

DIASPORA AND POSTMODERN FECUNDITY

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ABSTRACT

Central to the experience of postmodernity is the increase in, and

the intensification of, transnational encounters. The globalization of capital, culture, work-forces, and identities leads to patterns of homogenization whose totalizing tendency is undercut by intense fragmentation and the local play of differences. Thus Coca-Cola and IBM feel the need to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the world market, even as they capture it. The increased productivity in economic and cultural terms marks the postmodern as remarkably fecund. This perception of fecundity comes from the various, and often opposing, groups on the political continuum.¹ The 'triumph' of transnational capital in Asia and the entry of Eastern Europe into the capitalist fold have created unprecedented economic and financial flows. Simultaneously, the anti-foundational dismantling of epistemological hierarchies release long-repressed energies that create new flows and open up fresh possibilities.

These new flows and structurations require cognitive refigurations, as older modes of knowing the world have become inadequate. The nation is one social and cul-

tural formation that has come to be rigorously interrogated in the light of the global-local dynamisms. A rise in the volume of migrations and the increasing visibility of varied diasporas - communities that transcend the geopolitical boundaries of the nation-state - demand a new sense of national belonging: national heritage, essence, tradition etc. have lost their immanent valences. For instance, Chow (1993) stresses the need to "unlearn Chineseness" in order to foster Chinese diasporic identity. Our object of study is the Indian diaspora as it redefines the Indian nation. We look at specific political controversies among immigrant/expatriate Indians about what it means to be properly Indian. We trace the Indian diaspora's relation to 'home' and 'host' nations in cinematic representations originating both in and outside of India. As diasporic cultural productions are celebrated as part and parcel of the global postmodernism, we use this occasion to take a hard look at the promises of postmodern fecundity.

Postmodernism and global culture

In the last thirty years, social theorists have fashioned various narratives that attempt to describe and explain the changing economic, political, and

cultural structurations of postmodernity - an epistemological debate across disciplines. One common theme has been to the need to reimagine our world in terms of categories that are not strictly geopolitical. Appadurai (1990) proposes alternative landscapes as a framework of understanding the current economy of culture: ethnoscaples (of mobile populations), technoscaples (of technologies and informational networks), financescaples (of the global flow of capital), mediascaples (of images and their modes of production), and ideoscaples (of ideologies). Even international relations theorists, such as Shapiro (1996), have called for such attempts to move beyond archaic territorialities. Transnational or transcultural interactions operate by transcending boundaries, thereby generating/releasing a series of flows that need to be mapped in deterritorialized 'scapes'. What is at stake here, is really putting into question our cognitive dependence on binding physical referents. Following the poststructuralist feminist lead, we can put under erasure pre-given material bodies (ranging from human bodies to the national body politic) as unproblematic bases for identity and politics.²

In Appadurai's schema, the 'scapes' intersect but they are increasingly disjunctive, as the links between people, places and cultural forms become more tenuous. His sense of disjuncture can be misread to imagine a global cultural economy that is per-

fectly fluid and unconstrained. Featherstone (1993) cautions against such utopian readings, for the 'intensification' of flows leads to the need, at the practical level, to handle the nitty-gritty of intercultural/international transactions. A 'third culture' of professionals (lawyers, accountants, management consultants, financial advisors), who mediate between nations, come into prominence. So, although the hegemonic structures of nation-state are challenged under the new globalization, this third culture modifies, tightens and intensifies the relations between nations. A response to increased globalization is the consolidation of local ties (of religion, region, ethnicity...). With the possibility of 'outsiders' infiltrating local contained spaces, there is an intensification of the local as a site of conflict. Dirlík (1996) points out that the resurgence of the local may be an orthodox regression (ethnic cleansing, religious fundamentalisms, fascism); on the other hand, the global may infiltrate the local so completely that it is able to masquerade as the local. For instance, the emergence of Bangalore as 'the Silicon Valley of India' is often celebrated as a resurgence of Indian industry; but then, who reaps the benefits?

Dirlík and Featherstone present a new map: the global and the local as interdependent and interpenetrating sites, with the nation falling through the cracks. Featherstone stresses that although the nation-state ceases

to violently unify heterogeneous differences, the 'third culture' now takes its place. Woodside (1993), in a similar vein, points to the emergence of a transnational elite class consisting of people who care more about their counterparts in other nations, than the people whom they dominate in their own countries. Miyoshi (1996) warns us about the tendency to conflate the 'trans' in transnationalism (an utopian impulse) with the 'trans' in transnational corporations (who are willing to sever all national ties for pecuniary advances). What these theorists stress is the duplicitous operation of globalization: while there may be cause for celebration, there is also much need for caution.

The focal point of both the generative and destructive effects of globalisation is the transnational movement of capital. Several theorists of postmodernity, from Fredric Jameson to Kenneth Surin, read the global cultural and political terrains within the script of capital. Surin argues that in the wake of the crisis in macro-economic management following the failures of Keynesianism and monetarism, capitalists had to come up with new strategies of accumulation (Surin, 1995). To avert this crisis, capital had to infiltrate every aspect of social co-operation, becoming a mega-machine harnessing sovereign nation-states to its operations. This requires a reorganization of social power and the modes of production, a restructuration only possible through a specific ag-

gregation of desires, forces and powers:

A requisite organization of productive desire or fantasy has always preceded capitalist accumulation - today, however, the very existence and nature of this desire, the process of its composition into an economy has to be permeated by capital itself. The upshot is that nowadays capital has started to do much of its work even before it becomes 'visible' (Surin, 1995:1189).

Consumerism and the televisual culture in contemporary India bears out Surin's claim. The much-touted economic reforms in India have comprised trade liberalisations and have generated a consumer boom; Indian television now beams advertisements promoting conspicuous consumption to the remote villages. 'Indian television' itself has undergone a radical transformation: the state-owned Doordarshan has been largely upstaged by satellite television (in Indian languages) beamed from Hong Kong. The penetration of global media into Indian television, forcing local changes, is prompted by the exigencies of global capital (for which Rupert Murdoch is one of main signifiers). Washing machines and microwave ovens create a realm of fantasy even for Indians in the survival sector, who completely buy into the logic of economic reforms, increasingly aligned with the logic of transnational capital. Culture becomes the site for

generating desires and fantasies that enable the further production and accumulation of capital.

Surin envisages capital orchestrating all other flows; his is a totalizing vision. Like Appadurai, he marks the disjuncture between flows; but, unlike the former, Surin sees the world as isomorphic, shaped and governed by capital. Isomorphism implies not homogenisation, but the coexistence of diverse formations brought into alignment through the operation of a meta-principle (capital). How do we speak of culture, identity, community in these terms? Surin argues in a Deleuzian vein:

Cultural and social formations are constituted on the basis of accords or 'concerts'. These accords are dynamisms that make possible the grouping of whole ranges of events, personages, processes, movements, institutions, and so on, such that the ensuing integrated assemblage becomes an integrated formation. Capitalism, as a global axiomatic, is an *accord of accords*, accords which may be quite heterogeneous in relation to each other, but which express the same world, albeit from the point of view of the accord in question (Surin, 1995:1191; our emphasis).

Extending Surin's formulation, we may argue that nation was one of the meta-accords governing other pacts of religion, ethnicity or class. In the

postmodern era, capital has replaced nation, which is now flung into the multiple and non-hierarchical range of all accords. Before postmodernism's delegitimising and deregulating impulses, the accords were arranged in a hierarchy with specific criteria of inclusion and exclusion; in a crisis, the 'higher' accords regulated the others. With the collapse of this hierarchy, the distinctions set up by the operation of these accords - public/private, high/low, inside/outside - become difficult to sustain. The variation and multiplicity of accords - and the subject-positions that they imply - tie up with the kind of fecundity (which for Surin is unleashed by capital) that we have referred to earlier.

