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COMMUNITIES OF SOUND

Queering South Asian Popular Music in the Diaspora



At a 1999 performance of queer South Asian art and culture in New York City, the high point of the show came as the stage went dark and the audience heard not the familiar strains of Bollywood songstresses Asha Bhosle or Lata Mangeshkar over the loudspeakers, as one might expect in such a venue, but rather the chilly electronic beat of Madonna's 1998 Hinduism-inspired CD *Ray of Light*. As the lights went on, a spotlight bathed the three South Asian drag queens who appeared center stage in a golden glow. The performers were replete with the henna tattoos, gold bangles, and the upper-caste facial markings popularized by Madonna during her brief bout of Indophilia in the late 1990s. As the largely queer South Asian crowd erupted in enthusiastic applause, the performers launched into a sexy and hilarious rendition of Madonna's faux-Sanskrit techno dance track "Shanti/Ashtangi." How can we read this scene of criss-crossing influences, appropriations, and translations, of South Asian diasporic queers performing Madonna at the height of her "millennial orientalist" phase?[1] This performance and its interpellation of a queer diasporic public culture functions as an ironic commentary on Madonna's penchant for cultural theft and tourism, particularly her appropriation of the cultural forms of queer and racialized subcultures. Furthermore, it reverses the standard circuits of commodification and appropriation whereby

subcultural forms are absorbed into mainstream culture. But by returning Madonna's performance of exotic otherness to its roots, so to speak, the drag performers are not making a cultural nationalist claim to authenticity or cultural ownership. Rather, they can be understood as what José Muñoz terms "disidentificatory subjects, who tactically and simultaneously work on, with and against a dominant cultural form."[2] Queer diasporic cultural practices challenge "millennial orientalism" not through an outright rejection of dominant cultural forms but through a highly pleasurable refashioning of them; such practices thus open up a queer counterpublic space that both references and resists the simultaneous absorption and elision of subcultural forms within the dominant public sphere.[3] Crucially, they do so without resorting to the conventional articulations of masculine potency that are apparent in other musical expressions of South Asian diasporic culture.

This drag performance at a small nightclub in New York City offers a glimpse of how queer diasporic cultural practices, as brief and fleeting as they may be, produce a space of public culture that powerfully critiques the racism of dominant U.S. culture and the heteronormativity of hegemonic diasporic and nationalist formations. While performances such as this do not fit easily into analyses of South Asian diasporic music, their double-edged critique provides a critical point of reference for considering the production, performance, and consumption of popular music in the South Asian diaspora. As the critical scholarship and popular attention to South Asian diasporic music has grown over the past decade, the focus has for the most part been on two musical movements: Bhangra, a form of popular music originally from the Punjab in North India that became the basis of a diasporic South Asian youth culture in both Britain and the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s; and more recently, the post-Bhangra, UK-based "Asian Underground" or "New Asian Dance Music" scene of the late 1990s. The exclusive focus on these particular forms of South Asian diasporic musical production, I will suggest, invariably replicates a notion of diaspora that depends on dominant gender and sexual ideologies, in that it tracks forms of "radical" cultural politics only insofar as they circulate between men and pass literally and metaphorically from fathers to sons. In other words, tracing the contours of South Asian diasporic subjectivities through the soundscapes of only one particular music culture tells only one story of diaspora and its relation to both economic globalization and the nation form.

Conversely, my analysis of contemporary South Asian diasporic music cultures in the United States and the United Kingdom seeks to reconceptualize diaspora outside its conventionally masculinist and heterosexist parameters by paying attention to those cultural practices (such as the drag performance of "Shanti/Ashtangi") that are deemed to be tangential or marginal to the more audible forms of diasporic popular music. We can name these eccentric cultural practices as "feminist" and "queer," and together they constitute a different archive of South Asian diasporic culture that forces us to place gender and sexuality at the very center of our understandings of diaspora, nation, and globalization. This is not simply a call for the inclusion of "other" voices within the critical frameworks that define South Asian musical production. Rather, I am suggesting that ignoring the alternative narratives of gendered and sexual subjectivities that emerge from the margins of dominant cultural forms inevitably results in misreading the complex relation between diaspora, the nation, and the processes of globalization as they impact local sites.

Fathers and Sons: Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora

In 1995 I wrote an article on Bhangra music and how its production, circulation, and consumption across national borders created a sonic landscape that mapped imaginary lines of connection from rural Punjab, to the industrial cities of the English Midlands, to the urban centers of London and New York.[4] I argued that a second generation of British Asian musicians that emerged in the late 1980s—exemplified by the Birmingham-reared British-Punjabi artist Apache Indian's musical mix of Bhangra with reggae and dancehall—offered a powerful critique of claims to cultural authenticity by drawing on a wide array of black and Asian diasporic musical influences. In so doing, these artists reversed what I called "the hierarchical relation of the nation to diaspora," where the diaspora is seen in some sense as the bastard child of the nation: disavowed, illegitimate, and inauthentic. In the music of Apache Indian—with its referencing of multiple diasporic locations including the Caribbean, India, the UK, and the United States—the "nation" was displaced from its privileged position as the locus of originary or pure cultural identity and became merely one out of many diasporic locations. The web of "affiliation and affect" (to use Paul Gilroy's influential phrase)[5] that Bhangra produced between these dis-

parate sites in the South Asian diaspora resulted in the nation becoming part of the diaspora just as the diaspora became part of the nation.[6] In other words, a consideration of the way Bhangra traveled and continues to travel across national borders radically shifts the way in which diaspora is traditionally conceived as always and forever being oriented toward a phantasmatic lost homeland; rather, this homeland is revealed to be just as dependent on the diaspora as the diaspora is on the homeland.

This analysis of Bhangra music in Britain—a genre largely performed and produced by men—allowed me to consider both the uses and limits of diaspora as a theoretical framework through which to understand gendered and racial subjectivities in migration.[7] It became clear, in the music of first-generation Bhangra musicians in the 1970s, as well as in the work of later artists such as Apache Indian and the deejay Bally Sagoo in the 1980s and 1990s, that discourses of diaspora may challenge racial and ethnic essentialisms while at the same time being deeply invested in notions of dominant masculinity, genealogical descent, and reproduction. The concept of diaspora, after all, is neither purely disruptive of normative notions of culture and community, nor is it purely "regressive" and conservative. Rather the affective ties of diaspora can be mobilized for competing and contradictory interests simultaneously.[8] In the case of Bhangra, many first-generation musicians rooted in the working-class Asian immigrant communities of Southall in London or the depressed industrial cities in the Midlands articulated a "closed" notion of diaspora, as Stuart Hall defines it, one marked by a sense of exile, displacement, and longing for lost homelands.[9] Second-generation Bhangra musicians, on the other hand, for the most part eschewed notions of redemptive return and instead redefine their relation to questions of home, exile, and origin in an exuberant articulation of what Hall calls an "open" diaspora, one where immigrant subjects "remak[e] themselves and fashion new kinds of cultural identity by drawing on more than one cultural repertoire."[10] Of course, claiming that Hall's model of "closed" versus "open" diasporas maps neatly onto the music of first- versus second-generation Bhangra musicians runs the risk of being overly reductive. Nevertheless, I would argue that one of the defining features of the music of second-generation British Bhangra artists was the challenge they posed to the ethnic absolutism and concomitant longing for lost homelands of conventional diasporic ideologies, as expressed in some of the music of an earlier generation of Bhangra musicians. Their music also challenged the ethnic absolutism and

dominant notions of English national identity articulated by "New Right" nationalist discourse under Thatcher.[11]

Interestingly, questions of patrilineal descent, inheritance, and generational conflict were mobilized at various levels: within the lyrics of Bhangra songs, in the relation between first- and second-generation Bhangra musicians, and in the actual form of the music itself. The lyrical content of many early Bhangra songs detailed the hardships of working-class immigrant male existence in a racist, xenophobic Britain, while also commenting on the social rifts that migration produced between fathers and sons. The oedipal dynamics between father and son that were the focus of many early Bhangra songs were played out and negotiated musically by second-generation Bhangra artists in the 1990s in their remixes of first-generation Bhangra classics from the 1970s. For instance the 1974 track by Shaukat Ali titled "Why Did I Come to *Vilayet* [England]?," with its piano, accordion, and tabla instrumentation, dramatized the tense but also humorous dialogue between a father in Punjab and his wayward immigrant son in the UK. Twenty years later, Ali's song was remixed by the deejay Johnny Zee by adding a drum kit, sound effects, synthesizers, tabla, and dholak to the original track.[12] Virinder S. Kalra notes that both the 1974 and 1994 versions of this track, as well as other first-generation Bhangra songs, fit easily into the dominant narrative of "culture clash" and generational conflict that characterizes the "ethnicizing project" of the majority of ethnographic accounts of minorities in Britain.[13] Yet the musical dialogue between first- and second-generation Bhangra musicians, as seen in the dynamic of sampling and remixing, may also point to a more complex representation of immigrant existence than that which is produced within a conventional narrative of generational conflict. Bhangra songs of the 1970s through the 1990s seem to mobilize the recurring motif of generational divides between fathers and sons in order to articulate a pointed critique of the pressures brought to bear on working-class immigrant masculinities in the UK. For instance, one of the best-known Bhangra hits of the 1980s, Kalapreet's "*Us Pardes Kee Vasna Yaaran?*" (What Is It to Live in This Place/Abroad?), details the loss of dignity and self-determination that male migrant workers experience in the face of white racism, having left Punjab for *vilayet* (England).[14] Indeed, in the thematic focus of its lyrics, in the contrapuntal relation between first- and second-generation musicians, and in the aesthetics of the remix, Bhangra music can be seen to represent an extended meditation on racialized immigrant masculinity in the diaspora.

