Diaspora, Nation: Living Place through Movement

Khachig Tölölyan, in his short introduction[1] to *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, notes that the journal's concern is "the ways in which nations, real yet imagined communities…are fabulated, brought into being, made and unmade, in culture and politics, both on land people call their own and in exile" (1991: 3). Diasporas are important for Tölölyan because they embody the shifting boundaries brought into question in transnational studies. But diaspora is not now nor was it then a term clearly defined; a major aspect of the journal *Diaspora* is in fact to investigate the often ambiguous and contradictory contexts to which the term applies and the ways in which it has been defined. Speaking of methodology, Tölölyan notes the importance of embracing all forms of cultural production and all periods in history. This paper will attempt to follow this approach by highlighting works which eclectically deal with topics and sources, meanwhile raising questions regarding the "traces of struggles over and contradictions within ideas and practices of collective identity, of homeland and nation" (Tölölyan 1991: 3). Since 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the rewriting of Europe, and later 9/11 the terms of diaspora have become increasingly pertinent to our diverse social worlds. They help us to understand the situations in which social groups – cultures, societies, and other networks of social interaction – come into play with one another and redefine boundaries delimiting one group from another. This paper is an attempt to get behind some of the uses of diaspora, as it is framed in relation to nation, and show how

[1] He refers to this piece as a "manifesto disguised as a 'Preface'" (1991: 3).

the two are at once irreconcilable (they both described very different processes), yet inextricable (similar things are happening in both cases). I hope to show that diaspora is a useful category for any social research, but that it necessarily implies a historical look at feeling "at home" in a nation (whether it be near or far). Furthermore, through a brief case study of Italian American experiences, I hope to illustrate how culture might be conceived as the interaction between diaspora as movement and feeling "at home" in a nation.

Making Diaspora(s)

In a 1996 essay published in *Diaspora*, Tölölyan revisits diaspora and looks at how scholars since the 1960s have dealt with the term. Tölölyan observes that scholarship on transnationalism, in general, saw a re-naming of dispersed communities so that in contemporary work "diaspora" is deployed in reference to previous categories of groups, communities, and minorities in movement (1996: 3). He asserts, "re-naming is usually accompanied by an attempt to overthrow the older understanding of a category and to make the new term and refashioned category the focus of a new intellectual order" (1996: 5). One major implication of this refashioning is the reformulation of the relationship between the nation-state and diaspora. Tölölyan isolates reasons for the re-naming of dispersions that range from "accelerated immigration to the industrialized world" (1996: 20) to the proliferation of the American university system. The latter example frames diaspora in terms of an era of globalization, prior to which diaspora referred to specific national-ethnic dispersions (Jewish, Armenian, Greek). In the globalized era, however,

both communication and travel are made easier by international political, legal, and social conditions. Since 1965, 26 million immigrants moved to the United States legally, estimates suggest another six to ten did so illegally (Tölölyan 1996: 20). With increasing movement, scholars have sought to understand migration and social boundaries in various ways, this paper is an attempt to flesh out some of these understandings.

In 1997, James Clifford reworked his 1994 essay "Diasporas" (along with others) into *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Clifford examines an "unfinished modernity" via travels and sites in order to unsettle traditional anthropological notions of culture as rooted, bounded, or "dwelling" (1997: 2). He seeks to pinpoint the nexus of the regional, national, and global, when these are made local and reveal the historical tension between categories of "the traveler" and "the native" (1997: 24). He is less concerned with the term diaspora than with the boundaries both implied and directly referenced in cultural productions and in traditional ethnography. For example, Clifford points out a somewhat tautological argument: in different social contexts, different boundaries might be emphasized with regard to one particular group. He then complicates this by asking what are the implications with regard to boundaries and suppositions of the "boundedness" of culture. If in place A the given *race* of a people is emphasized and in place B their *ethnicity* or *religion* (all boundaries which likely overlap in complicated ways) are emphasized, how does one then conceive of this social body as bounded? What are the limits of diaspora groups in which these boundaries are constantly at play with outside forces? Clifford suggests that diaspora is something which might be expanded, brought into theories of culture; by invoking the work of Amitav Ghosh, an Indian, Oxford-trained anthropologist, working in Egypt who in his fieldwork

slowly discovers that everyone is somehow connected to narratives of travel and dispersion, Clifford shows that concepts such as "community," "culture," and "region," (among others) "may obscure as much as they reveal" (1997: 245). Diasporas then become an alternative for our understanding of cultural boundaries, their very existence un-bounds the wholeness given priority in cultural systems, for they exist in-between worlds, in interstitial places.

