The Italianisation of Bollywood Cinema: ad hoc films

Abstract

The relationship explored by this article is the one between Italy and popular Hindi cinema wherein the films of Bollywood have undergone a profound change in form and narrative structure absorbing, through a collage of images, traces of the Italian inheritance of its cinema. This phenomenon is studied as framed by Bergson's theory of time and with the technique of collage and the textual dismemberment that Bollywood films undergoes while approaching the Italian screens.

The analysis of how Bollywood cinema reaches Italy and the current use that the Italian entertainment industry makes of Bollywood texts (by adapting these texts for the national audience) is pivotal to understanding how, on the one hand Bollywood has been targeted for cultural and aesthetic changes, and on the other hand how the encounter of this industry with the European panorama has its own specificities. Through the analysis of one specific case study, the Ashutosh Gowariker's *Jodhaa Akbar*, which function as example among other Bollywood films screened in Italy, it will be highlighted how the Bollywood films, when filtered by the Italian entertainment industry produces ad hoc films, which re-frame the globalization of this Indian industry.

Bio

Dr. Monia Acciari completed her PhD at the University of Manchester, UK. After her PhD, she has been a Teaching Fellow at Swansea University. Currently, she is an Honorary Research Associate within the Department of Languages Translation and Communication at the Swansea University, UK. Her research interests are in Popular Hindi cinema, Contemporary Indian Indi Films, Coproduction Italy-India, Film Festival Studies, Film and

Emotions, Cinema and other Performing Arts, Screen Genre, Diasporic and Transnational Media, Entertainment in Places of War, and Qualitative Research Methods applied to Popular Culture.

The relationship explored by this article is the one between Italy and popular Hindi cinema wherein the films of Bollywood have undergone a profound change in form and narrative structure absorbing, through a collage of images, traces of the Italian inheritance of neorealist cinema. The subjects of this investigation are the constant neglect in Italy of non-Italian and non-American cinematographic industries with their specific languages and popular forms, and the difficulty to watch an international cinematography other than the dominant American market.

The analysis of how Bollywood cinema reached Italy and the current use that the Italian entertainment industry makes of Bollywood texts (as in their adaptation for the national audience) is pivotal to understanding how, on the one hand Bollywood has been targeted for cultural and aesthetic changes, and on the other hand how the encounter of this industry with the European panorama has its own specificities.

Although the desire for a union of Europe goes back to the post-war urge for a 'United States of Europe' (Churchill, 1946), as expressed by Winston Churchill in 1946, the longed for unity and life of a European body continues mostly to be culturally immature. Europe is still in many ways a project under construction with a 'supranational' flavour (Kerremans, 1996; Joerges and Neyer, 1997; Jönsson, Tägil et al., 2000). Despite the political unification of geographical borders, some of the free circulation rules within European countries are in need of harmonisation and so is the decodification of cultural phenomena that are still mostly related to 'national' procedures. A rational and accurate analysis of the Bollywood industry in

Italy cannot, and does not have to be left to a geographically unclear definition of a global phenomenon; it must be studied as a case *per se* in light of viewing Europe as a culturally new-born territory that is in need of cultural and geographical unification. Because Europe still fails to be perceived as a whole (Joerges and Neyer, 1997), or rather a harmonised space, the adaptation of Bollywood into the entertainment realm of individual countries needs to be considered separately.

Rajadhyaksha's discussion on the extraordinary panoramic success of Bollywood cinema in the chapter 'The Bollywoodisation of Indian cinema' (Rajadhyaksha, 2008), and the juxtaposition of terms such as Bollywood and Indian cinema, invite us to consider Bollywood within the European context. The history of Bollywood in mainland Europe is recent and it must be mentioned that each European country has its own history and approach to this rampant industry. The *Newsweek* essay mentioned in Rajadhyaksha's article states: "Indian movies are feel-good, all-happy-in-the-end, tender love stories with lots of songs and dances...That's what attracts non-Indian audiences across the world" (Rajadhyaksha, 2008: 194). The last clause is tremendously problematic.

The generalisation offered by *Newsweek* is not only challenging because of the definition of Bollywood films as being inevitably overlapping with the one of Indian cinema but also, and especially in the case of this article, because of what seems to be an inaccurate description of Bollywood films and of the appeal that these films have in Europe among non-Indian audiences. This is perfectly summarised by the response of the Italian entertainment circuits that 'dreaded' the arrival of Bollywood films, as they are, within the cinema halls of the country.

Bollywood in Italy does not support the view that Bollywood has global appeal, a view that has been for too long and too persistently called by the academic world 'the globalisation of

Bollywood cinema', rather in Italy it is acknowledged that this wealthy Indian industry has followed a very personal path of acquisition and attention by the Italian media (Acciari, 2012).

