond Ethnicity.”

\textsuperscript{5} There are four reasons why Benedict Anderson announces a nation as an \textit{imagined community}: (1) It is \textit{imagined} because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion; (2) it is imaged as \textit{limited} because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which the other nations; (3) it is imagined as \textit{sovereign} because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm; (4) it is imagined as a \textit{community}, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (1-8).

\textsuperscript{6} In \textit{The Politics of Home}, Rosemary Marangoly George postulates Said’s notion of “filiation” and “affiliation” to elucidate the imagined nature of nation and home. There is a succinct insight in page 16 to 17.
Diasporans’ desire of finding a “home” is allusive.

As I have mentioned earlier, diaspora is an assemblage term referring to those who leave their homelands forcibly or voluntarily. It is an “image of journey,” which is paradoxically to-and-fro between “settling down” and “putting roots elsewhere” (Brah 181-2). Diaspora contains multiple social-historical elements; various socio-temporal axes should be concerned. They signal the process of “multi-locality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries” (Brah 194). Diaspora, reiterating the concept of multi-placedness of home, does not mean that they do not feel berthed in the place of settlement (Brah 194). Not all diasporans yearn for an “authentic home,” for they recognize it as a created aura which is a delusion of nostalgia (George 175). Diasporans are shifting metaphors which are at once local and global; they are “network of transformational identifications” encompassing “imagined and encountering communities” (George 196). Dispersed from different countries, diasporans carry diverse cultural baggage in host countries where they are in but not of there. Embracing the idea of “route” but not “root,” diasporans do not hold the delusion of “home” tightly; on the contrary, they take their experience of migration as a strategy against the inelastic nationalist notion of nation-homeland. As Edmundson postulates, “Homelessness as a condition to be affirmed, because it allows for more metamorphosis, change, the ability to be other one was.” Rushdie affirms the condition of “homelessness.” (qtd. in Cook). He

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7 Salman Rushdie in Imaginary Homeland defines migration as a symbol of metaphor—“migration also offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age. The very word metaphor, with its roots in Greek words for bearing across, describe a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images”(278, emphases added).
states that the idea of “root “and “home” is a conservative myth which keeps us in a fixed place. Diasporans rejoice in plurality and hybridity instead of purity and absolutism. They refuse to settle down and be circled in a certain discourse and an imagined home. Instead, they carry observing and interrogating eyes to view the hegemonic, metropolitan culture. The forces between homeland and dispersion (Paul Gilroy statement of root and route) offer diasporans a creative tension which “inscribes a home desire while simultaneously critiques discourses of fixed origins” (Brah 192-3). The spirit gives them a potential power to transgress the boundary without being placed in fixed subject positions.

**Exile and Diaspora**

“Exile” and “diaspora” are two juxtaposed terms in literary critical theory. Although they both are included in migrancy, they are different in some aspects. According to Nico Israel’s interpretation in *Outlandish*, the two terms are contradictory and overlapped at the same time. The two juxtaposed terms are in the condition of either forcible or voluntary banishment and face the predicament of cultural displacement (Israel 3). Although facing the dilemma of cultural displacement, they still retain a sense of “tenacity, resistance, preservation of faith” in the worst cultural alienated circumstances (Israel 1-2). Pulled by the two opposite forces, a suffering of alienation from the homeland and the strong will of self-containment, “exile” and “diaspora” provide “ambivalent” and “in-between” dimensions for wanderers in foreign lands to question the dominant discourse.
ingrained in the mainstream culture. However, the striking differences between “exile” and “diaspora” are that the former stresses individual experience of finding an original home; though, the latter, having a desire for coming home, refuses to be pinned down in a certain geographical location. Because exile highlights an individual who is assumed as a coherent, continuous subject, its notion contradicts the postmodern idea of subject in process. Furthermore, its nostalgic attitude toward “home” or “root” narrows the meaning of home (Israel 3). It grasps the oneness of self identity and searches for rootedness, so it gradually falls into disfavor in the postmodern/postcolonial era (Israel 8). By contrast, “diaspora” sets free multiple and flexible possibilities to vagrants around the world. It interrogates the fixed origins while carrying the desire of homecoming, which is not the same as returning to “homeland,” a “root” ontologically (Brah 180). Diaspora is imbued with two characteristics, “hybridity” and “performativity,”\(^8\) which undo the stable foundation of cultural dominance, essential identity and location itself (Israel 3). They help “diaspora” win the favor of critics concerned about the agency of diasporic subject positions. The comparison of “exile” and “diaspora” can be said in this way—“exile is to diaspora as totality is to fragmentation, anxiety to schizophrenia, depth to surface and exchange to flow” (Israel 8).

