



Letting the Other in, Queering the Nation:

Bollywood and the Mimicking Body

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Bombay's film industry, Bollywood, is an arena that intensively transmits cultural products from one nationality to another; it is a mimicking arena that incessantly appropriates narratives of Western Culture, particularly from Hollywood. Hence its nick-name that contains the transcultural move back and forth between and Bombay/Mumbai, all the while retaining the ambivalent space positioned betwixt and between, and the unsteady cultural boundaries derived from the postcolonial situation.

This paper examines the manner in which this transcultural move takes place within the discourse of gender; namely, how the mimicking strategy forms a body and provides it with an ambiguous sexual identity. My discussion focuses on the film *Yaraana* (David Dhawan, 1995) – a Bollywood adaptation of *Sleeping with the Enemy* (Joseph Ruben, 1989). The Hollywood story of a woman who flees a violent husband exists in the Bollywood version, but takes on a minor role compared to its narrative focus: an (insinuated) gay man turning heterosexual and choosing one of two female options: the first is apparently Western, and the other – Indian. If *Sleeping with the Enemy* can be interpreted as driven by the desire and the claim on the boundaries of the body, the body of the raped protagonist whose boundaries are transgressed repeatedly, then this claim also motivates *Yaraana*. In the latter case, the boundaries in question are those of symbolic bodies: the body of the film, which is exposed, through the assimilation of the Hollywood narrative, to the invasion of the Other – and hence the imagined body of the Indian Nation, which

is represented and generated by the medium as a male homosexual body.

Bollywood and the work of mimicry

Bollywood, Mumbai's cinematic industry, is an intensive arena absorbing foreign cultural products, mainly Western. Characters, cultural icons, genres, lifestyle accoutrements such as clothing, furnishing, recreation styles, western pop songs and entire cinematic texts have constantly been appropriated and adapted during decades of film-making.

The mimicry phenomenon, with its central locus in the colonial situation and the meanings it continues to incorporate in the postcolonial context, is a loaded focus in current discourse on globalization and localization, homogenization and heterogenization. This paper examines the way in which the mimicking deed can highlight the gendered layout of the mimicking arena. This specific aspect has not yet been discussed in an explicitly analytical manner, even though variegated aspects of gender deriving from subalterneity have been widely discussed (Nandi, 1983; Chakravarty-Spivak, 1988; Krishnaswamy, 2002). The foci of discussion concerning mimicry and the mimicking strategy assume that the imitated culture has a power stance within the mimicking culture. The mimicking act is therefore a symbolic one, operating in the arena of cultural power relations, and relating to possible dynamics regarding intercultural differences.

Does the culture perceived as hegemonic serve as

an object for mimicry in a culture that strives to assimilate it as much as possible? Or, in other words, is mimicry a tool for intercultural homogenization, globalization, and ultimately westernization? Ulf Hannerz's words that "*When the centre speaks, the periphery listens, and most often does not talk back*" (1992, p. 21) could support this line of thought. The idea is that the periphery is passive, and thus the unambiguous cultural hierarchy is accepted by both the mimicking and mimicked (hegemonic) cultures. A more complex picture,ⁱ promoting the reading of mimicry as a dynamic arena, was suggested by Arjun Appadurai (1994), who pointed out the radical changes made in western elements when they undergo imitation (Appadurai, 1994, p. 327). These very changes might undermine the assumption of passivity implied by Hannerz, as well as the hierarchical structure and the process promoting homogenization/westernization.

