



MIGRATIONS AND IDENTITIES

Creolizing Europe

Legacies and Transformations

EDITED BY
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Chapter 7

Re-imagining Manchester as a Queer and Haptic Brown Atlantic Space

Alpesh Kantilal Patel

Introduction

Its reputation once based on its image as a thriving industrial center, Manchester, England has become just as well known for giving rise to punk and ‘new wave’ music in the 1980s and for being the post-millennial, commercial epicenter of gay life in the north-west of England. In 2003, Manchester was deemed the most ‘bohemian’ and ‘creative’ city, according to the ‘Boho (or Bohemian) Britain Index’ of forty UK cities. The Boho Index uses three indices – ethnic diversity, proportion of gay residents, and number of patent applications per head – as key indicators of the city’s economic health, and Manchester scores high in all these areas.¹ For instance, the city is home to a number of higher educational institutions, including Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and the University of Manchester, the largest university in the United Kingdom. Moreover, Manchester’s Gay Village, named for its many gay bars, shops and restaurants, enabled it to become the first British city to host Europride in 2003. Finally, Manchester has a diverse ethnic population, evidenced most conspicuously

1 See Demos (cross-party ‘think-tank’), ‘Manchester is Favourite with “New Bohemians”’, undated press release: www.demos.co.uk/press_releases/bohobritain.

in the commercialized spaces of Chinatown and the Curry Mile, an area of the city named for its large number of South Asian restaurants and shops.

In its strategic plan for the city center for the 2004–2007 period, Manchester City Council proudly boasts that Manchester topped the list of the Boho Index in 2003 (Manchester City Council and Manchester City Centre Management Company Ltd, 2003, 6). Urban geographer Steve Quilley (91) further notes that since at least the early 1990s those involved in ‘all aspects of urban regeneration’ adhered to a ‘Manchester script’ that characterized the city as ‘post-modern, post-industrial and cosmopolitan’. As I have argued elsewhere (Patel, 2009), the aforementioned Curry Mile is relatively absent visually and textually in the city’s marketing in comparison to the Gay Village. The two spaces are produced as mutually exclusive not only by the city’s marketing but the marketing of the restaurants and bars of the two spaces, as well. The Gay Village is given a ‘gay’ (white, middle-class and male) identity, while the Curry Mile is given an ‘ethnic’ (South Asian and heterosexual) one. In this chapter, I recount my own experiences, with close attention to haptic, or embodied, visibility to conceptualize how a queer-identified subject of South Asian descent can re-imagine urban space in Manchester by exploring creolization as a theory, method and a practice.

Dominique Chancé’s (2011) overview of the genealogy of the concept of creolization is instructive. She writes that it can only be explained through paradox. Indeed, borrowed from linguists to describe specific Creole languages and increasingly used to explore cultural formations beyond language in the Caribbean, creolization eventually detached itself from linguistic approaches and began to refer to a broader set of socio-cultural processes (Chancé, 2011, 262).² Drawing on the scholarship of Stuart Hall, Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (2011, 25) astutely note in their introduction to *The Creolization of Theory* that what is at stake in any expansive use of creolization are issues of power and entanglement that must be carefully delineated. Wary of the ‘playful bricolage’ to which the loose use of the concept can lead, Lionnet and Shih (24) call for the use of creolization so that it ‘militates against the neutralization and obfuscation of power dynamics’. Indeed, implicit in the anxiety registered by Chancé above is the potential for the term to be de-politicized.

In that vein, Lionnet and Shih (30) conceptualize ‘creolized theory’ as one that registers the ‘epistemological entanglement between the knowledge systems of colonizer and colonized’ and works against the abstract universalizing tendencies of dominant Euro-American theoretical models such as

2 It is perhaps not surprising that, to be viable, anthropologist Stephan Palmié argues for the concept to remain specific and regionalist in his 2006 essay ‘Creolization and its Discontents’ (Palmié, 2006). However, I would extend the concept of region so it is always already a transnational one.

structuralism and poststructuralism.³ To begin to conceptualize how I might rework urban space, I attempt to creolize British sociologist Paul Gilroy's already creolized theory of the Black Atlantic to theorize a *Brown Atlantic* – the geographical area conceptually bound by British colonialism – to which both film scholar Jigna Desai in her 2004 book *Beyond Bollywood* and queer and South Asian cultural studies scholar Gayatri Gopinath in her 2005 book *Impossible Desires* loosely refer.⁴