**Diaspora Space**

\(^8\) “Performativity” relates to the concept of “mimcry,” which involves the “subversive potential contained in the forced and half-hearted adoption of the style or conventions of a dominant authority.” It is a double-edged strategy—a weapon of the oppressed and the oppressor (Hawthorn 209). The idea is much more clarified in Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*. 
In the borderland of *identity-as-essence* and *identity-as-conjuncture*, in Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg words, diaspora releases a “third time-space,” echoing Bhabha’s liminal space (13). The space is also identical to Avtar Brah’s “diaspora space.” This in-between space occurs in a contact zone where two diverse cultures encounter. In the terrain, the opposition is not only reactive but affirmative and creative as well (Lavie and Swedenburg 13). It is the space of *negotiation* and border-crossing. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* elaborates:

> These “in-between” spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of *collaboration*, and *contestation*, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (1-2, emphases added)

Within the interstices, cultural differences are going to *collaborate*, *contest*, and *negotiate* (Bhabha, *LC* 2). Through cultural confrontation and negotiation, the third space erodes the binary or minor/major opposition and grants the members within it an interstice where a new culture *goes beyond* the old one without setting up another fixed cultural affinity (Lavie and Swedenburg13). Only through the space will the emergence of *newness* enter the world -- the *newness* belongs not to an old culture and refuses to be defined by a new one; it keeps changing with time—“[I]t [newness] *renews the past*, refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of necessity, not of nostalgia, of living” (Bhabha, *LC* 7).

Diaspora, as we have mentioned, is a multi-meaningful term. We have to
analyze it in a genealogical way. It is situated in a heterotopic\(^9\) dimension where subject/object, majority/minority are blurred. The dimension, diaspora space, is a site of intersection of culture, economy, locality, and psychics. It is a contesting zone where multiple subjections encounter, juxtapose, and negotiate (Brah 208). Diaspora space, where various cultures overlap, contest and negotiate, erases the borderline of cultures. Purity of cultures is a myth, for transcultural activities keep happening. The double consciousness of diaspora allows diasporans to create a third space in the host country (Their “doubled relationship” toward the host country and their geographical homeland). On one hand, diasporans settle in the host country, where they have to devote their loyalty; on the other hand, they long for “coming home” (Brah 14). In such ambivalent circumstances, diasporans sustain and threaten the host country simultaneously. In respect of culture, diasporans take in the colonizer’s culture as a part of their own but they appropriate and mimicry it to recreate a new culture. For example, diasporans in Britain absorb and re-form English culture at the same time. British diasporans infuse new cultural elements to Englishness, which contaminates and enriches English culture paradoxically. Gloria Anzaldua, a theorist of boundary, points out, “[A] borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (qtd. in Lavie and Swedenburg 15, emphasis added). Based on the attribute of diaspora space, diasporans gain the power to retain their

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\(^9\) Heterotopia refers to the way in which different spaces contacts with each other; however, members within the space cannot feel any relation to the two spaces. The situation often makes people confused about where they really are (Danaher, Tony Schirato and Jen Webb 113).
homeland culture while they can still go on re-producing a living, and new-and-transit culture against being assimilated into a certain cultural affinity. It is a space always contaminated, engendering the potential of exploring hybridity, cross-cultural and interdiasporic relationship (Mishra 429-30). Its ambivalent nature tallies with Rushdie’s celebration of the un-definable diasporic identity. Majority of the characters in *East, West* are personas of his yearning for vacillating among the diaspora third space.