In a world characterised by sheer "variation and multiplicity," a world that Surin (following Deleuze) calls "neo-Baroque," new powers of figuration emerge.³ These powers pivot on the 'allegorical forms': cultural entities such as identity or community become signifiers that slide into different valences in divergent contexts. In Surin's (1995:1194) words: "once allegory is allowed there is little or no place for any accord or protocol of reading that prohibits this kind of movement or evacuation/eviction into another, divergent series". With the loss of transcendental accords (nation, religion etc.), we tend to experience the world in terms of allegories (Baudrillard's simulacra); our af-

filiations to the global postmodern culture, then, exist at the figural level.

Ideas such as 'world music' or the 'global village' as celebrations of cultural differences are examples of the new allegories of globality. Erlman (1996) notes that since older notions of an organic totality seem hopelessly inadequate, such figurations attempt new syntheses - a kind of transversality is born of the play of unrelated differences. World music lays a claim to creating a space for different forms and traditions in music to play off each other; at the same time, it marks its political allegiances to particular configurations of race, class and ethnicity. Erlmann points to the fact that this new synthesis in no way challenges the commercial hegemonic Western culture. One of the most intense ideological expressions of the 'totalising mythologies' of world music is in the 'inverted utopia' of the *Womad* (World of Music and Dance) festival, a public ritual that plays into the logic of universal commodity production. Dispersed global forces of production fetishise and sample localities for global consumption.

Postmodern fecundity, postcolonial discontents

The above critics of global culture warn against over-eulogising two kinds of postmodern fecundity: the cultural productivity under global capital which sees the increase and

intensification of flows as well as the interplay of multiple differences; and the economic productivity arising from the global expansion of capital, which also creates incredible hardships for large masses of people. The champions of global capital keep flaunting the success stories of East and South-East Asia; they ignore the massive popular unrest and labour strife in South Korea and Indonesia. The fall of communism, and Russia's (and now China's) capitulation to Western economic and political models, cause much euphoria in the 'free world'. But the promise of fecundity comes with its own set of limits and ironies. The Cold War ban on Soviet journalists' travel to 'sensitive areas' such as Las Vegas and Atlantic City has been lifted; but market economics and attendant adjustments have also wiped out Russian newspapers' travel budgets. One correspondent finds himself in an ironical situation: "So now I can't afford to find out why Las Vegas was so special that it should be off-limits to Soviets" (Shalnev, 1993).

We can think of another form of postmodern fecundity, that which can be unleashed with the abolition of repressive apparatus. An useful approach is offered by (our reading of) Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) vision of the postmodern as a realm of boundless possibilities, beyond repression. Working in a Nietzschean mode, they argue for the revolutionary nature of desire. In historicising

psychoanalysis as a certain discourse of capital, they show how the Oedipus complex works to constitute the ideal consumer subject by inscribing him in eternal lack. Desire becomes linked to lack and the fixed set of objects that may partially fulfil that lack; plenitude is always an impossibility in the psychoanalytic paradigm. If one can go beyond this limiting paradigm with its fetishistic object-fixation, one can enter a realm of the freeplay of desire and lay claim to the whole world - a plenitude potentially available to every subject. For Deleuze and Guattari such unleashed energies and flows are revolutionary. The psychic effects of capital are double-edged: there is promise but also repression that always defers that promise.

The idea of repression and its link to fecundity is taken up by postcolonial theorists. The histories of decolonisation and the epistemological crisis of modern and colonial discourses mark a point at which the long-repressed knowledges and narratives of the colonised subjects come to the fore. Sangari (1987) invokes the "fecundity of the repressed, of the barely begun and the unfinished - not uncertain - stories simmering beneath the strident sounds and tight enclosures" of repressive regimes. This fecundity finds expression in a new aesthetic, exemplified in Gabriel Garcia Marquez' 'marvellous realism' and Salman Rushdie's 'fabulous realism'. Sangari is careful in marking out a

postcolonial postmodernism distinct from its Western variants characterised by epistemological uncertainty and angst (the end of all grand récits, the provisional nature of all knowledge, truth as historically circumscribed).

A significant amount of criticism against postmodern theory has come from postcolonial critics. They argue that while postmodern theory abolishes all epistemological hierarchies, and the left continues to demystify all totalising mythologies, this theory reduces and overwrites the specificities of postcolonial postmodernity. Western theorists cannibalise postmodern techniques, styles and forms drawn from postcolonial cultures by using them as examples of Euro-American postmodernism. Analysing Marquez' textual strategies of improvisation, multiple narration and non-mimetism, Sangari notes that these features should not be read as examples of the Western postmodernist style. Rather, each aspect should be analysed for its historical value. Latin American life is already hybrid, syncretic, and operates in simultaneous time. These are not abstract stylistic devices: improvisation is a strategy for living rather than a "formal literary reflex." Similarly, non-mimetic or marvellous perceptions are ways of seeing the world that have social relevance to Marquez' milieu: this non-mimetism is not the same as the anti-mimetism of Western postmodernism. Talking about India, Kapur (1993a)

raises a very similar point: that the non-mimetism of Indian art is related to shared beliefs in truth and revelation that are a part of an Indian consciousness. She identifies the characteristic of 'frontality' - exemplified in the "flat, diagrammatic and simply-contoured figures" in Indian painting - that goes against Western traditions of mimesis. This is not an oppositional strategy, but one that is part of the Indian mainstream, arising from collective beliefs and practices. Both Kapur and Sangari critique not just global culture, but also the globalization of theory.

There is a great deal of self-consciousness among postcolonial critics about their complicitous role in exporting Western or 'first world' epistemological categories to academic contexts in the 'third world'. Appiah (1991) warns us of the (often mobile) 'comprador elites' who participate in the Western debates on postmodernism. Taking the example of a Yoruba artifact, *The Man With a Bicycle*, exhibited in the Rockefeller collection, Appiah is quick to remind us that the issues of commodification and exoticisation matter only to those concerned with exploding the modernist divide between 'high' and 'mass' culture; for the man who made the piece, this project has little value. Given the exigencies of the globalisation of culture and theory, artefacts from postcolonial cultures are given value at the site of consumption

rather than their specific historical site of production.

These theorists displace dominant Western theorisations of postmodernism by claiming historical specificity for postmodernism's operating in postcolonial contexts.⁴ Yúdice (1992), for instance, finds the occurrence of the experiences and aesthetics that we group under the term postmodern in Latin America long before the Euro-American variety. He argues that the heterogeneous character of Latin American social and cultural formations "made it possible for discontinuous, alternative, and hybrid forms to emerge" with ease. The challenge to the grand récits of modernity, then, came not with the demise of the modern, but the incomplete denouement of the modernist project in Latin America. The uneven implementation of modernisation leads to other contestatory projects for political, social and economic structurations: narcotraffic, for example is the largest sector in the informal economy. Thus the linear narrative of modernity-postmodernity à la Western theory has to be reconceptualised in the case of Latin America. Kapur (1993b) also takes on the modern-postmodern relation in the Indian context. Indian modernist projects were always critical of, and of 'paradoxical value' to, the Western project of modernity with its imperialist thrust. While the modernist nationalist projects (with their inception in the mid-nineteenth century) have fallen into

disrepute, the left avant-garde potential has not been exhausted. She claims that modernism has not exhausted its possibilities in India, and so it coexists with the postmodern.⁵

The revaluation of the modern-postmodern time-scheme raises a further point about the history of these categories as they have been - and are being - experienced in the formerly colonised world. The postmodern realm of multiple and heterogeneous figurations elicits a comparison to an era preceding the consolidation of the project of modernity: the mercantile and early imperial era, with its relatively unbound flows of desires and energies. Before the crystallisation of the self-other distinctions between the West and the Orient, the latter existed as a fecund realm of possibilities (Lalvani, 1995). But the fecundity always had a darker side: the corollary reduction of the Orient to exotic allegories, figures and sites. A similar exoticisation is at work in the current postmodern sampling of global culture, where the sampling proceeds in utter disregard of the real, lived conditions in other parts of the world. As in the early imperial times, difference and otherness are simply consumed - the utopian promise of fecundity is belied by commodification.

