A Companion to Diaspora
and Transnationalism
Wiley Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies
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A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism

Edited by
Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani
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Chapter 1
Introduction – Diaspora and Transnationalism
Scapes, Scales, and Scopes
Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani

It is also a part of morality not to be at home in one’s own home.
Theodor Adorno (2006)

The fierce disagreement that broke out in the late 1990s between the US Patent and Trademark Office and India over the patenting of the name “basmati” allows us a small window into the complexities of diaspora and transnationalism. RiceTec, a firm headquartered in Alvin, TX, that markets products such as Jasmati, Kasmati, and Texmati to over 20,000 supermarkets and other outlets in North America, sought a patent for a cross-breed of American long-grain rice. The patent would also have granted RiceTec the power to control basmati rice production in North America and the right to collect fees from farmers who sought to plant it. This was offensive to India, who argued that the name “basmati,” which means “fragrant one” and is grown predominantly in the Punjab region of the country, must only be applied to rice from India. They suggested that basmati rice ought to have the same status as cognac or champagne, which are protected trademark names of certain alcoholic beverages deriving from the relevant regions of France. The Indians’ scientific and commercial reasons were also supported by powerful cultural and nationalistic appeals. In response, the All India Rice Exporters Association stated in their deposition to the US Patent and Trademark Office: “You cannot build a monument anywhere and call it the Taj Mahal. There is only one Taj Mahal and that is in India” (Krieger 2005: 2–3). As Ken MacDonald shows in his discussion of the transnational circulation of cheese (chapter 17), the link between cultural aura and commercial merchandizing for certain agricultural products establishes
a series of social and economic relationships across the entire spectrum of both production and consumption. It is the localization of such names that guarantees their cultural aura, and thus their niche status amongst the many other products that compete for consumer attention. In other words, there is a cultural economy to such agricultural products that relies entirely on the idea of cultural authenticity, which is folded into the product being consumed as a mark of cosmopolitan consumption.

The Taj Mahal is a labor of love and not simply a finished product of work. This example contrasts two forms of making, “work” and “labor” (Arendt 1998). For Indians, the label “basmati” represents not simply a finished market product, but a labor involving the daily life-producing activities that go into the making of home and locality. It is precisely through a labor of love, and not simply a labeling of a thing, that home and a longing for the past is created. The fact that there are also thousands of Indian grocery stores catering to the nostalgic needs of the large Indian communities across North America and elsewhere did not necessarily feature in the debate between the US Patent and Trademark Office and the All India Rice Exporters Association. Yet the cultural economy of basmati invoked in the debate may be taken as extending well beyond the immediate confines of the patent disagreement itself. Such shops have become a veritable switchboard of nostalgic exchanges between diasporic communities and the homelands from which they hail. Whether among the Indian, Ghanaian, or Trinidadian community, a visit to the local ethnic supermarket is not solely for the purchase of goods and products from the homeland. Rather, it is also significantly about the exchange of news from home, gossip about the local community, lamentations about the recalcitrance of children, and the general renewal of the sense of participating in another culture that is richer and more complex than the one that they happen to be sojourners in (Hage 1997; Mankekar 2002). It is part of the complex affective economy of diaspora, which also incorporates monuments, heirlooms, and many material objects in both the public and private spheres. At the same time, the basmati story also tells us something about the intersecting *scapes* (the links between culture and economy), *scales* (the multiple levels of farmers, shops, and people that the patent decision would have impacted, in India and North America), and *scopes* (the spatio-temporal vectors that define nation and its variant social imaginaries).

Transnationalism and diaspora are two key concepts by which to organize our understanding of nation, identity, and globalization in today’s world. They are also terms that are often used interchangeably. These two concepts tend to overlap with globalization theories in describing the conditions that give rise to new forms of migration, mobility, and mediatization. This volume shows that while there is no simple resolution to these intersections, there is a need to understand how these concepts and categories articulate with and against each other. Taken together, the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism promise a broad understanding of all the forms and implications that derive from the vast movements of populations, ideas, technologies, images, and financial networks that have come to shape the world we live in today. If the keywords that have organized the fields of diaspora
and transnational studies thus far have involved historically charged terms (i.e., nation, nationalism, ethnicity, culture, politics, economics, society, space, place, homeland, home, narrative, representation, alienation, nostalgia, and all their cognates), it is because the conditions they pertain to are so variegated that their understanding requires a multifocal, and indeed interdisciplinary, approach. The chapters in this volume address these entanglements from a variety of perspectives and will cover a wide range of topics and methodological approaches.

