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State, Culture, and Religion: Political Action and Representation among South Asians in North America

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In what ways, other than through aesthetics, is the “politics of diaspora” constituted? Pnina Werbner has suggested that, in the formation of diasporas, “real” politics might consist of “transnational moral gestures of philanthropy and political lobbying ... grounded in ideas about a shared past and future.”² Thus she urges us to interrogate the relationship between politics and art, or “real” politics and aesthetics, in diasporas and/or transnational communities (concepts not the same, but increasingly conflated in the literature: Vertovec 277).

This challenging question comes out of Werbner’s work with South Asian Muslims in the British context, where one can talk of the moral community of Muslims as a diasporic one. There are Muslims in the UK from the Middle East, Cyprus, Malaysia, and elsewhere, but most are Pakistani and Indian immigrants with a shared past. In North America, however, many other Muslims preceded the South Asians, and in the US, African Americans constitute some 40% of the American Muslim “community.” Estimates of the Muslim population in the US range widely, but in 1992 the American Muslim Council put it between 5 and 8 million, with indigenous Muslims at 42%, South Asians at 24.4%, and Arabs at 12.4% (Nu’man 13). Canadian Muslims are fewer in number, some 350,000; while many are Canadian-born, these are mostly second-generation rather than converts (Khan 29–30). In the US, not only are indigenous Muslims the single largest group, but immigrant Muslims represent many diasporas, not just one.

However, it is the differences between Britain and America, and between Canada and the US, that make the relationship of art and politics an interesting question. Taking Indians and Pakistanis in North America to be a single diasporic community, I will nonetheless draw religious and generational distinctions among them, considering Muslims and, very briefly, Sikhs and Hindus. These distinctions are then related to an issue much debated in Asian American studies and identity politics, the tension between “the diasporic perspective” and “claiming America” (Wong), to argue that Asian American and Muslim American politics both lead to a dissolving rather than a perpetuation of the diasporic nature of

the Pakistani and Indian community. I also argue that aesthetic and political activities cannot easily be separated; although self-representation and grounded political networks do not necessarily coincide, they are often mutually constitutive.

Theorists suggest that diasporas cut across national boundaries,³ yet the projects of nation-states clearly shape diasporic culture and politics. "All identity is constructed across difference" (Hall, "Minimal Selves" 45), and the national configurations of sameness and difference with which immigrants work are very dissimilar in the US and in Canada. US and Canadian white-dominated versions of cultural pluralism both extend equal rights to immigrants as citizens and to ethnic communities without requiring them to give up their "difference." While the US has a "laissez-faire" approach and a strong emphasis on individualism (the state plays little or no role in supporting ethnic cultures), however, the Canadian state has explicit multicultural policies supporting the maintenance of ethnic cultures.

Racial and linguistic fault lines differ in the two states as well. Canada has indigenous populations, notably the Inuit, and a longstanding tension between British and French immigrants. The US has a heritage of racism based on slavery and a substantial black population; it has another heritage of "frontier society" violence involving Native Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and Latinos (Castles 301–2). Canada, still reflecting its history as part of the British Empire, glosses its South Asian immigrants as "Children of the Raj" and maintains vital connections to the United Kingdom (Siddiqui), but the US has few historical connections to South Asia (or the British Empire) and only weak contemporary ones to the Commonwealth.

South Asians and Asians are positioned differently in Canada and the US. Small numbers of Indians, mostly Sikh peasants (members of a religion shaped by both Islam and Hinduism), began migrating to both Canada and the US from British India's Punjab province around 1900 (Buchignani, Indra, and Srivastava), but the population profiles diverged rapidly as those in the US married local Mexican American women (Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices*, in which I show that Mishra's striking division of Indian diasporas into old "continuous" ones of "exclusivism" and new ones of "border" and "selected discontinuities" [441–2, 427] is a product of his inattention to those old diasporas which do not fit his theory).