But the distance to which Clifford takes diaspora, and its implied sense of movement, begs important questions regarding the boundaries of social bodies in general. For, if diaspora dislocates connections to place, how can a sense of belonging to a group that identifies itself through its connection to place be reconciled with the existence (or non-existence) of that very group? Thus, underpinning nearly all discussions of diaspora is an assumption about the connection of diaspora to a homeland, a home, or a nation. Clifford's perspective undermines this very distinction: the homeland has never left the diaspora community. It does not exist in physical form, in fact, but is as Tölölyan noted, always being imagined and remade in the memories of the diaspora. However, Clifford cautions against exaggerating diaspora as un-rootedness because it reduces long-standing issues of the violence of "rooting," which include racism, ethnocide, and genocide (Clifford 1997: 258). Tölölyan notes, "Diasporic identity has become an occasion for the celebration of multiplicity and mobility – and a figure of our discontent with our being in a world apparently still dominated by nation-states" (1996: 28). Following a logic similar to Clifford's, Tölölyan argues that this approach to diaspora is reductive, for diaspora is more than multiplicity, especially when one factors into this problem the changing contexts with regard to third and fourth generation members of "diaspora" communities.

In later generations, in which individuals have little or no physical relationship with the homeland or the experience of their ancestors and have been re-written into a national or other narrative, yet a distinction nevertheless exists (for example, Italian American), we must ask how the diasporic distinction can be embraced or co-opted by the nation-state itself. Although the diasporic community, "labors to remain in interaction with the larger transnation which includes the homeland and other diasporic segments", there are ways by which the nation itself can co-opt or inscribe the diasporic narrative into its own, thus erasing the multicity of diaspora, and yet maintaining the illusion of its existence (Tölölyan 1996: 29). The diaspora as a community may be imagined or invented in the Andersonian or Hobsbawmiam sense, yet diaspora remains very real and constitutive of the social lives of members of its community in complicated ways.

Writing at the same time as Clifford and Tölölyan is Samir Dayal who speculates, in his article *Diaspora and Double Consciousness*, on the positioning of diasporic individuals and groups in light of the problems laid out above. The diaspora as lived, according to Dayal, is characterized by double consciousness. Double consciousness is a sense of being "neither just this/nor just that": that is, in order to collapse the dichotomy between both/and, which Dayal argues lends itself to making concrete suppositions about diasporic belonging, and the social, national, religious groups to which they claim to belong, being "neither just this/nor just that" lends contradiction and ambiguity to narratives which exhibit complicated geographical and temporal contexts (1996: 47). Narratives of purity – narratives that imply belonging to a clearly defined social group – are eradicated with double consciousness; instead, an internal hybridity marks diasporic

identity.[2] Internal hybridity speaks to the many worlds with which they concomitantly identify. Dayal writes against W.E.B. Du Bois's double consciousness in which one is always looking at one's self "through the eyes of others" (Du Bois, c.f. Dayal 48), by noting that an internally hybrid, or double consciousness perspective, "compels us all to see ourselves and our others in the *same* mirror" (1996: 49). Dayal does not intend to reduce all diasporics to self-reflexive individuals or cosmopolitans, but rather notes that this sense of ambiguity can amount to the disempowerment of diasporic individuals. That is, double consciousness sometimes places the diasporic in an interstice in which he is marginalized by hegemonic national or otherwise majority or dominant discourses.

Dayal introduces a problematic theme that carries over into discussions on diaspora nearly a decade later. He notes that standard definitions of diaspora tend toward "positive" conceptions of eclecticism, multiplicity, or one's connection to a homeland (in a nostalgic sense), whereas there exists another, "negative" conception that sees diaspora as a form of liminality or incompleteness (1996: 51-52). It is in this way that the diasporic is internally double, which to Dayal means "less than one." This negative conception of diaspora manifests itself when diaspora is constituted through its exclusion from "true citizenship" (such as "guest workers" in the United Arab Emirates or Germany), its neutralization through processes of cultural or national assimilation (such as hyphenated identification; Italian-American, Asian-American), and when its conception of itself is collapsed into something homogenous and uniform and rendered

[2] The notion of duality has been struggled with in most writings on diaspora (see Axel 2003; Ho 2004; Huyssen 2003 Tambiah 2000). By discussing Dayal's work on double consciousness, I do not intend to call upon the large discussion of duality, but rather find hybridity as implied in this sense of double conscious to be a term that allows for an ambiguity of boundaries denied by duality.

another "minoritarian body" (Dayal 1996: 52).[3] These remind us that diaspora is not clearly demarcated from other sectors of society, nor does it fit into a prefabricated narrative of temporality (diaspora is not simply the past in the present), diaspora is complicated in the way that race, gender, ethnicity are and speaks more about movement than it does about settling (or settlement). Categories outside of the nation – such as race, gender, and ethnicity – need to be theorized in connection with diaspora.