**Conceptual Categories**

Though subject to varied emphases and disciplinary investments, the contemporary concept of diaspora involves an understanding of the shifting relations between homelands and host nations from the perspective both of those who have moved, whether voluntarily or not, and of the recipient societies in which they find themselves. While diasporas emerge out of dispersals, not all dispersals lead to diasporas. For example, the violent dispersals that took place in Libya and the Ivory Coast in 2011 as a consequence of the political turmoil in those two countries may not necessarily lead to the formation of diasporas, whereas the Russian invasion and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, which led to massive dispersals of Pashtuns and other Afghani tribes into Pakistan and surrounding areas, did coalesce into a diaspora. Indeed, the central feature of the Afghani dispersal came to intensify an ethno-political and religious ideology to be articulated in the institutional form of the Taliban, incubated and hatched in the diaspora in the late 1990s, which in its turn came to cultivate a strong affiliation with the transnational network represented by Al-Qaeda. This would satisfy criteria for what Gabriel Sheffer describes in *Diaspora Politics* as an ethno-political diaspora (Sheffer 2003).

For a diaspora to emerge out of the dispersal of a given population a number of conditions have to be met. Among other things these often include the time-depth of dispersal and settlement in other locations; the development of a myth of the homeland; the attendant diversification of responses to homeland and host nation; the evolution of class segmentation and conflict within a given diaspora alongside the concomitant evolution of an elite group of cultural and political brokers; and the ways in which contradictions among the various class segments end up reinforcing different forms of material and emotional investment in an imaginary ideal of the homeland. Sometimes a utopian impulse serves to place the quest for the homeland in the vicinity of an active nationalism, as in the classic case of Jews at the turn of the nineteenth century and Palestinians in our contemporary period, and of the Irish diaspora nationalism following from the dispersals that took place from the middle of the nineteenth century. And yet the stake in a spatial homeland is neither always stable nor indeed consonant with the interests of a given diaspora, as Hakem al-Rustom shows for the Armenians of France (chapter 28). It is the utopian idealization and the work of political and cultural brokers that gives the homeland ultimate salience within diasporic consciousness, whether this ensues in a return-to-homeland
movement or not (Armstrong 1976; Brah 1996; Clifford 1997; Cohen 2008; Dufoix 2009; Sheffer 2003; Tölölyan 2000).

A diaspora, of whatever character, must not be perceived as a discrete entity but rather as being formed out of a series of contradictory convergences of peoples, ideas, and even cultural orientations. As Takeyuki Tsuda points out (Chapter 10), the circulations of diasporas between places of sojourn and their homelands may also come to generate different attachments to the idea of nation, either by deflating romantic notions of the national homeland and/or intensifying modes of identification with the erstwhile places of sojourn, or by conflating homeland and host nation into a new configuration of unanticipated doubled nostalgias. Following Hilary Parsons Dick on the contrapuntal lives of Mexican non-migrants (Chapter 24), diaspora is best understood, as Brah (1996) has noted, as the product of diaspora space involving a range of social and moral relationships that continually structure and restructure it. For diaspora space is inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but, equally, by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of “staying put” (Brah 1996: 18).

As a paired term to diaspora, transnationalism on the other hand focuses on various flows and counterflows and the multi-striated connections they give rise to. Transnationalism encompasses not only the movement of people, but also of notions of citizenship, technology, forms of multinational governance, and the mechanisms of global markets. While diasporas are often understood to be a subset of transnational communities, the latter are taken to be an expansion of the overall conceptual scale of the former. As an analytical category transnational communities are understood to transcend diasporas because such communities may not be derived primarily or indeed exclusively from the forms of co-ethnic and cultural identification that are constitutive of diasporas, but rather from elective modes of identification involving class, sexuality, and even professional interest. Thus transnational communities may include the gay communities worldwide that wage daily battles across different frontiers for recognition of their rights to marriage; Buddhist communities outside of the religion’s traditional homelands of India, China, and Japan that find common ground through involvement in certain rituals, practices, and non-violent ideologies across borders; or environmentalists who routinely traverse the circuits of international forums to assert common cause for a better-managed world. All such groups come to share strongly held objectives and communal values that are nonetheless quite different from the co-ethnic identifications that are taken to define diasporas.

