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Giovanna Rampazzo
Technological University Dublin

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Formations of Indian Cinema in Dublin: A Participatory Researcher-Fan Ethnography

Giovanna Rampazzo, MPhil

This Thesis is submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in
Candidature for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice
School of Media
College of Arts and Tourism

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Abstract

This thesis explores emergent formations of Indian cinema in Dublin with a particular focus on globalising Bollywood film culture, offering a timely analysis of how Indian cinema circulates in the Irish capital in terms of consumption, exhibition, production and identity negotiation. The enhanced visibility of South Asian culture in the Irish context is testimony to on the one hand, the global expansion of Hindi cinema, and on the other, to the demographic expansion of the South Asian community in Ireland during the last decade. Through varying degrees of participant observation in and across sites of film production and consumption, alongside interviews with South Asian and western social actors with an interest in Indian cinema, this thesis critically frames manifestations of Indian film culture in Dublin; crucially, it does so via my dual positionality as a fan of Bollywood cinema and a researcher, embedded in new formations of Indian cinema in the Irish capital. Drawing on existing literature surrounding the globalisation and circulation of Hindi cinema outside the Indian subcontinent (Rajadhyaksha 2003; Desai 2004; Athique 2005, 2008b; Dudrah 2012) and fan studies (Jenkins 1992, 2006b; Monaco 2010; Duffett 2013), this thesis endeavours to explore the circulation and the social dynamics of Indian cinema, with particular attention to its impact on Irish urban spaces and in constituting subjectivities in the context of the social and economic changes occurring in Ireland since the last decade.

Conducted through the lens of fandom, this study foregrounds the relevance of fan studies in promoting a richer understanding of a globalised and transnational cultural product such as Indian film in its multiple manifestations across the Irish capital, contextualising the complexity of the cultural practices and social environments involved. Significantly, my passionate interest in Bollywood cinema led me on a journey through various sites where Indian films are produced, consumed and exhibited, foregrounding the sheer diversity of modes of circulation and engagement that characterises the emergence of Indian film culture in Dublin. Immersive participant observation as a Hindi film fan thus represented an innovative approach to the exploration of the presence of Indian film in transnational contexts, which further contributes to Indian film studies and to the growing field of transnational cinema.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other Institute or University.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the Institute's guidelines for ethics in research.

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Signature: _____

Date: _____

Candidate: Giovanna Rampazzo

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I dedicate this work to my mother, Rosanna Rampazzo (1936 – 1990).

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Introduction

This thesis explores emergent formations of Indian cinema across the city of Dublin through the lens of my dual positioning as a white, female Italian fan of Bollywood cinema and a researcher. My work sets out to foreground how manifestations of Indian film culture in the Irish capital are intertwined with questions of globalisation, government policy and migrant identity formation, and how these factors play out across urban localities and in everyday life, tracing their links to the socioeconomic changes which have occurred in Ireland since the early 2000s. I had initially planned to conduct my research across various cities in Ireland, in acknowledgement of the fact that South Asian communities reside throughout the country. However, given that the circulation of Indian cinema outside the Irish capital is scarce, and considering the richness of material present in Dublin, I thought that restricting my fieldwork to Dublin would provide focus and depth to my study, in addition to making it more manageable and relevant.

Through a combination of ethnographic methods such as participant observation in and across sites of film production and consumption, together with interviews with South Asian and western social actors with an interest in Indian cinema, this thesis critically frames the reactions and interactions produced by instantiations of Indian film culture in Dublin. By providing a detailed examination of the presence of Indian film in the context of the Irish capital, this thesis engages with previous studies that have explored the globalisation of Hindi cinema and its circulation outside India and among non-Indian audiences (Rajadhyaksha 2003; Desai 2004; Athique 2005, 2008b; Acciari

2012a, 2012b; Dudrah 2012; Vandeveldel et al. 2013). This thesis thus endeavours to add to current scholarship surrounding the transnational circulation of Indian film, taking into account processes of globalisation that allow popular Indian cinema to be increasingly visible outside India, as well as the economic and social changes in Irish society linked to the growth of the South Asian community in Dublin during the last decade.¹

How I Became a Bollywood Fan in Dublin

My interest in Bollywood cinema originates from my very first exposure to Hindi films, which happened in Dublin in 2005, courtesy of Nicolle, a German girl I befriended during my early years in Ireland and an ardent fan of Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan. I watched my first Indian film when she brought a DVD of the Bollywood film *Swades* (We, the People, Ashutosh Gowariker, 2004) to a party we organised with Irish and Spanish friends. I had never watched a Bollywood film before but I had preconceived notions about them, because the only comments I heard about popular Indian films were very disparaging: people described these films as “contrived and silly”, “too long and boring”, “plagued by poor acting and overall bad quality”. Therefore, I assumed I would not like the film but agreed to watch it to please Nicolle, wondering why she was so passionate about Bollywood. Scholars of fandom have explored the stigma attached to being a fan and the condescending attitude that non-fans have for fan communities (Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002; Duffett 2013). Significantly, fans are often described by the media as misfits characterised by an unhealthy obsession with celebrities and fictional texts. Henry Jenkins notes that instances of fan enthusiasm are often explained by the press ‘according to a stereotypical conception of the fan as emotionally unstable, socially maladjusted, and dangerously out of synch with reality’

(1992: 13). This is particularly evident in the case of Indian film fans, who often attract negative comments from the media for worshipping film stars as if they were deities (Prasad 2009). To my shame, I admit that these notions made me initially look upon Nicolle's passion from a position of scepticism and intellectual snobbery. The film told the story of an Indian man (Shah Rukh Khan) working as a project manager at NASA in the US, who went back to India after many years to visit his elderly nanny still living in his childhood village. Confronted with the harsh realities of rural India and the problems the villagers had to face, including poverty and lack of infrastructure, the protagonist helped set up an electric power plant to provide the village with electricity. I found the story very gripping and poignant and I welcomed the inclusion of song sequences to highlight emotions, probably because I always enjoyed musicals, which are becoming increasingly rare in western cinema. Most people at the party liked the film, even if they found it too long and therefore difficult to watch. That night I realised that my preconceived notions about Bollywood cinema were unfounded and asked Nicolle to lend me other Bollywood DVDs.

What immediately drew me to Hindi cinema was its spectacle and music. Moreover, I found the emphasis on romance, family relations and display of emotions within popular Indian cinema refreshing when compared to the norms of more formulaic contemporary Hollywood cinema. That night thus marked a shift in my position towards Bollywood and I became a Hindi film fan. The processes that lead people to enter the world of fandom have been explored by scholars highlighting the autobiographic elements that prompt a connection with specific cultural products (Cavicchi 1998; Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006; Duffett 2013). As Duffett points out, 'individuals who become fans do not exactly transform their identities, because they never actually leave any aspect of

their previous identity behind. Instead, they find that a new vista opens up of self-identified possibilities' (2013: 155).

I realised only later that Hindi films reminded me of the 1950-60s American musicals and the Italian musical comedies I enjoyed watching with my mother as a child.² The escapist narratives of Bollywood, heavily reliant on music and dance, brought me back to a simple and innocent time, before my childhood was cut short by my mother's illness and premature death. At that time, my mother and I were living by ourselves in a large, rundown family house. My father was always absent from my life and my half-siblings, who were much older than me, had already moved out. The small humdrum village in the north of Italy where I lived did not provide many chances of entertainment; moreover, our troubled family history and my mother's struggle with depression meant that we did not have many social relations. Watching escapist films was thus a needed distraction from a bleak reality that I could not yet fully grasp, but filled me with insecurities and uncertainties about my future. Singing along with the song sequences and commenting on the comedic and spectacular aspects of the films, provided an occasion for bonding and positive interaction with my mother, which created happy memories of my otherwise troubled youth.

Judith Okely suggests that the researcher's past is equally important in the production of knowledge as current experiences in the field. In her paper on boarding school education for girls, Okely contends: 'I deliberately confront the notion of objectivity in research by starting with the subjective, working from the self outwards. The self – the past self – becomes a thing, an object' (Okely 1978: 110 quoted in Callaway 1992: 42). My subjective experience watching musical films as a child thus determined and

influenced my enjoyment of Hindi films as an adult and subsequently shaped my positionality as a researcher. When my mother's condition worsened I was taken into care by a foster family with whom I spent my teenage years. My only option was to attend a non-academic, secretarial high school in order to achieve economic independence as soon as possible. Immediately after finishing school, I had to face the challenge of living on my own and supporting myself completely.³ It was only in my late twenties, after years of frustration with the limited prospects of Italy's stagnant job market and with the extreme difficulty of conducting further studies without any financial support, that I had the opportunity to move to Dublin. In Ireland, thanks to the economic boom, I could easily find work and return to educational pursuits.

When introduced to Bollywood, I had not been watching musicals for a long time, even if I used to enjoy them. This was probably an unconscious decision aimed at avoiding the sensation of pain and loss that watching musicals without my mother would trigger during already difficult times. Being in a different country which offered me a better life compared to my tough experience in Italy, and having a group of friends, who were like family to me, allowed me to reconnect to filmic representations that triggered memories of my childhood without the pain that used to accompany them. Jeannette Monaco explored the role played by memory in her self-reflexive study on *The Sopranos* and its online fandom. Quoting Annette Kuhn (1995), Monaco contends that 'memory work allows us to make meaningful connections between the experiences of the personal and the cultural as we recall former periods of our cultural situatedness' (2010: 110). In a similar way, memories of my past allowed me to negotiate my own identity as a Hindi film fan by examining how the social and familiar context of my childhood shaped my emotional engagement with this particular kind of cinema. The exploration of how

Hindi films helped me negotiate my experience as a child with my identity as an adult, points to the importance of employing the researcher's personal experience in order to identify the reasons why fans develop an attachment to specific media texts, establishing how 'we, as media consumers and fans, construct a sense of those texts that are relevant and meaningful to us' (Hills 2002: 52).

My academic interest in Hindi films developed in my last year of undergraduate studies at the University of Wolverhampton in England,⁴ where I enthusiastically took the opportunity to join a module on the subject. Before that time, during the first two years of my film production course, my academic engagement was limited to auteur cinema and socially engaged cinema, as overtly commercial films were rarely mentioned during classes, confirming their struggle to be considered worthy of scholarly attention. The 'Popular Indian Cinema' course, introduced me to famous Hindi films such as *Mother India* (1957, Mehboob Khan), telling the epic story of a poverty-stricken village woman, the first Indian film to be nominated for an Oscar. I subsequently became familiar with another Hindi film legend, Amitabh Bachchan, through the films that propelled him to stardom such as *Zanjeer* (Chains, Prakash Mehra, 1973), *Sholay* (Embers, Ramesh Sippy, 1975) and *Deewar* (Wall, Yash Chopra, 1975). These productions established Bachchan as the 'angry young man' of Indian cinema and allowed him achieve iconic status unthinkable in western film culture by symbolising the social discontent and political upheavals affecting India in the 1970s. I was fascinated by the overt manner in which popular Indian cinema meant for entertainment, seemed to provide a peculiarly insightful account of social history and cultural politics, usually seen in non-mainstream films. According to Kazmi, mainstream Indian cinema is essentially political and plays a significant role in reflecting sociocultural realities and

shaping ideologies. Kazmi argues that ‘conventional cinema’ is ‘a sociological and political phenomenon that cannot be ignored’ (1999: 16). During that time, I appreciated the opportunity to study films that I found extremely enjoyable and entertaining as it allowed me to extend my fan pleasures through academic discourse. As I moved further along in my studies, I also became interested in how diasporic groups and western spectators respond to Hindi films. Most of the students in my class were white British and some were of Indian descent; it was fascinating to see how this mixed group of people responded differently to Hindi films. Some of the British Asian students had limited knowledge of Bollywood and joined the module to find out more about their culture of origin; others were well acquainted with Hindi cinema and thought the course would be very easy for them. Since England has a large South Asian population, Bollywood films were available at several commercial cinemas both in Wolverhampton and in nearby cities; it was therefore easy for me to have access to the latest Hindi film releases on the big screen.

In 2007 when I moved back to Ireland, after a break of just a few months, I noticed several visible changes to the Dublin landscape: more Indian shops had opened, especially around Talbot Street and Moore Street,⁵ many of which now sold pirated copies of Hindi film DVDs. Many of the Chinese check-out workers in corner shops had been replaced by South Asians. My biggest surprise was that Hindi films were being regularly screened in commercial cineplexes such as Cineworld (see chapter two), whereas before they were only sporadically shown in art house venues such as the Irish Film Institute.⁶ I was delighted to be able to keep on watching Hindi films on the big screen as I had become accustomed to doing so during my time in England. I speculated whether these positive cultural enrichments were due to the larger presence of South

Asian immigrants. Being a migrant worker, I was aware of the demographic transformations underway within Irish society since the 1990s due to an unprecedented influx of migrants. At the beginning Italians and Spaniards seemed to be everywhere. When Poland joined the EU, the Polish community grew rapidly, so much so that for the first time one could see newspaper inserts and billboards in a language other than English or Irish. After my return from England, I could not help but notice that the South Asian community was becoming increasingly visible, vibrant and active with a growing number of festivals, exhibitions and social events being constantly organised (see chapter three). It was very stimulating to witness these developments in an already multi-ethnic Irish society and to see new ethnic groups obtain increasing visibility and audibility.

These developments, combined with my personal and academic interest in Hindi cinema, prompted me to embark on a PhD on Indian cinema after completing an MPhil. in film theory and history at Trinity College Dublin. I did not know at that time that my project would be a self-reflexive, ethnographic study on the circulation of Indian cinema in Dublin. I initially planned to concentrate solely on ethnically diverse Bollywood audiences, but I soon realised that several people I identified as participants had an interest in Indian cinema that went beyond Bollywood and beyond watching films, such as event organisers, Bollywood dancers and people involved in Indian film productions. I resolved to document their experience and different manifestations of Indian film, such as the organisation of festivals and the production of commercial and independent films, in order to provide a more comprehensive account on the presence and effects of this fascinating cultural product in an increasingly multi-ethnic Irish context. In the

following sections I introduce the main methodological and theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, which will be expanded upon in chapter one.

Research Design and Theoretical Frameworks

The various manifestations of South Asian cinema in Dublin outlined above prompted me to trace the cultural geography of Indian film across the Irish capital and in the context of globalising transnational cultural flows. The aim of this thesis is therefore to explore the circulation and the social dynamics of Indian cinema, with particular attention to its impact on Irish urban spaces and in constituting subjectivities in the context of the social and economic changes occurring in Ireland since the last decade. I achieve this goal by examining different instantiation of Indian film culture through the lens of my dual identity as an Indian film fan and a researcher, in an attempt to demonstrate the relevance of fan studies in fostering understandings of transnational cinema. Significantly, it is my interest in Indian film that led me to the various sites explored in this thesis; these locations thus constitute the geography of fandom which shaped and informed my study. For this reason, the ordering of the chapters comprising this thesis does not actually follow the chronology of the research, instead chapter two to six of this thesis examine each of the research sites I identified as relevant in terms of the presence of Indian film culture. These sites are discussed in the order in which I discovered them in an attempt to impose a textual coherence on the material which mirrors my journey as a researcher.

Although my research focuses on the circulation, reception and consumption of Bollywood cinema, on mainstream Irish-Indian co-productions, and on emerging forms of independent Irish-Indian films, it is not strictly limited to social actors belonging to

the South Asian diaspora, but further includes participants from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Developing an interest in Hindi film on a personal and academic level – despite my distance from Indian culture in terms of ethnicity and geography – made me aware that the appeal of Indian cinema is by no means limited to South Asians. This led to my decision to inscribe my subject position throughout the thesis as an Italian Bollywood fan, engaged with Indian cinema in Dublin, thereby performing the hybrid role of a researcher who is also a fan.⁷ In order to negotiate my dualistic positioning as fan and scholar I critically analyse my self-identification as a fan and the role it plays in developing a more participatory ethnographic study of the emergence of Indian cinema in Dublin. In conversation with scholarly works produced by academics belonging to fan communities (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006b; Devereux et al. 2011; Duffett 2013), I expand on the challenges and possibilities opened up by my hybrid scholar-fan identity. Reflexive accounts of my personal experiences thus serve to enrich and complement the exploration of social and cultural practices linked to the circulation of Indian film culture in the Irish capital. This reflective voice surrounding my position as a fan is sustained throughout the chapters, functioning as a common thread encompassing the different themes explored in my thesis.

The eclectic nature of Indian film audiences in Dublin became obvious when I began looking for research participants and met many Bollywood enthusiasts who were not South Asians, but had various European backgrounds, such as French, Romanian, Turkish and German. For this reason, I document the experiences and impressions of both South Asian and western audiences of Indian films, who arguably use different points of reference in their perception of themselves, cinema and society. In doing so, I refer to Athique's concept of a 'cultural field' (2005, 2008a), which has been effectively

employed to study the reception of Hindi film by ethnically diverse groups of people. Through this framework, I attempt to explore how people with no links to South Asian culture can make meaning of Hindi films in a transnational context and whether these processes impact upon their sense of identity and belonging.⁸

Notes on Methodology Employed

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted via participant observation and semi-structured interviews across multiple sites of consumption, exhibition and production of Indian films such as cinema halls and their surrounding urban areas, festival locations and film sets, with the declared aim of observing how the circulation of Indian cinema plays out in the context of people's lives in urban localities. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that interviews and participant observation are often interconnected and that interviews represent an important source of data for ethnographers. Significantly, I met several of my respondents through various degrees of participant observation in and across sites. I subsequently conducted semi-structured interviews, in the form of informal conversations punctuated by specific questions, which aimed at uncovering detailed aspects of their engagement with Indian film. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to gather in-depth information by asking follow-up questions, while focusing on planned topics relevant to defined research questions. For these reasons, this type of interview proved to be extremely useful in covering various themes concerning my research through informal and flexible conversations that enabled my respondents to freely express their views.

An important component of my research is also represented via visual material, particularly photographs taken during the course of my fieldwork and stills from films.

In her discussion of visual research methodologies, Gillian Rose (2012) explains that images can effectively complement data collected during fieldwork and are particularly relevant in the context of ethnographic projects with an overt reflexive dimension, such as this study. Moreover, images have the potential to further convey sensory understandings of the spaces discussed (Rose 2012), offering an experiential counterpoint to the phenomena analysed in the body of the text (Suchar 1997). Therefore, the visual material included in this study aims at complementing and integrating my arguments rather than being merely redundant illustrations (Banks 2001).

Contribution to Current Scholarship and Thesis Structure

My study falls within the developing area of transnational and transcultural cinema and it endeavours to make a contribution to current scholarship on Indian cinema and Irish film studies, adding to ongoing research in relation to the globalisation of Bollywood cinema, and to the effects of such a globalising film culture in the city of Dublin. I further wish to advance current academic debates surrounding film production and the emergence of migrant cinema in an Irish context, as well as film reception practices. Audiences are often overlooked in film studies, significantly accounts of Indian film reception outside India are still limited in numbers and their scope is often restricted to South Asian diasporic audiences (Srinivas 1998, 2002, 2005a, 2016; Banaji 2006, 2013; Dudrah 2006, 2012). During the past decade further scholarly works have been conducted around the transnational appeal of Indian films and crossover audiences (Athique 2005, 2008b; Desai 2006; Eleftheriotis 2006; Iordanova 2006; Gurata 2010; O'Neill 2013; Raj and Sreekumar 2013) but no one of them has addressed audiences of Indian cinema in Ireland. This thesis thus provides a timely contribution to audience

reception studies as well as studies of media globalisation. Additionally, in chapter six, where the discussion is concerned with films produced by Indian immigrants, I address emergent instances of migrant cinema in Dublin in conversation with scholarly works on transnational and migrant cinema and representations of migrants, conducted in Ireland (Kakasi 2011; Asava 2013) and other European countries (Naficy 2001, 2006; Ezra and Rowden 2006; Berghahn and Sternberg 2010; Loshitzky 2010). As the subject of circulation, reception and production of Indian films has yet to be addressed in an Irish context, this thesis foregrounds the multidimensional interactions of local people and spaces with Indian cinema in its various manifestations. Furthermore, my fan-based approach to this study through immersive participant observation represents an innovative way to explore the circulation of Indian cinema in a transnational context, contributing to current studies of Indian film and to the wider field of transnational cinema.

Chapter one addresses the theoretical and methodological frames of reference underpinning the study. The chapter contextualises my experience as a Bollywood fan witnessing an emergence of Indian film culture in Dublin. Drawing on the work of several scholars in fan studies, cultural studies, ethnography and Indian cinema, I expand upon my decision to conduct this study across multiple sites employing my dualistic positioning as both Bollywood fan and scholar, delving into the challenges and possibilities that this approach entails. The chapter further discusses how I used participant observation and semi-structured interviews as the main ethnographic methods employed in the study, demonstrating how these strategies proved to be effective in exploring the reasons behind, and the effects of, the circulation of Indian film in Dublin.

Chapter two is centred on Cineworld Dublin, a multiplex located in the centre of the city, constituting the main site of sustained exhibition of mainstream Indian films. Here, I expand on the urban areas surrounding the cinema, which are at the same time ethnically diverse and steeped in Irish history and tradition, alongside the multiple ways this particular location arguably influences the experience of film viewing. This chapter aims at establishing how and in what ways practices of film exhibition and consumption are inextricably linked to Dublin's urban life and influenced by the history and evolution of the city. The chapter further focuses on the experience of watching Bollywood films in an Irish multiplex, delving into the contextual factors that influence and shape the perception of Indian films among diverse audiences.

Chapter three explores the 'Indian Film Festival of Ireland' and its related exhibition sites, Swan Cinema and Movies@Dundrum. It describes my experience as a volunteer for the festival between 2010 and 2014, examining how my hybrid scholarly and fan identity shaped and sustained my engagement with the festival. This chapter also examines the role of the festival in promoting Indian film culture, and how it impacts upon the relationship between diasporic and western audiences and Indian films. The chapter further delineates the links between the festival and current national socioeconomic strategies, establishing how the event is employed in cultural diplomacy and used as a vehicle for boosting economic exchange between India and Ireland. In this instance, I explore different manifestations of the event across urban spaces, demonstrating how it is influenced by historical and transnational processes taking place in the Irish context.

Chapter four focuses on the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012), framing the production concerns of a Hindi film across Dublin's urban spaces and historical contexts. Throughout the chapter, I examine how transnational filmmaking practices are negotiated within the national context and how they impact on local practices and the evolution of Irish cinema. Moreover, I describe how the film was employed by Irish government agencies as an advertising tool to attract Indian tourists, thereby creating an exoticised image of Ireland. In this instance, I outline how the collaboration between Irish educational, creative and cultural industries and the Indian film industry resulted in a cinematic representation centred on stereotyped and superficial images of Dublin and Irish culture. These depictions effectively created a 'tourist gaze' (Connolly 1998; Urry 1990, 2002; Urry and Larsen 2012) for prospective spectators and potential tourists showcasing appealing views of Dublin while simultaneously constructing simplified notions of 'Irishness'.

Chapter five draws on studies of fandom and participatory culture (Jenkins 2006a, 2006b; Burgess and Green 2009), examining the effects of the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* on local communities, with a focus on the experience of Irish-based Bollywood fans, including myself in a methodologically dualistic position of fan and researcher. This chapter draws attention to how the presence of the film's protagonists, Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif, compelled fans to gather in large numbers at film locations and to share photos and videos of the sets on the internet, thus appropriating the film and its imagery, using it to communicate with other fans across the world. The main components of this chapter are instances of participant observation on the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger* combined with an analysis of fan-generated media content surrounding the film's production. This enabled me to analyse how creating and circulating unofficial material

about the film provided fans with the opportunity to complement the event reported by the dominant media and to share their experience with others as members of ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 2006) of Hindi film fans.

In chapter six, I discuss the activities of a group of self-taught filmmakers, members of the Malayalee⁹ community in Dublin, who produce short films centred on the experience of Indian migrants living in Ireland. Although my thesis mainly focuses on commercial films in Hindi language, since they are the main form of Indian cinema circulating in Dublin, these independent productions are also relevant to my study as they represent an indigenous instantiation of non-commercial Indian film production in the Irish capital. Drawing on scholarly works on transnational and migrant filmmaking (Naficy 2001, 2006; Ezra and Rowden 2006; Berghahn and Sternberg 2010), and through descriptions of my experience of participant observation on film sets, interviews and close readings of relevant filmic texts, this chapter explores how these films are used to address concerns present within the Indian community, further representing a powerful tool for communication and cross-cultural exchange. In this instance, I emphasise the underlying factors encouraging and influencing their production, such as the fact that many of the male filmmakers are married to nurses who are the main breadwinners in their households. In conversation with current studies on diasporic communities of Keralites (George 2000, 2005; Percot 2012), I illustrate how film is used to address shifts in gender roles, posing a challenge to traditional masculinity experienced by Dublin-based Keralite men, in addition to raising questions surrounding issues of deterritorialisation and cultural difference. I argue that through this film production, Keralite filmmakers not only shed light on the lived experience of

Indian communities in Ireland, but also establish a way to reassert their masculinity by becoming active producers of culturally mediated content.

Notes

¹ About 30,000 South Asian people were in Ireland on Census night in 2011. <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/personsusuallyresidentandpresentinthestateoncensusnightclassifiedbyplaceofbirthandagegroup/> [Accessed 15 August 2013].

According to the 2011 Census, there has been an 87% increase in the population of people of Asian ethnicity. Available at: <http://cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011pdr/Census,2011,Highlights,Part,1,web,72dpi.pdf> [Accessed 15 August 2013].

² The ‘musicarello’ is a subgenre of the Italian comedy film characterised by comedic and romantic narratives including song sequences by popular singers playing the lead roles. Unlike Hollywood musical films, the musicarello is aimed at young audiences and often features themes of generational conflict. This genre was very popular between the 1950s and 1960s but started to decline with the beginning of the 1968 student protests when political upheavals marked shifts in youths’ tastes and interests.

³ The vast majority of young Italians tend to live with their parents until their late twenties/early thirties. This is mainly due to poor labour market conditions, lack of job security and high housing costs.

⁴ After achieving a Higher National Diploma in Film Production in Dublin, I had the opportunity to study one more year at the University of Wolverhampton and receive a BA in Film Studies.

⁵ Talbot Street and Moore Street are located in close proximity to each other in Dublin city centre. They are two of the main shopping streets on Dublin’s Northside (Dublin’s Northside includes the areas of the city located north of the River Liffey). These sites are explored in depth in chapter two of this thesis.

⁶ The Irish Film Institute (also known as IFI) is a national body in charge of the preservation of Irish film heritage; it maintains an archive of Irish films and provides education in film culture. The IFI is also the main art house cinema of Dublin: it hosts film festivals, retrospectives and curated seasons, along with independent Irish and foreign language films overlooked by commercial multiplexes.

⁷ The notion of academic-fan or scholar-fan was put forward by Matt Hills in *Fan Cultures* (2002). The term aca-fan was later coined and popularised by Henry Jenkins (2006).

⁸ These notions can of course apply to any kind of cinema and to every audience; I am not therefore assuming that Indian film can be interpreted in different ways whereas other forms of entertainment are universally understandable and not open to interpretation.

⁹ This term is used to refer to the native speakers of Malayalam, a language originating from the Indian state of Kerala; another equivalent is Keralite.

Chapter One

The Journey of a Bollywood Fan: Negotiating Reflexivity, Identity and Representation

People who are both academics and fans ... are able to write in a more open way about their experience of fandom.

Henry Jenkins (2006b: 12)

Recognizing the *generalized hybridity* of contemporary media academics ... surely means letting go of an infantile fantasy of omnipotence in which scholars are imagined as the bearers of pure, anti-ideological thought.

Matthew Hills (2007: 46-47)

This chapter is concerned primarily with the methodological choice of researching the circulation of Indian film across various sites in the city of Dublin while foregrounding my self-reflexive approach as an Italian Bollywood fan. To this end, I outline how my topical interest evolved through the emergence of multiple manifestations of Indian film culture in Dublin. The events I analyse in this thesis are: the screening of Indian films in a multiplex in Dublin; the Indian Film Festival of Ireland; the production of a Bollywood blockbuster in Dublin; and the films produced by a group of south Indian filmmakers currently living in Dublin. These additions to the sociocultural life of Dublin were reflected in changes to my social life, taking me on a journey through cultural practices and products originating in South Asia, which I could not expect to become familiar with when I first moved to Ireland. In the following section I contextualise the socio-economic development and transnational processes that contributed to the emergence of Indian film culture in Dublin.

The Irish Indian Community and Globalising Bollywood

Traditionally Ireland has been a country characterised by a declining population and high rates of emigration. At the end of the 1990s, this trend began to reverse and immigration increased significantly in the context of rapid economic growth. During the 2000s, immigrants continued to arrive in significant numbers from all over the world, attracted by profitable jobs available in Irish-based companies and in the public sector.¹ Since 2008, however, emigration rates have grown again due to an economic downturn. As Gilmartin notes, ‘emigration from Ireland has clearly increased since the start of the prolonged recession in 2008’ (2013: 102), which saw Irish nationals as well as people of other nationalities leaving the country.² Nevertheless, numerous migrants arguably remained in Ireland and others continued to arrive, albeit in smaller numbers compared to the previous years (Gilmartin 2013). This unprecedented influx of migrants to Ireland makes the situation of the country unique and distinct from nations with a longstanding tradition of immigration, for example, the UK and the US. Recent instances of immigration that occurred in Ireland during the economic boom (1995-2007), led to the formation of a distinctive national ‘ethnoscape’,³ differing in scope and intensity from the demographic landscapes of other countries with a longer tradition of in-migration. These notions inform and shape my analysis of emerging forms of Indian cinema in Dublin throughout this thesis, which predominantly addresses manifestations of mainstream Indian cinema, yet includes hybrid Irish-Indian productions, since they represent a form of resistance to commercial Indian cinema and a powerful way to articulate transnational identities through film.

The Irish Indian community grew steadily until 2007, mirroring the growth of the Irish economy. Indian professionals from numerous Indian states, characterised by varied

linguistic and religious backgrounds, found employment especially in the healthcare and IT sectors.⁴ However, since 2008, the number of Indians moving to Ireland has ceased to increase, primarily due to a severe recession experienced by the Irish economy and subsequent restrictions in immigration rules. That said, the expansion of the South Asian community from approximately 2,000 people in the year 2000 to about 30,000 members in 2011, resulted in the increased visibility of South Asian people and elements of South Asian culture in the Irish capital. Notably, over two thirds of the whole Indian community of Ireland are concentrated in the Dublin area.⁵ This is due to the fact that Dublin hosts larger migrant communities compared to other Irish cities, reflected in the city's wide availability of non-Irish cultural products and staging of events. Significantly, what prompted me to engage in this study is the fact that since 2006, Hindi films, and occasionally other Indian blockbusters such as Tamil and Telugu films, have been regularly screened in a mainstream cinema in Dublin. The predominance of Hindi films, also known as 'Bollywood films', is hardly surprising given the dominant role that the Hindi language film industry occupies among other Indian media institutions. As Jigna Desai and Rajinder Dudrah explain:

“Bollywood” – once a tongue-in-cheek term used by the English language media in India – has become the dominant globally recognized term to refer to Bombay's (Mumbai's) prolific Hindi-Urdu language culture industry and cinema. Characterized by music and dance numbers, melodrama, lavish production and an emphasis on stars and spectacle, Bollywood films have met with box-office success and enthusiastic audiences both nationally within India and globally.

(2008: 1)

Throughout my thesis I use the terms 'Bollywood films' and 'popular Hindi films' to refer to commercial films made in Hindi in Bombay (renamed Mumbai in 1995).⁶

A cautionary note is necessary here as Tejaswini Ganti reminds us: ‘Bollywood is a contested and controversial term ... both within the Indian film-studies community and the Hindi film industry’ (Ganti 2012: 13). Ashish Rajadhyaksha suggests that Bollywood is a ‘cultural conglomeration’ (2003: 27) rooted in Indian nationalism and operating on a global level. Madhava Prasad argues that Bollywood prompts a comparison with Hollywood, implying that Hindi cinema is nothing but an imitation of its western counterpart, ‘a variation that is related to but distinct from the globally hegemonic Hollywood’⁷ Moreover, in the western media, Bollywood has become synonymous also with any film made by diasporic Indians or set in India, for example, Mira Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) and Gurinder Chada’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2004). However, it can be argued that this conflation proved to be effective in raising awareness about the films and contributing to their box office success. As Adrian Athique observes:

Both Indian and expatriate directors have benefited from this fallacy: mainstream Indian films have been associated, for example, with the success of Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), whilst the “colour as culture” connotations of Bollywood branding have been used to market the films of non-resident Indian (or NRI) directors such as Chada’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2004).

(2008b: 301)

The term Bollywood has also been criticised because it has become the dominant global term to refer to, not only mainstream Hindi cinema, but the totality of Indian filmmaking traditions, thus obliterating the diversity of other Indian regional cinemas.⁸ To this end, Ganti contends that:

Global media usage of the term “Bollywood” usually demonstrates a complete ignorance that feature films are produced in over twenty languages in India every year and that vibrant and prolific film industries exist in the cities of Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, Trivandrum, and Calcutta.

Significantly, the media often reports that Bollywood is the biggest film industry in the world producing close to one thousand films per year. In reality, ‘the Bombay industry actually produces about 150-200 films a year’ (Ganti 2013: 3), whereas the total amount of features produced annually by all Indian film industries amounts to about one thousand. The constant conflation of diverse forms of Indian filmmaking with Bollywood indicates its status as a dominant cultural phenomenon both within and outside India. As Ganti observes: ‘Hindi films, though comprising approximately 20 percent of the total production, are the ones that circulate nationally and internationally, dominate the discourse about Indian cinema, and are regarded as the standard or archetype to follow or oppose’ (ibid.). The fact that Hindi films enjoy wider circulation in Dublin compared to other Indian cinemas suggests that these dynamics are at play also in the Irish context, presenting local audiences with simplified and globalised notions of Indian cinema.

The attention and visibility that Bollywood films have gained in the Irish capital can thus be seen as a manifestation of globalising forces that, together with new technologies, allow Hindi films to be more easily available to audiences outside the Indian subcontinent, influencing viewers’ sensibilities and impacting upon people’s lives and localities. In the 1990s, the liberalisation of the Indian economy resulted in the internationalisation of the production and distribution of Hindi films. New technologies, such as satellite television and the internet made Bollywood available to wider audiences and allowed films to be marketed more effectively outside India. Rajadhyaksha (2003) has referred to the emergence of ancillary structures that allow a wider circulation of Indian film products as the ‘Bollywoodization of the Indian

cinema'. According to Rajadhyaksha, film represents just part of the overall Bollywood cultural industry and its promotion is linked to the marketing of other Indian cultural products including music, fashion items and DVDs. Adrian Athique (2011) has explored how the Bollywood brand has been promoted to audiences outside India by Indian industrialists and politicians in order to generate additional revenue from international markets, boosting economic relations between India and western countries. However, Athique notes that this promotion is carried out according to nationalistic notions of culture, which imply that Indian film should circulate within specific ethnic boundaries and do not take into account its potential to attract non-South Asian audiences. In reality, the diasporic life of Indian film is a lot more complex and cannot be contained within the boundaries of diasporic Indian communities. As Athique suggests, 'notwithstanding the periodic articulation of nationalist rhetoric, the Indian film has already proved to be more than capable of transcending cultural barriers as well as critical taste and state authority' (Athique 2011: 20).

The globalisation of Indian cinema is but one manifestation of globalised markets that prompt country-specific cultural productions to transcend national boundaries while tapping into global markets. These globalising trends spawn marketing strategies aimed at attracting wider audiences for Hindi films, thus increasing the consumption of Indian products throughout the western world. Bollywood films thus circulate as key commodities of the growing Indian economy, impacting social and cultural processes of countries outside India. Appadurai examined the 'circulation of commodities in social life'(1986: 3) and stressed their relevance within a 'global cultural economy' (1996). According to Appadurai, commodities are not only

products meant to be exchanged within capitalist economies, rather they are ‘things with a particular type of social potential’ (1986: 6). The commodification of culture in the contemporary world has been discussed by John Frow who, drawing on Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), suggests the centrality of the spectacle, intended as social relations mediated by images, in the creation of cultural commodities. Frow contends that the spectacle is ‘the fetishized form of the commodity in a system of representation which is in part to be understood as the system of the mass media’ (1997: 5). The emphasis on spectacle and artifice typical of Bollywood films and their wide success among extremely large audiences both in and outside India, suggest that this kind of cinema is particularly suitable to circulate as commodified mediated representation of Indian culture.

Since the 1990s, the Indian film industry began catering to Non Resident Indians (NRIs)⁹ living in western cities by distributing Hindi films through emergent mainstream outlets such as multiplexes (Athique 2005, 2008b; Rai 2009). The commercial success of these films attracted the attention of the western media, resulting in gradually increasing popularity among a wider ‘mainstream’ audience (Athique 2008b). Besides the mainstreaming of Bollywood films in terms of distribution and exhibition in cinemas in major western cities, audiences without any previous familiarity with South Asian culture have been introduced to Indian cinema via the success of films made by diasporic Indian filmmakers such as Deepa Mehta, Gurinder Chadha, Mira Nair and others, based in Europe and North America. For many years, Indian films were distributed mainly through the western art-house circuits which screened films by internationally known directors for example, Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen; popular Indian films, however, started gaining a wider appeal

only from the 1990s onwards. The expression ‘cross-over audience’ (Desai 2004) has been employed to refer to the white mainstream audience that became the new sought-after target for films previously intended for South Asian and diasporic consumption.

The availability of Bollywood films in Dublin’s mainstream outlets since 2006 suggests that these strategies are too being employed in Ireland. For this reason I decided to explore the reception, circulation and consumption of Hindi film in the context of Dublin. The screening of Hindi films in mainstream Dublin cinemas, however, is but one manifestation of the emergence of Indian cinema in the Irish capital. Significantly, due to the growth of the South Asian community, an increasing number of social and cultural events have been organised to promote South Asian culture since the last decade. These include, for example, large scale celebrations of *Diwali* and *Holi* (Festival of Lights and Festival of Colours),¹⁰ with cultural programmes including Bollywood dance performances, and the ‘Indian Film Festival of Ireland’, discussed in chapter three – an annual event with the declared aim of promoting commercial films in Hindi and attracting Bollywood investment into Ireland. Relatedly, in 2009 Irish film director David O’Sullivan made a Bollywood short film, *Moore Street Masala*, highlighting Hindi cinema’s increasing appeal in Dublin. This trend was confirmed when Irish and Indian film industries collaborated in the making of Kabir Khan’s *Ek Tha Tiger* (Once There Was a Tiger, 2012) – the first Bollywood blockbuster to be partially shot in Dublin. The making of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin represented a particularly rich research site in the way it could be linked to recent government strategies aimed at attracting foreign investment to Ireland and also in terms of the reactions of Bollywood enthusiasts, including myself, to the filming across various urban locations in Dublin in 2011. For this reason, this

event is addressed in chapters four and five in my attempt to establish how and in what ways a high budget Bollywood film production impacts on everyday urban life in Dublin; additionally, how the production was intertwined with the concerns of the Irish cultural industries.

Bollywood productions, however, are not the only instantiation of Indian filmmaking in Dublin. Significantly, my participation in the Indian Film Festival of Ireland and other South Asian events introduced me to a group of amateur filmmakers from the South Indian state of Kerala, who, without any previous training in filmmaking, started to make short films about their lives in Dublin. Their activity as independent film producers and the way they use film to document their experience of migration is examined in chapter six in an attempt to explore how and why members of a particular Indian ethnic group decided to use filmmaking as a vehicle of creative and communal expression, rejecting the codes and aesthetics of mainstream cinema in favour of more experimental and realistic approaches.

The newfound visibility of South Asian film cultures within an increasingly multi-ethnic Irish society, calls for an analysis of the effects of transnational flows of people, media and culture on Irish localities and in the constitution of social subjectivities. This thesis therefore attempts to establish how Indian cinema circulates in terms of spectatorship, consumption and production, exploring its role in processes of identity negotiation. In doing so, I address issues of globalisation, commodification, transnationalism and migration, referring to scholarly works conducted in recent years surrounding the complex effects of globalisation and transnational flows of people, media and culture on local communities. In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions*

of Globalization (1996), Appadurai examines how identities are formed in a globalised context, highlighting emerging cultural forms of globalisation, noting that mass media and migration are the key forces shaping today's global world. He observes that global social and cultural flows are part of a 'new global cultural economy', characterised by 'fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics' (1996: 32-33). Such disjunctures can be explored through the examination of the interplay between various dimensions of global cultural flows, which Appadurai sees as landscapes characterised by 'fluid and irregular shapes' (ibid.). Particularly relevant to this study is the relationship between 'ethnoscapes', or 'the landscape[s] of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live in', and 'mediascapes', meaning 'image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality' (ibid.: 330-35). It can be argued that Indian cinema represents a form of country-specific 'mediascape' that diasporic ethnic groups can access while living in their host country. Significantly, Indian films provide South-Asian migrants living in Dublin with images and ideas from their home country which inform the negotiation of their diasporic identity and sense of belonging.

Notably, this thesis in conversation with studies on the transnational circulation of Hindi film and globalising Bollywood that have been conducted in the UK (Banaji 2006; Dudrah 2006; Dwyer 2006, 2013); in the US (Desai 2004; Gopinath 2005; Srinivas 2005a); in South Africa (Hansen 2005); in Nigeria (Larkin 2002a, 2002b; 2003); in Australia (Athique 2005, 2008b); in Italy (Acciari 2012); and in Belgium (Vandeveldt et al. 2013). This collective body of work has enabled me to identify the social and economic processes that impact on the perception and circulation of Indian cinema in different social and cultural contexts. According to Paul Willemen,

comparative film studies should ‘explore, more systematically, how social-historical dynamics impact upon and can be read from films’ (2005: 110). This thesis thus endeavours to establish the social, economic and historical reasons that can influence the circulation and interpretation of Indian cinema in Dublin. Instrumental in the shaping of this thesis are studies of audiences’ multi-dimensional engagement with media products, of cinema-going experiences, together with sensory aspects of film viewing (Dudrah 2006; Rai 2009; Srinivas 2010). Relatedly, ethnographic studies of Hindi film production and the evolution of the Indian film industry (Grimaud 2003; Ganti 2012, 2013) stress the links between economic liberalisation, globalisation and modes of cultural production, helpful in identifying the global forces and socio-political processes behind the presence of formations of Indian film culture in Dublin.

It is important to point out that this thesis does not claim to be a comprehensive study of Indian cinema in an Irish context. My research has been confined to Dublin and did not include instances of Indian film production and consumption in other parts of Ireland. Moreover, the thesis has not engaged with screenings of regional Indian films occasionally organised in various cinemas in Dublin, nor instances of film consumption in the context of private functions and in domestic spaces. Out of necessity, the study has addressed selective sites and events related to Indian film in an attempt to encourage further academic debate, drawing attention to areas of study that have hitherto received limited scholarly attention.

Methodological Approaches

My personal experience as a Bollywood fan prompted me to explore the circulation of Bollywood films and culture in Dublin and how it functions within the context of the Irish capital's varied cultural landscape. Bollywood fans living in Dublin are not limited to the South Asian community but include people of various nationalities, all of whom interact with Hindi film texts in different ways. For this reason my research is not strictly limited to social actors belonging to the South Asian diaspora, but further includes participants from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds who share my interest in Indian films. My decision to focus on ethnically diverse people with a common interest in Indian cinema was inspired by Adrian Athique's notion of 'cultural field' (2005, 2008a), which will be discussed later in this chapter. This model is particularly suitable to explore cultural practices linked to Indian film as 'it focuses on the diasporic life of the Indian movie itself, rather than using it as a relative measure of a given community' (Athique 2005: 120). Being an Italian national researching the circulation of Hindi films in Dublin clearly indicates that I am not a native of the place of origin of the cultural products I study, nor indigenous to the social environment in which I research its presence. Therefore, my positionality as a white, female, Italian academic who is also a Bollywood fan represents a further element of epistemological significance in the shaping of my research. The concept of positionality is common in ethnographic research practices, where researchers are encouraged to discuss how identity markers such as gender, age, class, and ethnicity (which constitute their positionality) affect their research process, in order to be open about the way their identity influences the outcome of their study. According to Madison, 'positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases' (2012: 8). For this reason elements of self-reflection are

recurrent in this thesis, serving to foreground how my identity impacts upon my relationship with the people and places I encounter. How, then, have I effectively deployed my hybrid identity as an Hindi film fan who is also an academic, in examining the effects of the circulation of Indian film in Dublin at the level of the 'local' and of the 'everyday', among ethnically diverse audiences? What are the links between the globalisation of culture and transnational mobility? Moreover, how did I explore the presence of Indian cinema in its various manifestations and across multiple sites?