**Rushdie’s Representation of Diaspora in *East, West***

Belonging to a member of the new Indian diaspora,\footnote{There are two types of Indian diasporas in Marisha’s viewpoint, the old Indian diaspora and the new Indian diaspora. The old Indian diaspora is also called the diaspora of exclusion, who creates and maintains the Indian tradition to keep Indian diasporans’ diversity in the colonies. The old Indain diaspora transplants Indian culture in the imperial country. The new Indian diaspora is called the diaspora of border, who embraces both local and western cultures and refuses to fall into the essential pitfall. The new Indian diaspora is characterized by its “mobility” in foreign countries. It is marked by the hyphenated subjectivity. To sum up, the old Indian diaspora fights against the imperial keenly on stage; the new one takes advantage of its ambivalent identity to re-form a new culture, which challenges and changes the host-country culture at the same time (422-3).} the diaspora of the border, Rushdie is glued to his Indian tradition but meanwhile absorbs the western civilization, which nourishes his thinking and writing (Mishra 422). In his writings, we see he is pulled by the two ropes, spinning off between the two forces because of diaspora. In spite of the dilemma, he still refuses to take sides. The inclination provides him with a third space, in which hybridity, mongrelization are celebrated. It also spares himself from cultural and racial essentialism. In *East, West*, Rushdie represents the dilemma of diasporans in Britain. From these short stories, readers
are able to detect the writer how to deal with the two axes of topics-- a free diaspora agent, and the politics of home. In the “East, West” section—“The Harmony of Two Spheres,” “Chekov and Zulu,” and “The Courter”—the dilemma of diaspora is clearly demonstrated, which ominously reflects Rushdie’s exilic condition. The section also tells us that the East and the West are two incommensurable entities, none of which can be oversimplified or assimilated. Furthermore, the story in the “West” section, “At the Auction of the Ruby’s Slippers,” reveals Rushdie’s attitude toward “home,” an imaginary, fictional, and fragmented image. The problems of how to cope with the paradoxical predicament of diaspora in foreign lands and how to shatter the fictionality of “home” may be solved in the diaspora (third) space.

The three stories in the “East, West” section sufficiently demonstrate the living condition of Indian diasporans in Britain and manifest the incommensurable differences between the East and the West (The two sides will not meet in harmony and will not separate completely). The stories mainly exhibit confrontations of the East and the West by portraying the situation of Indian-diaspora characters in the British metropolis where they are deemed as Others. Rushdie utilizes Antonio Gramsci’s “hegemony”\(^{11}\) to reveal the relation between the colonizer and the colonized. However, although the colonizer can concretize its authority because of the consensus from the colonized, the colonized may shatter the colonizer’s established authority by means of mimicry or other strategies. As a result,

\(^{11}\) The power operation does not just come from top to the bottom (coercion) but also from bottom to the top (consensus). The mutual collaboration, resonance, and consensus make the operation of power function. Hegemony itself is not rigid but transforms all the time with the flow of the power. If the colonizers intend to set up their dominancy, apart from imposing its values or ideas coercively on the colonized, they should obtain consensus from the colonized.
diasporans in the host country are likely to smash the seemingly integral imperial dominancy. This is why diasporans, who may invade and transform imperial cultures, are regarded as a threat to the host country; they are mostly silenced and excluded in the host country. Under such tough circumstances, however, diasporans find a freelance in the diaspora space, in which they freely draw their immigrant conditions, potential creativity, reformation, and vision of hybridity. They instill new blood to the host country. That is how the newness enters the world (Israel 161-62).

The first story, “The harmony of the Spheres,” illustrates confrontations, incommensurability of the East and the West and the discrimination of diasporans in the host country. It is the story about a Welsh writer, Eliot Crane, and his Indian diaspora friend, Khan. The former pursues arcane occults, finally committing suicide because of his paranoid schizophrenia. The latter tries to find unions of the East and the West in occults but in vain. After Eliot’s death, Khan’s dream of harmony collapses and his sanity is at risk because of reading the writer’s diary concerning the extra-marital affair between his wife, Mala, and the writer. At the beginning of the story, the narrator, Khan, indicates the predicament of his diasporic identity in the host country through Eliot’s insane words,

I [Khan] was an invader from Mars, one of many such dangerous beings who had sneaked into Britain when certain essential forms of vigilance had been relaxed. Martians had great gifts of mimicry, so they could fool yuman beans into believing they were beans of the same stripe, and of course they bred like fruit-flies on a pile of rotten
bananas. (Rushdie, *EW* 127, emphasis added).\(^\text{12}\)

Eliot’s insane words are an umbrella idea which shows the predicament of diasporans. Mostly, diasporans are regarded as Others, invaders, alienated in the host country. Although they have been assimilated into the host-country culture, diasporans are still assorted as Others, the threat in their master countries. They are regarded as contaminant to the pure and integrate dominant culture.