While several displaced persons may be included within the umbrella of diaspora (such as exiles, refugees, guest-workers, asylum-seekers, etc.) it is the term migrant community that is most often used interchangeably with diaspora in scholarly accounts. “Migrant” is also the most prominent in everyday non-scholarly and bureaucratic usages. Even though we will also be using the two terms interchangeably, it is important to note some subtle shifts in the uses of the term between
migration studies and diaspora studies over the past decade or so. These shifts become pertinent to the way that the links between diaspora and transnationalism may be conceived at the present time. As Pnina Werbner notes (chapter 6), at the most formulaic level the difference between the two terms may be seen in the degree to which, within migration studies, particularly in the American scholarly literature, nation and society were taken to be coterminous, in the sense that migrants were assumed to ultimately integrate or assimilate into the country of settlement, with the nation then assumed to be the main horizon for understanding migrant relations across national borders. The social typologies of settlement and sojourn in the host nation and the problematics of citizenship were for example among the favored topics of migration studies. In an attempt to move away from what some have termed methodological nationalism (i.e., scholarly research which takes the nation-state as a “natural” container for understanding “the social and political form of the modern world” – e.g., Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 302), recent studies in transnationalism have taken the nation-state as merely one agent in a more complex variety of global actors. As nation and society became progressively severed as concepts, the latter, now extended across different national boundaries, began to provide a different set of analytics for the study of social formations as well as for the ethnicities and political relationships that were thought to be their constituent parts. Against the stress on borders, transnationalism examines their permeability, transcendence, or irrelevance. Werbner argues, however, against simplistic notions of “simultaneity” that the transnational social field cannot be taken as continuous and homogeneous. Instead it is “ruptured” to “create new configurations and clusterings.” Thus in Arjun Appadurai’s much cited Modernity at Large (1996) the standard anthropological concept of ethnicity is only taken as a starting point for elaborating the fractal social relations that connect different scapes bearing an impact on identity formation. These include the financescapes, ideoscapes, and imagescapes in his well-known nomenclature. We might also add the significance of netscapes, or the possibilities opened up by social networking and the new technologies that help us imagine forms of community across borders and the consolidation of diasporic identities connected to different spaces (Ong 2008). While nations have still remained relevant in the study of diasporas and transnationalism, they are no longer the default mode of exemplification. The elasticity of societies, their self-imaginings as transcending national boundaries, the articulation of social identities, and the long durée of dispersal that in certain instances goes well beyond the formation of modern nation-states as we know them today, have all provided fresh ways for thinking about migrant lives in their interconnected global frameworks. If old usages of migration implied the rubric of the nation-state, diaspora emphasizes community plus the circuits and circulations that fundamentally undergird migrant social identities across borders.