In 2007, lagging behind the rest of Europe, a series of Bollywood films entitled *Amori con…Turbanti/*Loves with…Turbans was screened on Italian television during the summer time. This programming grew out of an earlier event, the Italy/India Business forum, prearranged by the annually organised Rome Film Festival in 2006.

In *Amori con…Turbanti* the films screened were borrowed from the Bollywood industry and were entirely dubbed in Italian. However, something was missing. These films were deprived of songs and dance sequences thereby presenting a dramatically transformed Bollywood cinema with an *ex-novo* format. The Italian national television service (RAI) released the following message on its website:

> We have revised the length and maybe the appearance of these films to make them acceptable to the Italian audience. Italians do not have the patience to sit and watch such long films. Despite speaking about universal values, the films seem to be conceived only for an Indian audience. To be able to make this agreement work, and show these films in Italy, it is necessary to compromise on length and form (author's translation). (Unknown, 2007)

Amori con…Turbanti is literally translated as "Loves with…Turbans" (a problematic image of India that is standardised and clichéd and that could in extreme conditions, as pointed out by Professor Purnima Mankekar during the 4th International Conference of South Asian Popular Culture at Manchester 2009, evolve into racial violence against South Asian communities particularly following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers in America). The word *conturbanti* (literally meaning provocative or exciting) was divided into

con…turbanti to produce a double meaning: loves with turbans and/or provocative loves. This image of Bollywood films, filtered through fallacy and misunderstanding based on conventional visions of this industry as 'exciting loves with turbans', establishes a hegemonic pattern of fusion which still sifts and selects notions and images of India as exotic. The title of the summer season of Bollywood films has since been changed and it is now called *Le Stelle di Bollywood/Bollywood Stars*. The new title provides a more 'dignified' name without moving into discriminative and obsolete definitions, but the films are still randomly cut without method or logic.

The new run of the series *Bollywood Stars* began on Italian television on 6 August 2011. The film *Jodhaa Akbar* (Ashutosh Gowariker, 2008), translated in Italian as *La Sposa dell'Imperatore/The Emperor's Bride*, was a tremendous choice to begin the series. The original *Jodhaa Akbar* was 3 hours and 33 minutes long, whereas the Italian version was cut by 50% to approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. This is striking evidence that the film shown was very different from the original *Jodhaa Akbar* and for this reason the film has been taken as a case study in this work.

The film, originally, tells the story of the Mughal emperor Julaluddin Mohammad Akbar (played by Hrithik Roshan), who ruled Hindustan, and the princess of Rajput, Jodhaa (played by Aishwarya Rai). The events are set in the sixteenth century, and the film is an epic romance that portrays the marriage between the Hindu Jodhaa and the Muslim emperor Akbar: a forced marriage for political gain. When Akbar agrees to the marriage, to strengthen the political relationship with the Rajputs, he does not know that he will be embarking on a journey of love or rather of true love. The film traces the two faces of the mighty emperor. The first is the face of the battlefield on which he is crowned and his conquests confer on him the title of Akbar the Great. *Jodhaa Akbar* does not fail to reveal the second face, which is the portrait of a great man in love with the rebellious Princess Jodhaa.

The original Indian film is divided into two specific strands: the first is the love story between the Emperor Akbar and the defiant princess of Rajput, Jodhaa Bai; the second is the narration of the construction and consolidation of the Mughal Empire of India. The plot in *La Sposa dell'Imperatore*, the Italian version, focuses mostly on the love story between the two characters and disregards an important part of the history of India. The original film had long and impressive war scenes that have been completely removed from the Italian version. In fact, *La Sposa dell'Imperatore* begins with a cut that is taken 30–40 minutes from the start of the original film. As mentioned, many of the detailed fight and war scenes have been removed with the intention of drawing attention to the romance between the protagonists. Furthermore, a distinctive scene within the original film that shows the deeds of a young Akbar taming a runaway elephant within the walls of a red fort and his acrobatic jump (for which the actor did not want a stunt) was cut for the Italian version. The practice of cutting and stitching back scenes to tailor them for a non-Indian audience (or rather in this case for an Italian audience) produces two sets of problems. On the one hand, the film is no longer *Jodhaa Akbar* but *La Sposa dell'Imperatore*, which is a clear reduction of an historical film of mammoth dimensions into another exotic, short, love story. On the other hand, pieces of world history fail to be acknowledged or to come across and be part of the cultural acquisition of one culture by another. The Italian entertainment industry continues to dissect Bollywood films failing to recognise that love stories are often filled with historical, social and cultural information – although fictionalised – of a specific culture.

