Introduction: The Translocation of Culture

Moving from country to country is a dislocating experience. This chapter is concerned with such dislocations and relocations in an age of transnational migration. These movements generate two paradoxes of culture. The first and perhaps obvious paradox is that in order to put down roots in a new country, transnational migrants begin by setting themselves culturally and socially apart. The second, more theoretical, paradox is that in such encapsulated communities culture is open, changing, and fluid and yet experienced as a powerful imperative.

As transnational migrants settle in a new country, they transplant and naturalize cultural categories, not simply because this is their tradition or culture, but because as active agents they have a stake in particular aspects of their culture. Culture as a medium of social interaction confers agency within a field of sociality and power relations. Yet the mere mention of culture in studies of migration invokes a conceptual minefield. Following Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978), culture has come increasingly to be grasped as an essentializing concept that reifies, stereotypes, orientalizes, racializes, exoticizes, and distorts an “Other.” Such critiques of culture have been repeatedly leveled by postmodernist and deconstructivist postcolonial and anthropological critics, as well as by skeptical sociologists and social anthropologists.

A further conceptual conundrum in the study of culture and migration arises from the fact that culture is never merely individual, a portable piece of baggage...
carried by migrants on their transnational voyages along with their other belongings. Culture is necessarily dialogical, embedded in the social relations of the migrant community and its continuing contacts with home. But like culture, the notion of community has been subjected to extensive scholarly critique. The face-to-face traditional, homogeneous and closed, territorially based *gemeinschaften* has long vanished from the scholarly gaze. Yet it seems that the ideal of community as a place of amity, mutual support, and homeliness is not easily banished from the popular imagination (Bauman 2000). Community is also repeatedly invoked by immigrant leaders and by politicians and policymakers seeking to control a perceived alien immigrant presence. However, rather than denying the existence of the immigrant community, the need is to theorize its *heterogeneity*: its ideological, political, cultural, and social divisions, and situationally changing boundaries. 3

Against the essentialist critique of community and culture, this chapter suggests that culture, in conferring agency, is a field of transaction and relatedness; second, that culture as performance, in being embodied, contains inescapable experiential force; and finally, that culture as a discursive imaginary of selfhood, identity, subjectivity, and moral virtue constitutes a field of power. In these three senses, the cultures of immigrants are “real,” a force generating social conflict, defensive mobilization, and creativity. And because this is so, such cultures cannot be either reified or simply dismissed. 4

Given that transnational migrant communities are not fixed or clearly demarcated social entities, but are fluid, situational, context-specific, and permeable, and given also that they interpenetrate and cross-cut one another depending on whether the analytic lens is directed to religious, national, linguistic, or regional divisions, it follows that the cultures of immigrant communities are multiple and sometimes conflicted. Moreover, “culture” may be used to refer to quite different expressions of transnational migrant cultural performance, from personally focused domestic or healing rituals in the home to collective, public religious or ethnic celebrations and mass consumption of imported films and music. Culture may allude to popular or high culture, and it includes both locally created diasporic aesthetic cultural products—novels, films, music, visual arts—and the imported products of transnational culture industries. These different aesthetic expressions combine to define the “culture” of transnational migrants.

The chapter begins by suggesting three ways of approaching transnational migrant “culture” that evade the charge of essentialism. It then explores comparatively a range of ethnographic examples of immigrant cultural celebrations, starting with an analysis of homemaking and translocated migrant domestic rituals, from seasonal holidays to weddings, sacrifices, and offerings. Collective public festivals, street processions, and carnivals that inscribe immigrants’ presence on their new places of settlement are discussed next. The final part of the chapter explores the aesthetic products of diaspora, both imported and created, and considers scholarly debates on cultural hybridity and hyphenated, multiple, and situated cultural identities.
Three Modes of Culture

Transnational migrant cultures can be approached using three interrelated modes of ethnographic analysis, which together allow for an understanding of the fluid, changing, and often transgressive features of transposed migrant cultures.

Culture as a Field of Relatedness, Agency, and Power

Transnational migration is often marked by the development of increasingly complex fields of relatedness as the process of community formation gathers pace. Different actors in a migrant community have different stakes in different aspects of a shared culture. For example, in many societies women control the domestic and interdomestic sphere of relationships within and between extended families. Among South Asian Punjabis, for example, women have traditionally managed the ceremonial gift economy, actively transacting in gold and cloth between families on joyous occasions. For incoming Punjabi women migrants to Britain, their very agency is thus often at stake in the revival of such ceremonial gift exchanges and life cycle rituals, because it is through these that they re-create the domestic and interdomestic domains under their control. Not surprisingly, then, once they settle in Britain, migrant women reclaim these domains of sociability even against their husbands’ resistance. Among Catholics and members of Pentecostal churches, women often dominate attendance at shrines and services. On the other hand, men often control the central institutions of the community—the church, the mosque, the synagogue, and ethnic umbrella organizations—so they have a stake in rebuilding these. Second generation migrant youth, excluded from key domains of immigrant decision making, often choose creative, transgressive, or innovative cultural routes. Although some may be critical of the conservatism of the migrant generation, others become hyperconservative, to the point of reinventing culture and religion. Clearly then, the translocation of culture in the migration process is not automatic, a matter of nostalgic clinging to “tradition,” but the product of locally grounded power struggles, often gendered and generational.

Growing wealth and emergent class divisions in migrant communities also generate internal competition for status and distinction through culturally specific forms of conspicuous consumption. Paradoxically, increasing prosperity has been associated for immigrants not with cultural assimilation, as might be expected, but with cultural intensification, as the celebrations of the elite have increased in scale, expense, frequency, and cultural elaboration. As they grew increasingly wealthy, for example, diasporic Chinese Man from Hong Kong dispersed in several countries sponsored lavish operas and rebuilt temples, ancestral
halls, and schools in their home village in the 1970s as ritual life “boomed.” In the next generation Man diasporic entrepreneurs aspiring to invest in China began to reconnect to their agnatic kin on the mainland and revitalize their apical ancestor’s tomb and ancestral shrines in Jiangxi, which became a framework for “trans-border business” (Watson 2004). Successful British Bangladeshi restaurateurs not only acquire large landholdings but religious status; after they die, ostentatious shrines are built for them in Sylhet as their families elevate them to the status of pirs (saints) (Gardner 1993). British Pakistanis hold increasingly elaborate weddings (Werbner 1990/2002). The dowries and wedding outfits of British Punjabi Sikhs have inflated in price, size, elaboration, and sophistication as the community has prospered (Bhachu 1985, 2004). In a brilliant analysis of the consumption practices of Jewish immigrants in New York at the turn of the nineteenth century, Andrew Heinze compares their creative adaptation of lifestyle tastes acquired in the “old country” with new American forms of luxury consumption (Heinze 1990).

The semiotics of power struggles for distinction through consumption is a theme familiar from the works of Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu. But though sociologists such as Bourdieu stress the integral relation between two factors—production and consumption—it is evident that among immigrants the relationship must be seen as triadic—among production, consumption, and reproduction. In such triadic systems of consumption, competitive lifestyle strategies center on ancestral shrines or reproductive rituals. These rites of passage, and especially weddings, allow scope for complex exchange relations, profligate displays of wealth, and potlatch-like destruction among immigrants. These, in turn, set the immigrant community apart.