The concern with masculinity that is apparent in Bhangra music, however, is often predictably predicated on dominant gender and sexual ideologies. An analysis of Bhangra makes clear that both the "closed" and "open" models of diasporic identity as articulated by first- and second-generation British Bhangra musicians were invariably organized around patrilineality and organic heterosexuality. Although Bhangra music allowed for a reversal of the nation-diaspora hierarchy in critical ways, I argued in my earlier piece that it also intersected with anticolonial and Hindu nationalist discourses in its deployment of the figure of "woman" and in its ultimate adherence to a particularly masculinist, heterosexual genealogy of diaspora. In first-generation Bhangra songs, for instance, the nostalgic evocation of homeland was mobilized through the fixed, static figure of the female, the emblem of tradition and (sexual and moral) purity. Female agency was again foreclosed in the music of later British Asian artists such as Apache Indian, whose concert performances staged a fluid, syncretic, de-essentialized notion of "Indian" identity only through the ritualized enactment of heterosexual descent and inheritance between father and son.[15]

If my early analysis of Bhangra music made clear the "dangers of positing certain notions of genealogy and patrilineality as the underlying logic of diaspora,"[16] in this chapter I want to ask if we can restore the impure, inauthentic, nonreproductive potential of the notion of diaspora by placing queer and feminist diasporic cultural practices at the center of our analysis. What alternative narratives emerge when we displace those of "generational conflict" and oedipal relations between fathers and sons through which much Bhangra music is structured both thematically and musically? By "queering" a discussion of South Asian popular music in the diaspora, I work against the tendency toward patrilineality, biology, and blood-based affiliation that lies embedded within the term "diaspora" and that is enacted by some South Asian diasporic popular music cultures and the cultural criticism about these cultures. In other words, queering the soundscapes of the South Asian diaspora means highlighting those feminist and queer diasporic cultural practices that give us a way of imagining and hearing diaspora differently, outside heteronormative paradigms of biological inheritance, oedipality, and blood-based affiliation.

Nostalgia, Nationalism, and Masculinity in Post-Bhangra British Asian Music

By the late 1990s, Bhangra was firmly entrenched as a central aspect of South Asian youth culture in both Britain and the United States.[17] But the diasporic South Asian music scene that was once dominated by Bhangra had also proliferated and taken flight in exciting new directions as well, with British Asian bands and artists such as Cornershop, Fun'da'mental, Asian Dub Foundation, the Kaliphz, Hustlers HC, Echobelly, Talvin Singh, and Nitin Sawhney encompassing musical idioms as diverse as punk, reggae, drum 'n' bass, alternative rock, hip-hop, techno, and electronica. These British bands also produced transatlantic linkages between the UK and the United States through venues such as Mutiny, a nightclub in New York City run by deejay and filmmaker Vivek Renjen Bald and dedicated to featuring the music of many new British Asian artists alongside that of local talent.[18] By examining three of the most visible and highly publicized British Asian bands of the late 1990s—Cornershop, the Asian Dub Foundation (ADF), and Fun'da'mental—I ask how this constellation of British Asian musicians, deejays, and consumers (alternately dubbed the "Asian Underground" or "New Asian Dance Music") replicates or reconceptualizes the masculinist paradigms of diaspora, nation, history, and memory as they were produced during an earlier moment of British Asian music. The trenchant commentary on racialized immigrant masculinities apparent in earlier forms of British Asian music are also evident in the music of newer Asian Underground bands. These new sounds explicitly challenge the pathologization of British Asian masculinity within discourses that position young Asian, particularly Muslim, men as "the 'new' threat to British society, the latest incarnation of the black folk devil."[19] As Claire Alexander notes, the newly discovered Asian Other in 1990s Britain is "best captured in the image of 'the Underclass,' 'the Fundamentalist,' and of course, 'the Gang.'"[20] In the tracks of ADF, mass media representations of an unassimilable racialized underclass are transformed into the image of what the band calls the "digital underclass," an imagined revolutionary coalition of sound that unites those outside of white male middle-class normativity.[21] Similarly, in naming themselves as they do, the indie rock band Cornershop and the hip-hop–influenced Fun'da'mental ironically inhabit dominant representations of Asian men as mild and meek owners of local grocery stores or, conversely, as dangerous fundamentalists/

terrorists. Yet, as I will discuss, as with an earlier generation of British Asian music, this powerful and necessary critique of dominant representations of British Asian masculinity also runs the risk of replicating conventional gender and sexual hierarchies.

In the mid 1990s, this conglomeration of musical sounds was heralded by the mainstream media as the coming of age of "The New Asian Kool," a marketing category that signaled the "acceptability" of South Asian diasporic popular culture within mainstream popular culture in Britain. The term "Asian Underground" first came into wide usage in 1997, with the release of Talvin Singh's album *Soundz of the Asian Underground*, which included the various British Asian artists featured at his London nightclub Anokha. Yet many of the bands deemed by the press to be at the forefront of the Asian Underground music scene rejected the label as merely a convenient term used by the mainstream media to package and ghettoize British Asian musicians. Pratibha Parmar's documentary *Brimful of Asia* (1998) turns a critical eye on this politics of labeling and the increasing visibility in general of British Asian sounds, arts, and fashion in 1990s Britain. Parmar's video, while largely a celebratory account of the newfound visibility of British Asian cultural production in the late 1990s, nevertheless reveals a troubling tension between the way in which British Asian artists understood the work that they were doing, and the way their work was incorporated into the mainstream. The British Asian artists interviewed by Parmar very explicitly countered narratives of "culture clash" and "between two cultures" that dominated popular and ethnographic accounts of British Asian communities. Instead they embraced a more complicated aesthetic that they understood to be remaking British national identity through a claiming of diasporic and transnational affiliations. While Parmar's film stops short of fully exploring the contradictions it raises, it becomes evident in the film that the complexities of British Asian self-representations were flattened out when they entered the mainstream. Indeed, the film makes clear how these representations were transformed into dehistoricized markers of otherness and exotica, exemplified by the "millennial orientalism" of Madonna's 1998 album *Ray of Light*.[22]

This new audibility of South Asian diasporic culture, as well as its new visibility in the form of ubiquitous citations of Bollywood cinema in mainstream Euro-American popular culture (which are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4), prompted fierce debate and criticism among popular music scholars

in the 1990s. Koushik Banerjea forcefully argued that the embrace of the term "Asian Underground" by the mainstream media points to the insidious effects of "an insatiable and . . . uncritical appetite for multiculture and its richly syncretic produce."[23] Banerjea notes that while newly dubbed "Asian Underground" artists enjoy their fleeting fifteen minutes of fame, the harsh material realities of British Asian immigrant existence remain unchanged: "Eulogizing Talvin Singh on a Sunday afternoon at his club in Brick Lane [a largely Bangladeshi neighborhood in East London] does little to hide white distaste for the large Asian community which actually lives there."[24] Banerjea alludes here to the shifting class demographics of South Asian club culture, as the largely working-class audiences and practitioners of Bhangra music in the towns and cities of the Midlands gave way to hip, multiracial, middle-class urban audiences in London. The new class affiliation of the Asian music scene rendered it more palatable to both middle-class Asian and non-Asian audiences alike. Banerjea goes on to argue that the contemporary dynamics between the Asian Underground and the culture "above ground," so to speak, is marked by the legacies of Orientalism: "Even if Empire has subsided, fascination with 'otherness' has persisted, except that this time round neo-Orientalists need travel no further than Hoxton for their masala mudpie."[25] Similarly, on the other side of the Atlantic, Vijay Prashad documented the ways in which all things South Asian are refracted through "U.S. Orientalism" in the context of U.S. popular culture, so that markers of a mythic, spiritual, dehistoricized, and implicitly Hindu India take the place of more radical subaltern histories of transnational alliances and affiliations between South Asia and the United States.[26] Popular music scholars such as John Hutnyk and Sanjay Sharma echo Banerjea's concerns when they plaintively ask, "In Britain the album *Soundz of the Asian Underground* was so rapidly sucked up into the mainstream, while so much more 'difficult' matter was left aside, that we are left wondering what spaces remain for subaltern cultural creativity and production to flourish and 'succeed' without becoming instant vacant fodder for the style magazines?"[27] In his book-length study of British Asian music, Hutnyk specifies what he means by this "more difficult matter" that remains resistant to the voracious appetite of capitalist commodification: it is the music and uncompromising antiracist politics of the hip-hop bands such as Fun'da'mental and Kaliphz, "*not* characterized as Asian Kool."[28]