Large numbers of urban and well-educated Indian and Pakistani immigrants began arriving in North America only after significant changes in immigration policies in the 1960s. The US has the largest foreign-born population in the world, 19.6 million, but the foreign-born are only 8% of the total population. Asian Americans are a rapidly rising proportion of the US population (they will make up

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8% of it by 2020), and Asian Indians are the third largest Asian American group (after Chinese and Filipinos).⁴ In contrast, Canada's population is 17% foreign-born, and the percentage is higher in cities—35% in Vancouver and 40 to 42% in Toronto. Of Canada's 1.5 million Asians, the Chinese are the largest group, followed by South Asians; more than half of Canada's Asians are in Ontario, particularly Toronto.⁵

Since Canada sets its multicultural categories according to nation of origin, leaders appeal to essentialized images of identity to claim scarce resources, becoming gatekeepers in situations structured by multicultural policies (Lal 398–400).⁶ Thus the Sikhs and the Indian Muslims are forced into the "India" box to secure state funds and influence decisions. (Dusenbery, "Canadian Ideology"; "Poetics and Politics"). Resisting these national origin categories emphasizes religious identities, since Sikhs (who constitute only 2% of India's population today) are still the most numerous among Canada's South Asians; Muslims come next, then Hindus.⁷ The situation is just the reverse in the US, where Hindus are the most numerous, then Muslims, and then Sikhs. In both the US and Canada, Muslims are increasingly important. They will be second in numbers only to Christians in the US within a few years and are already so placed in Canada, thanks to immigration and relatively high birthrates; conversion also adds to the numbers. South Asian Muslims are arguably becoming the political leaders of American Muslims (Leonard, "South Asian Leadership").

These new (post-1960s) Indian and Pakistani immigrants are particularly privileged in the United States. Although post-1985 immigrants are bringing down the socioeconomic profile slightly, Indians had the highest median household income, family income, and per capita income of any foreign-born group in the US 1990 Census. The American Association of Physicians from India is the largest ethnic body of doctors in the US, and its counterparts, the Association of Pakistani Physicians of North America and the Islamic Medical Association of Canada, are also powerful (Leonard, *South Asian Americans* 77–8). Their socioeconomic status gives Indians and Pakistanis "the powers of diaspora," as Boyarin puts it, some agency with respect to assimilation, repatriation, or the perpetuation of diasporic community. Boyarin sees "linguistic adaptability" and high levels of competence in English as major reasons for this privilege, and these attributes help give Indians and Pakistanis immigration preference. Also quite importantly, the racial classification of South Asians in the US is ambiguous; they are sometimes classified as "white."⁸ Perhaps, as Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin argue for Jews, it is the persistence of racism and the presence of African Americans that has enabled this classification for some South Asians (Boyarin and Boyarin, "Introduction" xi).

This position of South Asian privilege is clear in North American academia and in mainstream cultural arenas such as literature, film, and music as well.⁹ All religious communities are represented among the South Asian diasporic artists and intellectuals, but Hindus take a lead, since they are in the majority (in the US) and without religious constraints on the development of music and dance.¹⁰ In this arena, South Asians contrast with Arabs, for, as Sally Howell points out, Arab diasporic communities are sustained without high-profile aesthetic expression in the American media; their relationship to the media is more often antagonistic.

Indian and Pakistani immigrants in North America are in most ways a single diasporic population. Boyarin writes that "we remind ourselves of what we are by reminding ourselves of what we miss," and he points to genealogy (the concerns of ancestors) and contingency (elements of accident, or how one has ended up in a new site) as the two central components of diasporic consciousness. Aesthetic expressions evoke what people miss, and memories of historical events relate to both ancestral concerns and the "accidents" that have often propelled people to migrate. South Asian immigrants clearly constitute a diasporic aesthetic community through shared "cultural knowledge, passion, and creativity" (Werbner, "Essentialising" 240). They engage jointly in the production and consumption of not just literature, film, music, and poetry but cricket and Shakespeare, drawing on languages and artistic traditions that cross current political borders. These immigrants from diverse linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds draw also on common traditions of decoration, cooking, clothing, and architecture.¹¹