Writing about recently arrived Moroccans in Italy, Salih (2003, 83) found that they preferred to hold wedding rituals in Morocco, and this custom was true even among Moroccans in France, Belgium, and Holland despite lengthy sojourns in those countries. “Home” weddings are occasions for family reunions of migrants settled in different countries. Olwig describes a wedding held on a Caribbean island, which hosted a global family network and became an occasion for moral arguments regarding the performance of migrant filial duties at home (Olwig 2002). Though such rituals are ostensibly intended to reintegrate migrants symbolically into their home communities, Salih argues they are also agonistic events that enable migrants to display their newly acquired wealth and Western lifestyles back home.

Seen in such competitive and strategic terms, it is evident that the notion of transnational migrant culture is not static, implying a simple continuity of culture or class between sending and migrant countries. It has to be grasped as manifested in local class, gendered, and intergenerational power struggles through symbolic objects and responsive to local class and lifestyle choices. Wedding and funerary rituals are occasions not only for excessive consumption but for expressive creativity. Ghanaian migrants in London hold an elaborate series of funerary celebrations, often lasting months, in which sartorial
distinction is displayed through extravagant funerary clothing (Fumanti in press). In British Pakistani wedding rites, young women parody British society and older Asian men through ritual gift-giving and masquerade, while they also express their concerns about arranged marriages through sexually explicit joking, singing, and ritual clowning. In this sense wedding rituals are hybrid and creative, not simply transposed. Their transformative power is re-embedded socially and symbolically in the country of settlement, as well as being an embodied aesthetic experience.

Culture as Embodiment

Culture is thus a crucial medium of transaction, and hence of relatedness, for incoming migrants. It is also an embodied performance. Part of the move away from functionalist or essentialized notions of culture in social anthropology has been to approach culture as performance. In sociology, Emile Durkheim’s (1915) analysis of the aboriginal corrobori in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life has inspired a sociology of the body that encompasses the aesthetic aspects of social life (Shilling 1997). Similarly, in the case of migrants, ritual performance is an aesthetic experience that is powerfully embodied. It is substantiated in objects, food, and substances that inscribe and transform the person and constitute his or her felt subjectivity.

One example may suffice here in advance of the more detailed discussion. Cricket is fanatically loved by South Asians, so much so that the Indian film Lagan makes the claim that cricket was actually an Indian game even before the arrival of the British. It is an expression of controlled masculine aggression and competitiveness. The intense enthusiasm for cricket as spectacle in South Asia and among South Asian immigrants amounts to a cult glorifying the human body, not as a denied vessel, as in the case of world-renouncing Muslim or Hindu saints, but as active and physically powerful. Cricket—the game of the “Other,” the former imperial oppressor—has also become a popular cultural expression of modern nationalism and of friendly competition in the international arena. In an (in)famous speech in 1990, the right-wing Tory politician Norman Tebbit devised his “cricket test” for British South Asian immigrants, castigating them for their continuing support of their national teams in matches with the English cricket team.

Cricket is distinctively a sport of the Commonwealth, a medium of communication, along with the English language, between former colonies. It is a subculture with its own history and values of noblesse oblige, fair play, upright conduct, sportsmanship, team spirit, and so forth. The national cricket team is an emblem of the modern nation-state. In Britain, young South Asian immigrant men play cricket in cricket leagues they have founded, but so too do South African and Indian Jews in Israel (Shenar 2004) and Commonwealth immigrants from the West Indies, South Africa, India, Pakistan, New Zealand, and Australia in Miami and other U.S. cities (Sentence 2005).
Culture as Discourse

Each symbolic space—familial popular culture, religious devotion, sport, poetry, or communal celebrations—has its own discourses. If, as argued so far, culture is for migrant men and women first and foremost a mode of transaction and relatedness, and second a mode of substantive embodiment and aesthetic enjoyment, it is also a discursive imaginary of selfhood, identity, subjectivity, and moral virtue. Immigrants create and foster their own public spheres, subaltern counterpublics of oratory and performance, which are both arenas of power and contestation and platforms for self-expression. A focus on the immigrant or diasporic public sphere enables us to shift from an analysis of “culture” or “religion” as essentialized, disembodied systems of set meanings and prescribed practices to cultural consumption and performance of rhetoric, political argumentation, and aesthetic production. Immigrant collective identities are continuously negotiated in relation to their imagined audiences. They are never permanently fixed, but are intensely argued over, and are responsive to local and international political events. Moreover, to sustain the immigrant public sphere requires investments of time, wealth, effort, and symbolic imagination. The viability of cultural arenas depends on organizers’ capacity to mobilize audiences and lobby for or defend immigrant interests.

Migration thus entails more than cultural transplantation or translocation. It involves acts of cultural and material investment and creativity. Social spaces and symbolic discourses, as well as their material and organizational embodiments, all need to be created from scratch. The public sphere, it should be stressed, is not a single site but a series of networked sites: of religious, political, or cultural expression and contestation, but also of popular culture—of fun, leisure, and celebration. An individual migrant’s complex cluster of personal identities is articulated in front of different publics, even within the same community, reflecting the plurality of immigrant identities. These identities are not necessarily or not always hybrid and fused, though they may be, because they are enacted in public arenas and spaces of celebration set apart, an issue discussed further in the next section.

From Personal Ritual to Collective Celebration

Any analysis of the cultures of transnational migrants must recognize the different scales and levels of publicity characterizing their celebrations. This section begins by considering the domestic, personal, or family-focused rituals of transnational migrants. It then discloses the dynamics of religious networks, communal celebrations, and migrant public processions and carnivals.
The Naturalization of Ritual: Making Homes, Reconstituting Persons and Moral Communities

The rituals that immigrants celebrate in distant and alien places are usually elaborated with cultural images and objects derived from their homelands. This transfer of images from one cultural context to another is an evident feature of the migration process. Yet the theoretical questions it raises have been little explored in the literature on migration. Moreover, all too rarely has an attempt been made to interpret transferred ritual fully and systematically, analyzing how specific symbols are used during particular sequences of rites in the diaspora.

Anthropological analysis has predominantly been about ritual in its “natural” setting. In the natural setting the beliefs and concerns underlying the ritual, indeed the very substances and paraphernalia of a performance, are all rooted in the context in which the ritual takes place. Nevertheless, this focus on symbolic performance as enacted by people at home in their own society has also produced seminal contributions that are important for the study of transferred ritual. Here perhaps most significant are accounts of processes of cultural reconstruction and revitalization. In such processes a former cultural order has to be renewed or reconstructed in response to the impact of disruptive change (see Fernandez 1982). In extending the insights about these processes, it is necessary to explore how immigrants reconstitute the taken-for-granted features of rites and endow symbols with a direct and immediate bearing on their everyday world as immigrants; in other words, to examine the ways in which a ritual becomes “naturalized” in a new setting.