More specifically, I theorize a queer and 'Desi' Brown Atlantic drawing as much on theories of intersectionality and contemporary reworkings of haptic (or embodied) visuality and space as my own experiences. 'Desi' is a Hindi word meaning 'from my country' that is often colloquially used by many Western-based subjects of South Asian descent in the metropolitan areas of the USA and England to refer to themselves.⁵ It is particularly appropriate to adopt, given my focus is on the geographical and conceptual space bound by the colonial legacies of the South Asian subcontinent, the USA and the United Kingdom.⁶ That is, my own 'roots and routes', as Gilroy (1993a, 133) pithily refers to his Black Atlantic model, approximates the space of analysis I have heretofore outlined as part of the Desi Brown Atlantic: I am a UK-born, US-raised and – at the time of the writing of most of the larger project to which this chapter is connected – a Manchester-based subject, whose family emigrated originally from Gujarat, India. At the same time, my identification as 'queer' has added traction to a simplistic mapping of my personal history onto the Desi space I have otherwise sketched out.

Finally, I explore the limits and possibilities of cosmopolitanism implicated in the notion of the Black/Brown Atlantic by theorizing embodiment as part of my queer Desi Brown Atlantic. I am less interested in exploring cosmopolitanism as an intellectual or ethical attitude, as has been recently explored (Brennan, 1997; Cheah and Robbins, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999), than as a powerful mode through which to consider if my creolized and embodied

3 The authors further make the distinction between theory with a big 'T' and theory with a little 't' – the latter referring to theories that particularize the universalizing tendencies of the former. I do not mobilize these distinctions in this chapter given that I am ostensibly reworking a theory with a little 't': Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic' concept, which draws upon and makes more specific Michel Foucault's universalizing theories of heterotopia and discourse.

4 Desai fleshed out her use of the 'Brown Atlantic' in her *Beyond Bollywood* book (2004), but she first mentioned it several years earlier in 2002. See Desai, 2002, 86 n. 6.

5 See SAJA (*South Asian Journalists Association*) 2006 (no longer available, but archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20070705014212/http://saja.org/resources/stylebook.html>); and Sengupta, 2006.

6 The Global Commission on International Migration notes that the government of India puts the size of the diaspora at more than 20 million, with more than 2 million South Asians in the USA alone. www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/gcim/rs/RS2.pdf.

queer Desi Brown Atlantic can itself creolize the civic cosmopolitanism of Manchester. Building a critique of Manchester's cosmopolitanism entails a creolizing of methods in theorizing a queer Desi Brown Atlantic so as not to fall foul of Glissant's usage of contemporary creolization to refer to globalization (Chancé, 2011, 265)

Brief note on (creolizing) methods

Lionnet and Shih (2011, 28) write that 'encounters as situations that produce the possibility of theory or a method can itself be characterized as creolization'. I explore how an 'encounter' between my creolized queer Desi Brown Atlantic theory and my multi-sensory descriptions of my own experience at a queer Desi club party in Manchester as a form of practice is itself an act of creolization that brings into focus the aforementioned embodied aspect of my theory and the manner in which my body can creolize cosmopolitan queer space. By offering my own personal narrative as data I do not mean to present it as autobiographical fact or as singularly *authentic*. I consider it as the kind of 'self-fictions' Nancy Miller has theorized (Moxey, 1994, 138). In his 'autobiographical' sketch, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, French philosopher Roland Barthes rigorously refused to revert to an underlying reality or essence by revealing the construction of subjectivity itself as a product of language (in my case, transcriptions of my embodied experiences). He wrote that '[t]his book consists of what I do not know: the unconscious and ideology, things which utter themselves only by the voices of others. I cannot put on stage (in the text), *as such*, the symbolic and the ideological which pass through me, since I am their blind spot' (Barthes, 1977, 152; emphasis in original).