In fact, the overseas diasporic sites provide important nodes in a global network of reconnections between Indians and Pakistanis. Not only do Hindi movies, film stars, comedians, drama and dance troupes, and singers of *qawwalis* and *ghazals* (Indo-Muslim devotional and romantic poems) tour the US and Canada, but many outstanding performers live and teach in North America. *Bharatnatyam*, a Hindu temple dance rooted in South India, is learned as a "South Asian heritage" activity by young Muslim girls in Los Angeles; and when two very different groups, the San Diego Afghan Association and the Los Angeles Alumni of Karachi University, wanted a *ghazal* singer, both turned to a southern California Indian Bengali Brahmin woman. A father and son, from Pakistan and San Francisco respectively, were featured by the Pakistani Arts Council in LA singing *ghazals* and *geets* (classical and light classical traditions) and subsequently performed at the Institute of Punjab Studies in Delhi, India.¹² It is through such performances, of both high and popular culture, in overseas diasporic sites in the UK, Canada, the US, and the Gulf that a larger South Asian diasporic audience is constituted that draws Afghans, Bangladeshis, and

sometimes even Sri Lankans and Nepalese. Some performances draw strictly ethnic audiences, but there are many crossovers, as when Ravi Shankar's birthday is celebrated in Los Angeles or a Punjabi Hindu singer (Hans Raj Hans) is brought over to sing Sufi *qawwalis* in a World Religious Music event in the Hollywood Bowl (along with the Mighty Clouds of Joy, a gospel group, and others).

Barbara Lal theorizes that "identity entrepreneurs" help create and police ethnic or communal boundaries (396–400). Tölölyan suggests that such policing can be both internally motivated and at the insistence of the ruling majority (14): the latter is particularly clear in Canada, which wants to keep its multicultural units few in number. Aesthetic performances make political statements; they can express continuing allegiance to an ancestral culture and/or integration into Canadian or US culture. They are not immune from boundary maintenance but might be more noted for boundary breaches. Even the transmission and continuity of "pure" forms of "high culture" in music and dance open up new audiences and involve new participants. Such efforts can be framed by political constraints. Thus, in Canada, the Menaka Thakkar Dance Company, once lauded by the dancer's brother as exemplifying the breakthrough of the best of India's classical culture (*bharatnatyam*) to the host culture through a "cultural hero" of the highest artistic merit, has moved to fusion choreography, but it still presents Indian themes and wins government support (Thakkar 233–4; Jayakumar). Among Pakistani and Indian Muslims, cultural performances feature music and poetry rather than dance,¹³ and Sufi *qawwalis*, sung in South Asia in religious devotional settings, reach out in North American settings to non-Muslim audiences more accustomed to rock and roll.¹⁴ The aesthetic communities created by such performances may seem far from being grounded political networks, but the potential is there for new, non-diasporic coalitions and actions.

In addition to shared aesthetic traditions, Indian and Pakistani immigrants bring "memories" of British colonialism, the 1947 partition, and subsequent communal (religious) conflicts, memories of historical events that are shared, if differently interpreted (Raj; Leonard, "Remembering/Claiming"). Again, Jonathan Boyarin puts it well: diasporas are egocentric, they invoke a lost center, whether in time or space or both, and the ways in which they form their own collective identities and their coalitions with others depend upon how that center is defined and perpetuated. The past is "always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 71–2), but the experience of remembering is a heavily politicized one, a troubled symbiosis of witnessing, memory stories, and historiography (Barnouw).¹⁵ The ease of transnational travel and communications gives Pakistani and Indian immigrants

little chance to “forget” Indian and Pakistani politics, producing continuing engagement with each other even through conflict.

Both kinds of sharing, of cultural presents and “remembered” pasts, characterize South Asian immigrant discourse in North America. In cross-generational e-mail discussions of South Asian literature, for example, participants vigorously debate the oppression or tolerance of Indo-Muslim rulers, the resistance or tolerance of Hindu leaders, the tragedy or triumph of Partition. Religious and linguistic issues from the precolonial and colonial past (the Indus Valley civilization, the “Aryans,” British “racialization” of Indians) and the communal present come up repeatedly. Contemporary lobbying efforts of both Pakistanis and Indians in the United States perpetuate the diverging interpretations of history being developed and institutionalized in the homelands.

Many immigrants are emphasizing and reinterpreting not only histories but religions in North America, efforts often central to the constitution of diasporic communities. The overwhelming majority of Sikhs and Hindus come from India, and North American converts (the “white” Sikhs, the Hare Krishnas) are small fractions of those communities, albeit fractions that present different senses of dress, home and temple decoration, music, and dance. American Muslims, in contrast, cannot be viewed as a diasporic community, since the indigenous population is so large and the national origin groups differ so greatly. One might argue that the shared focus on Mecca as a sacred center, along with a shared historical core of teachings, moralities, and myths, constitute a diasporic orientation, but I relate these factors (below) to the constitution of a future *ummah* or universal Islamic community, not to the reconstitution of a diasporic community.