When tied to demography the concept of transnationalism, on the other hand, has grown out of the understanding that migrants do not easily substitute old homes for new ones in a straightforward way (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc 1994). Instead, scholarly research on transnationalism views the lives of migrants and
those who remain behind as simultaneously connected between two or more nation-states, where homeland ties are a defining part of a transnational profile that incorporates recursive modes of nostalgia, sometimes lodged in both homelands and the nations of sojourn at once (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). The variety of such movements, which have been variously described as transnational “circuits” (Rouse 1991, 1992), “networks” (Hannerz 1996), “social fields” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), “social spaces” (Faist 2000, 2011) and “chain migration” (Werbner 2002), allow for an investigation of both the broad social, economic, and cultural processes in which migrant diasporas are embedded, and the more interpersonal relationships of which they continue to be a part. The study of the transnational also includes “trans-social” spaces, where “place” at the subnational level becomes a lens through which to study intersecting social relations at different spatial levels and moments in time (Pries 2009). It is widely recognized that, just as there are different ways of studying transnationalism (e.g., from above and below, at the borders), there are also multiple ways of being transnational, since transnationalism includes a multiplicity of historical trajectories or pathways that affect people in different ways (Werbner 1999; Grillo 2007). These multiple phenomena are then taken to exemplify the nature and intensities of the multi-stratiated flows that shape the modern world. More importantly, it is also understood that migrant and diasporic networks may make an impact at different levels of society in both the host nation and the homelands from which migrants and their parents came from originally. For the implications of translocality cannot be limited to the two locations that have most framed migrants’ identities. The translocality of migrants means that their senses of themselves draw on the inflections and emphases provided by other communities of co-ethnics in other parts of the world. As Khachig Tölölyan points out in another context, “diasporas are resolutely multilocal and polycentric, in that what happens to kin communities in other areas of dispersion as well as in the homeland consistently matter to them” (2007: 651). Furthermore, as liberal multicultural policies relating to minorities within host nations are differentiated in relation to subnational groups, autochthonous communities with prior rights to land, and newly arrived immigrant/diasporic communities, they come to impact on the nature of the alliances and interrelations that such minority groups establish amongst themselves, and between them and other such entities in other national domains. This also inflects their transnationalist orientations (see especially Kymlicka 2007: 61–87).

The Study of Diasporas and Diaspora Studies

Unlike the hitherto readily recognizable sociopolitical field of area studies, which has its own hemispheric demarcations and distinctive disciplinary emphases, diasporas transcend nations, areas and regions and have arguably existed since the dawn of human history. Yet in terms of specific institutions, conferences, journals, and professional scholarship diaspora studies can only be dated confidently from
the middle of the twentieth century. There have always been differences between how diasporas represent themselves – emic uses – and how they are converted into an object of study under the rubric of diaspora studies – etic uses (Tölölyan 2007). It was only in 1965 that the historian George Shepperson made a scholarly case for viewing all peoples of African descent outside the continent as constituting a diaspora. As Brent Hayes Edwards points out (2003: 49), this crystallized the biblical resonances and figurations of Africans in the New World into a scholarly discourse explicitly in dialogue with the longstanding Jewish traditions behind the term *diaspora* itself. It also helped to expand and augment the purview of the classic diasporas, namely the Jewish, the Greek, and the Armenian. Since at least the early 1990s the term has been appropriated by and for the description of many other groups, both newer and older. Such groups have come to include the Chinese, the Indian, the Nigerian, the Caribbean, and the Somali diasporas, among many others, each of which has generated active transnational networks and internet communities as well as a steady stream of scholarly labor. With the establishment of the journal *Diasporas* by the Armenian American Khachig Tölölyan in 1991, the field progressively acquired scholarly coherence with a visible set of debates and practitioners. In 2004 the UK Arts and Humanities Research Board (now Council, hereafter AHRC) instituted for the first time the US$12 m Diaspora, Migration and Identities Program. The program’s web site asserted that its main aim was “to research, discuss and present issues related to diasporas and migration, and their past and present impact on subjectivity and identity, culture and the imagination, place and space, emotion, politics and sociality.” Its funding was not limited to any ethnic or cultural group but encompassed all diasporas within the United Kingdom, with a studied attempt to explore areas of overlap between the social sciences and the humanities. The presence of institutional support in the form of organizations such as the AHRC coincided also with a large range of governmental programs and policies instigated by countries in many parts of the world that sought to target and stimulate active homeland interest from their diasporas. This includes countries as varied as India, China, Zimbabwe, Trinidad & Tobago, and Brazil. As Jignai Dessa and Rani Neutill show (chapter 13), the new status that the diaspora acquired for Indian policymaking was mirrored in the emergence of a new character type in Bollywood cinema of the 1990s – the non-resident Indian or NRI – constructed out of a social imaginary of liberation, sexual adventurousness, and fresh female roles shaped within diasporic urban spaces that hitherto carried a different valence in the films. And in 2005 the African Union declared its African diaspora the “sixth region” of the continent, thus putting a continental spin on what had already been evolving within the domain of national policies.