The evidence I present can be further characterized as documentation of 'small acts', which Gilroy (1993b) notes are those practices that fall beneath the threshold of hegemonic nationalist and diasporic discourses, or as 'ephemera as evidence', as theorized by performance studies and Latino queer studies scholar José Esteban Muñoz (1996). The latter refers to forms of evidentiary material that are the only forms available for difficult-to-document sub-cultural spaces and identifications, like queer Desi, and therefore fall outside of traditional, scholarly analysis – what Muñoz (1996, 7) facetiously refers to as rigorous, or 'rigor-mortis'. In particular, Muñoz (1998, 433) notes that queer cultural production often leaves traces that are fleeting and, therefore, resist typical scholarly textualization.

Creolizing theory: towards a Desi Brown Atlantic

As noted previously, Paul Gilroy's intercultural theorization of the Black Atlantic that is not tethered to identitarian notions of ethnicity or

nationalism in his, now epochal, 1993 book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* can be considered a creolized theory. Gilroy draws on Michel Foucault's theories of genealogy, discourse and heterotopia, but through the specific optic of theories of black identity. He famously invokes the metaphor of slave ships 'in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean' to theorize black diasporic identities and to 'focus attention on the middle passage' (Gilroy, 1993a, 4). Gilroy refers to this 'middle passage' as the 'Black Atlantic' that he argues avoids the implications of the classical notion of 'diaspora'. According to Gilroy, in an interview with philosopher Thomas Lott, the latter assumes an 'obsession with origins, purity and invariant sameness' (Gilroy, 1993a, 56–57).⁷ Instead, the Black Atlantic is a theoretical model that underscores identity as always in flux. In this way, it dovetails with Martinican author Édouard Glissant's description of creolization as being characterized not by stability but by change (Chancé, 2011, 262–7).

The poststructuralist underpinnings of Gilroy's Black Atlantic have allowed it to be reworked and adopted by other scholars to theorize other discursively defined spaces – such as the 'Lusophone Black Atlantic', the geographical area bound by the slave routes between Portugal, Brazil and Africa.⁸ Indeed, the 'Brown Atlantic' that I have previously invoked is a space defined by British colonialism. Gopinath (2005, 70) writes that '[s]uch a mapping of South Asian diasporic movement suggests the differences and similarities between the experiences of racialization of South Asian immigrations in North America and the UK'. The Brown Atlantic can refer to a much more diverse group of South Asian populations who live outside of, but trace their ancestry to, the South Asian subcontinent – such as those

7 Of course, the genealogy of diaspora is already deeply intertwined with that of Gilroy's Black Atlantic. Cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall has theorized 'diaspora experience' in a manner that addresses the implications of fixed origins and destinations which Gilroy references. Hall defines 'diaspora experience' as determined not through 'return' and 'not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference' (1990, 235). Explaining further the distinction between 'diaspora' and 'Black Atlantic' in an interview with Lott, Gilroy says: 'Very often the concept of diaspora has been used to say, "Hooray! We can rewind the tape of history, we can get back to the original moment of our dispersal!" I'm saying something quite different. That's why I didn't call the book diaspora anything. I called it *Black Atlantic* because I wanted to say, "If this is a diaspora, then it's a very particular kind of diaspora. It's a diaspora that can't be reversed"' (Lott, 1994, 56–57). As American literature scholar Jonathan Elmer (2005, 161) suggests, Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* has proven to be influential in academic scholarship not necessarily for sharpening the concept of diaspora but for loosening the structures that define it.

8 I am referring to the exploration of the Lusophone Black Atlantic by the Centre for the Study of Brazilian Culture and Society, King's College, London. See the Centre's homepage: www.clba.kcl.ac.uk/index.html. Accessed September 26, 2011.

who are products of the migration of Indian indentured labor to former British colonies in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹ Indeed, given that one of the most salient criticisms of Gilroy's model as noted by African and African American studies scholar Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2005, 37) and postcolonial and African diaspora scholar Laura Chrisman (2000, 12–18) is that it slips into homogenization of inter-regional diasporas – and thereby conflates the diverse genealogical histories of various black diasporas within the 'Black' of his Black Atlantic – it is important to be specific about which part of the Brown Atlantic I plan to explore. As noted in the introduction, I limit my focus in this chapter to a sector that I refer to as 'Desi' – the geographical and conceptual space bound by the colonial legacies of the South Asian subcontinent, the USA and the United Kingdom.