It is worth stressing once more the double-edgedness of the postmodern: its is at once multiplicitous and totalising. Take for example the current poststructuralist dismantling of the

core-periphery binarism. At face value this move challenges the neat third world-first world opposition with its hierarchical implications; it also purports to capture the recent blurring of such boundaries (e.g. Los Angeles as a 'third world city'). But at heart, its is also driven by a wistful desire to forge a new international coalition, one that will replace the alternative that socialism once offered. The celebration of new technologies that enable 'minorities' and 'underclasses' in North America and Europe to take control of cultural production often incorporates populations in the third world. However, the availability of such technologies is severely limited in these societies: it is ridiculous to propose that people in the survival sector of the 'periphery' would have the same kinds of access and needs as the 'minorities' of the 'core'. Such a conflation elides several facts. Lack of access translates the potential of technology into a kind of tyranny. What is more pernicious is the inability of Western theorists to talk about the peripheral subjects, without somehow getting back to the West even if only in the form of an invocation of minorities. The antifoundational basis to postmodernism flounders when it produces knowledge about the third world; it returns home to the core. Thus LA Weekly, a self-styled radical anti-establishment rag, in characterizing Los Angeles as a third world city, ends up declaring it the "capital of the third world" - the center of the periphery must some-

how be annexed to the core. Even Shohat and Stam (1994), in their splendid project of Unthinking Eurocentrism, return obsessively to North America. Perhaps the core-periphery demarcation has not outgrown its use, at least in some self-reflexive, qualified form.

Diaspora

The same tendency is discernible in the 'global' reception of the Indian diaspora's cultural productions. Texts that originate in the West often define India; those that come out of India remain relatively obscure. In literature, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), coming out of Britain, opened the discussions on Indian writing in English; writers such as Raja Rao or R.K.Narayan, who were producing anti-British literature from the 1930s, had been ignored for decades. In the last decade, the only Indian films to gain prominence in the West have been Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* (1988), with substantial US involvement; and Shekhar Kapoor's *Bandit Queen* (1995), which was at any rate requisitioned by Britain's Channel 4.⁶ Meanwhile, a series of diasporic Indian films from the West hit it big time: *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1988), *Masala* (1991), *Mississippi Masala* (1991), and *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993).

Postmodernism unstructures and disperses prior social formations such as nation; diaspora is perhaps one of the best examples of such global dispersion. Diasporic imagined communities can be sometimes enabling: Pan-Africanism or the Negritude rubrics were once the centers of anti-imperialist political movements. It is a salutary move to get away from defining the nation strictly in terms of physical entities, and from harnessing Indian-ness to a archaic notions of tradition and heritage; given the syncretic history of the nation and the experience of the partition, such a move makes particular sense. But the North American and European Indian diaspora has a very particular take on the Indian nation. This should not be seen as the only possible or dominant reading of Indian identity. When the cultural productions of this sector re-enter the Indian milieu, because of the structure of the global media and their international currency, they become the definitive paradigms for many Indians living in India.⁷ This is most evident in popular music: in the influence of mix-masters such as Apache Indian and Bali Sagoo, who become celebrated doyens of post-modern black British music through a pastiche of Indian folk, Bollywood, black urban, and West Indian forms. Dance remixes of old film tunes, sung by artists who imitate the voices and styles of the great singers of the past, sell more than the original versions. The postcolonial resistance to the colonial structures, and the reinven-

tion of the indigénous are once more co-opted through cultural imperialism, this time in the garb of a 'new improved' Indian-ness.

One has to acknowledge that the differential attention to various sections of diasporic cultural production is governed by access. For instance, which Indian films are distributed and exhibited in the West? Who decides on the selection criteria? What kinds of venues do these films get shown in, if at all? Much of this has to do with the exigencies of capital and of the lingua franca. The modernist machines of capitalism and colonialism continue in their effects, allowing only a very particular form of postcolonial fecundity (of which multiculturalism is an epiphenomenon) to emerge.⁸ India has strong literary traditions in several languages; over eight hundred films are produced annually in some twenty languages. This fecundity is overwritten by the Indian heterogeneity in the West, which goes to enrich, diversify and titillate the postmodern Western consciousness.

This paper too is mired in some of the problems of access and epistemology that we have discussed. Any account of the Indian diaspora ought to take into consideration the large Indian populations in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, east and south Africa, and Australia. Our location in the United States restricts our access to, and our ability to address, all these diasporic cultural productions. Such

limitations make us aware of functioning, as academics, under the aegis of the very meta-accord that governs global productions of all kinds.

The view from elsewhere

We focus on the Indian immigrant communities in the United States and Britain. It might be worth noting that these communities are referred to as 'immigrant' as opposed to 'expatriate' communities. This, too, is a first world-third world difference: when people in the general condition of 'exile' move from the first world to settle in the third world, they are often referred to as 'expatriates'; but those who enter the 'core' from the 'periphery' are 'immigrants'. Paul Bowles, for instance, is best thought of as a self-exiled expatriate (part of the American post-war expatriate communities), while Bharati Mukherjee (who also moved to North America as an adult) is regarded an immigrant American. One may argue that immigrants to the first world usually come to settle there: they are driven by economic need, and sometimes the necessity of political asylum. These are imperatives that do not exist for the first world expatriates, who leave out of 'free' choice.⁹ Even in this formulation, there is the suggestion that the West is the realm of free will and the third world, the locus of economic and political oppressions. The point becomes much clearer when one looks at the self-styling of immigrant Euro-

pean communities in the Gulf States - where jobs and an economic boom have obviously taken them - who choose to call themselves 'expatriates'. Some of these valences are colonial hangovers: Britishers in Bahrain, once a British protectorate, still see themselves as people living away from 'home' (like the old colonial elites) rather than as ('resident alien') Bahrainis. Immigrant Middle Easterners, Africans, Indians and West Indians in Britain, on the other hand, group themselves under the term 'black British'.

A simple way to theorize these distinctions is to use Naficy's (1993) formulation of the 'exilic' condition. Naficy determines 'exile' to be a condition of living in a liminal zone between the two structuring force-fields of social, political and economic relations - the 'host' and the 'home' fields. If 'home' and 'host' are psychic fields within which one places oneself (as an exilic subject), then clearly first world expatriates remain cognitively closer to their 'home' cultures; their primary loyalties may even lie with that culture. But the third world exile assimilates more easily to the 'host' culture, which perhaps already signified as 'the good life' in his or her milieu, given the workings of transnational capital through the global media. The cultural hegemonies of the West are thus reproduced in the politics of identity in immigrant communities. As Bhattacharjee (1992:21) recounts, in her analysis of the Indian

immigrant community in the United States:

...the term 'expatriate' carries a trace of impermanence by leaving room for his/her return to the native country. Expatriate, then, appears to be a stage prior to the more permanent one that is designated by immigrant. [...] However, ...the expatriate always carries the seeds of an immigrant in his/her deferred, but nevertheless prospective, immigrant's state; and the immigrant carries the seeds of the expatriate as the return to one's native place always remains a distant possibility. The difference between the two can also be seen as a deferring of commitment, an anguish over allegiances.