The tendency of morphing and labelling Bollywood films as a type of South American telenovela of the East is corroborated by an anonymous Italian blogger who commented on the hive of songs, dance and the historical sequences as follows:

> These films are definitely stunning and exotic even though at first glance they give a sense of 'déjà vu' with the acting at times emphasised. Surely they have cut the best

part of musicals (songs and dances) because these are a little too long and the fear is that by not being understood, people would change channel (author's translation) (Anonymous, 2009).

This affirmation glues together the two main problems of viewing Bollywood films in Italy. The first dilemma is the apprehension of the Italian entertainment industry that it would lose its audience if it showed elaborated (and complete) versions of Bollywood films. The second problem is the one of providing an image of India to a non-Indian audience still safely wrapped in an image that is of exotic dimensions, shining jewellery, glittering saris and exotic amber bodies. *Jodhaa Akbar* is a film that follows in the tradition of spectacular movies such as the Hollywoodian *Cleopatra* (J. L. Mankiewicz, 1963) and *Ben-Hur* (W. Wyler, 1959) just to mention a few, that were made with grandiose and expensive sets that reconstructed the palaces and royal courts, and that used thousands of extras and animals without resorting to special effects to create armies and wars. However, this grandiosity is indeed abridged for the small screens of Italy. Popular Hindi films undergo a structural demolition of the narrative via elimination; in *Jodhaa Akbar* the elements that distinguish the body of Bollywood films, such as songs and dance scenes, were removed with the exception of a few songs that did not, however, help to reconstruct a coherent narrative of the film. On the contrary, the few 'survived' incomprehensible (as no dubbing was provided) songs, which were incomprehensibly left within the film for no lucid reason, exalted the film with an outlandish and exotic flavour.

The songs that were left within the film do not support the narrative and do not function as an educational tool to teach non-Indian audiences that songs and dances fulfil a series of important functions within the filmic text, generating what Gokulsing and Dissanayake aptly explained as follows:

...emotions; they underline moral messages, they convey eroticism and sexuality whose overt expression is disallowed on the screen: they create the mood for participating in the various episodes. Similarly dance sequences are important to fulfil a number of different functions. (Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 2004: 31)

While watching the original version of *Jodhaa Akbar*, similitudes with great world-renowned directors are inevitable. The epic battle scenes with shots worthy of Sergio Leone or Dario Argento have been removed. The notorious scene of the vision of a bullet coming out of a barrel and its parabolic journey before hitting a man is a scene from *Quattro Mosche di Velluto Grigio/Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (Dario Argento, 1971): a very well-known film that established Argento as a fervent director always in search of new cinematographic expressions. So it is for Ashutosh Gowariker. In *Jodhaa Akbar,* Ashutosh Gowariker pays homage to the master of Italian horror films, Dario Argento, and re-interprets the same suggestive scene through the use of cannons. The large spaces, the desert landscape, the sound of the wind, the galloping horses and the silence after the war that evoke the dusty western films of Sergio Leone, together with the details of close ups, are all parts of the original film that have been removed from *La Sposa dell'Imperatore*. Furthermore, in the original film Adham (played by Shaji Chaudhary) is thrown out of the window twice, not once as shown in the Italian version; this is again a crucial part of the film in which Jodhaa understands what her husband is capable of when he is in an incontrollable rage. In addition, if the intention was to produce, out of Bollywood, an exotic love story from India, then why was it necessary to cut the full scene of the first night between the two protagonists after their marriage?

Even more astonishing are the absences of the opening sequence and the life of Akbar as a child from the original film. The lacerations -in the body of this film, starting right from the beginning where the character is introduced as well as the reasons behind his illiteracy and

yet his greatness, is puzzling. The history of Akbar and the resonance (pretentious or not) of his existence are left out of the wider fictionalised contextualisation of the plot.

By removing songs and dances from a Bollywood film most of the expressions of emotions and unspoken desires, which are essential parts as described earlier by Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004), are removed from the body of the film. What then remains of the film? Is the audience asked to assemble these parts and by intuition reconstruct their own vision and truth? Does this operation of cutting and stitching back produce a collage of stereotypical 'truths' to which the Italian audience is subordinated and by which it is dominated? In addition, are these Italianised Bollywood films the sign of a still fragmented and disharmonised European culture?

The abrupt cuts inflicted by the Italian broadcasting networks not only created incongruence in the visual flow by giving a sense of unresolved emotional tension, but they also broke its established 'global' aesthetic formulae (which see these films as they are filmed and conceived in India). Europe needs a clearer organisation of its incoming new cultural artefacts – in this case Bollywood films – within a 'global' definition, and Italy needs, together with other European countries, cultural harmonisation that sees the achievement of a common 'filmic reception' and the moving of it towards a more complex 'filmic experience' (Casetti, 2009).

