

Genre Asymmetry and Diasporic Meaning in English-Language Literary Scholarship: Poetry, Fiction, and Critical Attention, 2000-2025

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Abstract

This PRISMA-informed qualitative thematic review examines recurring patterns in a selective corpus of English-language literary scholarship published from 2000 to 2025 across poetry, fiction, life writing, and performance. Rather than claiming a statistically representative survey of the entire field, it analyzes scholarship itself as an organized pattern of critical attention. The article codes 20 English-language literary-critical publications selected through a transparent screening pathway, supported by three methodological guidance texts. By foregrounding English-language literary criticism as the object of analysis, the article contributes to English literary studies, genre studies, and transnational literary scholarship. Five first-order clusters structure the coded corpus: identity and belonging (13/20), form, genre, and performance (8/20), memory and counter-history (7/20), language and translation (6/20), and embodiment, gender, and queer relationality (3/20). Framework coding suggests the continued centrality of postcolonial criticism, while memory studies and translation-oriented approaches become increasingly visible after 2017. The review's main contribution is descriptive and interpretive: within this bounded corpus, fiction and life writing are most often used to render diasporic experience socially intelligible and historically narratable, whereas poetry and spoken word tend to foreground formal, sonic, embodied, and multilingual dimensions. The article therefore identifies recurring genre-specific functions and an uneven distribution of critical attention without presenting these patterns as exhaustive measures of English-language diaspora scholarship.

Keywords: diaspora, English-language literary scholarship, poetry, fiction, genre asymmetry, qualitative thematic synthesis

1. Introduction

Over the last quarter-century, diaspora has become a durable organizing concept in English-language literary scholarship. It no longer functions only as a descriptive label for dispersed populations, migrant subjects, or exilic experience. It increasingly names a critical field through which scholars examine movement, fractured belonging, multilingual mediation, memory work, translation, and the uneven afterlives of empire across poetry, fiction, life writing, and performance. Early interventions such as Mardorossian (2002) challenged the prestige traditionally granted to exile by insisting on a more historically grounded account of migrant literature. Since then, diaspora criticism has expanded geographically and become theoretically denser, intersecting with refugee studies, translation studies, memory studies, queer studies, and debates about transnational reading (Gallien, 2018a, 2018b; Krá et al., 2019; Luo, 2020; Parui, 2024).

Yet growth has produced a problem of readability at the field level. English-language scholarship on diaspora in poetry, fiction, life writing, and performance is dispersed across postcolonial journals, comparative literature venues, translation journals, and special issues organized around migration, memory, refuge, circulation, and performance. Some essays remain anchored in relatively familiar questions of identity and home, while others turn toward sound, form, embodiment, translingual address, or public performance (Hermes, 2018; Novak, 2020; Hart, 2023; Bao et al., 2025). The result is an intellectually rich but uneven critical landscape in which recurring patterns are not always visible because scholarship is frequently organized by nation, author, or regional archive rather than by cross-field synthesis.

This article responds to that problem by treating English-language literary scholarship itself as the object of analysis. Rather than offering close readings of poems or novels, it examines how criticism distributes attention across genres, what kinds of evidence it tends to privilege, which interpretive frameworks recur most frequently, and where formal or methodological innovation becomes especially visible. In doing so, the article contributes to English literary studies, genre studies, and transnational literary scholarship by clarifying how critical attention, visibility, and interpretive value are organized across different literary forms.

This orientation is particularly relevant to English literary studies because much diaspora criticism is produced, circulated, and institutionalized through English-language academic venues. The article therefore asks not only what diaspora means across literary

genres, but also how English-language criticism organizes, privileges, and distributes that meaning across poetry, fiction, life writing, and performance.

Diaspora provides a particularly useful framework for examining genre asymmetry because its central critical problems - movement, belonging, memory, translation, displacement, and historical transmission - are mediated differently by different literary forms. Narrative prose can organize these problems through sequence, character, kinship, and social institutions, while poetry and performance can foreground compression, rhythm, multilingual address, embodiment, and discontinuous temporality. Examining diaspora through genre therefore makes it possible to ask not only what scholarship studies, but also how the formal properties of its preferred archives shape the kinds of diasporic meaning that become most legible to criticism.

The article, therefore, advances a cautious interpretive claim: the coded corpus suggests five recurrent thematic clusters that structure much recent diaspora scholarship, and these clusters are distributed unevenly across genres. Fiction and life writing often function as archives through which diaspora is made socially legible, whereas poetry and spoken word frequently provide sites where diaspora scholarship engages voice, embodiment, multilinguality, and formal experimentation. The argument is descriptive and interpretive rather than diagnostic. It suggests a recurring genre asymmetry in diaspora scholarship: prose narrative often supplies the field's most accessible route to social legibility, while poetry and performance intensify questions of form, method, and address.