Situated in such a predicament, Khan, who cares about race relations and the identity politics, conveys his unraveled rot of his self-identity and belongingness (136). He intends to reach the harmony between the unbridgeable schism with the help of George’s spiritual occults, which claims to have a power to *synthesize* the incommensurable (137-8):

> But in Eliot’s enormous, generously shared mental storehouse of varieties of “forbidden knowledge” I thought I’d found another way of *making a bridge between here-and-there, between my two otherness, my double unbelonging*. In that world of magic and power there seemed to exist the kind of *fusion f* worldviews, European Amerindian Oriental Laventine, in which I desperately wanted to believe. (141, emphasis added)

However, the access is an impasse. He finds it impossible to achieve the East-West harmony by the black magic so that he gives up the far-fetching idea. He inquires, “What human mind could have defended itself against such a Babel, in which

\(^{12}\) The abbreviation of *ES* here is Salman Rushdie’s *East, West*, the primary source of this dissertation. The documentation in the parenthesis will be the page number only hereafter.
Theosophists argued with Confucian, Christian Scientists with Rosicrucians?" (142). He addresses the readers that he has “flunked” the occult course, which he dares not put into practice but his weakness makes him survive (138). By contrast, Eliot, the devotee of occults, never finds harmony in his mind. He is possessed by the demon, dragging him into madness and schizophrenia and finally into his death. The collision of the opposition brings not harmony but a fatal “Bang” in the end (142).

The story ingeniously shows the quandary of diasporans and the interdependent relation of the East and the West. Any intention of fusing the two contradictory elements fails. They are self-contained and incommensurable entities. In the diaspora space, hybridity, mongrelization and mélange are celebrated. It highlights differences but not sameness. Only by respecting differences and maintaining high mobility within diaspora space will diasporans be free from the confined cultural snare. Eliot, who insists on integration of the East and the West, is doomed to fail. Khan, who fails to keep harmony in cultural synthesis, can only live on through maintaining and appreciating his ambivalent diasporic identity.

The second story “Chekov and Zulu” is about the friendship affected by the partition of India. Chekov (an Indian) and Zulu (a Sikh), whose names come from a movie, Star Trek, have been intimate friends since their childhood. They both come to London as “intrepid diplomats,” referring to spies in Britain (151). After the assassination of Indira Gandi, killed by a Sikh safeguard, the current political situation, the schism of Indian and Hindu-Sikh, forces Chekov and Zulu to set apart and take a political side. With the development of the story, they both finally return to India, but have disparate ends—Chekov serves the Indian government but is killed in the
bomb explosion; Zulu chooses to set up a security office and then flourishes. Their
dream of reunion again is just realized in Chekov’s dying vision. The story basically
represents two diverse diasporic attitudes and the inseparable relation between the
East and the West. As the previous section has mentioned, diaspora space is a
socioeconomic and cultural intersection where different elements negotiate, contest
and collaborate (Brah 208). It is a space in which contamination always happens.
Hybridity, trans-culturality and inter-diasporic interactions are attributes of the space
(Mishra 429-30). If diasporans intend to be free agents without being defined by
normative discourse, they must be free from fixed discourse to retain their high
mobility in host countries. Zulu, admitting and accepting cultural differences in the
country, survives while Chekov, holding strong nationalism and denying the fact of
cultural difference, loses his life.