typologies of diasporas, while Brah’s work explores the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity among South Asian diasporic communities in different parts of the world. For her part Hirsch builds upon her earlier “Post-Memories of Exile” essay from 1997, to focus on the ways in which the experiences of trauma after the Holocaust have impacted upon the field of visuality and memorialization for the children of Holocaust survivors and various others who bear witness to the violent events of the twentieth century. At the same time, Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* (1993) and James Clifford’s *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) are well known as offering models for rethinking the hybridities of diaspora. However, the distinction between Cohen, Dufoix, and Brah on the one hand and Hirsch, Gilroy, and Clifford on the other may be seen as between the outlining of social typologies and the attempt to describe the intangible elements of nostalgia, memory, and desire that elude the typologies of the social sciences. In a comprehensive view, both social science and humanities approaches are imperative for understanding the full spectrum of the significations of diaspora. The arts of memory, the dialectics of place, the affective economies of dispersal, the ethnographies of nostalgia, the intersubjectivities of social identity, and the citational practices that ground senses of cultural particularity outside the homeland (such as in names, family photographs, special community journals, movies, etc.), along with social categories and identities (village of provenance, race, class, gender, generational differences, the dynamics of (in)habitation facilitated by the host nation, etc.) are all crucial for understanding diasporas. All such features are part of the sometimes strategic/instrumental but always expressive configuration of diasporicity, the salience and intensity of whose elements is also shaped by the character of historical epochs in which they are articulated (Dufoix 2008).

**Dispersals and Transnationalism**

The history of the term *diaspora* reveals the polysemy of the historical context from which it first emerged and the further complications that came to be attached to it in subsequent usage. “Diaspora” first appears in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Pentateuch or Torah. According to most scholars, the first Greek translation of the Torah probably took place in third-century BCE Alexandria for the benefit of the Jews living in that city, who then spoke more Greek than Hebrew, as well as for the practical purpose of allowing the Jewish laws to be recognized and accessed by Ptolemaic law courts (Modrzejewski 1997; Cohen 2008; Dufoix 2008; Rajak 2009). The largest Jewish community outside of Jerusalem at the time, the Jews of Hellenistic Alexandria belonged to the cultural intersection of two worlds: Jewish and Greek. It is precisely this intersecting context that led Hellenized Jews to craft a Greek neologism aimed at expressing a Biblical reality devoid of Greek equivalent. The Greek noun “diaspora” was coined after the verb *diaspeirô* (from *dia,* “through” and *speirô,* “to sow”), which literally means “to disperse” or “to scatter” (hence, by extension, “to take root elsewhere”). “Diaspora” did not originally translate into, or
have the dramatic weight of, the Hebrew word *galuth* (exile, captivity), with which it later came to be associated after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE and “the disappearance of a Jewish political center – especially after the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt” (135 CE) (Dufoix 2008: 55; see also Boyarin and Boyarin 2002). Rather, it is first employed in reference to God’s curse and threat of dispersal of the Jews if they do not respect his divine commandments. It is hence true to say that Jewish translators created a word that designated the potential, and not actual, dispersal of the Jewish people.

While the history of the Jewish diaspora illustrates the most extensive emic and etic reflections on diaspora, it is the dispersals dating from the early modern period that provide the horizon in which we might understand the broader transnational configurations of the world today that transcend the Jewish example. The process of imperial and colonial expansion from Europe proceeded in two main phases, which overlapped and were both tied to the formation of the global political economy. The first expansion of modernity (1492–1650 CE) was set in motion primarily by the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs in the long sixteenth century, while the second modernity (1650–1945) saw a decisive shift away from the multiple repercussions of Iberian ambition towards the interests of England, France, the Netherlands, and Germany. Each historical phase of modernity also generated its own internal and external imaginative borders. In the first modernity the expansion of Spain into the Americas coincided with their expulsion of Arabs and Jews from their lands in the name of blood purity, while a concomitant assumption of the heathen status of the natives they encountered in what later became Latin America was also maintained. The second modernity on the other hand saw the progressive construction of the uncivilized Other (Chinese, African, Caribbean, Southeast Asian) who needed to be reformed through the light of reason and colonial governmentality (Grosfoguel 2007: 94–104; also Mignolo 2000).