By way of addressing the above mentioned research questions and to further elaborate on the reception, circulation and production of Indian Cinema in Dublin, I employ a multidisciplinary approach moving across film studies, cultural studies, fan studies and media ethnography. This disciplinary diversity is present throughout the thesis and is necessary in order to analyse the various manifestations and modes of engagement with Indian cinema explored in each chapter through the lens of fandom. Notably, fan studies is traditionally a multidisciplinary field that can integrate elements of various subject areas in order to explore the social and cultural implications of fan activities and interests. To this end, Nick Couldry analysed his experience of visiting the sets of *The Sopranos* as a fan of the TV show, and stresses the importance 'to acknowledge that fandom research needs a theoretical flexibility to match the phenomenological complexity of much fan experience' (2007: 148). In the context of this study, theories of fandom are instrumental in negotiating my fan-researcher identity, in addition to examining fan practices and modes of engagement with film culture. Film studies, media studies and cultural studies contextualise the narrative, social, cultural and economic implications of Indian film production,

exhibition and consumption; additionally, they further analyse the integration of new media into fan practices. Furthermore, ethnographic methods and concepts enable an immersive and embodied approach to fieldwork with various level of participant observation, which foreground how the presence of Indian film plays out across urban locales and impacts upon the subjectivities of social actors, including my own.

In order to effectively deploy my own subject position in my research I draw upon scholarly work on ethnographic practices (Denzin 1997; Nadai and Maeder 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Pink 2007, 2009) and in particular on ethnography applied to fan studies (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006b; Monaco 2010; Duffett 2013). Ethnography has played an important role in fan studies especially in relation to fan-scholars' insider status and on the possibilities that this dual identity can offer in terms of establishing relations with other fans and analysing different modes of engagement with a particular cultural product. Ethnography can be described as the study of cultural practices in the site of their occurrence, employed across various disciplines in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Until the 1980s ethnographers were not self-critical, not acknowledging their own impact in the ethnography they generated, assuming to produce objective and impartial knowledge. The 1980s, however, saw the emergence of the 'reflexive turn' in ethnography, meaning a change of perspective in many social sciences which used ethnography as a main research method.¹¹ During this period it was established that researchers are part of the world they study, and therefore they cannot be truly objective; notably the researchers' gender, class, ethnicity, among other characteristics, can greatly influence any research setting. As a result, researchers were expected to reflexively examine the impact of elements of their own identity - which determined their own position in relation to others, i.e. their

positionality - on the scholarship they produced. Therefore, positionality and reflexivity became key terms in the context of ethnographic methodologies (Rose 1997; Marcus 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Madison 2012). Significantly, ethnographers began to critically reflect on the lived realities of their positionality, inflected by intersecting and performative dimensions of their identity formation, which impacted on the research process. This act of examining the researcher's identity in the context of the knowledge produced can be described as reflexivity. Reflexivity implies the awareness of how the researchers' identity can impact upon their relationship with research participants and with the phenomenon under study; this notion, however, does not compromise the validity and rigour of the research. Significantly, Hammersley and Atkinson remark that we should 'not see reflexivity as undermining researchers' commitment to realism ... it only undermines naïve forms of realism which assume that knowledge must be based on some absolutely secure foundation' (2007: 15).

References to my positionality and reflexive accounts of my research experience are present throughout this thesis in order to foreground how my subject position informed both my research practice and the ethnography I produced. In this study, my positionality is represented by my identity as a white, Italian, female researcher who is also a fan of Indian cinema. These markers of my identity undoubtedly influenced various aspects of my research including my access to fieldsites and events, my interaction with people participating in my research and my perception of them, their perception of me and their likelihood to interact with me. I demonstrate an awareness of these dynamics through reflexivity. Therefore, when I talk about reflexive accounts, I do not simply mean that I include elements of my biographical experience in the

narrative. Rather, I acknowledge the role that my identity plays in the shaping and production of knowledge in relation to the presence of Indian cinema in Dublin during the past decade. Significantly, Hammersley and Atkinson argue that ‘the concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them’ (2007: 15). These notions are particularly relevant in the study of fandom and fan practices where scholars often create an interplay between their dual identities of fans and researchers, their own memories, and the experiences of other fans (Hills 2002; Monaco 2010; Duffett 2013). Commenting on Jeannette Monaco’s highly reflexive writing style, Duffett notes that ‘while it may look superficially like a stream of consciousness, this type of work actually offers an advanced way to explore how personal experience and cultural theory are relevant to each other’ (2013: 274). Therefore, self-reflexive accounts present across the thesis demonstrate how my identity as a white, Italian, female fan/researcher of Indian cinema, inflected by my lived experience across various countries and in socially diverse environments, impacted and shaped my research process and the scholarship I produced.

In addition to reflexive accounts, the ethnographic component of my study is characterised by a combination of methods commonly used in social research: semi-structured interviews and varying levels of participant observation across multiple sites, which will be explored later in this chapter. Furthermore, I utilise documentary photography to record and represent various fieldsite locations where I perform my dual role as a fan and researcher. The resulting photographs function as both an *aide-mémoire* and objects of critical analysis.

Significantly, along with its disciplinary plurality, the study is also further characterised by its geographical multi-sitedness. As this research has been conducted across multiple, disconnected spaces, it is informed by theories of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995, 1998; Hannerz 2003; Nadai and Maeder 2005) as a way of examining the presence of a transnational cultural product across multiple interconnected urban spaces. Marcus promotes an ethnographic approach that focuses on places rather than a single place as a critical methodological framework to study global processes and transnational experiences. Furthermore, he contends that ethnography operates in a 'world system' which includes a variety of sites and contexts, encouraging researchers 'to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time-space' (Marcus 1998: 79).

The 'world system' in which my research is conducted encompasses the globalisation of media, state policies, migration, social practices and cultural geographies. It was thus natural for me to follow different manifestations of Indian cinema in Dublin and to engage with them across various locations, dimensions and disciplinary practices. 'Strategies of quite literally following connections, associations and putative relationships are thus at the very heart of designing multi-sited ethnographic research' (ibid.: 81). According to Marcus ethnographic fieldwork is always multi-sited, even when conducted in a single site, because it is informed by elements present across related sites: 'cultural logics so much sought after in anthropology are always multiply produced, and any ethnographic accounts of these logics finds that they are at least partly constituted within sites of the so-called system' (ibid.).

However, the notion of multi-sited ethnography has been criticised due to its danger of compromising the overall depth of the research. James Clifford argues that ‘multi-locale *fieldwork* is an oxymoron. How many sites can be studied intensively before criteria of “depth” are compromised?’ (1997: 57). Moreover, Hage contends it is just a ‘buzzword’, the signification and ramification of which ‘are not explored by many of its users’ (2005: 464), arguing that the concept of a single site is more helpful than that of multi-sitedness. That said, the notion of multi-sitedness is useful to my research in the way it helps maintain a ‘wider and self-including perspective’ and can ‘be used to reinterpret the meanings of field-sites and social phenomena in a more relational and dialogic way’ (Gallo 2005: 2-3). Furthermore, a multi-sited perspective effectively contributes to an understanding of how Indian cinema circulates in multiple contexts and modes, highlighting the importance of different urban locales and modes of engagement in the experience and perception of film.

Significantly, my research attempts to trace the evolution and interconnections between different sites resulting from the agency of actors (particularly me, in my fan-researcher role) as well as cultural and economic flows which prompt manifestations of Indian cinema across multiple locales. For this reason, this chapter introduces, through a series of non-linear vignettes, the various events that influenced my research and the sites where ethnographic fieldwork was conducted. This fractured narrative device illustrates and contextualises the multiple places and experiences I gained access to through my fan-based approach, which determined the course of the research process underpinning the study. Each vignette thus enacts and performs a particular fieldsite and my negotiation of that fieldsite. Additionally, each vignette serves the purpose of introducing and discussing various theoretical and methodological

frameworks employed across each site, reflecting the way these are instantiated in the context of my research practice throughout the rest of thesis. Much like the ordering of the chapters comprising this thesis, the sequence of the vignettes does not reflect the temporal framing of the study, rather it foregrounds the geography of fandom resulting from my research journey on the tracks of manifestations of Indian film culture in Dublin.

I Conducting Research as a Bollywood Fan

As a Bollywood fan, I obviously share an interest in Indian cinema with the participants in my research. This prompted me to textually inscribe my subject position as an Italian Bollywood fan, engaging with Indian cinema in Dublin while performing the hybrid role of fan and researcher. In order to negotiate this dualistic positioning, I draw on the work of academics who define themselves as fans in their scholarship, examining the relationship between their academic and fan identities (Cavicchi 1998; Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006b, 2007; Monaco 2010; Devereux et al. 2011). In particular, Matt Hills (2002) advocates an autobiographical approach to fan studies and draws on personal accounts to explore the way identities are negotiated by fans in relation to specific media texts. These approaches to research on fandom are arguably influenced by the ‘crisis of representation’ that surrounded several fields in the humanities during the 1980s and can be traced in the seminal text *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986). At the time, anthropology in particular was subjected to intense scrutiny that challenged claims to objectivity and rationality in the construction of ethnographic representations, denouncing their underlying political motivations and rhetorical conventions. This shift was influenced by developments in literary theory, postcolonial and feminist theory,¹² which inspired

interdisciplinary approaches to representation, experimental explorations of the relationship between the personal and the cultural, highlighting complex notions of changing subjectivities and multiple identities. These new trends were also characterised by a focus on power relations between researchers and research subjects. These notions are echoed by more recent works on fan research promoting the use of reflexive narratives to examine the way the researcher's own fan identity and subjectivity influence and shape his or her interaction with other fans (Cavicchi 1998; Jenkins 2006b; Monaco 2010; Duffett 2013).

According to Jeannette Monaco in her research on *The Sopranos* fan communities, 'self-awareness of our partialities and positionalities as cultural and media studies researchers' is necessary in order to explore the 'power issues involved when researching "others"' (2010: 103). Therefore, I believe that reflexive accounts of my personal experiences can arguably offer a counterpoint to those of other social actors, adding richness to the examination of cultural practices and meaning construction that characterise the circulation of Indian cinema in Dublin. Moreover, this approach serves to enhance the critical analysis of my role as researcher, with regard to my position within an extremely diverse community of individuals brought together by an engagement with Indian cinema. For these reasons, my writing cannot lay claim to objectivity, which would be in any case difficult to achieve in the conduct of ethnographic inquiry. Significantly, Norman K. Denzin defines ethnography as 'that form of enquiry and writing that produces descriptions and accounts about the ways of life of the writer and those written about' (1997: xi).

The importance of taking a subjective approach is also reflected in the multiple readings and ways of engagements with Bollywood films that characterise Dublin-based audiences, which can be useful to complicate cultural understandings of Indian film. I resolved to deploy my subject position of a fan throughout my thesis, thereby constituting a key component of my methodological approach. In so doing, I analyse the implications of being a fan in the context of an ethnographic study of the emergence of Indian cinema in Dublin. Drawing on scholarly works on fandom produced by academics who declare to be fans of the texts they study (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006b, 2007; Monaco 2010; Devereux et al. 2011; Duffett 2013), I address the limitations and opportunities created by my hybrid scholar-fan identity in the context of this study. The tensions of being a researcher and fan emerged when I began writing material to incorporate into my thesis chapters, noting that the register deployed was too celebratory with little room for criticality.

Researchers who are also fans of their object of study have been described as having 'hybrid' identities in the way they are located in an academic context and at the same time involved in various forms of fan practices. This dualism has been considered problematic since a fan engagement with popular culture is fuelled by an irrational passion, whereas scholars' approach to cultural texts is deemed to be logical and rational. These very different forms of engagement are difficult to reconcile. As a result academics often hide their attachment to their subject in fear of losing credibility among their peers. To this end Jenkins notes that 'media scholars have long sought to escape the stigma of fandom, often at the expense of masking or even killing what drew them to their topic in the first place' (2006b: 3). The challenges of hybrid identities as researchers and fans have been the object of scholarly attention (Hills

2002; Duffett 2013), highlighting the point that being both a fan and a scholar might result in a compromised objectivity with the risk of producing work which is too celebratory and lacking adequate critical engagement. On the other hand, Hills (2002) notes that an academic engagement can only provide a partial representation of fan practices since the imagined subjectivity of the rational academic tends to prevail over fandom.

These tensions between fandom and critical scholarly engagement reached a turning point in the 1990s when important changes in the field of fan studies allowed scholars to be explicit about their fan identity. Until the 1990s scholarly work on fandom was conducted by outsiders to the fan communities and academics felt they had to hide their fandom for fear of not being taken seriously, moreover, fans often criticised academic interpretations of fandom. As Jenkins explains:

Something was in the air in the early 1990s that would have resulted, one way or another, in the academic “discovery” of fandom. After all, the two have shadowed each other from the start: media scholars have long sought to escape the stigma of fandom ...; and fans have often been hypercritical of academics because of their sloppiness with the details that are so central to fan interpretation.

(2006b: 3)

Since then, many academic-fans have been able to use their fandom to their advantage in effectively analysing fan culture (Jenkins 1992, 2006b; Hills 2007; Monaco 2010; Devereux et al. 2011, Duffett 2013). Eoin Devereux and his collaborators, for example, contend that ‘there is a huge potential for “the fan” to engage in a creative act when occupying that very role’ (Devereux et al. 2011: 15). According to Jenkins, the terms “fan” and “academic” used to indicate ‘very different ways of relating to media cultures. ... Today, the two do not seem very far apart’ (2006b: 4). Duffett

further argues that ‘an ethnographer should ideally be an “insider” who knows the culture that they are studying well enough to really allow it to speak for itself’ (2013: 263). The question of self-reflexivity, however, still represents a concern in the field of fan studies and it has been argued that ‘fan scholars’ “insider” status and own identity’ can ‘make it difficult ... to perceive and analyse the relevant cultural contexts shaping fan activities and identities’ (Harrington and Bielby 2007: 183). However, I was proud to be a Bollywood fan and decided to emotively highlight this kind of engagement with my object of study, since I could not imagine writing about Hindi film in a disembodied fashion.

Being a fan of Hindi cinema, I am not simply an ethnographer who leaves the field when the research is completed; I have always been in the field and linked to the places and people featured in my study because that is part of my identity. For this reason, I realised it was never an option for me to detach myself from my object of study and conduct this research in a disembodied way. My passion for Indian film has driven my study all along and many significant ethnographic moments I describe across my thesis would not exist if I was not a fan. Therefore, my reflexive approach allowed me to provide an unprecedented and distinctive contribution to fan-audience research and to Indian and Irish film studies. As Monaco suggests, ‘reflexivity can at least take us one step further in our knowledge production even if this knowledge always remains “still partial”’ (2010: 133). The works of scholars who declare their fandom encouraged me to deploy a methodology embracing a hybrid scholarly identity alongside my affective ties to the texts and the community under study, safe in the knowledge that an emotional investment is not necessarily an obstacle to critical thinking. To this end, Jenkins reminds us that ‘fans would reject such a clear

separation between feelings and thoughts: their favoured texts are both tools for thought and spaces for emotional exploration' (Jenkins 2006b: 5).

As discussed above, Jenkins' work has been instrumental in shaping my fan-based approach to this study and in foregrounding my fandom as an element of epistemological significance. In addition to that, his theories of media convergence and participatory culture also influenced my examination of fan activities and interactions during the course of my research. Notably, in his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006a) Jenkins foregrounds the way new technologies enable fans to not only to interact with each other on internet platforms but also to produce and circulate media content relevant to their object of interest. He terms this phenomenon 'convergence culture' arguing that new technologies enable independent producers to circulate their content alongside material produced by corporations, thus shifting the balance of power between official media producers and media consumers (2006a). These notions contextualise the impact of media convergence in shaping fan activities. Media convergence can be described as the flow of content across multiple platforms and the merging of old and new media, an example would be watching a video on a mobile phone. In his work, Jenkins does not focus on the development of new technologies per se; rather he foregrounds the new forms of cultural practices that are facilitated by them. Significantly, he argues that new technologies actually empower fans and independent producers, allowing their own content the same exposure as the products of official media channels. This celebratory position has attracted criticism from scholars who point out the inferior quality of much independently produced material and the actual impossibility of achieving real equality to media companies. For example, Internet

critic Andrew Keen (2007) contends that the presence of user-generated content threatens notions of authorship and professionalism and that the assumption that independently produced content is equally valuable is unfounded. Other media scholars are wary of the overt enthusiasm generated by Web 2.0 practices, questioning the actual democratizing potential of new media. To this end, Graeme Turner suggests that ‘the political empowerment promised to consumers is largely based on the expansion of consumer choice’ and ‘the provision of interactivity’ but ‘in practice these have remained limited developments’ (2010: 128). Media audience scholar S. Elizabeth Bird also argues that, especially in non-western countries where internet penetration is limited, ‘completely different media environments may present both gross inequalities and unexpected creative opportunities’ (2011: 503). Bird also warns us that media convergence did not actually diminish the power of official media and stresses the importance to ‘continue to interrogate the influence that media have over us, even as we can now talk back more actively than ever’ (ibid: 512). In response to these claims, Jenkins concurs that his initial concept of convergence culture was perhaps too optimistic and that his thinking about convergence and participatory culture has shifted over time, in line with the criticism he received:

Today, I am much more likely to speak about a push toward a more participatory culture, acknowledging how many people are still excluded from even the most minimal opportunities for participation within networked culture, and recognizing that new grassroots tactics are confronting a range of corporate strategies which seek to contain and commodify the popular desire for participation.

(Jenkins 2014: 272)

Jenkins however, stresses the importance of ‘remaining open to new possibilities and emerging models rather than giving way to a discourse of inevitability’ (ibid.: 274). Significantly, although new technologies are not necessarily synonymous of audience

empowerment and democratisation of media, Jenkins' theories of media convergence and active fandom resonate with instances of fan practices and independent film production which I have witnessed during my fieldwork. In chapter five of this thesis I demonstrate how digital technology and the internet enabled Bollywood fans to record and circulate visual material about a Hindi blockbuster filmed in Dublin, thus enhancing their interaction with the film and allowing them to connect with other fans online. Chapter six contextualises how Indian migrants living in Dublin started making films with consumer equipment and shared them online in order to articulate their experience of migration and to communicate with other Indian communities. In both cases new technologies and the internet were of pivotal importance in facilitating the active engagement of Dublin-based Indian migrants with film, for this reason I found Jenkins' theories useful in articulating their experiences and my engagement with his work is unfolding throughout the thesis. In the following vignettes, the examination of poignant moments in my fieldwork across various sites will introduce other core concepts and theoretical paradigms recurring through the subsequent chapters.

II Non-Indian Audiences Making Meaning of Hindi Films

On a summer night of 2013, along with a group of friends/participants in my research, I attended an evening screening of *Raanjhanaa* (Beloved One, Anand L. Rai, 2013) a highly anticipated Hindi romantic drama featuring Sonam Kapoor, a well-known Bollywood actress, and Dhanush, a Tamil film star in his Bollywood debut. We watched the film at Cineworld Dublin, a seventeen-screen multiplex located in Dublin city centre. Since 2006, Cineworld Dublin has been the only cinema in the Irish capital which regularly screens popular Indian films. Whilst the majority of the films

screened at this multiplex are mainstream Hollywood features, their numerous screens enable them to show a selection of independent films and films from various countries in languages other than English. They started screening Indian films, mostly Bollywood blockbusters, mainly to cater for the growing South Asian population of Dublin, which benefited also non-Indian Bollywood fans like me. Significantly, from the very outset of the study, I attended screenings at Cineworld embodying the dual position of Hindi film fan and researcher. Reinharz explored the various positions that a researcher can assume in the field and how they can affect the way fieldwork is conducted, arguing for ‘a tripartite division among selves in the field’, which are ‘research selves, personal selves, and situational selves’ (2011: 5). Research selves are concerned with doing the research, personal selves are the selves that one brings into the field, and situational selves are the ones that the researcher creates in the field. In this instance, my research selves pertain to my position as a doctoral researcher with a background in film studies, which helped me analyse the relationship between audiences and filmic text and social practices of going to the cinema. My personal self as an Italian Bollywood fan shaped my approach to this study and allowed me to establish close relationships with other fans. Moreover, being a white, European, migrant woman, like many non-South Asian participants in my study, proved to be a useful analytical framework and mode of engagement with my research subjects.

That night I went to the cinema with Emer, an Irish Bollywood dance teacher and several other students after our weekly dance class. Emer’s students came from various ethnic backgrounds, but shared a fascination for Indian dance. On that occasion only two Irish girls and a girl from Honduras were present, but Emer had many more students from Spain, Poland and various Indian states, among other

nationalities. When we entered the cinema we joined Kamlesh, an Indian woman I befriended at the Indian Film Festival of Ireland; along with Celine and Jeremy, a French-Congolese couple I knew through Nicolle. Everybody was pleased to go and watch the film in such a large group and to meet other Bollywood fans. The social aspect of being a fan has been explored by scholars; Jenkins for example, observes that ‘fandom functions as an alternative social community’ (1992: 280) rather than an escape from reality. However, Dublin-based non-South Asian Bollywood fans often do not know many other people who share their same interest, so they are usually pleased to meet fellow fans. Kamlesh explained to us that the title of the film was a reference to a traditional Punjabi¹³ romantic tale entitled ‘Heer Ranjha’ about a couple of star-crossed lovers. We were glad to have a person with a deep knowledge of Indian culture with us, since she could point out details which we would otherwise have missed. We joined dozens of mostly South Asian viewers in the theatre and watched the film together. At the end of the film everybody had positive comments about it and we particularly enjoyed a spectacular Holi dance scene and Dhanush’s endearing performance. However, most people, including Emer, were unpleasantly surprised by the tragic ending, given that most Bollywood films usually have happy endings. Watching a Bollywood film with an ethnically diverse group of people in an Irish multiplex prompted me to reflect on the dynamics surrounding the circulation of an Indian cultural product such as film outside India and its impact on different audiences.

In his engagement with the question of cultural globalisation Arjun Appadurai suggests that global cultural flows are linked with the transnational movement of people, arguing that there is a ‘mobile and unforeseeable relationship between mass

mediated events and migratory audiences' (1996: 4). Appadurai employs Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined community'¹⁴ to explain the notion of 'imagined worlds' (ibid.: 33) as complex transnational figurations constituted by deterritorialised ethnic communities. Appadurai writes that:

[D]eterritorialization creates new markets for film companies, impresarios and travel agencies, which thrive on the need of the relocated population for contact with its homeland. But the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups.

(ibid.: 49)

This phenomenon, as described by Appadurai, has to all intents and purposes occurred in the Irish context, since the growth of the South Asian community has boosted the circulation and visibility of Indian cinema in Dublin. However, the circulation of diasporic cultural products (in this case Indian cinema) does not remain limited to members of a given diasporic group, but extends outwards to people of various ethnicities who develop an interest in it.

Having been introduced to Indian cinema by a German friend, and considering the relative ease for me to develop an interest in Bollywood film in spite of my European background, I was aware of the appeal of Hindi film for non-South Asians long before beginning my research. This notion was confirmed by the fact that I met many Bollywood enthusiasts who were not South Asians, but had various national backgrounds, such as French, Romanian, Turkish, and Scottish. These people moved to Ireland during the economic boom of the last decade, and share a communal experience of migration and displacement with members of the South Asian diaspora. However, non-Indian migrants have different cultural and ethnic backgrounds that can

lead to interesting interpretations of elements of Bollywood cinema, which are in turn translocalised in a newly-constituted transnational environment.

According to Higson ‘the meanings an audience reads into a film are heavily dependent on the cultural settings in which they watch it’ (2000: 61-62). Moreover, the shared experience of viewing results in different interpretations from each viewer depending on their individual experiences, background and gender (Staiger 2000). Furthermore, during the conduct of my research I realised that Indian cinema and culture are being actively promoted amongst non-Indian audiences in an Irish context, generating a newfound enthusiasm in people without obvious links to South Asia.¹⁵ For these reasons, I decided from the outset to pursue my research among social actors of different ethnic backgrounds who shared an interest in Indian cinema. In this instance, I draw on Adrian Athique’s concept of ‘cultural field’, which has been effectively employed in his works, referencing the reception of Hindi film by ethnically diverse groups. According to Athique:

[T]his is a field of cultural *practices*. It is not assumed that members of a media audience necessarily possess a shared identity that can be measured through the product itself. However, it does assume that they have a shared interest (in this case in Indian movies).

(2005: 120)

Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’ (2006), Athique suggests that media audiences can be considered ‘imagined communities’ inhabiting ‘a cultural field constructed, and radically contextualized, around participation in particular instances of media practice’ (2008a: 25). Studies of Indian media consumption in diasporic contexts are usually focused on diasporic Indian communities. Athique devised the ‘cultural field’ research model as an alternative

structure for identifying media communities as sites of social practice in the context of his studies on the circulation of Indian cinema in Australia. The cultural field related to Indian films is composed of social actors who have various degrees of engagement with Indian film. Members of this media community have in common an interest in a cultural product that constitutes only part of their cultural lives. Athique suggests that, even if such a community does not represent a distinct social group, it can be defined according to Anderson's notion of 'imagined community' which encourages members to imagine fellow participants through various abstract social formations relative to the self (Athique 2005). According to Athique a cultural field 'may also be understood as a community of media-use connected by their related patterns of consumption and/or shared occupation of certain social spaces' (2005: 121).

Several studies of South Asian Bollywood film audiences outside India have been conducted in countries such as the UK (Gillespie 1995; Banaji 2006; Dudrah 2006, 2010, 2012); in the US (Desai 2004; Gopinath 2005; Srinivas 2005a); and in Italy (Acciari 2012). Across these studies the researchers' attention was focused on a group identified through belonging to a specific ethnic community. Undoubtedly, concentrating on a specific ethnic group can be useful to understand how social and cultural identities are negotiated within a diasporic community through a relevant diasporic cultural practice. However, media audiences cannot be neatly divided into specific ethnic groups and individual audience members are characterised by multiple and complex social identities. Significantly Faye Ginsburg notes that 'their interest and responses shape and are shaped by the variety of possible identities: cultural, generational, gendered, local, national, regional, and transnational' (2002: 363). For this reason I believe that a 'cultural field' approach to my research can lead to a better

understanding of the diversity of the social actors engaged with Indian film in a Irish context and how cultural practices are incorporated into the lives of ethnically diverse individuals. According to Athique, ‘where cultural processes are themselves the primary interest, it is desirable to avoid emphasising linkages between culture and ethnicity at the expense of cultural practices’ (2005: 130).

During the course of my research I established social relations with various actors with an interest in Indian cinema. It was therefore relatively easy for me to gather information through participant observation by engaging in social activities which were natural for me such as going to the cinema with fellow Bollywood fans. However, the brief chats I had with people at the cinema were often characterised by odd comments, contradictory statements and partial personal stories, which did not fully explain their engagement with Indian film. For this reason, I decided to collect more detailed information by using interviews. Hammersley and Atkinson stress the importance of interviews in ethnographic research and contend that ‘the accounts people provide can be an important source of data for ethnographers’ (2007: 120). Additionally, they draw attention to the links between interviews and participant observation and state that if interviews are in the form of informal conversations ‘the dividing line between participant observation and interviewing is hard to discern’ (ibid.: 108). This was true in the case of the interviews I conducted as they were shaped as relaxed conversations in informal settings such as people’s homes, restaurants or coffee shops. However, my informants were always aware that they were going to be featured in my research and gave me permission to record our conversations.

Semi-structured interviews with social actors were conducted, which proved to be useful in obtaining detailed information about people's engagement and understanding of Indian cinema that would not be accessible otherwise. According to Kvale and Brinkmann, the semi-structured interview 'seeks to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena' (2009: 124). In this mode of interview practice, the researcher designs a set of key questions to be raised before the interview occurs, allowing for considerable flexibility on how and when these issues are raised, enabling more scope for open ended answers and follow-up questions (Rubin and Rubin 2012).

When I interviewed non-South Asian Bollywood fans I asked specific questions aimed at understanding the origins of their interest and the elements of Bollywood films they found most appealing. By using this interview strategy I encouraged my interviewees to freely express their opinion in order to elicit more detailed information and was ready to follow up on emerging themes and stories told by my respondents. With this flexibility, I could obtain unexpected relevant information, as well as specific answers, for prepared interview questions. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stress the importance of probing the interviewee. Significantly, asking for clarifications was of key importance in the interviews I conducted, since it helped generate more information relevant to my research and was useful to uncover multiple perspectives. The relaxed nature of the conversations I had with my participants meant that I was not simply an interviewer to them and they would sometimes ask me questions about my research, coupled with my interest in Indian cinema. For example, when I interviewed Rohit and Aparna, two Indian siblings who hosted a weekly Bollywood radio show in Dublin, Rohit started our conversation by asking me a question: 'So tell

us Giovanna, what made you start this PhD on Bollywood?’ This caught me by surprise as I did not expect to begin the interview by answering my respondent’s questions. Nevertheless, I explained that I was a Bollywood fan, that I had studied popular Indian cinema in England and that I decided to do a PhD on the subject, as I had experienced an emergence of Indian film cultures in Dublin. I tried to convey that my interest was not only personal but also academic and that I had the necessary knowledge to write about Indian cinema. Both Rohit and Aparna were very interested in my responses and impressed by the fact that somebody would choose to study something that for most people, amounts to mere entertainment. Suddenly they laughed, remarking that they were asking the questions instead of me. They then invited me to talk about my research on their radio show at a later point. This episode draws attention to issues of power relations in research and the difficulties of negotiating my dualistic positioning as fan and researcher whilst conducting interviews. To this end, Monaco notes that ‘it is through empirical work ... that media fan studies can further pursue the question of power relations by examining how this dual scholar-fan identity is actually negotiated during the research process’ (2010: 104). Conducting interviews as a fan and researcher certainly posed a challenge, since I had to move between academic and fan modes of engagement, while dealing with shifting power relations between myself and my research participants.

The validity of interviews as a research method is often questioned by ethnographers claiming that interview data are not spontaneous, since they are affected by the presence of the researcher. In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson contend that ‘it is certainly true that the influence of the researcher on the production of data is an important issue’ (2007: 101). However, they claim that ‘interviewing can be an

extremely important source of data: it may allow one to generate information that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise' (ibid.: 102). What emerges from my conversations with several of my research participants is that the characteristics of Bollywood films that are considered unpalatable for western audiences such as excessive length, songs, melodrama, unrealistic happy endings and conservative themes are actually what they find most enjoyable about the films. For these reasons, recent mainstream Hindi films which endeavour to distance themselves from the conventions of the genre and move toward realism or imitate western films, are often met with disappointment. To this end, Hammersley and Atkinson point out that 'there are distinct advantages in combining participant observation with interviews; in particular, the data from each can be used to illuminate the other' (ibid.).

Another connection that emerged from the interviews I conducted was that an interest in dance and musical films can be further linked to the appeal Hindi films have for western viewers. Additionally, it was fascinating for me to hear that exposure to popular Indian cinema during childhood prompted several respondents to maintain an interest in Hindi films in adult life. Participants further mentioned that the presence in Indian films of elements that evoke cherished childhood memories can arguably enable them to develop a connection with the filmic text, in spite of ethnic and cultural differences. Significantly, I too became a fan of Hindi films as they remind me of musical films I used to watch with my mother. This type of connection often happens in the case of migrants, who, like me, moved to Dublin without family. This notion brings to the fore the importance of linking the responses of research participants to the social context they inhabit. Notably, 'all accounts must be examined as social

phenomena occurring in, and shaped by, particular contexts' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 120).

When I commenced my study I immediately identified Cineworld as one of my main research sites, given that it was the only public venue that hosted regular Indian film screenings. The centrality of this venue in my research is further motivated by the fact that it plays an important role in many of my informants' social lives, serving to shape their engagement with Indian cinema. However, scholars argue that ethnographies of cultural practices of complex societies are rarely limited to a single space and the field site is constructed by the researcher through interpretive practices (Geertz 1973; Marcus 1995; Nadai and Maeder 2005; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Initially, I did not plan to locate my research in a specific fieldsite: at that stage I was mainly interested in identifying key social actors with an interest in Bollywood film, focusing my attention on their experiences in relation of Indian cinema. However, my fan-based approach led me on a journey tracing the diasporic life of Indian film culture in Dublin, therefore I was open to the possibility of exploring its circulation across various spaces and in different forms. Nadai and Maeder, argue for a multi-sited ethnography, which traces multiply situated research objects across social worlds and stress the importance of identifying concrete research sites:

[A]s Geertz (1973, p.22) has reminded the ethnographers: "The locus of study is not the object of study." Nonetheless the ethnographer still needs to identify concrete locales within a social world where the practices and interactions s/he is interested in can actually be observed.¹⁶

Identifying an important fieldsite such as Cineworld was thus the first step in my ethnographic journey following Indian film which led me to several other interconnected sites and experiences.

III Conducting Participant Observation as a Bollywood Fan

Crowds of South Asian Bollywood fans and onlookers were waiting behind fences holding cameras and smartphones with looks of anticipation and curiosity on their faces, as location personnel tried to keep them at bay. Most of South King Street in Dublin city centre had been closed off and the area in front of the imposing Victorian building housing the prestigious Gaiety Theatre was crowded with young dancers dressed in colourful outfits, moving around market stalls laden with fruit, books and glitzy trinkets. I was standing on the other end of the street, close to the entrance of St. Stephen's Green Park, holding a bunch of inflatable balloons, surrounded by groups of builders, policemen, bagpipers, rock musicians and casually dressed people of different ages with various party props in their hands. As the notes of Celtic bagpipes started blaring from loudspeakers, members of an Indian film crew made sure everybody was in the right position; along with other extras in my group, I was instructed to wave my balloons and throw confetti as the film's leading man moved toward us. On that October day in 2011, I was working as an extra on the set of *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012).

The production of the film lasted over a month and during that period I attempted to be present on and around the sets as much as I could in different capacities. In that instance, I gained access to the film sets by getting a job as a background extra. This allowed me to gather information about the production through participant observation from an insider position. Participant observation¹⁷ is a well-known ethnographic method which can be employed in various ways by different researchers. According to Erving Goffman participant observation is a useful technique that can be effectively used for collecting data. This is achieved, as he writes:

[B]y subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals So that you are close to them while they are responding to what life does to them. I feel that the way this is done is to not, of course, just listen to what they talk about, but pick up on their minor grunts and groans as they respond to their situation.

(1989: 125)

Goffman contends that effective participant observation requires the researcher to physically participate in the activities performed by the community or the subjects the research activity is focused on, in order to gain ‘the ecological right to be close to them’ (ibid.) and to develop an embodied knowledge of their world. In her discussion on participant observation as a data collection method, Kawulich (2005) outlines the four observer stances identified by Gold (1958) and Junker (1960) in their work on ethnographic methods in sociology. These roles are: the *complete participant*, who takes an insider role, is fully part of the setting and often observes covertly. The *participant as observer*, whereby the researcher gains access to a setting by virtue of having a natural and non-research reason for being part of the setting. In the *observer as participant* role the researcher has only minimal involvement in the social setting under study. There is some connection to the setting but the observer is not normally part of it. In the *complete observer* role the researcher does not take part in the social setting at all. In her analysis of these distinct observation stances, Kawulich suggests:

The role providing the most ethical approach to observation is that of the observer as participant, as the researcher's observation activities are known to the group being studied, yet the emphasis for the researcher is on collecting data, rather than participating in the activity being observed.¹⁸

However, during my fieldwork on the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger* and in other research sites, I realised that maintaining a constant level of participation across various events and

experiences was extremely challenging. In fact, while on many occasions I was totally immersed in the events unfolding as a complete participant, in other instances my role was less participative and more observational. Nonetheless, this is a common occurrence in fieldwork as researchers rarely maintain a fixed observational stance during the course of their field research and the distinction between various roles is often blurred and difficult to define. Significantly, DeWalt and DeWalt contend that 'the balance between observation and participation achieved by an individual researcher can fall anywhere along the continuum' (2011: 27). This notion also applies to alternative views of the researcher's role in conducting participant observation which have been proposed by Spradley (1980), who distinguishes between various degrees of participation from non-participation, to passive participation, moderate participation and complete participation.

Different categorisations are outlined for example by Adler and Adler (1987) who propose a range of membership roles including peripheral membership, active membership, and full membership. Due to my emotional involvement with my object of study, my aim was to have an active role and fully participate in the phenomena I was researching. In spite of the perils of 'going native' and losing objectivity, the merits of active participation in research have been discussed by Johnson, Avenarius and Weatherford (2006), who argue that assuming an active role in the community under research allows a better understanding of its inner dynamics. However, as I illustrate throughout this thesis, it was not possible for me to maintain a consistently active role during every moment of my fieldwork, therefore the above mentioned distinctions between different levels of participations are useful in framing the shifts in my position whilst conducting my research.

My dual identity of a Bollywood film fan and researcher was instrumental in prompting me to look for different ways to participate in the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*. When I had the opportunity to work on set as a background extra or volunteer as a location trainee, I could at the same time conduct research as a ‘participant-as-observer’. When I could not be on the film sets, I would join the crowds of fans standing around them. This shift made me an ‘observer-as-participant’ in relation to the production of the film, however, I was still part of the community of Bollywood fans who are also objects of my research. It can thus be argued that in relation to them I was a ‘complete participant’. To this end, Kawulich (2005) explains that an ‘observer-as-participant’ is looking at a community from the outside, while a ‘participant-as-observer’ is part of the cultural practices and processes that he or she is studying. However, Hammersley and Atkinson note that ‘complete participation is also involved where the putative researcher is already a member of the group or organisation that he or she decides to study’ (2007: 82). In any case, my multiple modes of participation in the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* allowed me to understand how the physical presence of the film affected Dublin’s urban locales and the life of people involved in it gravitating around the sets.

For example, on that day on South King Street, I met Elena, a Romanian woman in her thirties who came to Ireland about fourteen years before and an ardent Bollywood fan. The work of a film extra is characterised by spending much idle time on set while the crew sets up different scenes. During one of those breaks I started talking to Elena while we observed with amusement the pranks of a group of extras dressed as policemen pretending to arrest leather-clad rock musicians. Most of the people who

worked as extras had no interest in Indian film and never watched Bollywood films, thus they were not very excited about being part of that particular production. For this reason I was particularly happy to meet Elena and to talk to her as she could relate to my enthusiasm about being in the film. Elena started watching Hindi films on national television in Romania and developed a passion for Indian cinema. Elena's favourite Bollywood actor is Amitabh Bachchan, who is also one of my favourites, so it was refreshing talking about his films with a new person who had an extensive knowledge about them. Although she was not a big fan of Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif, the protagonists of *Ek Tha Tiger*, she was aware of their star status in India. She was very happy to work on the film and, like me, she could not believe her luck to be in a high profile Bollywood production in Dublin.

My encounter with another Bollywood fan brought to the fore the relevance of my own fandom in my research and its role in shaping my field relations. This notion suggests that by attempting to critically analyse the production of a Bollywood film in Dublin and how this impacted on the lives and localities of people living in the city, I am obliged to also analyse my subjective engagement with my object of study, which ties in with my self-reflexive approach. This requires me to be able to 'defamiliarise' myself from my emotional involvement with Bollywood film. However, this does not mean that I need to write in a disembodied way, but that the focus of my analysis needs to be critical of my own personal experience, further extending this questioning to the experience of people participating in my research.

A few weeks after the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* had finished Elena and I agreed to meet for a coffee in a shopping centre in the northern suburb of Swords, where Elena lived

at that time. After sitting for a while in a Starbucks coffee shop talking about our experience working on *Ek Tha Tiger* and about our favourite films, we started walking around the shopping centre and we continued chatting about our lives in Ireland and Bollywood. I found Elena really easy to talk to, not only because of our shared interest in Hindi film, but probably also because we were of a similar age and of a similar cultural background (Elena lived for a while in Italy before moving to Ireland). As we walked across a Dunnes Stores outlet, in an area sparkling with heaps of Christmas decorations on sale, we started talking about *Sholay* (Ramesh Sippy, 1975), which is one of our favourite Bollywood films starring Amitabh Bachchan. At a certain stage, we simultaneously started singing the chorus of ‘*Yeh Dosti*’ (This Friendship), one of the film’s most famous songs, which talked about the strong friendship between the two protagonists. ‘*Yeh dosti hum nahin todenge/ Todenge dam magar/Tera saath na chhodenge*’ (We will not break this friendship/I may break my strength, but/ I will not leave your side), we sang, only for a few seconds, softly enough not to be heard at a distance. Retrospectively, it was a childish thing to do for two grown women; I nevertheless enjoyed that moment since it was a way to bond with another Bollywood fan through film and to express my passion for Hindi film outside the context of a movie theatre or an event centred on Indian cinema or culture. Most people around us probably never heard that song and had never seen *Sholay*. Being Bollywood fans thus created a sense of kinship between Elena and me which is not easily achievable otherwise.

The emotional bond created by our shared interest was further layered by the awareness of our respective Italian and Romanian identity, together with the fact that we were walking through a quintessentially Irish department store where the glitz and

sparkle surrounding us, even if it was reminiscent of a Bollywood film set, was actually motivated by a typically western celebration such as Christmas. All these elements coalesced in a kaleidoscope of cultural signifiers constituting what Appadurai describes as ‘a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order’ (1996: 32) in his analysis of cultural globalisation. Appadurai contends that cultural flows are perceived as ‘a complicated and interconnected repertoire’ which constitutes multiple ‘mediascapes’ of information that blur the lines between reality and fiction, creating ‘imagined worlds’ (ibid.: 35) . These mediascapes can be perceived in different ways by different people, and ‘what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements ... out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives’ (ibid.). This notion of appropriating and recontextualising material from the media is also relevant to fan practices examined by Henry Jenkins in his studies of fan cultures (2006b). For Elena and me, singing a Bollywood song in an Irish shopping mall and being on a Hindi film set in Dublin meant that we could express our emotional engagement with Indian film and experience our host country in a different and unexpected way. On such occasions, we became part of an ‘imagined world’ where extremely diverse elements such as our identity, Hindi films and our host country could coexist simultaneously.

These experiences helped me to realise the potential of deploying my dual position of fan and researcher. Matthew Hills explains that many academics who are also fans feel the pressure of conducting their research in a detached way, fearing that an overt emotional engagement with their object of study will result in them losing credibility in front of their colleagues. According to Hills, ‘the regulatory power of imagined subjectivity, and its myriad effects of respect, status and threatened pathologisation,

means that where academics do take on fan identities, they often do so with a high degree of anxiety' (2002: 12). Even if it proved to be difficult to step back from my emotional involvement and critically reflect on the experiences I was living, I felt that my engagement as a fan would enrich rather than compromise my research (Devereux et al. 2011; Duffett 2013). In addition to enhancing my participatory role in the cultural field where I conducted my research, my self-reflexive approach as a fan proved that it is possible to conduct meaningful research without claiming to be objective and unbiased. The use of narratives of the self in ethnography has often attracted accusations of self-indulgence (Coffey 1999; Sparkes 2002). Narratives of personal experience have been criticised for not being a 'clear route into the truth' (Atkinson and Delamont 2006: 166). In my use of reflexive accounts I endeavour to question the way my personal experience is shaped by my engagement with Indian film and to link it with the experience of others. I believe the exploration of the multidimensional manifestations of Indian cinema in Dublin can benefit from a reflexive approach, highlighting the personal investment of people in the representation of this compelling cultural product.