Homi K. Bhabha's seminal essay "On Mimicry and Man" (1984/1994) depicts a complex dynamic of symbolic power and domination relations built up through the mimicking strategy. His central argument is that mimicry is the sign of a double articulation: the Other is appropriated because it symbolizes power, whereupon it undergoes a transformation that subjugates it to the local, annuls its power and carves out the opposition to the force that is signified in it. The mimicking arena is therefore interpreted as a platform for changes operating symbolically in an arena of resistance, side by side with a desire whose object is the power stance of the imitated culture. This dynamic may be characterized by ambivalent structures of desire and rejection, containment and exclusion, and these are read as mirroring the inherent ambivalence, fluidity and ambiguity of the postcolonial situation. It is easy to apply the dynamic model outlined by Bhabha to the Bollywood arena and the intense debate it has sparked on topics of cultural and national identity.ⁱⁱ However, *Yaraana* makes extensive changes in the narrative and gender structures inside the mimicking arena, some of which, as I will show – are direct byproducts of the mimicking deed.

Yaraana: Narrative and Gendered Structures

At first glance, there is a huge gap between *Yaraana* and *Sleeping with the Enemy*. Apart from a few scenes that seem to have been copied almost shot for shot (e.g. the visit of the runaway woman to her hospitalized aunt - not mother, thus enabling the violent man to trace her) - nothing apparently links these two films. Joseph Ruben's film focuses on a woman fleeing her violent husband, leaving a desolate house on a liminal-like space marked by the coastline on the beach, and arrives in an all-American protecting space, signified by the suburb. There she meets another man and a different life, which are presented as equal, harmonic and free of gendered violence.ⁱⁱⁱ This life - these values, are established by the filmic work as embodying the American ethos through shots presenting the suburb and the protagonists next to flags of the USA.

Yaraana opens with shots of a fleeing woman: but this is not a woman fleeing her husband as the patriarchal consciousness constructing the film cannot bear the thought that a married Indian woman would rebel against the male *dharmic*/legal authority established by marriage. This is a woman fleeing a violent man who wants to marry her by force. But in any case, *Yaraana* scarcely deals with this fleeing woman. The character the film places at its narrative centre is Raj (Rishi Kapoor), a man who goes through a double transformation of objects of desire. The first is a transformation from a masculine object of desire into a feminine one, and the second is a transformation of a western object of desire into an Indian one. *Yaraana* therefore narrates the story of a man – not a woman; its title clearly indicates the sexual context discussed intensively through the film. *Yaar* is a Hindi word meaning boyfriend or a male close friend; this is a term of endearment among men in a way that parallels the word *buddy*. *Yaraana* is the name for this friendship/fraternity between men, and indeed, the focus of *Yaraana*, which is also a variation on the buddy-film genre, is this friendship between men; this homosocial friendship that might serve as a foundation for the male-dominated world, while at the same time posing a threat to the heteronormative order due to the homoerotic and homosexual potential it embodies.

Indeed, at the opening of the film it turns out that Raj refuses to get married in spite of the family's pressure, and that he has a good male friend. Nothing is said explicitly, though in the well encoded world of the Bollywood film, enough can be gleaned from the family's despair, Raj's reservations about arranged marriages and women in general, and the physical attributes of his male friend, Banke (Shakti Kapoor): a caricature-like image of what the patriarchal conscience imagines as homosexuality - high-pitched voice, theatrical feminine bodily gestures, ostentatiousness, over-adorned and extravagant clothing and a contemptible profession related to being put up for display (he is a club-owner and an actor). Raj is thus half of a self-sufficient male pair, in a way that fits David Halperin's description in: "*Heroes and their Pals*":

"[...] a close friendship between two, and no more than two, persons. These two persons are always male; they form not only a pair, but a relatively isolated pair: the two of them are never joined by a third; there are no rivals, no other couples, and no relations with women who might prove to be of a 'distracting' nature..." (Halperin, 1990, p. 77).

What meaning should be attributed to this isolated male coupling? Halperin suggests that the male couple and friendship between men is a phenomenon embodying values that are to be found in a space beyond the private: "The male couple constitutes a world apart from society at large and yet it does not merely embody a private relation (...). On the contrary: friendship helps to structure, and possibly, to privatize - the social space ..." (Halperin, *ibid.*).