While these critiques by Hutnyk, Sharma, and Banerjea usefully point to the

legacies of Orientalism in the new moment of visibility and audibility of South Asian diasporic culture, they also tend to reduce the dynamic relation between racialized immigrant subcultures and dominant culture into a simple story of unrelenting appropriation and commodification. As such, they run the risk of replicating conventional Marxist narratives, "whose tendency," as Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd remind us, "is to totalize the world system, to view capitalist penetration as complete and pervasive, so that the site of intervention is restricted to commodification; or, more insidiously, with the result that all manifestations of difference appear as just further signs of commodification."[29] As my example of South Asian drag queens "doing" Madonna attests to, laments about the inevitable co-optation of subcultural production tend to flatten out the complexities of the routes that culture travels. Within such a framework, it is impossible to account for the different meanings and effects of "appropriation" depending on both context and audience. For instance, Vijay Prashad documents the way in which African Americans in the early to mid-twentieth century participated in a dominant "U.S. Orientalism" that fetishized a spiritual India; yet he argues that the meanings of this fetishization were radically different than they were in "the world of white America." For black Americans, Prashad notes, "the strategic deployment of India was far more nuanced, particularly because it was used as a means to undercut racist authority."[30] George Lipsitz traces a similar dynamic of strategic subaltern appropriation in his analysis of the performance of (Native American) "Indianness" by working-class black men during the Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans. While these enactments by black men of the figure of the Indian "display all the orientalism, primitivism and exoticism that plague so much of popular culture's representations of aggrieved groups,"[31] Lipsitz goes on to show how "the politics emanating from Indian imagery to affirm Black nationalism lead logically to a pan-ethnic anti-racism that moves beyond essentialism."[32] These complicated forms of appropriation that Prashad and Lipsitz document have no place within the framework of inevitable, totalizing corporate commodification that Hutnyk and others map out. The following discussions of Cornershop, ADF, and Fun'da'mental in relation to queer and feminist cultural practices suggest that the dynamics of appropriation and the dialectic between the mainstream and minoritarian popular cultures may be more messy and unpredictable than such an analysis can account for. Moreover, it becomes particularly evident when considering queer diasporic cultural practices such

as the drag performance I described at the beginning of this chapter that minoritarian cultures respond to their own fetishization and commodification in strategic and imaginative ways.

The contradictory meanings and effects of South Asian diasporic popular culture's entry into mainstream consciousness were sharply delineated in 1997 when Cornershop, fronted by the British Punjabi singer Tjinder Singh, scored a surprise hit on both U.S. and UK charts with their single "Brimful of Asha." The track remained on Britain's Top of the Pops for the entire year, and the album on which it appeared was named the best new album of 1997 by *Spin* magazine.[33] Cornershop's transatlantic success marked a turning point for British Asian music, which had remained largely inaudible on mainstream music charts despite the Bhangra boom of the 1980s and early 1990s. Bearing in mind the cautions of critics such as Hutynk, Banerjea, and Sharma, I would nevertheless argue that Cornershop's success intervenes into what constitutes both "Asian diasporic" and "British" national culture and national memory in important ways. Indeed Cornershop deploys nostalgia not to evoke lost homelands or a fantasied imperial past but rather to offer a different vision of history, collectivity, and cultural genealogy. Nostalgia in their music functions not to reify the nation, as it does in the work of early Bhangra musicians in the 1970s as well as in the Thatcherite evocation of Britain's "golden age" of empire. Rather nostalgia destabilizes notions of "Britishness" espoused by New Right ideology, while also calling into question the status of South Asia as the locus of an originary, redemptive cultural identity.

An obvious point of departure in discussing new British Asian music's interventionist remembering of national history is Cornershop's rendition of the 1965 Beatles classic "Norwegian Wood." The original Beatles song, with its sitar melody line, marked one of the first times Indian instrumentals were used in mainstream pop. Thus, like the reinvention of Madonna's "Shanti/Ashtangi" by South Asian drag queens, Cornershop's translation of the Beatles track into Punjabi enacts a neat reversal of musical influences and appropriations. In their remaking of "Norwegian Wood," Cornershop also seems to comment quite explicitly on the wave of nostalgia for a whitewashed British past, evident in the tremendous popularity of "Britpop" bands like Oasis and Blur in the mid 1990s. As Rupa Huq argues, "Britpop bleaches away all traces of black influences in music in a mythical imagined past of Olde England as it never was, whereas [post-Bhangra musics] are rooted in the urban realities of

today's Britain."[34] Significantly, members of Cornershop have resisted attempts to read their cover of "Norwegian Wood" as solely an act of protest against cultural appropriation; rather, they insist, the song was meant as homage to the enduring musical influence of the Beatles on their own music. By singing the lyrics in Punjabi but otherwise playing a fairly straightforward cover version of the song, Cornershop manages to pay tribute to the legacy of the Beatles—referencing them as part of their musical genealogy alongside Asian artists and influences—while simultaneously challenging the "Britpop" phenomenon's elision of nonwhite musical traditions and histories.

Indeed Cornershop strategically redeploys nostalgia not to evoke an all-white Britain but rather to recall the histories and cultural imaginary of Asian immigrant communities in the diaspora. The eponymous "Asha" in Cornershop's hit single "Brimful of Asha," for instance, is the legendary Bollywood playback singer Asha Bhosle. While "Norwegian Wood" is Cornershop's tribute to the Beatles, "Brimful of Asha" functions as a tribute to Asha Bhosle, as well as to Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammed Rafi, the two other giants of Bollywood music who are referenced in the lyrics. All three singers dominated the Bollywood music industry from the 1950s to well into the 1980s, but were at the height of their popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. The voices of Asha, Lata, and Mohammed Rafi constitute, in a sense, the soundtrack to the lives of first-generation working-class South Asian immigrants to Britain who worked in the factories in the West Midlands and created ethnic enclaves for themselves in London's Southall and Brick Lane. Apache Indian, for instance, has spoken of hearing Bhosle's songs on his Punjabi parents' turntable while growing up in Handsworth, Birmingham.[35] By evoking these Bollywood legends and other iconic figures and symbols of sixties and seventies India, Cornershop gestures to the alternative genealogy of popular culture that constitutes South Asian diasporic subjectivity and that challenges notions of an "authentic" Englishness.

The spectacle of Cornershop performing "Brimful of Asha" on BBC's Top of the Pops, as hundreds of white British youth sing along to lyrics that celebrate the icons of Bollywood music, makes clear the ways in which Cornershop forces South Asian popular cultural referents into the mainstream of British national culture. John Hutnyk cautions that any celebration of this new visibility of South Asian culture in the mainstream—emblematized by the successes of Cornershop, Apache Indian, or Bally Sagoo—must be tempered with

an awareness of the workings of corporate capital as it turns "progressive sounds in one place [into] the agents of capitalism in another."[36] This, however, may be too limited a model of popular music and its effects. Indeed, Cornershop calls forth a new relation between immigrant subcultures and the dominant culture, one that resists being read as merely another instance of the unstoppable effects of corporate hegemony and a rapacious capitalist culture industry. Rather than South Asian cultural signifiers being inserted into mainstream popular culture as dehistoricized fetish objects, as Hutnyk fears, we can also read Cornershop's success as actually forcing a mainstream British audience to be literate in the cultural referents of Asian immigrant communities, and to acknowledge that Asian cultural forms are already an intrinsic part of the cultural landscape of the UK. Cornershop offers a playful yet powerful counterdiscourse to the nostalgic rewriting of sixties Britain as all-white, free of race riots and the rise of the British National Party. In other words, Cornershop demands that South Asian cultural forms be recognized by mainstream culture in ways that do not quite so easily resolve into mere absorption or appropriation. Rather, their music stages an intervention of South Asian diasporic public culture into the national public sphere. Thus Cornershop enacts precisely the nation/diaspora reversal apparent within an earlier generation of British Asian music: as I have argued elsewhere, second-generation interpreters of Bhangra music in the 1980s and 1990s, such as Bally Sagoo and Apache Indian, drew the nation (both the UK and India) into a sonic diaspora, so that it no longer provided the anchor for notions of diasporic return, authenticity, and purity.[37] In a similar move, Cornershop's reworking of "Norwegian Wood," as well as its evocation of alternative immigrant knowledges and psychic landscapes in "Brimful of Asia," resituate both "India" and "England" as equivalent sites within the band's diasporic map. But Cornershop also makes clear that the culture of diasporic immigrants is central to British national identity: thus the diaspora, through their music, is revealed to be intrinsically a part of the (British) nation.

