

Of Conformity and Conflict into the Interconnected Discourse of Border and Diaspora: Reading the Concerns of Narrative-Dialogue

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Abstract

In contemporary terms, national borders represent socio-political divisions of geographic regions, departing from their historical origins. In earlier times, natural features like rivers and mountains often served as the primary markers for such separations. In its very popular usage, border is the demarcation line between nations, therefore, is the socio-political reality of them. In the present scenario, a 'border' is a distorted reality which negates human intervention into other territories. While systematic border crossings can contribute to the dislocation experienced by diaspora communities, they do not necessarily mandate the relocation of multi-local populations to different geopolitical boundaries. The erection of border, thus, underscores the disparity of individual thinking and how nation forms themselves and its idealisation of ethnic, cultural and sometimes linguistic purity through separation. The writing on border gives the opportunity to practice multidimensional perception which means the ability to see not just from one side of a border, but from the other side as well. The present paper looks at both the sides of the interaction, especially arguing in favour of concepts and discourses that form an integral part of the diasporic narrative and at the same time peer into the concerns of diaspora that lies crucial for the reading of border. The paper outlines the key characteristics of diaspora and nation-states, highlighting their coexistence within and beyond borders. It emphasizes the diverse interactions between diaspora communities and nation-states, ranging from cultural preservation to transnational influence, while acknowledging the potential for challenges and conflicts.

Keywords

Border, Nation, Identity, Diaspora, Conflict, Geopolitical territory.

Introduction

Border emerges as an inter-disciplinary approach being known for its attachment to the geographical spaces. Kathrine P. Ewing notes that "the salience of border emerges from

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a confrontation between anthropology's old idea of bounded cultures with a recent focus on the flow of people, ideas and goods across national borders" (262). This flow is identified as globalisation with whose support it generates a body of lineage to the study of the border. Globalisation, Appadurai writes, inherit "media and migration as its two major and interconnected [*themes*] ... and explores their joint effect on the *work of imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity" (3). Border pre-supposes a line that helps a land to be politically divided and protected by its police and fences. Diaspora, however, suggests a far-reaching expansion and a separation based on the taboo of exile with the concept of return, containing the postponement of this to an inaccessible future. The crossing of a border, in a systematic way, may form a part of the diaspora in terms of dislocation but it is not necessary to separate the multi-local people and bound them in a different geopolitical boundary. The erection of border, thus, underscores the disparity of individual thinking and how nation forms themselves and its idealisation of ethnic, cultural and sometimes linguistic purity through separation. Thus, writing on the border gives the opportunity to practice multidimensional perception which means the ability to see not just from one side of a border, but from the other side as well. The present paper looks at both the sides of the interaction, especially arguing in favour of concepts and discourses that form an integral part of the diasporic narrative and at the same time peer into the concerns of diaspora that lies crucial for the reading of border.

Border and its Multifaceted Realities

Borders across nations, in recent terms, are socio-political separation of a geographical land, which differs from its historical application of it. In earlier times, there used to be natural sites like rivers or mountains as the basic mark of these separations. In the present scenario, a 'border' is a distorted reality which negates human intervention into other territories. In its very popular usage, border is the demarcation line between nations, therefore, is the socio-political reality of them. But the construction of border goes to the history of the creation of a nation which differs significantly in the post Second World War era. The idealisation of the border came much late in the nineteenth and twentieth century Europe with the idea of new territorial identity. Meantime, most of the third world countries getting freedom in the middle of the 20th century proceed to the creation of new national identities. Not only were nations created but there arose the need for demarcating, securing and guarding its territory. However, there also emerges the breaking of a single territory into two or more different nations. Boundary becomes the obvious factor with the creation of new a nation although it separates the large cultural unity.