IV The Indian Film Festival of Ireland: Orientalistic Imagery and Transcultural Encounters

In spring 2010, several months before commencing my PhD, my supervisor-to-be invited me to a meeting to discuss the forthcoming Indian Film Festival of Ireland. The meeting was held at the Centre for Creative Practices¹⁹ located on Baggot Street in Dublin city centre. On that occasion I was introduced to Siraj Zaidi, an Indian national who has been organising screenings of Indian films in Dublin since the 1990s and was going to be the festival director. I was really excited about having an Indian film festival in Dublin, since it would offer me an unexpected fieldsite to examine the

circulation and consumption of Indian film. Moreover, the creation of a dedicated festival constituted additional proof that Indian cinema was definitely becoming more visible in the Irish context, suggesting that my proposed research was needed and timely. Moreover, as a Bollywood fan I was thrilled by the possibility of being part of the festival and of collaborating in its smooth running, in addition to having the opportunity to participate in screenings and festival events and to meet the guest stars from India that Siraj planned to invite. I hoped that Siraj would let me volunteer at the festival and when I asked him about it, he put me in touch with Silvia, the manager of the first edition of the festival, who interestingly was also an Italian woman. Luckily for me, they needed all the help they could get and she scheduled me for festival desk duties at Swan Cinema²⁰ in the southern suburb of Rathmines, where the festival was being held. I thus got to volunteer at the event from its inception and since then I have participated in its organisation annually for a period of six years. This afforded me the opportunity to conduct participant observation in the role of participant-as-observer (Gold 1958; Junker 1960; Kawulich 2005) and to gain an understanding of how the event was organised and promoted, alongside its impact on people and localities. Siraj and other members of the festival team knew about my research and that I would want to thematically address the festival in my thesis. However, they did not see it as a problem, but rather as a way of raising the profile of the event and of attracting extra attention.

My longstanding collaboration with the Indian Film Festival meant that I developed a degree of attachment and personal involvement in the event. Hammersley and Atkinson caution that one of the common dangers associated with ethnographic research is “going native”. Not only may the task of analysis be abandoned in favour

of the joys of participation, but also, even when it is retained, bias may arise from “overrapport” (2007: 87). Conscious of these risks, I endeavoured to maintain a marginal position in the organisation. Of course, I made suggestions and observations in the planning stages of the event and, on one occasion, I independently organised a screening of short films as part of the festival, but never wanted to take control of the event or to exert a significant degree of influence over it. I realised that my passion for Indian cinema was often clouding my judgement in terms of addressing problematic aspects of the event, and I knew that a greater degree of involvement would result in being implicated in organisational procedures in a more rigid manner, thus limiting opportunities for actual observation and data collection. Significantly, it has been argued, that researchers should try to maintain a liminal position of insider-outsider in the field: ‘while ethnographers may adopt a variety of roles, the usual aim throughout is to maintain a more or less marginal position, thereby providing access to participant perspectives but at the same time minimising the dangers of over-rapport’ (ibid.: 88-89). During the festival I was usually located in its primary screening venue, welcoming audiences and providing them with brochures and information about the films. This proved to be a good vantage point to get to know members of the audience, attend screenings and observe the overall effect of hosting an Indian film festival in an Irish multiplex.

A particularly interesting festival event in terms of transcultural interactions and encounters was the premiere of *Ajitha* (2012), the first film directed by Nitin Chandrakant Desai, who previously worked as art director in numerous Indian films. *Ajitha* was based on the real life story of Major Robert Gill, a young British military draftsman, who in 1844 was sent to explore the caves of Ajanta, an archaeological site

discovered a few years earlier. The film showed how Gill, with the help of local villagers, reproduced on canvas the paintings adorning the walls of the caves. Pivotal in the narration was also his love story with a local girl named Paro. The film was well received by the audience thanks to its stunning visuals, and to Desai's skilful use of colours and lights. Moreover, people liked the way it combined Robert Gill's real story with typical elements of popular Indian cinema such as song and dance sequences and emphasis on romance. Among the audience attending the premiere at the Dundrum multiplex in June 2012, were a group of descendants of the real Major Robert Gill, who lived in Northern Ireland and travelled to Dublin to see an Indian film about their ancestor. They were a group of unassuming middle-aged men and women accompanied by a teenage girl; they all enjoyed the film and were pleased to see part of their family history on screen. After the screening, they sat in the cinema foyer and talked at length with the film's director. A photograph of Nitin Chandrakant Desai sitting on a couch in the cinema foyer surrounded by Gill's descendants (Fig. 1) suggests the sense of commonality and familiarity created by his film.



Fig. 1: Indian filmmaker Nitin Chandrakant Desai surrounded by the descendants of Major Robert Gill portrayed in his film *Ajitha* (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

On this occasion, film art and real life actually coalesced in a globalised and commercial space such as a multiplex, an environment that usually hosts fictional stories with no real relevance to the lives of audiences. Additionally, the event offered an opportunity of dialogue between cultures and allowed Gill's descendants to connect with their family history in a poignant and powerful way.

However, this notion is complicated by the poster of the festival present in the photograph (Fig. 1), where the use of over saturated colours and feminine imagery, including a woman's heavily made up eye, implies an orientalist representation of Indian culture typical of Western colonising countries. It can be argued that the juxtaposition of the film festival's poster and elements of western "Irish" material culture, in the form of an advertising board and the furnishing and decorations of the cinema foyer, creates an 'hybrid space' where cultural meanings and symbols 'have no primordial unity or fixity' (Bhabha 2004: 55). In this representation, however, India is constructed as 'Other' through culturally standardised clichés, casting a fetishising and patronising look at India. Edward Said ([1978] 2003) explored the construction of Eastern cultures in Western literature, arguing that the use of certain language and imagery reflects an ideological orientation that constructs Eastern countries as Others and alien.²¹ This is suggested by the controversial term 'the Orient' used to indicate South Asian, Middle-Eastern and North African countries in colonial literature. According to Said, 'the Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilisation and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarships, imagery'([1978] 2003: 2).

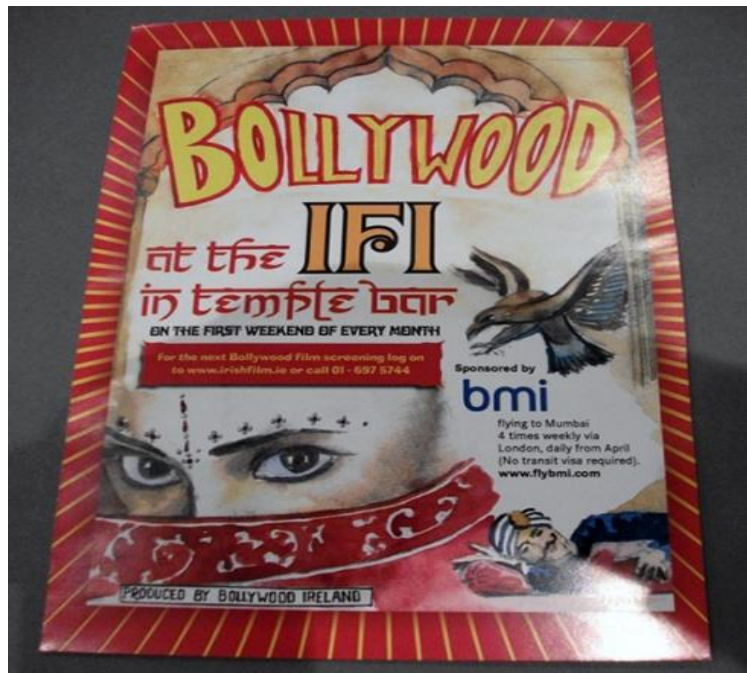


Fig. 2: Flyer advertising the screening of Bollywood Films at the Irish Film Institute in Temple Bar, Dublin 2005 (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

This aesthetic of orientalism is recurrent in the way the festival is advertised, in line with the notion that the event is predominantly aimed at western audiences. Advertising the festival and other Hindi film screenings through stereotypical and exoticist images is a conscious strategy adopted by Siraj in an attempt to attract audiences. The design of early advertising material about Bollywood film screenings organised by Siraj at the Irish Film Institute in Dublin (Fig. 2) further highlighted the exotic charm of these productions by juxtaposing an alluring female veiled face, with a man wearing a turban and a bird of prey, framed by a lobed arch typical of Indo-Islamic architecture. Furthermore, the font used in the flyer is reminiscent of the Devanagari script used in numerous South-Asian languages, drawing attention to the alien and exotic character of these films. This representation also problematises the perception of India and its culture, which are essentialised into stereotyped imagery synonymous with colonial ideological constructions.²²

The image of a ‘mysterious’ and ‘exotic’ woman on the flyer is particularly problematic as it is linked to stereotypical representation of Asian women common in western media. To this end, Said references the feminisation associated with orientalism, which results in the construction of the Middle East and the Far East as an eroticised and feminised Other. The idea of orientalism as ‘an exclusively male province’ (Said [1978] 2003: 207) combined with Western notions of patriarchy and male dominance, indicates that the feminine imagery used to advertise Indian films implies a standpoint of Western control and domination. In other words, this mode of representation casts a ‘male gaze’ (Mulvey 1975)²³ on images of Asia and Asian women. In a similar way, the image of a reclining man in a turban, visible in the lower right corner of the photograph (Fig. 2), is questionable given that it can be linked with derogatory views held by European colonisers about South Asian populations, as explained by Syed Hussein Alatas in his influential book *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977). Said ([1978] 2003) also observes that an orientalist approach is responsible for colonial descriptions of ‘the Orientals’ as lazy, suggesting that the Europeans are instead active and disciplined. By analysing the flyer and the festival poster, it can be argued that the circulation of Bollywood films in Dublin occurs through codes of orientalism aimed at enticing western viewers. Moreover, the advertisement of the British airline BMI (later integrated into British Airways) appearing in a prominent position on the flyer, confirms that the presence of Bollywood films in Dublin is intertwined with transnational economic interests.

The visual nature of the cultural products I set out to research and the compelling imagery associated with the circulation of Indian cinema in Dublin, encouraged me to incorporate visual material in my study, in the form of photographs I took as part of

my fieldwork, as well as stills from films I analysed. In her discussion of the use of photographs in research, Gillian Rose explains how ‘images are used actively in the research process, alongside other sorts of evidence generated usually by interviews or ethnographic fieldwork’ (2012: 298). Moreover, it has been argued that visual images can be successfully mobilised in the context of reflexive approaches to research (Banks 2001; Pink 2007; Rose 2012). In a similar way, I employ images as a way of documenting experiences, events, objects and urban spaces which I felt were relevant to my research from a cultural and emotional point of view. This can be useful to capture the sensory richness of the environments explored. As Rose contends, ‘photographs are seen as especially valuable in urban research because they can convey something of the feel of urban places, space and landscapes’ (2012: 298). However, photographs cannot be a mere illustration of certain aspects of the research, which Marcus Banks defines a ‘largely redundant visual representation of something already described in the text’ (2001: 144). Instead, the photographs I use serve a performative function, encouraging a reflective analysis of what lies both inside and outside the frame. In order to employ photographs effectively in my thesis I draw on the photo-documentation works of Charles Suchar, who treats photographs as a form of evidence, contending that ‘reference to very detailed visual documents, and the information they contain, allows for a closer link between the abstracting process of conceptualizing and experientially derived observations’ (1997: 52). Moreover, John Berger stresses the importance to ‘incorporate photography into social and political memory’ (1980: 62). For these reasons, the images included in my thesis do not simply illustrate my arguments; rather they strive to interact with the narrative in order to achieve a more effective and meaningful form of communication.

V Discovering the Emergence of Irish-Indian Amateur Cinema

Over time, the Indian Film Festival of Ireland has enabled me to establish fieldwork relationships with key participants and led me to new and unexpected research sites, shaping the evolution of the multisited dimension of my study. One such development was finding a community of filmmakers from the Indian state of Kerala, who were using cinema to document their lived experiences in Dublin. In March 2012, I received a Facebook message from Sachin, a Keralite man who works as a radiographer in an Irish hospital and a member of the Iris Film Society – a group of amateur filmmakers from the Indian state of Kerala currently living and making short films in Dublin. In the message he asked me about my research on Indian cinema in Ireland and invited me to a short film festival organised by the Iris Film Society to showcase their work. I did not know Sachin at the time but when I started conversing with him, it emerged that we had met at celebrations of *Diwali* and *Holi*, and shared mutual friends who formed the Indian community of Dublin. He found out about my research and involvement with the Indian Film Festival of Ireland through Facebook. This notion brings to the fore the relevance of the internet and online platforms in allowing people with an interest in a specific cultural product to connect to each other, thus forming online fan communities. Additionally, the internet enables independent media producers to raise awareness about their work and to connect with potential audiences anywhere in the world.

Henry Jenkins explored the way new technologies and the internet help grassroots cultural producers to advertise and share their own media content alongside flows of corporate media, describing this phenomenon as ‘convergence culture’. Jenkins explains that ‘corporate convergence coexists with grassroots convergence. ...

Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers' (2006a: 18). These dynamics are arguably reflected in the way Sachin could easily find out about my collaboration with the Indian film Festival and connect with me via Facebook, which in turn gave me the opportunity to know about his film festival. In this instance, social media proved to be very useful in facilitating my fieldwork and establishing relationships with participants in my research. The internet in general has been extremely important in terms of gaining information and access to South-Asian events and film productions, as well as learning how digital platforms are used by social actors participating in my research. In chapters five and six, I expand on the multiple ways in which online platforms allow Dublin-based Indian filmmakers to showcase their films and Hindi film fans to connect and communicate.



Fig. 3: Poster of a short film festival organised by the Iris Film Society

I gladly accepted Sachin's invitation, curious to view these Irish-Indian short films I did not know existed until then. The poster advertising the festival that Sachin sent me through Facebook looked well designed and was entirely written in English, suggesting their aspirations to achieve professional standards in making and screening films and to reach audiences beyond the Indian community (Fig. 3). The screening took place in a multi-purpose room above a South Asian supermarket located in Lucan – a suburban town in the south of Dublin which hosts a significant part of Dublin's Indian community. The screening room was full of Indians sitting on foldable plastic chairs facing a screen; many children were playing and running around as Indian women dressed in colourful sarees tried to contain their excitement. Sachin informed me that two of the shorts in the programme were children's films, so I was not surprised to see so many children in the audience. As soon as he saw me, Sachin came toward me; he introduced himself and found me a seat in the first row. Shortly after my arrival, Siraj entered the room. Sachin told me in his message that they contacted him too, hoping to have the opportunity to screen their films as part of the Indian Film Festival of Ireland. Sachin welcomed everybody, introduced the films we were about to see and asked Siraj to say a few words about the festival. After that, Sachin introduced me to the audience and asked me to briefly describe my research project. While I anticipated that he would ask me to introduce my study to the audience, I nevertheless felt nervous and unprepared to talk in front of so many people; I mumbled a brief description of my research and thanked everybody for inviting me.

Hammersley and Atkinson describe different modes of interactions between researchers and participants and contend that 'gatekeepers, sponsors, and the like (indeed, most of the people who act as host to the research) will operate in terms of

expectations about the ethnographer's identity and intentions' (2007: 60). This results in the fact that 'researchers are sometimes cast in the role of expert or critic' (ibid.: 82). According to either of these roles, the ethnographer can be expected 'to "sort out" the organisation or community' or 'to act as an evaluator' (ibid.: 60). On that day, I definitely felt that Sachin and other members of the Iris Film Society regarded me as some sort of film expert who had the resources and connections to allow their films to circulate beyond the Indian community. In fairness, they never put pressure on me to help them showcase their films, but they definitely hoped I could help them, which I eventually did by hosting a screening of their films as part of the Indian Film Festival.²⁴ The idea of being considered an expert and the expectation I could help them made me feel slightly uncomfortable, since I did not want to disappoint them. After the screening, I was introduced to some of the directors and other people who collaborated in the making of the short films in the programme. Most of them were young Indian men in their thirties. One of them, Rajan, who worked as a nurse in St. James Hospital in Dublin, was slightly older than the others. He explained that they organised an acting workshop for children the year before and the children's films were made as part of that event. On that occasion I also met Jijo S. Palatty, Biju Mullamkuzhithadathil and Ajith Kesavan, who directed some of the films²⁵ I had just seen.

They explained that they came to Dublin a few years earlier as their wives obtained nursing jobs in Irish hospitals, and that they started making films during their time in Ireland. I complimented them for their films which I found really impressive for their stories and technical quality, in spite of their lack of professional equipment and training. They were really pleased to know that I found their work interesting and of

good quality, modestly pointing out some minor technical faults. This suggested that they regarded me also as a ‘critic’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 82), who could evaluate and judge the quality of their films. I did not want to be perceived as somewhat superior to them, so I praised their mastery of the medium and stated that professionals could not have done a better job. We exchanged contact details, I asked them to keep me informed about future productions, hoping to be able to attend further screenings and participate in the making of their films. I confirmed that I was happy to liaise with Siraj about having their films screened at the Indian Film Festival of Ireland and that I was planning to talk about their work in my thesis, which they really appreciated. As we parted, I thanked them again for inviting me and we agreed to stay in touch and meet again at a later stage. I was really pleased I had found out about independent Indian films being made in Ireland because until then, my project was mainly focused on commercial films and it was refreshing to witness a different manifestation of Indian cinema emerging at grassroots level in Dublin.

Later that day, when I got home, I told my life partner Babu, who is British Asian, about the event and the films I saw. After hearing about my day, he commented: ‘I bet you were the only white person there’. Only then I realised it was true; actually I was the only non-Indian person at the screening, but did not acknowledge it until that moment. When I reflected on that episode with hindsight, it made me feel that my positionality as a white researcher definitely played a role in my relations with the filmmakers I had just met. In her discussion of the racialised experience of white women, Ruth Frankenberg notes that ‘white people have too often viewed themselves as nonracial or racially neutral’ (1999: 1). When I first got introduced to the members of the Iris Film Society I too considered myself racially neutral and did not even think

that race could be a factor in my interactions on that day. I was exclusively focused on the interest in film I shared with the Keralite filmmakers. This was also due to the fact that until then I had dealt only with non-South Asians and ethnically mixed groups of people with an interest in Indian film, which led me to focus mainly on our shared interest in Indian film rather than on possible differences. At that point, I realised that they probably perceived me as their Other in many respects: unlike them I was female, white and a researcher. Inviting me to the screening was the first opportunity they had to show their work to a film scholar and to somebody who did not belong to any Indian community. Later on, I also realised that I was the only female, apart from their wives, with whom they talked at length about their films. As previously mentioned, researchers need to be aware that their identity formations can significantly shape field relations. “Race”, ethnicity, and religious affiliation, like gender, can also set limits and pose problems. “Race” is, of course, not merely a matter of physical appearance, but is also defined in terms of culture, power and personal style’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 75). Reflecting on this episode made me aware of the importance of being mindful about the differences between my subject formation and people participating in my research and the need to foreground in my writing the way, my race, gender and cultural background inflected and shaped my ethnographic experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to frame and unpack the methodological concerns and theories that inform my research, introducing the locations and several social actors mentioned later on in my thesis. The structure of this chapter is organised to give insights into the circulation of Indian cinema across the city of Dublin and its impact

on different communities and localities. The use of vignettes brings to the fore the multi-sited nature of this research and the range of different methodological and theoretical interventions deployed in each fieldsite. The thread linking the vignettes comprising this chapter, as well as the different sites explored in this thesis, is my interest in Indian film, arguably the driving force of the study. This non-linear narrative style thus reflects the diversity of my experiences as a Bollywood fan following my object of interest through the Irish capital, foregrounding the encounters and possibilities offered by a fan-based approach to the exploration of Indian film in transnational contexts. Across the following chapters, and through reflexive accounts that aim to uncover my own experience as much as that of participants to my research, I explore the reactions and interaction linked to diverse and interconnected manifestations of Indian cinema in Dublin.

Notes

¹ In the years between 1995 and 2007, Ireland experienced a period of rapid economic growth commonly referred to as ‘Celtic Tiger’. During that time, an unprecedented economic boom transformed it from one of Europe's poorest countries into one of its wealthiest. As a result, immigrants came from various countries to take advantage of the career prospects and high salaries offered by multinationals attracted to Ireland via tax incentives.

² The Irish financial crisis began as a response to the global financial crisis of 2008, which soon was exacerbated by a series of banking scandals and the subsequent collapse of the real estate market. As a result the country fell into recession for the first time since the 1980s.

³ In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), Arjun Appadurai coins the term ‘ethnoscape’ to refer to the transnational landscape of people affected by migration, tourism, and exile in a world structured by global cultural flows.

⁴ ‘Indian Community in Ireland’. Available at:

<http://www.irelandindiacouncil.ie/community.php> [Accessed 15 December 2015].

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Throughout the thesis, I use the word ‘Bombay’ rather than ‘Mumbai’. My decision is motivated by the fact that the name ‘Mumbai’ can be associated with extreme nationalistic political views. As Ganti writes:

Though Bombay was officially renamed its Marathi equivalent “Mumbai” in 1995 and the print and broadcast media use the new name, the city is still referred to by its former name in daily parlance by the vast majority of Indians, especially filmmakers. My choice to use “Bombay” rather than “Mumbai” throughout the book reflects this usage, but is also driven by a distaste for the nativist politics represented by the name change. The change was effected by Shiv Sena, a Hindu and Marathi chauvinist political party, soon after it came to power in 1995, as an attempt to alter the diverse and cosmopolitan character of the city.

(2013: 241)

⁷ Prasad, M. (2003) 'This Thing Called Bollywood' *Seminar* 525 (May 2003) [Online] Available at: <http://www.india-Seminar.com/2003/525/525%20madhava%20prasad.htm> [Accessed 15 October 2015].

⁸ Bollywood is not the only Indian film industry to have been given a Hollywood-inspired name. According to Prasad (2003), this trend started in 1932 when an American engineer, writing in *American Cinematographer* (12.11 March 1932), used the word ‘Tollywood’ to refer to the Bengali film industry located in the Tollygunge suburb of Calcutta.

Over time, other Indian film industries have been given similar names: Mollywood, for example, refers to the Malayalam film industry in the South Indian state of Kerala. Kollywood

is the colloquial name given to the Tamil language film industry, based in the Kodambakkam district of Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu. Sandalwood refers to the Kannada language film industry in the state of Karnataka. The term Tollywood also refers to Telugu cinema, the film industry based in Hyderabad, capital of the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Commercial productions of these regional industries are often characterised by distinctive elements also typical of Bollywood films, such as melodrama, romance, escapism and song and dance sequences.

⁹ A non-resident Indian (NRI) is a citizen of India who holds an Indian passport and has temporarily emigrated to another country for six months or more for employment, residence, education or any other purpose.

¹⁰ These large scale events are related to Hindu festivals widely celebrated in the Indian subcontinent and are organized mainly by Hindu Indians of a middle class background, arguably the main culturally ruling class in India. This might suggest the danger of South Asian culture only being represented by Hindu culture, denying the high level of religious, linguistic and social diversity that characterizes India. However, these festivals are created with the declared aim to promote the integration between diverse Indian and non-Indian communities and are not exclusively aimed at Hindu Indians; significantly, Indian and western members of other religious groups such as Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Hare Krishnas collaborate in their organization. The Festival of Lights and Festival of Colours have been preferred to other Indian festivals due to their wider popularity and because they can incorporate multiple elements such as food, spectacle, music and dance, which can appeal to people of extremely diverse cultural backgrounds.

¹¹ A more detailed account about the reflexive turn in ethnography can be found in the 'Conducting Research as a Bollywood Fan' section of this chapter.

¹² Among the key texts that influenced the experimental turn in ethnography are: Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973); Barbara Myerhoff's *Number our Days: A Triumph of Continuity and Culture among Jewish Old People in an Urban Ghetto* (1978); Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978); and Vincent Carapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (1980).

¹³ Punjab is a region located in the northernmost part of the Indian subcontinent, comprising areas of eastern Pakistan and northern India. Kamlesh belongs to a Punjabi family originally from Peshawar (now Pakistan), but they moved to Bombay after the Partition of India.

¹⁴ In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson suggests that nations are not real but 'imagined communities' because they are formed by members who do not actually know each other, so nations exist only in the imagination of

their citizens. Anderson also contends that the emergence of mass media was pivotal in the development of modern nationalisms (2006).

¹⁵ Siraj Zaidi, the Director of the 'Indian Film Festival of Ireland', in his introductory statement for the second year of the festival, clearly stresses that the festival is aimed at a non-Indian audience and strives to promote Bollywood investments in Ireland. (www.indianfilmfestivalofireland.ie). [Accessed 15 August 2011].

¹⁶ Nadai, E. and Maeder, C. (2005) 'Fuzzy Fields. Multi-Sited Ethnography in Sociological Research', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(3), Art. 28. [Online] Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/22/47>. [Accessed 15 October 2015].

¹⁷ Participant observation is an ethnographic social research method employed by renowned anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead and Clifford Geertz. Other critical evaluations include (Geertz 1973; Spradley 1980; Clifford 1988).

¹⁸ Kawulich, B.B. (2005) 'Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method' *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* Vol. 6, No. 2. [Online] Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996>. [Accessed: 25 January 2016].

¹⁹ The Centre for Creative Practices is an arts centre and gallery, showcasing work from immigrant, experimental and emerging artists.

²⁰ Swan Cinema is a three-screen cinema situated the Swan shopping centre in Rathmines, a suburb located on the Southside of Dublin. Swan Cinema was the main venue of the first two editions of the Indian Film Festival of Ireland. From 2012 to 2015 the main festival venue was Movies@Dundrum, part of Dundrum Town Centre, a shopping mall located in the southern suburb of Dundrum.

²¹ In his book *Orientalism* Edward Said argued that western perceptions of Middle Eastern and Asian societies are based on stereotypes which have been perpetuated to justify colonial ambitions. Since its publication in 1978, *Orientalism* has been hugely influential in the fields of postcolonial and Middle Eastern studies; it further impacted disciplines such as literary studies, history, anthropology, sociology and comparative religion.

²² The way western locations and customs are exoticised in Hindi films is explored in chapter four of this thesis.

²³ The 'male gaze' is a term coined by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey. The male gaze theory suggests that visual arts are shaped around a masculine viewer. It describes the tendency in visual culture to depict the world, and especially women, from a masculine point of view and according to men's attitudes.

²⁴ This event is analysed in chapter six.

²⁵ These films are analysed in chapter six.

Chapter Two

Hindi Films and Irish Multiplexes: Cultural Geographies of Bollywood in Dublin



Fig. 4: Cineworld Cinema, inner city Dublin (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Introduction

This chapter draws on theoretical developments in film reception studies, urban and cultural geography and cultural studies to explore practices of Indian cinema in Dublin focusing on Cineworld Dublin¹ – a multiplex located in Dublin’s inner city as the main public site of ongoing Hindi film consumption and exhibition in the Irish capital. Indian film scholar Lawrence Liang contends that ‘there can, arguably, be no distinct account of cinema or cinematic spaces, which is not *at the same time* (original italics) an account of the history of the city, of the experiences of modernity and of the conflicts that define the very occupation of these spaces’ (2005: 368). For this reason, the chapter situates the multiplex within the urban structure of the city, expanding on the peculiar characteristics of inner-city areas surrounding the cinema,² which are at

the same time ethnically diverse and steeped in Irish history and tradition, together with the multiple ways this particular location potentially influences the audiences' experience of a globalising cinema undergoing rapid change such as Bollywood. The complex effects of globalisation and transnational flows of people, media and culture on local realities and in constituting subjectivities have been the object of scholarly attention particularly with reference to popular Indian cinema. According to Jigna Desai, globalisation is a comprehensive process involving transnational formations that 'connect multiple locations in networks in complex and contradictory ways' (2004: 15).

Therefore, one of the questions I wish to address in this chapter is: what are the links between the globalisation of culture and transnational mobility, communality and integration? Relatedly, how do audiences engage with transnational cultural products at the level of the 'local' and of the 'everyday'? Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in and around sites of Hindi film exhibition and consumption, a central concern of this chapter is to delineate how and in what ways audiences' practices of engaging with cinema are intertwined with Dublin's urban life and shaped by the social and cultural background of the city. To this end, the sensory aspect of my ethnographic research is analysed, drawing on scholarly literature highlighting the importance of incorporating sensory dimensions into ethnographic representation (Stoller 1997; Marks 2000; Howes 2005; Dudrah 2006; Pink 2009).

Cineworld Dublin and Shifting Exhibition Practices

Cineworld is located in the north side of Dublin city centre, traditionally considered working class compared to the more upmarket and trendy quarters on the south side of

the River Liffey. The cinema is in a busy commercial area and is surrounded by shopping centres, food markets and high street shops. For this reason the act of going to the cinema at Cineworld becomes part of a series of consumerist rituals that combine leisure and shopping activities. In fact, it is not uncommon to see people going to the cinema with shopping bags from local high street shops or groceries bought in the neighbourhood. In his discussion of multiplexes in India, Athique has explored the way multiplexes influence the urban area they occupy and the lives of the people who live around it. Multiplexes are modern landmarks embedded in the particular urban history of a city – sites worthy of consideration in order to understand the experience of contemporary urban life. For Athique, multiplexes are places where the globalisation of culture is manifested across urban spaces:

[T]he multiplex has been indicative of a consistent, if not always coherent, push to create a “globalized” consuming middle class and a new urban environment. Multiplex theatres, like their single-screen predecessors, have thus become key sites in the long-running struggle over cultural legitimacy and the right to public space.

(2011: 147)

Athique’s comment refers to the emergence of multiplex cinemas in Indian cities, but it can also apply to the presence of multi-screen theatres in the context of Dublin. Notably, the multiplex is positioned in a part of town that is particularly significant in the history of cinema-going in the Irish capital: over twenty movie theatres used to exist in the area surrounding O’Connell Street and Henry Street in the first decades of 1900, in the heydays of cinema, making this particular urban area popular among cinemagoers since the beginning of the 20th century. Additionally, Cineworld is located just a few steps away from where Dublin’s most famous early cinema used to be. The Volta³ Picture Theatre was created by renowned Irish novelist and poet James Joyce, who together with a number of Italian investors, organised the conversion of an

old provision shop situated at 45 Mary Street, into a cinema. As George P. Kearns and Patrick Maguire recall in their compendium of old Dublin cinemas:

The cinema opened on December 20th 1909 with James Joyce as managing director and it was his decision to introduce Italian themed films to his Dublin audiences, the first of which was *The Tragic Story of Beatrice Cenci*. ... with the films being all Italian orientated, the manager Mr. Huish had leaflets printed explaining their storylines and these he would hand to the patrons as they entered the cinema. A small orchestra played suitable music.

(2007: 548-549)

Interestingly, the experience of cinema in Dublin was characterised by watching international films from its very beginning, and this trend continued in years to come in many other movie theatres created around the city. Denis Condon, in his study of early cinema-going in Dublin, explains that by 1914 cinema was the most important medium of the 20th century, with numerous cinemas opening around Dublin:

Between 1911 and the outbreak of World War I, Ireland experienced the same cinema building boom that was common in many developed countries at this time. As a result, in a very short period after 1910, the way that many Irish people spent their leisure time changed fundamentally. Dozens of cinemas sprang up in the centres and suburbs of the large Irish cities of Dublin and Belfast to meet the burgeoning demand for moving pictures.⁴

During the 1920s many cinemas, for example the Metropole on O'Connell Street, became entertainment complexes offering bars, restaurants and ballrooms in addition to a 1000-seat cinema, 'making literally concrete the cinema's growing dominance in Ireland's media landscape' (Condon 2013: 134). In order to meet the demand of increasingly large audiences, exhibitors screened films from various countries including Germany, Italy, Denmark and France. As films were silent, Dublin audiences, who were not ethnically diverse at that time, could enjoy them as they would Irish based stories. Irish film production was very limited at that time and

represented just a fraction of the films screened in Dublin theatres. As Kevin Rockett (1988) recalls in his historical account of Irish cinema, the earliest series of fiction films made in Ireland were produced primarily by Gene Gauntier and Sidney Olcott, members of New York's Kalem Film Company who, between 1910 and 1915, produced almost thirty films engaging with Ireland and Irish subjects. The majority of these were filmed in and around Killarney, Co. Kerry, making extensive use of the dramatic landscape and using locals as extras. During the course of the 20th Century, the vast majority of Dublin movie theatres screened essentially English-language films, including Hollywood and British productions and a small number of Irish films. Nowadays, Irish film productions are still meagre compared to the American commercial productions that dominate the programme of Irish mainstream cinemas; however, technological advancements in the field of film exhibition and shifts in film exhibition practices allow for a variety of international productions to be screened at Cineworld Dublin. In fact, the shift from single screen cinemas to multiplex which started in North America in the 1960s and gradually spread to the rest of the world, revolutionised film exhibition by cutting costs and maximising profits. Multiplexes are movie theatre complexes with multiple screens which historically became an effective way to combat the stagnation in cinema attendance caused by the advent of home video and cable TV, since it provided a wider choice of films and an enhanced cinema-going experience. As Athique and Hill explain:

More screens meant greater efficiency in terms of admissions per square foot and also minimised the risks from films that failed. New and refurbished facilities also justified rising admission prices. As such, multiplexes increased both the number of screens and their overall profitability.

(2010: 5)

Cineworld Dublin has seventeen screens with varying seating capacities, as opposed to single screen cinemas with hundreds of seats each, allowing the screening of films which do not attract large audiences. Moreover, the conversion to digital screening formats (DCP) that cinemas have been gradually undergoing since 2002, allows exhibitors to cut the costs of transporting heavy and bulky reels of film to cinemas, making the screening of niche films more cost effective.⁵ These developments in film exhibition patterns, combined with a growing South Asian population, prompted the management of Cineworld Dublin to start screening Hindi films in 2006, following the advice of a Pakistani employee. As Ed Coleman, Operations Manager at Cineworld, explained in an interview:

We don't necessarily control the films here on site, it comes from our head booker in London, but he would also talk to us about what we think the Irish market is like, so I suggested to him back then that we try a Bollywood and see what the reaction would be like and it was good. ... Cineworld's strategy is to bring the widest range of films to the widest audience possible. We have an advantage, we have seventeen screens, so as much as possible every week we like to show a film that we know there isn't gonna be a huge audience for, but the small audience that is there for it appreciate it, and that's good for us too. What comes with going digital is that the possibilities are so high now to so easily show different types of films and we hope to be branching out even further, not just Bollywood, but different films if we think that there are people who are interested. ... It [the digital format] makes it easier for us to just get more in, because a lot of Bollywoods are very long and, when it was a reel, it used to be maybe five big boxes, so you have to make all that up, and maybe it wasn't so successful, but when it's just in a hard drive when it comes in, you just ingest it, show it, and no big deal if not many people watch it.

(Interview 8 January 2012)

Cineworld Dublin now makes up for the numerous cinemas that used to exist in the proximity of where the multiplex is now located. These cinemas include: the Rotunda Cinema on Parnell Street, the Maro on Mary Street; the Pillar Picture House, the Carlton and the Savoy on O'Connell Street, and the Masterpiece on Talbot Street. All of these cinema theatres are now closed, with the exception of the Savoy, which is

now the oldest operational cinema in Dublin (it opened in 1929), and it usually hosts high profile film premières and the main screenings of the Jameson Dublin International Film Festival.

Arguably, the experience of cinema audiences in inner city Dublin is greatly influenced by developments in exhibition modes and strategies, as well as by social and cultural shifts occurring in and around this specific urban area of film consumption. The dynamic nature of these urban environments can be effectively represented through a framework of movement, highlighting how cultural practices are influenced and shaped by people's act of moving across spaces. Jo Lee and Tim Ingold have stressed the importance of routes and mobilities in ethnographic research: 'walking allows for an understanding of places being created by routes' (2006: 68). Moreover, according to Sarah Pink, the analysis of 'routes of movement' can inform academic knowledge of urban processes and constitute notions of place through practices that are not simply visual but 'embedded in multisensorial experiences'.⁶

The urban area around Cineworld Cinema is a place where I conducted my research, inhabiting this site as a Bollywood fan attending Hindi film screenings, which highlights my dual position of researcher and participant in my study. I am aware that my autoethnographic experience can be very useful in understanding practices of engagement with Indian cinema at the level of the local and of the everyday. As Pink contends, 'we ourselves are emplaced, but at the same time we are both seeking to understand the emplacement of others and the practices through which the places they form part of are continually reconstituted'.⁷ In fact, 'place is seen as "event" (Casey, 1996) or process – something that is constantly being made and remade'.⁸ This notion

of 'place-event', suggests that places are not fixed entities but are shaped by the identities and sensibilities of the people passing through them. The importance of movement in the creation of place is suggested by Michel de Certeau in his book titled *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). De Certeau suggests that urban walking 'is a process of *appropriation* (original italics) of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian ...; it is a spatial acting-out of the place ...; and it implies *relations* (original italics) among differentiated positions' (1984: 97-98). De Certeau's celebration of walking is associated with the gendered figure of the *flâneur*, defined as somebody who leisurely strolls around urban spaces looking at things. His notions of movement have been linked by fandom scholar Lincoln Geraghty (2015) to geographies of fandom and to processes of inscribing new meanings and cultural significance to spaces related to objects of fandom. For these reasons, in order to illustrate and frame the experience of cinema-going at Cineworld Dublin, I structure the following sections following the path of my route to the multiplex, expanding on the places, people and sensations I encounter on the way.

Moore Street: Transnational Flows and Locality

On my way to Cineworld Dublin I usually get off the bus on Talbot Street, a working class inner city area bustling with migrants and working class Irish people walking around low price clothing and houseware shops looking for bargains. As I pass by two shops run by South Asians, my attention is caught by the vibrant colours of the clothes displayed on the windows and occasional copies of pirated Hindi film DVDs. Even though Cineworld Dublin screens Bollywood blockbusters as soon as they are released, Indian film industries are extremely prolific, and due to the prominence of Hollywood films on the Irish market, most Hindi films and regional films are not

available on the big screen in Ireland. Cineworld screens on average one Hindi film per week; only big blockbusters such as *Ek Tha Tiger* (see chapters four and five) which was partially shot in Dublin, or films starring the megastars Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan (see chapter five) are shown over two or three weeks. However, when several Hollywood blockbusters are released at the same time, they occupy considerable screen space and time slots, since they are deemed to be more profitable than Indian films. For this reason, Bollywood films can disappear from the cinema's screening schedule for several weeks. Therefore, Asian communities and other Bollywood fans resort to pirated versions of films available on the internet or buy pirated DVDs in Dublin. Several Dublin based Bollywood fans feel that they have no option but to resort to piracy if they want to enjoy Hindi films and be up to date with the latest releases. An Indian student who prefers not to be named explains:

We don't have any choice when we really want to see a particular film, a highly anticipated film that is not shown here. We do not go to India very often, so by the time of our next visit, the film will be old and nobody will want to talk about it.

(Interview September 2012)

Indian film industries are aware of the widespread use of piracy by audiences and films are now starting to be released only on digital formats to combat piracy, since many movies are copied while reels are transported to cinemas. Moreover, most Hindi films shown at Cineworld are preceded by advertisements of Erosnow.com – an internet platform belonging to the Indian film production and distribution company Eros International, which allows subscribers to watch a wide variety of Bollywood and regional films. In the ad, prominent Bollywood stars including Salman Khan encourage audiences to use Erosnow.com rather than watch pirated films. Lawrence Liang (2005, 2009) questions current laws on Intellectual Property, contending that

piracy actually allows the circulation and evolution of art and culture: ‘these non-legal technologies and media open a lot of avenues. It gives those who don’t ordinarily fit into the knowledge economy a chance to participate on their own terms’.⁹ Moreover, ‘the world of culture and creation is always spread through copy culture. We need to conceptually, make a distinction. When people look at a copy, they see it with a negative view. They perceive it as being fake’.¹⁰ In fact, several people who admit watching pirated films, say that if they really like them they will buy a legitimate copy of the DVD, so piracy does not always result in loss of revenue for film industries and is effective in raising awareness about enjoyable and original films people would otherwise not have access to.

Close to the intersection with O’Connell Street, are Clerys and Boyers, two of Ireland’s oldest and most iconic department stores; next to them is a Starbucks coffee shop and Carrols, a tourist shop selling Irish souvenirs. Across from Carrols, behind a small wooden door, squeezed between a furniture shop and an Italian restaurant, is Dublin’s first city centre mosque called Anwar-E-Madina, run by the Irish Sufi Foundation. I visited the mosque in 2011, on the occasion of the birthday of Prophet Mohammed, when, along with my partner Babu, I participated in the celebrations held in the upper floors of the unassuming inner city building, which was converted into a mosque in 2008. Babu and I were the only non-Muslim participants, with the exception of two Gardaí,¹¹ who were invited to highlight the inclusive and peaceful nature of the gathering. We had the opportunity to participate thanks to Manan, a third generation Irish-Indian man. Manan is a prominent member of the Irish Sufi Foundation and owns an Indian restaurant close to Cineworld cinema where we

usually go after the screenings (I provide an ethnographic account of my visits to the restaurant later on in the chapter).

As I cross the road on O'Connell Street, I am immersed in the flow of people and vehicles of the main street of Ireland's capital city. Colourful groups of tourists follow walking tours' guides dodging the crowds of city dwellers moving about the large pavements on each side of the street. It is common to see Hare Krishnas chanting and playing drums and people involved in protests and demonstrations in front of the imposing General Post Office (GPO);¹² the traffic is usually quite heavy, punctuated by brightly coloured double-decker tourist buses gliding along the monuments aligned in the centre of the street. When I am walking up Henry Street from the direction of O'Connell Street, I pass by a tourist office, a few high street shops and mobile phone shops; my attention is caught by the pungent smell of soap coming from Lush, a retailer of handmade cosmetics; at the same time the notes of Italian pop songs, playing from an Ice cream shop called Gino's, fill the air. As I take the first turn right I am greeted by the bustle and colour of Moore Street Market which stretches up to Parnell Street. Notably, Moore Street hosts Dublin's oldest food market, which begun its activities in the eighteenth century and is now considered a historical landmark.¹³ The market runs six days a week from the early morning to six in the evening and mainly sells fruits, vegetables, fish and flowers at very reasonable prices. Many Dubliners have a great affection for Moore Street, which is considered the most famous street in Ireland because of its market, its people, and its history. As Irish broadcaster Joe Duffy states in his preface to Barry Kennerk's book on Moore Street:

If I was to pick one place to represent our country – somewhere that captures its history, people, sounds, smells and colours – it would have to be Moore

Street. Located in the heart of our national psyche, it nestles in the shadow of O'Connell Street like a good-humoured, lucky, but mischievous mascot. (2012: 9)

A characteristic of Moore Street are its vendors, mainly Dublin women whose families have been trading on the market for generations; some of them have metallic stalls, others are hawkers selling their goods out of prams with breadboards balanced across them. I hear them from afar as they holler to advertise their products: 'Ten bananas for two Euro!', and I would often buy fruit from them to eat in the cinema. The ladies are usually very affable, witty and often greet me with a friendly 'How'ya, Love? What can I get you?' These hardy and friendly women are believed to embody the heart and soul of the city. As Kennerk recalls, 'traders in Moore Street have long held a prime place in Dublin's cultural heart' (ibid.: 92). Some of them have become legendary figures, for example Rosie Johnston, an indomitable woman known as the 'Queen of Moore Street', who was born and traded on Moore Street until the 1960s; she is recalled in Sean Dunphy's song 'Rosie up on Moore Street' (ibid.: 100).



Fig. 5: Market stalls next to the entrance of the Ilac Centre on Moore Street (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Walking along the stalls on Moore street market, one cannot help but notice that the two sides of the street are very different: the right hand side is old and shabby with crumbling two storey terraced houses, whereas the buildings on the left hand side are of recent construction and house the side entrance of a shopping mall called Ilac Centre (Fig. 5). This is due to an urban regeneration plan started in the 1970s by Dublin Corporation,¹⁴ aimed at redeveloping a six-acre area bounded by Moore Street, Parnell Street and Mary Street, which had become increasingly drab and rundown due to the general state of decay of its buildings. The opening of the shopping centre in 1981 meant that entire inner city streets and lanes were erased from the map and numerous shops such as butchers and second-hand clothes shops existing on those locations were forced to close as they could not afford to move into the expensive new units. This caused social tension in the area as families who have lived and worked there for generations were forced to leave to make space for commercial corporations.

These processes of regeneration, occurring in various derelict areas around Dublin, were problematic also because they were characterised by the indiscriminate destruction of numerous historical buildings in a climate of political corruption and property speculation. Irish journalist Frank McDonald exposed the corruption and denounced the destruction of historical areas of Dublin in his books titled *The Destruction of Dublin* (1985) and *The Construction of Dublin* (2000), where he analysed the relationship between state authorities, political parties, banking institutions and the property sector. Both in his books and in a series of provocative articles with headings such as ‘Cash in Brown Paper Bags for Councillors’, which appeared in *The Irish Times* in the early 1990s, he denounced the fact that developers used to pay councillors in order to obtain building permits. According to McDonald,

these transactions were often conducted in a pub located on Parnell Street, and precisely ‘in the upper room of Conway’s pub, the most favoured “cash point” for corrupt councillors’ (2000: 222). McDonald further explains that these processes of corruption, coupled with a widespread antipathy for Georgian architecture, perceived as legacy of eight hundred years of British oppression, caused the disappearance of numerous Georgian buildings which were replaced by commercial buildings and large streets meant to ease traffic problems (McDonald 2000). These development plans are presently operating in the context of Moore Street, which remains in danger of being destroyed by developers to make way for new buildings.