Brian Keith Axel works against notions of a "bounded" diaspora or, what he describes as the nation-state as a spatio-temporal container for diaspora, in his 2004 article *The Context of Diaspora*. He finds most uncomfortable the frequent placement of diaspora as "past in the present" – that is, the view that accepts diaspora as a representation of the past (place of origin) which persists in the present (location) and, in doing so, separates relationships of time and place by history (Axel 2004: 28). Instead, the subject formation of diaspora groups must be considered insofar as it shifts attention away from the "population" and assumptions about the "wholeness" of diaspora and onto the diasporic "subject." Thus, Axel describes the "emergence of particular subjects in ways that are necessarily culturally and historically specific" rather than seeing diasporic subjects as "transhistorical" (2004: 33). This moves beyond the claim to internal hybridity by asserting that rather than seeing diasporas as bodies that move between places, temporally and spatially, they are in fact created *through* cultural and historical

[3] Benedict Anderson's *Spectre of Comparison* stands in-between these articulations of diaspora and nation and the ones I argue exist. Anderson talks about the envisioning of diasporas as originally rooted in a place and, through movement, uprooted from that bounded unit only to be embraced by the nation-state as a diaspora and finally re-rooted (1998: 45). Anderson in a sense eliminates the diaspora's movement, its double consciousness, through its up- and re-rooting in the national imaginary.

process. Similarly, in *Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Pasts* (2003), Andreas Huyssen writes about a growing concern with the past since 1989. He argues that the Huntington *Clash of Civilizations* thesis, which is based on the argument that opposing "civilizations" constitute contemporary socio-political dilemmas, has become more entrenched after 9/11, but that it leaves little room for diaspora. Huntington's thesis and 9/11 have reinvigorated a discussion that revolves around "the metaphysics of civilizations, cultures, and nations" (Huyssen 2003: 149). In this narrative, diaspora appears as being opposite to nation. Huyssen suggests that in order to bring diaspora back into conversation and more critically consider its placement with regard to other social phenomenon, it must be studied in terms of diasporic "memory formation" – a process that has affinities with national "memory formation" (2003: 150).

The relationship between these different types of memory formation remains understudied. Huyssen notes a growing awareness of the ineffectiveness of the "national" as a category of analysis for social theory; as it declines in its ability to explain contemporary predicaments, today's diaspora offers a more functional framework. It is precisely because diaspora carries a subtler weight of memory that it has become an alternate path to theorizing the nation, or national bodies. Today's understanding of diaspora challenges the "rootedness" even of traditional diaspora. Huyssen argues that conceptions of nation are traditionally built on the idea of continuity and homogeneity, one could make this argument for the "old" diasporas. Discussing traditional diasporas, Brent Hayes Edwards begins his essay, *The Uses of Diaspora* (2001), by elaborating on the linkage between shifting notions of African history, the dispersion of Africans throughout the world, and existing discourses on diaspora in the Jewish community.

Writings that implied a future of going "back to Africa" and returning to "native roots" from the New World, although not yet explicit, showed striking similarities to discourses of Jewish return to Israel and archaic (and recent) invocations of "the promised land" (Edwards 2001: 47). There is implied here a sense of continuity between the present and one's linkage to the past as homeland or nation. Whereas these old conceptions were formed on notions of continuity, diaspora has since come to signify split, displacement, hybridity – in fact, Huyssen argues that any questioning of diaspora necessarily is based on geographical displacement or migration (2003: 152).

Scholars at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (University of Birmingham, England) such as Stuart Hall brought Marx into discussions of diaspora via a theory of *articulation* – a concept-metaphor that helps us to see "non-naturalizable relations of linkage between disparate societal elements" (Edwards 2001: 59). That is, concepts such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, become inseparable from any analysis of diaspora, thus decentering diaspora from arguments for cultural cohesion and continuity between "home" and diaspora community. *Struggle* instead is necessary to understand diaspora and how it works with regard to displaced (or dispersed) communities; the struggle to realize the diasporic's (or diaspora's) own sense of identity. Diaspora shifts from a static entity that serves categorical purposes to something constituted through difference and the relations between various social and political forces and bodies. Edwards argues that the "turn to race" in cultural studies was equivalent to a "turn to diaspora" both of which rewrite the *nation*; that the linkages between racism and nationalism mark a departure from existing discourses on diaspora in historiographical work (2001: 57). If diaspora rewrites the nation – and itself is often

framed in reference to it – we must ask how the nation becomes *home*, how senses of belonging to nation vis-à-vis diaspora come to inform subjects.