2. Data and Method

The study adopts a PRISMA-informed qualitative thematic review supported by thematic synthesis. The design is guided by three methodological touchstones: PRISMA 2020 for transparent reporting, ENTREQ for the presentation of qualitative synthesis, and Thomas and Harden's (2008) three-stage model of line-by-line coding, descriptive themes, and analytical themes (Page et al., 2021; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Tong et al., 2012). Because the unit of analysis is published English-language literary scholarship rather than interview data or primary literary texts, the review adapts transparent reporting procedures to the interpretive logic of literary studies. The article therefore functions as a thematic review and field map rather than as a hermeneutic reading of individual works, a format suited to interdisciplinary humanities readers interested in how critical discourse organizes evidence, method, and cultural value.

Search design centered on Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, and MLA International Bibliography, supplemented by hand-searching special issues, publisher archives, and reference trails from influential essays. For reproducibility, the database searches used equivalent Boolean combinations adapted to each interface. Scopus: TITLE-ABS-KEY((diaspora OR diasporic OR exile OR migrant OR migration OR transnational) AND (poetry OR fiction OR novel OR "life writing" OR performance OR "literary studies" OR criticism OR representation OR narrative)). Web of Science Core Collection: TS=((diaspora OR diasporic OR exile OR migrant OR migration OR transnational) AND (poetry OR fiction OR novel OR "life writing" OR performance OR "literary studies" OR criticism OR representation OR narrative)). MLA International Bibliography: (diaspora OR diasporic OR exile OR migrant OR migration OR transnational) AND (poetry OR fiction OR novel OR "life writing" OR performance) AND ("literary studies" OR criticism OR representation OR narrative). Results were limited to English-language scholarly publications within 2000-2025. To remain within a clearly literary domain, inclusion required peer-reviewed articles or scholarly interventions focused on poetry, fiction, life writing, performance, or closely adjacent literary forms; diaspora, exile, migration, or displacement had to be central rather than incidental; and the publication had to operate within literary, comparative, postcolonial, or translation-oriented scholarship. Non-literary migration studies and policy-oriented commentary were excluded unless they directly structured literary analysis.

Initial database searching yielded 26 candidate records, and reference-trail hand-searching added 5 further records, producing a total screening pool of 31. After duplicate removal ($n = 3$), 28 records underwent title and abstract screening. Five records were excluded at that stage, leaving 23 full-text items for eligibility assessment. Three full-text records were then excluded because they fell outside the 2000-2025 period, took the form of a book review, or did not center poetry or fiction as a primary literary archive. This left a final coded corpus of 20 English-language literary-critical publications.

The corpus size follows from the documented screening pathway and the article's qualitative, field-mapping purpose rather than from a claim of statistical representativeness. Of 31 candidate records, 3 duplicates were removed, 5 records were excluded at title/abstract screening, and 3 full-text records were excluded under the stated eligibility criteria, leaving 20 literary-critical publications for coding. The stopping point was therefore the outcome of the eligibility process applied to the bounded search rather than an arbitrary target number. The corpus is intentionally interpreted as a set of analytically rich cases through which recurring thematic clusters, genre functions, and interpretive repertoires can be examined in depth. Venue concentration is also reported explicitly: eight of the twenty coded publications appear in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, while the remaining twelve are distributed across twelve other journals. This concentration is treated as a limitation of the field map and is one reason the article avoids presenting the findings as a comprehensive twenty-five-year trend.

As Fig. 1 and Table 1 show, the selection pathway is transparent even though the final corpus is interpretive rather than bibliometrically exhaustive.

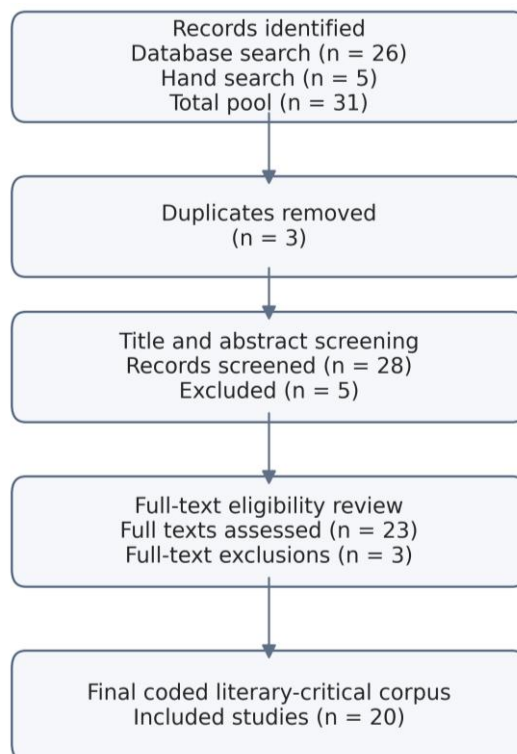


Figure 1. PRISMA-informed selection flow

The flow applies only to the screened literary-critical corpus; methodological guidance texts were selected separately.