Fig. 6: The O'Rahilly Memorial on O'Rahilly Parade off Moore Street (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

The remaining part of the original Moore Street buildings has survived primarily because of its significance in the history of Irish independence. Significantly, the terrace was of strategic importance during the Easter Rising in 1916 when nationalist insurgents surrendered to the British army precisely at this location.¹⁵ These events are

commemorated by a small bronze plaque barely visible on the wall of a derelict building on the right hand side of the street, and by a limestone and bronze memorial sculpture on a side street called O'Rahilly Parade, in honour of Michael Joseph O'Rahilly, a Volunteer¹⁶ killed on that lane during the Easter Rising; the sculpture is an etching of his last message to his wife (Fig. 6). It is interesting to note that the memorial has been placed on a modern building, highlighting the contrast between the history of the area and the way it is gradually being erased through urban development projects.

The notion of Moore Street as a symbol of Irish history and culture is complicated by the presence of an increasing number of ethnic shops next to the market stalls. Since 2001, Moore Street has become increasingly multicultural as African, South Asian and Chinese shops and restaurants opened alongside quintessentially Irish market stalls attracting customers from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Fig. 7). These migrant groups have thus become part of the landscape of local people who have inhabited the Moore Street area for generations establishing a relatively stable community. In his analysis of global cultural flows Appadurai observes that long established communities are not immune to the changes generated by globalising forces, as 'the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move' (1996: 33-34).



Fig. 7: Poster advertising a Telugu film screening and the Indian Film Festival of Ireland on Moore Street. (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

As I walk along Moore Street, I am surrounded by colourful fruit and vegetables on sale on the market stalls, posters of concerts, events and occasional Bollywood club nights and Indian film screenings (Figs. 6 and 7), the cries of the vendors in typical Dublin accent, the aroma of French bread mixed with those of Asian and African food. In this area of Dublin, I and other cinemagoers are reminded of our viewing experience by music videos and trailers of Hindi films shown on flat screens inside the restaurants, able to engage with the culture observed in the films at a different sensory level through the smells and the taste of Indian food. In a similar way, audiences watching Hindi films are reminded of related sensory experiences outside the cinema, producing unique sensations and experiences of the city of Dublin. The powerful sensorial impressions of the area in question suggest that it produces experiences that are embodied, since the body and its senses become a source of knowledge, namely

‘emplaced’ (Howes 2005; Pink 2009). The notion of emplacement conveys that the body and the senses are important sources of ethnographic knowledge in relation to the place where sensuous experiences occur. David Howes, in his work on the importance of the senses in the production of culture, argues that ‘while the paradigm of “embodiment” implies an integration of mind and body, the emergent paradigm of emplacement suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment’ (Howes 2005: 7). Relatedly, Paul Stoller points out that sensory experiences create links between different places and events through memory: ‘the human body is not principally a text; rather, it is consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds and tastes, all of which trigger cultural memories’ (1997: 85). This notion also relates to theories of ‘haptic cinema’ developed by Laura Marks and applied by Rajinder Dudrah (2006, 2010, 2012) in his work on Hindi cinema and diasporic audiences, where he extends the reading of Hindi films to their representations and their allied sensations as played out in related urban cultural geographies, enhancing and transforming the viewing experience through the memory of other senses.

Laura Marks, in her book titled *The Skin of the Film* (2000) notes that a tactile understanding of vision, or ‘haptic visuality’ as she terms it, is useful to understand how film can be perceived by diverse audiences. Significantly, she argues that ‘to think of film as a skin acknowledges the effect of a work’s circulation among different audiences, all of which mark it with their presence’ (Marks 2000: xi). Moreover, Marks contends that the notion of film as a skin ‘offers a metaphor to emphasize the way film signifies through its materiality, through a contact between perceiver and object represented ... to emphasize the tactile and contagious quality of cinema as something we viewers brush up against like another body’ (2000: xi-xii).

These thought-provoking theoretical insights suggest sensory links between the materialities of South Asian culture experienced in the area surrounding the cinema and the actual films shown at Cineworld cinema. As I pass through the area, a globalised display of images advertising Indian cinema juxtaposed to products and foods of other countries such as Chinese tea, Polish sausages, surrounded by the aroma of coffee and African cuisine, simultaneously evoke a vast array of sensations and memories (Fig. 7). I can feel in my mouth the spicy taste of the sausages, as the aroma of the coffee fills the air and I remember listening to jaunty and fast-paced music from Bollywood films; suddenly the Dublin-accented cries of market vendors remind me that I am actually in the Irish capital. These sensations, coupled with the ubiquitous presence of Hindi film through pirated DVDs, cable TV in restaurant and digital projection in the cinema, suggest that global forces create multiple intense and constant manifestations of Hindi film in this area of Dublin, allowing Bollywood fans and passersby to connect with this cultural product at multiple sensory levels. As Rajinder Dudrah states, ‘the acceleration of this cosmopolitan commodity – the globalised Hindi film – has produced many skins as it were, many surfaces, plug-ins, and amplitudes’ (2006: 103).

The way elements of different cultures interact and coexist on Moore Street mirrors the social changes occurring in Irish society due to accelerated immigration since the early 1990s. In the same period, developers proposed to demolish the surviving run-down buildings on Moore Street to build a retail and residential scheme, but such plans were opposed by residents and Numbers 14 to 17 of Moore Street were declared a national monument in 2007. However, developers are still seeking ministerial approval for their plans, which means that businesses established by entrepreneurial

migrants along the street as a way of getting a foothold in the country, together with market stalls run by generations of Irish families, are in constant danger of being shut down.¹⁷ The predicament of Moore street traders inspired an Irish/British comedy film titled *Mrs Brown's Boys D'Movie* (Ben Kellett, 2014), centred on a Moore Street market-trader called Agnes Brown struggling to protect her family's stall from a corrupt Russian businessman who plans to convert the market area into a shopping centre.¹⁸ The film was extremely successful among both Irish and UK audiences, and with a total gross of £14.7 million, it was the third highest grossing film in the British and Irish market in 2014.

The film, however, has received negative reviews by critics who described it as crude, not funny, and politically incorrect due to embarrassing capers such as a racist Chinese caricature and a running joke about an Indian character who everyone thinks is Jamaican. These representations are reminiscent of the racial discrimination faced by immigrants currently living in Ireland. Steven Loyal, who has analysed the experience of migrant workers in Ireland, argues that 'despite Ireland's tourist-orientated national self-image as a welcoming, hospitable country, varying levels of racism directed towards migrants undoubtedly exist' (2011: 182). These sentiments result in discriminatory attacks, exploitation and inequality in the workplace, and social exclusion. In the area of Moore Street, migrants are often victims of racial abuse; instances of migrant workers being subject to unfair working conditions while being employed in local businesses have also been documented.¹⁹ The growing presence of migrant groups in Irish society has prompted scholarly discussion surrounding questions of difference and otherness in Ireland, alongside an engagement with established minorities such as the Travellers and the Protestants. Work on

immigration and racism in Ireland has focused on the struggle of migrants to fit into Irish society and the widespread perception of migrant groups as 'Others' (Lentin 1999; O'Toole 2000; Lentin and McVeigh, 2002; McDonagh 2002; Feldman 2008). As Feldman contends, 'the Immigrant-Other has been marked out as both the central catalyst, focus and benchmark in debates about membership, belonging and citizenship in Ireland' (2008: 270). Moreover, global flows of migrants transform localities which, like Moore Street, have always been perceived as essentially Irish, creating diverse identities and ways of belonging that connect people to specific Irish locations. According to Feldman, 'the current contexts of rapid social change ... highlight the pervasive glocal transformations affecting the most taken for granted assumptions concerning space and place in Ireland, and forcing the evolution of new forms of belonging' (ibid.: 271).

Despite the uncertainty and precariousness of the location, low-budget ethnic businesses and Irish market stalls still remain on Moore Street, marking it as a place of cultural resistance to consumeristic and homogenising development plans. Both Irish traders and non-Irish shop owners face eviction in the event that the building of a new shopping centre is approved, thus in spite of their ethnic and cultural differences, both are united in the struggle to hold on to their livelihood and to their identity as Moore Street traders. This united concern suggests the complex and contingent identities and belongings created through the intersection of social policies, historical processes and global forces operating at the level of everyday life in Irish locales. These notions, concerning ongoing social changes and the emergence of new ethnic communities in Irish locales, are testimony of the effects of globalisation on social groups and localities and need to be taken into account in the exploration of the circulation of

globalised cultural products such as Hindi films. Immigration and social changes can greatly influence the way Bollywood films are perceived and utilised in processes of identity negotiation. Significantly, the following section foregrounds how distinctive elements and aesthetics of Bollywood cinema have successfully been employed in an endearing cinematic depiction of Moore Street.

Moore Street Masala: Cinematic Representations of Social Shifts through Bollywood

The multiethnic character of Moore Street has been portrayed in *Moore Street Masala* – the first Bollywood film made in Ireland. *Moore Street Masala* is a 5-minute short film by David O’Sullivan, which was shot on Moore Street in 2009. The film is centred on the love story between an Indian convenience store clerk called Baba (Deva Naidu) and an Irish secretary (Anne Wilson) working in an estate agency on Moore Street. It features the commercial activities unfolding in the area and culminates in a typically Bollywood song and dance sequence among the market stalls, showing how different ethnic groups coexist in the area (Fig. 8).

According to Kennerk, ‘*Moore Street Masala* can be seen as a positive affirmation of the changes that have taken place in the market in recent years’ (2012: 152). In the film, street vendors loudly advertise their products to entice customers; teenagers in tracksuits try to steal cans of beer in Baba’s convenience store, while girls wearing pyjamas²⁰ are reading fictional magazines on pyjama fashion trends. These characters are tongue-in-cheek portrayals of stereotypical Dublin people, parodies of inner city dwellers that might be considered questionable as their representation does not explore the complexity of their lived experience. On the other hand, Baba is shown as well adjusted to the area and loved by locals. Before declaring his love to the

secretary, he is shown receiving a blessing from an Irish elderly lady who puts a garland of flowers around his neck.²¹ In many Hindu weddings, the groom receives a garland of flowers from the family of the bride at the start of the wedding celebrations. This scene thus symbolises how the Irish community blesses the union between the secretary and Baba, suggesting the inclusive and welcoming nature of the Moore Street community. The portrayal of Moore Street in *Moore Street Masala* is thus idealised and simplistic as it focuses on comedy and romance, failing to bring into representation the social and political tensions generated by the redevelopment of the area and the presence of migrants discussed above.



Fig. 8: Film still from David O’Sullivan’s *Moore Street Masala* (2009)

In an interview the director commented that he made this film as a celebration of Bollywood cinema and to prove that Bollywood is very versatile and can work in an Irish context. Significantly, David O’Sullivan also declared that he hoped that his film would attract Bollywood productions to Ireland. ‘Bollywood crews haven’t really

been coming here at all’, said O’Sullivan. ‘They go to London and Switzerland all the time. They really need to start coming here and this is a way of showing that Bollywood fits in Ireland’.²² This actually materialised in 2011 when director Kabir Khan chose Ireland as a setting for *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012), which became a highly successful Hindi blockbuster (see chapters four and five).

Cineworld Cinema and Dublin’s Urban Regeneration

At the end of Moore Street I turn left onto Parnell Street West, where Cineworld is located. Parnell Street is a wide road usually congested with traffic, and busy with people shopping in the supermarkets and shopping centres in the area. Even if it mainly features large and new constructions, the presence of rundown buildings on side streets suggests that the area has undergone a process of redevelopment in recent times. As previously mentioned, the area between Parnell Street and Moore Street has been substantially redeveloped since the 1970s.²³ Frank McDonald explains that this urban regeneration continued until the 1990s as road plans by Dublin Corporation devastated the west end of Parnell Street in the attempt to widen it during the 1970s. Virtually all of the original Georgian architecture was destroyed and subsequently replaced by buildings of much larger scale (McDonald 1985, 2000).

Interestingly, the building now housing Cineworld cinema was erected as part of the regeneration of Parnell Street West, in the belief that a cinema would contribute to attracting people and other businesses to the area. According to Kennerk, the original Dublin Corporation development plan included: ‘100,000 square feet of retail shopping, along with a further 300,000 square feet of office space...a multi-storey car park...a 240 bedroom hotel, 50,000 square feet of leisure space with two cinemas, a

theatre, bars and restaurants' (2012: 139-142). All of the above has been built thus far, but the two cinemas and the theatre have been substituted by a multiscreen cinema which was initially operated by Virgin Cinemas and was subsequently acquired by Cineworld and expanded to 17 screens including an IMAX screen. Cinemas, since their inception, have been considered symbols of modernity (Larkin 2002b; Athique and Hill 2010); the story of the regeneration of Parnell Street confirms the important role that multiplex cinemas have nowadays in raising the profile of and revitalising stagnant urban areas. Athique and Hill have analysed the impact of multiplexes on urban areas. They argue:

[A] multiplex is almost invariably part of a major reconfiguration in urban space around which large numbers of people are required to reorganise their lives. Both the narrative and the behavioural influence of the multiplex can therefore be seen to spread far beyond its own confines. In each case the multiplex emerges from the pages of a particular urban history, laden with the ghosts of past aspirations and pregnant with the metropolitan fantasies of tomorrow. Ultimately, it is for all these various reasons that the multiplex has a particular salience for those interested in understanding the experience of contemporary urban life.

(2010: 3-4)

'We can meet in the pub next to Cineworld'. 'I live in an apartment block opposite Cineworld'. These casual directions highlight the pivotal role of Cineworld as a built space in the urban geography of Dublin. The large cinema building punctuates Dublin city centre's urban topography and is visible from a considerable distance (see Fig. 4). Surrounding the cinema are pubs, supermarkets, shopping centres and high street shops, so people who may not be interested in watching films have also internalised the movie theatre as a landmark. Brian Larkin explores how movie theatres demarcate public spaces in urban environments as concrete objects and 'commodified elements of everyday life' which 'constitute the total sensory experience of urban living' (2002b: 319). These notions bring to the fore the materiality of cinema and the

relevance of the physical presence of the movie theatre for people watching films or simply passing by the multiplex.



Fig. 9: The foyer of Cineworld Dublin (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

As I approach the shiny and tall cinema building I pass by an Australian pub where I occasionally meet friends before the screenings. The pub often shows popular football and rugby matches and sometimes the queue to get in stretches to the entrance of the multiplex; nearby is an American-style burger restaurant and an amusement arcade, signalling that the cinema exists amid other leisure activities such as going to bars and restaurants, playing videogames and watching sport on television (Fig. 4). As Larkin points out, ‘cinema theaters ... draw around them congeries of social practices that make cinema-going an event that always exceeds (and sometimes has little to do with) the films that are shown on the screen’ (ibid.: 320). Above the main entrance of the theatre is an array of neatly arranged posters advertising current screenings, the

colourful posters stand out on the black backdrop of the cinema building and entice passersby to the latest movies on offer (Fig. 4). Bollywood films are rarely advertised in this area, which is mainly occupied by posters of Hollywood and other English-language films. The foyer of Cineworld is very neat and spacious and over the weekend is crammed with people queuing to buy tickets. Members of the cinema staff, mostly young men and women of various ethnic backgrounds, are also visible in this area, working at the box office and checking tickets; they are easily recognisable from their uniform consisting of dark trousers and a red T-shirt (see Fig. 9). It is interesting to note the sharp contrast between the liminal sensory environment of Moore Street, characterised by the heterogeneous mix created by the warm textures and colours of ethnic food, urban decay and historical landmarks (Figs. 5, 6 and 7), and the cold modernity of the multiplex with shiny surfaces and a colour palette dominated by cold and dark colours suggesting an orderly, aseptic and standardised environment (Fig. 9). This notion suggests the multiple sensations and encounters produced by the globalisation of Indian cinema in the context of Dublin.

Cineworld Dublin is extremely successful among cinemagoers of various social classes, nationality and age groups not merely for its convenient location, but for the fact that it has seventeen screens; it is further popular thanks to their saving scheme called 'Unlimited Card', which allows viewers to watch unlimited films for a flat rate of 21.90 Euro. Since it is a commercial cinema mainly showing Hollywood blockbusters, Cineworld is particularly popular among teenagers and young adults who can be quite loud and noisy as they move around the multiplex; for this reason art film aficionados prefer quieter and more intimate venues like the Irish Film Institute or the Lighthouse cinema specialising in art-house and independent films (many of

which are also shown at Cineworld). Typically there are not many posters of Bollywood films around the cinema. This is motivated by the fact that the cinema does not receive much point-of-sale advertising material²⁴ for Indian films. However, sometimes it is possible to see posters of Indian films next to the escalators leading to the screens and on a wall above the ticket counters. The scarcity of advertisement of Hindi films points to the fact that the screening of Bollywood productions is a relatively new phenomenon in Dublin and the number of Bollywood films on offer is still very small compared to countries with a larger and more established Indian community such as the UK and the US. As mentioned in chapter one, the first public Bollywood film screenings in Dublin began in the 1990s when Indian films were shown in suburban cinemas and at the Irish Film Institute, usually on Sunday mornings, with one off screenings of popular Indian films mainly attended by members of the South Asian community. Since 2006, however, Bollywood films have been regularly screened at Cineworld Dublin, to meet the needs of a growing South Asian population who welcomed the inclusion of the latest Bollywood films in its programming schedules. Notably, both the operations manager and employees of Cineworld confirmed that, although they attract mainly South Asian audiences, Bollywood films are watched by a considerable number of people with no South Asian background. As Rino, a South Indian student who works part time at Cineworld, confirmed in an interview:

Bollywood movies are very popular here, not only among people from India. Irish people and people from Europe also show an interest in watching Bollywood movies. I think Bollywood films are popular in Europe because of the huge advertisement of recent years.

(Interview 4 January 2013)

Indeed, Hindi film industry practices have been evolving considerably in recent years and since the mid-2000, thanks to partnerships forged between Hindi filmmakers and Hollywood studios; Indian production and distribution companies have been able to tap into new markets including Taiwan, South Korea and China. Tejaswini Ganti, who has analysed recent development in Hindi films production and distribution, notes that ‘the increasing partnership with Hollywood is tied up with Hindi filmmakers’ more explicit efforts to court new audiences in non-traditional markets, which had begun in the late 1990s, but which has become more systematic in the present’ (2013: 53). These developments are motivated by the fact that film production was granted industry status only recently, in the year 2000. Before that time, making films in India was an extremely risky undertaking and many productions were completed with the filmmakers own financial resources or with money borrowed from shady individuals, sometimes connected to the Bombay underworld. This new industry status, referred to as ‘corporatisation’ of the Indian film industry, allowed film productions to benefit from tax incentives, investments from financial institutions, and the inclusion of production companies in the Indian stock market. As a result, renowned Indian corporations such as Reliance Industries and Tata Group created new film production and distribution companies, which increased the numbers and variety of films available. Since raising capital is not a challenge anymore for Indian film industries, the desire to tap into new markets is more motivated by achieving international recognition than by financial constraints. As Ganti states, ‘Hindi filmmakers’ desires to be “global” are not out of economic necessity, but more for prestige, status, and symbolic value, especially since domestic theatrical box-office income accounts for about 73 percent of the industry’s revenues’ (2013: 55).

These developments, together with the technological advancements in film exhibition described earlier, allow increasing audiences outside India to get acquainted with Hindi films, not only through cable channels and internet platforms, but also by congregating at the cinema, thus influencing people's social practices and perception of locality. Cineworld Dublin thus creates a physical space where Irish based communities of Bollywood enthusiasts can congregate and share the experience of watching films together in communal rituals that would not be possible if people watched films exclusively in private spaces. As Jancovich and his collaborators state:

[I]f communications mediate the boundaries between the public and the private, they are also related to cultural geographies in other ways. They not only provide images of elsewhere but also, as Benedict Anderson and others have pointed out, they provide the rituals for a sense of imagined community.
(Jancovich et al. 2003: 18)

Since the community of people watching Indian films at Cineworld is characterised by multiple ethnic and cultural backgrounds, they can be seen as inhabiting a 'cultural field' constructed around Indian movies. As mentioned in chapter one, Athique has researched ethnically diverse audiences of Hindi films (2005, 2008b) and developed the theoretical framework of the 'cultural field' to approach a community of spectators who do not possess a shared identity, but only a shared interest in Hindi film. According to Athique: 'the community here is simply formulated as the audience constructed by participation in the consumption of Indian movies, which are perceived as enacting diverse cultural dialogues across a wide and variegated social space' (2005: 119). It is interesting to note that some of the non-Indian people who usually attend Indian film screenings at Cineworld actually discovered Bollywood through the Dublin multiplex, thanks to the Unlimited Card promotion. For example Celine, a French participant in my research, now an ardent Bollywood fan, started watching

Hindi films by chance as she got a ticket to an Indian film merely to give it a try. Celine and I often go and watch Bollywood films together at Cineworld; occasionally her husband Jeremy, who is native to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, joins us as he also enjoys popular Indian films, especially family dramas and comedies. We are very familiar with the plush and impersonal interiors of the multiplex, three floors of film screens, with a bar, a fast food counter, candies and ice-cream shops and brightly coloured arcade games designed to cater to cinemagoers' consumption needs and to enhance the profitability of film exhibition.

Ascending the escalators across the cinema floors we see banners advertising Coca Cola, Ben and Jerry's ice cream, accompanied by the smell of popcorn and hot dogs inviting people to indulge in the food on sale at the cinema, but we usually carry with us snacks from Polish shops or local Indian restaurants. Inside the theatre, we join the mainly South Asian audience, punctuated by women wearing traditional Indian garments, to see the Indian film on that week. Sometimes we go to the cinema on our own, on other occasions we are joined by other Indian film fans of various European and South Asian backgrounds. We usually go to late afternoon screenings during the week and most of the time there are just twenty to thirty, mainly South Asian, people in the audience. However, weekend and evening screenings attract larger audiences and are sometimes sold out. As Rino commented in an interview:

The majority of Indians come at the weekends usually at eight thirty in the night, every Friday and Saturday. That's the time when Indians are coming. *Dabangg*, *My Name is Khan*, *Jab Tak Hai Jaan*, these movies were sold out in the first two days of release. Many people asked me for movie tickets and I had to say "sorry, the movie is sold out".

(Interview 4 January 2013)

The presence of a cinema screening Bollywood blockbusters and of a growing Indian community enables South Asian audiences to replicate viewing practices usually common in India but not possible in Ireland until a decade ago. Anjala, an Indian radio presenter who has been living in Ireland since 2001, enthusiastically recalls the first time she watched a Bollywood film at Cineworld: ²⁵

It was in 2006. The first Bollywood movie that I have seen in Dublin was *Krrish*. Back then we could not watch Indian movies often. They used to be screened at Cineworld for about one weekend every month. *Krrish* was really good, I loved it. I was really happy. What I loved about the experience of watching it at Cineworld was that the theatre was full of Indians. I never felt for a moment that I was not watching the movie in India. The only thing that was missing throughout, especially during the interval, were the samosas. The smell of the samosas! Oh God! When you go to an Indian cinema to watch a movie, you eat them when you come out in the break. Basically movies and samosas are kind of interrelated, so the only thing I missed was the samosas. Otherwise I enjoyed everything else.

(Interview May 2012)

Cineworld actually started screening Hindi films in 2006 and, initially, they would barely screen one or two a month to test the market. Anjala used to live in Kilkenny (located some 120km away from Dublin) at that time and she would travel all the way to Dublin with her husband for the opportunity to watch Hindi films at the cinema. Anjala reflected that her experience at Cineworld was not radically different from watching films in movie theatres in India, since the audience consisted mainly of Indians and they were watching a Hindi film. Lakshmi Srinivas, in her ethnographic study of cinema audiences in India observed that:

Audiences of popular Hindi cinema present a strategic site for study of the active audience as they adopt a viewing style that is participatory and interactive. In cinema theaters viewers applaud and whistle loudly, sing along with the soundtrack, shout out comments and throw coins at the screen. Viewers transform the meaning of the film and shape the collective experience of viewing.

(1998: 323)

Rohit and Aparna, two Indian siblings introduced in chapter one, however, found watching Hindi films at Cineworld boring and lamented that Bollywood audiences at Cineworld are usually not as participatory and interactive as audiences in India. Moreover, they noted that the small size of the theatres and the presence of non-Indian viewers do not allow an ‘active’ enjoyment of films. As they commented:

Rohit: It’s too small and it’s a different community altogether...

Aparna: What happens sometimes is that non-Indians will be watching as well, so you never know, you might offend them...

(Interview 14 September 2012)

These statements convey the difficulties that many migrants experience in engaging with cultural practices typical of their countries of origin in the context of Dublin: the need to fit into a different environment forces people to suppress and modify certain behaviours perceived as not suitable to the host country. This is one of the reasons why Dublin based audiences are usually quiet during screenings, even if at times they cheer loudly at the hero and clap their hands at action sequences; overall, South Asian audiences do not participate as much as they would in India. However, these changes in audiences’ behaviours might be more influenced by the specific mode of exhibition space they are in, than by their geographical location. Athique has explored the advent of the multiplex in India and its effect on audiences, and suggests that the ‘decent crowd’ (2011: 155) of middle class, educated people who can afford to attend screenings in multiplexes in India, would disapprove of ‘active’ modes of spectatorship as much as western viewers, who are used to attending screenings in silence. As Athique observes, ‘a large component of the eagerness of multiplex viewers not to mix with the “cheap crowd” in traditional cinema halls appeared to

stem from a rejection of the latter's emotionally demonstrative and "undisciplined" watching of films' (ibid.:154).

During my stay in India in 2013, I went to the cinema several times, both in Bombay and in Bangalore, with mixed groups of Indians and Europeans friends. My experience of watching films in India is limited to multiplexes embedded in shopping malls. Single-screen cinemas were not considered an option, since most people I met deemed them to be 'unsafe and unpleasant'. This is because Indian single-screen cinemas can actually be unsafe for women in the way they are usually overcrowded and they require patrons to queue in cramped lines, where women are vulnerable to sexual harassment and unwanted attention from unknown men. As Athique and Hill explain, 'older-style cinema halls also provide space for inappropriate acts such as spitting, jostling, groping and making lewd remarks' (2010: 156). For these reasons multiplexes are considered safer by female viewers as they guarantee more personal space and discourage inappropriate behaviours: 'a critical aspect of these new interiors is that they are less discriminatory towards women than the older cinemas and the streets outside' (ibid.: 158).

Both in Bombay and Bangalore the buildings were shiny and modern and their décor very similar to Cineworld Dublin. The food on sale was also similar: pop-corn, ice creams and hotdogs rather than samosas, even if in some theatres they were also selling cups of sweet corn. The only real difference, which surprised me at the beginning, was that the Indian national anthem was played before each film as a mark of respect to the nation. On those occasions all the people in the audience stood respectfully and sat only when the music stopped. Interestingly, the Irish national

anthem was also played in cinema halls around Ireland at the close of performances from 1932 until the early 1970s, with the aim of promoting sentiments of patriotism.²⁶ This notion is reminiscent of the shared colonial history that characterises India and Ireland. However, if in Ireland the national anthem was ostensibly perceived as an experiential symbol of the struggle for independence, in India it can arguably be linked to extreme nationalistic policies that characterise the political situation of the country at the time of writing. The audience of Indian multiplexes comprised middle class people, mainly wearing western clothes, who remained silent and composed during the screening. Watching Bollywood films in Indian multiplexes made me aware of the homogenising effect of multiplexes, as their ‘globalised’ exhibition standards erase differences in people’s behaviours and social practices, focusing on the preferences of a growing cosmopolitan middle class. As Athique notes: ‘India’s new chrome and glass multiplexes have been much appreciated by middle class cinema-goers seeking a “better” standard, and wider choice, of entertainment than the older large-capacity halls provide’ (2011: 153).

Even if multiplexes offer a standardised screening environment, the experience of cinema is still strongly influenced by its locality. This notion was particularly evident when *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012) was screened at Cineworld. Significantly, during various screenings of the film, I could hear not only South Asian spectators, but also Irish people in the audience, clapping and cheering when parts of the Dublin cityscape were actually featured in the film. In this instance, the city of Dublin could affect the perception of Indian cinema in a powerful and unique way. As it happened at the beginning of 1900, when Irish people could see Ireland portrayed on film for the first time, *Ek Tha Tiger* presented viewers with familiar images of Dublin transformed by

the unprecedented context of a Bollywood film. Seeing a Bollywood dance scene unfold on Trinity College's Parliament Square or a spectacular fight on the Luas train,²⁷ enhanced the enjoyment of viewers who could see familiar locales transformed into places of fascination and interest. Denis Condon uses the term 'autoexoticism'²⁸ to describe the reaction of Irish people to early films about Ireland made by British and American companies, thus intended for non-Irish audiences. I suggest that this notion can also apply to Dublin-based audiences of *Ek Tha Tiger* who, by watching themselves on screen through the lens of Bollywood, became tourists in their own country. According to Condon, 'in viewing themselves and their country from the perspective of virtual tourists, Irish spectators had to deal with the process by which the familiar is made exotic' (2008: 127).²⁹ In the following section I illustrate how watching Hindi films at Cineworld became a 'translocal' experience through the alluring landscapes that appear in Bollywood films.

Since its inception, cinema has always been considered as a form of virtual travel to faraway locations where the audience could not go otherwise. For according to Jancovich and his colleagues, 'it collapsed distances so that not only were images of elsewhere brought to audiences but, in the process, it created the illusion of being able to travel elsewhere without leaving one's locality' (Jancovich et al 2003: 59). Film spectators are virtually transported through images to other spaces, which they can experience while remaining in the familiar environment of the movie theatre. The notion of cinema spectatorship as a travel experience has been explored by Amy Corbin, who traces the links between film spectatorship and tourism. Corbin argues that 'cinema spectatorship can be usefully thought of as a virtual travel experience' (2014: 315). This approach is applicable to any kind of film, but is particularly

relevant to popular Hindi films, since they deliberately construct pleasurable and spectacular landscapes to enhance the enjoyment of audiences with postcard views of other countries.

The Hindi blockbuster *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (You Don't Live Twice, Zoya Akhtar, 2011) chronicles the road trip of three Indian friends across Spain, showcasing the country's landscapes and culture. After watching the film at Cineworld, Celine told me 'it was like being on a holiday to Spain'. Several Irish friends who saw *Chennai Express* (Rohit Shetty, 2013), a love story unfolding during a trip from Bombay to Tamil Nadu, really enjoyed the lush South Indian landscapes and colourful dance routines. When I watched *Happy New Year* (Farah Khan, 2014) with Evelyn, an Irish woman who also discovered Hindi films at Cineworld and started taking Bollywood dance classes, we commented on the spectacular views of Dubai. However, the enjoyment experienced by myself and other spectators of Indian films at Cineworld, is not exclusively dependent on our attitudes or sensibilities but rather is carefully shaped and constructed by a mobilisation of the 'tourist gaze'. John Urry describes the importance of choosing images that suggest the pleasures linked to specific places and the effectiveness of film in creating anticipation for such pleasures:

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze.

(1990: 3)

Significantly, Urry (1990, 2002) discusses how people are encouraged to look at new environments using a 'tourist gaze' similar to the 'medical gaze' theorised by Foucault

in his seminal work *The Birth of the Clinic* (1976) to denote the dehumanising medical separation of the patient's body from the patient's identity. According to Urry, the tourist gaze is also professionally crafted and controlled: 'this gaze is as socially organised and systematised as is the gaze of the medic' (2002: 1). Urry explains that the tourist gaze is constructed through difference and varies by society, social group and historical period. It is created by visual imagery of specific environments and can be understood when contrasted against the usual environment and social experiences of the viewer (1990). Significantly, the tourist gaze evolves through changes in the organization of travel and leisure in contemporary capitalistic societies and it is also affected by innovations in communication technology and changes in the economy. The notion of 'tourist gaze' as a socially organised way of seeing typical of contemporary societies, can also be linked to Foucauldian theories of surveillance. Notably, Foucault argues that 'the gaze has had great importance among the techniques of power developed in the modern era' (1980: 155). Keith Hollinshead (1999) also examined the social and cultural implications of the 'tourist gaze', emphasising its plurality and ever changing nature. According to Hollinshead, 'while the tourist gaze approximates to Foucault's institutional gaze of the medic and the professional, it tends to be rather broader in its occurrence and force across society' (1999: 9). The power dynamics related to the tourist gaze are arguably fluid rather than fixed and unchangeable. This is motivated by the fact that, 'as patterns of tourism change, so the tourist gaze(s) alter: they are significantly connected to the broader cultural changes of postmodernity' (ibid.).

Significantly, Indian films watched at Cineworld effectively construct a tourist gaze for Dublin-based spectators, providing pleasurable and 'safe' depictions of other

countries that can be enjoyed by audiences without the risks inherent in real travel, in the safety of a local cinema. To this end, referring to Lynne Kirby's paradox of cinema as a form of 'travel without movement' (1997), Larkin points out that 'cinema theatres are peculiar kind of social spaces marked by a duality of presence and absence, rootedness and transport' (2002b: 320). The virtuality of the travel experience offered by films suggests that going to the cinema results in an emotional experience for the viewer, which is inflected by the sensory environment in and around the movie theatre. This is particularly evident in Hindi films characterised by a display of overt emotions and by moving and affecting narratives. Semat, a Turkish-French Bollywood fan I befriended on the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger*, commented that for her Bollywood films represent 'a travel through emotions... something that will nourish your soul'. She also added that she finds the portrayal of family issues in Hindi films very moving and it helped her negotiate her mixed identity in her interactions with her conservative family. Celine and Jeremy further appreciated the emotional treatment of family relations displayed in Bollywood movies – noting that the emotions portrayed resonate at a human level and allow viewers to establish a connection with the film, even if it relates to a culture different from theirs. It can be argued that melodramatic storylines centred on family matters are common in Hindi films because South Asian audiences find them appealing. Nonetheless, I would suggest that this emphasis on emotions and familial themes further allows many non-Indian viewers to instinctively relate to the emotional realm of Bollywood films.

However, not every Bollywood film elicits the same responses from mixed audiences. This was particularly evident when Evelyn and I went to watch *Tevar* (Attitude, Amit Sharma, 2015), an action/romantic Bollywood film about a Kabaddi³⁰ player who

helps a girl escape a forced marriage to a gangster. It was an afternoon screening and the theatre was almost empty, with the last three rows occupied by groups of South Asian men in their twenties. We were the only women and the only non-south Asians in the theatre. Our assigned seats were in a row behind two young South Asian men sitting separately from the rest. As we took our seats both men turned toward us and asked with a smirk on their face: ‘Are you sure you are in the right cinema?’ ‘Are you sure that this is the right film for you?’ We smiled and replied that we were sure and that we knew it was a Bollywood film. Evelyn remarked that I study Indian cinema and I added that she is a Bollywood dancer. We sat down laughing because of the two young men’s comments and Evelyn remarked that she found their assumptions slightly racist. I explained that many South Asians do not believe that Bollywood films can actually appeal to non-Indians and they did not mean to offend us.

Even if the film was advertised as a love triangle with elements of action, we soon realised why only young men were watching it: the protagonist (Arjun Kapoor) was an alpha male hero who claimed to be a combination between Terminator, Rambo and Bollywood superstar Salman Khan. Moreover, the film was filled with exaggerated and brutal action sequences that allowed him to showcase his strength and fighting prowess. The leading actress (Sonakshi Sinha), in contrast, was a stereotypical damsel in distress who helplessly watched men fighting over her. The numerous fighting sequences were very stylised, extremely violent and exaggerated. During such sequences, the young men in the audience used to laugh and cheer every time the hero hit an opponent, which we found strange. Also in the final showdown between the hero and the villain, we both found very uncomfortable the way the protagonist was

roaring like a ferocious animal, which was also appreciated by the male audience, judging by their cheers.

On the way out Evelyn commented that ‘we definitely missed something’, since everybody else appeared to enjoy the fight scenes – the loud display of violence and machismo certainly did not appeal to us. We were also not impressed by the way the leading actress was so helpless and passively waiting for a man to rescue her. On the other hand, we both agreed that it was refreshing to see a female protagonist in a commercial Hindi film who was not extremely thin, like most female Bollywood and Hollywood stars, but flaunted a shapely figure and voluptuous looks. The difference in our response to the film ties in with reception theories formulated by Janet Staiger in her book *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*. According to Staiger films do not contain immanent meanings; differences among interpretations have historical bases, and these variations are due to social, political, and economic conditions as well as the viewers’ constructed images of themselves. As Staiger contends, ‘contextual factors, more than textual ones, account for the experiences that spectators have watching films and television’ (2000:1).

Madina: The End of My Route

After having been to the cinema, I often would go for an Indian meal with my partner and sometimes other friends. We usually go to Madina, an Indian restaurant belonging to Manan – an Irish-Indian friend mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. The restaurant is on Mary Street, which runs parallel to Parnell Street, where the cinema is located. On the way to Madina we encounter a Polish supermarket; a deconsecrated church now converted into a pub very popular among tourists; an Asian grocery store

flaunting crates of fruits and vegetables reminiscent of faraway countries; a garden shop with colourful plants on its window; several cheap hardware shops with a vast array of tools and utensils hanging in front of them; a sex shop with racy outfits displayed on its windows; and a chicken fast food outlet also belonging to Manan. The restaurant is arranged on two floors, with simple furniture brightened by walls painted in vibrant yellow and by a large gold-plated rotating chandelier above the entrance. Bollywood film music is usually playing, which reminds us of our viewing experience at the cinema; the smell of Indian spices and the taste of authentic Punjabi style Indian food allow us to experience the Indian culture and imagery we have just seen in Hindi films through senses beyond sight and hearing.

The restaurant thus offers an extension of the film viewing experience in the cinema through the complex workings of memory, which operates through the simultaneous interaction of multiple senses. As Laura Marks contends, ‘the experience of viewing a film is multisensory ... because the sense perceptions work in concert’ (2000: 212). In fact, the smell, texture and taste of Indian food vividly recall the colours, sounds and text of films through bodily sensations, before the topic of film even comes up in conversation. According to Marks, ‘often the sensorium is the only place where cultural memories are preserved’ (ibid.: 195).



Fig. 10: Manan in front of his restaurant (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Other references to South Asian culture are visible in the form of devotional paintings on the wall and a sign indicating that halal meat is served in the restaurant, suggesting that it is run by Muslims. Even if his family has been in Ireland for three generations Manan is very much in touch with the culture and traditions of the country of his ancestors (before the Partition of India, his grandfather moved from Peshawar, now Pakistan, to Northern Ireland and his parents moved to the West of Ireland in 1957). However, he mostly wears western clothes with the occasional addition of a knitted skull cap, and sports an Irish accent (see Fig. 10). He is jovial and friendly to all of his customers and often stops at our table to talk about the film we have just seen. He has a predilection for action films and admires action heroes played by Salman Khan and Ajay Devgn; he jokingly says that he tries to imitate their swagger and confidence. Because of his job he can rarely go to the cinema, but watches films on cable channels at home with his family. However, like other South Asian parents, he sometimes laments that many Bollywood films nowadays are too sexually explicit and unsuitable

to be watched by his children. This perception suggests that the recent inclusion in Hindi films of depictions of sexuality common in western cinema, potentially a sign of globalisation, is arguably not in line with the expectations of diasporic South Asians who prefer more traditional and family-oriented commercial films. Manan's restaurant represents the conclusion of my route to the Cineworld, which mirrors the cultural and sensorial mix experienced walking along Moore Street and allows access to understanding different manifestations and interactions produced by Bollywood cinema in the context of inner city Dublin.

Through the exploration of cinema-going at Cineworld Dublin I have endeavoured to map the cultural geographies of Hindi film in Dublin's inner city, conveying that popular Indian cinema circulates primarily as a transnational commodity embedded in complex flows of people, goods and information, reflecting ongoing changes in Hindi film distribution and exhibition. I have situated the exhibition of Bollywood cinema within a particular urban space of Dublin, highlighting how the commercial and globalising aspect of film production and consumption operates in the context of Irish social and historical processes. The area surrounding Moore Street thus constitutes a crossroads where tradition and modernity, corporations and independent traders, Irish culture and migrant culture meet through manifestations of Indian cinema. By way of tracing my personal route across Dublin city to Cineworld, I have suggested how the globalisation of culture allows Hindi films to be perceived in a multisensory way by diverse communities coexisting in urban locales. This approach reveals how mobility can be useful in processes of 'place-making' (Pink 2008, 2009) and in achieving an 'emplaced' (Howes 2005; Pink 2008, 2009) perspective on cultural practices in everyday lives. Hopefully, the discussion reveals how practices of watching Hindi

films in a Dublin multiplex are embedded in multisensorial experiences and contexts which are tied to the geographical area occupied by the cinema. This chapter has further outlined how cinema can literally ‘touch’ people’s everyday lives within Dublin’s social and urban framework. In the following chapter I expand on how Indian cinema circulates across different Irish locales through the Indian Film Festival of Ireland.

Notes

¹ Cineworld Dublin is a seventeen screen cinema located in the heart of the city. It was opened by Virgin Cinemas in 1995. In 1999, the Virgin Group sold Virgin Cinemas to a French cinema chain, UGC. Virgin Cinemas Dublin was then renamed UGC Dublin. In 2004, UGC's UK and Ireland operations were taken over by Cineworld. In 2005, the UGC cinemas in the UK and Ireland were rebranded as Cineworld; as a result UGC Dublin was renamed Cineworld Dublin. Cineworld Dublin now belongs to a UK-based company, Cineworld Group plc, which is the second largest cinema operator in Europe, with over two thousand screens across nine countries.

² The short film *Moore Street Masala*, cited earlier, was actually filmed around the corner from the multiplex in an area called Moore Street, chosen because of its typically Irish, yet multicultural character.

³ In his article titled 'The Volta Myth', Denis Condon contends that the Volta was not actually Ireland's first cinema:

[T]he People's Popular Picture Palace at the former Queen's Theatre in Dublin's Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street). This venue was probably Dublin's and Ireland's first dedicated cinema, opening almost two years before Ireland's best-known early cinema, James Joyce's Volta opened its doors on December 20, 1909. ... The Volta was undoubtedly an important early cinema, and the Joyce connection has provided the focus for some fine research. The significance of the Volta has, however, been inflated to the extent that it has come essentially to represent Ireland's first cinemas, and thereby to distort our view of early cinemas and the audiences who attended them.

(2007: 43)

⁴ *Early Irish Cinema - What's On in Irish Cinemas – 100 Years Ago* Available at: <https://earlyirishcinema.wordpress.com/about>. [Accessed 15 January 2015].

⁵ DCP is an acronym for Digital Cinema Package. It is designed to be the digital equivalent of a film print. A DCP usually arrives at a cinema theater on a CRU hard-drive. The DCP is ingested into the theatre's Digital Cinema Server and it is played through a Digital Cinema Projector. Available at: <http://indiedcp.com/digital-cinema-faq.html> [Accessed 15 January 2015].

⁶ Pink, S. (2008) 'Mobilising Visual Ethnography: Making Routes, Making Place and Making Images' *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 9(3), Art. 36, September 2008. [Online] Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1166/2581> [Accessed October 2015].

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Liang, L. (2009) *India: Media Piracy-Intellectual Property* Interview [Online]. Available at: <http://culture360.org/magazine/india-media-piracy-intellectual-property-interview/> [Accessed January 2013].

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gardaí (Guardians) is the plural of Garda, which means ‘police officer’ in Irish. *An Garda Síochána* is the name of the Irish police force, meaning ‘the Guardian of the Peace’.

¹² The General Post Office hosts the headquarters of the Irish national postal service. It is one of Ireland's most famous buildings and was the last of the great Georgian public buildings erected in the capital. During the Easter Rising of 1916, the GPO was the headquarters of the uprising's leaders. The building was destroyed by fire in the course of the rebellion and later repaired by the Irish Free State government.