Certain reductive approaches have to be avoided. Perhaps the least fruitful approach is the one that regards transferred rituals solely as a vehicle for boundary marking. The metaphors and cultural images that constitute the rituals are considered to be anachronistic and therefore inert. It is as if the rituals have been emptied in being transferred. In its obsession with boundaries, this approach denies the continued force that symbolic structures have in transferred ritual. Similarly, the “replication” approach is also misleading in that it holds that cultural dislocation is unproblematic and need not lead to cultural innovation. Here, as in the other approach, what gets obscured is the power of the transferred rituals to reconcile past and present in and through metaphors and images.

To highlight this reconciling of past and present requires analysis of how the tropes and symbols of ritual as celebrated in the context of migration give renewed validity to fundamental ideas about the person, gender relations, human fertility, kinship and filiation, culture and nature, moral obligation, and ethical dispositions. And it is through performance that rituals regain their sense of validity and naturalness.

If the migration process frequently starts with the arrival of lone migrants, male or female, the translocation and naturalization of culture usually begins when they are joined by their families. Perhaps the most emotionally compelling events for migrants away from home involve nurture and sociability within the
home, whether seasonal holidays like Christmas, Passover, or the Chinese New Year or rites of passage and rituals of sacralization and votive offerings, which bring together emergent circles of trust: kin, friends, and neighbors.

One of the most detailed studies of the preparation of immigrant food as integral to the sense of self and emotional well-being in the diaspora is Harbottle’s exploration of Iranian immigrants’ food. For Iranian immigrants, she says, “the process of cooking is one of transformation and enhancement, in which the sight, smell, taste and texture of the meal served ‘speak’ of the labour of the labour, love and expertise invested” (2000, 27). They derive their status and prestige from their ability to prepare elaborate, highly valued dishes.

The special ambience of family seasonal holidays and rites of passage is embodied in the tastes and smells of absent homes created by immigrants in their new homes. Immigrants often sacralize these homes, creating another kind of transnational bridge to their countries of origin. Among Hindus in Southern California studied by Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2008), home is sacralized with religious artifacts and landscaped with significant trees and plants through which immigrants renew their connections to home. Before moving into a new home, an altar is created for the deities on an auspicious day, and a *puja* offering of music and food is made, attended by invited relatives and friends. In the ritual, overflowing boiling milk symbolizes the abundance and prosperity of the new home; a priest sprinkles the rooms with holy water while the sacred camphor flame is lit and passed to congregants. Its smoke is believed to drive out evil. The owners decorate the entrance to their house with coconut, rice, and sacred objects, and anoint the doorway with sandalwood and turmeric in elaborate designs representing flowers or the goddess Lakshmi. Southern Californian Hindu homes are thus transformed, the authors argue, into “sacred microcosm[s]” (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2008, 259; see also Raj 2003, 95–98). Home altars are replete with pictures and statues of gods and goddesses, some of them heirlooms or imported substances like Ganges water, and multiple statues of gods and goddesses are distributed throughout the house. Sacred plants, bushes, and flowers are planted in the garden and used for ritual events, when relatives and friends are invited for devotional singing and music-making on special occasions. These gatherings, with their food, fragrances, visual aesthetics, and sound, offer participants a multisensorial spiritual experience, connecting and re-creating homes away from home.

Like Hindus, Vietnamese migrants to Australia invest in the sacralization of their homes and gardens. The process of choosing an auspiciously proportioned house and a garden planted with herbs, sugarcane, and bananas evokes a “landscape and physical environment imbued with meaning for diasporic Vietnamese” (Thomas 1999, 42). Their new homes are “crowded with echoes of the past,” including an ancestral altar, that allow them to express a Vietnamese cultural aesthetic and cope with their sense of loss as uprooted refugees. Some place ashes of family members carried from Vietnam to Australia at the altar, alongside pictures of deceased relatives (Thomas 1999, 52). On death anniversaries, weddings, and other family occasions, special prayers, food, and drink are offered at the altar.
When Pakistani migrants to Great Britain move into a new home, they call a khatam qur‘an ritual, a communal Koran reading followed by a ritual offering and commensal meal (Werbner 1990/2002, ch. 5). Khatam qur‘ans are held on other occasions also—to thank God for recovery from illness or accidents, when starting a new job, or to commemorate the dead. Hosts and guests are often women friends, kin, and neighbors. They sit on a clean sheet spread on the floor, heads covered, and read all thirty siparas (chapters) of the Koran in one sitting, each woman reading one or two chapters. Participation in such ritual events is regarded as a meritorious service on behalf of the convener “for the sake of Allah,” requiring no reciprocation. Khatam qur‘ans, like other such domestic rituals, create circles of trust for incoming immigrants, allowing the incorporation of newcomers and strangers. They are often neighborhood events, especially in immigrant residential enclaves, but they are also held among higher-class elite migrants living in suburbs and can include men as well as women.

The Bene Israel, Indian Jews who have migrated to Israel, hold their own unique version of this immigrant ritual of offering, thanksgiving, and purification. The malida invokes the Prophet Elijah, believed to be still alive, followed by an offering containing a sweet rice mixture, five kinds of fruit, scented twigs, and flowers, placed on a large platter. A wine libation is spilled on the ground, and the prayers are followed by a festive meal. Gabriele Shenar, who studied the ritual, makes the point that Bene Israel immigrants create “emotional continuity” with India in their “understanding of emotions as foods…elaborated in terms of nourishment, cooking, ingestion, digesting, and life.” Food rituals are thus a concrete means of experiencing and re-experiencing homage to the prophet or a gift to a deity (Shenar 2004).

Food is also central to Algerians in southeast France, whose rituals follow a set pattern: opening rite—prayers—meal—songs and dances—closing rite (Andezian 1990, 201). The food at such gatherings is blessed, containing baraka, and dhikr is performed, inducing ecstatic trance (202). The female leader, the mukadma, presides over the rituals, conducts the supplicatory prayer (dua), mediates requests to saints, finds solutions to personal afflictions, and accompanies women on Sufi pilgrimage to Algeria. Such invisible neighborhood events, convened in the privacy of homes, link immigrant women of all ages in family, neighborhood, and friendship networks.