Table 1. Selection metrics and coded corpus profile

Metric	Value
Initial candidate records identified	31
Duplicate records removed	3
Records screened at title and abstract stage	28
Records excluded at title and abstract stage	5
Full-text literary-critical records assessed	23
Full-text literary-critical exclusions	3
Final coded literary-critical corpus	20
Methodological guidance texts (selected separately)	3
Genre-focused publications	12 (7 fiction/life writing; 5 poetry/performance)
Mixed-genre field interventions	8
Publications from 2017-2025	14 of 20 (70%)
Sampling logic	Selective, analytically rich, field-shaping corpus

Three methodological guidance texts - Page et al. (2021), Tong et al. (2012), and Thomas and Harden (2008) - were selected separately to scaffold review design and reporting and are not part of the screened literary-critical corpus. The English-language literary corpus itself is intentionally selective rather than exhaustive. The purpose was not comprehensive coverage but interpretive mapping of influential and conceptually representative scholarship. Consequently, corpus size was balanced against analytical depth rather than breadth. The review therefore prioritizes conceptual recurrence, numerical frequency, and interpretive significance over bibliometric coverage. Coding combined deductive and inductive procedures. Deductive codes tracked publication year, publication function, genre focus, regional archive, dominant theme, and theoretical frame. Inductive coding then identified recurrent argumentative patterns that cut across region-specific studies. Five first-order thematic clusters emerged: identity and belonging; memory and counter-history; language and translation; embodiment, gender, and queer relationality; and form, genre, and performance. Because a single article can participate in more than one cluster, the thematic percentages reported below are not mutually exclusive. The analysis therefore maps patterned co-presence and relative prominence rather than exclusive classification.

3. Results I: Thematic Distribution

The coded corpus is small enough to remain interpretively coherent and large enough to reveal recurring tendencies. Fourteen of the twenty publications (70%) appeared between 2017 and 2025, which indicates that diaspora scholarship became especially visible as a mapped field in the late 2010s and early 2020s. Seven publications focus on fiction or life writing, five on poetry or performance, and eight on

mixed-genre interventions. As Fig. 2 shows, identity and belonging remain the most stable thematic concern (13 studies, 65%), followed by form, genre, and performance (8 studies, 40%), memory and counter-history (7 studies, 35%), language and translation (6 studies, 30%), and embodiment, gender, and queer relationality (3 studies, 15%).

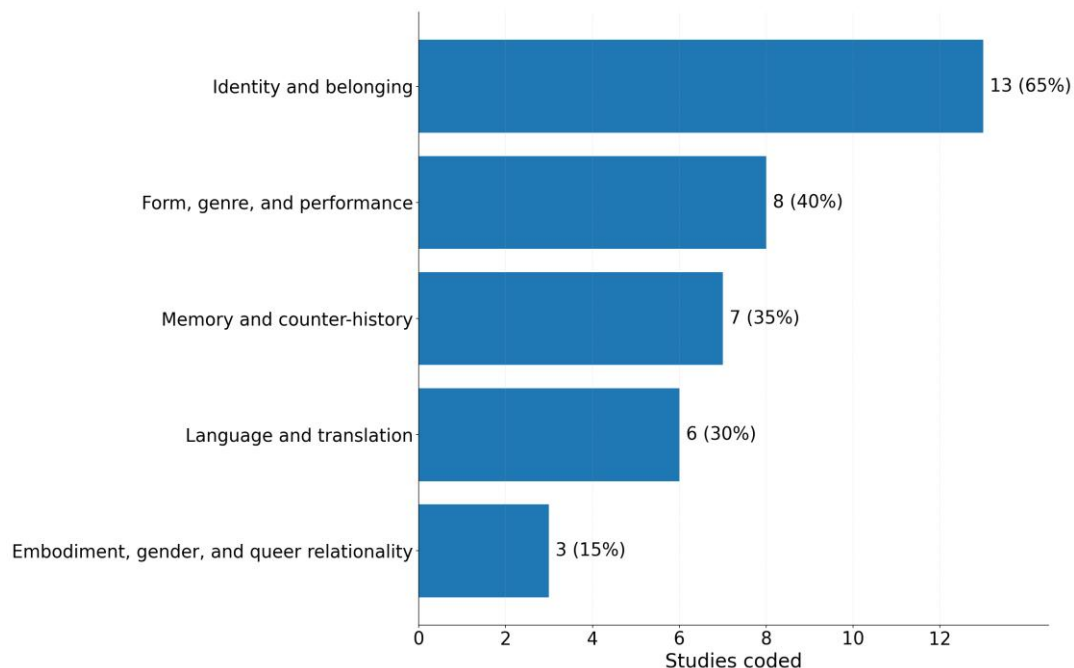


Figure 2. Distribution of first-order thematic clusters. Studies could receive more than one thematic code

3.1 Identity and Relational Belonging

Identity remains the longest-running axis of diaspora scholarship, but the literature repeatedly resists essentialist models of identity as inherited essence. Mardorossian's (2002) early intervention is important because it reorients criticism away from the prestige of exile and toward the uneven, historically grounded conditions of migrant literature. In later work this shift becomes more explicit. Joshi's (2004) discussion of recent Indian fiction frames diaspora through the double pressure of nation and alienation. Li's (2014) reading of Ha Jin shows that home and identity are not recovered destinations but negotiations undertaken in motion. Zhang's (2006) study of Chinese diaspora poetry likewise treats locality as layered, unstable, and multiply local.