As the potential embodiment of the social space, the male couple can be seen as the expression of a basically male community: in this respect it contains the potential to imagine and construct the patriarchal hegemony through concepts such as harmony and brotherhood. At the same time, intimate coupling between men can arouse hegemonic anxiety over the challenge to the heteronormative order - the set of constructs founding the social order on the oppositional and hierarchical definition of genders, constructing them as natural and as obligatory (Rich, 1993). Hence, narrative patterns in patriarchal cul-

tures, including the narrative pattern of *Yaraana*, toil to neutralize the threat embodied in the male couple, and normalize one of its protagonists. This interpretation is further strengthened by concepts developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985) and a narrative formula described by Halperin. Sedgwick states that phallogocentric anxiety over the collapse of the heteronormative order will bring about the need to end the threatening succession of the homosocial - the inter-male friendship in its a-sexual meaning - and the homoerotic.

Furthermore, Halperin notes, the normalization process is a painstaking one, since the male pair is based on a structured asymmetry: one of its members has greater importance, while the other is personally, socially and narratologically subjected to him. And at the end of the day the weaker friend sacrifices himself and dies. This death functions as the climax of the friendship, and paves the way for the stronger member to return to the heart of society (Halperin, *ibid.*, 77-79).

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A concise reading of *Yaraana* reveals these formulae are neatly reflected in the film. Its title suggests male friendship/coupling as its centre: the plot attempts to normalize the pair's stronger member (the perplexed, hesitant and feminine Raj), while sacrificing the weaker one (Banke, whose weakness is expressed by his closeness to signifiers of homosexuality as constructed by the homophobic consciousness). Banke functions as the agent of normalization paving Raj's way to the heteronormative order, and this is also where the woman fleeing the violent man functions in the narrative: her flight has brought her by chance to Banke's club, where the latter suggests to Raj that he should hire her as a fictional, temporary bride - so as to ease the family's anxiety.

Banke is pushed to the margins of the narrative, and eventually is put to death; Raj will be normalized, while the death blow he will inflict on his male opponent - the violent man from whom his beloved fled - will affix upon him the seal of the masculinity ethos. A masculinity fit to constitute the axis in the phallogocentric world.

Narrative Transformations, Gendered Structures and the Mimicking Deed

What links this rather complex narrative with *Sleeping with the Enemy*? Indeed the fleeing woman, the narrative nucleus of the film, is sidelined, and another story is told: a story aiming at homophobic anxiety, undermining the male couple and trading the intimacy between men for a normative heterosexual, hierarchical one. I argue here that the narrative transformations and the gendered structures proposed in *Yaraana* are a reflection of the very act of mimicry. This reflection takes place within the arena of the gendered images of the nation. The appropriation of *Sleeping with the Enemy* creates a threat to Indian consciousness; this threat dictates the narrative transformations - the shift from a heterosexual woman to a man - more precisely, to an insinuated homosexual man whose gender and sexual identity serve as tropes symbolizing the nation and its body in the mimicking film. This proposed reading might also clarify the marginality of the fleeing woman, and the additional changes in this figure, who seems to be the only remnant of the film.

It is noteworthy that the fleeing woman is split into three figures, each endowed with a conflict-stirring identity: The first is the fleeing woman (Lalita, whose "real" identity is denied all through the film); the second is the fictitious bride (Shikha), who is undesired and rejected, and the third, fictitious too, is Raj's first object of desire. This is Murti: a woman disguised as a shop window mannequin, dressed in a western wedding-dress and adorned with a blond carré-cut wig. These clothes and the wig are the disguise Lalita wore during her flight at the opening of *Yaraana*, a clin d'oeil before she was named Murti by the desiring Raj.