If the Indian immigrant communities in North America and Britain have to define themselves in terms of their 'home' and 'host' cultures, then the Indian 'nation' as an imagined community is redefined in a global frame. The five films from Canada, the United States and Britain that we have mentioned earlier bear witness to these gradual refigurations. While the immigrant communities globalise the Indian nation, they are implode with differences in class, gender and regional politics. Within particular regions of Britain and the United States, Punjabis or Bengalis will often prefer their smaller (region and language based) cultural affiliations, even though English acts as the lingua franca among Indians.¹⁰ In the

case of Bengali Indian immigrants, often their ties to Bangladeshi Bengalis (patronising their stores, sharing cultural artefacts like films and books, exchanging locational/partition stories and information, and - above all - focusing on cuisine) are stronger than their identification with other Indians. Even more compelling are class differences. In the United States, for example, Indian immigrants are predominantly thought of as the bourgeoisie. This is a question of visibility: Bhattacharjee (1992:33) argues that there is a certain "selective amnesia in the Indian bourgeoisie's memory of the history of the Indian community in the United States," for there is almost no acknowledgement of the fact that the early pre-World War II Indian immigrants who came to the United States were used as cheap labor. The rhetoric and activities of this pre-war community reveal a consciousness of anti-imperial and racial politics. But with the change in immigration laws post-1965, the influx of Indian professionals have increased. Having access to cultural media, they promote an image of the Indian community as 'model' bourgeois citizens of the United States, who nevertheless carry with them a distinctive cultural heritage in history. The National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIAA) replicates the efforts of the Indian nation-state (and echoes early twentieth century Indian nationalist agendas) to create an all-India community that unifies across all state/linguistic and religious differ-

ences. They celebrate major Indian holidays ('Independence Day') and festivals ('Diwali' as a panorama of Indian culture).¹¹

But this nation-ness is always perceived in terms of its otherness in American eyes: they are, after all, 'minorities' in the American nation-state. Bhattacharjee points to an interesting occasion when the Diwali celebrations hosted by the NFIAA in New York refused permission for Sakhi, a women's group focused on domestic violence in the Indian community, to participate in the fair because the celebrations were 'cultural' and not 'political'. Clearly, the plight of Indian women could not be aired in public, could not be revealed to American eyes. The idea of the Indian nation, then, is reified into a nostalgic concept by the immigrant bourgeoisie, rather than lived; the host country constitutes the actual public spheres of economic and political activity. The distance between need to replicate a reified 'idea' and 'lived reality' echoes Bhabha's (1992) notion of the 'pedagogical' and 'performative' life of the nation; here, the pedagogic idea finds expression in the cultural self-styling of the immigrant bourgeoisie. In Bhabha's schema, the nation is the liminal form that contains both these aspects.

The case of Britain is very different in that there has always been considerable visibility for the Indian working-class: one of the oldest community

organisations in Southall, the Indian Association, is a Marxist one that has always organised around immigration, education and labor issues pertaining to the Indian immigrant community; they consider the Southall Black Sisters a corollary organization who provide shelter, protection and legal aid to battered women. Here the Indian immigrant community actively engages with the differences within it. Yet they organise - or present a 'united front' against the British body politic - as 'black British', a pan-immigrant term wedded to the politics of race, ethnicity and class rather than the nation (as a pedagogic ideal). Perhaps, the history of anti-colonial struggles and decolonisation creates the conditions for this anti-host culture community building.

In face of tenuous nation-ness, Indian global-local dynamisms provide better frames for reading the transnational encounters of the immigrant communities. In the United States, the model bourgeois citizen becomes the disciplinary ideal for immigrants who function as an integral workforce for the economy, acting in accordance with the demands of capital rather than of nations. In Britain, too, the 'black British' formulation is a largely class-based (overdetermined as it is by race in that neocolonial context) rather than a nation-based rubric for identity. Local dissensions (with global links) divide nation-based immigrant communities: Hanif Kureishi's new novel, *Black Album* (1996), records difficulties faced by a liberal

Muslim Pakistani when he is asked to align himself politically with the anti-Rushdie book-burning community of radical Muslims in London.¹² The radical Muslims speak of a religious "empire" that will replace nation-states all over the world. Their imperial claim finds an echo in the local Hindu rhetorics in contemporary India: Ramrajya, or the until-now allegorical kingdom of the Lord Ram, will now encompass the whole world.¹³

Hindu fundamentalism finds listeners/sympathizers in the United States immigrant communities, a fact which can be deduced from Shatrughan Sinha, a fairly well-known Indian actor, taking the time to inform the NRI or Non-resident Indian community of the rightist Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party agendas; he was also interviewed on his views by *Namaste America*, a program that features news and Hindu film songs (a popular requisite for Indians all over the world) for the NRI population. Often, the global ties to local sympathies (if *Hindutva* can be considered a difference within the Indian nation) generate pockets of violence: the book-burning incidents in London are one example of such implosions. *Appadurai* (1993) marks this trend toward violence among 'trojan nationalities' - groups seeking non-territorial forms of solidarity - and argues that the violence stems from their conflict with the executive power of the nation-state. Non-territoriality as a conception is consistently at odds with the nation-state's politico-judicial

administration of borders and laws: the naked power of the nation-state that makes the idea of nation possible is exposed under these kinds of contestation. Britain has spent six million in providing security for Salman Rushdie because of its Muslim immigrants' global commitments. Where national identity as a community-building glue is fast disintegrating, the nation-state must sometimes pick up the tab.

The vanishing structuration 'nation' is now recollected in refined allegorical terms, full of guilt and nostalgia. Rafi, the Pakistani postcolonial politician who visits his son in London in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, harkens back to the Pakistan/India under British rule - a country he had fought to free. It is the moment of anti-colonial nation building and national euphoria that signifies nation to him, rather than the present Pakistan where corruption and death-threats await him. Most of the diasporic films problematise nationalistic fervor in an age where national belonging as a point of origin seems lost or obscured: in *Mississippi Masala*, the central family's 'roots' are in Uganda - already once removed from India - and in *Bhaji on the Beach*, the visitor from India, the Chanel-clad Rekha, is quick to remind the nostalgic immigrant women that they would not even recognize 'their' India anymore because of the rapid and transformative changes in that nation. In fact, the filmmakers painstakingly record the immense variation in community ties that com-

pete with the national accord/affiliation: ties of gender, class, sexuality, race and region. Some of these ties are at odds with national identity: this is especially so with those pertaining to gender and sexuality in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Bhaji on the Beach* - one must 'unlearn' Indian-ness in order to act as a woman, a homosexual or a lesbian.

Gender and sexuality are crucial issues in most of these films. In *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, women bond across age, sexuality, race and class; the cosy party rituals and the last scene of the women crowded around Rosie's dining table represent one kind of coalition building. Yet the film is too sophisticated to present this moment as a utopian one. The women's disregard of Rafi, for instance, enables him to quietly commit suicide without the possibility of community or support. However critical the film is of Rafi, his death is still recorded as a tragedy; coalitions are forged always at the cost of exclusivism of some sort. Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*, on the other hand, presents a far more promising picture of female bonding across ideologies and generations. But, in doing so, it enacts a now 'de riger' demonisation of South Asian men, who are either portrayed as caricatural or violent.¹⁴

That sexuality presents another possibility for new social accords is by now well-documented. The volume

Challenging Boundaries that collects emergent global identities offers a whole section on 'gay diasporas'. Recent films such as *Strawberry and Chocolate* (Cuba, 1993) explore the clash between sexual preference and national loyalty as their subject matter. *My Beautiful Laundrette's* last sequence of playful gay sexuality presents that (interracial) love as a halcyon alternative to the tribulations of class and race. *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* also features a lesbian couple, whose marginal position is their point of entry into black British class politics against the national bourgeoisies of both Britain and India/Pakistan (they excavate Rafi's roster of torture and exploitation).