To define the term 'border', there are as many dimensions as are its various implications. Border in its very common usage introduces a separation, constructed physically or mentally. Despite that, there are several terms associated with it; for example, the lines of separation, frontier and land near that frontier etc. One important thing common to all the three definitions is the quoted use of the word 'line'. The word 'line' is also invariably used with frontier (*front era* in Spanish) which has the same lineage of it. The importance of the term 'border' lies in a ready acceptance of certain geographical limits that argue that what is being positioned behind (and beyond) limits are abnormal or unacceptable. But apart from the geographical boundaries, the word has a multiple meaning depending upon various aspects of society and social fact. While it stands as a significant marker of nation formation, there is a simultaneous lineage of it

being arbitrary lines of cultural, social, linguistic, psychic territories (Brah 194). So in the structuring of the basic definition of border, one has to undergo all possible fields with careful understanding. While cultural and linguistic territories define a community's value, belief and common sharedness of a language, psychic territories call forth individual contestation of a boundary. Thus, border points toward the structuralist criticism in the light of sameness and difference in binary opposition of meaning. Border finds the sameness in ownership and belonging and difference with the demarcated 'other'. This 'other' can be every second person whom we claim to have a difference in personality, thinking and mentality, if not ethnicity and historically shared identity. Likewise, the 'other' in the context of border refers to the other nationals, of whom it necessitates not just a difference created by the state but also a demarcated distance with that subject with the political means of patrolling, keeping its identity intact and safeguarded.

Socio-cultural integrity and border happen to be two different directions where most of the critics comment on the border and usually integrate both in a context of complicated nature of human life. It helps in bringing out contestation over one another as well as synchronizes settlement with negotiation. The theorisation of border and borderlands, thus, creates a dialogue of human subject in dealing with pain, suffering and trauma on one hand, and the urge to trespass, access the inaccessible and dismantle monolithic identity on the other. Gloria Anzaldua, in her understanding, reflects upon border as the social condition of life as she says, "the third world grates against the first and bleeds" (109), usually pointing towards sneaking of Mexican labourers to the workplaces in Texas, USA. She invokes the concept of the border also as a metaphor for psychological, sexual, spiritual, cultural, class and racialised boundaries. Anzaldua speaks of borders, simultaneously as a social relation, the everyday lived experience and identity. Avtar Brah, however, has a different view apart from the initial idealisation of the border as demarcation. In her understanding, she speaks of border as 'arbitrary constructions' and calls it "zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self, places where claims to ownership – claims to 'mine', 'yours' and 'theirs' – are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over" (194-195). She believes that each border embodies a unique narrative, even while it resonates with common themes with other borders. Such metaphoric materiality of each border, presumably through the narratives, calls attention to its specific features. Thus, far from being mere abstractions of concrete reality, metaphors are part of the discursive materiality of power relations. Metaphors can serve as powerful inscriptions of the effects of political borders.

Borders, therefore, underlines a separation with the claims of defining and protecting the vitality of the nation-states. However, such entitlements are inconclusive since boundaries are an arbitrary constructions which create and separate its subject from other nations. Border with the renewed idea of nation help intervenes into the identity formation of its people. The consciousness of the people with a variety of resources along with territorial limit and governance mark the concept of a nation in actualisation. To know people up to a certain limit is the inclusive factor for the territory of a nation where boundary gets erected in the sense of its geo-political end. But there are several inconvenient facts into it. The end of the geo-political dimension of a nation may not end with its cultural expansion, social history, homogenising ideal and linguistic affluence. These aspects of social fact indeed raise certain questions into the construction of the border. Questions like nationalism's role in breaking up a larger

cultural continuity, the forceful idealisation into the embedded psycho-social domain of memory then rise up.

The Narrative Concerns of Border

The narration of the border is a unique stance towards breaking away with the idealist notion of it. The narrative encircling border are usually of limitation, demarcation and of distancing. Narratives intervene into the manifold ideological construction of the border and try to bring up a humane understanding of constructive and adaptive logic of it. A narrative is usually the outcome of belief and meaning which a community consciously create with respect to its various 'stories'. These 'stories' are the witness of that community's history, memory and meaning which bind themselves altogether. Somers argues that social life is essentially a 'storied' entity where narrative serves beyond the representative ideal to enliven into the 'ontological condition of social life' (32). Thus narratives are an important tool for a society that acknowledges interlink among the different communities. Here also comes the question of differentiation of a territory apparently understood in distancing with the other community. So, boundaries act as a kind of institution that gives importance to the questions of territory. It negates the establishing of interaction amongst individuals with a sharedness of identity. A border, thus, serves the metaphor of not referring to the area where the lines had been drawn but engage with many an authorities and manifestations of the border through them.