Queer Desi

I deploy Desi in much the same way as does the BBC television programme 'Desi DNA'. The producers of 'Desi DNA' ironically appropriate the concept of 'DNA' to underscore that Desi is crystallized through a matrix of socio-cultural determinants that is not always reducible to genealogy or biology. That is, rather than merely apply Gilroy's concept to yet another geographical space, I aim to theorize a Desi Brown Atlantic that is intersectional with identity categories beyond race, class and nationality. More specifically, I filter Desi through the 'intersectional' framework theorized by African American feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s. Intersectionality is a syncretic method that allows Crenshaw to consider a nexus of different identity categories in order properly to theorize violence against women of color. Arguing that identity politics 'frequently conflates or ignores intra group difference', Crenshaw (1994, 94) points to the importance of considering constructions of gender, race, ethnicity and class *as constitutive of each other*. More specifically, an intersectional framework, then, would aid in uncovering the structures that might otherwise obscure the manner in which other categories of identity are linked to the Desi Brown Atlantic.

Theorizing Desi as intersectional can be tantamount to a Sisyphean task, resulting in a never-ending chain of 'supplemental' identifications. French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1973, xliii, 88) refers to that which always

9 The former British colonies to which I am referring are: Mauritius, the Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana), Fiji and South Africa. See Shri J.C. Sharma (Minister of External Affairs, Government of India), Inaugural Address, delivered at the 'Indian Diasporic Experience: History, Culture and Identity' conference, January 22–24, 2002, Henchandacharya North Gujarat University. Reprinted on the Centre for Indian diaspora and Cultural Studies, Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University website: www.ngu.ac.in/center/dias/index.htm. Accessed September 26, 2011.

escapes signification as the ‘supplement’. Significantly, Derrida notes that the supplement ‘is in reality *différance*, ‘the simultaneous process of difference and deferral, which prevents the definitive closure of *Desi*. For instance, the implicit ‘etc.’ at the end of any listing of categories of intersecting identification to which *Desi* is attached functions as a supplement, which ‘adds itself [... and] is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude [...]. But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace’, and is therefore never fully able to deliver on its promise of inclusivity (Derrida, 1976, 144–145). In this context, creolization itself is a process that adds only to replace. It is this supplemental nature of the concept that Glissant implicitly brings to the fore as a core concern for him. For Glissant, creoleness (as opposed to creolization) is not just essentializing but effectively veils the supplementarity embedded within creolization as a concept. Rather than attempt to categorize, sanitize and contain the supplementarity of *Desi*, I embrace the epistemological paradoxes it unearths by highlighting the tensions, or the production of innumerable Derridean supplements or creolenesses, inherent in *Desi*.

To accomplish this, I specifically filter *Desi* through one intersectional node in this chapter: queer *Desi*. That is, I risk essentialism per film theorist Stephen Heath’s (1978, 99) well-known phrase, ‘the risk of essence may have to be taken’. Heath’s call to ‘risk’ essence, though, ‘can also operate as a deconstructionist strategy’, as queer and gender studies scholar Diana Fuss (1989, 19) points out. Queer and *Desi* as two overlapping and, at other times, competing sets of supplemental identifications can highlight rather than subsume the complexities of the broader spectrum of identifications connected to both. I do not mean to imply that each categorical identification, all of which are illimitable per Derrida’s supplement, can be explored in equal measure. Instead, a macro-queer *Desi* framework ensures that the broadest range of identifications connected to *Desi* are always considered. However, in the end, any case study necessarily will home in on more specific, or micro, intersectional combinations. In other words, though queer *Desi* is a conceit to ensure *Desi* remains in a state of creolization or under erasure per Derrida, in this chapter I present a case study that homes in on queer and *Desi*, by drawing on my lived experiences regarding the intersections and antagonisms between the two in the context of the aforementioned ‘cosmopolitan’ city of Manchester.

Embodied queer *Desi* Brown Atlantic

My description of a visit to Club *Zindagi* (or ‘life’ in Hindi), a queer *Desi* club party on Canal Street in Manchester, where I lived from autumn 2005 to summer 2008, will tease out how vital embodied visuality not only is to the creolized queer *Desi* Brown Atlantic theory I have heretofore put together but also to creolizing Manchester’s cosmopolitan queer urban space.