¹³ Built on land that was originally part of the 12th Century Cistercian monastery of St Mary, Moore Street was developed in the early 18th century by Luke Gardiner in two stages, initially in the 1730s and later in the 1760s. The Moore Street Terrace Nos. 10-25 was built during the second phase of construction and housed tradesmen and professionals who catered for the needs of the gentry that inhabited the grand town houses on nearby Sackville Mall (now O’Connell Street). By the mid-19th century the street and its environs had evolved into a market area specialising in poultry and butcher shops. During this period, the 18th century terrace was remodelled and shop fronts inserted, elements of which survive till this day.

Combri Group ‘A Citizens Plan for Dublin’ Available at: <http://www.gaelicadventure.org/pdfs/h16>. [Accessed 15 January 2015].

¹⁴ Dublin Corporation was the name given to Dublin city government and its administrative organisation between 1661 and 2002. It is now known as Dublin City Council.

¹⁵ On the night of 27 April 1916, after days of bombardment, the GPO garrison evacuated the building through Henry Place. Still under fire they broke into the Moore Street Terrace through No. 10 Cogans’ Provisions Dealer. To relieve pressure on the expanding numbers, the volunteers broke through the interior walls up through the terrace. Stopping at No. 16 Plunketts’ Poulterers, The Provisional Government set up their last headquarter in the shop’s first floor back room. Decision to surrender was taken here on 29 April 1916. ‘A Citizens Plan for Dublin’ Available at: <http://www.gaelicadventure.org/pdfs/h16>. [Accessed 15 January 2015].

¹⁶ The O’Rahilly was a founding member of the Irish Volunteers, a military organisation established in 1913 by Irish nationalists.

¹⁷ As Kennerk writes:

In March 2010 *An Board Pleanála* approved plans submitted by Chartered Land, a company owned by shopping-centre developer Joe O’Reilly, for the extension of a

new shopping complex from the old Carlton cinema site on O'Connell Street into Moore Street. ... Opponents of the scheme, led by members of the Save Moore Street Campaign, who are descendants of the 1916 Proclamation signatories, object on the basis that it would involve major alterations to the old terrace, completely dwarfing it. ... Dublin City Council has also passed a motion calling on the government to designate all of Moore Street as a national monument. ... Although Chartered Land continue to be supported by the National Asset Management Agency, it seems very unlikely that the new development will be completed by its projected end date of 2016.

(2012: 153-154)

An *Irish Times* article further addresses the question of planning permission:

While planning permission was granted for the development, known as Dublin Central, in 2010, no work has started, and a spokeswoman for Chartered Land said the scheme was 'on hold pending a recovery in the Irish economy'.

Kelly, O. (2015) 'Fianna Fáil plans to turn Moore Street into next Temple Bar'. *The Irish Times* 10 April 2015. Available at:

<http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/fianna-f%C3%A1il-plans-to-turn-moore-street-into-next-temple-bar-1.2171500> [Accessed 9 June 2015].

¹⁸ The film is based on *Mrs. Brown's Boys*, a television sitcom created by and starring Irish writer and performer Brendan O'Carroll and produced in the UK by BBC Scotland alongside Irish companies BocPix and RTÉ. The titular character Agnes Brown is played by O'Carroll himself, with several close friends and family members making up the rest of the cast.

¹⁹ Murphy, A. (2014) 'Paris Bakery Situation Reveals True State of Workers' Rights in Ireland' 4 June 2014 - Migrant Rights Centre Ireland. Available at:

<http://www.mrci.ie/press-centre/paris-bakery-situation-reveals-true-state-of-workers-rights-in-ireland/> [Accessed 15 March 2015].

²⁰ Many inner city working class women and teenagers wear pyjamas as daywear, so it is common to see young women walking around underprivileged areas of Dublin wearing colourful pyjamas.

²¹ During an Indian-Hindu marriage a garland is placed around the groom's necks by female family members as part of the religious engagement party (Ramdya 2010: 58). During the wedding rituals older women from both families whisper blessings in the groom's ears (ibid.: 70).

²² Battles, J. (2009) 'Hello Dubbywood' *The Sunday Times* 21 April 2009 [online] <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/ireland/article6078365.ece> [Accessed 15 August 2013].

²³ The eastern end of Parnell Street has remained comparatively undeveloped; however, it is now home to a thriving immigrant community. Notably, the presence of numerous authentic

Chinese and Korean restaurants has earned the east side the nickname of 'Dublin's Chinatown'.

²⁴ A point-of-sale display (POS display) is a specialised form of sales promotion that is found near to a checkout counter (the "point of sale"). They are intended to draw the customers' attention to products.

²⁵ The film she saw was *Krrish*, a 2006 Indian superhero film directed, produced, and written by Rakesh Roshan, and starring Hrithik Roshan, Priyanka Chopra, Rekha and Naseeruddin Shah. The film became the second highest earning Indian film of 2006.

²⁶ 'The Story of the National Anthem'. Available at: <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/the-story-of-the-national-anthem/> [Accessed 15 March 2015].

²⁷ Luas means 'speed' in Irish and is a tram (or light rail system) serving Dublin.

²⁸ Autoexoticism is a concept advanced by the historian of Irish literary culture Joep Leerssen, to explain why Romantic Irish novels of the early nineteenth century so markedly strive to explain Ireland to a readership assumed to be English. Leerssen notes that:

[T]he auctorial voice in these novels, or the focalizer (i.e., the character through whose eyes scenes are represented, with whose perspective the narrative identifies) is almost invariably non-Irish, tracing an approach *towards* Ireland from outside (rather than describing Ireland from within).

(Leerssen 1996 quoted in Condon 2008: 127-128)

²⁹ These exoticist representations of Ireland and Irishness, however, often resulted in derogatory and stereotypical depictions of Irish characters. This is evident in the negative response of members of the audience to the US film *The Banshee* (Kay-Bee, 1913) which was screened in Tralee in 1914, attracting the anger of the local branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. They sent a letter to the manager of the Tralee Theatre, where the film was shown, describing it as an 'objectionable' and 'anti-Irish film ... in which the Irish character is caricatured and held up to ridicule, and the Irish priesthood depicted as superstitious, vulgar and uncultured' ('The Stage Irishman: Action of Tralee Division A.O.H.', *Echo*, 14 February 1914, p.5 quoted in Condon 2008: 167). Another letter criticising the film argues that such degrading depictions of the Irish in cinema can promote negative notions of Irishness in other nations, the UK in particular, given its colonial ties to Ireland: 'such is the type of picture, flaunted in the eyes of the English public year after year, and from such pictures they get their notions of what the Irishman must be' ('Eireanac', 'Insults to Ireland' (Letter), *Echo*, 14 February 1914, p.9 quoted in Condon 2008: 167)

³⁰ Kabaddi is an Indian contact sport played between two teams of seven players each, in which individuals take turns to chase and try to touch members of the opposing team without being captured by them.

Chapter Three

'Indian Film Festival of Ireland' (2010-2015): The Expediency of South Asian Cinematic Culture

The idea was to make Indian films more mainstream and introduce people to the global appeal and popularity of Indian cinema. A film festival seemed the obvious platform to achieve this goal.

(Siraj Zaidi's introduction – IFFI programme 2010)

One of the main purposes of the film festival is to market Ireland as a film location for the Indian film industry, and so present Ireland as an ideal location for Indian film productions. The festival is developing its own indigenous crop of films by creating an Irish-Indian film corridor.

(Siraj Zaidi's introduction – IFFI programme 2014)



Fig. 11: The opening night of the Indian film Festival of Ireland in 2014 (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Introduction

On a mild September evening in 2014, an unusually diverse crowd populated the foyer of Dublin's suburban multiplex Movies@Dundrum: they were mostly South Asian people, some wearing casual clothes, others sporting formal suits or traditional Indian attire such as Sherwanis,¹ sarees, Sikh turbans and Nehru Jackets.² Two white Irish gentlemen waited in front of the drink and candies counter dressed in tuxedos; across from them was the Indian ambassador to Ireland, clad in an elegant green saree. Next to the staircase leading to the cinema's VIP area, the crew of a local TV station filmed an interview with one of the volunteers of the Indian Film Festival of Ireland. In a corner, a team of Bollywood dancers in shimmering costumes and bare feet chatted with members of South Asian Cultural associations. A blonde woman and her two children on the way out from the cinema curiously looked at the colourful crowd, probably unsure of what was occurring (Fig. 11).

The renowned Indian director Shyam Benegal and Bollywood actress Divya Dutta made their entrance along the red carpet under the curious gaze of students exiting the neighbouring McDonald's fast food restaurant. Upon their arrival, everybody followed them to the VIP lounge for a wine reception in The Mezz bar, a recently opened plush lounge area overlooking the cinema's main lobby. In this glamorous oasis of distinction, sparkling wine and finger food were served to distinguished guests, while the slight smell of popcorn and the chatter of teenagers coming from the lobby, acted as a powerful reminder that the event was unfolding in a multiplex. The crowd eventually moved to the multiplex's VIP Screen for the screening of the festival's opening film, Khalid Mohamed's *The Master: Shyam Benegal* (2014), celebrating the life and work of the festival's guest of honour, preceded by a Bollywood dance

number and by introductory remarks from Irish and Indian dignitaries, the multiplex's manager and the festival director. What followed was the premiere screening of Pradeep Sarkar's *Mardaani* (Masculine Female, 2014), featuring Bollywood star Rani Mukerjee in the role of a fearless female police agent. Surprisingly, the film was attended by a disappointingly small number of viewers.

The scene described above occurred on the opening night of the fifth edition of the Indian Film Festival of Ireland (IFFI) – the first festival in Ireland entirely dedicated to Indian cinema, which was inaugurated in Dublin in 2010 and recurs annually. The events, people and spaces described and portrayed in the photograph above (Fig. 11) prompt a reflection on the significance of an event celebrating Indian cinema, which is held in a multiplex embedded in an exclusive shopping mall located in the prosperous suburb of Dundrum in the Irish capital. This idea is further complicated by the fact that the festival is geared mainly at non-Indian audiences and aims at attracting Indian film industries' investments into Ireland (see epigraphs). These notions are discussed later in the chapter to highlight the complex economic, social and cultural background of the festival, embedded in a vast array of transnational, economic and historical flows that characterise the globalisation of culture within the urban, social and economic context of Dublin. Exploring the multiple roles of film festivals, Marjike De Valck contends that 'studying film festivals demands a mobile line of inquiry', and that 'at the festivals the issues of nationality or political relations are negotiated, economic sustainability or profitability is realized, and new practices of cinephilia are initiated' (2007: 16). In light of this statement, this chapter intends to expand on how the IFFI endeavours to accommodate culture and commerce, education and entertainment, geopolitical interests and strategies to attract overseas investments.

Despite the global presence of film festivals, such events have only recently become the object of scholarly attention, mainly focused on high-profile international European and North-American festivals (Nichols 1994; Stringer 2001; Elsaesser 2005a; De Valck 2007; Koven 2008; Iordanova 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013), in addition to specialised publications such as the *Film Festival Yearbook* series (Iordanova and Rhyne 2009; Iordanova and Cheung 2010, 2011; Iordanova and Torchin 2012; Iordanova and Van de Peer 2014), alongside networks of scholars such as the Film Festival Research Network.³ Indian film festivals, however, have started to emerge across Europe and North America only in the last decade; as a result, academic studies on the subject remain limited (Majumdar 2011, Acciari 2012a, 2012b, 2014). This chapter is therefore an attempt to respond to this dearth by employing an ethnographic methodology with the aim of exploring how the IFFI impacts on people's lives and localities and how it circulates across multiple locales. Janet Harbord has explored the links between film and the cultural economy of nations, noting that 'an interdependency of nation and film culture exists at the heart of the festival event. Festivals are not simply spaces of commerce free from the state, nor are they localities disconnected from the national context' (2002: 73). Therefore, this chapter situates the festival within the political economy of Ireland, expanding on its function in negotiating the goals of state bodies and individuals, in the context of changes in society and economic downturns.

Mikel Koven, in his discussion of film festival audiences, advocates ethnographic explorations of film festivals, arguing that 'ethnographic investigation into any kind of festival is essential in understanding its relation to the community who produce it'

(2008: 55). For this reason, one of the questions this chapter sets out to address is: what is the significance of the IFFI for the community of organisers, volunteers, patrons, audiences that gravitates around it? In this regard, I examine the connections and the linkages between transnational people that the festival facilitates, in an attempt to establish how and in what ways the festival functions as a locus of socio-cultural exchange and as a 'contact zone' between cultures. In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt coined the term 'contact zones', which she defined as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today' (2008: 7). The term was later adopted by James Clifford, who suggests that 'contact zones are borderlands between different worlds, histories and cosmologies ... places of hybrid possibility and political negotiation' (1997: 249). Therefore this chapter analyses the contacts and interactions between culturally diverse subjects facilitated by the festival.

Given that the festival occurs over four days per year in multiplexes located inside shopping centres, a further question this chapter attempts to answer is: how does the festival's fleeting presence impact on the localities where it takes place each year and the lives of people who inhabit these spaces? Throughout the chapter, I narrate my journey through the festival as a multi-locale fieldsite exploring the various settings where the event is hosted. Drawing on literature addressing cinema and urban spaces (Jancovich et al. 2003; Athique and Hill 2010; Srinivas 2010b; Athique 2011), I critically consider the various ways festival venues influence the experience of audiences and organisers, as well as the meaning and perception of film. In this

instance, Sarah Pink's concept of 'place-event' is useful in analysing the notion of the festival as a context which is not fixed in one location but becomes an 'environment in movement' (2012: 38).

Drawing on my experience as a participant observer in six consecutive editions of the festivals across different sites, I argue that hosting a film festival in multiplexes highlights the commercial dimension of what would be usually regarded as a cultural event. This framing brings to the fore the notion of film as a commodity interlinked with other productions and economic trajectories. George Yúdice explored the changing role of culture in an increasingly globalised world and how cultural activities are promoted for economic ends. Yúdice demonstrates that often 'the only way to convince governments and business leaders that it is worth supporting cultural activity is to argue that it will reduce social conflicts and lead to economic development' (2003: 1). For this reason, I expand on the role of the festival in cultural diplomacy and its endorsement by Indian and Irish national institutions, suggesting that the event is associated with transnational policies aimed at advertising India as a tourist destination and at attracting Indian investments to Ireland. Additionally, I explain how the festival aims at constructing a 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990, 2002) for non-Indian spectators, in the way it is promoted and designed around appealing and simplistic notions of Indian culture. In the following discussion, I attempt to capture the spaces, effects, people, practices and sensations related to the festival and their interactions across multiple locales.

A 'Boutique Festival' of Indian Cinema in Dublin

The IFFI is often described in the festival programme as a 'boutique festival', due to

its small scale and focus on Indian films. Like many other small ethnic film festivals in Dublin, IFFI is not competitive, it does not receive submissions by emergent filmmakers and its programme comprises a selection of country-specific and previously released films. Unlike other festivals mainly showcasing independent films, IFFI features mostly Bollywood and commercial films. The festival very rarely hosts film premieres due to the high cost that such screenings would entail, given that the event is financed solely by limited state funding and small contributions by few private sponsors such as local businesses and occasionally airlines. The notion that festivals focusing on films in languages other than English tend to appeal to art-house audiences, prompted the festival director to choose an event structure that suggests the promotion of culture and social engagement, as well as a sense of community and celebration, with elements of exclusivity and glamour such as red carpet opening event, like the one described at the beginning of the chapter, and black-tie gala nights.

Beverly Stoeltje suggests that ‘the multiple activities of festivals do not occur randomly but rather in an order’ (Stoeltje 1992: 264), arguably comprising an opening ceremony, rituals, dramas and contests, food feasts, dance and music, and a concluding event. IFFI’s format is characterised by high-profile opening and closing screenings preceded or followed by Indian meals, master classes and seminars, together with a charity gala dinner with live entertainment in the form of Indian song and dance performances. Moreover, the programming of the festival is marked by films highlighting a particular theme: a focus on the works of a specific director; films by diasporic and debut directors (usually present as guests); a retrospective on a film star; screenings for schoolchildren. The festival usually lasts four days and screens about twenty films. In apparent contrast with the nature of the event, the main venues

of the festival are cinemas located in shopping malls in suburban areas of Dublin, with additional screenings and functions at a number of other venues around the city. Due to the populist nature of most of the films included in the festival programme, the event could not be supported by art-house venues in Dublin city centre, which usually host events focused on social issues and independent cinema. The first two editions of the festival were held at Swan Cinema in a shopping mall in the Dublin suburb of Rathmines; between 2012 and 2015 the event took place at 'Movies@Dundrum', part of a larger shopping mall in the south side of the city.

The festival was created by the Indian national Siraj Zaidi, who became its director, following his experience as an exhibitor of Indian films in Dublin for over fifteen years. He conceived it as an initiative to introduce Irish-based, non-Indian audiences to Indian cinema. Originally from the Indian city of Lucknow, Siraj trained as an actor at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts and moved to Dublin in the mid-1980s, where he worked as radio broadcaster, documentary producer and an actor in various Irish television series.⁴ In the meantime, he continued seeking acting opportunities in India and played a supporting role in *Samvidhaan: The Making of the Constitution of India* (2013) – a ten part television series directed by Shyam Benegal, part of which was screened at the festival in 2014.

As the Indian community developed in size, attracted to Ireland by the economic boom the country experienced in the late 1990s, Siraj started screening Bollywood films in various cinemas around Dublin, initially catering to the needs of diasporic audiences who could not see these films elsewhere. For some time these events were successful and sparked curiosity among non-Indian viewers, who often attended the

screenings. However, the subsequent availability of Indian films on internet platforms, cable channels and in a multiplex in Dublin city centre (see chapter two), drastically reduced the size of Siraj's screenings' audiences. At that point, with the advice of the director of the Bollywood Festival Norway, he decided to organise an Indian film festival in Dublin. The festival thus became an extension of Siraj's initial film distribution activity, allowing him to continue promoting popular Indian cinema in Ireland, realising the potential of the increasing appeal of Bollywood films among non-Indians. The festival never had a political agenda or a particular focus on building a sense of community within the South Asian diaspora and was aimed at raising awareness of Indian cinema among the Irish population. However, another declared objective of the festival, which became more obvious over the years, was to attract Bollywood investments into Ireland, encouraging co-productions between Irish and Indian film industries. In his introductory statement to the second year of the event, Siraj clearly stressed that the festival aimed at promoting Indian film among non-Indian audiences, but also at prompting Indian film industries to invest in Ireland. As he wrote:

Since the first seeds had been planted I have seen this festival having two entwined purposes: to make Indian cinema more mainstream, introducing people to the global appeal and popularity of Indian cinema and to help craft an environment for Bollywood to invest in Ireland.

(Siraj Zaidi, Director of IFFI)⁵

Significantly, Siraj created two film distribution and production companies called Bollywood Ireland Ltd. and U and Us Films Ltd., through which he strives to develop film projects in collaboration with Indian filmmakers and producers. Thus the festival has the potential to provide Siraj with a platform to promote his own business and develop industry connections that might lead to collaborations with Indian production

companies. As suggested earlier, existing scholarship on film festivals (Dayan 2000; Turan 2002; De Valck 2007, 2013) highlights the fact that these events do not simply have a cultural function, but can serve multiple interests and agendas such as fostering supranational communities, supporting political causes, facilitating international relations, as well as serving economic purposes. IFFI fulfils its cultural function of screening films that would be outside the mainstream western circuits of distribution and exhibition, but also has a commercial agenda focused on attracting Indian investments which could benefit both the festival organiser and the country. At the time of writing, Ireland had hosted very few Indian film productions, the most prominent of which was *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012), a Bollywood blockbuster filmed in Dublin in 2011 (see chapters four and five), but neither of them involved Siraj's production companies.

Alongside the festival, Siraj continues his acting and radio broadcasting activities and has been involved in the organisation of several cultural events, all of which contribute to the festival in terms of contacts and support. Through his weekly radio show and participation in Indian cultural festivals (Festival of Lights and Festival of Colours), he established contacts with dancers and singers who then performed at festival related events, as well as volunteers and people who helped promote the festival. Moreover, acting in *Samvidhaan* allowed him to approach director Shyam Benegal and to have him as a guest of honour at the fifth edition of the festival. However, Siraj's activities are not limited to film and media, he also runs an Indian food stall at a weekly covered market called the Dublin Food Coop.⁶ The market is very popular as it hosts community events focused on cultural diversity, further promoting the activities of multiethnic performers, artists and retailers. These events

attract a wide variety of people and represent a vehicle to advertise the film festival among people with an interest in world cultures who wish to experience Indian films. Additionally, the market enabled Siraj to network with people who collaborated in the organisation of the festival and subsequently became prominent members of the festival team. One of these is Mary O’Sullivan, a middle aged Irish woman with an interest in filmmaking and photography. She met Siraj when she was taking photographs in the market and he asked her to become the festival’s official photographer. Mary was not very familiar with Indian cinema and culture at that time, but she enjoyed the idea of being part of a film festival. Over the years her involvement with the event grew and she soon became the festival coordinator. Mary enjoys being involved with the festival because it enables her to become familiar with Indian culture. As she explains:

I got exposure to the Indian community, whereas I didn’t have any dealings with the Indian community before, so I learned a lot from that, especially about Indian culture and Indian food, because before I never really liked Indian food. Actually, I got to like it as a result of being involved with the festival.

(Interview 9 November 2011)

The composition of the festival team changes every year with many volunteers moving on to other projects, however, there is a core group of people that have been part of the festival since its inception. In addition to Mary and myself these include: Cliona, an Irish entrepreneur who is also a patron of the festival; Rita, an Irish actress; and Louise, an Irish entrepreneur also working at Food Coop. Several volunteers work at the festival desk and perform general organisational tasks; others have specific roles for example, Sebastian, a young Irish media graduate promotes the festival across internet platforms; Robbie, a middle aged Irish man, is in charge of transportation; Saiyog and Charmi, a young Indian couple, have the difficult task of selling

advertising spaces in the festival programme and are also involved with an Indian travel agency that sponsors the festival. Interestingly, most of the members of the festival team, volunteers and other people helping out with the festival, are not Indian, but of Irish or other European backgrounds; and most of them, like Mary, only got to know about Indian cinema and culture through the festival.

The presence of people of different ethnic backgrounds can help communicate the international appeal of popular Indian cinema, while at the same time the festival has strong connections with the Indian community in the way it was created by a South Asian entrepreneur who also curates its programming, and is financially supported for the most part by local Indian businesses such as restaurants, food shops and travel agencies. This foregrounds the fact that the festival is embedded in a social network of diasporic entrepreneurs who consider it an opportunity to afford visibility and expansion to their businesses. Additionally, the fact that Siraj could enlist prestigious Irish cultural institutions such as Trinity College and the Chester Beatty Library,⁷ as well as Irish Ministers of Culture and councillors among the festival supporters, in line with government strategies to attract investments from India (see chapter four), further indicates his embeddedness in the socio-economic and politico-institutional environment of Ireland. This notion is termed ‘mixed embeddedness’ by Kloostermann and Rath (2001), in their discussion of migrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies, focusing on the opportunity structure in which diasporic entrepreneurs can operate and expand their businesses constantly adapting to the socio-economic conditions of their host country. Kloostermann and Rath contend that ‘immigrant entrepreneurs and their social embeddedness should be understood within the concrete context of markets and, hence, opportunity structures’ (2001: 198).

Dina Iordanova recognises three kinds of ‘diaspora-linked film festival’ (2010). Alongside events focusing on cultural diplomacy and identity agendas, she identifies ‘business and diaspora’ festivals, which are supported by diasporic entrepreneurs and local diasporic businesses. She cites Bollywood film festivals as an example of such type of event (2010). The overtly commercial and globalising nature of Bollywood cinema has been explored by scholars (Rajadhyaksha 2003; Athique 2008b; Ganti 2012, 2013), who demonstrate how Indian economic liberalisation and new technologies prompted Indian film industries to tap into global markets by targeting audiences in western countries (see chapter one). It is therefore not surprising that an Indian film festival with a focus on Bollywood has overtly commercial aims and is linked with business ventures, embodying the ambivalent nature of popular Indian cinema that can be perceived as a cultural product as well as a commodity. This notion was evident since my first encounter with the festival, which I address in the following section.

Opening Night of the First ‘Indian Film Festival of Ireland’: Bollywood Glamour and the Persistence of the Local

In chapter one I described how I first was introduced to the festival and its organisers, which resulted in my involvement in the event between 2010 and 2015. On that initial occasion, I told Siraj I would be happy to help with the festival and we agreed I would contact him closer to the event. A few days before the beginning of the festival I asked him about the possibility of being a festival volunteer. He put me in touch with Silvia, the event manager who was in charge of coordinating the volunteers. I was surprised to find out that she was also Italian and originating from an area very close to my birthplace. We had a pleasant chat over the phone and it turned out that they needed

more volunteers than they already had, so I was scheduled to work at the festival desk handing out programmes and festival membership cards for a few hours in the afternoon for the whole duration of the festival. I was appreciative of the opportunity because working as a volunteer could provide me with deeper insights as to the impact of the event on the public while further enhancing my understanding of the work of the organisers. On the first day of the event, I was looking forward to the festival opening night which promised to be a special event with guest stars from India, food and Bollywood glamour. I worked nights in the call centre of a credit card company at that time, so I had been working the previous night and did not get much sleep, but I did not feel tired due the excitement of being at an Indian film festival red carpet event with Bollywood stars and a renowned director in attendance. The festival venue was a relatively new three-screen cinema located in the Swan shopping centre in Rathmines, a suburb located on the South side of Dublin. The links between retail activity and cinema-going have been explored by Athique and Hill in their book on multiplexes.

They observe that:

The formation of crowds that go with the cinema ... have now become a readily exchangeable commodity between different forms of retail activity. As such activity is reconstructed as the dominant form of leisure, a new form of ambience needs to be created. The mall provides this new form of public space: a sensual environment that is sanitised, secure, carefully planned, selectively accessed and privately operated.

(2010: 74-75)

Siraj explained that city centre cinemas would have been too expensive to rent for the duration of the festival. He was nevertheless able to secure Swan Cinemas⁸ thanks to the longstanding relationship he built with the owners through the screenings of Bollywood films he had organised around Dublin over the years. I was used to seeing film festivals being organised in art house cinema venues or other cinemas in the city

centre, due to the fact that world cinema usually circulates through centrally located art house cinema circuits. However, I was also aware that Rathmines was a vibrant area of Dublin, which occasionally hosted local arts festivals thereby providing an appropriate location for an Indian film festival. On that day, I took a bus to Rathmines, I was curious to see the festival unfold in such an unusual venue. Swan Centre was a small retail complex on two levels with a supermarket and several high street shops, coffee shops and restaurants. Its red brick façade, typical of the Georgian architecture commonly found around Dublin, gave it an appealing urban look; its appearance was enhanced by large windows and glass ceilings letting in plenty of natural light (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12: Entrance to the Swan Shopping Centre (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

The small scale of the building did not immediately prompt associations with large malls identified by scholars as modern temples of consumerism and overspending. Nancy Backes argues that ‘shopping malls address real needs and desires, which are albeit somewhat mediated by the machinations of capitalism’ (1997: 2). Scholarship

on shopping malls also highlights the contested nature of these particular spaces which are deemed to be artificial, exclusionary and ‘product[s] of a largely middle-class desire to distance oneself from the figure of an undifferentiated mass’ (Jancovich et al. 2003: 198). Moreover, shopping malls are linked with the rise of the multiplex cinema; watching films being an example of the multiple activities customers can indulge in aside from shopping. Multiplexes are also highly contested institutions, mainly due to their association with blockbuster films. To this end, Gomery (1992) has noted that the success of multiplex cinemas is based on their ability to use their multiple screens to obtain maximum profit from blockbusters. These notions became more obvious in Movies@Dundrum, the multiplex which hosted the festival from 2012 onwards, discussed later in this chapter.



Fig. 13: Banner of the film festival at Swan Cinema, Rathmines, Dublin (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

The cinema was located on the first floor next to an Irish restaurant franchise called Kylemore, easily reachable from a large staircase at the main entrance of the mall; a large banner hanging at the top of the staircase advertised the festival. The banner was

characterised by a warm colour palette with various tones of orange and yellow and included an image of Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai wearing an elaborated Mughal style courtesan costume, as she appeared in the film *Umrao Jaan* (J. P. Dutta, 2006). The face of the actress was partially covered by her bejewelled hands, which were also decorated with henna, giving her a seductive and mysterious look (Fig. 13). As discussed in chapter one, this kind of imagery, often used to advertise the festival and occasional screenings of Hindi films, suggests a feminised and romanticised construction of India, which is problematic as it perpetuates stereotypical and orientalist notions of Indian culture ([1978] Said 2003).



Fig. 14: Indian Film Festival desk, Swan Cinema, 2010 (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

The cinema foyer was a small open space tucked into a corner; it had a popcorn and drink counter at the bottom of a waiting area with high tables and stools surrounded by mirrored wall panels covered in film quotes. Hindi film posters appeared on the wall and the festival was advertised on a screen listing current releases located next to the box office. A festival desk was positioned at the entrance to the foyer. Here I met Silvia and the other volunteers, mostly Irish students with an interest in Indian culture or seeking event management experience. I began by helping Sofia, a Spanish woman in charge of recording video footage of the festival, she was setting up a recording location inside the cinema.

When I returned to the entrance, the staircase had been fitted with a red carpet and adorned with flowers. On the festival desk, amongst copies of the festival programme and membership cards were packs of bindis⁹ (Fig. 14), for distribution to audiences. I was encouraged to wear one by other volunteers who also sported elements of Indian clothing and mehndis (henna tattoos). This apparently casual gesture of wearing Indian accessories by several white festival volunteers can be linked to debates around the legitimisation of these items by multicultural capitalism, which promotes them as desirable fashion accessories for middle class white women. Nirmal Puwar explored the responses of South Asian women to the western consumption of Indian culture, contending that the appropriation by white bodies of South Asian cultural symbols such as bindies and mehndies caused feelings of anxiety and rage in South Asian women. This is because they often cannot wear the same accessories without being reviled and marked as 'other' (Puwar 2002). This notion made me realise that the festival promoted behaviours which intertextually created images based on an aesthetic of orientalism and exoticised Asian stereotypes.

On the festival desk, copies of *The Ticket* – the weekly entertainment supplement to *The Irish Times*, featured a cover story on the festival, enticing potential audiences to the event (Fig. 14). Seeing the festival advertised so extensively in one of Ireland’s main newspapers made me conscious of the importance of reviews in the press for raising the profile of an event and creating awareness about it. Quoting Dayan’s analysis of the Sundance festival, Thomas Elsaesser highlights the role of the press in defining and sustaining the identity of a film festival:

[F]ilm festivals are defined not so much by the films they show, but by the print they produce, which has the double function of performative self-confirmation and reflexive self-definition, creating “verbal architectures” that mould the event’s sense of its own significance and sustain its self-importance.
(2005a: 95)

In subsequent years, however, the festival received only limited attention from the media in the form of brief articles on daily newspapers, mentions in entertainment websites, and was featured in local radio programmes.

From my position at the festival desk I could hear noises coming from neighbouring shops and the voices of people chatting as they were walking along the mall. People coming to Kylemore restaurant often looked at the unusual activities unfolding at Swan Cinemas and many asked us what was happening. Children were also curious, especially about the bindis and henna tattoos sported by some of the volunteers. These exchanges are testimony to the variety of the interactions that the festival promoted, which became an integral part of the commodified experiences on offer in the shopping centre. For according to Backes, ‘the mall is an enabling space, a place where a visitor can experiment with and experience the varieties of performance and participation ... in which the patron is sometimes audience, sometimes participant;

sometimes object, sometimes subject' (2003: 13). These notions made me realise that the festival, although advertised as a glamorous and glitzy event, was actually embedded in the mundanity of people doing their shopping and running errands at their local shops, unaware that something special was going on; that the festival was just one of the activities that patrons could experience alongside shopping.

Those thoughts dissipated as soon as the festival guests started walking up the staircase along the red carpet, their presence announced by a bagpiper. Until then I thought that bagpipers wearing kilts were native to Scotland. I later discovered that they are also part of Irish culture and it is common to see them at Irish formal events such as weddings and funerals. In a postcolonial context, however, the presence of a bagpiper was problematic as bagpipes are reminiscent of Ireland's colonial oppression and linked to sentiments of rebellion. Significantly, during the seventeenth century 'Irish music was outlawed because of the part taken by harpers, pipers and poets in the last upsurge of Gaelic Ireland against the English' (Seán O'Boyle quoted in Tuohy and Ó hAodha 2008: xiii). The sound of the bagpipe gave solemnity to the entrance of the festival guests, creating a jarring sensory experience in its interaction with the smell of Indian snacks provided by a local restaurant, the sight of Hindi film posters and the ethnically diverse group of dignitaries, film stars and members of the audience attending the opening night of the festival. The presence of a strikingly beautiful Bollywood actress, Gul Panag, clad in a sequined golden evening dress alongside acclaimed director Prakash Jha, renewed the sense of excitement about the event I had felt earlier in the day; after all it was the first time I was in the proximity of Bollywood stars. Observing them walk along the red carpet was reminiscent of the glamour of rituals typical of more prestigious events such as the Cannes Film Festival.

The cultural aspirations of the event were highlighted by the presence of other personalities such as academic and filmmaker Sangeeta Datta, screenwriter Atul Tiwari, and independent filmmaker Suahil Tatari. The role of the festival in cultural diplomacy was suggested by the presence of Dublin's Deputy Lord Mayor and the Belfast Indian consul. Nasrullah Qureshi of the Bollywood Festival Norway was also invited, signalling the international links of the festival and its belonging to a 'film festival network', like larger and more established festivals. The locality of Swan Cinema was thus dramatically transformed by the presence of the festival and these dynamics can be explained through Sarah Pink's notion of 'place-event', according to which places are not fixed in localities, but need to take into account the flows and movements occurring through space. Pink proposes the concept of 'place-event as a way of understanding the shifting configurations of persons, things, practices, emotions, climatic conditions and more in relation to a locality' (2012: 38). Pink developed this concept through the work of Doreen Massey, who argued that the 'event of place' is a 'constellation of processes rather than a thing' (2005: 141). The place-event of the festival is thus constantly shifting and determined by the intensities created by the encounter of different materialities, people and localities. Julian Stringer has relatedly examined how film festivals are at the same time local and global in the way they operate as part of international circuits while foregrounding the cultural uniqueness of their host cities. According to Stringer:

[T]he ambition of many festivals – regardless of their actual size and the catchment area they draw participants and audiences from – is to aspire to the status of a global event, both through the implementation of their programming strategies and through the establishment of an international reach. (2001: 139)

The red carpet event was followed by the screening of *Raajneeti* (Politics, 2010),

Prakash Jha's latest film at that time, which merged a sociopolitical narrative with more commercial elements, such as a Bollywood cast and songs, suggestive of the nature of the festival aspiring to be a commercial as well as a cultural event. The film was introduced by Prakash Jha; while Siraj, in his opening address, suggested that the festival could potentially be a platform for Indo-Irish film productions. The Deputy Lord Mayor praised the festival as a vehicle of intercultural awareness between the Irish and Indian communities. Bollywood actress Gul Panag also said a few words in support of the festival. These elements undoubtedly influenced the experience of watching the film for the ethnically mixed audience present at the screening. Several Irish women I spoke to later were enthusiastic about the film and smitten by its protagonist, Bollywood heartthrob Ranbir Kapoor; they also praised the beauty of Gul Panag. Personally, I found that the opening night of the festival was a unique experience that enabled me to feel a deeper connection to Bollywood cinema and a sense of community with filmmakers, festival organisers, as well as other members of the audience in spite of the ordinariness of the venue. Dirk Van Extergem has explored the experience of audiences attending film festivals. He writes:

A film festival, as compared to a regular movie screening, is even more detached from the everyday experience: it takes place but once a year, it presents films "for the first time" and has extras such as the presence of guests ("stars") and the creating of a more communal, more festive and, in many ways, more significant context by way of animation, presentation and the simulation of a certain "ambience".

(2004: 224)

This event also marked the beginning of my collaboration with the festival. I became a regular member of the festival team contributing to the event in various capacities over the years. For example, Siraj would ask for my help writing content for the programme and sourcing films, in and amongst attending to the festival desk at main

venues. Our relationship would be limited to organising the festival, with sporadic casual meetings at South Asian events and during my visits to the Food Coop Market. I was grateful to him for organising an event centred on Bollywood cinema and I was happy to help him in the hope that the event would grow and become more established and successful.

The inaugural year of the festival featured twenty two films and was characterised by a focus on director Prakash Jha, with the screening of sociopolitical thrillers with a mainstream appeal (due to the presence of Bollywood stars and song sequences), such as *Raajneeti* (2010) and *Gangaajal* (Gange's Water, 2003); a retrospective on popular Bollywood actress Gul Panag; and a thematic strand on remakes of old Bollywood films showing two versions of *Devdas* (1955, 2002) and *Umrao Jaan* (1978, 2006). The programme also included independent films such as Sangeeta Datta's *Life Goes On* (2009), Nagesh Kukunoor's *Dor* (String, 2006) and documentaries like *Indian Ocean* (2006), alongside quintessentially Bollywood films such as *Kal Ho Na Ho* (There May or May Not Be a Tomorrow, 2003) – a Hindi love story set in New York, starring Hindi film idol Shah Rukh Khan. Prakash Jha attended the festival and presented a masterclass on his filmmaking practice, while Gul Panag and other guests participated in seminars on the evolution of Indian cinema. However, the festival, could not sustain the appeal of its opening night and the rest of the screenings and events were poorly attended. Despite this, the festival managed to establish itself as a recurring feature in Dublin's cultural event calendar. Interestingly, in 2010 several other events were organised around Indian culture, for example, 'The Irish in India' exhibition at Trinity College between May and October, also advertised in the film festival programme; 'A Sikh Face in Ireland' an exhibition between May and July 2010 at the Chester Beatty Library; and the first large scale celebration of the Festival

of Lights in October. The festival could thus be seen as a further example of emergent Indian themes and narratives in the cultural landscape of Dublin.

Festival Press Release (2011): Commercialising Indian Culture

In the summer of 2011, I participated in the press launch for the festival which was held in a four-star hotel located in an upmarket suburb of Dublin, a few weeks ahead of the event. During the first edition of the festival, my participation in the event involved volunteering at the festival desk at Swan Cinema, attending a few screenings and additional events such as the gala dinner and the masterclass with guest director Prakash Jha. I found these experiences extremely enjoyable and rewarding both in terms of my love for Indian cinema and with regard to understanding the dynamic of the event in relation to the Irish context from an academic point of view. I had never attended a press launch before and always thought of these events as commercial strategies to advertise new products; I thus was curious to observe how a press launch for a film festival would unfold.



Fig. 15: T-shirt worn by volunteers of IFFI 2011 (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

On the day of the event, I reached the hotel slightly later than planned since I was not familiar with that part of Dublin. As I hurriedly walked through the corridors of the first floor of the hotel in search of the function room where the press launch was held, my attention was caught by a desk covered in T-shirts. Standing by the desk next to banners advertising the travel agency they were working for, were Sayiog and Charmi, whom I met during the first edition of the festival; I was happy to see their familiar faces and to have reached my destination. They greeted me and explained that the T-shirts were to be worn by volunteers; they invited me to take one and directed me to a function room a few meters ahead. The festival T-shirts featured a colourful abstract image, the festival logo and listed cities around Ireland where the festival was going to hold screenings that year. Connemara Whiskey, one of the festival's sponsors was also mentioned in a prominent position (see Fig. 15). I smiled thinking that it was a conscious reference to the Jameson Dublin Film Festival, which is also sponsored by a famous whiskey brand.

As I entered the room, the event had already started and a promotional video of the festival was about to be shown on a portable screen hanging at one end of the room. Below the screen was a table where dignitaries such as the Indian ambassador, then Minister for Arts Jimmy Deenihan, Siraj and Irish cricketer Kevin O'Brien, were seated facing an audience of elegantly dressed South Asian and western participants sitting on chairs positioned along the sides of the room. This seating arrangement was necessary to accommodate two classical Indian dance performances that took place during the event, as a small film crew captured footage of the evening's proceedings (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16: Indian dancer performing at the press launch of the festival, 2011 (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)



Fig. 17: Guests wearing traditional Indian clothes (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

As I clumsily began to take photographs with a camera I was unfamiliar with, I noticed that most people in the audience were wearing suits and similar elegant western clothes, but some, including several western guests, wore colourful traditional Indian attire such as sarees, sherwanis and various versions of shalwar kameez (Fig.

17). I was pleased to see westerners wearing Indian clothes and I interpreted their choice as a way to celebrate and embrace Indian culture. However, the habit of western people to randomly wear traditional clothes typical of other cultures has been criticised for being disrespectful to the rich heritage and social significance that such attire entails. Cultural historian Elizabeth Rouse notes that ‘clothing is not a random or totally individual affair ... we cannot interpret the clothing of other societies, we cannot understand their significance, if we have not learned the code’.¹⁰ Moreover, it has been argued that, as white women gain an air of sophisticated exoticism when they are clad in ethnic dress, South Asian women who usually wear those items are simultaneously reviled and devalued (Puwar 2002).

At the other end of the room there were tables laden with trays of Indian food, its inviting aroma permeated the room; drinks, including wine and Connemara Whiskey, shiny copies of the festival programme, and bunches of red and yellow tulips matching the colours of the film festival logo were on display. Smartly dressed catering staff and about a dozen volunteers wearing festival T-shirts and lanyards with name tags suggested the careful planning and organisation of the event. Colourful banners advertising the festival, airlines, Indian travel agencies and other sponsors were scattered around the room evoking sensations and discourses that were not directly related to Indian cinema, but were associated to it (Figs. 15, 16 and 18). These markers of overt advertising were obvious indicators that the festival was being used as a vehicle to promote tourism to India, which combined with other elements of Indian culture present in the room, created a more subtle appeal to a culture communicated as exotic and spectacular, suggesting an aestheticised form of consumption through multiple sensory experiences. John Urry has explored the changes occurring in contemporary tourism, which is moving from mass marketing to

sophisticated customisations. ‘Such changes are also transforming the relationship *between* (original italics) tourism and other cultural practices’ and more importance is ‘placed on “play, pleasure and pastiche”, features which have always characterised the tourist gaze’ (Urry 2002: 15).



Fig. 18: Participants to the press launch indulging in Indian food (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

The plain and impersonal room was thus transformed multisensorially through these practical engagements with Indian cinema and other ancillary Indian cultural products that conveyed an exotic and alluring image of India creating a tourist gaze for participants, who could potentially be enticed to plan a trip to India after experiencing the film festival. As I observed earlier, this happened visually through videos, banners, posters, volunteers’ T-shirts, rich Indian costumes, brightly-coloured flowers; and further enhanced through olfaction stimulated by the pungent smell of food and the subtle smell of flowers; through the tastes and textures of the food and drinks on offer, thus offering participants an embodied experience of the festival and the reactions and interactions it created. Indian guests clad in South Asian traditional clothes sipped

Connemara Whiskey, white Irish participants indulged in Indian food, providing me with a compelling experience, indicative of the cultural encounters and exchanges enabled by the festival (Fig. 18). Participants, including myself, became temporarily emplaced (Pink 2008, 2009) and participated in an environment framed by the festival discourses and sensory manifestations in which the festival's aims were explicitly communicated verbally and visually. The environment constructed by the festival was thus a 'place-event' determined by the intensities produced by the interrelations of people, sensations and objects that I could also experience and influence as a participant in the event. For according to Pink, 'researchers themselves are entangled in, participate in the production of, and are co-present in the ethnographic places they share with research participants, their materialities and power relations' (2009: 33-34).

The potential of the festival to become an instrument to further economic and diplomatic relations between Ireland and India became even clearer during the addresses of the festival directors and other dignitaries, who all remarked about how the festival could be a vehicle to strengthen diplomatic and commercial ties between India and Ireland, especially in the form of joint venture film productions. Additionally, the presence of cricketer Kevin O'Brien was motivated specifically to emphasise links between the two countries through sport. The notion that cricket was introduced by the British, evokes memories of colonial oppression shared by both Irish and Indians. Nowadays, cricket is India's most followed sport despite being linked with colonial rule. In Ireland, cricket was banned for a long time as a 'foreign' game but its popularity has been growing in recent years thanks to the Irish team's victory over England during the 2011 world cup.¹¹ An explanatory note about cricket included in the press packs distributed at the event, stated 'with the recession in

Ireland and boom in India, it is only natural that any ties that bring these two great nations together should be encouraged and celebrated’, suggesting shifting power relations between western and developing countries and the need for Ireland to attract international investment from countries previously considered economically inferior. This mirrors India’s own diplomatic strategies: significantly, the First Secretary of the Indian Embassy in Ireland explained in an interview that the main role of the embassy, alongside assisting Indian residents, is to promote Indian trade and tourism. He explained that they mainly organise events to promote India as a business partner among potential international investors, in addition to promoting India as a tourist destination among the non-Indian population of Ireland.¹² At present, the Indian Ministry of Tourism is relentlessly trying to boost tourism through the ‘Incredible India’ campaign. As a result, ‘Incredible India’ brochures and banners are often on display at public events centred on cultural diversity and South Asian culture.