What matters across these essays is not only the recurrence of identity as a keyword but the way identity ceases to mean stable origin. Belonging is repeatedly recast as process, relation, and movement rather than as fixed essence. Identity remains durable within the field precisely because it is continuously revised rather than mechanically repeated.

3.2 Memory and Counter-History

Memory is the second major pillar of the field and one of its fastest-growing clusters. Yu's (2008) work on the Filipino diaspora foregrounds memory and nostalgia as structuring forces in diasporic writing, while Weber's (2019) study of Cambodian diaspora narrative poems shows how exile becomes legible through communal memory and the historical transmission of loss. In more recent work, memory is no longer simply a backward look at homeland. Novak's (2020) analysis of Black British spoken-word performance shows how diasporic memory becomes embodied and public, while Ha and Tompkins (2021) demonstrate that memory, identity, and storytelling converge in Ocean Vuong's fiction through the afterlife of refugee trauma and intergenerational war inheritance.

The memory turn intensifies from 2018 onward. Gallien's (2018a, 2018b) work on refugee literature insists that displacement generates formal experimentation and new relations among truth, fiction, testimony, and visibility. Parui (2024) makes explicit the convergence between postcolonial studies, affect studies, thing theory, and memory studies. The field therefore no longer uses memory as sentiment alone. It mobilizes memory as counter-history, archive, transmission, and embodied practice.

3.3 Language, Translation, and Translinguality

For English-language literary studies, this cluster is especially important because diaspora scholarship often depends on the tension between English as a critical medium and multilingual experience as a literary condition.

A major development in the later part of the review period is the rise of language and translation as central critical concerns. Luo's (2020) editorial on translation and diaspora literature makes clear that the field can no longer think diaspora only in terms of people and places. It must also think in terms of circulation, linguistic mediation, and the readdressing of texts to new readerships. Wu (2023) sharpens this by

formulating diaspora as translation, treating movement across borders as inseparable from conceptual and linguistic remaking.

Recent scholarship on Chinese diasporic writing is especially revealing here. Hart (2023) emphasizes the conceptual instability of diaspora, Chineseness, and liminality, while Hu's (2025) work on British Chinese life writing foregrounds the tension between individual subjectivity and collective affiliation in explicitly transcultural and translingual terms. Fan and Liu (2025) likewise show how cultural identity in fiction is formed through multilingual and multicultural negotiation rather than through pure origin. Language, in short, is not merely the medium in which diaspora is represented. It is one of the main sites where diasporic experience is made, contested, and aesthetically transformed.

3.4 Embodiment, Gender, and Queer Relationality

Embodiment, gender, and queer relationality appear less frequently than identity or memory, but their interpretive force exceeds their numerical share. Hermes's (2018) essay on Pasifika poetry shows how hybrid diasporic identities are voiced not only through thematic declarations of mixedness but through poetics shaped by gendered labor, orality, and the politics of naming. Novak's (2020) reading of Black British spoken-word performance similarly suggests that the body is not supplementary to diaspora; it is one of the forms through which historical memory is carried into public space.

The newer queer turn extends this trajectory. Bao et al. (2025) argue for a transnational Chinese queer literary study that refuses methodological nationalism and attends to fiction, poetry, fan fiction, translation, and circulation across the broader Sinosphere. The consequence for diaspora scholarship is significant: identity can no longer be read only through ethnicity or nation. It must also be approached through bodies, intimacies, textual circulation, and asymmetrical regimes of visibility.

3.5 Form, Genre, and Performance

The most strategically important thematic cluster in the corpus is form. Eight of the twenty publications engage form, genre, or performance directly, making it the second most recurrent first-order code. This is not a trivial result. It means that the field is no longer content to treat diaspora merely as topic or background. Sabo (2016) notes that diaspora studies has often turned away from formal aesthetics in favor of social histories and lived experience. Yet Gallien's (2018a, 2018b) work on refugee literature, Weber's (2019) study of narrative poems, and Novak's (2020) account of spoken-word performance all show that displacement frequently reorganizes literary form itself.

Form is also where the corpus most clearly differentiates fiction from poetry. Fiction often carries diaspora through plot, kinship, citizenship, intergenerational continuity, and settlement. Poetry makes a distinctive contribution to diaspora studies because it highlights experiences that are difficult to tell through a continuous narrative. While fiction uses plots, family ties, and migration stories to structure displacement, poetry captures disjointed, fragmented moments alongside the effects of language switching and emotional intensity. It usually does not fit these elements into the kinds of orderly narrative patterns associated with fiction. This means poetry is not simply another way of portraying diaspora in literature. It also questions the usual methods through which diaspora is interpreted. Through voice, rhythm, and sound, poetic works often show diasporic life as more than a completed narrative. Instead, it appears as continuous negotiation, translation, and refiguration. This is why poetry in the corpus reads less as an underdeveloped supplement to fiction than as a methodological challenge to the field: it requires criticism that is more attentive to sound, compression, and performance than diaspora scholarship has always been prepared to offer.