Many first-generation Pakistani and Indian Muslims, settling in the US and Canada, with their long-established Judeo-Christian traditions, try to place themselves both inside and outside “the West.” They are critical of the culture in which they find themselves, yet they are historically related to it; worse, they are at a power disadvantage and must hopefully seek “common ground.”¹⁶ One way of doing this, and also of redressing the widespread American ignorance of Islam, is to talk about its closeness to Christianity and Judaism. The discourse of immigrant Muslim American leaders asserts that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are monotheistic “religions of the book” with shared origins, prophets, and values.¹⁷ Furthermore, a Muslim American writes that “Muslims believe in the same values for which this country [the US] was founded ... they feel closer to the founding fathers than what America has become ... those Muslims who have the strength of character to withstand the agonies [will] remain in America to re-instill the American values of which [*sic*] the American themselves

have lost" (Athar 7). Canadian and US Muslims write about the compatibility between Islam and democracy and pay growing attention to the political sphere. American Jews are a constant reference group, seen as monolithic and both envied and feared by Muslim American leaders. Political activists strive to bring American Muslims into public life, and they have achieved conspicuous successes under the Clinton administration.¹⁸

When one looks beyond Muslim self-representation to the mainstream North American audience, there are activities directed at the homelands. These can be lobbying efforts aimed at influencing US policy (particularly with respect to Kashmir among South Asians), but North American Muslims also contribute substantially to educational and other efforts in Pakistan and India. It is precisely this diasporic engagement with the mother countries that may be weakening. Diasporic communities maintain contact with the homeland "when it persists in identifiable form," Tölölyan says (14); they may try to recreate homelands that have been dismembered or drastically changed, or, at some point, the identification may lessen. For many *muhajirs* (refugees) from India, Pakistan did not quite become a homeland, and for many Indian Muslims, India has become less of one; in both cases, Muslims may be reluctantly leaving homelands where ideological reinterpretations of the past marginalize or exclude them from cultural and political power.¹⁹

At another level, American Muslim discourse is constructing an international Islamic community, or *ummah*. All the Muslim newspapers, journals, and media in North America give news regularly about Muslim countries and Islamic issues. Here Werbner's discussion of communities of suffering and/or moral communities embodied in acts of giving and lobbying across national boundaries makes sense ("Essentialising" 238–40). The imagined community unifies North American Muslims and stretches beyond nations to address the problems of Palestine, Bosnia, Kashmir, and Kosovo; North American Muslims battle together against the stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists, their strongly voiced public stance striving to override internal differences. Muslims in North America come from countries as diverse as Lebanon, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, and not only the dominant Sunnis but also Shi'as and sects such as the Ahmadiyya, the Druze, the Zaidis, the Imamis, and many others are represented (Haddad and Smith, *Mission*).²⁰ Sufi converts are prominent, for charismatic Sufi leaders have been recruiting followers in America to this mystical strand of Islam since 1910 (Hermansen; Poston).

The indigenous, predominantly African American "new Muslims" jostle uneasily alongside the "new Americans" (McCloud; Naficy). African American Muslims have been historically shaped by American race and class struggle, seeing Islam (from the founding of the

Moorish Science Temple in 1913) as a way to develop a separate (and non-Christian) community identity in the US. Some African American Muslims argue that *asibiyah* or group identity may be given priority over the *ummah* or universal Muslim community at this stage in African American Muslim life; they do not accept the customs or authority of immigrant Muslims (McCloud; Turner). Yet long-standing African American efforts to secure legal rights and access to societal resources are now benefiting the immigrant Muslims and helping Muslim identities to become part of the range of American mainstream identities (Moore). Furthermore, the South Asian-led political mobilization of American Muslims reflects a shift from inward to outward goals and audiences, from Muslims to the broader society (Leonard, "South Asian Leadership"; Moore 105–6).