Unlearning and unstructuring national identity may well cast our protagonists into a realm of endless possibilities. One of the main signifiers of these possibilities in all of these films is sexual desire: premarital and extramarital sex, non-monogamous relationships, gay or lesbian desire, premarital pregnancy (as the mark of desire) and abortion (as a mark of free choice) are important personal choices for all the characters. In *Mississippi Masala*, premarital sex is a part of unlearning Indian-ness, and for going beyond the Aryan hangover among Indians; in *Sammy and Rosie*, extramarital sex is the dislocation of the family-nation-patriarchy-bourgeoisie power nexus. The scene where all three couples making love appear on the same screen (like a

porno magazine or comic strip) marks the sexual as a figure of excess which is difficult to contain within the representational parameters of the realist mode. Spivak (1989) points to the fact that the lesbians in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* are also the most positive political actors: their otherness (in Rafi's eyes) frees them from the social demands of courtesy, polite language, and the 'decent' privileging of family/national ties (Rafi is their friend Rosie's father-in-law, and in that capacity should command generational respect).

It might be noted, however, that the utopian potential of sexual desire as a signifier is somewhat limited because the protagonists' ability to 'express' or 'find' their sexuality once in the West precisely fits Western conceptions of Indians as tradition-bound and narrow. Stereotypes of arranged marriages and the commodification of women in India abound, and these diasporic mediations of sexuality add to the collection. Such stereotypes, in turn, enable Western feminists to act in 'sympathy' with the 'passive' women 'victims' of the third world. These assumptions have generated many conversations between feminists: sisterhood is not global, and the third world has its own histories of struggle over gender and sexuality.¹⁵ Moreover, as Appadurai (1993:424,426) has argued, the implicit hyphen in trans-national communities (e.g. 'queer nation:') is sometimes deceptive: the rhetorics of

queer nation reflect a desire to replace rather than transcend nation.¹⁶ Love exists in the middle of other social and material relations, and cannot transcend history. Radhakrishnan (1996:207-208) makes a strong point of this, in his reading of *Mississippi Masala*:

First from the point of view of the assimilated generation it is all too easy to forget the past and forfeit community in the name of the 'free individual', a path open to all first generation citizens. [...] The second path is the way of the film *Mississippi Masala*, reveling uncritically in the commodification of hybridity. The two lovers walk away into the rain in a Hollywood resolution of the agonies of history. Having found each other as 'hybrids' in the here and now of the United States, the two young lovers just walk out of their 'prehistories' into the innocence of physical, heterosexual love. The past sucks, parents suck, *Mississippi* sucks, as do India and Uganda, and the only thing that matters is the bonding between two bodies that step off the pages of history, secure in their 'sanctioned ignorance,' to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's ringing phrase. What is disturbing about the 'masala resolution' is that it seems to take on the question of history, but it actually trivializes history (there is more than one implied here) and celebrates a causeless rebellion in the epiphany

of the present. Just think of the racism awaiting the two lovers. In invoking the term 'masala' superficially, the movie begs us to consume it as exotica and make light of the historical ingredients that go into making 'masala.'

The ties that displace primary national identifications, then, are not unproblematic in their unificatory, hegemonic or exclusive gestures. Race is another central concern in these films, for the racial categories of the 'host' cultures reinscribe the Indian diaspora in very specific ways. In *Mississippi Masala*, anti-black sentiments surface on American soil, where blacks are an underclass; in *Uganda*, the father unites with the black residents as an anti-imperial gesture. Here, race relations (between African Americans and Indians) are overdetermined by class. This is also true of *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, where 'blackness' is a political allegory for oppressions of all kinds. Race as an organising concept in the global sense is only represented through white supremacist fascism that erupts into violence in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, and causes the death of the protagonist in *Masala*. An interesting point of difference: while in Britain and Canada, Indians face oppression on grounds of race, in the United States, they pass on grounds of class (Appadurai (1993) tells us his "accent", "passport" and "clothes" place him as

acceptable bourgeoisie) thereby allowing them to become racists.

Regional ties surface in *Masala*, where the thorny Khalistan issue is raised. When Lallu Bhai's shop is raided (he had rented the basement to a Sikh professor for pro-Khalistan activities) by the Canadian mounties, rolls of toilet paper inscribed with the entire history of Sikh suffering is unearthed. The reference to Amos Tutola's writing of his first postcolonial work on toilet paper cannot be missed; questions of subalternity and the imperialism of the Indian body-politic become evident. Here, some members of the Indian immigrant community have a primary affiliation with a region, rather than to either nation - India or Canada.

Of all these ties, class is probably the dominant locus in most of the films. Business, economic constraints and housing become important sites of struggle: the laundrette (*My Beautiful Laundrette*), the liquor shop and motel (*Mississippi Masala*), *Sammy*, *Rosie*, and *Rafi's* arguments over money, property, inheritance, social work, private possessions all overwrite the ways in which these representatives of the Indian immigrant communities will act in their respective public spheres. Capital, in fact, provides a stable locus of identity - a subjective emplacement that the characters cannot easily dismiss. In *Mississippi Masala*, a part of the central family's shame in front of their

other relatives (at their daughter's sexual promiscuity) is determined by their financial dependence on those relatives. Rafi's bourgeoisie largesse is confronted by Rosie's liberal but ineffectual class struggles, and this becomes an important bone of contention between them. The plight of the white working class youth, jobless and living in squats, is linked to racial politics in *My Beautiful Laundrette*. The coalitions between classes, races, ethnicities are never utopian. *Sammy and Rosie Gets Laid* records the failure of the liberal ideal to forge lasting ties that will impact individual lives. In the last scene of the film, the liberal women's coalition sneaks out of Rosie's apartment as the couple hold each other in grief over Rafi's death. *My Beautiful Laundrette* deflects all the class and racial problems it raises by relying on 'love' as a signifier of harmony. *Mississippi Masala* can also be read in this way: Spivak (1989:87) correctly points out the convenience of Mina's rebellion—her wars are fought and won on issues of sexuality, not the deeper conflicts of class. Possibly, *Bhaji on the Beach* presents the most unproblematic coalition, and it remains the most simplistic.

The coalitions envisioned in these films effect a kind of transversal synthesis. As we have noted before, such transversality, while avoiding the pitfalls of totalising mythologies, does elide heterogeneity in the name of globality. The alliances between Indi-

ans and blacks in some of the films, for instance, measures - as Spivak notes in her comments on *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* - an Indian post-colonial wistfulness for the fullness of anti-imperial struggle. Spivak argues that the African entry into the Western episteme was much less, and so they become figures for a postcolonial site of resistance that Western-educated Indians long for if they could erase their education and class upbringing. The effect of such wistfulness replicates some of the Left's attempts at new syntheses and refines the complexities of colonialisms in Africa and America.