Border provides the multiple contexts to look at it offering at the same time deep theoretical insights into the domain of national boundary, the boundary of psychology, working of memory and imagination, narrative structure, multiple realities and so on. Kathrine P. Ewing notes that "the salience of border emerges from a confrontation between anthropology's old idea of bounded cultures with a recent focus on the flow of people, ideas and goods across national borders" (262). Border signifies a fixed line of separation of land, of human engagement and the past. To present that, literature understands its common unitary experience in its different mode of projection. The literary representation of fact through fiction rejects sometimes the idea of the indignant and bounded social reality. Again, the border is among that static field of study, say, the construction of argument over border lies apartheid that narratives made to look at it discouragingly in its constructed logic. Questioning through the human act of memory, imagination and displacement, the border becomes a place for revision where the pre-border situation is equally important as it is now.

The recognition that the concept of purity or fixity as a myth is a founding principle into the questioning of border. This notion is usually held by postmodernists who discarded the 'grand narrative' and paved way for small or little 'localized' narratives, as they argue it has dangers of totalisation. Similarly, the 'absence of interaction' for a community to intermingle with another community believes neither the singular culture nor language, not even lineages are 'pure'. Thus, the purist attitude tends to ignore histories, migrations and fluctuations of power centres, seismic changes and human weakness. Hence, a border can be constructed and reconstructed through narratives. These narratives will work like the de-constructive agent of physical reality in understanding the ideology behind it. The concerns will be then the disparity of individual thinking and how nation form themselves; how laws are made or resisted and how dialogue opens out the discussion. Thus, writing on the border gives readers the opportunity to practice multidimensional perception.

Through histories and ethnicity, we tend to realise the simplified nature of a community's lifestyle and the preserved value, culture etc. Therein, the national boundaries, which stand for the idealisation of national law or the purity of its culture, are no barrier to the flow of culture, histories and language. And perhaps identifying this flow we can work towards the reduction of conflict. The paper initiates our need to understand the duality in idealising national law and purist nature of its culture. Emily Hicks suggest that border writings articulate a textual strategy of translation as opposed to representation because she opines that it gives readers a multidimensional approach. By multidimensional, she means 'the ability to see not just from one side of a border, but from the other side as well' (xxiii). The readers enter a multi-layered semiotic matrix and experience multi-lingual and cross-cultural realities. Whereas, Avtar Brah cautions the primary 'border theory' is not to be thought of as same as the 'border writing', especially when the latter is used as a synonym for literary texts.

Of Conformity and Conflict: Debating on Border

It is unlikely that a geographical, as well as a political site like border, came directly in conflict with the patterns of knowledge being formed in humanities. We must need to look at to what extent do border situates itself in the debate. The constructing logic behind the erection of border might give us the idea of conformity of its being the divider of the land. It earlier times, the safeguarding of monarchy from foreign invasion usually finds natural obstacles in its way. Therefore, mountains and rivers, the deserts and the wetlands work as a bordering principle. With years, it becomes an idealisation phase for many a nation, whether to call it an invisible line or an actual one, the border becomes a part and parcel argument for nation building. But this seclusion, a gesture towards exclusivity of materials and resources for the nation building during and after the World Wars finds in itself a kind of competitive progressive ideal. Until the late twentieth century, this has become the dominant discourse in the socio-political dimension of the border. With globalisation, things have coming to a different end. The flow of capital and information is identified as globalisation with whose support it generates a body of lineage to the study of the border. Globalisation, Appadurai writes, inherit "media and migration as its two major and interconnected [*themes*] ... and explores their joint effect on the *work of imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity" (3). Border hence becomes a notion where criss-crossing meant the access of space in both sides.

Borders are usually produced according to socio-spatial orderings of land. Space is regarded mainly of a large dimension where something is located. Mitchel calls it a socially produced idea, where there is a three dimensional dialectic between perceived, conceived and lived experience (quoted in Hubbard 41). Eventually, those experiences become the desired form of space whereby it differs only in subjective attitude. However, there are two furthermore categories of space. First, it is immediately attached to a territorial or geographical dimension from where the community space comes. It is more of a static phenomenon which happens at a larger level. Second, space also adheres to the idea of human self which is also an impetus for searching into society's engagement. Thus, it opens out debate when we need to understand values, morals reserved by human beings in social space. A social space differs from another in accordance to its inhabitant's focus/mentality towards others. Border juxtaposes both this mentality, although it happens to reflect on society, encompassing the subjectivity of a given population. Thus, space becomes both public (social/community/group) and

private (individual). Private space as the distance between the individual and the others is determined by its protection and communication with each other. It is the need of protection of self in the society that one has to undergo several interactions to both the people of known and unknown zones which helps in accumulating less threat. (Madanipour 22)