Murti (literally, in Hindi: a form/shape: this word suggests a range of meanings linked to the issue of presence within matter; thus, the name itself might capture the character as a fetish). Murti's wig hints at the one worn by Julia Roberts when she fled her violent husband in the Hollywood film, and is therefore a metonymy imprinting the mark of the Hollywood film on her, articulating the presence of the West in the symbolic arena outlined upon the body's tangibil-

ity. The wig-wearing mannequin is thus a double fetish: of femininity and of the West.

In the private sphere, the fact that Murti is a fetish could be interpreted as reflecting Raj's deficient masculinity. Reading the film as an *ideological state apparatus*, which operates in the public space and makes it talk, Murti is the epitome of the desire for the film - i.e., the desire for the West. This is the same desire that motivates Indian culture to mimic, and thus to internalize, the text/Other. As this desire is aroused and expressed, the threats it embodies are evoked, arousing the demand for the double normalization Raj undergoes. The transformations of Banke into Murti and Murti into Shikha form the crossroads of meanings delivered by *Yaraana*: the coupling of the sexual and the national, all structured as the subject and its objects of desire. The mimicking desire is incorporated within the gendered structure shaped by the mimicking film, breeding a series of imagined bodies.

Mimicry and Imagined Bodies

A mimicking film creates a series of intertwined bodies: the body of the mimicking Bollywood film; the imagined body of the Indian Nation that is represented and generated by it, and finally, the relatively tangible body of its protagonists. These bodies are dependent upon, and stem from, the mimicking deed and the threat inherent in it. The demands for normalization, addressed to the mimicking body of the Bollywood film, to the body of the Indian Nation and to Raj's body/sexuality, might be read as the patriarchal hegemony's desire to restore an essentialist dimension to the categories of nationality and gender. The axis that underlies this complex structure is the body, functioning as a symbol for any entity built around physical or imagined boundaries. As summed up by Mary Douglas:

"The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious (...) we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body" (1966, p. 115).

The body is therefore a symbolic arena that serves as the basis for a discourse of boundaries. The centrality attributed to boundaries in this respect already assumes the desire for rigid borders and the threat attributed to fluid ones. From this perspective, the body may serve as a metaphorical basis for the essentialist thought also embodied in the normalization processes in the film: within the national context, Raj's choice of an Indian bride may embody the desire to shape the Nation as a homogeneous, stabilized body/entity, differentiated from the others and having rigid boundaries. In the gendered context, it is possible to refer to the heterosexualization process as conveying the heteronormative claim for a fixed sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine as expressing male, feminine as expressing female). Again, this fixity conditions the perception of the body as coherent and meaningful. The essentialist desire is therefore the one motivating the normalization processes taking place in *Yaraana*.

Contemporary theoretical discourse promotes an understanding of the postcolonial situation in terms of fluidity, opacity and ambivalence.^{iv} Turning attention back to essentialist thought could take into account the huge difficulty created by the postcolonial situation, and might aid in comprehending the reactionary aspect embodied in the web of imagined bodies spun by *Yaraana*. From a complementary angle, the essentialist aspect might illuminate a less frequent tendency in the engendering channels of the Indian Nation - the construction of the nation as having a masculine body. Both nationalist and phallogocentric thought are symbolically constructed as a consciousness of firm boundaries, stipulating their existence and significance in this firmness.

Essentialist thought is not restricted to the wish for firm boundaries; it refers to the content of the bounded arena as well. At this point, the claim for homogeneity might symbolize the anxiety of heterogeneity, interpreted as a disintegration of the entity designated to embody the idea of stability. The bearers of this claim are all the symbolic bodies laid out in the film as though organically linked with the body of the film itself.

This series of bodies produced by the mimicking

film can be mapped. First I examine the mutual dependency of these imagined bodies, and the reflexive thought attempting to construct them as stable and homogeneous against a backdrop which is basically unstable and heterogeneous. I dwell on the homogeneity constructed into the film work to designate a stable body with which the spectator can identify while calming his anxiety prompted by fragmentation and dismantling. Later I describe the ways in which this body is extended to the other bodies constructed via the cinematic text.