The view from home

Meanwhile, how have films produced in India addressed the issue of diaspora? There is a long tradition of films that explore the problems of individuals educated abroad, when they return to the homeland. In fact, the very first Bengali feature *Bilet Pherat* (1921) was a satirical take on the cultural conflicts and disorientations that ensue when a young man comes back to his conservative family fold after a long sojourn abroad. In these films, the host country remains a distant point of reference, the narratives unfolding mainly in India. But in the 1960s, there was a trend of shooting commercial films abroad, strengthened by the wild popularity of *Love in Tokyo*, and *An Evening in Paris*. Thus in *Purab and Paschim* (The East and

the West, 1970), much of the action takes place in the west. The director and the male lead, Manoj Kumar, maintains the nationalistic fervor demonstrated in his 1967 directorial debut, *Upkar*. The film is didactic in its tone, a quality enhanced by its formalist tendencies. The first fifteen minutes, which depict events before the country's independence, are in black and white; as the narrative reaches August 15, 1947, the screen turns to color. When we see the hero all grown-up for the first time, he is praying with his extended family at a temple: the word 'purab' (east) is flashed across the screen. His name is Bharat, which is also the ancient name for the country. Later, when he is introduced to Preeti, a young Indian woman born and brought up abroad, the word 'paschim' (west) appears across her image. She seems clueless about Indian traditions and customs, and has no sense of her heritage. The lead characters are conceived allegorically to represent two kinds of Indian-ness, and the narrative denouement is orchestrated to let everything 'authentically' Indian triumph in the end. When Bharat is about to leave India for studying abroad, the grandfather figure invokes a glorious past when foreigners would come to India for attaining knowledge. Later, we see ISKCON devotees (popularly known as the Hare Krishnas) on a street in London: a comment is made about how westerners have to look to the east for spiritual salvation, even as their sci-

ence lets them reach the moon. This comparative mode, which continues throughout the film, is supposed to promote a kind of patriotic chauvinism. The film provides an Indian take on London of the swinging sixties, a take that is marked by ambivalence in spite of the stringently parochial tone. The nightclub scenes, and scenes depicting sexual freedom are meant to elicit criticism; but surely they also titillate, contributing to the immense popularity of the film. Bharat is able to rekindle a sense of Indian identity in the 'good' expatriate Indians: it largely takes the form of nostalgia about old songs. The 'bad' Indians are another matter: they require the use of force. A connection is made between evil Indians abroad, and traitors who betrayed the nationalist cause to garner favours from the British rulers. However, the film has a curious reticence about the British; there are several sympathetic portrayals of westerners.

A similar attitude is evident in Dev Anand's 1977 film *Des Pardes*, which plays into Thatcherite ideals even before their historical consolidation. One of the main characters implores Indians to turn over illegal aliens to the British Government, for they bring disrepute to all Indians. He stresses the need to maintain 'our' pride and dignity in a heady invocation of a pedagogical notion of Indianness. The villains in this film are those Indians who bring their countrymen to Britain on counterfeit passports and

visas, promising them jobs and a prosperous life, and then exploit them ruthlessly. The British establishment (including the New Scotland Yard) is portrayed as liberal and benign, ready to assist the hapless victims. Made in the late 1970s, when disillusionment in India was at its peak, Des Pardes buys into the promise of a good life in the west; it offers hard work and entrepreneurship as the solution to problems of living in a foreign land (for instance, if you face racial discrimination in an English pub, you buy out the pub).

Interestingly, Dev Anand's earlier film *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* (1971), is far more nationalist in tone. It has at its center a family split through marital discord. The son is brought up by his mother in India, and grows up to be a law enforcement officer - an example of an upright citizen. The daughter, brought up by the father in Canada, lacks the support and security offered by traditional Indian society, and comes under the influence of a Hare Krishna cult. She ends up in Nepal as part of a hippie commune, which is really the front for an international drug ring. Eventually, the brother rescues the sister, and the family is reunited. In the process, the film extols traditional Indian values as an antidote to the confusions and enticements of contemporary life. In one significant scene, the hero (played by the director) urges the dope-smoking cultists not to besmear the name of Rama, but to understand and appre-

ciate the tradition around the demigod. His plea maybe taken as a criticism of the globalised appropriation of certain Indian traditions as fad, completely dissociated from their original contexts and without any comprehension of their lived valences.

Religion appears in all these films as the mainstay of Indianness: even when they are far from their homeland, the protagonists pray to the gods, take part in collective religious rituals. However, it is usually Hinduism that is evoked, further consolidating the idea that to be Indian is to be Hindu. Krishna, Rama, Sita and Hanuman are invoked all the time; the prayer songs *Jaya Jagadish Hare* and *Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram* are sung repeatedly. This equation of Indian national identity with being Hindu is taken for granted. While members of other religious communities are represented, their religious identities are subsumed under an all-encompassing Hinduness, a facile unification with an obvious hegemonic agenda. In this context, we should note the support among diasporic Indians for the Hindutva movement, and for the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (the World Hindu Council). Cinematic representations play into this kind of Hindu chauvinism by making Hinduness the chief marker of Indianness across the Indian diaspora.

The shift from the back-to-the-roots tone of 1971's *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* to the greater acceptance of foreign migration in 1977's *Des Pardes* reflects the shifts in India. 1972 marked the height of nationalism, as India celebrated 25 years of independence and the triumph over Pakistan in the Bangladesh wars. But the celebrations gave way to a long period of introspection, as the economic and social failures of the independent era became evident. The emergency years eroded faith in the political system, and ushered in an era of political unrest that was a far cry from the stability of the 1950s and 1960s. Mounting separatist movements, rising unemployment rates, a disenchantment with Nehruvian socialism, and the persistence of social injustice, created an atmosphere in which the very idea of Indian nation could be put into question. By the 1980s, there was a clear movement away from the rhetorics of self-reliance that had supported more inward-looking policies; the early 1990s saw the introduction of wide-ranging economic reforms. As India enters the capitalist fold, and becomes increasingly implicated in the processes of globalisation, what constitutes an Indian identity becomes less monolithic. A recent film such as *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayengey* reflects the new willingness to open up Indianness to transcultural negotiations.¹⁷ Again, there are two kinds of Indian expatriates, with differential investments in Indian traditions. But this

time around, they are not put in a hierarchical order; in the conflicts that ensue, no side emerges clearly victorious. If the more westernised young hero learns the value of respect for elders and of traditional family structures, the more orthodox elders learn to accept some of the new ways of life.

The intervention of the diaspora into the homeland is less benign in Aparna Sen's *Paroma* (1985). It explores the ramifications of an affair that a middle-aged Bengali housewife has with a younger photographer who works abroad. Here, the short-lived affair becomes the catalyst for the woman's embarking on a kind of soul-searching: what does she want from her life? what is her role? what are her responsibilities? is there a way to balance her needs with her responsibilities? The film takes her out of her community with its familial structures, and sets her out on a more individual mission. But it does not glorify the lover's role as particularly liberatory. The moment of crisis arrives in the narrative when he thoughtlessly publishes some compromising photographs of her in a glossy photographic journal. His interest in her stems largely from her role as a traditional Bengali housewife in an upper-class family. He ends up objectifying her completely - culturally, sexually, even epistemologically. The film critiques this form of ethnographic pro-

duction, and the diasporic privilege that enables such production.

Leaving Bakul Bagan, a product of the fledgling independent documentary filmmaking tradition in India, traces several weeks in the life of a young woman about to leave her home. The film represents the competing loyalties to the Indian body politic, particularly articulated in the protagonist's argument with her cousin who points out her selfishness in thinking only about how she will get to the airport, and if her flight to the US will be allowed to leave, when the political conditions in her hometown become more and more incendiary (after the Babri Masjid riots of December 1992). But then, a part of his critique may have to do with envy: maybe a flight to the west (or anywhere else, for that matter) brings with it a promise of liberation and *exotica*, however short-lived.