The notion of self and other, presupposes inter and intra-personal divisions in human psyche, commonly identified as private and public space. Tuan suggests, space is usually understood not by scale, rather by 'fields of care', that is, people's emotional attachment to it. He introduces the terms like 'topophilia' and 'topophobia' (Hubbard 42) to suggest the desires and fears one associate with a particular space, thus focusing the sensual, aesthetic and emotional aspects of it. The most common reference for the private space is mind as the embodiment of inner subjectivity. The duality of mind and body becomes the primary concern for acknowledging space. Thus the comparative outlook of private and public space is connected with the social self of human being. Being a citizen these two aspects lead to a social character in individual human being and attempt to reveal the dichotomy of perception. Perception is important in this context because border is both physical and metaphorical means of differentiation. If space is border laid territory, then perceiving of that as obstacle in making of knowledge becomes the issue for discussion. Thus giving emphasis to space in understanding border, leaves an uncanny mark.

The Narrative Troupes of Diaspora Criticism

The discussion upon diaspora most of the time recalls displacement and other cultural transmissions as a general fact for debate. The term diaspora etymologically comes from the Greek word "diaspeirein", which means to disperse or disseminate. However, immigrants commonly experience such displacement as they struggle for survival in the new land and with new life. The problem of displacement confronted by them resulted in the questioning of identity, which also includes the problem of self and culture. The native society for a diaspora is one reason for the immigration which either grounds on the political disorder or because of their personal want. Political upheavals often result in mass displacement, as the whole community gets uprooted from their home and placed in a new land with their old memories and practices. Thus, displacement is not only a matter of land; rather it is also concerned with the people, culture and their attachments.

Diaspora studies emerged as an engaging field of inquiry in both humanities and social science. And in the same vein, it opens up new dimensions into the analysis of nationalism where diaspora demands rethinking of the national territory in the context of globalisation. The geopolitical territory has a primary role in the formation of identity and the case of diaspora, it always attached to the place of origin. Homeland memory and nostalgia are often viewed as an original and constitutive factor in the identity formation of diaspora but apart from that other issues like transnational engagement and hyphenated formation of identity are the matter of negotiation in the condition of migrancy. The diasporic imaginary, Vijay Mishra refers "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion, as a group that lives in displacement"(14). So, going by the above definition there are two things behind its constituting logic. Firstly, it identifies an agent (here in this case an ethnic people in displacement) and secondly his position in a

given situation. It realises the matter of questioning in view of positionality beyond a person's usual comfort zone.

The conception of the diaspora is not only formed with the definitive association with a place but also shaped through the temporality and corporeality of existence. In many a narrative, the acknowledged pattern for the ethnic people in migration not only relate to the physical boundary of place but also stipulate a process of formation of the diasporic subject. The diasporic imaginary from the place of origin moves to the place of belonging to the new home, therefore creating a dialogue among them both. The boundaries have become translucent within the longing and belonging of the migrants where diaspora imaginary correspond powerful apparatus in the development of diaspora. In the constitution of the subjectivities of diaspora, we see representative fictions focuses on the two main socio-psychological concepts. The concepts of longing and belonging display a similar but slightly different notion in which the main focus is on 'home'. In the field of diaspora, with a vivid interest in both exile and expatriates, home is related in conceptualising the initiator wherefrom the journey begins as well as of the point of return. Home has been idealised in various manner in the narratives of disorientation, dislocation and travelogue. Longing thus means "longing for home...understood as a yearning for recovery or return to the idea of a nurturing, unconditionally accepting place/space" (Rubenstein 4). It has also been emphasized that narrator who excavates meaning out of home, nostalgia end up in resolving subversive longing, what has been used for representing "the return of the repressed" (Rubenstein 4).