The Cinematic Body: An of Imagined Organicity

Mary Ann Doane (1986) and Kaja Silverman (1988) established an analogy, Lacanian in style, between the body of the spectator and the film, and linked it to the anxiety of fragmentation and dismantling, which is countered by the illusion of homogeneity and stability that forms the ideological and aesthetic foundation of mainstream cinema. Doane analyzed the inherent fragmentation of the cinematic arrangement, concluded that mainstream cinema camouflages the medium's inherent heterogeneity, and creates an illusion of a homogeneous, coherent, single entity – or symbolic body – which would calm this essential anxiety.

“The cinema presents a spectacle composed of disparate elements – images, voices, sound effects, writing, which the *mise-en-scène*, in its broadest sense, organizes and aims at the body of the spectator (...). This is why Lyotard refers to classical *mise-en-scène* as a kind of somatography, or inscription of the body (...) classical *mise-en-scène* has a stake in perpetuating the image of unity and identity sustained by the body and in staving off the feat of fragmentation”

(...). The different sensory elements work in collusion, and this denies the material heterogeneity of the ‘body’ of the film” (Doane, 1986, p. 344-345).

This cinematic body reflects, and in a way produces, another body: the body of the spectator, who reads the film's body as an analogy of his or her own body (Doane, *ibid*, 166). This analogy is the basis for a symbolic alliance of mutual dependency, which is

essential for the construction of the spectator's identification with the ideological array produced by the medium.

However, the illusion of homogeneity and stability is not only the desire of the single subject, or as Silverman puts it - of male subjectivity (Silverman, 1988, 1,2,10). This desire may extend beyond the private space as the film, functioning as an *ideological state apparatus* in Althusserian/Neo-Marxist terms, and become an agent of nation-building. The film shapes a symbolic world, incorporating the image of the nation, and providing it with a body equivalent in a wide sense to the body of the film itself. At this point the mimicking film may create a complex challenge: being a symbolic embodiment of the Nation's body, it is expected to confirm the nation's stability and homogeneity. However, the mimicking film is a body into which the Other has penetrated.

It should be stressed that the actual use of the Other is not the factor which undermines the essentialist dimension within a nation. Quite the opposite: in the frequent channeling of the strategy of binary oppositions, the national Self often makes a stabilizing use of the Other. The Other might therefore become an element of a separatist strategy that promotes the perception of the national boundaries as firm (Hall, 1997, p. 174-175). Accordingly, the Indian Self had the option of shaping itself to the western Other in a stabilizing contrast that relies on the structure of binary oppositions. This strategy also exists in *Yaraana* and in Bollywood in general – but this is relatively less significant than what *Yaraana* consolidates: the presence of the Other does not remain outside, and so lays out the self as having rigid borders, but rather is located within.

This Other is located inside the national body due to the mimicking deed and the internalization of the foreign text, and through shaping the Western Other as an object of desire organically engraved in the local body: Murti's body, which bears the seal of the Hollywood film and the desire for it, is organically constructed into the Indian woman's body (Lalita). In a wider sense it can therefore be argued that the body of the Bollywood film *Yaraana*, the mimicking body, is a body bearing inside it a foreign presence, the pres-

ence of the Other. Thus, the body of the Indian nation is constructed as a body deprived of homogeneity. Furthermore, it is a body whose borders are fluid. It is an invaded body, arousing the familiar trope of the nation invaded by foreigners.