Chekov holds paradoxical affections toward Britain. He enjoys and adores
British civilization while his nationalism reminds him of the colonized past of his
mother country, India. He tells Zulu, “I look at my own home [India], and I see that
it has been plundered by burglars [the colonizers]. I can’t deny there is a residue of
distress” (155). He blames the colonizers for pilfering the treasures from India to
build up their own prosperous fortunes and cities. He says, “[T]heir museums are
full of our treasure. [. . .]. Their fortunes and cities, built on the loot they took” (156).
He is unable to forgive the colonizer’s exploitation of the colonial country and to
forget the miserable past of India. He says to Zulu irritably, “One forgives, of course,
that is our national nature. One needs not forget” (156). Due to his hatred and
discontent toward the host country, Chekov confesses to Zulu that his radicalism
would make him a terrorist, not a diplomat (157). However, Zulu’s attitude is contradictory to Chekov’s. Zulu accommodates himself with his diasporic identity and is willing to accept both British and Indian cultures. The attitude helps him face the diasporic situation more easily. Zulu, in his notion about Indian colonized past, admits “the colonial period is a closed book” (157). The citizens of the former colonized country should not grasp the historical traumas tightly; instead, they are supposed to live out of the past, embracing and re-creating their brand new culture. Zulu gets rid of the colonized past, finding a new paradise in Britain. He compares the “Middle-earth,” a fairy land, the liminal space, between goodness and evilness, in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, to the living space in the central England and Wales. He believes the peaceful and fairy land dwells within us if we observe the world in a more open-minded scope. He tells Chekov, “Do you know, [ . . . ] the map of Tolkien’s Middle-earth fits quite well over central England and Wales? Maybe all fairylands are *right here, in our midst*” (163, emphasis added). Zulu’s choice of living within the diaspora space, negotiating with contradictory cultures, makes him safely survive in the dichotomous world. He refuses to go to extremes politically and ideologically; he establishes prosperous business in his homeland. On the contrary, Chekov is unwilling to negotiate with the imperial culture but embraces rigorous nationalism and hatred, which leads him to a miserable end.

Chekov and Zulu’s friendship is pulled by the political forces from the East and the West. They respectively represents one type of the diasporans: Chekov, a radical diasporan, rebels against the cultural of the host country; Zulu, a new diasporan, embraces and cherishes local and the western cultures. According to Mishra’s
analysis, the new diaspora is more open to change and have more mobility in the host
country (422-23). The fact echoes “the change of sameness,” which makes
diasporans indefinable and flexible in the self-fashioning process (Gilroy 335-36). It
is because of their diverse cultural points of views that Chekov and Zulu are unable to
unite again. The two friends’ life spans are a miniature of the East-West cultural
contradiction. However, under globalization, cross-culture interactions are prevalent.
The compression of time and space shortens and erases the country borders. Local
and global cultures are mixed up. All cultures are inter-related and hybrid.
Insisting on purity of cultures is a far-fetching dream. The only way for diasporans
to maintain their agency\(^13\) without losing their own mobility is to stay in diaspora
space—keeping embracing, respecting, and negotiating with different cultures.

In addition to diaspora space, ambivalence is another main topic of the story.

\textit{Ambivalence} is originally a psychoanalytical term. It alludes to a fluctuating
situation between the thing one wants and the thing one does not want. Bhabha
extends its meaning to an ambiguous relation between the colonizer and the colonized.

Instead of being totally “complicit” with or “resistant” against the colonizer, the
colonized people vacillate between the two attitudes. They are “exploitative” and
“nurturing” at the same time in the metropolis of their host country (Ashcroft, \textit{KCPS}
12-3). Their ambivalent attitude is a threat to the colonizer, which effaces the

\(^{13}\) Michel Foucault reveals the fabrication of the subject, a social discursive construction.
The unified and coherent subject does not exist. Because of the paradoxical (arbitrary)
nature of the subject—“People do not have natural and unchanging characteristics. Rather,
we are produced out of a network of discourse […] and always change according to the
circumstances” (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 122-3) — the subject, the incoherently defined
object of power, is endowed with agency against totalizing.
boundary between the colonizer and the colonized. Just like hybridity, ambivalence “decenters” the metropolitan power and culture, which is affected by the colonized discourse and becomes hybridized (Ashcroft, *KCPS*14). The ambivalent scene of the story manifests in Chekov’s notion of the bomber in India. Chekov and Zulu talk about England as the breeding ground of Indian revolutionists. They unfold the fact that revolutionists are trained and nurtured in England and then they bring the idea back to their Mother Country. Chekov says,

> England has always been *a breeding ground* for our revolutionists. [. . .].