Although the religious formulations and practices of second-generation Pakistani and Indian Muslims are just beginning to be studied (Aswad and Bilge; Bozorgmehr and Feldman; Haddad and Smith, *Muslim*; Waugh, Abu-Laban, and Qureshi), the centrality and future dominance of the young American Muslims in America and beyond is already being predicted (Schmidt 242–4). In both political and aesthetic activities, generational differences are emerging. There are language issues, as members of the second and subsequent generations lose competence in their "mother tongues," and issues of integration in the dominant culture, of fusion or crossover culture. Since the use of both public and private space is heavily influenced by dominant culture practices, immigrant Muslim women are often more visible in artistic performances, as well as in public spaces, in North America than in their homelands (Leonard, "Ethnic Identity"). Religion is taught to youngsters in North America through texts in an American context, not through everyday immersion in South Asian contexts. While this produces greater standardization and "orthodoxy," many of the new texts (especially the media and Internet resources) strongly reflect the new location.²¹ These gendered and generational changes reflect tensions within Muslim immigrant families.

A comparative look at the Sikh community in Canada and the US shows a concerted attempt to constitute a diasporic community along the lines suggested by Werbner's "real" politics (along with Punjabi diasporic aesthetics based in bhangra/reggae/rock and its derivatives in the UK, North America, and India). Self-consciously terming themselves a diaspora community—the pioneer "Hindu" or Punjabi immigrants to North America have been recast as "the Sikh diaspora" (Dusenbery, "Sikh Diaspora")—the Sikhs are, paradoxically, held together by fierce and public disagreements over their place in India and the nature and extent of Sikh religious authority. The minority status of Sikhs everywhere and specific grievances based in Indian politics exploded in the 1986 demand for a Sikh home-

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land, or Khalistan, with Canadian Sikhs (soon joined by US Sikhs) taking the lead.²² Militant takeovers of North American *gurdwaras*, associations, and media followed, but so did resistance by moderates to this process. The emissaries of centralizing institutions of Sikh governance (those constituted under colonialism in the early twentieth century, the Akal Takht, and a *jathedar* [custodian or high priest]), have tried to exercise supreme authority at home and abroad. Opposing them, other Sikhs have turned successfully to North American courts to argue that the community has always been a decentralized one, its *gurdwara* congregations exercising local control.

Barrier expertly reviews the current situation among American Sikhs. Legal issues pit Western legal systems against religious law extended from India through a “code of conduct” and pronouncements of the (contested) Akal Takht *jathedar*. There is extensive use of media, traditional journalism, and the Internet, and attacks are mounted on specific academics and academic conferences, using political techniques imported from India such as *jathas* (traveling groups) and marches to counter or disrupt academic conferences held on Sikh subjects. The Canadian and US governments acted together in 1999 to block a controversial *jathedar* (Ranjit Singh) who wanted to visit North America, and such efforts to encourage moderates continue.

As militance wanes, developments include a better integration of the small white or *gora* Sikh group with the Punjabi immigrant Sikhs and converging second-generation conceptions of Sikhism as a world religion (Dusenbery, “Nation”). Political goals remain elusive: while some first-generation Sikhs want to create a new homeland by division, some in the second generation reject that leadership and want to recreate a united Punjab for Punjabi speakers from both India and Pakistan, using language and not religion as the rationale (Leonard, “Second Generation”).

Hindus, least in number among the early immigrants and therefore without “memories” of oppression in North America, have strong and continuing allegiances to India, and associations along linguistic, regional, caste, occupational, and educational (school) lines flourish, often crosscutting religious boundaries. Hindus are probably the most privileged of the new populations, but they are least well organized in terms of religion in North America. Reasons for this have to do with the extreme diversity within Hinduism and with its lack of centralized structures. Undeniably the neo-Hindu groups are quite important with respect to politics in the homeland, but there is not yet a Hindu politics focused on goals in North America. Although there are parallels to the Sikh court cases involving contested leadership of particular temples, no national or transnational patterns govern such disputes, to my knowledge.

We began by asking whether the “politics of diaspora” should better be seen in aesthetic expressions and performances (hybrid and cosmopolitan, part of an emerging global art world), in transnational moral gestures of philanthropy and political lobbying (transnational but not cosmopolitan, and in danger of slipping into anti-hybrid or essentializing discourses), or in some combination of these. Werbner acknowledges that both activities are hybrid, and she draws on Bakhtin to distinguish between intentional hybridity, which poses conscious challenges to social order and identity, and organic hybridity, which “does not disrupt the sense of order and continuity” but integrates new elements “into language or culture unconsciously” (“Introduction” 1–5).