If Cornershop rememorializes British culture by drawing on the popular cultural markers of both post-Independence India and post-imperial Britain, the punk/dub/rock band Asian Dub Foundation offers an even more explicit commentary on questions of nation, nostalgia, history, and historiography. ADF's potent mix of punk, ska, reggae, and jungle with snatches of Qawaali, Bollywood soundtracks, and classical Hindustani instrumentals documents the

intersection of multiple immigrant and diasporic communities in London. ADF's lyrics consistently espouse an antiracist politics that draws its inspiration from the anticolonial nationalist struggle and other radical social movements in India. Their track "Assassin," for example, celebrates the Indian nationalist hero Udham Singh, who in 1940 assassinated Michael O'Dwyer, the British colonial official responsible for the infamous Amritsar massacre of 1919.[38] By drawing on an anticolonial nationalist past in India to create an antiracist present in the UK, ADF brings to the surface the continuities between the British state's colonial aggression in India and its current racist practices against communities of color in Britain today. The zone of public culture that their music produces thereby functions both transnationally and cross-historically. Similarly, on a track titled "Naxalite," the left-wing peasant insurgency in Bengal in the late sixties serves as an antecedent for the fight against police brutality in the UK in the 1990s. The Naxalite movement remains one of the touchstones of the left in India; its evocation by a diasporic, East London–based band like ADF opens the band to charges of romanticizing a complicated, historically situated movement. Indeed when I presented an early version of this chapter to an audience primarily made up of South Asianists, a debate erupted over the accuracy of ADF's portrayal of the Naxalite movement.[39]

Clearly, what is significant for my purposes here is not so much whether ADF "gets it right" but rather what happens in the always inaccurate process of translation as the memory of this particular movement travels from the West Bengali village of Naxalbari, the birthplace of the movement, to East London, where ADF originated. In their evocation of the Naxalite movement in "Assassin," ADF does not attempt to provide British Asians some sort of unmediated access to South Asian history; rather the track, and the music of ADF in general, can be seen to produce what Josh Kun suggestively calls "audiotopias." Drawing from Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopias, Kun defines audiotopias as "sonic spaces of affective utopian longings where several sites normally deemed incompatible are brought together not only in the space of a particular piece of music itself, but in the production of social space and mapping of geographical space that music makes possible."[40] The "audiotopic map," as Kun terms it, conjured up by ADF's music brings into discursive proximity disparate geographic spaces and temporalities: ADF's "community of sound" (to borrow a phrase from one of their own songs)[41] encompasses London's East End as easily as it does Naxalbari. This new geography of

diasporic public culture also enacts a temporal collapse of past histories of social struggle in South Asia, and contemporary realities of race and class in the UK. In so doing, the question of cultural origins is mobilized in a radically different way from the standard evocations of "homeland" and exile that characterize conventional diasporic ideologies. Like Cornershop's rewriting of the history of 1960s Britain, ADF's imagined sonic community mobilizes an interventionist nostalgia where "India" signifies a history of radical organizing rather than a site of pure, unsullied cultural identity. Furthermore, ADF's evocation of "India" as a site of radical movements for social change directly challenges the "millennial Orientalism" evident in mainstream popular culture, where random Indian cultural markers stand in for a vaguely defined, depoliticized "Eastern" spirituality.[42] Offering a trenchant critique of liberal multiculturalism, ADF rants on their track "Jericho": "We ain't ethnic, exotic or eclectic/ The only 'e' we use is electric/With your liberal minds/You patronize our culture/Scanning the surface like vultures/with your tourist mentality/we're still the natives/You're multicultural/We're anti-racist."[43] ADF's redeployment of "India" as the locus not of a lost originary identity or of a transcendent spirituality but of a rich history of anticolonial and antistate resistance is echoed in the names of the nightclubs in the United States and Britain that showcase new British Asian music, such as *Swaraj* (self-rule) in London, Mutiny in New York, and *Azaad* (freedom) in San Francisco. These instances reveal the ways in which auditory cultural forms and practices powerfully mobilize affective loyalties across time and space. ADF's notion of a "community of sound" is therefore suggestive of ways of organizing collectivity that bypass the realm of the visible. For an earlier generation of British Asian musicians, Bhangra was a powerful means of asserting a specifically "Asian" identity within an obliterating scopic economy organized around a black-white binary.[44] For ADF and other British Asian bands in the 1990s, producing affiliation through sound can be seen as a way of critiquing a logic of the visual, where British Asians are rendered either invisible or hypervisible (as stereotype) within the dominant racial landscape of the UK.

Ashley Dawson's careful and nuanced discussion of ADF provides the local context for the band's transnational address by situating the band's politics within the social and economic conditions of London's East End in the 1980s and 1990s, specifically the area known as the Docklands.[45] Drawing on Saskia Sassen's notion of "global cities,"[46] Dawson observes that the emer-

gence of London as one such global city has been particularly devastating for working-class Asians: "Overwhelmingly concentrated in industries and skill levels which have been on the decline, and living in urban areas hardest hit by the restructuring of the global economy, Asians have been the first to suffer from Britain's economic woes and have yet to reap the rewards of the nation's halting economic revitalization during the 1990s."[47] Dawson provides an invaluable historicization of the increasing impoverishment of white and Asian working-class communities in the Docklands and demonstrates that the concomitant rise in racial violence by long-time white residents against newer Bangladeshi immigrants was a direct result of state policies that effectively converted the Docklands into an "enterprise zone" in the late 1980s.[48] ADF's militant antiracist politics, in Dawson's reading, emerges in response to this explosive nexus of white racism, working-class frustration, and the brutal exigencies of global capital. ADF evokes global antiracist, anticolonial struggles as a way of addressing the very local context of race and class inequalities set in motion and exacerbated by the state policies that facilitate the transformation of London into a global city. Thus, for Dawson, the significance of ADF and other militant hip-hop Asian bands lies in the way their music signals a critique of state racism as well as a "resistance to the inequalities often generated by the globalization of the economy."[49]

It is also crucial to remember, however, that these inequalities generated by globalization are produced along gendered divisions rather than solely along the racial and class lines that Dawson discusses. The same dynamics of globalization that resulted in massive unemployment among young working-class black men in the UK in the 1980s produced a large segment of casualized homeworkers that was overwhelmingly made up of Asian women immigrants.[50] Naila Kabeer, in her comparative study of Bangladeshi women workers in London and Dhaka, notes that the international restructuring of the garment industry in the 1970s and 1980s led to firms subcontracting parts of the production process to low-wage labor in the global south, while also utilizing "domestic outworkers in the 'hidden' economy of the depressed inner city areas of Britain."[51] Bangladeshi immigrant women in the East End of London engaged in home-based piecework became the primary source of low-wage labor in the UK garment industry. Kabeer turns a critical gaze onto "the high visibility of Bangladeshi women workers . . . on their way to and from work on the streets of Dhaka, and the near-invisibility of the Bangladeshi women who

worked as domestic outworkers for the [garment] industry in London."[52] Kabeer argues that this invisibility of Asian women homeworkers in the UK was compounded by the silence on the part of the British labor movement to address their needs, and spoke to the dominant view of homeworking as "a logical cultural choice for 'Asian' Muslim women and hence not necessarily a matter for public concern."[53] Swasti Mitter's research on immigrant women workers has further demonstrated that Asian women's labor in the UK only registers in the general public consciousness when a horrific accident (such as the death of workers due to the burning down of an illegal sweatshop, for instance) makes occasional front-page news.[54] Ironically, this literal invisibility of Asian women's labor is discursively replicated in analyses of popular music and globalization that fail to account for the gendering effects of the global economy on local sites such as the East End. Asian women's labor, because it takes place in the seemingly "private" space of the home, is not recognized as a critical component of South Asian diasporic public culture. Thus, while it is clearly necessary to contextualize a band like ADF through an analysis of "the political economy of racism," as Dawson does so thoroughly, the failure to recognize the gendered logic of this economy means that men are once again the tacit subjects and objects of analysis.