Samosas, pakoras, and salads are served free of charge at midnight to all partygoers at Club Zindagi.¹⁰ The smells of these traditional South Asian foods evoked nostalgic feelings for my mother's Gujarati dishes, which she cooked at least five times a week while I was growing up in Florida and California. The rush of emotions summoned by the pungent aromas is both liberating and jarring, co-mingling memories of growing up in a domestic space marked by South Asian-ness as heterosexual – I refer to the domestic space in which I grew up and in which I was culturally groomed by my parents to expect to have an arranged marriage, for instance – with the current space marked by South Asian-ness as homosexual in which I found myself. In fact the visceral sensory knowledge that the smells evoked was more exhilarating and potent than the actual experience of being in this space with other queer-identified South Asians and their friends.

As film studies scholar Laura Marks (2002, 96) writes, 'smell has a privileged connection to emotion and memory that the other senses do not. We smell, we feel the jab of emotional memory'. Her theorization of 'haptic visuality' refers to a specific mode of reception of cinematic images in which vision is located in the body.¹¹ Drawing on Viennese art historian Alois Riegl's scholarship, Marks argues that though a cinematic image might be classed as optical in terms of form, it can still be received in an embodied manner: 'haptic images invite a multi-sensory, intimate and embodied perception, even when the perceptions to which they appeal are

10 See Club Zindagi, 2011 (founded 2003) www.clubzindagi.com. A number of South Asian gay and lesbian clubs emerged in the 1990s and in the early part of the twenty-first century in the UK as well as in the USA. Clubs in the UK include: London, Club Kali, 2011 (founded 1995) www.clubkali.co.uk; Birmingham, Saathinight, 2011 (founded 2001) www.saathinight.com; Leicester, Rang Night, 2006 (founded 2004) www.rangnight.co.uk (website no longer available). Clubs in the USA (NY) include: Sholay Events, NYC, 2011 (founded 2001) www.sholayevents.com; South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA), NYC, 2011 <http://salganyc.org/cm2011>. SALGA is primarily a not-for-profit that runs a variety of support groups. Other clubs in the USA include: Trikone, San Francisco, 2011 www.trikone.org; KushDC, Washington DC, 2011 www.khushdc.org/index.html. All websites accessed September 2011.

11 Marks (2000, 1) arrives at her theory of haptic visuality through a careful investigation of the avant-garde film and video of Canada-, North America- and, to a lesser degree, UK-based artists, whom she further describes as 'intercultural' or 'between two cultures'. (How these artists describe and identify themselves is less clear.) She notes how these films challenge the often facile categorization of cultural anthropologists who evacuate the sensuous potential of engaging with the most visual of objects in Western cultures and displace or ascribe 'the fullness of sensory experience only to "non-Western" cultures' (208) by inviting 'an intimate, sensuous, and memory-based relationship' (82).

vision and hearing alone' (Marks 2002, 133).¹² She further (2004, 82) writes that the intercultural films she explores 'invite an intimate, sensuous, and memory-based relationship'.

Marks's theorization of intercultural films can be applied to thinking about the embodied memories of the space of a club party I describe through montage – a term employed to describe a technique used in films to put together scenes that are not necessarily temporally synchronous. For instance, it has parallels to the manner in which I am juxtaposing my memories of embodied images – culled over time in the space but necessarily chronologically presented here – of a club party. Importantly, French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991, 40) implicitly extends Marks's theorization of haptic visuality to space by indicating that 'social practice presupposes the use of the body' including the 'sensory organs'. It is this use of the body that both senses the creolization of and creolizes Manchester's urban space as it moves through it.

Creolizing Manchester's urban space

In addition to the aforementioned aromatic atmosphere, the music of Zindagi parties is decidedly different from anything playing at the gay club above which Zindagi was held, or any other place in Manchester's Gay Village. It is instructive to note that the Gay Village was a disconnected series of buildings with darkened windows and a clandestine ethos as recently as the early 1990s; now wide-open windows punctuate the contemporary promenade of glossy bars and clubs (Campbell, 2004). The windows promote an atmosphere of voyeurism which transforms the space into what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 493) would refer to as a 'striated' one that relates to a 'more distant vision, and a more optical space'.¹³ The windows heighten and keep at bay the object of one's desire, or effectively delay gratification and the eventual break of the voyeuristic gaze via touch per Freud's theory of the fetish (Freud, 2001, 155).¹⁴ My point here is not to elide the vast theoretical chasm between Freudian psychoanalysis and Deleuze and Guattari's work,

12 In his 1901 book *Late Roman Art Industry*, Riegl describes Persian textiles (amongst other things), the sight of which elicits for him a tactile, bodily response as opposed to the strictly 'optical' character of Late Roman art. Riegl (1988 [1902], 190) specifically borrows the term from physiology (*haptein*, to fasten) to avoid constructing as oppositional the tactile and visual, and to underscore that haptic is much more expansive than merely touch.