Belonging on the other hand is a "relational, reciprocal condition that encompasses connection and community: not only being taken care of but taking care" (Rubenstein 4). One does not simply belong to a community rather the shared cultural history and ethnicity that he/she has in living into that community also constructs the individual identity. A land or a place is thus the significant matter for one's collective memory which shapes/controls all other dispositions of an individual. It is also a sense of security that one connects with a friendly 'home' zone. That is why belonging adheres to the common word 'mother', depicting immediate security and an extended metaphor for all resolution and redemption. Longing is craving for past or experiences of the past where the subject can never actually return but finds a momentary satisfaction in revealing that. In most of the narratives of diaspora, the author usually posits the characters in the liminal space between longing and belonging, and employing nostalgia achieves a new comprehensive acknowledgement of the person's private history and cultural displacement.

The way diaspora imagines their identity, mostly in the narratives of diaspora, the process of displacement is often been attached with nostalgic past being left with the migrant's home country. The same issue persists with the categorical understanding of gradually getting deterritorialised with a familiar space and is being introduced to a new one. Thus, deterritorialisation denotes the claiming of identity outside the land of origin. It means the dislocation of certain cultural subject from a very specific time and space. This evokes the very nature of globalisation-a particular culture gains its new identity when it has been uprooted from some old territory to a newer one. The word 'deterritorialisation' symbolises the up-rootedness of people from their native land and being placed in a new territory. But in the light of capitalism it invokes the commodification of culture, in which Appadurai (1996) comments that the inward

distancing of oneself from locality but immediately identifying with whole world. He again attaches the idea of reterritorialisation into it which is a sort of recreation and rejuvenation of their local culture in new territorial space. Reterritorialisation can be materialized in different modes with the involvement of different groups. In the context of diaspora where the boundaries are drawn to define the self and the other, reterritorialization necessitates the shift in the boundary to incorporate the country of residence within the process of identity formation.

In Conclusion: Junctions in Diaspora Criticism and Border Studies

The recurring notions in diaspora criticism and border studies measure the intangible resources whose common ground of application is distinctly separate to their own. Their objective and derivative logic may separate them in many an instance but their degree of attachment is obvious for certain reasons. While diaspora mourns the lack of familiarity of homeland emotions, the same emotions are culturally and geographically located. The surrounding of the familiar spaces too accentuates the unexplored, far-reaching and fenced unfamiliarity beyond imagination. Therefore, diaspora and border converge on certain functionalities whose understanding single out their latent relation. For example, in the definition of the terms like transnationalism, cultural nationalism and multiculturalism the working of the two field is strong. Concerning migration in its centre, the said concepts involve an understanding of both. The migration of human beings over one nation to another not only confronts the intersection of two different spaces but makes obvious the influence of one culture over another. There the boundaries of cultural limitation mingle with the host nation and thus, the process of assimilation starts. Therefore, in cultural nationalism, the influence of 'alien' culture to the native broadens the boundary of both. There is also another aspect of it in looking into the recent human mobility, the differentiated past is one more time foregrounded in the field of diaspora. Diasporas are different subjective beings who also suffers the creation of boundaries. They fall prey to traumatised memory and nostalgic past. Multiculturalism is the extreme point where cultures and its descendants remain at the same time integrated and different. So in all these cases invisible domain of border from different part intersects among each other and influences each other.

Similarly, displacement and deterritorialisation adhere to the fact that the phenomenon they acknowledge is of reality when they discard the so-called notion of the border-border that is mainly political and is only defined by its territory. Displacement is sneaking through the border and only overwhelmed through the practice of both lamenting and praising for the origin. Deterritorialisation is the event where human beings at once reflect the situation without any presence of it. Thus, they are important to understand the dynamics of border discourse. Contextualising border into the manifold observation of diaspora in which it points out several arguments that directly and indirectly adheres to many a field, the paper talks about a multifaceted rationale. Invoking a multidimensional oeuvre into its body and referring to sociology, social geography, international politics, migration study and literary narrative it looks for all the possible field of its extension. Therein, border and its conceptual ideologies makes a way for its narration with the human engagement of memory, space, self, nostalgia and several other factors. These factors then in turn ask for the constituting the motive of the paper, in engaging the discourse of diaspora and its concerns for the literary narrative. Thus, deterritorialisation, the socio-spatial dilemma, concerns of longing and belonging as well as the reterritorialising ideal are the projects that largely

encircle the debates in diasporic literature. The handling all the aspects and finding its linearity with border attempts a unique search for the conceptual and categorical underlining of the study in a typical manner.

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