Scholars of colonialism and empire generally concede that the period from the sixteenth century represents the largest movement of human population in world history, with some estimates of as much as 60 million for the period. With the entire world population standing at 1.2 billion by 1850, the population dispersals from the sixteenth century onward then represent a dramatic movement of the world’s population stock. The population movements that took place in the period are however normally reported in segments; it was not until the 1905 census of the British empire that we get a detailed picture for the first time of many of these population dispersals, particularly for the English-speaking world (see Maas 2003; Christopher 2008). And it is only when we take all these population dispersals together, as opposed to piecemeal or separately, that we get a proper picture of world history from the perspective of the mobility of populations and their implications for understanding the transnational character of social relations among different regions of the world.

The reasons for and character of population dispersals contrast in different historical phases. However, from a diaspora and transnational perspective, a handy overlap may be seen between the character of largely voluntary migrations from
Europe from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, and the more instrumentalized character of population dispersals that marked first the period of transatlantic slavery from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries and then, from the high point of formal colonialism, from the mid-nineteenth century into the first half of the twentieth. As Emmanuel Akyeampong adroitly shows (Chapter 9), transatlantic slavery had an impact not only on the constitution of hybrid societies in the New World and Europe but also on the ways in which wage labor and regimes of factory work came to later be defined (see also Williams 1944; Baucom 2005). As Simon Gikandi argues in *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (2011) the cultivation of modern taste in Western societies and the violence of slavery did not inhabit separate domains but were co-constitutive in the first and abiding instance. Even though population dispersal became instrumentalized as a central component of colonial governmentality, it is important to note that this process began first in Europe itself. Thus while the seventeenth century in particular was to be characterized by vast movements of populations from Europe to different parts of the world – instigated by dire demographic transitions, famine and agricultural blight, acute living and social conditions due to population explosion, and the rabid religious persecutions and zeal for renewal that marked the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the period – these population dispersals were also managed with respect to race, class, and also law-and-order prerogatives.

In 1620 the English philosopher and politician Sir Francis Bacon called for a study of monsters, “of everything . . . which is new, rare, and unusual in nature” (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000: 39). Through this study landless peasants, orphans, pirates, Anabaptists, the Irish, gypsies, Africans, and other types of “vagabonds” were compared to a “hydra-headed monster” that needed to be controlled and later exploited. The British empire at the time was expanding and these “monsters” served as important sources of labor in the colonies. Thus for the British, whereas West Africa had long been considered unsuitable for a penal colony in favor of Australia, a settlement was still established in Sierra Leone for the settling of London’s black poor from 1786 to 1791. The resolution of issues of poverty in Britain through the movement of segments of its own population was not limited exclusively to the plight of the black poor but also included the dispersal of poor children to Australia, South Africa, and the Americas. As early as 1618 a hundred “vagrant” children in London were rounded up and transported to the colony of Virginia. They were set to work as indentured laborers under slave-like conditions, the policies of enforced child migration continuing piecemeal throughout the colonial period. Orphaned children ended up being sent off to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa and the Swan River colony in Australia in 1832, and to New Brunswick and Toronto in Canada in 1833. An estimated 150,000 poor children were transferred in this way until the outbreak of World War II, with at least 80,000 of these being sent to Canada alone. Many of the children ended up in dastardly conditions of servitude.