Popular music critics such as Dawson, John Hutnyk, and Nabeel Zuberi, all of whom have written extensively on the Asian Underground, are cognizant that the black nationalist politics of Asian Underground bands may valorize a militant, tough Asian masculinity at the expense of female agency. As Zuberi comments, in much militant British Asian hiphop, "the politics . . . are primarily about young men, defined by the homosociality of Asian lads on the street."[55] Similarly, Dawson is careful to note that the black nationalist politics of ADF may indeed marginalize women, but he also usefully resists reductively labeling the band's gender politics as simply regressive or sexist. Instead, he argues that a track like ADF's "*Tu Meri*," while seeming to buttress conventional gender relations, also implicitly responds to the challenges leveled by feminist and queer artists, activists, and academics to gender conventions within the South Asian community. Dawson's insistence on the multiple meanings and effects of the music is well taken, yet other critical commentaries on the gendering of the Asian Underground are not quite so nuanced. In a telling example that is indicative of much of the existing critical commentary on gender in the British Asian music scene, John Hutnyk discusses the rap group

the Kaliphz in the following terms: "The Kaliphz often seem caught up in a version of macho Gangsta rapping that is testosterone-fuelled and boyz-in-the-hood aggressive, yet their record in opposition to British fascist groups is considerable."[56] For Hutnyk, here, the music is radical *despite* the sometimes unfortunate conservatism of its gender and sexual ideologies. By simultaneously acknowledging and disavowing the limits of masculinist militancy, Hutnyk in effect subordinates gender as a terrain of struggle to the seemingly more urgent political project of antiracist organizing. One of Hutnyk's main arguments is that the new visibility of particular, easily consumable forms of South Asian culture in the United States and Britain comes at the expense of a more radical politics espoused by bands like Fun'da'mental.[57] But in celebrating the "hard" politics of ADF, Fun'da'mental, and the Kaliphz over the "soft" politics of more mainstream acts that make it on the charts such as Bally Sagoo, Apache Indian, or the Coventry-born rapper Panjabi MC, Hutnyk implicitly valorizes a particular version of "radical" politics over all others. Such a dichotomy—of good versus bad music, good versus bad politics—obscures the pleasures, disruptions, and challenges posed by South Asian diasporic cultural forms and practices that may not announce themselves as "radical" or "oppositional" in ways that are quite so obvious.

The dangers of privileging antiracism as a singular political project that in effect relies on conventional articulations of gendered and sexual subjectivity are particularly apparent when considering the music and politics of the hip-hop–influenced Fun'da'mental. The band's music samples everything from Bollywood dialogue and the Sufi devotional music of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan to the speeches of revolutionary male leaders such as Louis Farrakhan, Malcolm X, and Gandhi. As such, like ADF, Fun'da'mental works against a conventional diasporic evocation of India as a site of origination or redemptive return. The music conjures forth a militant, male pan-Islamicist identity that rails against the "U.K. Islamophobia," as Nabeel Zuberi phrases it, that followed the controversy over the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* in 1992 and that emerged with renewed fervor after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.[58] David Hesmondalgh notes that Fun'da'mental's first single, "Righteous Preacher," contained lyrics which supported the Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against Rushdie. In an interview in *Melody Maker* that caused great controversy at the time of the single's release, the band member Goldfinger made the following statement: "Even though

I'm Sikh, I agree with my Muslim brothers that Rushdie has to face the consequences of what he has done . . . Until you understand the importance of religion in our culture, you will not understand how much this man has hurt us."[59] Hesmondhalgh takes this statement as a deliberately provocative attempt on the part of the band to challenge assumptions of an easily consumable "multiculturalism" held by the white press. While this may be true, Goldfinger's statement is deeply problematic in its couching of South Asian collective identity, "culture," and "religion" as unitary and homogenous. During the Rushdie controversy, it was precisely against both the multicultural rhetoric of the white liberal press, as well as the claims to a singular cultural identity made by self-appointed male British Muslim community "leaders," that a multiracial feminist alliance such as Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF) was formed. As Clara Connelly and Pragna Patel have documented, WAF used the Rushdie affair as an occasion to level a powerful multipronged critique of state-sponsored racism and the gendered politics of patriarchal fundamentalism in immigrant communities.[60] The valorization and visibility of the pan-Islamist black nationalist political stance held by bands like Fun'da'mental invariably elides these more nuanced negotiations of gender, race, religion, and multiple nationalisms undertaken by feminist critics, activists, and cultural producers.

"Other Ways of Being in the World": Alternative Narratives of Globalization and Diaspora

My point here is not only to decry the marginalization of non-male, non-heteronormative subjects in much of the critical scholarship on the British Asian music scene, much less to simply dismiss the music and bands themselves as sexist. Rather, I am suggesting that the invisibility of "other" subjects and forms of cultural insurgence in the critical discourses of British Asian music are an inevitable result of the misrecognition, on the part of scholars and critics, of the new mappings of space, race, gender, and sexuality effected by globalization. Saskia Sassen notes that "the global city is a strategic site for disempowered actors because it enables them to gain presence, to emerge as subjects, even when they do not gain direct power."[61] Within Sassen's framework, the global city is a site of contestation between global capital and the vast pool of low-wage labor that sustains it. Sassen forces us to pay attention to the new actors that globalization produces—such as working-class women, immigrants,

and people of color—who are invisible within a top-down narrative of globalization that can only see members of the new transnational professional work force as viable global agents. Thus, while Dawson is dependent on Sassen's model of global cities to make his argument about ADF's remapping of urban space, what remains curiously absent within his framework is the migrant female work force that Sassen demonstrates is so central to the workings of the global city. Within the new cartography that globalization produces, much of this gendered labor occurs not only in the "public" spaces of the factory and sweatshop but also, as the works of Naila Kabeer and Swasti Mitter document, in the "private" space of the immigrant home. Hence the "street" (implicitly codified as male) can no longer be held up as the privileged and singular site of contestation, as it tends to be by both the music and its critics. Rather, less visible sites such as the "home" must also be theorized as key locations in the production of diasporic public cultures and in what Sassen calls "a worldwide grid of strategic places" where global processes materialize.[62] To use a band like ADF as the grounds for an analysis of the impact of globalization on local sites is to inadvertently replicate in discursive terms the historical invisibility of Asian immigrant women's labor and subjectivity.

The difficulty of making visible and audible the "other" subjects, spaces, and modes of contestation within British Asian landscapes through an analysis of the Asian Underground music scene may point to the need to redefine the very archives that are being identified by this current scholarship on South Asian diasporic public culture. In other words, the black nationalist and antiracist politics and self-presentation of some UK British Asian bands may not necessarily be the most fruitful places to look for alternative renderings of diaspora and globalization. If anticolonial and black nationalist movements provide the inspiration for much of the more explicitly politicized British Asian music being produced today, it is worth asking if this particular remembering of history also inadvertently tends to replicate some of the subordinating tendencies of the very movements it evokes. Critics of black nationalist ideologies in the United States have long argued that the militant masculinity upheld by the movement comes at the expense of all those outside of heterosexist, patriarchal ideals. As Mark Anthony Neal notes, "during the 1960s this violence [of black nationalism], rhetorical or otherwise, at best trivialized various expressions that were not in sync with nationalist desires to unify black identity and culture under a common rubric that would ideally best survive the bombardment of

white supremacist discourses and practices."[63] While the music of bands like ADF or Fun'da'mental clearly works against the ethnic essentialism of conventional diasporic and nationalist ideologies, it nevertheless imagines a male, masculine, militant diasporic subject at the center of its antiracist politics. While the lyrics seldom tip into overt homophobia or misogyny, the militant masculinity asserted by ADF and Fun'da'mental nevertheless forecloses the transformative possibilities initially suggested by their music.[64]

This necessity of rethinking the archives of British Asian cultural production in order to make audible "other" diasporic voices becomes apparent when we consider the ways in which a singular focus on one form of diasporic popular music throws others in shadow. Several critics have argued that the privileging of Bhangra as *the* primary signifier of British Asian youth culture in the 1980s by both the mainstream media and cultural critics meant that other musical cultures in the diaspora were rendered inaudible.[65] For example Giddha, the female equivalent of Bhangra that is sung and performed within all-women's spaces such as weddings and religious ceremonies, never received the same kind of scholarly or popular attention as did Bhangra. Virinder Kalra observes that the live performances of Giddha take place in female homosocial spaces that lie outside the circuits of "written, manufactured and mechanical reproduction" of the male-dominanted Bhangra industry.[66] Thus male Bhangra producers have been able, in effect, to "cannibalize" the form by using Giddha lyrics and melodies without acknowledging the Asian immigrant women's culture from which they come.[67] Consequently the pointed, complex reflections on the intersections of class, race, gender, and sexual ideologies that emerge in the lyrics of many Giddha songs remain inaudible to most critics and consumers of British Asian music. Furthermore, what also remains unthinkable within standard approaches to South Asian diasporic music is the way in which a Giddha performance itself, in its production of female homosocial space, may very well allow for forms of female diasporic intimacy that exceed the heteronormative—a question I return to in chapter 4 in my analysis of the Giddha sequence in Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001).