In November 2008 I had the pleasure to interview, as part of my doctoral research, the Indian actor Kabir Bedi. Bedi is very well known within the Italian entertainment industry for his unforgotten portrayal in a television series of the brave pirate *Sandokan* who fought against British colonialism. During the interview with Bedi, which happened after the Rome Film Festival 2008, the actor responded to my question about Bollywood films being screened in Rome as follows:

Television is the main entertainment industry in Italy; films here tend to be either entertaining little comedies or great cinema from great directors and a few in between. So television becomes the main lifeblood of entertainment in Italy. People watch everything on television…I have offered to introduce Indian cinema to the Italian audience, ideally one a week, so that the Italian audience can recognise them and say 'ah this is a Bollywood film, this is the culture, this is the context', and so we should show Italian films in India, to help people to familiarise and once an Italian film comes to the cinema people can say 'ah an Italian film is coming, let's go to see it'…However, producers from both countries should think outside the box, and think about common ground; Bollywood films have songs but I was told that also in Italian cinema people like Amendola and Merola, and Romina Power and Albano were protagonists in film with many songs in it and they were very popular, so films with songs are not alien to the Italian audience…so it can be done, working together can be done, and for India Italy can be the gateway to the West. Italy can be the gateway for India to be part of world cinema. (Abstract from author's interview with Kabir Bedi, November 2008)

Thus, according to Indian actor Kabir Bedi, the choice of broadcasting popular Hindi films on Italian television is not only strategic but also seems to be an accurate one because television is the favourite media in Italy. Also, the two countries share common ground on which a powerful collaboration can be established. As Bedi reminds us, music as an integral part of a film is not new to Italian cinema. However, on Italian screens the songs and dances of Bollywood films are not treated as coherent pieces of the narrative of a film. By cutting song and dance sequences the text of a Bollywood film is deprived of important narrative parts. It must be made clear that the films mentioned by Bedi belong to a specific era of Italian cinema: these kind of popular and yet B movies were called Musicarelli.

The case of Musicarelli in Italy, despite seeming to be easily associated with Bollywood films because of their distinctive content in which songs are hosted and local popular singers are promoted, is a genuinely weak connection. In Italian Musicarelli, typified by a fragile filmic structure, the plot normally comprised an uncomplicated love story seasoned by families' disapproval, or a love story in which the heroes were enrolled in the Italian armed forces and the heroines are fascinated by their uniforms and were waiting for their love to return home. The main hero was never seen to be involved in action or war, rather he was seen leaving the barracks or travelling on a train and singing because he was glad to be going home. This specific subgenre – which was short-lived but intense – served to broaden the popularity of songs and generated national singing idols (Trentmann, 2012). Singers such as Gianni Morandi, Albano and Romina Power, Little Tony, to name just a few, are the most popular and representative singers/actors, who were accompanied by some comical actors, and were the heroes and heroines of this subgenre. Titles such as *Chimera* (E. M. Fizzarotti, 1968), *Piange il Telefono* (Lucio de Caro, 1975), *Non Son Degno di Te* (E. M. Fizzarotti, 1965) and *Cuore Matto…Matto da Legare* (M. Amendola, 1967) denote the peak of success of this category of films.

This subgenre of the Italian cinematographic industry served two main purposes: the first one was exclusively commercial, and it was to support a singer in full creative bloom and his/her new album; the second was a liberalisation of the promotion of youth culture. The films almost always included scenes of holidays on the beach and tender love stories seasoned with light-hearted songs and dances that did not constitute an integral part of the narrative structure. These songs, in contrast to songs in Bollywood films, were purely promotional.

The life of these films – Musicarelli – was short and this method of publicity was soon replaced by national television. Musicarelli were supplanted by television that began to broadcast variety shows in which the juvenile idols were now accepted after having long been

considered subversive by the general public. The films of the 1970s were characterised by political and social perspectives, providing a voice to the discomfort of a generation, and Musicarelli ceased to dominate the screens of Italy.

Matteo Lanza in a magazine article entitled 'Bollywood? Non solo "musicarelli"'/'Bollywood? Not only "musicarelli"' (Lanza 2011) writes about the screening of *Bollywood: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told* (R. O. Mehra, 2011) at the Cinemà de la Plage, Cannes, in 2011. The documentary Lanza mentions is a chiselled editing of images that remixes and indexes themes and suggestions from Bollywood cinema of the 1980s; Lanza wanted to show occidentals who were normally biased against 'musicarelli' that the industry produces technically valid films despite "preserving some of the kitsch aspects that do not fully convince the Western audience" (author's translation from Italian) (Lanza, 2011). However, in spite of the similarities that Lanza and Bedi raise while thinking about the formal structure of a Bollywood film and a Musicarello, these two methods of filmic narration are profoundly different in scope, form and composition, and for these reasons, as articulated earlier, it is impossible to compare them. The assonance between the two is only perceptual and abstract rather than constructional.

