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# Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History

*By Bryan Cheyette*



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In this fascinating and erudite book, Bryan Cheyette throws new light on a wide range of modern and contemporary writers—some at the heart of the canon, others more marginal—to explore the power and limitations of the diasporic imagination after the Second World War. Moving from early responses to the death camps and decolonization, through internationally prominent literature after the Second World War, the book culminates in fresh engagements with contemporary Jewish, post-ethnic, and postcolonial writers.

Cheyette regards many of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century luminaries he examines—among them Hannah Arendt, Anita Desai, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Primo Levi, Caryl Phillips, Philip Roth, Salman Rushdie, Edward Said, Zadie Smith, and Muriel Spark—as critical exemplars of the diasporic imagination. Against the discrete disciplinary thinking of the academy, he elaborates and argues for a new comparative approach across Jewish and postcolonial histories and literatures. And in so doing, Cheyette illuminates the ways in which histories and cultures can be imagined across national and communal boundaries.



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#### Review

"*Diasporas of the Mind* is a rare book: serious, critically imaginative and theoretically aware, it is incisive, thoughtful, detailed, well-written, with an astonishing intellectual hinterland. Centrally, it sets the contours for a series of new debates about post-War literature, cultural history and the history of ideas."—Professor Robert Eaglestone, Royal Holloway, University of London (Professor Robert Eaglestone 2013-11-24)

"Brian Cheyette's *Diasporas of the Mind* elegantly weaves together Jewish and postcolonial writers and thinkers to make new and unexpected links and illuminations."—Professor Robert Eaglestone, *THES*, Book of the Year (Professor Robert Eaglestone *THES* 2013-12-19)

'Bryan Cheyette's rangy and authoritative new book not only takes a challenging look back at writers such as Rushdie and their imaginative claims to the territory of "migration, displacement", but also tries to imagine a creative and political environment in which writers might turn the idea of "diaspora" into something active and specific, as opposed to the supposedly disengaged or cosmopolitan qualities with which it has sometimes been identified by its detractors of widely different ideological stamps. . . *Diasporas of the Mind* remains a major contribution to its field: a timely sometimes uncomfortable remapping of its intellectual territory.'—Bharat Tandon, *TLS*

(Bharat Tandon *TLS* 2014-08-22)

#### About the Author

**Bryan Cheyette** is professor of modern literature at the University of Reading. He lives in London.

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