These are difficult lines to draw, heavily dependent on one’s position when drawing them; one might start by proposing that it is youngsters who take the lead in the deliberately hybrid cultural arena²³ and first-generation leaders who do what Werbner privileges as “real” politics. Arguably, however, both generations and both kinds of activities produce intentional and transnational hybridities, and not all these activities and products are diasporic in nature. In an important, complex, and nuanced discussion (drawing on Hannerz for the cosmopolitan/ transnational distinction), Werbner seems to conflate ethnic/diasporic/religious communities as she privileges “transnationals [who] are also cultural hybrids, but their hybridity is unconscious, organic and collectively negotiated in practice ... their loyalties are anchored in translocal social networks and cultural diasporas rather than the global ecumene” (“Introduction” 12). She sees (intentional) hybridization as remote from “the real global, anti-ecumenical processes that the weakening of the nation-state as a modernist project has precipitated” (13) and writes of “self-consciously ethnic identities,” “normal objectifications of ethnicity,” and “a shifting, hybridising politics of cultural multiplicity” (14–8) as more principled, more responsible, than “contingent hybridity, a self-congratulatory discourse which leads nowhere” (22).

That moral gestures or “real” politics, whether essentializing or only ethnic in an everyday, normal sense, can originate in aesthetic representations, and that intentional hybridities can also function in the responsible way Werbner requires above, seems clear (or perhaps I am less sure that I can distinguish between intentional and organic hybridities). Young African American Muslims are producing Muslim rap, a hybrid music integral to their politics if perhaps incomprehensible to immigrant Muslims, and together they and their immigrant brothers and sisters are producing Islamic American English, incorporating Arabic phrases and Muslim terms of address into everyday speech, even with non-Muslims.²⁴ Muslims in North America, or their answering machines, often answer the

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phone with “*Asalam aleikum*.”²⁵ There is a simultaneously globalized and localized message on the answering machine of an officer of a Los Angeles Pakistani association: it begins with “*Asalam aleikum*,” gives a message in Urdu, and ends, in English, “have an awesome day”—no one fails to place this message in California. Another striking example of “principled” political hybridity is furnished by a video-maker who asserts that Muslims really discovered America and that Elvis Presley, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln’s wife all had Muslim ancestors (Quick). These can be seen not as self-congratulatory representations but as reflections of emerging political movements and coalitions (Leonard, “South Asian Leadership”).

How to connect to others in the new national context is a major question for “identity entrepreneurs” and for ordinary members of both generations. Does a South Asian Muslim join with Middle Easterners, Asian Americans, People of Color, or Muslim Americans, and under what conditions? National demographic patterns set important parameters here, and the Canadian and US contexts encourage different kinds of intellectual, aesthetic, and political coalitions. The government is a more significant player in Canada, while in the US the lead comes from campuses (over 60% of American high school students go on to college, and the proportions among Asian Americans are far higher).²⁶ Thanks to the pioneering work of African Americans, Chicano/Latinos, and earlier Asian Americans, groups with weaker parallels in Canada, I think, the best possibility for the second generation immigrants seems to be working with others of Asian descent under the Asian American banner.²⁷ Religious identities offer another, and apparently competing, possibility (so far, South Asian youth have engaged in one or the other arena). In both broader coalitions, there is tension between the “diasporic perspective” and “claiming America,” terms that come from and better fit the Asian American arena (Wong) but might be paralleled by “Islamicizing America” or “Americanizing Islam.” Young American Sikhs talk confidently about the congruence of Sikh and American values; this does not seem to be a central religious issue among Hindus in North America.

Finally, to theorize, “one must stand in some experience of commonality or political alliance, looking beyond the local or experiential to wider, comparative phenomena” (Clifford 177). One experience of commonality that might serve is the familial conflict between first- and second-generation immigrants, but this is too simple. Lisa Lowe cautions against interpreting Asian American culture in terms of master narratives of generational conflict and filial relations, thus displacing and privatizing class, gender, and national diversities into familial oppositions (e.g., 26). We need to complicate that interpretation by emphasizing the formative political

experiences that have crucially shaped “memories” and their transmission, the ways in which the youngsters position themselves in the histories, cultures, and languages of North America. Their identities, ethnicities, and coalitions are new and different, developed in the new homelands. The experience of commonality, then, is of political markings related to generational memory and to “claiming America” or taking “a diasporic perspective” in North America today. Slippages and ruptures between the first and later generations of immigrants change the coalitions created to achieve cultural and political goals and weaken the diasporic nature of the Indian and Pakistani community in North America. While Pakistani and Indian immigrants did constitute a diaspora in terms of shared aesthetics and memories based in homeland politics, we have seen that Canadian and US policies and “real” politics pull the immigrants apart along religious lines and/or into building not only diasporic communities but also, and perhaps more often, broader and non-diasporic communities in the new homelands. This happens increasingly as second-generation leaders emerge, and all of these efforts, diasporic and non-diasporic, involve creative and intentional hybridity.