13 Deleuze and Guattari (1987) are careful not to imply a facile dichotomy of the sense organs by noting that the 'eye is not the only organ' to produce striated, or optical, space. Nonetheless, it is not accidental that vision is used to describe striation.

14 Freud's theory is based on the maintenance of distance between the object of desire and the viewing subject, and only broken by touch.

but to note an interesting connection between the two in terms of how power is primarily intertwined with visuality, and potentially unravelled only by the other senses.¹⁵ Given the latter, I explore in more detail the role embodiment can play in creolizing the Gay Village via my description of the music played at the club and the nostalgia it evoked:

A mixture of contemporary pop hits, bhangra music, and Bollywood music was playing. The most salient in my memory were the old Bollywood tunes from the 1970s and 1980s, many of which I had not heard since the early to mid-1980s during my childhood in Anaheim, California, to where my family had immigrated when I was four years old from the United Kingdom, where I was born. During this period in California, my memories of Bollywood music are largely restricted to those my parents played in my dad's stalwart midnight blue Datsun 510. Memories of my family's weekly trips to Brea Mall in Anaheim, the car trips we took to visit relatives in Santa Rosa, California, and, the month-long cross-country trip we took from California to move to Florida in the summer of 1984 all came back to me quite vividly.

In Florida, my parents continued to take car trips, often to visit relatives in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Beaufort, South Carolina, for instance, but I had less exposure to Bollywood music as I got older, as I often skipped out on these car trips partly to spend time with my own friends, but also because I was increasingly feeling ill at ease with my Gujaratiness. In fact, the 'silence' of Bollywood music in my life coincided with my growing awareness of my homosexuality. So the rush of emotions I felt hearing these old tunes at Club Zindagi was bittersweet, to say the least.

Much like my experience of smells described earlier, my experience of these sounds unlocked memories, all of which felt out of time and place in the queer-identified space in which I stood. The smells and sounds took me back to familial scenes through a nexus of emotions associated with different periods of my life – from the heavily heteronormative, South Asian-inflected

15 Psychoanalysis does not offer the immersive and fluid understanding of subjectivity that Deleuze and Guattari do. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's writings of his difficulty in enacting a racial subjectivity, they argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that psychoanalytic and colonial discourses collectively 'participate in a double ideological operation where each serves effectively to conceal the political function and purpose of the other' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 170), as summarized by queer and gender studies scholar Diana Fuss (1994, 33). Fuss powerfully pushes Fanon's and Deleuze and Guattari's arguments forward to illustrate that colonial domination works through institutionalization of both misogyny and homophobia in tandem with the castration of black male sexuality. Fuss's point implicitly suggests the difficulty of enacting a queer Desi subjectivity.

upbringing in California and Florida to my adult life in New York, which was marked more by my identification as gay. Indeed, nostalgia becomes an important part of the moment of creolization of queer urban space. Marks (2000, 201) notes that ‘nostalgia, then, need not mean an immobilizing longing for the past: it can also mean the ability of the past experiences to transform the present’. In many ways, the multi-sensory experience of being at Zindagi felt *more* liberatory than the moment of initially ‘coming out’ did for me that was always tinged with a residual guilt and anxiety precipitated by what I felt was a certain requisite disavowal of my family and ethnic ties. Boundaries between what seemed two quite disparate worlds dissolved and seemed to blend increasingly more seamlessly.

British sociologist Avtar Brah’s (1996) theorization of diasporic spaces is instructive in further describing my own visually embodied experience of a diasporic connection to the South Asian subcontinent. She rethinks the notions of a ‘home’ in diasporas as more of a ‘homing *desire* [where] diaspora refers to multilocationality within and across territorial, cultural, and psychic boundaries’ (Brah, 1996, 197). The ‘homeland’ as I experienced it was not necessarily and simply Gujarat, India, where my parents were born; Wednesbury, England, where I was born; California and Florida, where I grew up; or New York, where I lived for eight years prior to my arrival in Manchester. Not entirely geographical and definable by static borders, the entire concept of a ‘home’land became more protean and spatially and temporally mobile, often occupying simultaneously multiple locations and times.