The customisation of Bollywood in Europe, and specifically within Italy which sees these films as *ex-novo* products for a non-South Asian audience, seems to adhere to the abstract narrative of a collage. When Umberto Eco wrote about *Casablanca* and the way the film became a cult (Eco, 1985), the author explained that a filmic text must display specific features because the filmic text had become a sort of textual syllabus or rather "a living example of living textuality" (Eco, 1985: 4). This clause opens questions when applied to Bollywood filmic texts: How is Bollywood textuality being translated for the Italian audience? and What are the specific features retained and what do they signify?

The re-editing of *Jodhaa Akbar* does not imply a technique of juxtaposition of images but rather a synthetic montage of images. The filmic text of *Jodhaa Akbar* (like many other Bollywood films in Italy) follows the free reconstruction of an image, or an object, which is now completely untied from the initial perspective. The film, as an artistic object, is not analysed or sectioned of all its essential physiognomy without being subjected to the rules of mimicry. The synthesis here happens naturally keeping in mind parts of the initial object that now appears on the same level as an open object deprived of depth. *Jodhaa Akbar* was sought to be constructed as a modernist work allied to the resounding notions of time and memory. The re-editing, the cutting and gluing back of this film was made through an association of ideas, a synthesis spurious of 'unwanted', as named by Lanza, kitsch aspects (Lanza, 2011).

When Henri Bergson claimed that "no matter how abstract a conception may be it always has its starting point in perception" (Bergson, 2010: 133) the author was writing on the wider notion of 'perception of changes'. Both the form and content of *Jodhaa Akbar* as presented on the Italian screen can be analysed through the lens of the French philosopher Henri Bergson. He was interested to develop theories on duration and simultaneity as consequences of time, something incomplete and constantly evolving. Bergson disseminated the distinction between the notions of intellect and intuition and characterised their oppositional understanding of time: intellect as being associated with fixity, and intuition as being associated with motion and changes (Bergson, 2010). The author by rejecting fixity claimed the following: "it is not the 'states', simple snapshots we have taken once again along the course of change, that are real; on the contrary, it is flux, the continuity of transition, it is change itself that is real" (Bergson, 2010: 16). In simple words this means that Bollywood films, and particularly the case of *Jodhaa Akbar*, were no longer subject to the fixity of specific narratives; this new filmic 'collage' was liberated by the film's set of images. Following Bergson'stheories, and particularly the study on the butterfly in flight and the

reflection on what it had been and what it was becoming (Bergson, 2010), it is possible to explain what this Bollywood film had transformed into on the Italian screen.

Bergson, as we are reminded in the writing of De Micheli (De Micheli, 1992), proposed a method of knowledge that has more than one analogy with the construction of a Cubist painting. In particular, his attention was directed to some compositions of Delaunay that had been made with combinations of disparate images (De Micheli, 1992). Bergson, as De Micheli informs us, wrote the following: "many different images, taken from very different orders of things may, with the convergence of their actions, direct consciousness to the exact spot where there is a certain intuition to be seized" (author's translation from Italian) (De Micheli, 1992: 215).

In harmony with Bergson's considerations, the filmic text of *Jodhaa Akbar* (and by extension the evolution of Bollywood in Europe) can be understood as being an expandable and contractible text that becomes something different from the original, something in permanent flux, as perfectly explained by the French philosopher through a metaphor as follows: "Let us unfasten the cocoon, awaken the chrysalis; let us restore to movement its mobility, to change its fluidity, to time its duration" (De Micheli, 1992: 17).

Bergson named this flow of time *durée*, a French word that indicates duration or 'something that lasts', and celebrated its continuous rise of originality. Furthermore, he wrote that this *durée* should be considered as an incessant creative evolution that cannot, be fractured into measurable parts. Instead, it was unique, erratic and restless with its own capacity for change.

As argued by Rob Stone in his fervid and convincing analysis of the documentary *Ama Lur*/Motherland (N. Basterretxea and F. Larruquert, 1968) through the perspective of Bergson's theory:

> …time and film share the movement that constitutes the flow of life and are inseparable from their meaning. Unless one stops the projector there is no 'now' in time or film, for 'now' has already passed. Moreover, it might be argued that a film never exists in the present except in the intellect's pedantic insistence on the single frame that scientific manuals state stops for one twenty-fourth of a second before the projector's bulb. (Stone, 2010: 237)

This indeed is the way *Jodhaa Akbar* is compiled, but *La Sposa dell'Imperatore* (its Italian counterpart) suggests that the reception and decodification of a Bollywood film away from India is quite a different operation.