Sleeping with the Enemy might be read as a text having a similar focus, as the fleeing woman at its center struggles to obtain a renewed claim on her body and its boundaries. This could have provided the basis for a more direct adaptation of Ruben's film. Why, then, did the makers of *Yaraana* place a man at its center? Why did they push Murti, Julia Roberts' Indian double, to its margins? Placing her, or even Lalita, at the narrative heart could also have adhered to the common symbolization of the nation as having a feminine body. But the issue of Indian breached borders, which necessarily stems from the establishment of the nation's body as a mimicking one, in fact obtains a direct expression through the feminine body. However, the feminine body in *Yaraana* is marginal, as it embodies the object of desire – not the desiring subject. In this respect, the role played by the feminine figures does not exceed what Hunt (recalling Kosofsky Sedgwick) argues: "Women have no place in the new political and social order except as markers relating to social relations between men" (Hunt, 1992, 7).

Yaraana makes use of the woman's feminine body, which is a remnant of the Hollywood film, in both thematic and physical means. However, she is not placed at the narrative centre. The discourse of desire in *Yaraana* refers to Raj; through him, the Indian national situation is formulated in terms relating to masculinity and to the loaded symbolism of penetration into the male body.

The Masculine Body as the National Body

The male body does not primarily serve as an embodiment of the nation's body.^v The theoretical discourse has already pointed out that the national community is imagined as basically a male community, operating as a fraternity, and produces binary oppositions which attempt to define, suppress and exclude its Others (Parker et Al., 1992). This position designates the

woman's place as limited and excluded. The existence of femininity in the public arena is conditioned by its subjection to national ideals (Yuval-Davis, 1998, 23-33). Thus, the woman and the female body have become symbols or common images of the nation (*Mother Earth, Mother of the Nation* and in the Indian context – *Bharat Mata* – the mother/goddess who is itself). These symbols, including the trope of the invaded national body, are commonly constructed as a female body arousing the desire to save it and make it an object of regulation (McClintock, 1995, p. 24, 28-30). The female body is therefore a convenient platform for practices operating to impose the heteronormative order and preserve phallogocentric hegemony.

This homology between sexual and political hegemony is also applicable to the arena of the relations between colonizers and colonized. As Krishnaswamy already noted, the colonial consciousness saw the colonial rule as manly or husbandly, while the colonized was symbolized in feminine terms (Krishnaswamy, 1998, p. 2)^{vi} And while the colonized culture was imagined as a woman, its men were imagined as suffering from defective masculinity, as effeminate - “the radicalized construction of femininity-in-masculinity as a pathological condition.” (Krishnaswamy, *ibid.*, 19).

The opaque sexual identity could therefore be a direct reflection of opacity in the colonial and postcolonial situations in general.^{vii} However, *Yaraana's* protagonist's homosexuality embodies an opacity which is a categorical threat: a threat which is especially relevant for the national consciousness (Krishnaswamy, *ibid.*, 43).

Kathryn Conrad clarifies how the categorical threat that the national/phallogocentric consciousness may relate to homosexuality in a very straightforward manner:

“Any identity category potentially troubles the national border, but homosexuality in particular threatens the stability of the narrative of the nation. The very instability and specific historical contingency of the definition of homosexuality makes the category more fluid than most, and thus brings into question the fixity and coherence of all identity categories.” (2001, p. 124).

Homosexuality can, therefore, signify the dissipation of the categories, and thereby threaten the desire of the national/phallogocentric consciousness for rigid borders in general and in particular those of the male body and the national body. However, how is the homosexual body associated with the body of the Bollywood film and with the body of the Indian nation altogether?

Let us return to the body of the film. As already stated, this is a body relying on a mimicking strategy, a body born out of an act of transcultural transition, out of a mimicking act. As claimed, this body is a body into which the Other has penetrated, and thus, the rigid borders that were supposed to be the legacy of the Indian nation and culture are dissipated. In the transition to the domain of supplementary symbolization, it may be argued that the mimicking strategy creates a penetrated national/cultural body. In *Yaraana* this body is specifically structured as the male protagonist's homosexual body.