Notes

1. This is a revision of a paper originally written for the American Anthropological Association meetings, Chicago, Nov. 2000.
2. Werbner, ‘Materiality,’ draft written for the AAA panel mentioned in note 1 above. Werbner also explores this issue in ‘Diasporic Political Imaginaries.’ I am indebted to Pnina for invaluable comments on the first draft of this article.
3. Jonathan Boyarin sees the concept of diaspora as a resource for rethinkings of the nation-state system; Tölölyan also emphasizes the “statelessness” of diasporas.
4. 80% of South Asians in the US are from India and Pakistan. According to the 1990 census, 815,447 are from India and 81,371 from Pakistan (Leonard, *South Asian Americans* 68–9, 173).
5. Toronto was enlarged in early 1998 as six municipalities were amalgamated, but the foreign-born percentage changed very little. The biggest flow of immigrants is coming from Asia. See “Asia”; Gombu; “Toronto Enlarged”; “Unwelcome Aliens.”
6. Intellectuals, like activists, are impelled to resist and subvert the categories: the Canadian Christian Pakistani writer Julian Samuel is bitter about being pressed to write ‘as an immigrant,’ and Bharati Mukherjee’s outrage at being ‘typed’ in Canada is well known. Canadian South Asian youth culture (as in *Desh Pardesh*, a Toronto-based “non-profit, community-driven arts service organization that brings together diasporic South Asian communities through arts and activism” [e-mail job posting, 23 July 1999]) also resists those boxes.
7. There are 100,000 Sikhs, 70,000 Muslims, and 60,000 Hindus in Toronto (Gombu).
8. For a recent review of this controversial issue, see Koshy.

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9. For the US, see Leonard, *South Asian Americans*, chap. 5. For Canada, one can list, at a minimum, Deepa Mehta, Abdullah and Sudha Khandwani, Shan Chandrasekar, and Illa Devani (in film, television, and drama); Rohinton Mistry, M.G. Vassanji (in literature); Meena Thakkar, Lata Pada, Janak Khendry, and Trichy Sankaran (in dance and music); and R.S. Rania (in visual arts).

10. India dominates the diaspora in the American mind, not only because of the eminent intellectuals and artists but because of influences from the homelands. While India's nationalist figures are known, admired, and even drawn upon in America (Gandhi and the civil rights movement; vegetarianism, and perhaps yoga; Nehru and his principled neutrality during the Cold War), it is much harder for North Americans to recall Pakistan's Jinnah or view his leadership of a religious separatist movement positively.

11. For examples, see Appadurai; Bhachu; Haider.

12. In Los Angeles, a young Muslim woman from India celebrated her debut as an Indian *bharatnatyam* classical dancer (Dongre), and I know of similar cases. The Bengali *ghazal* singer is Monideepa Sharma, who also sang a *ghazal* in a 1997–1998 LA Hindu temple cultural program to represent Muslim culture. The singers, Salamat Ali Khan and his son, Shafqat Ali Khan (who also does fusion), performed in 1996 and 1998.

13. Music and dance associated with the country of origin may flourish in North America as evocations of the homeland, even as these arts have been declared un-Islamic and are endangered in their homelands: aspects of Iranian music and dance are being preserved as a secular heritage in Los Angeles by the Avaz International Dance Theatre.

14. Aesthetics, too, is being used to narrow and redefine communities, particularly religious ones: Sufi traditions in Islam encourage music and dance, but some South Asian Sunni Muslims in America now see *qawwali* as outside the boundaries of Islam. Naim points out that mosques in South Asia existed in the context of Hindu temples, Christian churches, and Sufi shrines and *dargahs* (tombs) (184). The best known *qawwali* superstar is the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who recorded soundtracks for movies as diverse as *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Dead Man Walking*.