Interestingly, Stone discusses the notion of Cubism to provide a wide and yet articulate explanation of *Ama Lur*. The author calls into question the artistic movement known as Cubism and highlights the unity of this painting technique as part of an intuitive response. He also mentions that Cubism proposes not only the opening of an object and therefore a spatial extent and location of this object, but Cubists also promoted the multiplicity of an object and its developing place in a fluid time (Stone, 2010): the latter being the *durée* in Bergson's work. As explained by Stone:

> Intellect,…could only ever distort, disparage or disqualify the reality of what was seen, perceiving only an absence of logic, decorum and sanity when confronted by something that confounded its scientific worldview. (Stone, 2010: 237)

The image that Stone presents of *Ama Lur* is the one of a smooth association of sounds and images that provides a Cubist portrait of the Basque Country. *Jodhaa Akbar* (*La Sposa dell'Imperatore*) undergoes a similar process of textual dismemberment in which awkward time lapses are perceived as 'absence of logic'. Although Stone's approach is a valuable inspiration to frame the breaking up and 'amendments' that have characterised the re-editing

of Bollywood films for the Italian audience, the analysis of this article moves away from pure Cubism, and aims to seek a more specific technique necessary to decode this new montage. The technique here invoked to explain the outcomes of this 'amends' is the one of collage largely used in Dadaism, Surrealism and Cubism.

Apollinaire provided a 'sentimental' explanation of a collage saying that the use of a stamp, waxed canvas, upholstery, an envelope and other objects is the actual introduction of an element already imbued with humanity (Apollinaire, 1965). For this reason Apollinaire reminds us that a painting, or any form of art, that employs collage is enriched with new pathos creating a bond between reality and artificiality (Apollinaire, 1965).

Collage is an artistic concept that is associated with the beginning of Modernism; it brings the artistic process of cutting-and-gluing-back parts of an object onto another to the extremes of its methodological and intellectual possibilities. The glued patches that Picasso and, in particular, Braque added to their canvasses provided a new perspective when the cuttings collided with the flat surface of a canvas (De Micheli, 1992). The collision frames the collage as part of a methodological re-examination of painting, sculpture and low relief that provides each medium with the characteristics of the others. Furthermore, the cuttings from pictures or newspapers introduce fragments of external referenced meanings; hence reference to current events or aspects of popular art are grafted onto the content of the so-called high art. The composition of these signifiers was fundamental to the inspiration behind works of collage. Made up of fragments, the collage is a work of exploration. It proposes a dislocation in time and space and by the nature of its fragmentation, yet coherence; it offers multiple layers of significations.

This is also true in films. What is clear in the (de)construction of Bollywood films in Italy is that the film is discontinuously reconstructed and deprived of all the emotional elements of

unspoken love and desires. By removing songs and dances from the film its spatial integrity is destroyed and reconstituted into exotic fragments. Through a new montage these fragments are (re)united into a new structure whose only continuity is in the continuum embedded within the process of montage itself, which, to paraphrase Apollinaire, enriches the film with a new pathos.

As Moore reminds us in his compelling discussion of experimental cinema (Moore, 1980) the nature of this type of collage is called '*Ad ho*c' (Moore, 1980: 147). This term provides the possibility of contextualising Bollywood films in Italy. *La Sposa dell'Imperatore* is an 'adjustment' of an Indian film loaded with hyperreal situations and exaggerated events that is transformed into a more (neo)realistic image of Bollywood films; these films, as Lanza reminds us, are deprived of the "kitsch aspects that do not fully convince the Western audience" (Lanza, 2011) and are therefore *ad hoc*. *Ad hoc* representation and re-production of Bollywood films in Italy speaks directly to the fragmentation of mainland Europe, and showcases the lack of cultural harmonisation among European countries when facing incoming cinematographic realities from overseas. It also problematises and destabilises the now diffused assumption of understanding the journey of Bollywood away from the Indian borders as a global phenomenon.

To link back to Adhocist terms, Moore writes that the *Ad hoc* method in art takes place when the editing is formed of available and found objects to create a new work, and with it a new signification (Moore, 1980). In this light, Moore writes, "Adhocism often produces a reaction of 'anyone could have done this', because it recombines the already existent cultural artifact into a new form" (Moore, 1980: 47).

This last clause is pertinent to the analysis of *Jodhaa Akbar* in Italy. By using the footage of *Jodhaa Akbar* to broadcast *La Sposa dell'Imperatore* the original meaning is, as mentioned at

the beginning of this article, subverted. The story of a glorious Indian emperor, his deeds and his history as well as his influence on the interreligious dialogue within India, is mostly discarded in favour of a light romantic and exotic love story. The latter being another love story among the myriad of love stories from India that inhabit the small screens of Italy during summertime.