These notions and the presence of Irish and Indians diplomats at major film festival events, such as press launches and opening nights, confirm Yúdice’s argument that ‘culture is increasingly wielded as a resource for both sociopolitical and economic amelioration’ (2003: 9). In this case, Indian culture becomes expedient in the way it is expected to lead to economic gain for both India and Ireland. These dynamics invoke the ‘Indian Summer’ festival – a celebration of Indian popular culture organised in the UK in 2002 to promote trade exchanges between India and Britain and to encourage UK’s white population to purchase Indian cultural products. On this occasion, the British Film Institute (BFI) organised the Indian film festival ‘ImagineAsia’, which also included the use of Bollywood themes in department stores such as Selfridges, Indian visual art exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum and Andrew Lloyd

Weber's Bollywood-inspired West End musical 'Bollywood Dreams'. In the 'ImagineAsia' brochure, Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, stressed the importance of establishing links between the British and South Asian film industries and of using film to raise awareness about the different cultural products available in Britain. As Athique points out 'the BFI's ImagineAsia festival of Indian cinema was considered a success, *primarily* (original italics) since it drew almost a third of its audience from outside of Britain's South Asian population' (2008b: 302).

Albeit on a much smaller scale, IFFI is further mobilising Indian film culture in favour of strengthening economic ties between India and Ireland by placing emphasis on other elements such as food, sport, travel, music and dance which overshadow the main object of the festival, namely Indian cinema, and prove that Indian film can be a catalyst for other discourses, thus becoming a means to an end. Indian film scholar Ashish Rajadhyaksha, in his analysis of the 'Indian Summer' festival mentioned earlier, observes that the event was so driven by economic considerations involving many stakeholders, that cinema became a marginal presence among a variety of other products being promoted through it. According to Rajadhyaksha:

Fashion, music, entertainment and food – the new representatives of Bollywood – evoked the cinema interminably, but had little economic dependence on either the financiers or the box office from which cinema derived its capital.

(2009: 57)

Rajadhyaksha argues that the Bollywood brand actually encompasses a wide variety of cultural products, examining the cultural impact of Indian cinema beyond its visible economy and identified various 'film-related "productions"' and 'ancillary industries' being created 'in order to specifically exploit the byproducts of the textual economy'

(ibid.: 37). Rajadhyaksha describes these ancillary productions, which include fashion, music and live entertainment, as ‘the cinema effect’¹³ (ibid.: 36). In a similar way, it can be argued that the IFFI, with its emphasis on cultural diplomacy, Indian food, travel, music and dance and Irish brands, is also using cinema and Indian culture as an expedient to further multiple agendas. Arguably, these manifestations were a product of the efforts and vision of Siraj, who harnessed his connections among the Indian community of Ireland, alongside influential Irish individuals and associations, to create a festival with the potential to grow, gaining both cultural and economic relevance in the Irish context.

Mark Peranson, in his analysis of the political economy of film festivals, notes that all festivals large and small ‘are subject to pressures from interest groups ... that must be appeased for the continuing support and success of the festival’ (2008: 38). For this reason, Siraj strategically plans promotional events such as press launches, opening nights and gala dinners to guarantee exposure and publicity to sponsors and other political actors who can support the festival. In his address, he proudly announced that the second year of the festival would be characterised by film screenings in several cities around Ireland, suggesting that the event had an expanding nature typical of larger and more established festivals. Significantly, the 2011 festival held special screenings in the cities of Tralee in County Kerry and Belfast in Northern Ireland, while the rest of the films were shown at Swan Cinemas in Dublin. The programme also included a day-long symposium on Indian Films and Visual Art¹⁴ organised by one of my supervisors and hosted by Trinity College. This was prompted by the success of the first edition of the festival in terms of both sponsorship and press coverage, further constituting an attempt to achieve more visibility and support for an

event that in essence was entirely the product of Siraj's vision and planning. Significantly, the volunteers and other people enlisted in the organisation of the festival had usually limited influence in its programming and in the shaping and designing of the event. Siraj prides himself to be the creator and the main force driving the festival and other members of the festival team rarely came to question his judgement due to his knowledge and experience of event management and the Indian film industry. Siraj thus approached the task as a diasporic entrepreneur, needing to access various parts of the market and potential customers for his business. In order to achieve this goal, he attempted to create an 'exotic' and alluring South Asian event for western audiences and a high profile and glamorous social event for South Asian audiences, where elements of Indian and Irish culture coalesced creating a hybrid environment where the tourist gaze was mobilised. For this reason the festival was characterised by often conflicting narratives which in turn highlighted the cultural aspect of the event, in the form of masterclasses, symposia and collaborations with cultural and educational institutions; and commercially, with screenings of mainstream films and overtly promotional events with an emphasis on sponsors and the aim of attracting Indian investments. These dynamics are arguably typical of many festivals which need to secure adequate support and following in order to compete with each other.

Marijke De Valck cautions that festivals do not 'neatly correspond to traditional anthropological definitions of social constructions such as the spectacle, ceremony, and festival. On the contrary, film festivals are dynamic hybrids' (2007: 131-132). In the case of IFFI, the hybrid nature of the festival further mirrors the hybrid context that characterises the globalisation of Hindi film and its widespread presence in global

media spheres which blur ‘the boundaries between the modern and the traditional, the high and low culture, and the national and the global culture’ (Thussu 2006: 175). Siraj thus operates as a bricoleur, passionately tissing together social and cinematic experiences mixing various apparently conflicting elements, such as mainstream and art film, advertising and educational events in an attempt to appeal to multiple audiences and supporters. According to Anne-Marie Boisvert ‘the bricoleur ... responds to a profound need: that of creating meaning through reassembly, by (re)organising and weaving meaningful relationships among apparently heterogeneous objects’.¹⁵ While Boisvert is addressing questions of cultural production in the form of art, it can be argued that Siraj is also a cultural producer, in the way he created an event centred on a cultural product from his country of origin, such as Indian film, enhancing its appeal by associating it with other products such as travel, Indian food, music and dance. According to Yúdice, the articulation of culture in the attempt to advance one’s interests is a complex expression of one’s identity, and such articulations can be seen as performances where cultural elements are combined to achieve a result. ‘A performative understanding of the expediency of culture ... focuses on the strategies implied in any invocation of culture, any invention of tradition, in relation of some purpose or goal’ (2003: 38). Sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) applied the imagery of the theatre to the study of social interactions, developing a dramaturgical theory to analyse how individuals, in their interactions with others, try to foster a certain impression of themselves by adopting certain settings, appearance and manners. Observing Siraj clad in an elegant western suit, confidently speaking about the festival, directing his collaborators with authority and suavely entertaining participants in an upmarket venue, surrounded by codes of Irish and Indian culture, brought to the fore the performative elements of his role as festival

director (Fig. 18). Adopting an interactionist perspective, Goffman argues that identity formation and negotiation is an ongoing process, which unfolds in the context of social interactions and ‘when one’s activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated’ (1959: 111). Significantly, Siraj clearly conveyed his identity as a successful diasporic entrepreneur with a middle class image and a prominent social presence, thus distancing himself from the working-class background and marginal social position traditionally associated with ethnic minorities. In fact, the venue, event structure and the composition of the audience present at the press launch suggested that the festival was targeted primarily to middle class people and that the sociocultural exchange it enabled was limited to western and South Asian members of a globalised multicultural middle class.

Promoting the Festival in Ireland’s Largest Shopping Centre

The middle class appeal of the festival was clearly reflected in Siraj’s choice of festival venues, which became increasingly upmarket over the years. In 2012 the festival moved from Swan Cinema to a twelve-screen multiplex called Movies@Dundrum embedded in Dundrum Town Centre – a large and upmarket shopping centre located in the affluent area of Dundrum, once a town in its own right and now a suburb of Dublin. The move was motivated by better screen hiring rates and the hope that a larger venue in a more popular area would improve attendance to the festival screenings. Significantly, in spite of its rich programme IFFI 2011 was poorly attended. The screening of Prakash Jha’s *Raajneeti* (2010) in Tralee was very successful, thanks to the advertising efforts of Sonali, a well-connected Indian woman living in the city. As Mary recalls ‘there was funnily enough a lot of people in Tralee and it was where we had the greatest spread of non-Indian audience, which is quite

interesting'.¹⁶ The fact that the film was not new did not deter Irish audiences, who viewed the screening as a novelty due to the fact that, in a provincial place like Tralee, they rarely have the opportunity to see Indian films on the big screen. Very few people, however, went to other film festival screenings and a new venue could hopefully change that. Dundrum Town Centre was inaugurated in 2005 and is Ireland's largest shopping centre with more than 80,000 square metres of floor space, and over 160 tenants including high fashion shops, prestigious restaurant chains and of course the cinema. Interestingly, one of the first shopping centres in Ireland was opened in Dundrum in 1971, since the area has a tradition of hosting affluent communities with a high disposable income.



Fig. 19: The main entrance of Dundrum Town Centre (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

In order to raise awareness about the festival among shoppers, an advertising event was organised consisting in the distribution of fliers at the main entrance of the shopping centre. This was also motivated by the fact that the cinema is positioned on

an external corner of the shopping complex facing the main road, so people could actually walk across the mall without any awareness of its programming. The distribution of flyers was scheduled for two days before the opening of the festival. I remember thinking that the festival was only two days away and people would probably need more notice in order to plan a visit to the festival and that flyers should have been distributed much earlier. However, Siraj believed that people would just throw the flyer away if they received it too early. He asked Rita and me to distribute the flyers together with an Indian girl named Narayani. On that occasion Siraj encouraged us to wear Indian clothes in order to stand out among the crowd of shoppers and advertise the festival more effectively. Rita and I did not have any, so we opted for colourful tops and pashminas, while Narayani wore a beautiful pink salwar-kameez. We complimented Narayani for her attire and felt slightly underdressed compared to her. However, it could be argued that wearing ethnic clothes while promoting the festival encouraged a perception of the event as 'exotic', colourful and constructed a 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990, 2002) for prospective viewers, who were enticed by simple notions of spectacle and cultural difference. According to Urry, 'the tourist gaze is structured by culturally specific notions of what is extraordinary and therefore worth viewing' (2002: 59).

In order to approach as many people as possible, we stood at the main entrance of Dundrum Town Centre and distributed flyers to the customers of the shopping mall. Most people we approached did not know about the festival and few of them said they would try and attend some of the screenings. In general people were curious about the event and sometimes mentioned eating at Ananda, an Indian restaurant located in the shopping centre, upstairs from the cinema, which was also a sponsor of the festival.

As we carried out our activity, surrounded by international shopping chains and high street shops, the festival site became an integral sensory part of the flow of people and goods, achieving a visibility that the marginal location of the cinema could not offer. However, I realised that in this process the event became like any other commercial brand advertised in the mall through flyers, banners and posters. The notion that I was advertising Indian film culture in a way that would allow it to be perceived as a commodity customers could purchase as part of their shopping experience was difficult for me to accept as a film fan, in spite of the overtly commercial nature of Bollywood films. Matt Hills examined these contradictory behaviours and observes that ‘fans are both commodity-completists and they express anti-commercial beliefs’ (2002: 19). The conflicting relation between fandom and consumer culture has been explored by scholars (Cavicchi1998; Hills 2002; Duffett 2013) who questioned the tendency to divide fan practices into positive and negative. In their opinion the tendency of considering only fan production and exchange valuable, while giving a negative connotation to consumption is problematic and offers only a partial reading of fans’ engagement with their object of interest. To this end, Duffett suggests that ‘fandom does not escape or resists commodity culture. Instead consumption facilitates fans’ contact with media products’ (2013: 21). Significantly, my ambivalence about the way the festival was promoted was motivated by my emotional investment in Indian film, however, although I had mixed feelings about the advertising event, I was clearly part of it, hoping it would be effective in raising awareness about the festival.

Being situated at the entrance of the shopping centre was a very different sensory experience from volunteering in the calm and cocoon-like environment of the cinema: my colleagues and I were surrounded by the loud chatter of customers; occasional

wafts of perfume from toiletries shops and passing ladies; the bright colours of products and signs of neighbouring shops; and the glare of the steel frames of the glass walls. The most striking difference was that the sun was shining through the large glass walls, blurring the boundaries between the inside and outside of the building (Fig. 19). Daniel Miller and his collaborators have explored how shopping spaces are constructed, noting that the use of natural light is part of a strategy to ‘ameliorate the negative feelings that they [consumers] have about shopping as an act of materialism’, since natural light creates ‘a potential ambiguity between going shopping and going for a walk’ (Miller et al. 2005: 133). Dundrum Town Centre carries this illusion even further in the way the whole complex is shaped as a village with a square in the middle, making it look like a parody of a community space. The shopping complex also features a refurbished mill pond to commemorate the fact that it is built in an area which hosted corn and paper mills since 1600.

Shaped as a village invoking local history, the shopping centre can be perceived as a community space, appealing to a middle class nostalgia for authenticity and nature. As Miller and his colleagues explain, what is seen as natural nowadays is nothing but a reconceptualisation of what is perceived to be the traditional community, which can be termed ‘the imagined community of creative nostalgia’ (ibid.: 123). Moreover, the fact that the complex is completely separated from the local neighbourhood, it can be accessed just through designated entrances while its central areas are invisible from the outside, identifies it as a space of social exclusion – testimony to the increasing division of cities ‘into pleasure and leisure for some and poverty and unemployment for others’ (Jancovich et al. 2003: 19). Miller and his colleagues explored the links between the expansion of shopping malls and the notion that public spaces are

perceived as being dangerous and threatening, arguing that ‘the privatisation of space within shopping centres and malls provides a solution to the now widespread fear of public space’ (Miller et al. 2005: xi). The shopping centre is located amidst the quaint and peaceful Dundrum village and surrounded by residential estates, which pose no danger for customers. Nevertheless, Dundrum Town Centre is endeavouring to create a utopian globalised capitalist space providing its middle class customers with a risk-free shopping experience in an environment that can be perceived as pleasant, distinctive and ‘natural’ as it fosters a feeling of community rather than mass consumption. Pierre Bourdieu, in his work on sociocultural differentiation, examined how taste is mobilised as a marker of social difference noting that ‘taste, the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of lifestyle, a unitary set of distinctive preferences’ (1984: 173). According to Bourdieu, practices and preferences of the ruling class are presented as natural and genuine in order to justify social hierarchies (ibid.). So it can be argued that presenting Dundrum Town Centre in the form of a traditional community such as a village, promotes the perception of shopping as a natural social practice. These notions are complicated by the fact that the shopping centre was built by the same property developers who own the area of Moore Street, discussed in chapter two. Chartered Land successfully built Dundrum Town Centre during the peak of the Celtic Tiger economic boom; however, due the Irish economic downturn of 2008, the Irish National Asset Management Agency (NAMA)¹⁷ took control of all loans connected with Dundrum Town Centre by buying out debt linked to the property held by several Irish banks. At present, Dundrum Town Centre is considered Ireland’s most valuable real estate asset currently being sold by NAMA. This suggests that the aura of opulence and middle

class fantasy, characteristic of the shopping centre, actually hides a reality of uncertainty and financial misconduct.

Volunteering at Movies@Dundrum: Audiences, Community and Locality

Movies@Dundrum is located in a marginal position compared to the main areas of the shopping centre, suggesting that watching films is not the primary activity customers are encouraged to engage in. However, its plush interiors and the presence of VIP areas indicate that the cinema is also aimed at middle class audiences in search of a distinctive viewing experience. On entering the cinema, there is a short corridor covered in posters and screens advertising current releases, counters selling candies, ice-cream, popcorn and fizzy drinks. The cash registers at those counters also function as the box office, implying that the sale of snacks and drinks is as important as the sale of cinema tickets.



Fig. 20: Festival desk at Movies@Dundrum (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)



Fig. 21: Banners of festival sponsors at Movies@Dundrum (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

During the festival, a dedicated information desk is organised in a counter positioned next to the escalators leading to the main screening area and separated from the main foyer (see Fig. 20). The area around the counter is decorated with numerous festival posters and often banners advertising festival sponsors emphasising the commercial aspect of the event, associating it with the idea of travelling to exotic locations, serving to construct a ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry 1990, 2002) for viewers, who are encouraged to look at Indian films as tourism advertisements for India (see Fig. 21). Posters advertising Hollywood blockbusters surround the area, suggesting that Indian cinema is a marginal presence in a space dominated by western film culture (Fig. 20). A manager of Movies@Dundrum explained that they do not normally show Indian films due to the lack of demand among cinemagoers,¹⁸ indicating the fact that Indian film was a fleeting presence, which temporarily transformed the space of Movies@Dundrum, impacting on the life of people inhabiting it.

As previously mentioned, during the festival I mainly worked at the festival desk in the cinema foyer, providing audiences with programmes, membership cards and

information about the films. I thus became familiar with that particular space and its dynamics. During working days the cinema was generally quiet, sparsely populated by a few festival volunteers, cinema staff members and sporadic customers. At weekends and in the evening more people attended screenings – the place became animated by the presence of groups of teenagers chatting loudly as they walked to the screens carrying popcorn and other snacks. American blockbusters such as *Superman Man of Steel* (2013) would draw large audiences. The clientele was composed mainly of white Irish people, but also included members of other communities such as Brazilians, Eastern Europeans and South Asians. Occasionally people on their way to watch other films stopped at the festival desk, requesting information about the films in the programme. I was happy to observe people acknowledge the festival and I did my best to make them feel welcome, hoping they would come to the festival screenings, or at least develop an interest in Indian film. The presence of the festival was particularly strong during special events such as the opening and closing films when, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the space was transformed by the presence of crowds of guests, dignitaries, performers and audiences, constituting a tangible manifestation of Indian cinema in a space otherwise dominated by western cinema. These events transformed the foyer in a space where different cultures could meet and interact with each other in unprecedented and unpredictable ways.

My sustained presence in the cinema foyer gave me the opportunity to interact with the staff of the cinema. For example, I spoke to Colin, a young Irish man in his twenties who worked at the ticket check point in the cinema. He commented that he enjoyed watching Indian films and was sorry he had to work otherwise he would have watched more festival films. He proudly said ‘the Indian film industry is the biggest in

the world, people don't realise that'. Colin was happy that the cinema hosted the festival and enjoyed the buzz created by the event. Over the years I met several members of the staff who were actually Indian. One of them was Mahendra, a postgraduate student from Hyderabad in his twenties. He was glad to have the film festival hosted by his workplace and spoke about watching *Aarakshan* (Reservations, Prakash Jha, 2011) and *Chillar Party* (Vikas Bahl, 2011) part of the programme of IFFI 2012. Mahendra would normally watch Bollywood films with his friends at Cineworld in the city centre. Another respondent was Harman, originally from Punjab, who had worked at the cinema for several years as a general manager. I approached him as I recognised him from playing an extra role in *Ek Tha Tiger* and was surprised to see him working at Movies@Dundrum. He informed me that he was also studying accountancy, had been in Dublin for eight years and had developed a passion for film in Ireland through a work colleague who is an amateur filmmaker. Harman liked the idea of hosting an Indian film festival at Movies@Dundrum, but observed that the event could not attract South Asian audiences:

I think Indian people don't go to the Indian film festival because they have already seen the films. Most of the people who went to see the films were Irish, there weren't many Indians. The film selection is great, it's ok if they try to attract Irish people. But if you want to make money, then I think you need to bring in new films or try to bring in more celebrities

(Interview 12 August 2013)

Since the beginning of the festival it became clear that Indian communities, usually the most obvious target audience for an Indian film festival, were generally not interested in the event, since it lacked premieres of blockbusters and major guest stars. That said, some did attend the opening and closing film as well as social events surrounding the festival such as the gala dinner and closing dinner. As discussed

earlier in chapter two, for mainstream Indian audiences the appeal of a film is linked to the excitement and anticipation generated around its release; films should ideally be watched as soon as they are released in India in order to allow participation in discussions about them with friends and family. Moreover, since most films are available on free or cheap digital platforms, it makes no sense for Indians to spend money to watch them in the cinema months or years after their release, unless arguably if they are cult classics shown in a significant context within a festival. Therefore, many are not interested in films that have already been released even if they are screened in the context of an Indian cultural event in a country far removed from India. Liz, an Irish friend who works as a nurse, told me that she talked about the festival with her Indian colleagues and they said they knew about it but had no interest in attending it because it had no new releases.¹⁹ They commented, ‘why should I pay money to see an old film I can easily find on the internet?’ Liz was very surprised by such a reaction given that she is passionate about film and if she lived in a different country, she would be happy to participate in an Irish film festival, even if it meant watching old films she has already seen. For her such a festival would represent an important social event bringing together the local Irish community providing a powerful way to celebrate her own culture. I tried to explain to her that, in order to celebrate Indian culture, South Asians living in Ireland prefer to take part in large scale celebrations of Indian festivals such as the Festival of Lights and Festival of Colours. They arguably do not consider the Indian film festival interesting because it is disconnected from current discussions around commercial films happening in India and they do not feel it offers a selection of films that have something worthwhile to contribute to their cinematic experience.

The impact of digital technologies on the circulation and consumption of films has been explored by scholars Elsaesser (2005b) and Rodowick (2007), who suggest that digital platforms prompted new forms of cinephilia and provided audiences with more choice and flexibility. In a similar way, cable TV and internet platforms allow audiences greater control over their viewing experience of Indian films which are no longer limited to screenings in movie theatres. For these reasons, the only thing that would definitely draw South Asians to the festival would be the presence of high profile film stars, but that cannot be arranged due to budget constraints. In reality, the actors, directors and other personalities of the Indian film industry invited to the festival would not be famous enough to motivate audiences to come to the event. This is due to the fact that only the big stars of commercial Indian films are idolised by audiences, who would go out of their way to meet them (see chapter five); everybody else goes virtually unnoticed by the majority of mainstream cinemagoers, regardless of the quality of their work or the awards they have won.

Cognisant of these dynamics, Siraj decided from the outset to target the festival at non-Indian audiences as a way for them to learn about Indian culture; however, world cinema audiences are used to art-house venues located in the city centre linked with the notion of high culture and independent cinema. They prefer these venues as they are 'isolated and distinct from the consumer mobility of shopping malls and the cineplex' (Jones 2001: 132). For this reason, unless they have a strong interest in Indian cinema, they are not likely to go and watch films in suburban shopping malls. Due to unappealing films and peripheral venues, every edition of the festival registered small audiences, mainly composed of western viewers. Consistent poor attendance caused the festival to decrease in scale from its third year remaining

limited to Dublin, as the expansion attempts of 2011 proved to be financially unsustainable. The only films that registered audiences of some forty to fifty people were free screenings hosted by the Chester Beatty Library, due to its central location and dedicated following of people accustomed to attending the events they organise, suggesting that non-Indian audiences interested in art and world cinema prefer to attend screenings in non-commercial venues. In 2014, the inclusion in the programme of socially engaged films around women's empowerment and the presence of acclaimed director Shyam Benegal, did not improve attendance. However, the tentative screening of *Maanikya* (The Ruby, Sudeep, 2014), a newly released, commercial film produced in Kannada²⁰ language, proved to be quite successful attracting about sixty South Indian viewers, proving that Indian audiences were aware of the festival and willing to participate in it if they considered the films included in the programme worth watching.

My sustained presence at the cinema allowed me to interact with several non-Indian festival goers. Many of them were Irish film students and members of the Irish film industry, yet the majority were middle class people living in South Dublin with an interest in world cinema. Some learned to appreciate Indian films through South Asian acquaintances. One of them was Alan – a cultured Irish man who discovered Indian films thanks to his friendship with a South Asian college lecturer. He appreciated Indian films mainly because of the complexity of their storylines and narrative codes which are different from western cinema. He attended festival screenings every year and we occasionally met at other events organised around Indian culture such as the Festival of Lights and Indian music performances at Chester Beatty Library. Another regular festival attendee was Lorraine – a Scottish woman in her late thirties who has

been living in Ireland for the past fifteen years and has her own business in the south side of Dublin. I got to know her in 2013, when she approached the festival desk after having bought tickets to seven films, which was unprecedented. Rita and I were really enthusiastic and started to speak with her, wishing more viewers were like her. Lorraine later told me about her passion for Indian film, which developed during her childhood in Glasgow, where she started watching Bollywood films together with her British Asian classmates. Since she moved to Dublin, Lorraine mainly watched Indian films on DVDs bought online or streamed on Internet websites where her choice was limited since most films were not subtitled in English, she thus relished the opportunity to see them in the cinema. Lorraine explained:

It was brilliant when Siraj used to do Bollywood films up in the Ormond in Stillorgan. He did that about eight years ago before he moved to the city centre. It was perfect for me, it wasn't far from where I lived. It was about one or two films a month, it wasn't many. There were not too many people going, which is a shame, but it's great to be able to see the films on the big screen.

(Interview 17 July 2013)

Lorraine told me that, since she lived in the South side of Dublin, she could not often attend screenings at Cineworld, located on the opposite side of the city. For this reason, she particularly enjoyed the Hindi film screenings that Siraj used to organise in a cinema in the southern suburb of Stillorgan as it was closer to her home. Even those screenings were not mainly geared to the needs of the South Asian community, but aimed at promoting Indian film among indigenous Irish people. The festival thus gave Lorraine the opportunity to watch a wider range of Indian films; she made arrangements to make sure she could attend as many screenings as possible in spite of her busy schedule. As she said:

I begged my husband to take Friday and Monday off work to look after the children, so I could go to them all... Recently, going to the film festival, I started to see more up to date films: *Jab Tak Hai Jaan* and *Shanghai* were very good – these are films I wouldn't normally have watched. I am just hoping that the festival will continue.

(Interview 17 July 2013)

Lorraine does not watch many western films, apart from old Hollywood films in black and white, preferring Indian films (not only Hindi films but also Pakistani and regional films) because of their emphasis on spectacle, music and dance which are rare in contemporary films made in the West. She also enjoys the unpredictability of their narratives and finds their imagery very appealing. As she commented:

They are very expressive, atmospheric. [I enjoy] the symbolism, the sunsets and the scenery: they could be on top of a snow covered mountain one minute, and then in the middle of the ocean. Then [I like] the costumes and the music, the over-the-top drama, the actors and actresses are all so handsome. I just find them very visually pleasing to watch. I love that you can just switch off. What I love about these films as well is that they are so long, three to four hours and you just sit there and you get totally absorbed in it

(Interview 17 July 2013)

I was pleased to have met Lorraine given that we shared an interest not only in Indian cinema but also in the festival (she joined the festival team in 2015). Lorraine and I would discuss possible ways to improve attendance and advertise the festival more effectively. Some of these exchanges were facilitated by convivial gatherings such as the festival closing dinners at the Ananda Indian restaurant located in the shopping centre, upstairs from the cinema. These gatherings allowed festival organisers, volunteers, guests, patrons and members of the audience to come together and to connect and communicate in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere while indulging in Indian cuisine. From the first year, it was clear that food was an important component of main festival events, such as opening and closing nights, gala dinners,

masterclasses and symposia. This was hardly surprising since I knew that food is extremely important in South Asian culture and is used to mark most social and religious occasions. Moreover, several festival sponsors were Indian restaurants which could effectively advertise their business through the event by offering samples of their cuisine. Food rituals also had the power of making the event more enticing, attracting wider audiences with the promise of culinary pleasures and sensuous experience of Indian culture: the promotion of many festival events actually stressed the availability of food. Furthermore, Joseph Sciorra, in his works on Italian migrants in the US, argues that ‘the convivial consumption of food’ can become ‘a strategy of investment in ... community ties aimed at maintaining group solidarity’ (2011:19). Thus the festival’s emphasis on food can be seen as an effective way to encourage a sense of community among the people involved in the event further stressing the multiple possibilities of enjoyment that it offered.

These rituals allowed participants to experience Indian culture at various sensory levels: not only visually and aurally at film screenings, but also through the aroma, taste and texture of Indian food. I particularly appreciated this dimension of the festival, since the importance of food and conviviality are very much part of my Italian cultural capital. The prominence of Indian food at the festival and related social gatherings was a familiar element that enhanced my feeling of belonging to the festival and suggested that the sense of commonality I felt with Indian people went beyond a shared interest in Indian cinema but included other cultural elements and sensuous experiences. These events thus presented different ways to negotiate my identity as an Italian Bollywood fan in Dublin, and discovering unexpected ties between Irish-based people and Hindi films. For example, at the closing dinner of the

2012 festival, I befriended Kamlesh, an Indian woman in her seventies who had been living in Dublin for over twenty years. Originally from the Pakistani city of Peshawar (formerly in British India), she moved to Bombay with her family when she was a child because of the Partition of India, where she became acquainted with prominent members of the Hindi film industry, who also had their roots in Peshawar. Kamlesh explained that her father, a wealthy businessman with no ties to the film industry, knew Prithviraj Kapoor – a pioneer of Indian theatre and Hindi cinema and patriarch of an influential family dynasty that shaped the Hindi film industry with five generations of famous actors, directors and producers. He was also friends with Prithviraj's son, acclaimed actor, director and producer Raj Kapoor, and with celebrated actor Dilip Kumar, who all became legendary figures of the golden age of Hindi cinema. Their friendship was facilitated by common roots and shared interests. Prithviraj Kapoor used to attend poetry readings organised by Kamlesh's father in Bombay in the 1950-60s. These events were called *mushairas*,²¹ and attracted numerous people from the film industry as many lyricists and scriptwriters were also poets. It was fascinating for me to hear Kamlesh's memories of being on the sets of famous films at R.K Studio²² as a young girl, adding a personal and 'real' dimension to people and films that shaped the history of Hindi film. Her enjoyment of those moments was palpable in the way she started singing a few lines of the song *Ek Bewafa Se Pyar Kiya* from *Awaara* (Tramp; Raj Kapoor, 1951), one of the most iconic films of Hindi cinema. Nominated for the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1953, *Awaara* was extremely successful both in India and abroad. The idea that she actually witnessed the filming of this song and could share this with me, made me feel privileged compared to thousands of film fans around the world who knew of the film but never had any contact with anybody involved in its production. Kamlesh also had

fond memories of celebrating Holi at Raj Kapoor's mansion in Bombay and of frequently visiting Dilip Kumar and his family, who were like relatives to her. Speaking to a person who grew up affectionately referring to iconic actor Dilip Kumar as 'Yusuf Uncle' added a human dimension to Hindi film celebrities who were almost mythical figures in my mind, serving to strengthen my emotional connection to Indian cinema.

The exploration of the Indian Film Festival of Ireland conducted in this chapter, suggests that the event occurs within the flow of historical and transnational processes prevalent in contemporary Ireland. The discussion has highlighted the commercial nature of the event and how it is used in cultural diplomacy to strengthen economic relations between India and Ireland, alongside the form of film co-productions it attempts to attract. My ethnographic involvement with the event was sustained by my active interest in Indian cinema and allowed me to examine how the festival circulates and manifests itself across different urban and social spaces within the city of Dublin. My role as a participant observer during five consecutive editions of the festival further enabled me to uncover the connections and transcultural exchanges that are facilitated by the event, foregrounding its role in fostering dialogue and meaningful interactions between Indians and westerners. The following chapter focuses on the effects and interactions produced by the filming of a Bollywood blockbuster in Dublin.

Notes

¹ Sherwani: a coat like garment, worn by men, fitted close to the body, of knee-length or longer and opening in front with button-fastenings.

² The Nehru jacket is a hip-length tailored coat with a mandarin collar. Its front modelled on the sherwani jacket worn by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India from 1947 to 1964.

³ The Film Festival Research Network (FFRN) is a loose connection of scholars working on issues related to film festivals, founded by Marijke de Valck and Skadi Loist in 2008. The FFRN aims to make festival research more available, to connect its diverse aspects and to foster interdisciplinary exchange between researchers as well as festival professionals. (<http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org>). [Accessed 15 September 2015].

⁴ Siraj appeared in the RTE drama series *Fair City*, where he played an Indian professor; in *The Clinic*, as a pharmacist; and *Glenroe*, as a restaurant owner. RTE stands for Raidió Teilifís Éireann which is a semi-state company and the national public service broadcaster of Ireland. It both produces programmes and broadcasts them on television, radio and the Internet. In 2015, Siraj also appeared in *Red Rock*, an Irish soap opera shown on TV3, a privately-owned Irish television network.

⁵ From the homepage of the IFFI website <http://indianfilmfestivalofireland.ie/> [Accessed 11 March 2011].

⁶ Abbreviation of Dublin Food Co-operative Society Limited. It is a food retailer based in a converted warehouse in The Liberties area in the Southside of Dublin city centre. It was founded in 1983 and is constituted as a consumer co-operative with a focus on organic and whole food products.

⁷ The Chester Beatty Library was established in Dublin in 1950 to house the art collection of mining magnate, Sir Alfred Chester Beatty. The museum displays manuscripts, miniature paintings, prints, drawings, rare books and houses an impressive collection of Islamic and Far Eastern artefacts.

⁸ Swan Cinema (now Omniplex Rathmines) is part of the Ward Anderson Group, the largest cinema chain in Ireland which operates cinemas across Ireland and Northern Ireland. In 2013 the group was divided into two main chains Omniplex Cinemas and Irish Multiplex Cinemas.

⁹ A Bindi is a forehead decoration worn in South Asia. Traditionally it is a bright dot of red colour applied in the centre of the forehead close to the eyebrows, but can also consist of other colours with a sign or piece of jewellery.

¹⁰ Rouse, E. (1989) *Understanding Fashion* Quoted in Kay, K. (2013) ‘Can Western Women Carry Off the Sari – And Should They even Try?’ The Guardian.com 10 November 2013. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2013/nov/10/western-women-sari-Indian-dress> [Accessed 20 April 2015].

¹¹ Cricket was introduced to Ireland by the English at the beginning of the 19th century and quickly became very popular. However, in the 1880s, the social unrest caused by the Land War, resulting in disputes between landlords and unfairly treated Irish tenants, prompted the Gaelic Athletic Association to issue a ban on what it considered ‘foreign games’. As a result, cricket did not regain popularity until the ban was lifted in the 1970s.

¹² Notes from an interview with Mr. Ramamoorthy, then First Secretary of the Indian Embassy (January 2011).

¹³ The term ‘cinema effect’ was originally used by Sean Cubitt (2004) to indicate symbolic productions distinct from the moving image, often found beyond the cinematic space.

¹⁴ The Symposium comprised of discussions on Indian cinema involving guest directors Anusha Rizvi and Partho Sen Gupta, alongside a panel on Indian film in diasporic contexts with contributions from UK based academics Rajinder Dudrah and Sarita Malik and visual artist Alnoor Mitha.

¹⁵ Boisvert, A. (2003) ‘On Bricolage: Assembling Culture with Whatever Comes to Hand’ *Horizon Zero*, Issue 8 2003 Available at: <http://www.horizonzero.ca/textsite/remix.php?tlang=0&is=8&file=4> [Accessed 25 April 2015].

¹⁶ Mary O’Sullivan Interview 9 November 2011.

¹⁷ The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) is a body created by the government of Ireland in 2009, in response to the Irish financial crisis and the deflation of the Irish property bubble. NAMA acquires property development loans from Irish banks in return for government purple debts bonds, with a view to improving the availability of credit in the Irish economy.

¹⁸ Interview with Harman Singh, General manager at Movies@Dundrum (13 August 2013)

¹⁹ I did not record my conversation with Liz, for this reason I am reporting her comments indirectly.

²⁰ Kannada is a Dravidian language spoken predominantly by Kannada people in the South Indian state of Karnataka, and by linguistic minorities in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala and Goa.

²¹ *Mushaira* is a Urdu word used to define a symposium where poets perform their works. *Mushairas* are prominent elements of the culture of Pakistan and North India.

²² R.K Studio is a famous film studio located in Chambur, Mumbai which was established by and named after Raj Kapoor. It hosted numerous productions by R.K Films, Raj Kapoor’s

production company including *Aag* (Fire, 1948), *Awaara* (Tramp, 1951), *Boot Polish* (1954), *Jagte Raho* (Stay Awake, 1956) and *Shri 420* (Mister 420, 1955).

Chapter Four

Filming a Bollywood Blockbuster in Dublin: *Ek Tha Tiger*



Fig.22: Extras and dancers during filming at Trinity College (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Introduction

On a cloudy October day in 2011 an unusual scene unfolded on Dublin's Trinity College's Parliament Square: large crowds of mainly South Asian onlookers waited eagerly behind fences enclosing the area between the refectory and the Campanile (bell tower). A brass band and bagpipers surrounded by people of various ages, some dressed in formal clothes with leprechaun hats, others in casual clothes and Kilkenny hurling¹ gear, stood on the steps of the refectory. Members of an Indian film crew were gathered on the left side of the refectory with imposing film equipment including a large crane and a steadycam operator on a Segway. As the notes of Celtic bagpipes filled the air, everyone standing on the steps waved their hands. A few seconds later

the brass band and the bagpipers moved toward the centre of the square; simultaneously a camera mounted on the crane followed them with a sweeping movement. Suddenly Ahmed Khan, the film's choreographer, shouted 'cut', echoed by Karishma Kohli, the first assistant director, with a loud 'cut it', and the musicians returned to their positions. Ahmed Khan shouted some directions in Hindi to the camera operators and then went to talk with Kabir Khan and Salman Khan, respectively the film's director and protagonist, who were standing close to the crane. When Ahmed Khan walked back and nodded to Karishma Kohli, she shouted 'Challo, challo let's go! Rolling!' and the whole sequence started again.

The above scene was part of the shooting of a song sequence entitled '*Banjaara*' (Wanderer), included in *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012) – a Hindi film directed by Kabir Khan and produced by Aditya Chopra of the renowned Indian production company Yash Raj Films. *Ek Tha Tiger* features Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif, two major Bollywood stars. The plot of the film is characterised by a mix of various genres and punctuated by song and dance sequences, as is popular in Bollywood cinema. *Ek Tha Tiger* can actually be described as a romantic thriller, where an Indian secret agent called Tiger (played by Salman Khan) is sent to Ireland to prevent a Trinity College professor from selling missile technology secrets to Pakistan. Tiger falls in love with the professor's caretaker Zoya (played by Katrina Kaif), who is studying at the fictional Trinity College Dance Academy.² His secret mission causes the couple to embark on a journey across the world.

The film was produced across several countries including India, Ireland, Turkey, Cuba and Thailand and is the first big budget Bollywood production ever to be staged in

Ireland. Other Indian films, such as the Tamil productions *Kaiyodu Kai* (Rajan Sharma, 2003); *Sachein* (John Mahendran, 2005); and *Ayodhya* (R. Jaiprakash, 2005) have produced song and dance sequences in Ireland in the past, while the 2009 Irish Bollywood short, *Moore Street Masala* (David O’Sullivan) was also filmed in Dublin (see chapter two). However, *Ek Tha Tiger* is to date the biggest Bollywood film to make extensive use of Dublin locations. For this very reason, the aim of this chapter is to examine the way the film impacted upon the city’s urban life and culture. I argue that the filming of a Bollywood blockbuster across the city of Dublin brings to the fore the relationship between popular Indian cinema and locality, highlighting the relevance of urban landscapes and city life in the filmmaking process and in the perception of the completed film. Tracing the links between the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* and the promotion of tourism to Ireland, I explore how the film was used to construct a ‘tourist gaze’ for prospective spectators and potential tourists. In so doing, I argue that by promoting and cultivating the anticipation of a given subjective experience of a country or in this case, an Irish urban location, cinematic representations can be mobilised in the service of ‘cultural tourism’, resulting in the creation of simplified, stereotyped and spectacular imagery constructions. What, this chapter asks, does Bollywood cinema’s spectacular presence in the Irish capital mean for the city and its inhabitants? How and to what end do Dublin’s distinctive buildings and landmarks become the backdrop for a commercial Hindi film?

Film scholars have commented on the relevance of urban spaces in the meaning and perception of film (Grimaud 2003; Dudrah 2006, 2010; Srinivas 2010a, 2010b). Lakshmi Srinivas, in her ethnographic study of cinema in India, foregrounds the ‘significance of the urban setting for the cinema experience, for moviegoers and film

business insiders' (2010b: 189). Srinivas also argues that current scholarship does not provide 'an understanding of contemporary cinema as it is shaped by the places in which the movie experience is elaborated' (2010b: 190). Although her study mainly engages with exhibition spaces and posters of films across cities, I contend that this notion also applies to the actual presence of film sets in urban environments. This chapter provides an analysis of the interaction of a Bollywood film in the making with Dublin's locales and material infrastructure, addressing the significance of this presence in the context of everyday urban life, alongside how the film was perceived by people who interacted with it at different levels. Additionally, this chapter critically narrates the arc of the film's production, demonstrating how the genesis of the film is linked with national policies and strategies aimed at attracting tourism and investments to Ireland by instrumentalising this film. The following discussion foregrounds the intersecting concerns between the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* and Irish national institutions, which benefited from the choice of Dublin as a location for the production of the film.

Hindi Films and Non-Indian Locations: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship

The use of locations outside India is not uncommon in Hindi films. Since the 1960s, Bollywood films have incorporated sequences filmed in faraway locations. A famous example is *Sangam* (Confluence, Raj Kapoor, 1964), which was produced in Italy, Switzerland and France, establishing a trend for films set in Europe. This tendency has intensified in contemporary films targeting Non Resident Indians (NRIs) and middle class South Asians, which often showcase tourist landmarks and transnational lifestyles. At present, it is customary for Hindi films to be set in the UK, America or Australia, among other countries. This is usually done to enhance Indian audiences'

enjoyment of the film through the display of landscapes remote from their everyday experience.³ As Grimaud explains in his ethnography of filmmaking in Bombay: ‘the viewer takes pleasure in identifying places, but forgets them as it becomes clear why they were chosen: a bit of exoticism’(2003: 227). Exoticisation and the ‘tourist gaze’ are terms that often arise in discussion regarding western representations of other cultures. When elements of Indian culture and landscapes are portrayed in non-Indian film productions, they are likely to raise academic debates that negatively highlight their ‘exoticism’ and ‘tourist gaze’, which makes them appealing to western audiences not familiar with Indian culture. This often applies to films made by South Asian migrant filmmakers resident in Western Europe and North America such as Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Gurinder Chadha. An instance of this criticism can be found in the way Laura Marks refers to ‘the rise of director Mira Nair to panderer of cultural exoticism for white audiences’ (2000: 4), arguing that films such as *The Perez Family* (Mira Nair, 1995) and *Kama Sutra* (Mira Nair, 1996) are ‘but an example of how the commercialization of multiculturalism tends to evacuate its critical effects’ (ibid.).

Shohini Chaudhuri, in response to the accusation of exoticism levelled at Deepa Mehta’s *Water* (2005), argues that ‘exoticisation is a common aesthetic strategy in world cinema and needs to be addressed without the customary moral condemnation’ (2009: 8). She further suggests that these practices are not exclusively employed by western film industries, since ‘catering to a taste for spectacle and exotica has been a long-standing strategy of Indian popular films’ (ibid.: 10). In fact, even if aesthetics of exoticism are usually discussed as appealing to western audiences, Indian popular films have always employed production strategies that in turn allow Indian audiences to see faraway countries as exotic. As discussed earlier, Bollywood films have been

using overseas locations to attract wider audiences since the 1960s. This is emphasised by Chaudhuri when she states:

While the “tourist gaze” might be characterised as a particular mode of vision signalling aspiration and access to the privileges of modernity and globalization, it is neither exclusively “white” nor “Western”. ... the so-called “tourist gaze” is returned in Bollywood sequences in Western metropolises.
(2009: 10)

Bollywood sequences set abroad thus allow Indian audiences to ‘return the tourist gaze’ to recognisable tourist landmarks that represent dream holiday destinations, invoking the appeal of glossy, consumerist lifestyles. London and Switzerland in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (The Brave Hearted Will Take Away the Bride, Aditya Chopra, 1995), New York in *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (Nikhil Advani, 2003), and Sydney in *Dil Chahta Hai* (The Heart Desires, Farhan Akhtar, 2001), are illustrative of the way western locations are portrayed as desirable holiday destinations for Indian audiences.⁴ Jigna Desai argues that these representations are linked to ‘the rising dominance of Bollywood and the new urban middle class in India engendered by liberalization’ (2008: 347), suggesting that wealth and consumerism are not just the privilege of white western people and neither is the mobilisation of the ‘tourist gaze’.