The desire to sacralize one’s home, however ephemeral, is also found among single migrant workers. Filipina Catholic female domestic workers in Israel join together to form block rosaries. They carry a figure of the Virgin Mary acquired in Jerusalem through the streets of Tel Aviv from one shared apartment to another. Mama Mary is then enshrined each week in a new home, as the women gather to pray over their rosaries and celebrate with a festive meal. She is set up in the home altar, lovingly dressed, kissed, and prayed over. Liebelt reports that each week the Virgin blesses “homes and their surrounding neighbourhoods, hears hundreds of the women’s petitions, creates a community of devotees, and performs miracles.” Against the backdrop of south Tel Aviv’s “raucous Friday night life and the devotees’
own life turbulences,” she says, “‘Mama Mary’, as she is tenderly addressed, comes to stand for compassion, refuge, and protection.” The block rosary, like the devotion of Mary more generally, [can] be understood as a performance of the sacredness of the home and the family. As the powerful mother of the Holy Family, tenderly called “Mama,” the figure [blesses] the homes she stays in. Within the context of migration, this consecration of the home and the family [has] the undertone of remembrance, nostalgia and yearning. As they pray the devotees, almost exclusively mothers of children far away, [remember] family members they [have] been separated from for years and sometimes decades, [suffer] from homesickness and feelings of exclusion from belonging in Israel, while they [hope] for miracles, salvation and healing. (Liebelt forthcoming)

Rituals of offering and sacrifice have been regarded in the anthropological literature as taking place in the context of “natural” groups of kindreds or locally based communities. The very structure of the ritual dictates that its efficacious performance is contingent on the mediated support of significant others: kin, friends, neighbors, the poor. For labor migrants, as the preceding examples illustrate, this “natural” community cannot simply be “renewed”; it must be reconstructed. Moreover, its very reconstruction is problematic, for it implies a shift in commitments from migrants’ natal home to their new place of domicile. The holding of sacrifices and ritual offerings, hitherto associated with “home” in its broadest affective and moral sense, in migrants’ new place of settlement is predicated on the reconstruction of a moral universe. To achieve this reconstruction, crucial categories of the person must be reconstituted. Until such a stage is reached, money is often sent by migrants for sacrifices to be made at home in their names. Pakistani migrants, for example, sometimes send home money because they express doubt at the efficacy of offerings made in the absence of an act of expiatory giving to the poor (Werbner 1990/2002, ch. 5). Once reconstructed, however, rituals of offering and sacrifice come to be powerful foci for sociality. As immigrants put down roots in their places of settlement, homes are sacralized, and newly naturalized communities of trust form around them. In particular, women’s “worlds” are renewed.

Large-scale family rituals, like weddings and funerals, are indexical occasions, which register the full range of a family’s network of acquaintances, friends, and kin. Often these events consist of a series of rites that effect crucial transitions. For example, the Pakistani all-female mehndi (henna) prewedding ritual is the most elaborate within a complex cycle of rituals. Through feeding and cosmetic treatment with substances, the symbolic transformations effected during the mehndi move the bride and groom from a state of culturally constrained “coldness” to framed, safe “heat,” in anticipation of the consummation of the marriage (Werbner 1990/2002). Equivalent female henna rituals, known as kina gecesi, laylat al-henna, or mehndi, are held by Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese Hindustani Muslim migrants in the Netherlands (Dessing 2001). The female dresser, negaffa, paints the Moroccan bride with henna and plays an important role in the wedding reception, at which the bride changes her clothes several times and is carried around the hall amid singing and ullulating. As among Pakistanis, weddings involve elaborate
exchange relations. Importantly also, much as in India (Raheja and Gold 1994), the Pakistani mehndi is an occasion for bawdy singing, sexual clowning, and transgressive masquerade, in what may be conceived of as a resistive or counterhegemonic commentary on both the status of women in Muslim Punjabi society and of Pakistani migrants within British society. Such clowning is not simply reflexive; it fulfills a symbolic transformational role in the ritual process, occurring at a key liminal moment, before the clown is banished amid gales of laughter from the women (Werbner 1990/2002). Mehdidi rituals allow for creative inventiveness and culturally hybrid objects, songs, and dramas, while revitalizing through aesthetic performance the substances, foods, music, and dance of the homeland. The groom is subjected to hazing, sexually suggestive joking, and forced feeding by the female bride receivers, underlining the power and control of Punjabi women over the domestic domain. As Raheja and Gold (1994) also argue, such rituals highlight the uninhibited expressive sexuality of South Asian women. Not surprisingly, mehndis are disapproved of by Muslim reformists and Islamists.

The centrality of women in “pre-political contexts of everyday life” is stressed by Alund in her study of Bosnian women in Stockholm (Ålund 1999). She argues that “rather than being passive victims, women who have migrated actively employ the complex cultural symbolism of their histories to challenge contemporary forms of subordination and, in the process, they create new solidarities” (150–151). Just as in Bosnia, in Sweden cultural events enable women to host and sustain informal networks and foster cross-ethnic local solidarities (Ålund 1999).

An important feature of family and domestic rituals is their socialization of second generation migrants into the intricate concrete details of their parents’ culture through the medium objects, substances, and performances; images; sounds; and tastes, as lived experience rather than theoretical dogma or text. Young girls and women figure prominently in Pakistani mehndi celebrations. They are the ones who dance, sing, and clown, supporting the bride. So also are networks of second generation girls and younger women formed around such interdomestic rituals and celebrations.

But “culture,” once taken as axiomatic in the natural context, can also come to be questioned in the migration context, such as when Sierra Leonian Muslim women in Washington, D.C., challenge practices of polygamy or agonize over the rights and wrongs of female circumcision, while men adopting stricter forms of Islam challenge traditional child-naming feasts (D’Alisera 2004). So also may young South Asian women question arranged or “forced” marriages, accusing their parents of mistaking outmoded Punjabi “culture” with Islam (Werbner 2007). Quite often in Britain, pubescent girls’ movements are restricted and they are chaperoned, with family honor and female modesty repeatedly invoked. Fear of gossip is highly potent in close-knit Pakistani communities, although illicit love affairs do occur (Shaw 2000, 172–173).

Whether because of global trends toward Islamicization, or the maturation of second generation migrant women, the spread of the hijab (veil) has become increasingly marked in Muslim migrant communities across Western Europe,
from Norway, Denmark, and Sweden to France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom, along with the proliferation of Islamic study groups (dars), as noted by Afshar (1998) and Schmidt (2004). These groups rotate among women’s homes or meet in mosques to interpret Koranic verses or learn classical Arabic, often guided by a woman expert in Islamic studies. Some “born again” women belong to national and international networks, such as the Al-Huda women’s network, which has its headquarters in Pakistan (see Ahmad 2009). Such networks use e-mail and have their own Web sites and chat rooms. An increased knowledge of Islam allows young women to resist traditional customs as un-Islamic and to demand the right to make their own marriage choices (Dwyer 1999; Schmidt 2004; Werbner 2007).

In addition to weddings, funerals, or birthday parties, most immigrant festivals and holidays are celebrated at home as well as in temples, synagogues, or churches: Christmas, Eid, Passover, Diwali, the Chinese New Year, the Vietnamese Tet, and a myriad of other holidays must all be reconstructed. In an overview of such family celebrations, Pleck (2000) shows how past and present cultural traditions are renegotiated and reinvented in the context of migration. Sometimes the public aspects of holidays may cause conflict. In France, for example, Moroccan immigrants’ desire to slaughter their own sacrifice in person, often in public places, has created conflict with the authorities (Brisbarre and Diop 1997). In Trinidad, the descendants of Indian Muslim indentured laborers celebrate Muharram in an elaborate ritual, which begins with building imambaras, large, complex ritual structures that purify the community and are later carried through the streets in procession, with carnivalesque drumming and music, before being cast into the sea. Korom (2003) investigates the origins of the ritual in India in the light of current attacks on it by Islamic reformers, who object to what they see as its illegitimate creolized form.