At home in a nation

With the breakdown of Iron Curtain, Gorbachev declared, “we are Europeans,” envisioning the dissipation of borders between Western and Eastern Europe (Wolff 1994: 15). However permanent these borders have appeared, Larry Wolff, in *Inventing Eastern Europe*, shows how borders – and thus boundaries – are imagined and mapped into reality by travelers and philosophers through the selection and representation of characteristics that reify a peoples’ belonging to a particular place or region. Wolff notes, regarding the history of Western and Eastern Europe, “Inventing Eastern Europe meant picking out the resemblances to produce a pattern of relations, and failing to note the differences that marred the pattern” (1994: 357). Although a distance of some 50 miles separated major cities in Germany and Poland, the journey from one to the other symbolized a passage from west to east (or vice versa). Similar observations can be made about the construction of diaspora or national categories. While the boundaries between Europe and the “Europes” were challenged after 1989, Jeffrey M. Peck, in *Rac(e)ing the Nation*, notes the striking connection between the moment Germany moved to include all Germans, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and concomitantly "left so many 'others' out" (1996: 481). Opposing categories of German and *Auslander* (foreigner – literally, "from outside the country" associate with the word *fremd* for strange) were used to differentiate between Germans and those who would not become members of the new German nation.

Color materialized the degrees of inside-/outside-ness. In the new Germany, argues Peck, difference in terms of race and skin color differentiation categorize groups of people who, to varying degrees, can or cannot become "German" (1996: 485-6). Furthermore, Peck uses the work of anthropology to show that "the feeling of being at home" in Germany was something considered impossible and inconceivable by Portuguese guest workers in Germany. The boundaries represented as national, became inscribed in the discursive traditions of "Germans" and "non-Germans" so that they were untranscendable (1996: 483). It was not merely a sense of belonging to a political nation-state that was expressed, rather a sense of belonging to a *home*.

Because of these ambiguities with regard to belonging and place, Morley and Robbins, in *No Place like Heimat*, invoke Anthony Giddens's work on the time and space of modernity and argue, "Places are no longer the clear supports of our identity" (1996: 457). Similarly addressing the boundaries of Europe and Germany – this time in relation to America – the authors ask, if America forms more or less a unified symbolic border to the west, what is the post-Iron Curtain border to the east of Europe? What are Europe's new boundaries? Morley and Robbins argue that there is a reemergence of "a rather ancient definition" of Christendom is at stake, Islam comprising the limits of its boundaries. Herein lies the decomposition of place as supporting identity, for one cannot ignore the large populations of Muslims within Europe's political and legal boundaries (Morley & Robbins 1996: 457). Muslims, in diaspora, form new others in opposition to European nationals. There is implicit here a duality of place – country/idea; for example, America as the geographical entity that is the United States of America and America as in "the American Dream" (Morley & Robbins 1996: 464-5). The latter is often formative of

conceptions of home, embracing a particular economic and social trajectory. Morley and Robbins discuss memories of "home" vis-à-vis the role of national cinema. Cinema serves to shape national bodies, creating or imagining a sense of "home" for the nation's citizenship; thus the idea of "home" and "homeland" is not only at play for communities detached from their "home" as in diaspora but too for those within its geographical limits. This should be an important reconsideration for diaspora studies; for, the processes that are often assumed to be particular to communities away from "home" actually have as much relevance to communities, in every sense, "at home" (Morley & Robbins 1996: 461)