Even the Pakistan idea was dreamt up by young radicals at college in what we then were asked to think of as the Mother Country. Now that England’s status has declined, I suppose it is logical that the quality of the revolutionists she breeds has likewise fallen. (164).

However, his prediction is not correct. Though the glory of England has declined, its influence on the colonized has not reduced. The colonized absorb and mime what they have learned in England and bring it back to their mother country. Sometimes what they have learned and mimed is far better than what the colonizer does. These devices (mimicry) help them re-form their country and endow them with power to fight against the metropolitan control. Chekov realizes the ambivalent relation between the colonized and the colonizer when he is dying. After the bombing accident, Chekov knows, “these Tamil revolutionists are not England-returned,” and “we [the colonized] have learned to produce the goods at home, and no longer need to import” (170). The notion displays the inseparable apron strings between the colonized and the colonizer. The story tells us if diasporans want to keep the agency
in the host country, they have to know the hybrid nature of culture and identity.

Within the diaspora space, refusing to be pinned down and utilizing the power of ambivalence are ways to prevent diasporans from being assimilated into the colonizer’s discourse.

The third story in the “East, West” section is “The Courter.” The story is Rushdie’s autobiographical one, which represents his childhood and his diasporic voice most (King 650). It is also the summit of the collection as a whole. In the story, the disclosure of diaspora dilemma and the eastern and western cultural confrontations are exhibited. Gillian Gane indicates that the story is about migrants and foreigners who “shift location;” it is about “displacement, conflicted loyalties, misprision of identity, and failures of communication” (47-8). However, the story transgresses the racial and national boundary, and challenges the notion of the single identity but it advocates the divided one. The story portrays the life of the narrator in London and the romance of Certainly-Mary, an Indian aya, and Mecir, a porter, previous Eastern European chess champion. The transcultural interaction and confliction shuttle back and forth in the story, which can be discussed in three layers. The first layer is the dilemma of diasporans caused by misuse of language; the second layer is about the narrator’s interrogation of his identity, and the third layer is about the romance between Certainly-Mary and the porter, the East-West encounter.

Misuse of language is the pertinent feature in this story, which draws on the hybrid nature of language to subvert the dominance of the Standard English. The issue will be discussed in Chapter Two explicitly. My focus in this story is on the final two layers—the narrator’s choice of his national and racial identity and the failure of
fusion of the East (Certainly-Mary) and the West (Mecir, the porter).

At the beginning, from the portrait of Indian aya, we know that Certainly-Mary is the traditional type of Indian woman. The narrator describes her as a sixty-year-old Indian lady in her “red-hemmed white sari in the front” (175) and her mispronunciation of “p” to “c” in English (176). Her dress and pronunciation are general features of an Indian. Apart from her outer features and accent, her nickname, Certainly-Mary, shows her personality of lacking inflexibility and agency in the clear-cut binary oppositional world. The narrator depicts her as a woman who “never said plain yes or no; always this *O-yes-certainly* or *No-certainly-not*” (176, emphasis added). Her affirmativeness reminds Mecir of his long-lost sense of certainty. As the narrator describes,

In the confused circumstances that had prevailed ever since his brain, his one sure thing, [. . .], he could hardly be certain of anything any more; he was stunned by her sureness, first into nostalgia, then envy, then attraction.” (176)

From the illustration above, the difficulty Certainly-Mary encounters in Britain is predictable. Her failure of adapting into the foreign land—her difficulty in pronouncing “p” to “c,” and her homesickness— is due to her incapability of negotiating and staying within the ambivalent dimension, diaspora space. Although negotiation and hybridization of the East and the West occur in their romance, in the end the cross-cultural interaction is blocked by Certainly-Mary’s affirmative and binary oppositional conception. She ends up the romance and gets a serious heart disease as a result of homesickness. The narrator analyzes the reason of
Certainly-Mary’s homesickness:

So it was England that was breaking her heart, breaking it by not being India. London was killing her, by not being Bombay. [. . .] Or was it that her heart, roped by two different loves, was being pulled both East and West, whinnying and rearing, [. . .], and she knew that to live she would have to choose? (209, emphases added).