The Mimicking Body: the Defilement of the Male

The equation formulated in *Yaraana* is, therefore: the Other was let in, the nation had been queered. But the issue present at this point is not anxiety over the penetration into the nation's body: this anxiety is inherent in any case to the essentialist nature of national thought. The issue that needs to be explained, in relation to the queer aspect with which the mimicking text/body, and thus the national body, is endowed, is why is the nation constructed via the masculine body?

Homosexuality is associated with the phallogocentric anxiety of sodomitical relations; namely, with the anxiety of penetration into the masculine body. This anxiety can be understood through an integration of the psychoanalytic symbolism of gender, and the modes in which this may affect the essentialism imprinted in the phallogocentric stance.

Briefly, the psychoanalytical stance identifies femininity (and the feminine body) with absence – the absence of the phallus which is perceived as castration, as the non-being penetrating the being and rampaging its order, as death permeating living tissue. This ab-

sence is interpreted as the symbolic essence of the feminine body, which is hierarchically constructed against the male body and the phallus. According to this perspective, sexuality is perceived as a dynamics of power polarizing its participants to relations of domination and submission, and thus, the erected organ signifies the area of domination, and its receptacle – the area of submission. To be penetrated – the symbolic essence of femininity - means losing the self, to be harmed, to die. In other words, femininity is defined as a symbol of death or nullification, as a violation of order and as an inherent inferiority embodied in the lacking and penetrated body. Masculinity could therefore be interpreted as its opposite: an unthreatened body signifying order: a “complete” body due to its perception as unbreached and impenetrable.

Considering the phallogentric/essentialist demand for firm borders and its anxiety over heterogeneity, heterosexuality may therefore be interpreted as the embodiment of a coherent entity with firm boundaries. The challenge of homosexuality is thus the threat to the supposed essence of masculinity: impenetrability.

The Indian national body structured by *Yaraana* is therefore male as, according to the phallogentric/patriarchal premises, the masculine body should be impenetrable. Thus, it is supposed to constitute an entity of both sexual and national stability. In this sense, the ideal of stable heterosexual masculinity is the arena realizing the desperate and ever failing wish of the national consciousness to create a distinct, firm identity. It is homosexual, as homosexuality signifies penetration into the body that was to be impenetrable. And the threat, that might be understood in the private sphere as castration, self-destruction and death that stem from the very fact of the body’s breaching and violation (Edelman, 1991, p. 106; Bersani, 1987, p. 212), should be understood in the national domain as cultural extinction.

In summing up the transcultural process achieved by *Yaraana*, I argue that its main preoccupation is the essentialist desire for firm national boundaries, expressed via a symbolic series of intertwined bodies: the body of the mimicking Bollywood film, the national Indian body and the body of its protagonist. In

an analogous mirror combining gendered and national aspects, the normalization processes carried out by the film with respect to its protagonist are moves that seek to remove the threat of penetration from both the male body and the body of the film, and so stabilize the borders of the national body.

Endnotes

ⁱAs Stephanie Newell notes, “Hannerz does comment briefly upon the creative ways in which Nigerian audiences absorb and modify imported forms, but these observations are contradicted by his lengthy analysis of the metropolitanization of popular culture in , a process in which local producers and performers seem to participate most willingly”. See Newell, 2000, p. 47.

ⁱⁱ Raj Kapoor’s film *Shree 420* (1957) could serve as a concise model illustrating the mimicking discourse of the Bollywood film. *Shree* prominent nation-building text produced about a decade after independence, mimicked and appropriated Charlie Chaplin’s cinematic tramp. This was made to examine the moment of sovereignty, when could have renounced the colonizer’s symbolic assets and aspired to celebrate its sovereignty in every respect. However, this moment was also the moment when Indian culture realized that this very renunciation, as well as the aspiration for sovereignty in both essentialist and hermetic terms was impossible.