15. Barnouw argues that the discourse of the Holocaust as a construct of memory-stories has become a discourse of suspended disbelief, that there is a cultural consensus that memory stories concerning it may not and need not be corroborated. "It might indeed be necessary to practise partial forgetting in order to find a different, less exclusive way of remembering that admits questions posed by other voices," she writes (5), and I think this applies to the reifications of Partition by both India and Pakistan.

16. This search for a common ground has been eloquently written about by Radhakrishnan (whose reference point was Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition).

17. The Boyarins talk about the relationship among Christians, Jews, and Muslims, with these three "both possessors of an autonomous history and inextricable partners in the creation of 'European' civilization," quoting and emphasizing this from the work of Akcalay in their volume (Boyarin and Boyarin, "Introduction" xix; Akcalay 331).

18. In July 1999, the US House Minority Leader, Richard Gephardt, nominated a leader of LA's Islamic Center, Salam Al-Marayati, to serve on the National Commission on Counterterrorism; leading American Jewish organizations lobbied against the nomination, and it was withdrawn (generating many comments in both the mainstream and Muslim press). The Al-Marayatis have been guests at the Clinton White House, and Dr. Laila Al-Marayati was the one woman from California selected for the US delegation (led by Hillary Clinton) to the 1995 International Women's Conference in Beijing.

19. One can argue that increasing Hindu-Muslim tensions in India and the failure of Pakistan to integrate the *muhajirs* produce a disproportionate number of Muslims in the South Asian

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diaspora: see William Safran's definition of diaspora, in which "push" is important; also Leonard, "Hyderabadis in Pakistan."

20. Iranian Americans are primarily secular (Bozorgmehr).

21. A textbook for Islamic education produced in Orange County, California, for Muslim youngsters explains *zakat* (charity) thus: "Some have a lot and some have none. We live in America, the richest country in the world. We live in big houses, drive good cars, wear good clothes and play with the best toys. . . . We should also look at the other people here or in other countries who have nothing . . ." (Ali 67).

22. The Khalistan movement was sparked by the violence of 1984: Indira Gandhi's Indian Army Blue Star assault on militants in the Amritsar Golden Temple and her subsequent assassination by her Sikh bodyguard. Canadian Sikhs worked through the Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada to form, with US Sikhs, the World Sikh Organization at a New York International Convention in 1984; the WSO, with a new International Sikh Organization, demanded Khalistan in 1986.

23. Young Canadian Muslims are active in Toronto's Dosh Pardesh, which recently advertised for a Festival Programming Coordinator and encouraged "women, First Nations and people of colour, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered people, people living with disabilities, and youth" to apply (e-mail job posting, 23 July 1999).

24. For Muslim rap, see Gardell 293–300. The phrase 'Islamic American English' comes from Schmidt (a Dane) 252–5, although 'Islamic English' was discussed earlier by Isma'il Raja al Faruqi, a Palestinian immigrant who published a pamphlet on the subject in 1986 (and who founded AMSS, the Association of Muslim Social Scientists, and the Institute of Islamic Thought in Virginia), and by Sayyid Syeed, an Indian Kashmiri (now Secretary General of ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America).

25. I once saw this greeting as parochial, indicating that one expected to be telephoned only by other Muslims and/or Urdu speakers; I regretted the dropping of the secular and more inclusive "Adab arz" or "respects" used in parts of India. But I think now, following Schmidt and others, that it is an expansive Islamic American English.

26. While Affirmative Action programs in American universities did not set quotas but goals, were meant to be transitional, and did not usually include Asian Americans in the goal-setting at either student or faculty levels, these programs have had an undeniable effect in encouraging curricular and structural focuses on Asian American, African American, Chicano/Latino, Native American, and Women's Studies. Muslims, like Jews, do not fit easily into these boxes. Religious Studies, rising in popularity among students, may not gain a foothold on campuses.

27. For an overview, see Chang. The "diasporic perspective" offered by leading postcolonial/post-modern scholars of South Asian (and other) backgrounds in US academia is a red flag to the "old boys" based in the pre-1965 histories of Asian immigration. But the gatekeepers are giving way, and UC Irvine's current Director of Asian American Studies, Ketu Katrak is a Parsi woman from Bombay, the first South Asian American to hold such a position.

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