4. Results II: Interpretive Repertoires and Theoretical Frameworks

Framework coding indicates that postcolonial criticism remains a central interpretive infrastructure of diaspora scholarship. It appears in eight of the twenty coded publications (40%), while spatial or transnational frames appear in six (30%), memory studies in five (25%), translation or translingual approaches in five (25%), and explicitly feminist or queer frameworks in three (15%). As Fig. 3 suggests, the field is not theoretically uniform. It is layered: postcolonial criticism remains foundational, but it is increasingly cross-wired with memory, translation, performance, and queer world-making.

4.1 Postcolonial Criticism as Infrastructural Frame

Postcolonial criticism supplies the field with its most familiar vocabulary: empire, race, hybridity, displacement, border crossing, uneven modernity, and the critique of Eurocentric history. This is visible in Mardorossian's (2002) call to historicize migrant literature, in Gallien's (2018a, 2018b) postcolonial account of refugee literatures, in Krå et al.'s (2019) field-shaping discussion of diasporic trajectories, and in Hart's (2023) insistence that diaspora remains a debated but indispensable concept in the study of Chinese diasporic writing. Postcolonial criticism still explains why diaspora scholarship is most comfortable when reading texts against colonial histories and racialized mobility.

4.2 Memory Studies and the Archive of Transmission

Memory studies has become the field's most influential partner framework. In practice this means that diaspora criticism no longer asks only how displaced subjects define themselves; it also asks how objects, ruins, family stories, performance, repetition, and affect transmit historical violence. Essays on Ocean Vuong, Kat François, and Cambodian diaspora narrative poetry (Ha & Tompkins, 2021; Novak, 2020; Weber, 2019) reveal memory to be embodied, mediated, and collectively negotiated rather than simply interior or private. Memory studies thickens the archive because it expands what counts as evidence and where historical transmission can be located.

4.3 Translation, Circulation, and Multilingual Critique

Translation-oriented approaches reframe diaspora in especially productive ways. Luo (2020) and Wu (2023) push the field toward a view of diaspora as linguistic remaking rather than geographic relocation alone. Scholarship on Chinese diasporic writing and British Chinese life

writing extends this by emphasizing circulation, readership, and translingual self-positioning rather than homeland sentiment alone (Fan & Liu, 2025; Hart, 2023; Hu, 2025). Translation in this corpus is not a secondary technique. It operates as a theory of diaspora itself.

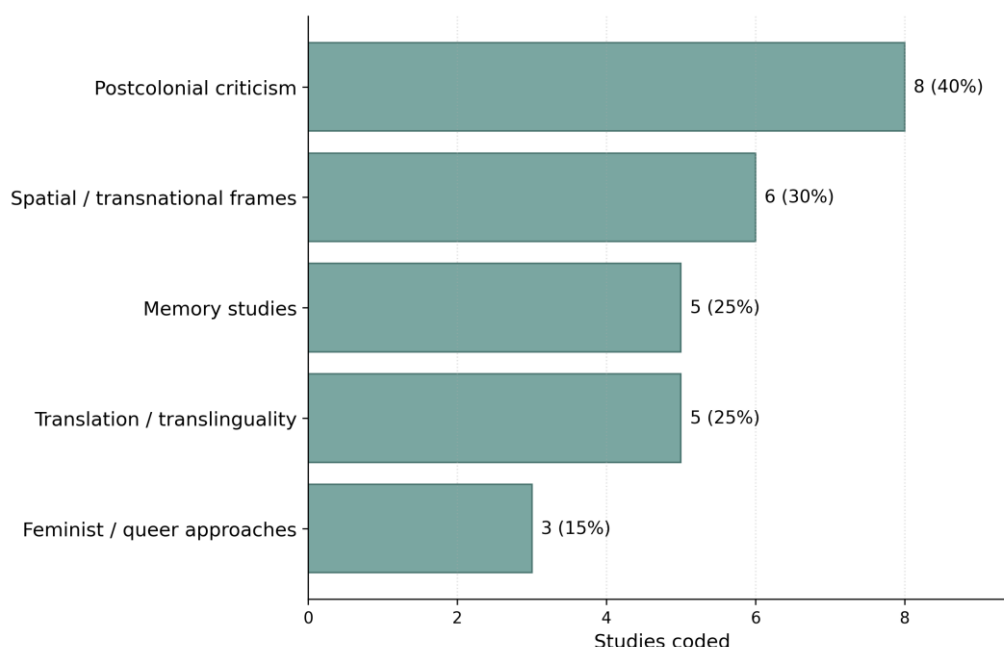


Figure 3. Distribution of dominant theoretical frameworks. Studies could mobilize more than one framework

4.4 Feminist, Queer, and Ecological Extensions

Feminist and queer approaches remain less common in absolute terms, but their methodological importance is disproportionate to that share. Hermes (2018), Novak (2020), and Bao et al. (2025) show that once gendered embodiment, queer circulation, or public performance enters the frame, the archive itself changes. Poetry, performance, and minor forms become newly legible. Feminist and queer approaches therefore do more than add one more perspective. They alter what the field counts as evidence and push diaspora scholarship beyond nation-centered models of reading.