Some of the alternative gendered configurations that Giddha evokes are evident in the music of Mohinder Kaur Bhamra, a renowned female vocalist and one of the few female presences in the largely male dominated Bhangra industry. The lyrics to Mohinder's 1980 track, "*Aiyee Naa Vilayet Kurie"* (Don't Come to England Girlfriend), are worth quoting at length as it is a pointed

critique of the regime of racialized gendered labor both in the home and in the factory that awaits female immigrants:

My *mehndi* (henna) was still on my hands
When my mother-in-law brusquely said
Let's put the new daughter-in-law to work.
Chorus: Don't come to England girlfriend
If you wish for a life of ease, don't come to England girlfriend . . .
All lost in the factory life.
My back doesn't straighten, every day I have to clock,
All my hopes lost in the depths of my heart.
Don't come to England girlfriend.
Intense cold strikes my chest
When I wake up, On Time, in the morning.
Like lightning I have to finish the housework
Put the children in the pram
Drop them off at strangers, on the way to work.
Working on the shifts has stripped my good looks
There's no one to give me any consolation
I wash my face with tears, who should I cry to?
[The man] who married me and brought me here on a lie?
Don't come to England girlfriend.[68]

Significantly, the lyrics of the song were written not by Mohinder herself but by Manjit Khaira, a male Punjabi immigrant who spent years working alongside Punjabi women in factories in the West Midlands in the 1970s.[69] While Virinder Kalra briefly discusses the song as reflecting "the multiple facets of migrant working women's experiences,"[70] he only hints at the complexities of its representation of racialized and gendered labor migration. I would argue that the song can be read as a remarkably astute analysis of what Lisa Lowe terms the "racialized feminization of labor in the global restructuring of capitalism."[71] Lowe reminds us that "the particular location of racialized working women at the intersection where the contradictions of racism, patriarchy and capitalism converge produces a subject that cannot be determined along a single axis of power or by a single apparatus, on the one hand, or contained within a single narrative of oppositional political formation, on the other."[72] Structured as a warning to an unseen and unheard female friend who remains

in Punjab, the song conjures forth a "community of sound" that in a sense lies beyond the realm of audibility of ADF's or Fun'da'mental's singular narratives of militant antiracist, anticolonialist politics. The oppositional political formations so powerfully expressed by these bands cannot contain the multiple and intersecting axes of domination articulated by "*Aiyee Naa Vilayet Kurie.*" The particular "feminist audiotopia" imagined by the singer is brought into being through transnational affective bonds that exist between women. As such the song produces an alternative zone of public culture that connects geographic and discursive sites as seemingly disparate as rural Punjab and the West Midlands, the factory and the home, "private" and "public" space.

That the song is a cautionary tale that enacts a diasporic intimacy between women in different geographic locales is particularly significant given that many Asian women in the UK are recruited into factory and sweatshop work through friends and relatives.[73] The song thus performs and signals a refusal to participate in the informal networks that perpetuate the exploitation of racialized gendered labor. The emphasis on time, shifts, and the clock in the lyrics point to the ways in which time itself is a disciplinary mechanism that regulates the rhythms of the female worker's embodied existence. The singer articulates her struggle to adhere to Aiwha Ong's definition of Taylorism, the disciplinary apparatus underlying Fordist production that is "based on 'time-motion' techniques that dictate precisely how each task is to be performed in order to obtain the highest level of productivity within a strict time economy."[74] Indeed Kalra notes that the song is sung "at a breakneck pace, almost as if Mohinder, like the woman in the song, does not have enough time to sing the song before her next shift begins."[75] The song in a sense then registers a rejection of the mechanistic efficiency, the demand to be punctual and "On Time," that is required of the singer's body as it is transformed into an instrument of wage labor. Significantly, the song represents the home as a site that is just as regulated and disciplined by the clock as is the factory: waking up "On Time" in order to finish the housework, the singer experiences the space of the home not as a private space of leisure but rather as one that becomes yet another site of labor within the global economy. The familial relations that the song maps out between husbands and wives, mothers and children, daughters-in-law and mothers-in law are irrevocably marked and defined by the exigencies of transnational capital and the labor migrations that it precipitates: affective bonds between family members are superseded by the demands of home

and factory work. Swasti Mitter, in her research on Asian women workers in the West Midlands garment industry in the 1970s and 1980s, observes that for many women who work in what she terms the ethnic sweatshop economy, "the working conditions at the factory are seen as an extension of home life."[76] Mitter notes that the dominant gender ideologies within diasporic communities "create a unique dependency relationship between the women and their ethnic [male] employers, from whom they are often compelled to accept exploitative wage rates, ethnic ties notwithstanding."[77] In other words, as women remain dependent on male employers for payment, job security, and immigration status, the particular hierarchical gendered arrangements of the familial space are replicated on the factory floor. Indeed, in "*Aiyee Naa Vilayet Kurie*" the hierarchies of the domestic space—between husband and wife, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law—are seen as coextensive with the disciplinary regime that governs the factory space.

Interestingly, Mohinder's song bears a startling resemblance to the 1993 testimony of Fu Lee, a Chinese female immigrant garment factory worker in San Francisco, that Lisa Lowe cites in her analysis of Fae Myenne Ng's 1993 novel *Bone.* Lowe reads Fu Lee's testimony as revealing "the manner in which the factory extracted surplus value not only through her 'labor' as an abstract form, but from using and manipulating her body itself."[78] Fu Lee's testimony, according to Lowe, evokes "her conscious, embodied relation to work, [while] it also refuses the isolation of each part as a separate site to be instrumentally exploited."[79] Similarly, in the Giddha song, the female body becomes the primary site on which the different disciplinary regimes of gender, class, sexuality, and race are mapped: the *mehndi* on the singer's hands, which initially marks her as wife, is overlaid with the bodily labor she does in the household as well as in the factory. The cataloguing of body parts—hands, back, chest, face—speaks to the bodily fragmentation that the singer experiences in the process of laboring in both "public" and "private" space. In her naming of herself as daughter-in-law, mother, wife, migrant, and worker, she resists this fragmented, instrumentalized sense of self that is required by the regime of racialized gendered labor and instead insists on the simultaneity of these subject positions. That we can hear the echoes of "*Aiyee Naa Vilayet Kurie*"—released in 1980 and detailing the experiences of Punjabi women workers in factories in the West Midlands—in the 1993 testimony of a Chinese garment worker in San Francisco is not coincidental. Rather, it speaks to the lines of commonality between the expe-

riences of racialized immigrant women workers in various "First World" nations, as transnational corporations shift their primary labor source from export processing zones in developing countries to the vast pools of low-wage immigrant labor in metropolitan locations.[80]

Dipesh Chakravarty's analysis of the way history informs Marx's notion of capital is useful in further unpacking the complicated critique of racialized gendered labor enacted by Mohinder's song. Chakravarty argues that two ideas of history underlie Marx's understanding of capital. The first notion of history, which Chakravarty designates in shorthand as History 1, is "the past that is internal to the structure of capital" and that capital posits as the precondition of its own existence. But, according to Chakravarty, there is another idea of history (or histories) that mobilizes Marx's critique of capital. These pasts, which Chakravarty calls History 2, "do not belong to the 'life process' of capital. They enable the human bearer of labor power to enact *other ways of being in the world*—other than, that is, being the bearer of labor power."[81] As Chakravarty writes, "the idea of History 2 suggests that even in the very abstract and abstracting space of the factory that capital creates, ways of being human will be acted out in manners that do not lend themselves to the reproduction of the logic of capital."[82] The song articulates the "other kinds of pasts" and "other ways of being in the world" embodied by the singer that exceed her instrumental status as merely a bearer of labor power. These other pasts and other histories that "interrupt the totalizing thrusts of History 1," as Chakravarty phrases it, are referenced in the song by the singer's affective relation to a female friend left behind in Punjab. Female friendship, here, is the signifier of those allegiances, desires, yearnings, and memories that literally and metaphorically exceed the boundaries of the factory floor. They bring into the space of the factory life histories and experiences that disrupt capital's demand that the singer/worker be simply "living labor, a bundle of muscles and nerves and consciousness, but devoid of any memory except the memory of the skills the work needs."[83] Chakravarty reminds us, however, that "History 2s are . . . not pasts separate from capital; they inhere in capital and yet interrupt and punctuate the run of capital's own logic."[84]