While some revisionist imperial historians with an eye to identifying the positive effects of empire have argued that colonial policy was often confused and unsystematic (Ferguson 2002; Darwin 2009), it remains the case that, certainly in the case
of the British, conditions were created for the transfer of large populations during the colonial period, and that these groups were dispersed between different regions of the empire. A similar phenomenon of intra-colonial dispersals were also to mark French and Dutch colonialism, while Spain and Portugal played a key role first in the dispersion of Jews in the medieval period, and subsequently in the long phase of the Atlantic slave trade. In fact, it would not be hyperbolic to suggest that colonialism relied essentially on the instrumentalization of population dispersal as a key component of governmentality. Whether with the direct establishment of administrative and bureaucratic arrangements in the conversion of what were initially trade outposts (as in much of Africa, India, and Southeast Asia), or in the context of settler colonies (as in Australia, Canada, Latin America, and, arguably, Ireland), or in the case of post-plantation economies (as in Sri Lanka, Jamaica, and Malaysia), colonial governmentality invariably involved the creation of conditions for the dispersal of populations, some of which came to coalesce into diasporas (see chapter 8). And in several instances, as in the indentured labor policies that took effect from the 1830s, population dispersal was systematic and designed to meet particular economic ends. In contrast, the enforced dispersal of Jews from Eastern Europe to North and South America and Israel that took place from the late nineteenth century was tied to the spasmodic nature of nation-state formation within Europe itself. Whether with regard to Russia, Germany, Poland, or other European countries of Eastern Europe, each phase of national splintering or imperial expansion involved the isolation of Jews as anomalous citizens who were submitted to violent attack and dispersal. The political and economic vagaries of the nation-state form are also responsible for the ongoing dispersal of people from the global south to the global north in our contemporary period. From at least the postwar period, when Europe actively encouraged labor migration from its former colonies, and then magnified several fold after the economic collapse of the early 1970s, people from Third World countries have had to flee famine, wars, religious persecution, and oppressive and incoherent political systems to become sojourners in foreign lands. It is a profound irony, then, that despite the moral panic often expressed in many parts of Europe and North America today at the prospect of immigrants and asylum-seekers on their borders, the period of extensive migrations from Europe during the seventeenth century and after was marked by the same forces that have underpinned the desperate movement of populations from the global south to the global north from the latter part of the twentieth century. These include spasmodic nation-states, famine and natural disasters, inter-ethnic conflicts, and religious persecutions. If the imaginative connection between the two modernities of European expansion already noted, and between Europe and the various lands that were “discovered,” is displayed in the relentless dissemination of letters, reports, paintings, chronicles, and travel narratives penned by sailors, merchants, travelers, and colonial officials, it is also important to acknowledge that these media have not remained exclusively within the privileged purview of Europeans. As Julian Murphet shows (chapter 3), once we expand our understanding of the word media to include different forms and modalities of representation that dispersed peoples have always carried along
with them, we find that the diasporas that were created out of the various processes of dispersal not only deployed similar media for the self-representation of their conditions, but also came to completely alter the terms by which these media might be understood in the first place. As a starting point to understanding the relation between media and diaspora, Murphet asks that we revise our understanding of orality and its uses. For well before Facebook people told collective stories of where they came from and where they hoped to be going. In certain instances, as with the Torah, orality coalesced into ethical dicta and recommendations for surviving the traumas of dispersal that were progressively to be written down and later disseminated via other forms of representation. In yet other instances material objects also came to be invested with the aura of the homeland and become the bearers of the arts of memory. As Rachel Mairs points out (chapter 6), the more than 70 garrison diasporas that were formed following Alexander the Great’s military expeditions in the fourth century BCE, which spread from Alexandria in Egypt as far as Kandahar in Afghanistan and Khujand in Tajikistan, came to carry traces of Greece through the material culture and architecture that were transposed from their homeland into the new environments. Archaeological findings in some of the garrisons in Central Asia and India suggests that they knew Greek drama, philosophy, and literature, with a Greek transcription for a fragment found in Kandahar even bearing an oblique reference to Homer.

Transnationalism and the Question of the Nation-State

If diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment (Tölölyan 1991), then when did transnationalism become understood as a separate phenomenon in the first place? Scholars have pointed to the 1910s, when “transnationalism” was used to criticize classical frameworks within international migration and to challenge a calculating and rationalist model of the migrant as *homo economicus* (Isotalo 2009: 62). Bourne (1916) first used the word “transnationalism” to refer to a state in which migrants maintain cultural ties to their home countries. He was challenging the assumptions of an American “melting pot” scenario, which assumed that new migrants had to assimilate fully into their country of residence (Ernste, Van Houtum, and Zoomers 2009). The concept fell out of use until the 1970s, when transnationalism had some cache within the domain of international relations (Nye 1976). It was only in the early 1990s that transnationalism (like diaspora) became a popular concept, extending itself across different scholarly fields and serving as a useful critique of global development theories. Going beyond the “bipolar model” (Rouse 1991), this interdisciplinary field emphasizes the ways in which migrants build transnational social fields that cut across geographic, cultural, and political borders. Examining the spatialization of the “nation” through cultural “flows” between borders and the production of transnational “hybrid” subjects proved to become an influential and exciting field that cross-cut the social sciences and humanities. Studies in transnationalism challenged the boundaries of the nation-