A further example of these dynamics at play is the Yash Raj Films production, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sadness, Karan Johar, 2001), which was mostly set in London portraying the British capital’s tourist landmarks and the transnational lifestyles of Indians living abroad. For such reasons it was hugely successful, both in India and in the UK. Exploring new locations and exhibiting places hitherto not seen in Indian film is a deliberate choice of Bollywood film producers. As Aman Agrawal, a production executive of Yash Raj Films

explained in an interview, ‘this strategy allows the film to become international and encourages people outside India to get connected to Bollywood’.⁵ Significantly, he further pointed out that their films are mainly geared to Indian audiences, so overseas locations are primarily meant to ‘appeal to audiences in India who love to see new and unusual places’.⁶ The links between travel and cinema have been explored by Amy Corbin in her article ‘Travelling through Cinema Space’, where she develops the notion of cinema spectatorship as a travel experience. Corbin argues that ‘film spectatorship is specifically touristic, and not just a generalised virtual travel experience, because of its entertainment value and its status as an experience you pay for’ (2014: 316). In the following section and throughout the chapter, I explore the links between virtual travel in the form of film spectatorship, allied to the promotion of traditional tourism.

Yash Chopra, founder of Yash Raj Films, is famous for using Swiss locations characterised by idyllic green valleys and snow-capped mountains as a backdrop for love scenes in his films. Indian films have a history of setting romantic scenes in mountainous areas and for many years the region of Kashmir, located in the north west of South Asia, served that purpose. Since the late 1980s, however, Kashmir could not be used for filming any longer due to an ongoing territorial conflict between India and Pakistan. As Qureshi explains, ‘Kashmir's scenery and landscape became so popular that lakes, trees and mountains became synonymous with romance in Bollywood’.⁷ For this reason filmmakers resorted to similar landscapes located overseas to effectively convey the romantic feel in their films. Initially, just a few song sequences were set abroad while the plot was set in India. In the 1990s, however, due to economic liberalisation policies, wealthy Indians living both inside and outside

the Indian subcontinent started to be seen as potential consumers and investors in the Indian national economy. During those years, Hindi films began setting entire storylines in overseas locations to target growing communities of middle class South Asians and NRIs.

One such example is *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (Aditya Chopra, 1995), a romantic comedy about two NRIs living in London who meet and fall in love during a rail trip across Europe. The film was also produced by Yash Chopra and filmed in London, Switzerland and India, becoming one of the most successful productions of Hindi cinema. Films such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* boosted tourism to Switzerland to a great extent and Swiss tourism bodies capitalised on the keen interest of Bollywood fans to visit film locations. On a trip marketed as the ‘Enchanted Journey’ tourists can watch DVDs of Bollywood film scenes shot in Switzerland while travelling from site to site.⁸ The contribution of Yash Chopra’s films to Swiss tourism was so significant that Swiss Jungfrau Railways inaugurated a train named after him; relatedly, a lake in the Alpenrausch was named Chopra Lake as a symbol of gratitude by the Swiss government. Switzerland thus far has provided locations for over two hundred Hindi films, attracting hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. Switzerland does not have historical ties to India nor does it host large Indian communities, suggesting that the vast majority of the Indians visiting the country are tourists attracted by the lush locations appearing in Hindi films.

Over the years it became apparent that Bollywood productions set abroad played an important role in increasing the influx of Indian tourists to the countries featured in the films. By hosting Hindi film productions, governments had the opportunity to use

cinema to promote tourism to their countries among Indian film audiences. This notion was reinforced by the constant growth of Indian the middle class since the 1990s. According to a forecast by Ernst and Young,⁹ the number of Indian middle class households will almost double by 2020, which means that more and more people will be able to afford a consumeristic lifestyle including holidays abroad. Reflecting on representations of the West in Bollywood films, Kaur notes that ‘economic liberalisation saw the emergence of a globalised Indian middle class. Their conspicuous consumption patterns revealed a highly materialistic and uninhibited urban middle class, constantly fuelled by growing capitalist ambitions’ (2002: 205).

Following the example of Switzerland, other European countries tried to secure Bollywood investments as a way to boost tourism from India. Spain has benefited from Zoya Akhtar’s *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011), a blockbuster which caused visa applications from India to double shortly after its release by featuring several major Spanish landmarks.¹⁰ The film boosted Spanish Tourism from India by 65 per cent in 2011 compared to the previous year.¹¹ *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* effectively showcases Spain’s natural beauty, its tourist infrastructures and its culture as the protagonists take part in the tomato fight ‘La Tomatina’ in the San Fermin festival bull race and in flamenco dance routines. The Spanish tourism board used *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* to market Spain and ‘never before has so holistic and concerted an effort been made on the part of a country’s tourism authority and an Indian filmmaker to fully integrate the marketing of a destination into the production, plot and promotion of a major movie’.¹²

Irish government agencies soon became aware of India's rapid economic growth and of the potential of Hindi films to attract Indian tourists to Ireland. The Irish Film Commissioner, Naoise Barry, explained in an interview that since 2004 the Irish Film Board and Tourism Ireland have been trying to build relationships with leading producers of Bollywood films with limited success until *Ek Tha Tiger* was secured.¹³ Thus when Kabir Khan expressed an interest in filming *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin, the Irish government was eager to capitalise on the high profile of the film to promote Ireland as a tourist destination and as a location for more Bollywood films. Since *Ek Tha Tiger* is the first big budget Bollywood production to make extensive use of Dublin locations to date, it is particularly interesting to study the way it was used to promote investments and tourism to Ireland.

Notably, an important part of the activity of the Irish Film Board is actually to promote Ireland as a location for international film and television productions. This strategy, however, has been criticised as a way to exploit the country for mere financial gain rather than nurturing indigenous Irish filmmaking talent. According to Pettitt, 'Ireland presented and exploited itself as a picturesque location-base (despite the weather) for US and British productions to send over visiting directors and crew enticed by favourable tax relief' (2000: 39-40). Significant tax incentives are in place to attract international film industries and Section 481 of the Irish Taxes Consolidation Act offers up to 28 per cent tax relief on Irish expenditure for international TV and film ventures co-produced with Ireland. As a result, Ireland has a long history of hosting Hollywood and UK productions, providing locations for large-budget productions such as *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998), *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995) and *Far and Away* (Ron Howard, 1992).

Although these films provided employment for Irish crews, bringing investment into the economy, in most cases they merely used Irish locations as doubles for other countries. When Hollywood productions have been filmed in Ireland, it has been argued that locations are commonly reduced to a series of nostalgic and idyllic images, which does not reflect the sociocultural complexities of the country. As Ging contends, ‘many of the films produced represent American notions of Irishness rather than articulating the realities of Irish existence, past or present’ (2002: 190). These problematic representations of Irishness have dominated Irish cinema from its beginnings through well-known international productions such as *The Man of Aran* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1934) and *The Quiet Man* (John Ford, 1952). According to Luke Gibbons, themes such as ‘the idealization of the landscape, the persistence of the past, the lure of violence and its ominous association with female sexuality’ (1996: 117) have dominated Irish cinema since the beginning of the twentieth century. Themes identified by Gibbons have arguably influenced the way the country has been perceived internationally and consequently boosted tourism in some measure.¹⁴ In this chapter I demonstrate how this strategy was employed in the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* to create appealing imagery aimed at attracting tourists to Ireland.

The Irish Film Commissioner explained that Tourism Ireland¹⁵ worked with the Irish Film Board and Dublin City Council to secure *Ek Tha Tiger* for Ireland, in addition to Trinity College and other agencies to help facilitate filming in the city at reduced costs, since the film involved complex and expensive scenes, yet did not have the budget of a Hollywood film. Everybody came on board and waived their fees as they saw the potential of what the film could do in terms of publicity, even if they could

not imagine that it would be so successful. Before hosting *Ek Tha Tiger*, the Irish Film Board and Tourism Ireland had limited success in attracting high profile Indian film production to Ireland. As Naoise Barry explains:

It became clear that India was, and continues to be, an important emerging market for Irish tourism ... that film was an important medium by which Indians decide where they are going to go on vacation ... So we began working eight years ago with the Tourism Ireland office in Mumbai to try to identify the leading producers of Bollywood feature films and we began working to build relationships with those companies. And in the intervening years we had limited success, and that success was limited to small elements from bigger movies. It was never the whole movie, only a song and dance sequence. ... and the movies those song and dance sequences were in, would be smaller movies, not necessarily made by Mumbai based companies, but actually companies based in the south of India, in Chennai.

(Interview 13 April 2012)

Having *Ek Tha Tiger* set in Ireland thus represented a big leap forward in the country's attempts to secure Hindi film industry investments, providing a unique opportunity to showcase the beauty of Ireland to a vast number of potential Indian tourists.¹⁶ For this reason, the film became part of an advertising campaign aimed at raising awareness of Ireland as a tourist destination among Indians. Even if India is home to a third of the world's poor,¹⁷ tourism authorities are aware of the presence of affluent Indian audiences with high levels of disposable income, which are also the most sought after clientele for multiplex movie theatres. Athique and Hill analysed the links between the emergence of multiplexes in India and the increasing purchasing power of India's middle classes: 'according to the multiplexes chain, their clientele represents a much more select segment of the middle classes – a segment that can afford to spend above the odds and on non-essentials' (2010: 163). Characterised by ticket prices that are 'usually more than triple the rates charged in single-screen theatres' (Ganti 2013: 48), multiplexes initially appeared to be mainly vehicles for non-commercial films appealing to educated, middle class urban audiences. These

films were characterised by smaller budgets and unconventional themes, ‘which soon got labeled “multiplex cinema,” and attributed a causal relationship between the sites of film exhibition and cinematic practice’ (Ganti 2012: 111). However, multiplexes proved to be instrumental for the domestic success of many recent Hindi blockbusters: ‘*Bodyguard* (2011), *Agneepath* (Path of Fire; 2012) and *Rowdy Rathore* (2012) have each generated more than one billion rupees at the domestic box office’ (Ganti 2013: 51). For this reason, a Hindi blockbuster set in Ireland was guaranteed to advertise the country among wealthy audiences who had the financial means to visit the country.

Kabir Khan, the film’s director, was instrumental in choosing Dublin as a location for *Ek Tha Tiger*. In an interview he explained that he needed a unique location – a prestigious college with impressive buildings as a backdrop for the storyline and preferred not to use a British university, since they had appeared many times before in Hindi cinema. Kabir Khan commented: ‘when I was writing the script of *Ek Tha Tiger*, I needed a university of repute to set a character in, that’s how Trinity College came about’.¹⁸ The director had been to Trinity College in 1995 to interview then President Mary Robinson and was impressed by the architecture of the place, so he decided to use it as a location for the film. As Naoise Barry recalls: ‘it was very good luck on our part in that the first third of the movie takes place in a university ... in this case Kabir knew about Trinity College Dublin, so he called me and asked if we could host a visit for him and his creative team’.¹⁹ However, the decision to use Dublin as a location was motivated by the script and by the director’s choice rather than by effective advertising campaigns or incentives offered by government agencies. As Avtar Panesar, Vice President of International Operations at Yash Raj Films, confirmed in an interview: ‘everything is really driven by the script and ... what the

director wants to do with it; so it's never a case of we always want to shoot at a particular place; if it fits the script, if it works, we then make use of the country as a location'.²⁰

When Yash Raj Films contacted Trinity College enquiring about the possibility to film *Ek Tha Tiger* on campus, the university had been closed to film crews for almost twenty years. However, Vice-Provost Michael Marsh agreed to the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*, viewing the potential of this project as an advertising tool for the university. In fact, the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* was included in a Trinity College promotional video and delegations from Trinity College went to India upon the film's release to conduct a promotional campaign aimed at attracting prospective Indian students. Details on how the film was used as a promotional tool for Trinity College are addressed later in the chapter.

Advertising Ireland Through Bollywood: *Ek Tha Tiger* as a Promotional Tool

As previously mentioned, *Ek Tha Tiger* became an important promotional prospect for Tourism Ireland. The Irish government worked closely with Yash Raj Films who supported Ireland's advertising campaign as part of their production agreement to shoot the film in Ireland. As Panesar noted, 'we came up with many promos which highlighted Ireland as part of the campaign here, and the Irish tourism board actually played these promos out here in India ... because that's the market they wanted to target'.²¹ Yash Raj Films agreed to the film being used to promote Ireland in order to benefit from reduced fees for filming on location, however, they did not receive any funding from the Irish government. Barry stated in an interview that the production benefited from tax incentives through section 481 of the Irish Taxes Consolidation

Act, along with complimentary visas and reduced location fees, but did not receive any direct funding from Ireland.²²

The collaboration between Tourism Ireland and Yash Raj Films in the creation of imagery designed to cultivate curiosity among Indian viewers by portraying Ireland in an alluring way, suggests that the construction and development of people's gaze as tourists depends on specific marketing and communication strategies. To this end, in their discussion of the development of the tourist gaze in relation to the promotion of tourism, Urry and Larsen argue that 'the concept of the gaze highlights that looking is a learned ability and that the pure and innocent eye is a myth' (Urry and Larsen 2011: 1). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the tourist gaze is mobilised in Hindi films set in western locations which are shown as exciting holiday destinations through imagery of tourist landmarks and hedonistic lifestyles. Ravinder Kaur explored the depiction of western locations in contemporary Bollywood films, suggesting that, since the economic liberalisation of the 1990s, Bollywood films have been telling stories of upper/middle class Indians living abroad and the western backgrounds of films shot for example in the Swiss Alps, New York, or Sydney provided a sharp contrast to highlight the Indian values promoted by the narrative (2002). According to Kaur, 'the search for 'authentic' Indian values in the Hindi films, however unintentionally, reveals the long-held images of the West and the eventual making of a celluloid Occident'(2002: 206). Western locations are thus used simply as lush and prosperous backgrounds for narratives centred on Indian tradition and family values geared at the growing Indian middle-classes of post-liberalisation India. In a similar way, the images of Ireland associated with *Ek Tha Tiger* mobilise a superficial view of the city as charming, colourful and cosmopolitan, encouraging the

viewer/tourist to focus on these aspects of the place rather than delving into the complexities of Irish history and society.



Fig. 23: Hurling and the St. Patrick's Day Festival in dance sequence, *Ek Tha Tiger* (Photograph: Tourism Ireland)

Later in this chapter, I discuss how the filming of the song sequence deliberately highlighted traditional elements of Irish local culture and folklore (Fig. 23). These images were subsequently circulated across the internet by Tourism Ireland upon the film's release to advertise the country. A few days before the release of the film, Tourism Ireland Chief, Niall Gibbons stated that:

There is tremendous excitement in India, and among the Indian Diaspora, about this week's release of *Ek Tha Tiger* and we are confident that it will help increase awareness of the island of Ireland among Indian travellers who are always on the look-out for new destinations to explore.²³

Irish Tourism authorities are acutely aware that carefully crafted images of Ireland can potentially lure tourists to visit the country. To this end, the imagery of Ireland promoted by *Ek Tha Tiger* points to the power of institutions that influence what the viewer should see and know about a country. Urry and Larsen examine these dynamics using Foucauldian notions of surveillance and power relations: 'following Foucault, we can see this making of seductive images and destinations as an institutional mediation by "expert gazes" within which spectacle and surveillance

intersect and power-knowledge relations are played out' (Hollingshead 1999; Cheong and Miller 2000 cited in Urry and Larsen 2011: 173). The way Dublin is framed in *Ek Tha Tiger* reveals how the 'expert gaze' of filmmakers can be complicit in constructing a tourist gaze for audiences. In fact, overt advertisement for Dublin was discernible across action sequences set in Dublin city centre, showcasing Dublin's most touristic areas including the Luas train.



Fig. 24: Film still from *Ek Tha Tiger* - Close up of sign of the Temple Bar Trading Company



Fig. 25: Film still from *Ek Tha Tiger* - Tiger passing by a Guinness advertisement



Fig. 26: Film still from *Ek Tha Tiger* - Tiger stopping the Luas

In one chase sequence the protagonist follows a Pakistani secret agent across the Temple Bar²⁴ area; a close up of the sign of the Temple Bar Trading Company (Fig. 24) helps locate this scene in the city, suggesting the importance of the location, even if this shot has no real relevance in the narrative of the film. This was clearly a way to highlight the shopping opportunities offered by the area and to justify the disruption to businesses caused by the film sets. ‘Dublin shop owners in general had a positive attitude towards the filming and were happy to come on board as they saw the potential of what the film could do’, explained Dermot Cleary, the film’s Location Manager.²⁵

A run down area at risk of demolition until the 1980s, Temple Bar is now one of Dublin’s main tourist attractions and is widely advertised as ‘Dublin’s cultural and entertainment quarter’ and as a site of cultural and historical significance. Temple Bar, however, is what Maeve Connolly defines as ‘a large scale example of staged-authenticity’ (1998: 2). Interestingly, the colourful shop fronts and impressive facades that characterise the area are actually visible material remnants of the sets of a big

budget Hollywood production, *Far and Away* (1992). Thus film sets belonging to an American filmic representation of Ireland are actually advertised as authentic and quintessentially Irish. Connolly explained that even if the film ‘was received as highly ‘unauthentic’, the sets were retained by popular demand and became part of the scenery of Temple Bar’ (1998: 2). This can be linked to an attempt of the locals to control and direct the tourist gaze in order to prevent tourists from knowing aspects of Irish life and society perceived as irrelevant to outsiders: ‘apparently authentic back-stages may be artificially created by local people and entrepreneurs to redirect the gaze and hence reduce the degree of intrusion’ (Crawshaw and Urry 1997: 178).

The exteriors and interiors of traditional pubs are shown during the film’s chase sequence; here signs advertising Guinness beer (Fig. 25) and a medium shot of a gentleman sipping a pint of the same beverage suggest that drinking alcohol is a distinctive and integral element of Irish social life and culture. Across Temple Bar, the constant advertisement of beer and spirits encourages tourists to consume these beverages to participate in an authentic experience of Irishness. These representations, however, are not unproblematic given that they are linked to negative Irish stereotypes widespread in England, Ireland’s former coloniser. Mary J. Hickman, in her analysis of the experience of Irish migrants in Britain during the 20th Century, contends that ‘English people continued to associate the Irish with drink, fighting and dirt’ (1998: 298). Moreover, ‘drunkenness has provided one of the core stereotypes of Irishness; its addiction being linked to the supposed frail control which Irish people have over their bodies’ (Nagle 2009: 118). Therefore, it can be argued that the touristic promotion of Ireland is organised around derogatory representations of Irish culture.

More examples of these dynamics are provided later in the chapter, in my analysis of the film's dance sequence at Trinity College.

In a sequence showing the character Tiger trying to stop a Luas train (Fig. 26), the Luas is shown moving along the Quays²⁶ despite the fact that in reality there is no Luas line in that area; this was done to show different landscapes of the city and to make the scene more spectacular. The action scene on the tram was well received by viewers in Ireland, alongside audiences in India who perceived Dublin as a vibrant and modern city. The scene was particularly enjoyable for extras working on the film. Mary, who worked as an extra on set for two days, commented: 'we were more engaged in doing a little bit of acting compared to other extra jobs, where we were just in the background ... but in this you actually had to show emotions and there was a bit of running, and it was more dramatic ... it was good fun'.²⁷ These sequences reinforce the potential of film to dramatise, if not fantasise, the structure of the city and to focus on specific elements of urban landscapes influencing the perception of the place not only for prospective tourists, but also for Dublin's inhabitants, who clearly enjoyed seeing their city transformed in the film.



Fig. 27: Advertisement linked to *Ek Tha Tiger* on Tourism Ireland website upon the film's release (Image: www.tourismireland.com)

Irish government agencies were determined to exploit the film to advertise Ireland among South Asian communities inside and outside of India. In fact, Tourism Ireland teamed up with Yash Raj Films and Ethiad airlines, organising an extensive advertising campaign aimed at audiences in India and the Gulf countries (Fig. 27). They used social events to coincide with the release of the film, including television and digital advertising and organised competitions through social media such as Facebook and online booking platforms such as Yatra.com. They also persuaded a Dubai based Radio station to launch a competition to win a trip to Ireland by creating a story inspired by *Ek Tha Tiger*.

Some six days following the launch of the film on 15 August 2012, Tourism Ireland's Indian Facebook page had gained over 23,000 fans, up from 10,000 before the release;²⁸ over one year later the page had about 90,000 fans. In the months following the release of *Ek Tha Tiger* in 2012, Ireland's Central Statistics Office recorded an increase in tourism from long-haul destinations – visits to the Tourism Ireland website

further increased since the release of the film.²⁹ Irish tourism authorities, however, were determined to continue targeting Indian tourists and to further capitalise on the success of the finished film. For example, in January 2014 Tourism Ireland organised their first-ever India seminar aimed at Irish tourism enterprises interested in welcoming Indian tourists. During the seminar Irish agencies declared their aim of increasing the numbers of Indian tourists visiting Ireland. Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar,³⁰ commented: ‘India is one of the fastest-growing tourism markets in the world. Although the numbers visiting Ireland are relatively small, the Indian market has significant potential for growth’.³¹ Among the strategies in place to attract tourists building on the massive success of *Ek Tha Tiger*, Tourism Ireland is working on a *Ek Tha Tiger* trail of Dublin. Tourism Ireland is determined to continue their collaboration with the Irish Film Board and Northern Ireland Screen, targeting top Bollywood producers and highlighting the locations available around the island of Ireland.³² These notions suggest that *Ek Tha Tiger* definitely established a foundation for future collaborations between the Indian entertainment industry and Irish creative and cultural industries.

Notably, another Hindi production *Teraa Surroor* (Your Passion, Shawn Arranha, 2016) featuring Bollywood actor and music composer Himesh Reshammiya, was filmed in Dublin in September 2015. *Teraa Surroor* had a much smaller budget compared to *Ek Tha Tiger* and it did not include spectacular dance sequences or major Bollywood stars. For such reasons it did not attract as much attention from the media or from fans and was not actively used to promote Ireland as a tourist destination. However, Irish producer Kathy Horgan, whose company Dark Window Media provided location services to the production, confirmed that filming *Teraa Surroor* in

Dublin was a positive experience for both the Indian and the Irish production teams. She explained that *Teraa Surror* was secured through a smaller Indian production which was filmed in County Kerry in the West of Ireland in 2015.³³ These developments indicate that the collaboration between Indian and Irish film industries is constantly increasing, albeit through a series of small-scale productions.

Promoting Trinity College in India

Trinity College was founded in 1592 by Queen Elizabeth I and it is Ireland's oldest and most prestigious university. It was chosen as a location for the film especially for its monumental historic buildings. The university has longstanding links to South Asia, first established with the inauguration of the chair of Oriental Languages in 1762. It has been regularly hosting international students from India since the 19th century, and in 2009 the Trinity College South Asia Initiative was launched to strengthen the university's relationship with India. The prominent role of Trinity College in *Ek Tha Tiger*'s storyline was crucially part of a promotional campaign already in place at Trinity College and linked to government agencies eager to attract Indian students. As Olivia Waters of the Trinity College Global Relations Office noted:

India has taken on a new level, not just here in Trinity but in Ireland: Education in Ireland, the brand that is run by Enterprise Ireland, see India as a huge marketplace for Ireland. Activity has really ramped up in this area. So we have been working in India, but *Ek Tha Tiger* gave us a platform to improve our visibility and raise our profile around the country.

(Interview 4 October 2012)

For this reason, the university's Global Relations Office arranged for the making of a promotional video for Trinity College³⁴ including interviews with South Asian students, lecturers, crew members, featuring scenes of the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*

around campus and highlighting the way students had the opportunity to interact with the film's production (Fig. 28).



Fig. 28: Film stills from the Trinity College promotional video *Bollywood Comes to Trinity College Dublin*

Several other internationally renowned films have included scenes shot around campus: for example, the Jedi Library in *Star Wars Episode II* (2002) is the Long Room, the main chamber of the Trinity College Old Library; *Educating Rita* (1983) was filmed in Trinity College; in *Michael Collins* (1996) the Dail debate was filmed in the 1937 Reading Room. As Trinity College's Vice Provost for Global Relations, Jane Olhmyer, explained in an interview: 'we always use a film as a point of reference for prospective students'.³⁵ However, *Ek Tha Tiger* was the first film with an overt Trinity College storyline, it thus had the potential to be more effective in granting visibility to the university. Upon the release of the film on 15 August 2012, delegations from Trinity College went to India to conduct a promotional campaign aimed at attracting prospective students; special screenings of *Ek Tha Tiger* were hosted in five Indian

cities Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Calcutta, and Delhi. Information on the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* was also included on the university's website.³⁶ As Ohlmeyer recalls: 'we worked very closely with Yash Raj films. They said, "we will give you access to clips for student recruitment purposes" and then we came up with this idea of actually holding screenings across India'.³⁷

In August 2012, Yash Chopra, founder of Yash Raj Films, also received a Trinity College honorary professorship for his significant contribution to Indian cinema.³⁸ A special screening of *Ek Tha Tiger* was held at Trinity College on 29 September 2012; on that occasion Kabir Khan also delivered a masterclass to several Trinity College film and drama students. Yash Chopra was also scheduled to deliver a masterclass at Trinity College later in 2012, but sadly passed away on 21 October 2012. The filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* proved to be beneficial in raising the profile of the university; as Olivia Waters confirmed: 'we have seen an increase in activity on the website from India, an increase in applications for our postgraduate scholarships, an increase in interest from schools that we would have had relationships with'.³⁹

Media Engagement with *Ek Tha Tiger*

As Bollywood productions are unprecedented in Ireland, the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* received considerable media attention and was praised for promoting Dublin as a tourist destination, for injecting approximately 1.5 million Euro into the economy and for creating over 1000 short-term jobs during the recession.⁴⁰ While *Ek Tha Tiger* was being filmed in Dublin, news about its production was regularly reported by RTE⁴¹ and Newstalk⁴² and several articles appeared in *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent* and on FilmIreland.net (Fig. 29).⁴³

Bollywood Film ‘Ek Tha Tiger’ ‘(I am Tiger)’ Shoots in Temple Bar, Dublin in October

gordon | September 29, 2011 | Comments (0)

Tuesday 4th October 3pm to 8pm

Tiger runs through the streets. Tiger runs into temple Bar Pub.

All very easy shots with our Actor running down East Essex street. We will let all pedestrians go and not block the streets. We will place a table and chairs on roads adjacent to the Centra store and as Tiger runs out of Centra he knocks over table.

Sunday 9th October 6am – 2pm

Car stunt on Crampton Quay. South Quays closed from O’Connell bridge to Grattan Bridge from 6am until 2pm.

Thurs 13th October 8pm to 1am

Film Dance sequence down East Essex street at night.

Fig. 29: Updates about the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* on Filmireland.net

With constant updates aimed at raising awareness about the film’s production, the Irish media contributed in locating the film within the urban area of Dublin, often reminding people about the awaited song and dance sequences while mentioning shooting locations around the city. As discussed earlier in this chapter, many overseas film and television productions have often been filmed in Ireland, mainly due to the availability of tax breaks, but never before has a film been so heavily featured in the Irish media as *Ek Tha Tiger*. This can be linked to the previously mentioned strategies employed by the Irish tourism authorities to boost awareness of the film in the media, using it as a promotional tool. In any case, media attention helped embed the film in the very fabric of the city and in people’s everyday life; it also prepared them for the

temporary disruption filming in the city would cause. Rob, an Irish man in his twenties who worked on the film as a location trainee recalls:

People had heard of it. It was in the news regularly over the course of the production and that helped a lot for us. Once something is triggered in somebody's mind that they can connect with the media they tend to be a little more interested and like the idea of it.

(Interview 1 December 2011)

Filming in the City

For five weeks between September and October 2011, Dublin was punctuated with film shoots that briefly turned easily recognisable areas of the city centre, such as the streets between Trinity College and St Stephen's Green, Temple Bar and the Quays, into film sets. During that time it was common for people walking or driving around the city, to come across the *Ek Tha Tiger* crew filming various scenes of the film. The film sets were very conspicuous due to the use of bulky equipment and props; a crew of about a hundred people and large crowds of onlookers, temporarily transforming entire streets and actively bringing the film into urban spaces. The Bollywood film shoot brought familiar manifestations of South Asian popular culture to Dublin for a few days, encouraging material elements of Hindi film culture to temporarily inhabit unusual places and be experienced by audiences in tactile and multisensory ways. On the various sets, urban locales characterised by Georgian buildings, colourful Irish pubs, cobblestone pavements and inclement weather, were briefly inhabited by famous Bollywood stars, often engaged in spectacular stunts, running across bridges and streets, at times so close to the public that they could almost touch them. The air resonated with the sounds of filming directions shouted in a mixture of English and Hindi and the aroma of Indian snacks, such as pakoras, samosas and masala chai⁴⁴ prepared for the crew, lingered around the sets. The scenes filmed were often quite

elaborate, especially ones that were part of a song and dance sequence, needing- a lot of extras in various different costumes, as well as numerous props and large speakers blaring loud music. Particularly in areas surrounding central Grafton Street, it was very common to see members of a heavy metal band next to bagpipers wearing kilts, standing near to other extras dressed as builders and Irish policemen. At the same time, young people in colourful casual clothes were dancing behind the film protagonists; others were waving air balloons and inflatable Champagne bottles, while confetti was thrown in the air to the notes of a catchy rhythm mixing Celtic bagpipes and Hindi lyrics.

The multiple ways film sets stimulated the senses constitutes an example of the multi-sensorial experiences that ethnographers convey through their work (Stoller 1997; Howes 2005; Back 2007; Pink 2009). According to Stoller ‘it is especially important to incorporate into ethnographic works the sensuous body – its smells, tastes, textures, and sensations’ (1997: xv). My ethnographic experience was constituted by a kaleidoscope of extremely diverse sensations that were particularly noticeable during film shoots in Dublin city centre, especially in the Temple Bar area. While on set, I was often overwhelmed by the heat and luminosity of the large lights used to illuminate the sets; the unpleasant sensation of the wind and the rain on my skin; the feeling of the wet and slippery cobblestone under my feet; the loud voices of the crew members; the smell of food and beer coming from neighbouring restaurants and pubs, mixed with the smell of Indian food consumed on set; the glare of the reflective vests of the location personnel, that I also wore while volunteering on set; the colourful crowds of movie extras and onlookers in and around the sets; and of course the palpable excitement of Hindi film fans standing a few feet away from their heroes, all

added to this unique experience. The material manifestations of Bollywood embodied in the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger* engaged the audiences beyond the audio and visual senses, producing unique and tactile sensations of the city of Dublin. These sensations become embodied in the temporality of sites represented by the film sets, spread across the city of Dublin, producing transient and constantly changing urban cultural geographies.

Local Reaction to Filming

The presence of film sets around Dublin for over a month generated curiosity among Irish people, who had limited knowledge of Hindi cinema but happened to be passing by the locations and sometimes stopped to watch the filming. Many of them, who had heard about the film in the media, were pleased that Ireland was chosen as a location, saying that even if they were not usually interested in Bollywood cinema, they would watch the film when it came out. In general, most of the people who stopped and asked the location crew about the filming, had an awareness of Bollywood, which was considered quite surprising. As Rob recalls: ‘across socioeconomic areas and age groups, everybody seemed to have something in their mind about what it is, so even though nobody had ever watched a full Bollywood movie, everybody knew what it is, which is quite interesting’.⁴⁵ Many non-South Asian onlookers I spoke with had some knowledge of Bollywood or India; arguably evidencing the gradually increasing rise of Indian film culture in Dublin. Some people who had not heard about the film, asked questions about it and sometimes mentioned positive experiences of visiting India or meeting Indian people. For example Barry, a high School French teacher, recalled the time when he was working in London and living with a Sikh family. He was amazed

by the respect and devotion Asian children had for their parents and teachers, admiring the determination and dedication of Indian students based in the West.



Fig. 30: *Ek Tha Tiger* crew in a residential estate on Leinster Road, Dublin (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

When the crew was filming in a residential estate on Leinster Road, located in the Southside suburb of Rathmines, not many people were present around the set. Only a few fans turned up, probably because it was a closed location and there was little chance of getting close to Salman Khan, although during breaks he occasionally allowed Indian families with children to take photographs with him. Overall, it was a quiet day; myself and the other Trinity College students volunteering on set did not have much to do. We were chatting with crew members and some of us were unsuccessfully trying to take a photograph with the star. People living in the estate did not pay much attention to the filming and were occasionally looking out from their windows at the bulky film equipment placed on a green area a few meters away from

their homes (Fig. 30). It was very different from the hectic pace of filming during the previous days in Dublin city centre and some of the assistant directors also found time to play football with the few Irish children who were hired as background extras. On that particular day I spoke with Lesley, a middle aged Irish man who came to the estate to visit a friend and stopped to watch the filming. Surprised by the large size of the Indian crew, he inquired about their roles in the making of the film and I tried to answer his questions. Lesley told me that he had travelled to India in the past and really enjoyed his time over there. He was aware of Indian cultural events that were being organised around Dublin; he was also pleased by the emergence of the Indian community in Ireland, commenting that ethnic diversity can benefit Irish society.

Local Irish people often lingered around the sets, engrossed by the action and by the excitement of the fans, participating in the buzz created by a film that they may never see. A few were disturbed by the temporary traffic diversions or closure of streets, but in general they accepted and tried to accommodate the fleeting intrusion of Bollywood cinema in their lives and locality. Many people simply ignored the filming and kept on going about their business, suggesting that the magical world of film was immersed in the banality of everyday urban experiences of people carrying out mundane tasks. As Srinivas observes in her discussion of the presence of cinema in Indian cities, ‘fantasy worlds then are framed by and embedded in the mundane’ (2010a: 6). People were in general curious as to why Dublin was chosen as a location, since it does not resemble an Indian city, Steven recalls some of his exchanges with passersby: ‘you would have to explain “no, no it’s supposed to look like Dublin, it’s very real... this is Dublin and this is what they want to show”’. So that was interesting, people were actually quite taken aback when they found out’.⁴⁶ Several Irish people who came across the film

sets assumed that Dublin was supposed to represent England in the film and were pleasantly surprised to find out that *Ek Tha Tiger*'s storyline was deliberately set in Dublin.

The assumption that stories filmed in Dublin are actually set somewhere else is motivated by the custom of serving Hollywood and UK productions described earlier in the chapter. For example, a BBC drama about the hunt for Jack the Ripper entitled *Ripper Street* was filmed in Dublin in 2012 and the streets of Clancy Quay in Islandbridge, near Heuston Station, filled in for the streets of Whitechapel in the East End of London. This is motivated by the fact that numerous historical buildings in Dublin were built during the British domination and many are examples of Georgian and Victorian architecture, construction styles prominent across the British Empire between 1714 and 1830, and between 1837 and 1901 respectively. For this reason it is it is easy to use unspoilt historical quarters around Dublin as locations for narratives set in London. The architectural similarities between London and Dublin also led Indian reviewers of the film to believe it was set in London. Manjusree Abhinav (2012), who gave the film an overall positive review in *Deep Focus Cinema* magazine, wrote that the films' main characters, Tiger and Zoya, actually met in London,⁴⁷ thus suggesting that that Dublin urban landscapes bear a striking resemblance to the architecture of English capital, to the point that the two places can easily be confused. This notion, however, is reminiscent of the city's colonial past and suggests how the materiality of the city, with its distinctive shapes and textures embodying cultural meanings linked to the history of the country, and the production process of a Hindi film, can coalesce to create a new, fleeting environment for

intercultural encounters. This concept is explored in the following section which focuses on filming at Trinity College.

Ek Tha Tiger at Trinity College

The availability of Trinity College was pivotal in the choice of Dublin as a location for the film. The most significant scenes such as the blossoming of the romance between the two protagonists and the main parts of the *Banjaara* dance sequence were filmed at Trinity College. The large film sets completely transformed Parliament Square: fences surrounded the set filled with large pieces of equipment such as cranes, flood lights and screens; a gazebo covering the director and main crew; crowds of extras, dancers and crew members were scattered around the place (Fig. 22). All this activity was undoubtedly unusual for people studying or working around the college and often lecturers and students stopped to watch the filming engrossed by the complexity of the scenes and the size of the sets. One day, a group of American tourists from Texas asked me what was happening and when they heard it was a Bollywood film, replied that Bollywood films are often shown at cinemas near them in the city of Houston. The *Banjaara* dance sequence was filmed across several days on various locations around Dublin city centre, but the main part took place on Parliament Square. The filming of the dance sequence at Trinity College attracted large crowds of onlookers and it was often mentioned in the media as the highlight of the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* in the Irish capital. For people living in Dublin it was undoubtedly striking and surreal to see large numbers of Bollywood dancers performing on the front square of the campus (Fig. 31). Executive Producer John McDonnell recalls the dance sequence as his favourite memory of the film: ‘the idea of seeing hundreds of dancers in the square in Trinity College is something I’ve never

seen before and I doubt if I'll ever see it again. It was fantastic to witness'.⁴⁸ The South Asian Bollywood fans I spoke with enjoyed seeing a multiethnic crowd of young dancers performing on the backdrop of majestic buildings alongside bagpipers, a brass band and Kilkenny hurlers, since it appeared to convey a sense of cosmopolitanism and modernity embodied by the dancers, referencing established Irish sport and music traditions while drawing attention to a sumptuous location. These notions of beauty and exoticism enhanced their enjoyment of the completed film. The unfamiliar locations and lifestyles portrayed in Hindi films arguably appeal to South Asian audiences in that they embodied their class aspirations and the lifestyle choices indicative of modernisation and increasing globalisation. Srinivas analysed the effects of globalisation in Hindi film, suggesting that, 'the appeal and popularity of recent Bollywood films lies in their ability to construct and communicate popular understandings of globalization and transnationalism' (2005a: 324).

A Bollywood Dance Sequence: Contested Representations of Irishness

During the filming of the *Banjaara* dance sequence against the backdrop of Trinity College, colourful crowds of dancers and extras filled the front square of the campus; in the meantime the notes of a Hindi song with Celtic overtones resonated among imposing buildings reminiscent of Ireland's colonial history. Markers of Dublin's colonial past are present throughout the city in the form of monuments and Georgian buildings, but no more so than at Trinity College, which was chosen as a location for the film, especially for its monumental architecture. The juxtaposition of a Bollywood dance sequence with the colonial buildings of the university prompted me to reflect on the ideological significance of the colonial architecture of the place, as classical elements such as Ionic columns, large windows and the pediment above the entrance

can be perceived as codes of British colonial expansionism and oppression, experienced both by Indian and Irish people (Fig. 31).



Fig. 31: Dance sequence in front of the Refectory on Parliament Square, Trinity College (Photograph: Sharon Campbell)



Fig. 32: South Asian onlookers around the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger* watching extras dance in leprechaun hats (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

It is interesting to note that links to Dublin's colonial past are downplayed in touristic promotion of the city; heritage tourism has been alternatively constructed through literary connections given that these are 'more acceptable to the indigenous population. Georgian architecture is thus marketed to tourists as a link with a creative rather than a colonial past' (Connolly 1998: 3). In a similar way, using colonial architecture as a backdrop for a Bollywood dance sequence allows the imposing buildings to become part of a spectacle that highlights their beauty rather than a history of oppression, thus directing the tourist gaze to positive notions of Irishness.

However, during the filming of the dance scene, the presence of elements of Dublin's colonial past was complicated by the initial reactions of staff members of Trinity College, who felt uncomfortable with the way some of the extras impersonating university lecturers were wearing leprechaun⁴⁹ hats (Fig. 32). When volunteering on set I would often see Olivia and Sharon of the Communication Office lingering around the set to make sure the operations were running smoothly, taking pictures for the college website. 'It's so embarrassing!' commented Sharon jokingly, as she saw extras performing silly dance moves wearing leprechaun hats. This perception can be linked to the way Irish mythology and folklore have historically been ridiculed in British and North American literature and media⁵⁰ (Wohl 1990; Venable 2011). The depiction of Irish people as leprechaun stereotypes has been also documented in modern media (Dente Ross 2003; Negra 2006). However, when it became clear that this depiction was part of a dream sequence and inspired by images of the St Patrick's Day parade,⁵¹ people did not feel that the representation was offensive. The choreographer, Ahmed Khan, confirmed in a video illustrating the making of the film, that the scene was meant to symbolise the way the protagonist's world was turned

upside down as he was falling in love for the first time and did not know how to manage his feelings. Olivia said later, ‘when you looked at that dance sequence that was happening in here, it was confusing ... but in the context of the film itself I thought it worked very well – it was obvious that it was a dream sequence in the film’.⁵² Rob similarly commented: ‘that was a dream sequence so it wouldn’t really be fair to criticise that per se, and everything they did in that was for colour, so I don’t really mind’.⁵³

However, it is worth questioning how acceptable this kind of portrayal can be, considering that it occurs in the context of a very commercial, industrial, mode of filmmaking, linked with governmental strategies to promote tourism and attract inward investment. In fact, it can be argued that references to the St Patrick’s Day parade make the leprechaun hats scene more controversial rather than acceptable. In a postcolonial sense, St. Patrick’s Day celebrations are seen as problematic in the way they can confirm essentialist notions of Irishness. Nagle contends that events organised around St. Patrick’s Day are ‘rites devised to enforce shared cultural values ... erasing agency and negating room for subversion and social critique’ (2009: 104). Moreover, even if the celebrations are meant to represent a positive and fun-loving identity, ‘the “colonial gaze” operates as the once-colonized find their authenticity prescribed, hierarchized, and fetishized as cultural surplus value’ (ibid.: 103). It can thus be argued that, even if it was not meant to be offensive, the encouragement to perform a key stereotype of the Irish – the leprechaun – provides a darker representation of Irish ethnicity in the film, serving to reinforce derogatory notions of Irish identity. As Nagle notes, ‘the performance of traditional culture is often a place where stereotypes are enacted and the body becomes fundamental to the process of

constituting and articulating self/national identity' (ibid.: 111). In general, the production team behind of *Ek Tha Tiger* set out to portray Dublin in a positive way and cultural symbols and distinctive markers of the city, such as Georgian buildings and elements of folklore, were chosen to highlight the majestic beauty and the overall charm of the city of Dublin. Most Irish people I spoke with, welcomed this celebratory outlook, as it arguably made them proud of their city. For example, Executive Producer Brendan McCarthy commented that, 'being with them [the Indian crew] and seeing Dublin through their eyes reminded me that actually Dublin is a much nicer place than I normally think of it as being'.⁵⁴ The film's representation of Dublin and by extension, Ireland, is supposed to satisfy Indian audiences with images of striking international locales in line with government strategies to attract Indian tourists to the country. The city of Dublin thus becomes an object of the gaze of Indian audiences who see the city as a tourist attraction, with spectacular events and locales being showcased for their enjoyment. According to Urry, 'contemporary societies are developing ... on the basis of the democratisation of the tourist gaze and the spectacle-isation of place (1990: 156).