The tramp who is the nation (Kapoor), served as the focalization of a symbolic transition from the village – a signifier of “authentic” – completely absent from the symbolic world of the film – to the city, that embodies modernity, modernization, industrialization, capitalism and the disintegration of traditional structures. Time after time Kapoor’s tramp fails and does not renounce the objects of desire understood as a Trojan horse through which the West (capital/economic welfare, personal and sexual freedom) permeates Indianness. Although the film designated binary oppositions promoting symbols of ‘s Western Other, the Chaplinesque features of Kapoor’s tramp served to designate this (anti) protagonist as an elevated character. Elevated because it was based upon a western cinematic model, and its very western-ness structures him as an object of desire and an embodiment of power. This western quality also provided a protective shield, since the mistakes made by Kapoor’s tramp might have been read as deriving from his very Otherness, from its very ascription to the West as imagined by Indian consciousness. Against this backdrop, Kapoor’s mistakes or failures were constructed as pardonable, and the tramp is cast as deserving sympathy; a sympathy arising because of these mistakes and failures embody the desire of Indian culture for the West and Westernness – a desire that is as reprehensible as it is tempting. Thus, the film forgivingly articulated the Indian fluid state of vagrancy and movement, and its ambiguous state inherent to the postcolonial situation.

ⁱⁱⁱ A deconstructive reading will easily undermine what the text's front states. In fact, it is possible to read *Sleeping with the Enemy* as a reactionary/phallogocentric narrative that deals with the fear generated by the demand for feminine sovereignty, and attempts to alleviate this anxiety. The first part of the film take a sympathetic stance towards the woman exposed to the violent patriarch, and for this reason it appears that the film sides with flight and the creation of independent feminine life. However the film does not allow its female protagonist to establish such an existence, not even for a minute. It presents her as a woman flitting from one man to another, in a way that denies her the right to every component of her new life (work, the meeting and renewed relations with her mother). Moreover, the entry of a new man into her life is constructed as the renewed entry of the law (she picks apples from his tree, he threatens to sue her for trespassing). The hegemonic/phallogocentric conscience is formulated in this film in a purportedly subtle manner that does not change any deep structures.

^{iv} See Appadurai's (1994) comments on the suffix *scape* (*Ethnoscapas*, *mediscapes*, *technoscapes*, *finanscapes* and *ideoscapes*) enabling a wide range in which movement and change are possible, the complexity that Bhabha (1996) imparted to the binary layouts stemming from Edward Said's early work and spatial concepts that he coined, as, for example the Hybrid space and The Third Space). This issue was also referred to by Stephanie Newell (2000).

^v There are, however, prominent male figures that embody the Indian nation in Hindi cinema. Raj Kapoor's tramp, briefly discussed here, is one of the most important ones. Another man who is the nation is Manoj Kumar's figure of Bharat (""), around whom a series of rather radical patriotic films were made during the 60s and 70s. But in the Manoj Kumar case, the films did not rely on mimicry.

^{vi} At this point it is possible to assume that the Indian consciousness, which internalized parts of the orientalist and colonial burden, would make a symbolic use of male figures in order to signify the stance of political and cultural inferiority articulated via the mimicking deed. Here we can return to the deliberately failing tramp of Raj Kapoor's Shree 420: this is a man who ideologically embodies hesitation, erring and straying due to the cultural chaos of the post-colonial era. In his physical aspect, the tramp has a shrill voice, stammering speech and feminine or childish mannerisms. Thus the position of subalterneity which is expressed and challenged via the mimicking deed, may attempt to depict the effeminization of the Indian male who embodies the Nation. Also see: Revati Krishnaswamy, *Effeminism – The Economy of Colonial Desire*. (Ann Arbor – The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 2.

^{vii} However, there is a crucial difference between the tramp who is the nation and the protagonist of Yaraana: whereas the tramp is an effeminate man, Yaraana's protagonist is a homosexual. The opacity and fluidity in his sexual identity are not only a reflection of cultural opacity and do not encode what Indian culture may attribute to sexual opacity – a symbolic transcendence over the fetters of gender division.

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