5. Discussion: Field Structure and Genre Distribution

When the corpus is viewed longitudinally, three patterns become visible. First, only six of the coded publications fall between 2000 and 2016, whereas fourteen appear between 2017 and 2025. Diaspora scholarship therefore appears to have consolidated comparatively late as a self-conscious field of synthesis. Second, the period from 2018 onward is shaped by clusters on refugee literature, diasporic trajectories, Chinese diasporic writing, and memory in postcolonial scholarship (Gallien, 2018a, 2018b; Krá et al., 2019; Hart, 2023; Parui, 2024). These clusters do not merely add case studies; they actively reframe the field by making its conceptual architecture explicit. Third, the field remains regionally and institutionally uneven. South Asian, Chinese, Black British, Pacific, Vietnamese American, and refugee archives receive sustained attention, but often through Anglophone publication circuits that amplify some traditions more readily than others. Table 3 summarizes these temporal shifts.

The article's main intervention emerges at the level of genre function, where the pattern is especially visible. Fig. 4 and Table 2 show that fiction and life writing account for seven of the twenty coded publications, compared with five focused on poetry or performance; the remaining eight are mixed-genre field interventions that often leave prose narrative as the unmarked norm. The issue, however, is not merely numerical imbalance. The genres do different theoretical work within the field.

Table 2. Observed genre functions in the coded corpus

Dimension	Fiction / life writing	Poetry / performance	Mixed-genre field interventions
Corpus share	7 of 20 (35%)	5 of 20 (25%)	8 of 20 (40%)
Frequent evidence form	Plot, kinship, migration route, settlement, memory narrative	Voice, rhythm, address, performance, multilingual compression	Conceptual framing, field expansion, archive definition
Typical critical payoff	Diaspora becomes socially legible and historically narratable	Diaspora becomes formally audible and embodied	Diaspora becomes theoretically expandable and comparative
Primary blind spot	May normalize prose as the field's unmarked norm	Often positioned as corrective or specialized rather than central	Can theorize the field while leaving prose preference intact
Synthesis	Frequent archive	Frequent site of innovation	Infrastructure of field consolidation

Table 3. Major temporal shifts in diaspora scholarship, 2000-2025

Period	Count	Dominant vocabulary	Interpretive shift
2000-2007	3	Exile, migrant identity, nation, alienation	Moves away from romantic exile toward historically grounded migrant critique
2008-2016	3	Home, memory, place, creativity	Expands into spatial and poetic readings without displacing identity
2017-2020	7	Refuge, trajectories, performance, translation	Accelerates through refugee studies, spoken word, and field-shaping clusters
2021-2025	7	Memory, translanguality, queer circulation	Consolidates around memory studies, translation, Chinese diaspora, and queer Sinospheric approaches

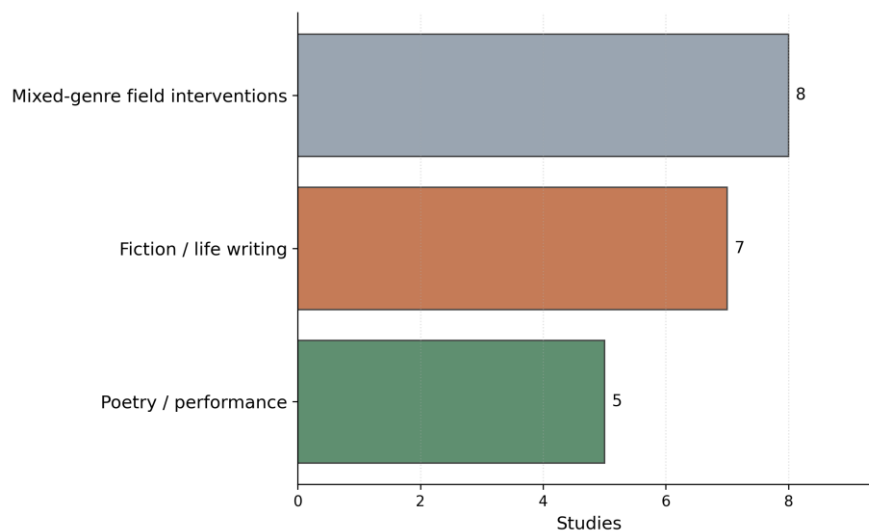


Figure 4. Genre focus within the coded corpus. Mixed-genre interventions frequently retain prose narrative as the field's unmarked norm

5.1 Genre Asymmetry and the Distribution of Diasporic Meaning

Fiction functions as the field's most accessible vehicle for representing social experience. Social legibility refers here to the ways literary criticism renders diasporic experience intelligible through recognizable social categories such as migration, family, citizenship, memory, and belonging. It is the genre through which critics often track migration routes, citizenship crises, kinship structures, intergenerational memory, and the politics of settlement. Narrative prose is comparatively easy to align with the sociological categories that have long organized diaspora studies - home, family, nation, trauma, return, and historical continuity. This does not make fiction aesthetically superior. It indicates that fiction is especially legible to the kinds of questions the field has most often wanted to ask.