These films offer a 'look' back or how the North American and British immigrants are perceived in India - for such perceptions from 'home' form a part of these immigrant directors' visions of Indian-ness. Chadha (1994:27), in fact, mentions the fact that she was influenced by films like *Purab aur Paschim*:

When I was growing up this is what everyone thought those of us brought up here were like. So when I wanted a shorthand for England's ruinous effect on 'good' Asian girls, I just took

an image of the blonde-wigged, red mini-skirted, cigarette-puffing character.

And the interviewer notes after this comment: "'Back home' and its mores shadow the women in *Bhaji* like clouds obscuring the sun". Thus the Indian (in India) readings and re-evaluations of immigrants become an integral aspect of the conversation on transnational Indian-ness.

Diasporic possibilities, postmodern places

The fragmentation of the national accord, and the proliferation of other affiliations, brings us back to the questions and problems of postmodern fecundity. Certainly the films made by the immigrant communities, mostly realistic, have postmodern features. The recurrence of supernatural/irrational as a way of comprehending the world presents the disjunctive modes of mimetism and non-mimetism in one text. The ghost in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, for instance, cannot be explained away simply as a fragment of Rafi's conscience; he is an agent in the narrative - the taxi-driver who takes Rafi to his son's house. Rafi interacts with him in the real and the unreal world. In *Masala*, the grandmother talks to Krishna (a Hindu god) through her VCR, and in *Bhaji on the Beach*, Asha, a middle-aged newsagent frustrated with her life with husband and

kids, has visions of Lakshmi presented to us in Indian kitsch. These interactions are not there simply for the sake of comedy, although they may be read as such by those looking to apply Western postmodern stylistic choices to non-Western/part-Western texts. Keeping Sangari's distinction between Western anti-mimetism and Indian non-mimetism in mind, we may look at these supernatural encounters as 'strategies of living' between host and home cultures and not abstract stylistic choices.

But the key to postmodern fecundity in these texts lies in their representations/refigurations of place. While the modern saw space as the epiphenomenon of its functions (social and imagined space defined according to its material organisation), the postmodern sought to disengage space from its materiality: spatial configurations enter simulacric and formal systems (Harvey, 1990:304). A spatial configuration that compresses memories, both individual and collective, can be understood as a place. The diasporic search for a 'place of belonging' or 'home' has been the subject of much discussion amongst postcolonial theorists and critics of global media.¹⁸ Bhabha argues that the idea of home as a stable signifier demands the security of a stable social order (based on hierarchised accords) where the distinctions of private and public remain clear. But for the immigrant such distinctions are sometimes unavailable given his or

her marginal entry into established social accords (and in a world where these accords themselves have dissolved). For instance, the fact that one's HIV status (thus the perimeter of the body as a private realm) is a matter of public record when one applies for a greencard in the United States - and given the precious confidentiality on this issue offered to the citizens of that country - exemplifies the kind of permeable borders between public/private distinctions that the immigrant encounters in his or her host culture. 'Home' exists in a shady zone where neither 'origin' nor 'arrival' achieves fullness: Bhabha refers to the state of 'unhomeliness', the perception of the "world-in-the-home" and "the-home-in-the-world."

Places of belonging signifying home, then, are unstable double-edged configurations in these diasporic films. A stable or fixed place of 'home' or 'belonging' always carries the possibility of disintegration. But the disintegration is not always dangerous: the image of home is replaced by the possibilities of a mobile space, such as a road or caravan. Initially, placelessness (represented through symbolic acts of 'crossing over' or making the journey to a new place) has negative connotations: leaving Uganda is an act of painful separation (Mississippi Masala); Rafi's flight from Pakistan is anxiety-filled, especially when his son fails to meet him at the airport (Sammy and Rosie Get Laid); the initial journey over is referred to as the

moment of origin for a new identity (in both *Bhaji on the Beach* and *My Beautiful Laundrette*); the catastrophic crossing of the Air-India plane maroons Krishna in Canada (*Masala*), recalling the plight of the two protagonists of *Satanic Verses*.

When in the host country, the immigrants spend some effort looking, guarding, trying to create or stabilising their 'homes'. But this figural search for roots dissolves into a more utopian entry into the possibility of many homes/locales. In *Mississippi Masala*, the new American home is a motel run by Mina's relatives - already a symbol of transience - and she and Demetrius soon opt for the road. *Victoria*, in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, combines the states of home and homelessness into his mobile caravan, acquiring a non-kinship based family on the way and offering his digs as refuge for others (*Rosie and Rafi*). *Bhaji on the Beach*, too, features a impermanent space - the beach - as its place for forging ties. The mobility attached to places is a way of figuring process: belonging is an act of becoming, rather than a fixed subject-position. The road, the caravan the beach are marked by the temporariness of one's existence in them. The consistent making and re-making of home becomes the only stable postmodern immigrant condition.

With this suggestion the texts offer a series of heterotopias to sustain the

disorientation of 'unhomeliness'. Foucault's (1984) sense of a heterotopia as a temporary symbolic illusion that imaginatively sutures incommensurable real places is useful in examining these politics of home/homelessness. A postmodern heterotopia is the palimpsestic overwriting of one place over another, the relationship between the two being one of disjuncture. The conflictual existence of the two spaces often make these heterotopic imagings temporary and disintegrative. *Chadha's Bhaji on the Beach* features the Blackpool sea resort as one such heterotopia. When *Rekha* disembarks from the bus, the gaudy sight that meets her eyes is all too familiar, and she exclaims: "It's Bombay!" In an interview with *Sight and Sound*, *Chadha* (1994:26-27) agrees that this moment sums up the film: "I do think that Blackpool, when the *Illuminations* are on, is where England meets India." The comment indicates *Chadha's* own way of laying claim to hybrid possibilities: "What I am saying is that there is no such thing as ours and theirs. There is no part of Britain or England that I can't lay claim to". Heterotopias may be regarded as places where one extends the choices available by imaginative acts of dislocation and re-location; because of their transient and often idiosyncratic nature, they fail to become hegemonic spatial concepts like the national body-politic.

A similar act of overwriting may be perceived in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, where the last scene uses the curtained backroom of the laundromat to figure a kind of 'home' for the gay lovers. As the lovers playfully splash each other with soapy bubbles, the door closes on them like the door of a bathroom before the privacy of a sex scene. This homeliness is the underside of the laundromat beyond the curtain - a place of business struggling to survive among racial politics and the anger of unemployed white youth. The laundromat is also the signifier of the realised immigrant dream: the immigrant becoming a part of the public sphere of economic activity. The public and private fuse at this utopian moment when the film ends; it is a transitory heterotopia, but one which records a stage, a possibility in the process of identity-construction. *Mississippi Masala's* closing on-the-road scene achieves a similar function. The lovers embark on a road in a generic on-the-road as rebellion mode. But the film closes with the two lovers making phonecalls home from a wayside booth. The road is configured here as radically both a place of disconnection (separation and individuation from the family) and recurrent connection (to family as signifier in this case of culture and community). But a similar use of Lallu Bhai's shop, in *Masala* - as a business with a basement used for Khalistani activities - fails to provide a refuge to the protagonist, Krishna, who is finally stabbed to death by one of the racist

teenagers he had encountered earlier in the film.