One of the paradoxes of immigrant cultural celebrations highlighted by Korom’s study is that in some respects immigrant cultures are both the same and different wherever they settle. To give a familiar example, every year during the Passover meal, Jewish families recount the story of the Exodus from Egypt and express their collective yearning for the homeland in their supplicatory prayer, “Next year, in Jerusalem.” The simultaneity of the Passover celebration by Jews throughout the world engenders a consciousness, both individual and collective, of the Jewish diaspora as copresent, while it inscribes the space between past and present ontologically and materially—the shared sacrificial meal, the ritual enactment of the ten plagues, the open door to Elijah and to all strangers, the empty chair filled by their ethereal presence, the glass of wine. This simultaneity of ritual practice in thousands of widely dispersed homes seems itself to imply the sameness of the immigrant experience in the diaspora, even beyond a single shared script.11

Yet Passover meals also differ widely between places of settlement and even families, and so too, apparently similar immigrant cultural practices vary from place to place. They are never beyond place. As Stuart Hall points out (1991), they are hybrid formations, created by the encounter with very different receiving contexts. How then can they share a single imagination of home, when even the
locations of immigrant sacred centers differ? Writing about Hassidic Jews in the diaspora, Henry Goldschmidt reports that, “Each rebbe’s court, wherever he may be, has always stood at the social and geographic center of his community, as a pilgrimage site for his Hassidim and a source of inspiration” (2000, 98). “Thus according to most Lubavitcher [Hassidic Jews], Crown Heights [in New York] is not merely the center of the Lubavitch community but the spiritual center of the Jewish people—‘the center of the world’” (98). These “centers-of-the-world” travel in the imagination of Hassidic followers with the peregrinations of the their holy men, whose charisma the centers radiate. Such centers are multiple, just as the religious sectarian tendencies and movements within immigrant diasporas are multiple and often highly contested and politicized, as discussed further later in this chapter.

Multiplicity is reflected in the diverse ways in which the cultural landscapes of immigrants are reproduced differentially even in a single receiving context, while resembling one another across different places. Religious and cultural movements respect no administrative, territorial, or political boundaries. This is what makes diasporas chaordic social formations: chaotic orders that reproduce and extend themselves without any centralized command structures, emerging as unique and yet predictable cultural-organizational forms in many different places. Chaorders are inscribed both materially and imaginatively in space, time, and objectifying practices (Werbner 2002). Chaorder theory implies that, irrespective of receiving contexts, the generative cultural, religious, and organizational DNA of diasporas, so to speak, both ignores and transcends context. Migrant communities import and inscribe their homes spatially through ritual and religious processions and festivals, celebrated in the streets of their new places of settlement.

Public Festivals, Processions, and Carnivals

Much immigrant culture is celebrated outside the home, often deliberately, as migrants take over the streets and parks of their adopted cities and inscribe them with their presence. These public celebrations often follow distinctive patterns wherever migrants settle.

Sacred Iconographies: The Catholic Diaspora

Catholic immigrants to North America appear to follow predictable patterns of localization. Southern Italians develop mostly male-based peer groups and regional clubs and sustain a familial rather than national orientation to Italy. Nicholas Harney (1998) describes the locational “toponomy” of regional and village storefront associations in Toronto, which metaphorically map (“mondialize”) Italian geography in diasporic space. Alongside such secular institutional expressions, southern Italians define themselves diasporically through their devotion to village, regional, or national Marian manifestations and saints, whose images in the
form of icons imported from the home country are lodged in churches and clubs in diaspora communities.

Robert Orsi has commented that among Catholic immigrants, “nationally and regionally identified Madonnas contributed to sustaining immigrant and migrant affective ties to the old countries, serving in some cases as pivots of enduring political and social aspirations for the homelands” (2005, 66). Mary’s figure holds immense power for devotees. She is a source of healing from affliction, and her worship is associated among Italians with anticlericalism and a rejection of the absolute authority of the Catholic Church or its sacralized hierarchy, whereas the Church in turn rejects such localized devotions as superstitious folk culture. Orsi (1985) describes the emergence and papal crowning of the Madonna of Mount Carmel in turn-of-nineteenth-century Harlem in the context of ongoing struggles between Italian devotees from the Neapolitan region and the Irish-dominated American Catholic Church, itself unwilling to bend to the authority of the Vatican. The annual festa in honour of the Madonna was celebrated for a whole week, with processions parading her sacred image, public manifestations of penitence, excessive consumption of food and alcohol, bands, music, dancing, and gambling, in which the church barely figured and the streets of East Harlem were sacralized and made Italian. The festival drew Italians from the entire eastern seaboard. Seventy years later, Harney (1998) reports, scores of Italian annual feste to honor regional madonnas and saints were still being celebrated, with renewed intensity, by affluent southern Italian Canadians, mobilizing wide regional networks from Ontario and New York State. Despite the Italian Canadians’ affluence, the same ongoing conflicts with the official church and carnivalesque expressions of hedonistic enjoyment continued to mark this devotional religious complex.

Cubans in Miami have enshrined another madonna, “Our Lady of Charity,” smuggled out of Cuba after the revolution in a diplomatic bag. In Cuban mythology the original icon in Cuba was discovered by three fishermen, floating on the sea, miraculously still dry, in the sixteenth century. Mary’s shrine in Miami, which faces the sea out to Cuba, is a place of personal pilgrimage, votive offerings, and petitions, but she is also patroness of the Cuban nation, adored as a “rebel” madonna. Once a year she is taken from her shrine by boat to be celebrated in a communal mass feast as Cuban immigrants pray for the liberation of Cuba (Tweed 1997).

Peruvian migrants import images of a black Jesus, the “Lord of Miracles,” along with other saints, wherever they settle, whether New York City, Tokyo, Madrid, or Buenos Aires, and struggle for the right to parade their imported icon through the city streets. The icon forms the focus of national diasporic migrant brotherhood associations settled in particular cities, often riven internally by class and ethnic tensions and conflicts. Paerregaard (2001) reports, however, that other Hispanic migrants also join in the religious processions, opening shared spaces of devotion beyond church control among all diasporic Catholics. The sacred geography created by Latin American migrants to the United States in particular is both exclusive and inclusive, reflecting local, regional, and national diasporic attachments.
alongside a common, shared world of religious devotion focused ultimately on the Madonna of Guadalupe in Mexico.

How can the kind of compulsion that makes Peruvians feel the absolute necessity to parade their icon through the streets be explained? Peruvians explain this compulsion pragmatically, in terms of their desire to assert their presence as immigrants. But it seems more true to say that the icon itself demands to be taken into the streets; that it belongs in the streets, part of a complex edifice carried by devotees. Its efficaciousness as a source of divine protection resides in the streets, not merely in the church.

Filipinos in New Zealand, Josefina Tondo (2010) reports, dance to the beat of the drums in the Sinulog fiesta (Boy-Child feast day). Santo Niño, the infant Jesus, once based in Cebu island in the Philippines, has gone on a “transnational journey,” with the Sinulog dance ritual performed by devotees in his honor in a procession through the streets of Christchurch from the church. Imported from the Philippines, the hand-carved icon is so large that it required its own airplane seat for the journey to New Zealand! Praying the rosary and singing Marian hymns, the procession carries the image alongside the Blessed Virgin Mary and smaller Santo Niño icons owned by other Filipino migrants through the streets, so that “the encircling path of the procession sets the boundaries of the sacred domain. Some of those participating in the procession wear different Filipino costumes, their creative interpretation of “native” and Hispanic clothing, portraying the connection between history, culture and identity” (Tondo 2010).