She is unable to bear the pulling forces from the two cultures and her love to the courter; she decides determinedly to return to Bombay. She says, “I must go [. . .] certainly. Bas. Enough” (209). She regains her health after returning to Bombay. She never has heart trouble anymore and lives happily (210).

Like Certainly-Mary, the narrator feels the pull from the two forces, too. However, his decision is contrary to Certainly-Mary’s. He denies taking a side; instead, he vacillates in the in-between space, diaspora space, in which he negotiates with sundry cultures.

The narrator’s family migrates from Bombay to London, where they live in Waverly House in the 1960s, with his father (177). He studies in the boarding school in England. During his schooldays, cultural conflicts occur because of diverse use of languages, by which he recognizes his ambivalent identity and senses that he belongs to nowhere. The narrator recalls he is often tittered by his schoolmates because of his inappropriate use of English (185). Moreover, his father’s misuse of the words in a pharmacy enforces the narrator to admit the effaceable cultural schism. After his father’s misuse of the words, “nipple” and “teats,” in the pharmacy, the narrator confesses he has the same difficulty in using English. His non-standard English
makes him never completely fit into the English culture. He admits, “I was able to conceal the shaming truth that I, who had been in England for so long, would have made the same mistake as Abba did” (185). The gap between the East and the West is reflected in language and culture. The cultural schism will never become seamless. If differences exist, the total assimilation of the two polar will not be reached. The only way for diasporans to deal with their ambivalent identities is to stay in the in-between space, keeping negotiating, contesting and collaborating with other cultures.

Since the narrator feels displaced in the host country, Britain, his father’s tyrannical control over the house also strengthens his determination to stay in the third space to pursue freedom by getting the British passport. For him, the passport is the emblem of severing his root from family and his Indian identity—giving up one’s own nation is equal to cutting off the relation with the family (Gane 58). With the help of an old Indian family friend, Sir Charles Lutwidge-Dogdson, the narrator obtains an opportunity to get the Britain citizenship (191). The narrator tells us that the Indian passport only permits him to travel a few countries listed on the right-hand page. Provided he gets the British passport, he will be permitted to travel everywhere and be free from his father’s control (202). Hence, holding the two passports, the narrator is able to shuttle to and fro the East and the West. Although he is still pulled by the East and the West, he rejects to choose a singular stance:

[T]he passport did, in many ways, set me free. It allowed me to come and go, to make choices that were not the ones my father would have wished. But I, too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day,
pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose.

[. . .] Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoes, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose.

(211, emphases added).

Staying in the interstitial dimension prevents him from being pinned down in a certain identity and helps him gain agency.

In addition, the issue of family and nation-state is also the theme of the story. Usually, family and nation-state are bunched together in dominant discourse. Members within them are expected to be loyal, staying put in their peculiar fixed stance. Thus the power will be retained. If someone escapes from the designated place, he or she will shake the stable foundation of pre-established discourse. If someone gains freedom to choose one’s own position in the locality, he or she will not lose agency and mobility. Diaspora is the product of intersectionality, which cannot be stuck in a certain place or discourse. Staying free and mobile in the diaspora space, they will not lose their subjectivities.

Diaspora arouses the question of nation, nationalism and nativism (Siagna 6). If diasporans cannot bear the differences per se between the East and the West, they will feel unsettled in foreign lands. By contrast, if they perceive the diversities between the East and the West and respond to both sides freely, they are able to face cultural differences without losing agency. The cases of Certainly-Mary and the narrator are strikingly opposite. The former grasps her Indian identity tightly, unable to feel settled in the foreign country. The latter decides to stay in diaspora space,
casting off the restraint of national identity. He succeeds in embracing hybrid cultures, not being constricted by narrow nationalist discourse. He finds himself a new avenue to observe and react to the world. The “East, West” section demonstrates Rushdie’s idea of diaspora space and hybridity—the East and the West will not be homogenized; they are interdependent. Diasporans is going to find their own room by staying in diaspora space, the third space.