Perhaps *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* is the one film in which every utopian possibility is ruled out. Truly dystopic, the film records a series of delegitimisations without allowing for the happy surfacing of heterogenous elements. Of course, one can read one of the last sequences of Victoria heroically atop his caravan (with Margaret Thatcher's squeakily and ironically claiming peace, justice and equality on the soundtrack) as the overcoming of victimisation, the resolution of the home with the condition of homelessness. But Victoria exists mostly as an allegory in the film; none of the main protagonists manage to imagine a place untouched by the social struggles of class, race, and gender around them. If anything, the film goes to lengths to crisscross every place with manifestations of power, force and violence: the yellow police lines of the first scenes explode into fires, bulldozers, thefts and physical injury. *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* disallows heterotopias by exposing them as illusions: Rafi's imagined England meets riots, homeless camps and a houseful of bitter memories; Rosie's carnivalesque sojourn in Victoria's camp meets bulldozers and a family suicide in a cramped and be-seiged apartment.¹⁹

The transitory and illusory nature of these heterotopias provides a very slim alternative to the immense felt

distinguishing and fragmentation of the postmodern diasporic condition. The fecund postmodern, then, might generate variation in the cognitive maps that we use to moor ourselves in a global context, but these maps are sometimes dangerous and at other times, fragile - wistful transversalities that offer inadequate recompense.

subject of expression." Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (U of Minnesota, 1993), p.127.

Notes

1. We steer clear of relative characterizations of the "right" and the "left," because such polar categories make sense only in specific contexts. The IMF or the World Bank's agendas of economic restructuring of supposedly sovereign nation-states is regarded, in many parts of the 'third world,' as righteous neocolonialism. But in the United States, the World Bank comes under constant flak for its liberal ways.
2. See, for instance, David Campbell, "Political Prosais, Transversal Politics," *Challenging Boundaries* 7-31. Campbell's invocation of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault's work on the power of the discursive in constructing identity, community and politics exemplifies the interdisciplinary nature of the volume *Challenging Boundaries*: essays range from cartographic anxieties about national body politics, to communities like "refugees" and "migrant," to gay diasporas.
3. Surin quotes Deleuze: The "Baroque introduces a new kind of story...in which description replaces the object, the concept becomes narrative, and the subject becomes point of view or
4. Clearly, there is a general consensus among these theorists that the Western postmodern disavowal of the regime of truth and power are not necessarily utopian for postcolonial theory: in fact, as Kwame Appiah (1991) noted in his seminal paper, the "postcolonial" and "postmodern" have a very uneasy relationship. Appiah brings back the script of capital by insisting that the concern over postmodern cannibalizing of folk cultures are concerns of western-educated, comprador elites in both the West and in the former colonies.
5. Lyotard argues that modernism and postmodernism should not be thought of in chronological, periodizing ways: "A work can only become modern if its at first postmodern"; postmodernism is not really the last stage in the modern, but the "nascent state" that is constant. In "What is Postmodernism?", appendix to *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1984), 79.
6. Faroukh Donde, diasporic writer living in Britain, often commissions Indian films for BBC's Chanel 4; he proudly notes that he has just commissioned a controversial film (Liable to be banned in India--again!--he thinks) on Indira Gandhi and Bhindanwale. As co-productions become more common, some of these arguments on global hegemony have to be rethought.
7. It is important to note that films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* were not exhibited in India. So the question be-

comes: how is the immigrant diasporas self-styling transmitted to the Indian context? Most of the Western influence is transmitted through the popular press: India has a whole slew of magazines (Femina, India Today, Society, Glamour) modeled on Time, Newsweek and Vogue; the now-privatized TV shows mimic BBC and American televisual practices (for instance, the immense popularity of BBC movie critics who shape the upper-class urban responses to Hollywood films). The imitations of the upper-class, urban middle class of their diasporic counterparts, in turn become the models for survival sector and lower middle class Indians. We rarely hear of the massive Indian diasporas and workforces in parts of the world other than the West because they have little cultural capital: the Indians in Kuwait or Hong Kong serve as cooks and janitors and not professionals of a "third culture." Thus there is a real class division between the Indians living in the West and elsewhere; the Western Indian diaspora remains culturally dominant, while the Middle East and Southeast Asia are seen to be economically dominant.

8. Patric Keatley, in "Sun never Sets," *Media Studies Journal* 7.4 (Fall 1993): 141-8, argues that a new British empire of linguistic boundaries is being set up through globalization of media. The BBC's World Service Television News, whose footprint via Hong Kong Star TV satellite organization tracks across India and into all major population centers in Southeast Asia, is once more shaping the the cognitive figurations of the world for some 11 million homes (143).

9. A similar point is made in Raul Ruiz' *Of Great Events and Ordinary People* (1979), where he is asked to make a film on local elections in France. But as a Cuban exile in France, Ruiz' ruminations center on the relationship of the "exile" to his or her host country.

10. Bengalis and Punjabis, in particular, have a propensity for crystallizing their regional affiliations: in most large metropolitan areas, one can notice video and spice stores catering specifically to their tastes.

11. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, in his recent work on the diaspora, argues that diasporas often become preoccupied with questions of 'authenticity': which is the real "India" or "Nigeria"? The search for authenticity should not become a mere "article of faith appropriated by one privileged group. In "Introduction," *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996), xxv-vi.

12. Hanif Kureishi, who is a personal friend of Salman Rushdie's, actually incorporates a Rushdie figure in his new novel—a man entrusted with writing a religious text, who dissembles it instead—and shows how a gap yawns between Westernized "modern" South Asians and "religious" Asians (Black Album, 1996). The novel is interesting in the similarities it is at pains to point out between hip excesses such as raves and ecstasy, and the fervor and rush of religious fanaticism. Both fulfill an intensity not available to the rationality of liberalism.

13. As Gyanendra Pandey notes, in "Modes of History-Writing: New Hindu History of Ayodhya," *Economic and Po-*

litical Weekly June 18th, 1994, the initial idea of Ramrajya was predominantly allegorical; but in the new "calendar" of the Hindu right (circulated in prayerbooks and pamphlets at religious festivals and pilgrimage sites), real wars need to be fought to re-establish this kingdom of the Lord Ram. Most of the battles mentioned are fought between Hindus and Muslims.

14. See Farrah Anwar's review of *Masala*, in *Sight and Sound* (new series) 2.4 (August, 1992): 58. Chia-chi Wu, in an unpublished manuscript, makes a similar point about the depiction of Chinese men in Ang Lee's adaptation of Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club*—all the Chinese male characters are flawed, and the white men are liberal. Wu argues that the history of white male patriarchy as it feminizes and demonizes Chinese (Asian) men is completely obfuscated in such texts.

15. See, Chandra Mohanty et al eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991).

16. Arjun Appadurai (1993) 424, 426.

17. It has become difficult to imagine a country without the non-resident Indians (NRIs), or to posit some superiority over them in terms of authenticity. A large part of the economic transformations are being fuelled by NRI investments. Even Jyoti Basu, the most prominent Communist in India today, and the head of the state of West Bengal for two decades, has been wooing the NRIs aggressively.

18. Homi Bhabha, "The World and the Home," *Social Text* 31/32: 141-53; see also essays on the idea of "traveling

nation" and "home" in the special issue on India of *Socialist Review* 24.4 (1994)—see especially, Amarpal Dhaliwal's article, "Reading Diaspora: Self-Representational Practices and the Politics of Reception," 13-44. For theorists on global media, see the David Morely and Kevin Robins essay, "No Place Like Heimat: Images of Home(land) in European Culture." *New Formations* 12 (Winter 1990): 1-23.

19. This film exemplifies Hamid Naficy warning to all searchers for utopian new homes, which usually turn out to be small insufficient cramped apartments, in "Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: independent transnational film genre," in Wilson and Dissanayake eds. (1996) 119-144.

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