One possible explanation for this asymmetry lies in the historical relationship between diaspora studies and the social sciences. Concepts such as migration, citizenship, family, settlement, return, and belonging, which shape diaspora scholarship, often appear clearly in narrative forms. Fiction offers organized storylines, recognizable characters, and a continuous temporal structure, all of which fit well with sociological and historical methods. Poetry, by contrast, tends to foreground dense language, ambiguity, interruption, and sonic experimentation, all of which challenge conventional modes of evidentiary interpretation. Thus, the greater visibility of fiction may result from both literary inclination and wider academic norms about persuasive evidence, not from literary creativity alone.

Poetry and performance, by contrast, often function as sites of methodological innovation. They encourage attention to voice, rhythm, breath, multilingual compression, public embodiment, and formal fracture. They frequently expose dimensions of diaspora that do not settle into continuous plot: sonic address, discontinuous temporality, compression, and the interplay of lyric and performance. The more limited presence of poetry in field-level synthesis may therefore indicate a recurring evidentiary preference in the field's training and habits. Diaspora scholarship often treats prose as its most accessible route to legibility, while poetry remains a place where diaspora is less easily reduced to stable narrative form.

This observation does not mean that fiction provides a fuller account of diasporic experience. Instead, it shows that different genres make different aspects of diaspora available for critical examination. While fiction often highlights social and historical structures, poetry tends to emphasize affective, linguistic, and performative elements that are not as easily explored through narrative alone. The imbalance observed in the corpus is therefore not a ranking of literary value. It is a finding about how diaspora studies has traditionally chosen what to treat as intelligible evidence.

This asymmetry matters for a multidisciplinary humanities review because it links interpretation to institutional structure. What counts as a central archive is not just a matter of literary value; it is a matter of how fields organize evidence, method, and visibility. Once the review is

read through that lens, genre asymmetry becomes a finding about the production of scholarly meaning. The field not only describes diaspora; it also helps shape where diasporic meaning becomes most visible across genres. Some forms are treated as transparent carriers of social knowledge, while others are more often approached as specialized sites of formal or methodological pressure.

The difference between fiction and poetry is not only a matter of genre. It also indicates how critical interpretation frames diasporic experience. Fiction often makes these experiences more readily intelligible by organizing them through narrative sequence, whereas poetry highlights the boundaries of comprehension through affect, performance, and the disruption of expected language use and form.

This imbalance in critical attention speaks to the priorities of the field. Diaspora studies often privileges narratives that produce explanatory clarity, while giving less space to poetry and other formally challenging modes. Read as a field-level trend, this pattern reveals how literary knowledge is produced in diaspora studies, not merely which genres happen to be studied more often.

The forms of attention that scholarship directs toward particular genres affect visibility and perceived value. As a result, some artistic expressions remain marginal to field-level synthesis. A closer account of genre functions therefore helps clarify how diaspora is not only portrayed, but also understood, named, and valued in critical discussion.

6. Limitations

This review has several limitations. First, the corpus is selective rather than exhaustive: the twenty coded literary-critical publications emerge from the bounded search and eligibility process and are used for analytical depth, not statistical representativeness. Second, the corpus is unevenly distributed across publication venues: eight of the twenty coded publications appear in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, while the other twelve are spread across twelve different journals. This concentration may amplify particular postcolonial conversations and further limits claims about the whole field. Third, reliance on Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, MLA International Bibliography, and Anglophone publisher archives creates an English-indexing bias that may underrepresent scholarship published in other languages or in less visible regional venues. Fourth, the study is interpretive in emphasis. Its coding identifies recurring patterns of argument and genre function, but it does not claim bibliometric coverage, citation-network completeness, or quantitative saturation. Fifth, the review window ends in 2025; subsequent publications may extend, qualify, or redirect the patterns identified here. The findings should therefore be read as field-mapping propositions about this coded corpus rather than definitive measures of the whole discipline. These constraints point toward future multilingual, database-expanded, and periodically updated reviews.

7. Conclusion

English-language literary scholarship on diaspora between 2000 and 2025 is neither a loose collection of readings nor a settled critical consensus. It is a field held together by recurring themes and by a changing set of interpretive alliances. This review has shown that English-language scholarship on diaspora in poetry, fiction, life writing, and performance is organized around five durable clusters: identity and belonging; memory and counter-history; language and translation; embodiment, gender, and queer relationality; and form, genre, and performance. It has also shown that postcolonial criticism remains foundational, while memory studies and translation-oriented approaches increasingly reshape what counts as central within the field.

More importantly, the article does more than summarize prior scholarship. It suggests a recurring genre asymmetry in the distribution of diasporic meaning. Fiction and life writing remain the field's most frequent archive of social legibility, whereas poetry and spoken word often operate as sites of formal and methodological innovation. The implication is not simply that poetry deserves more attention. It is that the sociology of literary production within diaspora scholarship may be shaped by genre-based evidentiary habits that influence what the field can most easily see. The article therefore shows that English-language literary scholarship does not simply describe diaspora across genres; it also participates in shaping where diasporic meaning becomes visible, narratable, audible, and critically valuable. Future research may extend this field map through larger multilingual corpora, but the present review demonstrates that genre remains a crucial site through which diaspora is read, translated, and institutionally recognized in modern literary criticism.