Returning to the discussion of diaspora, Morley and Robbins ask, can Europe be open to the "condition and experience of homelessness" – that is, is there a place for the *absolute*, or bounded category, in a world redefined by movement? Is there a place for "home"? How are diaspora communities, with regard to what is written above, inscribed into national narratives of "home"? As noted, Eastern Europeans became such through the process of repetition and imagination, which selected similar aspects of their identity and neglected the differences. Analogous processes no doubt occur in diaspora. For example, a group of Muslim immigrants – from different countries and regions within those countries, practicing different forms of Islam (*Wahhabism, Sufism, Sunni Islam*) – might be recognized in terms of their similarities and deemed "Muslims" thus being categorized in the national context as Muslim Americans, a term which neglects the subtleties and attributes to them a place in the nation in which to feel "at home." Furthermore, their similarities might be pointed out for the precise reason that they are perceived as *similarly different* from general practices of the "host" community, thus

their "multiplicity" works to perpetuate their distinctiveness while purportedly inscribing them into a national narrative (Dayal 2003). Peck concludes with an argument for how the *Heimat* model does not represent the German nation in its political sense – in fact, he argues that it presents an impossibility, an ideal, that is foiled by the fact that today, "the refugee more appropriately represents the universal man or woman, since displacement, fragmentation, transcience, as oxymoronic as it may be, seem to have become rather permanent states" (489). The idea of wholeness, although influential to conceptions of belonging, is not sufficient for describing the cultural boundaries in and around which "nationals" and "diasporas" interact and where they find themselves "at home."

The diaspora that never was, from the nation that never was

In Donna R. Gabaccia's *Italy's Many Diasporas* (2000), she argues that there was neither an Italian nation nor and Italian people prior to 1861. Without the conception of an Italian nation or people, it is difficult to talk about an Italian diaspora, especially regarding suppositions about the connection between "peoples living outside their homeland." However Gabaccia does find the term diaspora useful as it provides a framework from which to look at the making of Italian communities outside of Italy and the making of Italy itself – the unity of diaspora is not there, but the sense of "making" it is. This exemplifies some of the questions raised above about whether or not diaspora is a useful analytic category, and how, through it, one can come to understand nation and categories which offer insight into degrees of belonging to a nation-state. Gabaccia clarifies by noting that her subject is not *one* Italian diaspora per se, but instead "many

temporary, and changing, diasporas of peoples with identities and loyalties poorly summed up by the national term, Italian" (2000: 6), thus embracing the ambiguities of boundaries attached to *both* diaspora and nation.

The third part of her book deals with what she refers to as the "proletariat" Italian diaspora of 1870 to 1914. During these 50 years, Italy saw 16.6 million departures. As soon as Italy became a unified nation, people left; but explanations for this mass migration are as much in world as in local histories. Gabaccia cites among these, the freeing of slaves, "populating" new lands in North and South America, and a general "human restlessness" 19th and early 20th centuries (200: 58-60). Work and bread – not nation – are what Italian workers sought. In fact, the learning of a trade was considered a means to departure – "*mestiere per partire*" – trade for departure (leaving). Gabaccia describes a sort of market of men in Europe and driven in part by *padroni* (boses, or patrons) who advertise and sell work in other European countries to men in Italy. On the reception side, the earliest conceptions of Italians abroad by "native" Americans and others redefined the national-diaspora group as hardworking and poor people, the term "Italian" as a referent for the immigrants themselves carried little weight (Gabaccia 2000: 74). Regarding the relationship between "natives" and Italians, Gabaccia notes that "natives" often found troubling the living standards of Italians, who were saving money for remittances and surplus (2000: 91). Their lifestyle was characterized by the sacrifice of living between worlds.

The network of movement was quite intricate: between 1908-1909, 98.7% of emigrants left on a pre-paid ticket; and between 1905-1920, 49% returned from the Americas (*La Merica*) (Gabaccia 2000: 66-72). In some cases, this system was preferred

by the state because it meant that the Italians were "protected." In this sense, the return home was important for the newly founded Italian state. Temporary, migratory work was standard for Italians, Northerners and Southerners alike – they built Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Boston, and the railroads between these cities. It was only late during this period that Italians began to find more permanent work in (Gabaccia 2000: 77). In this way, by being un-rooted in *La Merica*, Italians abroad were more intricately linked to their *paese* than they were to American cities and communities. They did however experience the difference of place. Gabaccia discusses the changes in social practice that came out of migration; these occur mainly in terms of class mobility (and regional, that is rural to urban), Italians who had worked abroad began mimicking styles of dress common to urbanites, and also made considerable changes with regard to alimentary practices, such as an increase in meat consumption, drinking beer or schnapps. These practices by Italians and *paesani* (in Italy) were labeled as American, German, Swiss – it was understood that the returnees had modified their lives, were no longer Italian (or more accurately *paesani*) in the same way, now they embodied the internal hybridity, or double consciousness of diaspora (2000: 96-99). Another example is highlighted in Marie Hall Ets's *Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant* 1970), in which Rosa, the main character of the oral narrative, describes her growing sense of power in America, her ability to address people she generally considered her superiors. For Rosa, her sense of being positioned in the *paese* social structure began to dissipate in America, she was challenged to find new categories for understanding herself as a woman, an Italian, a Lombardian, and an American. Likewise, Gabaccia notes, citing immigrant sources, "in the diaspora, a man could more easily feel like a civilized human being" in comparison to the conditions of