Catholic cults define specific transnational attachments within a universal religion, creating a sacred geography in the diaspora composed of devotees connected metonymically to a particular sacred site in the homeland, but also to one another, in the sense that all venerate similar personal embodiments of divine grace. And just as Marian objects carry immense power, notions of power inform the syncretic fusion of traditional and Christian ideas in many migrant African independent churches. In these the charismatic power of prophets enables them to counter the power of objects to harm through witchcraft and sorcery, as in the Nigerian Aladura church in London, studied by Harris (2006, ch. 3).

Sacred Muslim Geographies: Sufi Migrants

Like Catholics, Muslim Sufi orders create their own sacred geographies of migration. Citywide processions of Sufi followers commemorate their annual ‘urs festivals and eid milad un Nabi, the Prophet’s birthday, with processions through the streets of Birmingham, London, or Manchester. The processions wound their way for three miles through inner-city neighborhoods to the city or order’s mosque, where sermons, praise singing, qawwalis, prayers, and benedictions mingle with civic public speeches by the Lord Mayor, police, and local councilors. Several hundred or even thousand strong, the processions include men from all over Britain, wherever the order’s saint is venerated among South Asian Muslims in the United Kingdom. On both the ‘urs and Prophet’s birthday, the marchers process the streets, shouting out
the name of God; they literally stamp the earth with the name of Allah. In doing so, they sacralize the spaces of the cities and immigrant neighborhoods they have colonized, linking their domestic homes, mosques, and Asian commercial districts as they march along reciting *zikr*, the memorialization of God. They call people back to the faith; they own the streets of their adopted cities.

In Pakistan and South Asia generally, the movement and settlement of saints that led to the expansion of Sufi cults on the subcontinent is similarly conceived of as sacralizing barren, wild, uninhabited land (Eaton 1993; Gardner 1993; Werbner 1996, 2003). In Britain, the land of infidels and unbelievers, indeed of open blasphemers, diasporic migrants inscribe the dangerous and sacrilegious foreign earth they have colonized with God’s blessing. They say that God remembers the place where his name has been called out.

Of course not all Pakistani immigrants in Britain are Sufi followers. The impact of “Wahabbi” reformist Islam is said to be growing in the diaspora, especially among young people. The relations between Sufi followers, venerated of saints’ shrines, and the iconoclastic, puritanical Islamists has been antagonistic and highly politicized for hundreds of years in South Asia, and the battles have carried over into Britain, though in an attenuated form. Over the years since the early post–World War II mass migration, Pakistani immigrants in Britain have replicated and reproduced all the subcontinental religious sectarian streams, denominations, political parties, and divisions. The inclusive, mostly peaceful ideology of the hundreds of Sufi orders now present in Britain, some small, some quite large, all focused on shrines and saints in South Asia, is countered by the more exclusive and hard-line ideologies of the various reformists and political Islamic groups. Muslim religiosity is thus highly contested and politicized.

Like South Asian Sufis in Britain, Senegalese Murid marabouts bring *baraka* or blessing to migrants in the diaspora (see Riccio 2001). As Evers-Rosander (2004) describes for Spain and Tenerife, the Murids carry back with them gifts and offerings to the sacred center at Touba, now a major city with half a million residents, still focused on the original saint’s tomb and on his descendants. This movement back and forth, including the constant traveling of migrants to Senegal for pilgrimage or visits, shows how sacred space is connected metonymically and ontologically through the international travel of symbolic objects and persons, even over vast distances. Similarly, North African Jewish immigrants to Israel established new saints’ shrines thirty years after they first migrated (Weingrod 1990).

“We Own the Streets”: The West Indian Carnival

Like South Asians, West Indians form a complex diaspora. There are seven West Indian islands represented in the United Kingdom, including the largest, Jamaica, alongside Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia, Guyana (a colony at the northern tip of South America), and St. Kitts and Nevis. These seven English-speaking West Indian nations are separate countries, united by the West Indian cricket team, the University of the West Indies, and carnival, celebrated in London,
Leeds, Manchester, New York, and Toronto. Despite their differences, over the years West Indians have also come to form an aesthetic unity. One way this has happened is through carnival. The Notting Hill carnival has become, in the words of its organizers, “the largest street festival in Europe,” with attendance, in some years, of up to two million people. Carnival’s development, according to Abner Cohen (1993), has gone through several critical stages, from being a multicultural festival, to a Trinidadian, and finally to an all West Indian event. After 1976, carnival was marked by violent confrontations between black youth and the police, and over the following years the struggle to make it a peaceful event confronted a variety of hurdles as the number of attendees increased greatly, along with the number of sound systems, youth, police, masqueraders, and bands, and with the rising tension between white yuppie residents and the carnival organizers in Notting Hill.

Cohen (1993) argues that the Notting Hill carnival reveals the complex nature of the relationship between politics and culture, or, more specifically, between aesthetics and power, or artistic creativity and politics. Over the years the “we” of carnival at Notting Hill—that is, the community that has organized and participated in carnival—has shifted in line with emergent political cleavages within the society. If carnival is always an authentic expression of community and identity, who that community is and what that identity is has continually changed. With the change in the definitions of community have come changes in cultural forms and artistic genres celebrated. This is because carnival is not simply a political event. It is a joyous celebration of identity and artistic creativity. Culture is not reducible to politics, Cohen argues, just as politics is not reducible to culture. In fact, it is the inherent artistic attraction of carnival—its music, masquerade costumes, and dance—that make it politically so potent. Its emotional pull has meant that many groups want to harness its mobilizing power to their political and economic ends.

Like many such street processions, whether carnival becomes a political protest or an expression of identity is historically determined. Carnival is always poised “on a knife’s edge” (Cohen 1993, 39, footnote citing Burke). “Like a grand joking relationship…Carnival expresses both alliance and enmity, both consensus and conflict, at one and the same time” (1993, 37). It mocks elites while retaining a measure of good-humored self-mockery. During the 1980s carnival as a cultural performance became, Cohen reports, increasingly contested as various interest groups attempted to take control of it. All these groups, both black and white, clashed over the definition of carnival, its values and its priorities. For the artists and musicians, carnival was above all a cultural, artistic event. They wanted to continue to develop its artistic merit and argued that political and commercial considerations were of secondary importance and that, in any case, carnival could only be effective politically if it was artistically powerful. Just its size and the fact that it continued to be held in the streets of Notting Hill, despite the objections of white yuppie residents and the police, was in itself a political achievement. They further argued that the fact that black music and culture had become part of British culture was another political achievement of the black community. Hence, the artists did not want to contain and restrain carnival. After all, they argued, carnival is an
expression of freedom, a celebration by the weak of their power when, for a brief period, they reverse the usual hierarchies. Indeed, it can be argued that the attacks by black youth on the police and their organized pickpocketing were all part of the license of carnival, to which the police were overreacting. As Bakhtin (1984) has commented on medieval carnivals, carnival is a moment of license: unpredictable, heteroglossic, and bodily transgressive, beyond the control of higher church authorities or politicians.