The way in which these "other kinds of pasts" are not outside the logic of capital but rather are embedded within it is made clear in the depiction of Asian immigrant women workers in the documentary *Bringing It All Back Home* (dir. Chrissie Stansfield, 1987). The documentary, which details the local effects of

the global restructuring of capital on working-class communities in the UK in the 1980s, features an interview with a South Asian immigrant woman homeworker in the West Midlands doing piecemeal garment work for London retailers in her home.[85] Here, as in "*Aiyee Naa Vilayet Kurie*," the bodily and psychic demands that the factory makes on the worker are transported to the home space. The camera focuses not on the woman's face, which remains invisible throughout the scene, but on her hands as they move continuously from the sewing machine to the pile of garments by her feet. The woman's baby daughter sits watching her mother intently from a sofa and mimics her mother's hand movements, an image that again speaks to the ways in which affective ties between family members are cross-cut and overdetermined by laboring relations. The woman, speaking in an English that retains Punjabi intonations barely beneath its surface, poignantly describes the experience of homeworking as "worse than being in a factory; it is like a jail." She continues:

> When you go in the factory, you meet different sorts of people. You get to know about different ideas of people and you talk with them and you feel less depressed. (Voice rising) I feel so isolated and confined in the house. When I'm very busy on the machine I'm gone so deep in thoughts, you know, of my past time, when I used to go to school and college, of my good friends in India. It is really totally different, in the house.[86]

Ironically, the factory is imagined by the woman worker as the site of interaction and sociability that is unthinkable within her current location in the house. Indeed, she conflates remembered forms of sociability and female homosocial space (the all-girls schools and colleges that she attended in India) with the imagined space of the factory floor. The woman's words reveal the psychic costs of migration and give voice to the deep despair and anguish that the lived experience of racialized gendered regimes of labor produces. Echoing Mohinder's song, the migrant woman worker brings to her current experience of homeworking memories of "past time" and affective ties with other women in other locations. The bringing of these pasts into the present experience of laboring in a sense both interrupts the current experience of work (she is no longer simply an abstract embodiment of "living labor") while simultaneously enabling her to continue with it (conjuring up the past makes her current work more bearable), thus underscoring Chakravarty's caveat that these pasts are not separate from capital but rather inhere within it.[87]

Both "*Aiyee Naa Vilayet Kurie*" and this brief scene from Stansfield's documentary speak to the collapse of "public" and "private" space as the global economy is instantiated in the home and factory through the very body of the female worker. Similarly, Monica Ali's 2003 novel *Brick Lane*,[88] set in the predominantly Bangladeshi borough of Tower Hamlets in London's East End, is inspired by Naila Kabeer's research on Bangladeshi women homeworkers in the garment industry and provides a fictionalized account of their lives. Kabeer's empirical study stresses the need to move beyond generalized stereotypes of "Asian women workers" in popular and academic discourse that imagine such women as simply an undifferentiated and homogenous mass. Instead, Kabeer stresses Bangladeshi women's agency in making labor market decisions and argues that "women workers do not only exist as artifacts of employers' strategies nor is the quality of their lives fully determined by their experiences in the work place."[89] Ali takes up Kabeer's call to illuminate the motivations and decision-making processes of the women themselves by providing us with a finely drawn portrait of Nazneen, the protagonist of the novel who works as a home-based machinist while living in a housing estate in Tower Hamlets. While the Bangladeshi neighborhood of Brick Lane provides the backdrop of the novel, Nazneen's imagined geography extends far beyond its groceries and restaurants to the densely packed streets of Dhaka and the open landscapes of rural Bangladesh. Indeed, Nazneen's narrative of life in working-class, immigrant London is shadowed by that of her sister Haseena in Bangladesh who, having migrated from the country to the city, becomes a worker in one of the numerous garment factories in Dhaka that are subcontracted by transnational corporations. Nazneen and Haseena are thus part of an interconnected labor market of migrant, low-wage, female workers that exists in the cities and free trade zones of the global south as well as in the immigrant enclaves of the advanced industrialized countries of the north. The incorporation of Nazneen and Haseena into the two opposing ends of the international garment industry makes apparent the ways in which both locations are intimately connected through the gendered exigencies of transnational capital. The epistolary, transcontinental relationship between the two sisters evokes the same sense of female diasporic intimacy that animates the Giddha song discussed previously, and acts as a powerful reminder of those "other ways of being in the world" that resist the reduction of complex lives and histories to "living labor." The novel ends with Nazneen's husband return-

ing to Dhaka to fulfill a fantasy of diasporic return, unable to withstand the daily, petty, racist humiliations that he faces as a Bangladeshi immigrant male in the UK. Nazneen, however, courageously decides to stay on in London with her two young daughters, where she eventually becomes part of a sewing cooperative with other Bangladeshi women in the housing estate. She thus collectively produces a new notion of "home" that is no longer organized around a conventional diasporic longing for lost homelands. This new collective home space thereby also breaks with the patriarchal gender arrangements that characterize diasporic nationalism and that situate women as embodiments of communal tradition and the longed-for homeland.

These various musical, cinematic, and literary representations of the "racialized feminization of labor" rarely enter the realm of the visible within standard accounts of globalization, nor do they enter the realm of the audible within standard accounts of diasporic popular music. As such, they force us to revise and expand our understanding of South Asian diasporic public culture as being formed through and against the seemingly "private" space of the home. All three texts—the Giddha song, Stansfield's documentary, and Ali's novel—raise the important question of what knowledges, histories, spaces, and embodiments are seen to inhabit the public culture of the diaspora as it is produced and impacted by economic globalization. The submerged relation of Giddha to Bhangra has particular resonance when we consider the way in which a new moment of British Asian cultural production is being narrativized through the Asian Underground. That a musical form such as Giddha is performed and consumed for the most part outside the "public" spaces of the street, the recording studio, or the concert stage would seem to relegate it to the realm of the "private." But as the lyrics of the song, as well as the testimony of the woman in Stansfield's documentary and her fictionalized counterpart in *Brick Lane* show, the space of the home is hardly private but rather a key site of labor within the global restructuring of capital. Thus in order to fully unpack the ways in which diasporic public culture responds to and is formed by the dynamics of globalization, we must pay careful attention to those cultural practices that seem to exist outside the realm of the "public." It is precisely the cultural practices that emerge from seemingly tangential spaces of cultural production that most profoundly speak to the gendered and racialized effects of globalization on local sites. It is also precisely these cultural practices that are overlooked by many analyses of public culture—and popular music in

particular—in the South Asian diaspora. What, then, are the different aural and visual trajectories that become apparent if we turn our attention from the overtly politicized lyrics of ADF to the soundscapes of female British Asian deejays such as the London-based DJ Ritu, or the spontaneous, informal performances of Giddha? Or from the masculinist bravado and posturing of Fun'da'mental to the ephemeral performances of queer femininity that take place at occasional queer club nights in London or New York? Turning to this less visible and less audible archive of South Asian diasporic culture may allow for an alternative understanding of the gendered and sexual landscapes of global cities.

The critical attention paid by critics to the CDs, Web sites, and videos of Asian Underground bands themselves may miss the real "underground" to the Asian Underground, that is, the far more difficult to document cultural practices that occur under the aegis of an Asian Underground event but are not understood as central to the event. These practices suggest the need to ask different questions of dominant, recognizable archives and to rethink what constitutes a viable cultural archive in the first place. For instance, in her ethnography of young British Asian women who are avid club goers in the Asian Underground scene, Falu Bakrania shows that far from simply being passive consumers of a music scene that is still largely produced by men, these young women are actively using club spaces in order to negotiate gendered notions of "Asianness" that are mapped onto their bodies by both patriarchal diasporic and racist English nationalist ideologies.[90] The imaginative consumption strategies that Bakrania documents remain submerged within the dominant discourse of the Asian Underground produced by a body of critical scholarship that privileges more conventionally understood forms of radical political practice. Bakrania also notes that the young women she interviewed strategically use different cultural forms and spaces—such as that of the Asian Underground or Bhangra—in order to challenge racist and patriarchal assumptions at different moments, even as they are simultaneously reinscribed within the very ideologies that they seek to disrupt.[91] Bakrania's research, as well as a consideration of a diasporic musical form like Giddha, raises the following question: how do various forms of South Asian popular music in the diaspora—Asian Underground music, Bhangra, Hindi film music, Giddha, Qawaali—produce distinct social spaces that offer highly particular modes of gendered and sexualized sociability, pleasure, and desire? Such research sug-

gests that each musical form may offer a particular audience different spaces and strategies to negotiate gender and sexual ideologies.