In contrast to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) theorization of striated space, haptic, or ‘smooth space,’ which is moved through by constant reference to the immediate environment – such as walking through an expanse of sand or snow – suggests the intimate and embodied manner in which subjects can traverse space and thereby is instructive in further theorizing my experience of queer Desi Brown Atlantic as *felt*. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 493) argue ‘that the eye itself can perform a nonoptical function’, and thereby produce smooth, or haptic, space.¹⁶ Indeed, my descriptions above illustrate how the visual can elicit a ‘nonoptical function’, and thereby produce a smooth space that is critical to conceptualizing a creolized and creolizing queer Desi Brown Atlantic.

16 Though many of the examples of smooth space they give are rural, they also note that, ‘even the most striated city gives rise to smooth spaces’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 500).

Towards a conclusion

At Club Zindagi, the queer Desi variant of the Brown Atlantic I experienced not only blurred my genealogical history but also collapsed and intermingled my past and present memories in connection to my identifications as Desi and queer as *felt*. In particular, the sights, tastes and smells of various South Asian foods and sounds of Bollywood music triggered my embodied experience of a Brown Atlantic and resulted in the production of a particularly smooth/haptic space in which my subjectivity became less tied to any singular identity. My body became part of its milieu in the spirit of the fluidity of the classical model of the Black Atlantic, though with a much more intimate and nuanced understanding of queer sexuality and embodiment than the latter might suggest in its strictest interpretation.

Lionnet and Shih (2011, 2) conceptualize creolization as ‘simultaneously descriptive and analytic’. They write that it ‘emerges from the experiential but provides a theoretical framework that does justice to the lived realities of subaltern subjects, connected to those realities’. In this way, the importance of linking my own experiences with and through my theory of a queer Desi Brown Atlantic took on greater significance in considering the possibility of its creolized/creolizing potential in terms of Paul Gilroy’s Black Atlantic. Perhaps most importantly, haptic visuality aids in making felt the notion of cosmopolitanism embedded within my Brown Atlantic; and how a specifically embodied queer Desi Brown Atlantic could critique, re-imagine and creolize the city of Manchester’s civic queer cosmopolitanism in a deeply personal manner. Indeed, creolization is simultaneously a way of rethinking theoretical models; a method that permits the free commingling of theory with practice and the conceptual with the experiential; and is suggestive of how urban space can be powerfully re-imagined and felt. It demands attention to all of the innumerable creolenesses it incessantly produces; this chapter is a modest account of just one of these.

Finally, in the context of an increasing embrace of homosexuality by a post-national European Union – if even inconsistently across its constituents – this chapter cautions against the bifurcation of queer and racialized subjectivities as evidenced in the case of Manchester. Jasbir Puar has referred to the collusion between normative queer agendas and the state as ‘homonationalism’ in her 2007 book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. In that same year, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Margaret Littler, in their introduction to the groundbreaking international conference ‘Creolizing Europe’ at the University of Manchester, underscored that present-day Europe continues to operate under an ideology that refuses to see racialized difference.¹⁷ Along the same lines, in 2014, Fatima El-Tayeb (2014, 9) notes that ‘Europe, in its national and postnational variations, is

17 See also this book’s introduction by Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Tate.

maintaining a normalized, Christian(ized, secular) whiteness through an ideology of colorblindness that claims not to “see” racialized difference’. Littler, Gutiérrez Rodríguez, and El-Tayeb all suggest that the creolization of theory is important as it questions Europe’s dominant, internalist narratives.¹⁸ This chapter frames how queer, racialized subjectivities can creolize the homonationalism and ‘colorblindness’ of Europe’s queer cosmopolitanism through an attention to the lived experience of the haptic body and the metaphoric currents of the Brown Atlantic.

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18 El-Tayeb further writes (2014, 11), ‘according to Glissant, the Caribbean became a center of relational identities and situational communities exactly because their inability to claim the “sacred roots” of these territories excluded its inhabitants from a world order in which both dominance and resistance were built on notions of sacred land.’

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