Other West Indians, however, argued that the commercial possibilities of carnival were not being adequately tapped. The art groups depended on the Art Council and local authority grants and on internal fund-raising events, but carnival was still hugely in debt. Yet carnival could actually be a fantastic money spinner, by marketing carnival buttons, T-shirts, and posters, as well as all kinds of other commercial products. Still others wanted to make carnival more overtly political. And of course the government, the police, the local authorities, and the residents all wanted to contain carnival, to tame, control, and restrict it—even to remove it entirely from Notting Hill. Their attack was on the very spirit of carnival.

But for all the arguments, for West Indians in Britain, carnival was theirs. In their writings, West Indians declared that “CARNIVAL BELONGS TO US, WE ARE THE CARNIVAL, CARNIVAL IS THE ONE THING, ONE TIME, THAT IS OURS AND OURS ALONE, carnival is part of the cultural and artistic expression of the slave community… it is an outward expression of everything that is West Indian” (Cohen 1993, 76), or, in West Indian creole, “Carnival is we-ting.” As a kind of liminal ritual, carnival has sacralized the streets of Notting Hill in London. It commemorates the racial violence that occurred there and the confrontations with the police, but at the same time it also celebrates multiculturalism and the potential for living in racial harmony. This is so despite the fact that the “we” of carnival has changed over the years and continues to change. Cohen concludes that carnival really belongs to the carnival players in any given year. Who they are changes and is contested.

Carnival is not an isolated happening. It is the dramatic culmination of a whole year of work, of get-togethers, parties, networking, and fund-raising events, in which hundreds and hundreds of West Indians voluntarily devote their time, labor, and artistic imagination to the planning of the mas dance bands. The street celebrations are thus an objectification, an overt public manifestation, of huge social networks that criss-cross the West Indian immigrant community in London, partly created through links among relatives, migrants from particular West Indian island communities, and followers of particular bands and sound systems.

The specificities of the London Notting Hill carnival and its historical development would seem to be unique. Yet similar processes have occurred not only in Britain but in the United States as well. In New York carnival is celebrated on Labor Day, the first Monday in September. It was first held in Manhattan but shifted to Brooklyn after it was banned following a minor disturbance (Kasinitz 1992). In Brooklyn, which is the heart of the West Indian settlement, it is a massive event. Kasinitz argues that, as in Britain so too in New York, carnival is the basis for a
pan–West Indian diasporic identity. And as in London, the relation between culture and politics in carnival is constantly debated and highly contentious. Politicians are both included and not included in the Brooklyn carnival, which is fundamentally a street event, an equalizing celebration in which no leaders are recognized, and yet they keep wanting to jump on the carnival bandwagon.

There are some features of the New York carnival that make it different from the London one. In particular, West Indian identity in New York is opposed to black African American identity, and much of the political tension surrounds the way black politicians take the West Indian vote for granted. This division is, of course, absent in London, where West Indians have been until recently the dominant black community. In addition, unlike London, because New York is so close to the West Indies, artists come and go freely between home and diaspora. They go home for the Trinidadian carnival, and Trinidadian artists come to New York for the Brooklyn carnival.

The fact that similar historical processes, political contestations, and forms of cultural organization emerge in West Indian carnivals in different global cities apparently independently, without a guiding hand, is a further instance of Chaordic transnationalism. It is as though diasporic groups have the same internal group dynamics and encounter the same crucibles that lead them to form similar institutions wherever they settle.

FROM BOLLYWOOD TO THE SATANIC VERSES: IMMIGRANT ARTISTIC CREATIVITY AND THE CULTURE INDUSTRIES

A major aspect of research on immigrant culture has been concerned with both the importing and local creativity of diasporic aesthetic products, from music and film to novels or plays. Here debates on cultural hybridity, crossover, reception, interpretation, and performance are linked to issues of identity and multiculturalism. Some regions of the world, like South Asia and Latin America, but increasingly also China, Turkey, Nigeria, and West and Southern Africa, have flourishing indigenous culture industries. Extraterrestrial channels in the home country beam film and music programs into immigrant homes, while local stores sell imported books, newspapers, DVDs, and CDs, alongside immigrant food products, West African cloth (Stoller 2001), South Asian saris and shalwar qamiz, jewelry, and “ethnic” designer clothes (Bhachu 2004). Chain cinemas in Britain and the United States show recent Bollywood movies, while popular singers, classical musicians, film stars, and other celebrities go on tours throughout the immigrant diaspora.
The myriad of ethnic restaurants that have sprung up throughout the global cities of the world seem to adapt "authentic" exotic tastes and cuisines to local consumers. They form the backbone of immigrant small business enclaves. Thriving club and music industries have arisen in the diaspora as immigrants incorporate newly fashioned "traditional" music like Punjabi *bhangra* (Sharma et al. 1996) or African highlife. But immigrants also adapt and adopt forms of music from other ethnic groups that seem to express resistive themes. This is evidenced in the spread of African American rap into immigrant communities, from American and British Asians to German Turks, French North Africans, and Samoan immigrants (see the contributions to Basu and Lemelle 2006).

A growing literature on Indian popular cinema’s reception in the dispersed South Asian diaspora highlights the way context and positionality determine the appropriation, interpretation, and performance of Bollywood by immigrants. An early study by Gillespie (1995) described the way Hindus watching the Indian version of the *Mahabharata* in their homes in London adopted devotional attitudes to the deities portrayed on TV. In other words, watching was also a performative act. This is a theme carried over into other studies, such as Dudrah’s of South Asian gay clubs, where homoerotic dance-and-song video clips of male friendship are performed, against the grain, from films whose overall plot and message is heteronormative (Dudrah 2006, ch. 5; 2008). Gopinath uses the term “retrospec-tatorship” to denote this type of viewing, which reimagines films as sites of queer identification and desire (2005, 97). Parents and children diverge in their interpretation of Bollywood movies in Germany (Brosius 2005), South Africa (Hansen 2005), Britain (Kaur 2005), Guyana, and New York (Halstead 2005). For the older immigrant generation the films constitute a source of authentic images set in a safe, “pure,” respectful, sexually modest cultural frame. Against that, young viewers are attracted by Bollywood’s colorful and musical aesthetic qualities of stardom, dance, and song while often distancing themselves from cinematic plots. Their subjectivities are thus marked, according to Mishra (2002), by a double subjectivity, a double consciousness. Across generations, however, Bollywood is also performed—in South Asian club disco dancing, in Indian festivals of song and dance in Israel (Shenar in press), and even in Hindu temples (Halstead 2005, 278).