Queer Audiotopias

I have suggested throughout this chapter that theorizing the workings of diaspora and globalization through a singular recognition of particular musical forms (such as Bhangra and the Asian Underground), and the most obvious cultural practices associated with them, misses the crucial ways in which gender and sexual ideologies are foundational to both processes. Diaspora, as it takes shape through these musical forms, is still imagined through an oedipal narrative and a patrilineal genealogy that connects one generation of immigrant men to their second-generation offspring, or through a revolutionary politics that connects men to each other but at the expense of women and alternative forms of masculinity. I want to close, then, with an instance of a queer cultural practice that echoes the drag performance with which I opened this chapter; both instances seem to embody the alternative visions of culture and community that Asian Underground music promises but fails to realize. That such cultural practices are notoriously difficult to document, archive, and preserve speaks to what José Muñoz calls the ephemera of queer life. Writing of the African American drag performer Kevin Aviance, Muñoz understands "queer ephemera" as "the conversations that ensue after [Aviance's] performances, the friends and strangers that approach him on the street, the ads in bar rags, the reviews in local papers, the occasional home video documentation, and the hazy and often drug-tinged memories that remain after the actual live performances."[92] These fleeting cultural practices and memories that are "lost in relation to the space of heteronormativity" are erased from standard representations of the public culture of the diaspora.[93] They may in fact constitute a new mapping of the space of globalization, one that is able to find those bodies, desires, and subjectivities that remain lost within dominant narratives of globalization on the one hand, or diasporic formation on the other.

If for some of the young women Bakrania interviews, the Asian Underground scene seems to offer more possibility for sexual and gender self-definition than does the Bhangra scene, for gay male subjects, the space of possibility that emerges within the more seemingly "traditional" venue of, say, a Qawaali concert may be more useful than an Asian Underground club space.

In order to track the different erotic and affective possibilities opened up by different forms of South Asian diasporic popular music, I return from one global city (London) to another (New York City). Shifting the scene from London back to New York requires that we recognize that different diasporic locations produce their own highly particular forms of resistance to and accommodation with dominant culture.

At an outdoor Summerstage concert in New York City's Central Park in July 1999, the female Sufi devotional singer Abida Parveen's powerful stage presence delighted a large, predominantly South Asian crowd that, for a brief moment, reterritorialized Central Park into a vibrant space of South Asian public culture. While many of the women in the audience remained seated as Parveen's voice soared to ever greater heights of ecstasy and devotion, throngs of mostly working-class, young and middle-aged South Asian Muslim men crowded around the stage, singing out lyrics in response to Parveen's cues, their arms aloft, dancing joyously arm in arm and in large groups. Sufism, a form of Islamic mysticism in which music plays a central role in enabling the individual to commune with the divine, has a long history of homoerotic imagery in its music and poetry.[94] The sanctioned homosociality/homoeroticism of the Qawaali space in effect enabled a group of men from the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association, gay-identified South Asian men, to dance together with abandon; indeed they were indistinguishable from the hundreds of men surrounding them. In this instance the queer listening and dance practices that revolved around Parveen's performance enabled a male homosocial space to translate quite seamlessly into a homoerotic one. The gay men in the audience (both Muslim and non-Muslim) were able to exploit the "traditional" forms of homoeroticism that lie embedded within a Sufi mystical tradition in order to articulate for themselves a specifically gay male diasporic subjectivity. They were thus producing a "queer audiotopia," to extend Josh Kun's notion of an audiotopia, in that they were conjuring forth a queer sonic landscape and community of sound that remapped Central Park into a space of queer public culture, the locus of gay male diasporic desire and pleasure.

We can perhaps better understand the queer audiotopia fleetingly produced in these moments through Michael Warner's theorizing of "publics and counterpublics."[95] Warner defines both publics and counterpublics as those that "come into being only in relation to texts and their circulation." Publics, Warner writes, are "increasingly organized around visual or audio texts . . .

Often the texts themselves are not even recognized as texts—as for example with visual advertising or the chattering of a DJ—but the publics they bring into being are still discursive in the same way."[96] Warner's notion of a discursively instantiated public that is self-produced (rather than externally, institutionally produced) through the very act of address is particularly suggestive when considering the ways in which music produces queer sociability, belonging, and identification. At the Summerstage concert, Parveen's voice (often described as "manly" and gender non-normative[97]) functioned as the text that enabled the production of a queer counterpublic, one that is discursively produced by virtue of being addressed and that also acts as a "communit[y] and relational chain of resistance that contest[s] the dominant public sphere."[98] José Quiroga, in his study of Latino gay men's relation to the musical form of bolero, argues that the bolero allows for the construction of a "sentimental community" that comes together around the iconic figure of the female bolero singer. For Quiroga, bolero underscores the power of affect in producing a transnational queer community: "the bolero signals the beginning of a new voice that reappears from the past in order to seduce readers again into a transnational (and even meta-Caribbean) space."[99] Similarly, the Summerstage performance created a web of affect that served to bind and connect the queer men in the audience to each other and to Parveen herself.

Such a performance and the remapping of urban space it enables allow us to crucially rework Saskia Sassen's formulation of the ways in which economic globalization produces new political possibilities within the global city. The city, according to Sassen, has "emerged as a site for new claims: by global capital . . . but also by disadvantaged sectors of the urban population" who may indeed create "a new type of transnational politics, a politics of those who lack power but now have 'presence.' "[100] Sassen understands this "new type of transnational politics" that emerges within the transnational geography of the global city as the new forms of organizing and alliances created by those actors within the global economy whose labor is historically rendered invisible: low-wage female and immigrant workers, as well as workers who are U.S.-born people of color. Sassen's invaluable feminist theorizing of globalization thus brings into visibility particular actors that have been systematically devalorized within conventional globalization discourse. But we can also extend Sassen's analysis to bring into visibility, or rather audibility, those actors and forms of political contestation that indeed "lack power" but have "presence," and can-

not be seen or heard within a strict materialist framework of political economy that to a certain extent Sassen herself subscribes to. Although the question of alternative sexual subjectivities never enters into Sassen's analysis, we can include the queering of public space that happens in instances such as the one I have described above as constituting one of the new forms of transnational politics that Sassen suggests can emerge from the "new geography of centrality" of the global city.

The Summerstage event thus suggests that different forms of South Asian diasporic music allow for very specific erotic possibilities and mobilize distinct affective loyalties, for particular audiences in particular locations. While Parveen's performance enabled the production of a tremendously powerful form of gay male diasporic intimacy, as I have been arguing, the performance may have had a very different resonance for the women in the audience. Almost all the women remained seated, many with children in tow, and were relegated to being a largely immobile audience for the ecstatic performance of male homosociality/homoeroticism. Indeed, women played a crucial role in enabling this space to come into being: their bodies, voices, and affect (in the form of Parveen as performer) instantiated this space, even while their function as sidelined observers lent the assurance of respectable heterosexuality to the event as a whole. The "queer audiotopia" initiated by Parveen's performance, then, can hardly be seen as a utopian site but rather as one that is contradictory and unstable, imprinted with hierarchical power relations organized along gendered lines. To return to Sassen for a moment, while she fails to acknowledge that queer communities may indeed be among those who "lack power" but "have presence" within the global city, her insistence on revealing the gendered effects of globalization allows us to critique the ways in which "queer" in this instance is predicated on the foreclosure of female agency. In its literal sidelining of female pleasure, desire, and agency, the Summerstage performance of gay male diasporic intimacy thus signals the limits of a "queer audiotopia" and points to the need to consistently use both a queer and feminist lens through which to scrutinize the meanings of diasporic cultural practices. The ensuing chapters more fully examine the dangerous effects of splitting queer from feminist analyses and suggest the necessity of bringing together these rubrics through a focus on queer *female* diasporic subjectivity. The following chapter further explores the ways in which the seemingly "private" space of the immigrant home as a site of racialized gendered labor is crucially

remade through queer and feminist interventions, which offer new possibilities for narrativizing diaspora outside of its conventional patrilineal, oedipal logic. It is precisely by making intelligible those queer, feminist cultural practices that are rendered inaudible and invisible within dominant paradigms of nation, diaspora, and globalization, I argue, that we most powerfully intervene into these paradigms, and thereby suggest other ways of being in the world.