In *La Sposa dell'Imperatore* there is a transformation of the textual traditional Bollywood continuity rule and with it the denial of historical contextualisation. There is no attempt by the Italian television channel to broadcast the entire universe of a Bollywood film with its emotional decompensations. Within the context of Italy, the aim is to provide a more (neo)realistic (as much as possible) image of Bollywood stories thereby generating a new filmic universe and a novel – to use Bergson's terms – perception of this so-called global phenomenon. This new filmic universe is the one of a more realistic storytelling that is created *ad hoc* for the Italian audience. Here, the desire of the hero for the heroine can be desire without it being sang or danced reciprocally to the loved one. Nothing of what cannot be explicitly said in Bollywood texts, and therefore suggested by songs and dances, cannot be clearly presented on Italian screens, and the reassembling of the film into a new form that is cleansed of 'kitsch elements' (Lanza, 2011) subverts spatial and temporal continuity. This temporal and spatial flux in constant transition is the theorem revealed by Bergson, and an actual 'perception of change' of Bollywood cinema abroad.

Continuity is here replaced by the idea of an idealistic continuum and the Italianised Bollywood film re-created a rule-system that governs the collage of images sequentially arranged into new meanings. The new meanings sketched by *La Sposa dell'Imperatore* provide a filmic stability to Bollywood films within the certainty of the daily spectacle and palimpsest of Italian television; this aesthetic and narrative 'stability', however, responds to local needs. They now adhere to what Parker Tyler describes as follows:

> …filmic stability depends on the conventions of a continuous space in which we are shown discontinuous, necessarily fragmented pieces…which are knit together by the action of those who move within that space or by the harmonious transition from one still background pattern to another (Parker, 1970: 214).

The export process, and becoming a 'global product' that is consumed not only by the diasporic community but made available to a wider non-South Asian audience, consolidates the possibility of Bollywood films to assume new meanings within new temporalities and spatialities. Popular Hindi cinema in Italy marries a 'neorealistic' trend (less in aesthetic terms and more in conceptual terms) with 'unknown' actors and actresses, and with stories taken from faraway lands or from neorealities of migrants that populate the streets of the Italian ethnic neighbourhoods of big cities (Acciari, 2012).

In Rajadhyaksha's article mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the author reminds readers that:

> Bollywood is *not* the Indian film industry, or at least not the film industry alone. Bollywood admittedly occupies a space analogous to the film industry, but might best be seen as a more diffuse cultural conglomeration involving a range of distribution and consumption activities from website to music cassettes, from cable to radio. (Rajadhyaksha, 2008: 1920).

The appalling trimming process that the evergreen Bollywood cinema industry underwent in Italy, and continues to undergo, is part of the consumption activities of this industry worldwide. The altered Bollywood narratives that populated the screens in Italy during summer seasons (since 2007) are, undeniably, an answer to one of Rajadhyaksha's two questions on modernism: "Bollywood clearly is reconfiguring the field of the cinema in important ways. What does it pick as translatable into the new corporate economy, what is it

that this economy leaves behind? This would be as important a cultural question as an economic one" (Rajadhyaksha, 2008: 198).

To partially answer the cultural question we need to think about Eisenstein's comments on the art of montage. While playing with pieces of films, if the pieces are placed together they will inevitably be combined into a new concept and have a new quality (Eisenstein, 1975). The omission of parts of Bollywood films by the hand of the intransigent Italian entertainment industry poses problems with the sense of this new collage of images and on the necessity of an *ex novo* montage that alters the structure of the original film. The basic aim and function of montage, which is "the need for connected and sequential ex-position of the theme, the material, the plot, the action, the movement of the film sequences" (Eisenstein, 1975: 3), is altered and the film drama as a whole, and as originally conceived, is challenged.

By cutting Bollywood songs and dances, what is left for us to see? A text deprived of dream, desires and unspoken truths. Awkward time lapses and missing events provide a novel perspective of a film; perhaps a more realistic perspective?

The Italianisation of Bollywood cinema, which occurs through a collage of a new montage of existing footage to obtain closer realism as an *ad hoc* pathway for the Italian audience, transforms a Bollywood film into a completely new product. Does this 'surgery' suggest a hidden association of the Italian entertainment industry with old and melancholic ways of recounting a filmic story through a realistic approach? Are Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai and Aamir Khan (to name just a few Bollywood stars), unknown Indian actors within Italy, associable to the anonymity of actors and actresses of the age of Neorealism? Is the Italianisation of Bollywood film into new simplistic stories, with no space and time to dream, a process for the re-affirmation of (neo)realism facets and stereotyped narratives?