The mimetic borrowing of Bollywood’s stardusted charisma crosses traditional and modern aesthetic conventions, just as Bollywood itself has borrowed from devotional Sufi or Bengali singing styles and North Indian wedding folk traditions to create a shared pan-Asian cultural aesthetic for its dispersed Indian and South Asian immigrant consumer audiences. Its eclectic origins and heteroglossic assemblages have led commentators to note the transcendent, extranational, self-contained cultural “autonomy” of Bollywood (Gopal and Moorti 2008, 15), articulating an “alternative cosmopolitanism” and offering a counterpoint to “neotraditionalist discourses” of nation (32). The cultural exchange between local and diasporic musicians, singers, and producers has revolutionized the industry’s music, song, and dance clips, all of which are marketed in their own right (Morcom
2008). The crossover extends to the many filmic song scenes, set in romantic locations in Europe and increasingly incorporating diasporic outsiders into cinematic plots.

In contrast to Bollywood, young South Asian immigrants’ films and TV shows produced by second generation immigrants in the diaspora, usually in English, are far more critical. They challenge the normative gender and generational norms upheld by the immigrant generation (for a review, see Desai 2004). They contain explicit homoerotic love scenes (e.g., *My Beautiful Laundrette, East Is East, Bhaji on the Beach*), interracial love (e.g., *Mississippi Masala*), pervasive challenges to the authority of the parental immigrant generation (e.g., *East Is East, My Son the Fanatic*), women’s agency, and a subversion of strictly defined gender roles (e.g., *Bhaji on the Beach, Bend It Like Beckham*). They are thus transgressive in the tradition of Punjabi *mehndi* masquerade performances, lampooning hallowed customs and questioning religious authority as they express feminist, gay, liberal, antiracist, or secular attitudes. They deliberately caricature and parody conventional South Asian weddings, the sentimental core of so many Bollywood movies, even as they valorize romantic love. Not surprisingly, many of these culturally hybrid and transgressive films have had a stormy critical reception from older members of the migrant community.

Bakhtin’s distinction between organic and intentional hybridities (1981) is relevant here. It allows us to theorize the simultaneous coexistence of cultural change and resistance to change in immigrant communities, as well as the way immigrant cultures challenge the established cultures they settle in. A key theorist of hybridity, Homi K. Bhabha, celebrates hybridity as destabilizing hegemonic meanings through a “doubling up of the sign,” a “splitting” that is “less than one and double” (Bhabha 1994, 119). In other words, the same object or custom translocated and placed in a different context can acquire quite new, transgressive meanings while echoing old ones. Famously, Bhabha locates the agency of postcolonial migrants in the act of interruptive enunciation, which subverts the possibility of pure narratives of nation (1994, 119). As Paul Gilroy also argues, this creates a “double consciousness,” a split subject, a fractured reality (1993, 126). But such challenges to nationalist discourses are never uniform. Hence the pan-African negritude movement, which arose among Francophone African and Antillian immigrant intellectuals in Paris in the mid-twentieth century in response to the colonial experience, has, Jules-Rosette (1998) argues, fractured in the postcolonial era into different hybrid identity discourses.

While immigrants embed themselves in their new homes by appropriating and naturalizing homeland rituals and celebrations, what they often find to be most threatening is the deliberate, explicitly provocative aesthetic challenge to a felt social order and identity. Such intentional aesthetic hybrid interventions are thus critically different from immigrant routine cultural borrowings and appropriations, which unconsciously create the grounds for future social change. This was evident in the deep offense that Salman Rushdie’s novel, *The Satanic Verses*
(1988), caused immigrant Muslim South Asian readers. It led to a fierce academic debate about the novel, regarded as a hybrid, postmodern narrative of migration. Anthropologists and sociologists critiqued its nonrepresentativeness, which they argued reflected the alienation of elite diasporic intellectuals, writers, and novelists from the wider migrant community (Asad 1990; Friedman 1997; van der Veer 1997; Fowler 2000). Others read the novel differently and argued that it meshed with Muslim traditions celebrating hybrid, liminal moments and spaces of transgressive license (Fischer and Abedi 1990; Werbner 2002a). But the evident offence experienced by working-class immigrants raised the question: What are the limits to licensed hybridity (Werbner and Modood 1997)? Most Muslims regarded The Satanic Verses as a blasphemous attack on their most sacred religious values, highlighting the fact that hybrid novels or plays can harm vulnerable minorities, even if their offense arises from a misreading of the novel’s intentions (Werbner 1996).

If immigrant identities form hybrid mosaics (Fischer 1986), immigrants also celebrate multiple overlapping identities or identifications—moral, aesthetic, political—as coherent wholes, situationally, in discrete social spaces they create and set apart. In Britain, Islamic piety, South Asian popular culture, and cricket as an expression of Pakistani nationalism and Commonwealth citizenship are selectively foregrounded by British Pakistanis in separated social events and spaces, though there are also contexts in which they fuse these different identities (Werbner 2002a, ch. 2). Spaces of immigrant cultural celebration or devotion require investment in material props, personnel, and programs, if the ambience associated with home is to be embodied and materialized.

**Conclusion**

This chapter argues that the translocation of culture is a process of dislocation, transplantation, and relocation, both painful and joyous, as immigrants invent and re-create a local culture and viable community, while they struggle to sustain local and transnational commitments. In this process of translocation, culture cannot be conceived of simply as an instrumental badge of identity; it is, as argued here, a compelling moral and symbolic reality, conferring role and agency, to be struggled over by cultural actors, even when it is hybrid, contested, permeable, and open to change. If culture and traditions are often felt to be axiomatic, eternal, and hence compelling, they are nevertheless subject to challenge, transgression, or rejection by fellow migrants. In a world of transnational migrations and blurred borders, immigrant cultures cannot therefore be neatly packaged in fixed multicultural policies or subjected to loyalty tests devised by politicians in a futile attempt to create order out of ambiguity and flux. Rather, immigrant cultures are constantly
evolving, historical social formations, as new arrivals and their children work to put down roots in and transform their newly adopted homes.

NOTES

1. For example, Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Clifford (1988).
2. Kuper (1991, 71), objecting to Geertz’s definition of culture as a “system of symbols and meanings” in contrast to norms, argues that Durkheimian and Marxist anthropological traditions regard culture “with suspicion.”
3. For a detailed ethnographic analysis, see Werbner (2002a).
4. For a more extensive discussion of this point, see Werbner (2005).
5. For a full discussion of various aspects of the gift economy among Punjabis, see Werbner (1990/2002) and Bhachu (1986).
7. Like other Marxists, Bourdieu uses the notion of “reproduction” metaphorically, to refer to the recreation of capitalist and class relations of production. My own usage is the investments made in social-biological reproduction.
9. This has been associated with the Manchester School’s extended case study method or “social drama,” and particularly the work of Victor Turner (1958) and Max Gluckman (1940). A parallel move in American cultural anthropology is the work of Clifford Geertz (1973), who defines cultural performance as “text,” an idea similar to the move in cultural studies (e.g., Hebdige 1979). Missing, however, from such accounts is the recognition that culture in performance does not simply exemplify communication or social conflict—it represents an experience of embodiment and hence identity.
10. On this powerfully compelling aesthetic dimension of South Asian rituals, see also the thesis by Shenar (2005) on Indian Jews in Israel.

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