Data availability statement. All coded data used in this review are contained in the manuscript, tables, figures, and Appendix A. No external dataset was generated beyond the documented coding matrix.

AI-assisted tools disclosure. During revision, the authors used OpenAI ChatGPT for language editing, structural clarification, and preparation of revision-response materials. The tool was not used to select or generate references, determine inclusion decisions, interpret the coded evidence, or make scholarly judgments. The authors verified the manuscript, references, analysis, and responses and take full responsibility for the final content.

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Author Contributions

Ismael AlMazaedh and Ayah Ahmad jointly contributed to the conception, design, analysis, interpretation, writing, and revision of this article. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Ethical Approval

Not applicable. This article is a thematic review of published literary scholarship and does not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, experiments, or personal data collection.

Informed Consent

Not applicable.

Consent to Publish

Not applicable.

Data Availability

All coded data used in this review are contained in the manuscript, tables, figures, Appendix A, and Appendix B. No external dataset was generated beyond the documented coding matrix.

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Appendix A. Coded corpus and first-order codes

Theme codes: Id = identity / belonging; Mem = memory / counter-history; Lang = language / translation; Emb = embodiment / gender / queer relationality; Form = form / genre / performance. Framework codes: PC = postcolonial; MS = memory studies; TT = translation / translingual; SQ = spatial / transnational; FQ = feminist / queer.

Table A.1. Coded corpus and first-order codes

Study	Year	Genre	Theme codes	Framework codes
Mardorossian	2002	Fiction	Id	PC
Joshi	2004	Fiction	Id	PC, SQ
Zhang	2006	Poetry	Id, Form	SQ
Yu	2008	Fiction	Id, Mem	MS
Li	2014	Fiction	Id	SQ
Sabo	2016	Poetry	Id, Form	-
Hermes	2018	Poetry	Id, Emb, Form	PC, FQ
Gallien	2018a	Mixed	Mem, Form	PC
Gallien	2018b	Mixed	Mem, Form	PC
Weber	2019	Poetry	Mem, Form	MS
Kr ̃ a et al.	2019	Mixed	Id	PC
Luo	2020	Mixed	Lang	TT
Novak	2020	Performance	Mem, Emb, Form	MS, FQ
Ha & Tompkins	2021	Fiction	Id, Mem	MS
Hart	2023	Mixed	Id, Lang	PC, TT, SQ
Wu	2023	Mixed	Lang	TT
Parui	2024	Mixed	Mem	PC, MS
Bao et al.	2025	Mixed	Id, Lang, Emb, Form	SQ, FQ
Fan & Liu	2025	Fiction	Id, Lang	TT
Hu	2025	Life writing	Id, Lang	TT, SQ

Appendix B. Selected literary-critical publications

Table B.1. Complete list of the 20 literary-critical publications included in the coded corpus

Study	Publication title	Journal
Mardorossian (2002)	From literature of exile to migrant literature	Modern Language Studies
Joshi (2004)	Nations and alienations: Diaspora in recent Indian fiction	India International Centre Quarterly
Zhang (2006)	Of nonlimited locality/identity: Chinese diaspora poetry in America	Journal of American Studies
Yu (2008)	Memory, nostalgia, and the Filipino diaspora in the works of two Filipina writers	Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society
Li (2014)	Home and identity en route in Chinese diaspora: Reading Ha Jin's <i>A Free Life</i>	Pacific Coast Philology
Sabo (2016)	Creativity and place: Meena Alexander's poetics of migration	Interdisciplinary Literary Studies
Hermes (2018)	The female voice in Pasifika poetry: An exploration of “hybrid” identities in the Pacific diaspora	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Gallien (2018a)	“Refugee literature”: What postcolonial theory has to say	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Gallien (2018b)	Forcing displacement: The postcolonial interventions of refugee literature and arts	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Weber (2019)	“Moving in an Endless Single Line”: Memory, exile and history in Cam diaspora's narrative poems	SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia
Krã, Coombes, & Bigot (2019)	Diasporic trajectories: Charting new critical perspectives	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Luo (2020)	Translation and diaspora literature	Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies
Novak (2020)	Performing Black British memory: Kat François's spoken-word show <i>Raising Lazarus</i> as embodied auto/biography	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Ha & Tompkins (2021)	“The truth is memory has not forgotten us”: Memory, identity, and storytelling in Ocean Vuong's <i>On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous</i>	Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature
Hart (2023)	Introduction: Chinese diasporic writing	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Wu (2023)	Afterword: Diaspora as translation	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Parui (2024)	Memory studies and postcolonial writing: Interstitial intersections and entanglements	Journal of Postcolonial Writing
Bao, Indelicato, & Ma (2025)	Imagining a transnational Chinese queer literary studies: A conversation about queer literature in the Sinosphere	Journal of Intercultural Studies
Fan & Liu (2025)	Diaspora, rebellion, and reconfiguration: Forming cultural identity in Shirley Geok-Lin Lim's <i>Joss and Gold</i>	ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews
Hu (2025)	Individuality, collectivity, and pluralised diasporic Chinese identity in British Chinese life writing	Life Writing