The 'new' Bollywood texts that are broadcasted in Italy are, therefore, a result of an *ad hoc* selection of images glued back together into a novel coherent montage that generates another filmic text. However, as Umberto Eco reminds us: "When you do not know how to deal with a story, you put in it stereotyped situations because you know that they, at least, have already worked elsewhere" (Eco, 1985: 6).

Bibliography

Acciari, Monia, (2012), South Asian Aesthetic in Italy. A Journey. Saarbrücken: LAP

Lamber Academic Publishing

Anonymous, (http://www.kalpana.it/ita/blog/2009/07/amori-con-turbanti-2009-2.html)

(retrieved on October 2012)

Apollinaire, Guillaume (1965) Les peintres cubists: meditations. Paris: Hermann, 1965

Bergson, Henri (2010) The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics. New York:

Dover Publications

Carolan, Bruce 'The Birth of the European Union: US and UK Roles in the Creation of a

Unified European Community', *Tulsa Journal of Comparative & International Law*, Vol. 16,

No. 1, (2008), pp. 51-65.

Casetti, Francesco (2009) Filmic Experience, *Screen* 50 (1), pp. 56-66

Churchill, Wiston, 'Speech to the Academic Youth',
www.europa.ch/files/pdf/churchill_en_pdf (retrieved on September 2010).

De Micheli, Mario *Le Avanguardie artistiche del novecento*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1992)

Eco, Umberto, (1985) "Casablanca": Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage, *SubStance* 14 (2), Issue 47: In Search of Eco's Roses (1985), pp. 3-12

Eisenstein, Sergei (1975) The Film Sense. New York: Harvest Book

Gokulsing, Moti K. and Dissanayake, Wimal, (2004) Indian popular cinema: a narrative of cultural change. London: Trentham Book

Joerges, Christian and Neyer, Jurgen, 'Transforming strategic interaction into deliberative problem-solving: European comitology in the foodstuffs sector', *Journal of European Public Policy* Vol. 4, No. 4 (1997), pp. 609-625.

Jönsson Christer , Tägil Sven and Törnqvist Gunnar, (2000) Organizing European Space, London: Sage

Lanza, Matteo, (2011) Bollywood? Non solo "musicarelli" [online], 16 May 2011. Available at http://www.vanityfair.it/f#show/speciale-cannes/2011/05/16/festival-di-cannes-2011-bollywood-the-greatest-story-never-told [Accessed: 12 Jan 2012]

Moore, Barry Walter, (1980) Aesthetic Aspects of Recent Experimental Film. New York: Arno Press Inc.

Parker, Tyler (1970) Underground film: A critical history. New York: Grove Press

Kerremans, Bart, (1996) 'Do institutions make a difference? Non-institutionalism, neo-institutionalism, and the logic of common decision-making in the European Union', *Governance* 9, (2), (Spring) pp. 217-40

Rajadhyaksha, Ashish (2008) The Bollywoodization of Indian cinema: cultural nationalism in a global arena, in Rajinder Dudrah and Jigna Desai (eds) *The Bollywood Reader*. London: McGraw-Hill, pp. 174-190

Unknown, (2007) Amori con Turbanti [online], August 2007. Available at:

< http://www.rai.tv/dl/RaiTV/homeTv/amoriconturbanti/2007.html > [Accessed: 15 October 2007]

Stone, Rob (2010) The coding of aesthetic and thematic discourse in a cinematic mnemonic: The case of Ama Lur (1968), *Journal of European Studies*, 40 (3), pp. 230-242

Trentmann Frank (ed) (2012) The Oxford book of the history of consumption. London: Oxford University Press

Films:

Ama Lur. 1968. Dir N. Basterratwea and F. Larruquert. Distribuciones Cinematograficas Ama Lur and Frontera Films S.A.

Bollywood - The greatest love story ever told. 2011. Dir R.O. Mehra. UTV Motion Pictures

Chimera. 1968. Dir E. M. Fizzarotti. Mondial Televisione Film

Cuore Matto…matto da legare. 1967. Dir M. Amendola, 1967. Gloria and West

Jodhaa Akbar/La Sposa dell'Imperatore Dir A. Gowariker. Ashutosh Gowariker Productions Pvt. Ltd. and UTV Motion Pictures

Non son degno di te. 1965. Dir E. M. Fizzarotti. Ultra Film

Piange…il Telefono. 1973. Dir L. De Caro. Climati Produzioni

Quattro mosche di velluto grigio. 1971. Dir D. Argento, 1971. Universal Productions France, Marianne Productions and Seda Spettacoli