Southern Italy at the time (2000: 100). Yet, "while returners seemed determined to cast aside old mores and customs, families abroad more often appeared as social, moral, and fiscal conservatives" (2000: 105). This is an interesting relationship given the diaspora's social context; as the two bodies (home-village, diaspora-village/community) experience different in- and out-flows of population, the political and social circumstances change in vastly different ways so as to further separate one from the other. Nevertheless, the connection remains, at least in an ideological sense.

Gabaccia makes the argument that for the immigrants from Italy, there was a strong desire to return home and not a cohesive sense of community as is common in other forms of diaspora (forced, involuntary). For these migrants, "home was a place…not a people, nation, or descent group" (2000: 7), home was the *paese* (village) or *patria* (homeland). This has been pointed out, albeit in a different way, in Stefano Luconi's work on the making of Italian-American communities in Philadelphia during the interwar period (1996, 2001). Luconi emphasizes how political and social (discrimination) events caused the coagulation of smaller groups of *paesani* (people from one village) into Italian-Americans. It was true, too, that "Everywhere, competition among varieties of diaspora nationalism, paese- and kin-centered regionalism, and exiles' internationalist ideologies was quite pronounced until World War I" (Gabaccia 2000: 107). Catholicism, for example, was particularly salient force in pulling the diaspora into a unified narrative; despite being more loyal to popular religious practices, Catholic churches provided a place for Italians to organize in an overwhelmingly Protestant country (Gabaccia 2000: 126; Luconi 1996). These examples of the ambiguity and changing contexts of Italians abroad and their frequent returns home show that diaspora

does not necessarily challenge the nation-state and it can instead be used as something through which the nation-state comes into being by virtue of its population at home and abroad. The transnationalism of diaspora became "a way of life" for Italians *fuori* (outside) – it facilitated the "the construction of family economies across national borders" that were hardly formed (Gabaccia 2000: 82) and makes the Italian diaspora a "diaspora that never was" in a nation that never was (13).

Conclusion

Lived experiences of place and nation via movement – routes, diaspora – imply broader contexts by means of which we might envision a conception of culture as something carried with us, yet also rooted and growing from these movements. Some authors talk of the problems of theories of de-territorialization and offer alternatives (Morley 2000; Tambiah 2000). Certainly, there is no such entire de-territorialization. Palestinian diaspora often carry a key to their family's home, passing it from one generation to the next, to memorialize the exile in which they live. Italian grandfathers tell their grandchildren of the "old country," however imagined, still descriptive and lucid enough to fill a child's memory with images of a "lost" part of his history. These are no singular cases, they amount to collective endeavors and this is what allows them to be described as diaspora. But what social encounters are not constitutive of some "lost" past? The de-territorialization that does happen is symbolic; it is a violent demarcation between the past and the present. Tölölyan suggests that to combat the violence of the diasporic past, that sense of loss, "diasporists should and must aspire to teach every

nation, especially those created by immigration, to see and honor the diasporas within, to transform their/our self-perception and self-representation" (1996: 30). This is a call to see our others and ourselves in the mirror. Thus, research on diaspora is necessary for it allows us to see alternatives to the nation, to broaden and expand upon the boundaries commonly associated with national cultures. In the nation, there's a certain sense of futurity – but this is constructed on a particular past (whether that be positive or negative). Homi Bhabha calls for an acknowledgement of the import of collective memory and its historicity in contemporary social realities. This necessitates an inquiry into how social realities are constituted through hybrid and dialectical encounters that are always in-between worlds, whether these are diasporic or nation. Bhabha notes "[this kind of analysis] makes it possible for us to confront that difficult borderline, the interstitial experience between what we take to be the image of the past and what is in fact involved in the passing of time and the passage of meaning" (1996: 60). Thus, we return to place and lived experiences of diaspora and nation embodied in culture as movement; through using a historical approach to examine memories, experiences, and lived realities this theoretical perspective articulates a conception of culture that assists in our understanding of diasporic and national communities, two terms that I hope to have shown are at once irreconcilable yet inseparable. Without movement, there is neither diaspora nor nation, the case of Italian Americans helps to foreground this point.

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