The politics of home is also a salient topic in Rushdie’s works. The final story “The Auction of Ruby Slipper” in the section of “West” conveys Rushdie’s idea of “home.” The story parodies The Wizard of Oz. It reprimands modern marketing and racial fundamentalists from the narrator’s description of the auction market (Goonetilleke 128). The ruby slippers in the original story have magical power to bring Dorothy back home. However, the ruby slippers here seem to lose their power and silently lay in a bullet-free transparent vase. Their function of helping the moral decayed era reach a utopian vision of the peaceful world fails. Although the slippers lose the magic power, bidders crowded in the auction stadium still yearn for retrieving back the stable and peaceful world in the past by the slippers-- they believe the slippers with their “powers of reverse metamorphosis, their affirmation of a lost state of normalcy in which we have almost ceased to believe and to which the slippers promise us we can return” (92). As for the narrator, he believes if he gets the slippers, he will win back Gale’s (his ex-girlfriend) heart again. To the narrator, Gale’s image is associated with the image of “home.” Both of them are fictional, existing simply in his imagination (95). Rushdie brilliantly combines the two images to express the fictional, imaginary and fragmentary home.
As a persona of Rushdie, the narrator addresses readers: “‘Home’ has become a scattered, damaged, various concept in our present travails” (93, emphasis added). Diasporans yearn for “home” but nothing will promise an authentic home in reality. For diasporans, home is an irretrievable desire. Home is an imaginary and self-constructed fantasy. The condition is parallel to the narrator’s love affair with Gale. The narrator takes his love making with Gale as the symbol of homecoming. He expresses, “[I]t [their love making] satisfied me deeply, deeply, especially when she chose to cry out at the moment of penetration: ‘Home, boy! Home, baby, yes—you’ve come home!’” (95). However, after being dumped by Gale, his sustained image of home disappears. He can just make it real by imagining. He tells his audience, ‘Since those days I have decided to dedicate myself to her memory” and then “after years of separation and non-communication, the Gale I adore is not entirely a real person. The real Gale has become confused with my re-imaging of her” (96, emphasis added). I think the transformation of Gale’s image is the same as diasporans’ imagination of their “homeland;” it is an atavistic desire, nostalgia. Since “home-country” is an ideologically formulated artifact instead of a being in nature (George 17), it is the product of imagination. By imagining a fantastic homeland, diasporans may strategically sustain their ambiguous identities. Nevertheless, they set critical eyes on their static origin at the same time. As a result of their realization of fictionality of home, diasporans are mobile in the diaspora space, exploiting and challenging the idea of home simultaneously

After the auction is over, the narrator realizes that Gale is a fictional figure imagined by himself. Gale will never come back and be what he thinks of. He is
set free from the restraint, feeling refresh and renew (102). He states,

> There is a loss of gravity, a reduction in weight, a floating in the capsule of the struggle. The ultimate goal crosses delirious frontier. Its achievement and our own survival become—yes!—fictions.

> And fictions, [...], are dangerous. (102, emphasis added)

Realizing his own fiction of Gale, he feels free and sees things more clearly. Just like the narrator, diasporans penetrate fictionality of home and free themselves from a singular national and racial discourse. Staying in the diaspora space and maintaining ambivalent, they can grasp their autonomy and avoid being designated.

In this chapter, the contour of diaspora has been given. From the discussion, we know that diaspora is not a fixed term. It does not refer to a certain type of wandering people or experience. Its history varies with diverse dispersion experiences. It is an intersection of socioeconomic and cultural product. If we want to understand it, we have to observe it from multiple axes. Diaspora is a shifting boundary, which effaces the frontier of nations and national identities. A geographical “homeland” is not a goal diasporans pursue. Instead, they create their own culture, which keeps changing all the time, redefine themselves, and challenge normative discourse. Diasporans are free agents in the host country. They choose to stay in the diaspora space, the third space where they straddle between diverse cultures without being fixed. Rushdie, as a diasporan, feels two opposite forces pulling him around his neck. He refuses to take a side and celebrates hybrid nature of diaspora. He himself is a convergent product of various cultures. His insistence on his diasporic identity is revealed clearly in *East, West*. The three stories in the
“East, West” section and one story in the “West” section focus on the mobility of diasporans in the diaspora space. In these stories, the diaspora space resonates with his denial of a singular identity but plural and partial one. Diasporans find freedom and agency in this in-between space. Fixed national identities, culture, and discourse are challenged.