Reception and Success of *Ek Tha Tiger*

The film opened worldwide on 15 August 2012 and its Dublin premiere at the Irish Film Institute marked the launch of the first Mela festival of Dublin (Fig. 33). This event was used by Yash Raj Films to promote the film among Irish based audiences. According to Panesar, 'upon the release of *Ek Tha Tiger*, on 15 August, we used the event to drive the campaign, and we worked closely with the cinema, as well as the Mela to try and garner as much attention as we possibly could'.⁵⁵



Fig. 33: The premiere of *Ek Tha Tiger* on the Dublin Mela 2012 website

Mela means large gathering in Sanskrit and Mela festivals are South Asian cultural events common in various countries hosting large and established Indian communities such as the UK; significantly, they had never been organised in Ireland before August 2012. Dublin Mela was coordinated by Unitas Isac – a not-for-profit organisation set up by members of the Indian Diaspora in Ireland with the aim of promoting community integration through sport, arts and culture. The festival included events such as an art exhibition, Indian dance and sports workshops and a day-long family event centred on performances of South Asian dance and music. Tickets to the launch of the Dublin Mela and the *Ek That Tiger* premiere were sold out; the event was introduced by then Minister for Culture, Jimmy Deenihan and Film Commissioner, Naoise Barry. *Ek Tha Tiger* was screened at Cineworld Dublin between August 15 – September 3 2012 and was well received by audiences. Several viewers were disappointed by its storyline comparing it with Kabir Khan’s previous features – the thought-provoking political dramas *Kabul Express* (2006) and *New York* (2009). However, they enjoyed the film’s song and action sequences, especially the one involving the Luas, and liked the way Dublin was portrayed in it. Celine said, ‘I was disappointed by the story: I was expecting something like *New York*...But I love the

tram scene in Dublin! And I love the song where they dance in Trinity College’. ‘I really enjoyed the film’, said Bharath Kumar, founder of Unitas Isac and organiser of the Mela festival. Members of the film’s crew also appreciated the finished film: ‘the film was really good, well directed and Dublin looks really good in it’, said Dermot Cleary, the film’s Location Manager. Olivia Waters was also pleasantly surprised: ‘I loved the film! I was surprised by the humour in it – I didn’t think it followed the usual Bollywood format ... I thought Dublin came across as a fun, young city’.

The makers of the *Ek Tha Tiger* wanted the locales portrayed in the film to be part of the spectacle expected from a blockbuster and they were clearly successful in their intent to show Dublin as a vibrant and exciting city. This upbeat and modern representation is in line with a new image of Ireland promoted since the 1990s, when the economic boom prompted the media to refashion an appealing portrayal of the country, which denied its problematic past and social struggles in order to raise its international appeal. ‘The reinvented Ireland of the Celtic Tiger is based on the creation of a “modern, liberal, progressive, multicultural” image fashioned according to the need for international acceptance’ (Kirby et al. 2002: 197). Irish films of the late 1990s and early 2000s moved away from the gritty social realism that characterised productions of the 1970s and 1980s, aiming instead to portray Ireland as liberal, urban and successful. Films such as *About Adam* (1999) and *When Brendan Met Trudy* (2001) focus on young and lively urbanites, highlighting the newfound cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism of Dublin, deliberately ignoring any of the social problems afflicting contemporary Ireland such as crime, alcoholism, poverty, homelessness and drug abuse. As Ging contends, ‘our national cinema is moving steadily toward easy, globally-digestible narratives’ (2002: 185). *Waking Ned* (1999)

and *The Closer You Get* (2000) present an idyllic view of rural Ireland aimed at the American market. According to Ging, these films deny ‘that Ireland is a complex and changing nation with a troubled sense of self-identity, pandering instead to a largely mainstream American understanding of Irishness’ (ibid.: 187). In a similar way, it can be argued that *Ek Tha Tiger* carefully avoided representing any kind of complexity or social issues present in the underbelly of the charming and cosmopolitan Irish capital, constructing instead a simplistic image of Ireland that requires a minimum of cross-cultural understanding or critical engagement on the part of the viewer. This kind of representation is in line with longstanding strategies supported by government agencies to promote the country internationally, creating a marketable version of Irishness.

Ek Tha Tiger has been incredibly successful breaking several box office records in India with a worldwide gross of 3.25 billion Rupees (39 million Euro).⁵⁶ It became the second highest-grossing Bollywood film of all time, surpassed only by *3 Idiots* (Rajkumar Hirani, 2009). The film’s box office success was later exceeded by *Chennai Express* (Rohit Shetty, 2013) and *Dhoom 3* (Blast 3, Vijay Krishna Acharya, 2013), the most successful of Yash Raj Films' releases to date.⁵⁷ Kabir Khan’s third feature film received positive to mixed reviews from Indian critics. Taran Adarsh of *Bollywood Hungama* rated the film 4.5 stars out of 5, calling it a ‘high octane thriller that works big time. This one has style and substance, both, besides dazzling action, stunning international locales and stylish execution’.⁵⁸ Anupama Chopra of *Hindustan Times* gave it 3 stars out of 5 and said that the film was Khan's best since *Dabangg* (Fearless, Abhinav Kashyap, 2010); it had more story coherence and emotions than Khan’s recent films. She further added that ‘in places, *Ek Tha Tiger* becomes

downright silly. So the modus operandi might be to think of it as a fairy tale with spies and guns. And enjoy the ride'.⁵⁹ In the Irish press the film was mainly praised for its potential to attract tourists to Ireland,⁶⁰ confirming the notion that the most significant Irish-Indian co-production to date was considered mainly a vehicle for Irish national promotion.

In conclusion, this chapter has endeavoured to demonstrate how both the underlying production concerns of *Ek Tha Tiger* and audience participation and engagement with the film are intricately imbricated in Dublin's everyday urban life – a deliberately chosen context for the film characterised by the nationally iconic appearance of established and stereotyped markers of 'Ireland' and 'Irishness'. By way of narrating the arc of the film's production, I have outlined how Irish government agencies and Bollywood collaborated in the making of a blockbuster, ostensibly used as an advertising tool to attract Indian tourists, students and inward investment to Ireland. In my analysis I demonstrate how the film produced a 'tourist gaze' for audiences, shaping their perception of Dublin and Irish culture according to institutionally choreographed images of charm and cosmopolitanism. In so doing, the film plays on existing clichés and stereotypes surrounding Irish culture and identity, showcasing postcard-like views of Dublin thus far featured in commercial Irish films and international productions set in Ireland. These representations of Irishness were well received by audiences both in Ireland and abroad and proved to be effective in boosting tourism to Ireland. The production of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin thus confirmed the effectiveness of Bollywood cinema in constructing spectacular and appealing notions of Irish urban life. The following chapter focuses on the reactions and experiences of Irish-based Bollywood fans to the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*.

Notes

¹ Hurling is an Irish outdoor team game of ancient Gaelic origin and is administered by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). Kilkenny hurling jerseys are characterised by black and amber stripes.

² There is no dance academy in Trinity College.

³ Narratives displaced from the Indian national context can also enable the representations of liminal fantasies in a non-threatening manner, suggesting that morally questionable behaviours can happen in other places but not in India.

⁴ These films showcasing the life of NRIs arguably serve the function of discouraging diasporic groups from adopting western moral standards through the display of themes promoting traditional Indian values. This strategy is in line with middle class ideologies focused on preserving morality and tradition against western influences. As Kaur notes, these themes are ‘specifically family values, moral superiority, true (unpolluted) love, the sacrifice of individual desires for greater good of the family/community, and the struggle and victory of the Indian Diaspora in preserving their cultural universe through Indian rites of passages in an alien environment’ (Kaur 2002: 200-201).

⁵ Aman Agrawal, Yash Raj Films Production Executive (Interview 15 October 2011).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Qureshi, I. (2012) ‘Bollywood in Britain - The Legacy of Yash Chopra’ *The Guardian*. 23 October 2012 Available at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/the-northerner/2012/oct/23/lakedistrict-scotland-northern-ireland-extra> [Accessed 15 November 2013].

⁸ The ‘Enchanted Journey’ is a tour of selected Swiss locations featured in Bollywood films directed by Yash Chopra. The trip is organised by India’s leading outbound tour operator SOTC, in association with Yash Raj Films and Switzerland Tourism and is very popular among Indian tourists. ‘Yash Raj Films Enchanted Journey’ in Switzerland. Available at: http://www.jyotitours.com/all_of_switzerland.html [Accessed 14 June 2014].

⁹ Ernst and Young - Rapid Growth Markets Forecast of 2012. Available at:

http://emergingmarkets.ey.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/03/RapidGrowthMarkets_April-2012-LR2.pdf [Accessed 28 March 2013].

¹⁰ Munshi, N. (2012) ‘Spain’s Starring Role in Bollywood Movie a Boon to Tourism’ February 2012. <http://adage.com/article/global-news/spain-s-starring-role-bollywood-movie-a-boon-tourism/232511/> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

¹¹ Over 115,000 Indian tourists visited Spain in 2011 compared to 75,000 in 2010 (ibid.).

¹² Ibid.

- ¹³ Naoise Barry, Irish Film Commissioner (Interview 13 April 2012).
- ¹⁴ 'The Quiet Man' - The Movie That Put Ireland on the Tourist Map - *Film Ireland* - 1 November 2011. Available at: <http://filmireland.net/2011/11/01/the-quiet-man-the-movie-that-put-ireland-on-the-tourist-map/> [Accessed 20 May 2014].
- ¹⁵ A government agency in charge of the promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination. <https://www.tourismireland.com/> [Accessed 10 December 2011].
- ¹⁶ For more on Irish film locations used to promote tourism see O'Connor, N. and Bolan, P. (2008) 'Creating a Sustainable Brand for Northern Ireland Through Film Induced Tourism' *Tourism, Culture & Communication*, Vol. 8, 2008 pp. 1-12.
- ¹⁷ Mashru, R. (2014) 'India's Growing Urban Poverty Crisis' *The Diplomat* 4 March 2014. Available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/03/indias-growing-urban-poverty-crisis/> [Accessed 25 May 2014].
- ¹⁸ Maria, G. (2012) 'Chalo Ireland: Will Ek Tha Tiger Be Dublin's Lucky Charm?' *Firstpost* 1 September 2012 Available at: <http://www.firstpost.com/world/chalo-ireland-will-ek-tha-tiger-be-dublins-lucky-charm-436928.html> [Accessed 15 September 2012].
- ¹⁹ Naoise Barry, Irish Film Commissioner (Interview 13 April 2012).
- ²⁰ Avtar Panesar, Vice President of International Operations at Yash Raj Films (Interview 28 February 2013).
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Naoise Barry (Interview 13 April 2012).
- ²³ 'Bollywood film shot in Dublin expected to be watched by 100 million people' Available at: <http://www.thejournal.ie/bollywood-film-shot-in-dublin-expected-to-be-watched-by-100-million-people-557882-Aug2012/> [Accessed 15 September 2012].
- ²⁴ Temple Bar is a designated cultural quarter in Dublin situated on the south bank of the river Liffey. It is known for its lively nightlife and its popularity among tourists.
- ²⁵ Dermot Cleary, Location Manager (interview 3 September 2012).
- ²⁶ The Dublin Quays are two roadways that run along the north and south banks of the River Liffey in Dublin, Ireland.
- ²⁷ Mary O'Sullivan (Interview 9 December 2011).
- ²⁸ Munshi, N. (2012) 'The Irish Look for the Luck of the Indians...in Bollywood' 21 August 2012. Available at: <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2012/08/21/the-irish-look-for-the-luck-of-the-indians-in-bollywood/#axzz24BxzquWN> [Accessed 30 August 2012].
- ²⁹ Tourism Ireland Comment on CSO Figures for December 2012-February 2013. <http://www.tourismireland.com/Home!/About-Us/Press-Releases/2013/Tourism-Ireland-Comment-on-CSO-Figures-for-Decembe.aspx> [Accessed 10 April 2013].

³⁰ Leo Varadkar is the son of an Indian doctor from Mumbai and an Irish nurse (who met while working together in a hospital in Slough, England). His political career has been marked by controversy, an example being his proposal of a voluntary repatriation scheme for unemployed migrants attracted accusations of racism.

Ghosh, P. (2013) 'Leo Varadkar: Could This Indian Man One Day Become Prime Minister Of Ireland?' 24 July 2013 Available at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/leo-varadkar-could-indian-man-one-day-become-prime-minister-ireland-1359033> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

³¹ 'Targeting Indian Tourists for the Island of Ireland'. Available at: <https://www.tourismireland.com/Home!/About-Us/Press-Releases/2014/Targeting-Indian-Tourists-for-the-Island-of-Ireland.aspx> [Accessed 15 February 2014].

³² Ibid.

³³ Kathy Horgan, Film Producer at Dark Window Media (interview 11 February 2016).

³⁴ *Bollywood Comes to Trinity College Dublin - Filming of Ek Tha Tiger at TCD*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpE2-AOAIEU> [Accessed 15 September 2012].

³⁵ Jane Ohlmeyer, Trinity College Vice Provost for Global Relations (Interview 15 October 2012).

³⁶ 'Bollywood Film Shot on Location at Trinity College Dublin Launches in India and Dublin' Available at: <https://www.tcd.ie/globalrelations/news/Ek%20Tha%20Tiger%20launch.php> [Accessed 15 September 2013].

³⁷ Jane Ohlmeyer (Interview 15 October 2012).

³⁸ 'Bollywood's Most Influential Film Maker, Yash Chopra, Receives Honorary Professorship from Trinity College Dublin, Marking 100 Years of Bollywood Film' Available at: <https://www.tcd.ie/Communications/news/pressreleases/pressRelease.php?headerID=2652&pressReleaseArchive=2012> [Accessed 15 September 2012].

³⁹ Olivia Waters, Trinity College Communications and Global Relations Office (Interview 4 October 2012).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ RTE is the abbreviation of *Raidió Teilifís Éireann* (*Radio [and] Television of Ireland*). It indicates the national public service broadcaster of Ireland. RTE produces programmes and broadcasts them on television, radio and the Internet.

⁴² Newstalk is an independent radio station in Ireland. It is the only commercial radio station in the country to have an exclusively talk-based format.

⁴³ 'Bollywood Film 'Ek Tha Tiger' '(I am Tiger)' Shoots in Temple Bar, Dublin in October' Available at: <http://filmireland.net/2011/09/29/bollywood-film-%E2%80%98ek-tha-tiger%E2%80%99-i-am-tiger-shoots-in-temple-bar-dublin-in-october/> [Accessed 05 October 2011].

⁴⁴ Masala chai is a hot tea beverage made by brewing black tea with a mixture of spices.

⁴⁵ Rob Power, Location Trainee (Interview 1 December 2011).

⁴⁶ Steven Sheehy, Location Trainee (Interview 19 October 2011).

⁴⁷ Manjushree, A. (2012) 'In Defence of Blockbusters' - *Deep Focus Cinema* December 2012.

⁴⁸ John McDonnell, Executive Producer (Interview 24 July 2012).

⁴⁹ A leprechaun is a fairy creature in Irish folklore. Leprechauns are usually depicted as a little bearded men, wearing a green coat and hat, who enjoy playing practical jokes on humans. Leprechauns are said to have a hidden pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

⁵⁰ Modern depictions of leprechauns are arguably based on derogatory nineteenth century caricatures and stereotypes of the Irish. To this end, Venable notes:

In the United States, leprechauns are associated with the St. Patrick's Day holiday and appear as jovial, comical creatures, whose appearance mirrors derogatory cartoon caricatures and stereotypes of Irish immigrants from the waves of immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Leprechauns thus appeared wearing old shabby clothes and silly caps and displaying reckless, drunken behaviour.

(2011: 197)

⁵¹ The St. Patrick Day parade is held annually on 17 March to commemorate the death of Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Saint Patrick's Day is a cultural and religious holiday. In the mid-1990s, the government of Ireland started a campaign to use Saint Patrick's Day to showcase Ireland and its culture. The celebration became a four day event with outdoor performances and fireworks attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors to Dublin.

⁵² Olivia Waters (Interview 4 October 2012).

⁵³ Rob Power (Interview 01 December 2011).

⁵⁴ Brendan McCarthy, Executive Producer (Interview 1 December 2011).

⁵⁵ Avtar Panesar (Interview 28 February 2013).

⁵⁶ 'Chennai Express Crosses *Ek Tha Tiger* Worldwide In Ten Days' Available at:

<http://www.boxofficeindia.com/boxnewsdetail.php?page=shownews&articleid=5979&nCat=>
[Accessed 30 August 2013].

⁵⁷ At the time of writing the highest-grossing Bollywood film ever was *PK* (R. Hirani, 2014).

⁵⁸ Adarsh, T. (2012) 'Ek Tha Tiger' 15 August 2012. *Bollywood Hungama* Available at:

<http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/moviemicro/criticreview/id/545809> [Accessed 30 August 2012].

⁵⁹ Chopra, A. (2012) 'Anupama Chopra's Review: *Ek Tha Tiger*' *Hindustan Times* 16 August 2012. Available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Entertainment/Reviews/Anupama-Chopra-s-review-Ek-Tha-Tiger/Article1-914239.aspx#sthash.IPEZpvVK.dpuf> [Accessed 30 August 2012].

⁶⁰ 'Rupee Tuesday' - 21 August 2012. Available at:

<http://www.broadsheet.ie/2012/08/21/rupee-tuesday/> [Accessed 30 August 2012].

Chapter Five

The Arrival of Bollywood Celebrities in Dublin: Media, Community and Fandom



Fig. 34: Katrina Kaif signing autographs at Trinity College (Photograph: Sharon Campbell)

This chapter draws on my ethnographic fieldwork on the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger* in my dual role as a Bollywood fan and researcher, focusing on the experience of fans of the Indian movie stars featured in the film and on their reactions to their presence in Dublin. Salman Khan, the film's male lead, is currently one of the most prominent stars of Hindi cinema and has a very large fan base including people of every social background, age and gender; his online fan following has been rated as one of the largest compared to other prominent Bollywood personalities.¹ For this reason, Irish based fans were eager to know where the filming was taking place in order to see the star in person. Katrina Kaif too is an extremely popular Bollywood actress with an

impressive fan following and her presence also contributed to attracting large numbers of fans to the sets. In my analysis, I demonstrate how large crowds of fans temporarily transformed urban spaces around Dublin, gaining visibility and connecting with the city in unprecedented ways. I further expand on how these experiences allowed fans to interact with the film's production by circulating their own photographs and videos of the sets on internet platforms.

Hindi film scholar Aswin Punathambekar has explored the activities and representations of Hindi film fans and observes that 'a focus on fan activities that emerge at the intersection of film and "new" media opens up the possibility of rewriting the history of Indian cinema's publicness as a history of media convergence' (2007: 205). In the light of this compelling suggestion, this discussion delves into the analysis of fan-generated media content related to the production of *Ek Tha Tiger*, expanding on how the creation and circulation of this material enhanced the fans' connection with the film and with each other. I want to suggest that the act of circulating unofficial material about the filming provided fans with an opportunity to complement news of the event reported by official media. Fans could share their experience with others, as members of what Benedict Anderson describes as an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006), because without being aware of each other, they could connect and communicate via social media. Throughout this chapter, I expand on how fans used digital technologies to share their 'local' experience of being on the film sets with a 'global' community of fans.

Negotiating Access to the Production of *Ek Tha Tiger*

The filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin occurred over five weeks between 10 September and 14 October 2011. During this period, I endeavoured to be present on the film locations as much as possible in order to conduct fieldwork in the form of participant observation and to experience the making of the film. In what follows, I explore and foreground the background to my involvement in the film's production and how I negotiated access to various Dublin shooting locations of *Ek Tha Tiger*.

In July 2011, Eileen, whom I befriended during my MPhil at Trinity College, sent me an online article via Facebook accompanied by the message: 'hey Gio - did you see this? Reckon you should try to be in this movie?' The article, titled 'Salman and Katrina Go Back to College',² was about the imminent shooting of *Ek Tha Tiger* at Trinity College. Since I commenced my research on the reception and circulation of popular Indian cinema in Dublin one year earlier, I was hoping to witness the filming of a Bollywood film in Ireland before the end of my study. This was because I wanted to experience first-hand how Hindi film productions unfolded outside India and how they impact upon their host community. My initial exploration of the emergence of Bollywood in Dublin made me aware that the presence of Bollywood film sets in the city could provide me with invaluable information as to the relevance of cinema outside the movie theatre, in people's everyday lives and localities. Given that Ireland is a country where in-migration is a relatively recent phenomenon, I was interested in finding out what people without previous knowledge of Bollywood would make of a Hindi film shoot; significantly, I was curious to learn how Irish based Bollywood fans would engage with the filming. Moreover, I was keen to examine how Irish urban spaces and culture potentially influenced the experience of cinema for audiences and

for the film industry. I was confident that the shooting of a Hindi film in Dublin could shed light on the way transnational cinema is embedded in a national context and how it is negotiated by local exhibitors, the media and government agencies. Additionally, as a Bollywood fan myself, I was eager to witness the production of a Hindi film and see famous film stars in person.

I would occasionally hear rumours of Indian film productions being lured to Ireland, but until *Ek Tha Tiger* nothing ever materialised; when I first received Eileen's message I thus remained sceptical. However, the article in question was very detailed, explaining how Dublin was chosen and that Trinity College had granted permission for filming on the campus site. After an internet search which led to several articles explaining that filming in Dublin was delayed due to Salman Khan's health problems, I realised that it was actually going to materialise and began contacting people who could hopefully facilitate my access to the film's production. Mithileash, a member of the Trinity College Indian Society, pointed me in the direction of the university's Communications Office (later renamed Office for Global Relations). I sent them an email, hoping they would help me given that I was a Trinity College alumna. Soon afterwards, I received a reply from Olivia who kindly informed me that she would forward my details to the location manager, that filming at Trinity College would commence on 13 September and that further information would be available on the Trinity College website. Meanwhile, I found out that the Irish production company working on the film was 'Fantastic Films'; without hesitation, I contacted them to inquire about the possibility of accessing film locations and taking photographs, but to no avail. This was hardly surprising, since I knew it was going to be very difficult to

access the sets. Hammersley and Atkinson, in their description of ethnographic practice, point out that:

The problem of getting access to data is particularly serious in ethnography, since one is generally operating in settings where the researcher generally has little power, and people have pressing concerns of their own which often give them little reason to cooperate.

(2007 : 40).

This was particularly true in the case of accessing the sets of a big budget film with major Bollywood stars on locations that were hard to negotiate, such as the university.

In the meantime, the Trinity College Indian Society informed me of the opportunity for twenty Trinity Indian students to act as ushers around the set, escorting the extras to and from the set and to their location base. A meeting for volunteers was going to be held the day before the beginning of the filming on campus. I decided to attend the meeting, but did not think I had a chance to get in, since I was sure that many Indian students would be fighting for the opportunity to work alongside famous film stars. However, when I entered the designated meeting room in the Arts Building, I was surprised to see that not many people had actually turned up; just myself and three South Asian students: Shabnam, Faryal and Arun; however more volunteers joined us the day after. On that occasion, I met Olivia and her colleague Sharon, who were both very helpful to me and confirmed that I could definitely work on location. They gave me a yellow ushering t-shirt with a big *Ek Tha Tiger* logo on the back and a small Trinity College logo at the front, saying that they would send an email to all of us with details of the shooting schedule for the following day. This is how I initially obtained access to the sets.

After the first three days of shooting at Trinity College, a few Indian students and I became familiar with several members of the Indian crew and we asked if we could volunteer on set for a longer period. The director and his assistants were happy about it, so long as we did not circulate unofficial pictures or information about the production. I thus managed to join the crew for a few more days, performing various location duties including directing extras and controlling crowds of fans, helping the art department move props and occasionally filling in as a background extra. After that, the producers raised concerns about us not having insurance coverage in the event of an accident, so we were not allowed on set anymore. By that time I got to know Sinead, who was in charge of managing the extras on set, who advised me to subscribe to Movieextras.ie,³ promising that she would request them to include me in the extras needed for the following shooting days. I thus also had the opportunity to conduct participant observation on set by officially working as an extra for four days.

When I was not working on set, I would ask members of the crew about details of the locations and I joined the crowds of Bollywood fans gathered around the sets. Of course, on many occasions they would work on closed sets that I could not enter, but they were often shooting along streets in Dublin city centre, which could not be closed to public traffic and this made my access to the locations easier. I discuss the process of gaining access to the film sets to illustrate how these specific spaces have boundaries that are not easy to penetrate, and therefore to communicate my first-hand experience of the importance of establishing relations with ‘multiple gatekeepers’ and ‘to build up a trusting relationship with them relatively rapidly’ in order to be granted access ‘that earlier would have been refused point blank’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 57).

Stalking Salman Khan

A few days before the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* was due to commence, I heard from several Indian acquaintances that the crew was supposed to be shooting a scene with Salman Khan on the Liffey Boardwalk next to the Ha'penny Bridge on Ormond Quay on Sunday 11 September in the early afternoon. At that time I was still trying to negotiate access to the sets with Trinity College and Fantastic Films, uncertain as to whether I was going to be successful. I was thus glad to have the opportunity to at least witness the filming of a scene in an open location. When I shared this information with Celine, she enthusiastically suggested we could go and have a glimpse of Salman Khan together. On the day of the shooting, when I was on a bus on my way to the Ha'penny Bridge, Celine sent me a text message saying 'I have already reached. There are loads of people on the bridge'. This was followed by a few other messages saying things like 'I can see the director!' and 'I can see Salman!' It was really exciting for me to receive these messages, since it meant that it was really happening (up to that point I was rather sceptical as it might have been just a false rumour) and I was glad for Celine, as like myself, she had never had an opportunity before to see a Bollywood celebrity in person.

When I reached the Ormond Quay location, I noticed dozens of mainly South Asian people on the bridge and a film crew of about thirty people with small equipment on the sidewalk next to a coffee shack. I could see Salman Khan and Ranvir Shorey (who played the part of Tiger's colleague Gopi) walking along the boardwalk (Fig. 35). I am not a huge fan of Salman Khan, but was very curious to see him and it was difficult not to be caught up in the contagious excitement and the emotion of the fans present at the scene. The choice of Dublin as a location allowed fans present in the

city the opportunity to see their star in person, granting them an ‘extra-cinematic experience’ (Spitulnik 2002) that many of them, including me, probably never had before.



Fig. 35: Salman Khan (right) and Ranvir Shorey on set, Ormond Quay (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)



Fig. 36: Celine with her camcorder, Ormond Quay (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

I could not imagine then, that just a week later I would be joining the film crew on that same location, helping out as an extra and with crowd control. On that occasion, the neighbouring street was full of Dublin supporters celebrating winning the All-Ireland Senior Football Final⁴ and the Irish crew members were involving the Indian crew in cheering along with loud chants of ‘Up the Dubs!’, inviting participation in the celebratory atmosphere for a sport they were unfamiliar with. The life and culture of the city thus became intertwined with the filming in progress, highlighting the relation between the film and its location.

I quickly joined Celine, who stood on the sidewalk next to Yamamori Sushi restaurant, along with a group of about forty fans, mostly men in their 20s and 30s. Celine brought along her camera and a small camcorder. She stood out in the crowd of Indian fans but shared the same enthusiasm and happiness about the event (Fig. 36). For a while, we were chatting and cheering along with the Indian fans and tried to take a few photographs of the actor standing across the road in front of us. Being in a crowd of Bollywood fans for the first time, made me realise that I could not simply enjoy the moment but I had to negotiate my dual positioning as fan and researcher. Researcher expectation to reflect critically on the events unfolding before me rendered it difficult to balance my desire to participate in everybody else’s enthusiasm and the need to ensure that I collected enough visual media and recorded ethnographic fieldnotes for future analysis. Moreover, I knew that writing about that experience would inevitably create some distance between myself and the wider community of fans. This was a challenge I faced throughout my experience on the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger*. As previously mentioned, Jenkins explored the tensions between fandom and critical scholarly engagement commenting on the struggle to remain a fan while

writing about fan practices: ‘I’m embodying this community that I’m writing about, but it’s nevertheless the case that it becomes a myth the minute you assert it in a particular space; it’s a mythic identity as well as a lived identity’ (2006b: 16). Significantly, I felt separated and distinct from the other onlookers when I realised that, while they were only concerned with approaching Salman, I was thinking about the significance of his presence in the city of Dublin.

It was a strange sensation to see a high profile Indian film star, usually visible on the big screen, appearing on the backdrop of quintessentially Dublin landmarks such as the river Liffey and the Ha’penny Bridge (Figs. 35 and 37). This was further complicated by the background presence of Italian and Japanese restaurants along the riverbanks (Fig. 35), fostering an awareness of our Italian and French identities, thereby creating a cultural mix reminiscent of the ‘large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes’ (1996: 35) as described by Arjun Appadurai in his discussion of cultural globalisation. According to Appadurai, global cultural flows are seen as multidimensional landscapes that look different according to each viewer’s perspective, constituting multiple ‘imagined worlds’ based on the imagination of people or groups, as they are ‘inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors’ (ibid.: 33). This notion became particularly relevant during the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*, where I experienced how diverse cultural elements coalesced in a flow of events, images and information, which was perceived and elaborated differently by the people involved in it.



Fig. 37: Fans trying to take photographs of Salman Khan, Ormond Quay (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Several Indian fans tried to cross the road to get closer to their idol and the few location personnel present were struggling to prevent people from reaching the set and getting run over by passing cars in the process. Celine and I were happy just to stand on the side walk and watch the filming from afar; a couple of hours later when they wrapped the shoot, we joined the other fans who tried to take a close-up photograph of the star (Fig. 37). The fans were very eager, yet not too forceful and Salman Khan's security personnel were successful in keeping them at bay as he entered Yamamori Sushi restaurant. Celine and I went into the restaurant to have something to eat, hoping to see the star again but he was seated in a separate room, so we were just chatting about the day and planning to attend future location shoots. The following day, Celine sent me an article from *The Irish Independent*⁵ discussing the film shoot that we witnessed the previous day, claiming that Salman Khan was 'mobbed by more than 200 fans' and 'was forced to take refuge in a nearby restaurant'. We laughed at these words, knowing that they were clearly exaggerated and probably an attempt to

hype up the event. However, this description of fans as forceful and unruly ties in with media accounts of fans' behaviour in India. To this end, Punathambekar observes that 'mainstream media coverage of Bollywood ignores fan activity except when it seems obsessive or pathological' (2007: 198-199). The pathologisation of fans' behaviours has been explored also by fan scholars in an attempt to counter negative perceptions of fandom (Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002; Duffett 2013). Moreover, the need to control and contain large groups of fans is highlighted in audience studies and 'public culture discourses around fans gatherings as mass audiences have focused on their need to be kept in check, not least for the possible mayhem and destruction that can entail if their energies are unduly let loose' (Dudrah 2012: 88-89).

To counter such arguably misplaced negative stereotypes, in what follows I demonstrate how the urban sets of *Ek Tha Tiger* became 'heterotopic spaces' (Foucault 1967-1984)⁶ of resistance where crowds of fans could claim their right to be active and visible around the city of Dublin. These gatherings allowed individual fans the unprecedented opportunity to create their own visual material about the film, which contributed to creating excitement about the production internationally alongside official advertising material. This can be seen as an instance of 'media convergence' (Jenkins 2006a), which highlights the power of fans' creativity and collective intelligence that should be reckoned with by media industries. As Jenkins contends 'collective intelligence can be seen as an alternative source of media power' (2006a: 4).

Locations Revealed on Indianinsireland.com

Re: Bollywood shooting in Dublin Trinity College

by [sumitm](#) » Tue Sep 13, 2011 9:12 pm

They are very much in dublin.. 100s of people turned up in trinity college today to see them shoot.. people got photos etc. but couldnt meet them. They will be shooting on and off till oct. 5th in trinity and 15th oct in dublin..Rahul to answer yr question, yeah u can very much see them...

Re: Bollywood shooting in Dublin Trinity College

by [sumitm](#) » Tue Sep 13, 2011 9:23 pm

Shooting will take place in trinity on 13th, 14th and 24th from morning till evening.. and on 5th oct from afternoon till early morning...enjoy..

Sumit

Re: Bollywood shooting in Dublin Trinity College

by [rahul_khanna](#) » Wed Sep 14, 2011 9:40 am

Thanks everyone for the information. Sumit, I was thinking of going on the 24th Saturday to Triity college to see them shooting, but the question is would it be possible to meet them after driving for 1.30min. Any ideas guys who have watched them shooting in Trinity college?

Re: Bollywood shooting in Dublin Trinity College

by [zulfi](#) » Wed Sep 14, 2011 3:27 pm

There is shooting in dublin castle on coming friday 16-sept-2011 starting 11am. Anyone interested please reach on time.

Fig. 38: Fans sharing online information about the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*

As noted in the previous chapter, the production of *Ek Tha Tiger* received much media attention compared to other international productions both in national newspapers and television. Official news channels, however, were not the only available source of information during the filming. Significantly, Bollywood fans participated in raising awareness about the film by exchanging information about locations through internet platforms and forums such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Indians in Ireland (Fig. 38).⁷

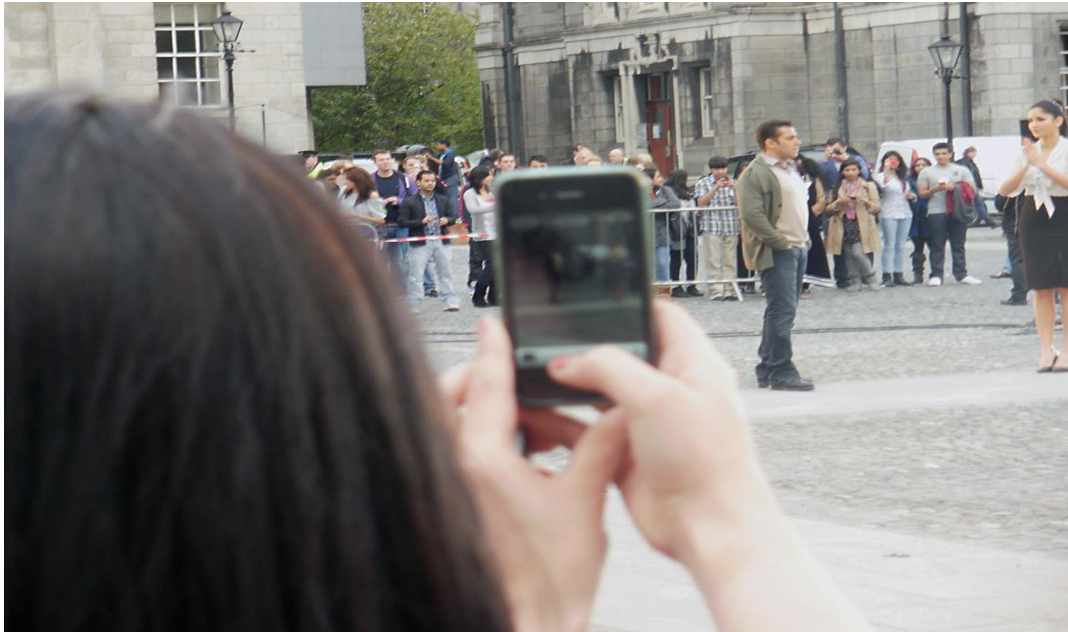


Fig. 39: Fans recording videos of the actors on set, Trinity College (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)



- thanks for uploading this video. please upload more videos making of ek tha tiger ([salman khan](#)).
- my account is public so u cant read the tweets even if you dont have twitter. Sources say they're shooting in Kilmainham today ([SanjayBSK](#) in reply to [manisha dabhade](#)).
- In which place of dublin he is shooting now a dayss ..plzz tell me ([manisha dabhade](#)) .
- @mdabhade1234 He was busy shooting action scenes past few days at the quays/ Stephens Green. If u have twitter follow me on @Sanjay_BSK as soon as I find locations I tweet ([SanjayBSK](#) in reply to [manisha dabhade](#)).
- thanx so much 4 upload ([sallueyes](#) 11 months ago).

Fig. 40: Screen shots and comments on YouTube video *Ek Tha Tiger Shooting Dublin, Ireland*

Fans did not merely post information about locations, but also footage of the sets taken with camera phones, iPads and digital cameras, thus appropriating the film and its imagery (Fig. 39). Mobile devices and online platforms gave Bollywood enthusiasts based in Ireland the opportunity to gather at film sets in communal rituals; enabling them to engage with the film at a deeper level, by actually capturing, editing and circulating unofficial images of it. This demonstrated that the availability of new technologies is of pivotal importance in empowering media users, allowing them to appropriate, rework and share media content previously available only through official channels. According to Jenkins ‘new technologies are now enabling average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content.’ (2006b: 1). Jenkins conducted extensive studies on fandom and participatory culture, focusing on the way fans interact with each other, produce and circulate media content through the use of digital technologies. From his analysis it emerged that audiences are not passive consumers of media content, but are extremely ‘active, critically engaged and creative’ (ibid.). This notion certainly applies to Dublin-based Bollywood fans who did not miss the opportunity to actively interact with the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger*. By sharing these videos, Dublin-based fans allowed viewers located elsewhere to participate in their experience of seeing the film in the making and major Bollywood stars in real life.

Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s concept of imagined communities, Adrian Athique contends that media audiences ‘can still be understood in terms of Anderson’s model of “imagined community” which encourages participants to imagine their fellow viewers through various abstract social formations’ (2005: 121). For this reason, I suggest that online media brought together an ‘imagined community’ of Bollywood

fans who, without being aware of each other, could share information and visual content on the internet, regardless of their location. The filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* enabled Hindi film fans to come together not only by gathering in large numbers around the film sets, but also virtually on internet platforms as fans posted videos of the filming on YouTube where they could be joined by other fans based in India or other countries.

Fans could also create their personal version of the film by editing together footage collected at different locations. A fan called Sanjay_BSK posted a video made of footage collected at three Dublin locations (Fig. 40).⁸ It consisted of shaky and dark clips of scenes involving Salman Khan; the first clip shows him and actor Ranvir Shorey standing in front of a Georgian building together with a sound recordist and an assistant director; in the second clip the star is walking along a narrow street of Temple Bar with the film's female lead, Katrina Kaif, but neither is visible due to the massive presence of onlookers; and the third clip consists of very dark footage of Kaif and Khan riding bicycles near Trinity College at night. This video also portrays the tensions between the fans and the production as security men are filmed in the act of pushing onlookers away, highlighting the difficulty for fans to witness the filming and collect visible evidence of it. In spite of the poor quality of the images (for which the author of the video apologises in a comment), the audio consisting of traffic noise, wind and voices of other onlookers, combined with directions shouted by the first AD, and most of all, lines of dialogue between the actors, collectively contribute to convey the tangible feeling of being on a film set. The camera exclusively follows the movements of Salman Khan in order to capture the clearest possible image of him. The second clip conveys how challenging this task was, as it reveals large crowds of

onlookers obstructing the view and crew members telling people to move back from the set. These clips, given their poor quality and content, might seem inane and pointless to a viewer who is not a fan of Salman Khan, but they mean a lot to fans of the actor (and to me as both a fan and a researcher), as they enable participation in the emotion of seeing him on set.

The video was popular among YouTube users; many left comments thanking the author for letting them participate in the filming through his unofficial video and asking for additional footage of the sets, indicating the pleasure fans receive from vicariously participating in a film shoot through unauthorised material about a highly anticipated Hindi blockbuster. Dublin based fans, such as Manisha,⁹ took the opportunity to obtain information about future Dublin locations in order to be able to witness as many film shoots as she could. Manisha is an ardent Salman Khan fan, she commented: 'I'm a diehard fan of Salman Khan. Literally I went daily to Trinity to see his face. Normally we don't get chance to see Bollywood actors closely in India, so that was a big opportunity to see him and click pictures with him'. Sanjay_BSK also uploaded a video consisting of still images taken on the sets.¹⁰ Similar to his previous video, the images feature his watermark, signalling that he is claiming ownership of the unofficial material he is publishing. The author is obviously proud of the opportunity he had to witness the making of a major Hindi film and to be able to share visible evidence of his experience with other fans. In a caption below the video he explains:

These are a few pics I took besides the videos I made. There were so many amazing moments, I didn't know when to click cause wanted to enjoy the moment live. After all I'm Salman's fan not a paparazzi. I wish I could upload my brain here and share every great moment I had with you guys. Pictures are

marked/ protected. Less marked pics can be seen on @Sanjay_BSK Hope u enjoy. ¹¹

YouTube is being increasingly mobilised by audiences, amateur producers and particular communities of interest. This phenomenon is currently an object of scholarly attention with the aim of identifying how these practices challenge existing ideas about cultural ‘production’ and ‘consumption’. For example Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009) in their discussion of YouTube, culture and community explored the way audiences and amateur producers express themselves by re-editing and re-publishing the media of traditional outlets. However, in Dublin, Bollywood fans could go beyond that, since they could share their experience of actually witnessing the making of a Hindi blockbuster, thereby engaging with the film by displaying their own original footage of it. Burgess and Green observe that ‘YouTube users partake in new forms of “publishing”, partly as a way to narrate and communicate their own cultural experiences ... which are bound up with commercial popular media’ (2009: 47-48).

Film production companies are commonly very secretive about plots and images of current productions, concerned that leaked information in the media might reflect negatively on box office returns. This was true even in the case of *Ek Tha Tiger*; notably, extras and crew members were explicitly forbidden from taking photographs of the stars or disclosing elements of the story. Location personnel, including myself when I was volunteering on set, were asked to stop onlookers from taking photographs or videos of the stars – a task that proved impossible as filming was occurring in public spaces. In fact, Manisha, who commented on Sanjay_BSK’s video, eventually

succeeded in capturing and uploading her own video of part of the song and dance sequence (Fig. 41).¹²



- sallu bhai movies thoda jaldhi launch karo excited to watch please MUIZZ73 7 months ago
- salman ur real star i love u just waiting for the movie.its going to another blast at box office.INSHALLAH AbdulBasit304 8 months ago
- omg salman looking so freaking cute desiserial1 1 year ago
- i love him how he dance i love him [SahraNorAbdi](#) 1 year ago
- Wauw! Sneak preview of Ek Tha Tiger. He dances very fit. Cool! Can't wait for the original videoclip and song. [Surroor](#) 1 year ago

Fig. 41: Screen shot and comments on YouTube video, *Salman Khan in Dublin for Ek Tha Tiger Shooting*

This video was viewed over ninety-thousand times and generated numerous enthusiastic comments. Since song and dance sequences are extremely important for the success of a Bollywood film, normally videos of the film songs are not circulated until a couple of months before the release of the film. Thus fans were really grateful and fortunate to have a taste of the main song sequence almost one year before the film was released. Rather than putting people off watching the film, the comments in

response to the video suggest that it actually contributed to creating feelings of anticipation and excitement about the production. Manisha commented that, like Sanjay_BSK, she also shared her video on YouTube because she was happy to be able to see Salman on set and wanted to encourage other fans to share her joy.

As noted earlier, the circulation of unofficial visual content, together with official material about the film, can be linked to Jenkins' theories of 'media convergence' (2006a) in relation to the emergence of media content produced by ordinary people, alongside official media channels. By sharing their own material, fans actively participated in the circulation of information about *Ek Tha Tiger* interacting with and complementing the news reported by official media, thus giving other Bollywood enthusiasts more opportunities to engage with the film and generating excitement about it. In this process, the material circulated by both fans and official media became embedded in a 'convergence culture, ... where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways' (Jenkins 2006a: 2). Dublin-based fans such as Manisha and Sanjay_BSK could effectively use media technology to take control of the information about *Ek Tha Tiger* circulating in the media and to interact with other fans, temporarily shifting the power relations between production companies and audiences. When working on the sets, I felt ambivalent about having to ask fans to move away or to stop taking photographs: being a fan myself I thought that they should have the opportunity to enjoy the presence of their idols. I was sorry to witness how the production was trying to control and dismiss them, even if it was their expression of fandom that would partly guarantee the film's box office success. Appropriating and sharing unofficial material about the film empowered Dublin-based

fans, indicative of the fact that they were not passive, isolated and easily controlled, but rather active, socially connected and able to circulate media content on globally accessible public platforms. As Jenkins explains: ‘convergence requires media companies to rethink old assumptions about what it means to consume media If the work of media consumers was once silent and invisible, the new consumers are now noisy and public’ (2006a: 18-19).

Bollywood Film Fans Following Their Idols around Dublin

In her study of cinema halls and film posters around Indian cities, Lakshmi Srinivas observes that ‘the presence of cinema in the urban landscape can provide transcendence in everyday life’ (2010a : 5). Yet the actual filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin offered a more comprehensive extra-cinematic experience to audiences and fans, since they were not merely reminded about their viewing experiences and daydreams about films, but could actually see the film as it was made, observing the stars in real life. People had the possibility to engage with Hindi cinema, not just on a screen but on a physical level by being actually present around the sets. During filming along the river Liffey, I spoke with a group of Indian students who arrived in Ireland just a few weeks before to start a degree course in the country and they could not believe their luck when they saw Salman Khan filming in Dublin. I met several South Asian fans who were missing classes or work to come to the sets as they saw it as a once in a lifetime opportunity to see major Bollywood film stars in person.

During filming at Trinity College I met Semat, an ardent fan of Salman Khan who soon became my friend, and we often shared the excitement of the sets as onlookers and as extras; Semat wanted to be on set as much as she could – she too registered

with Movieextras and a few days later we were working together as extras in a crowd scene in a pub. When she was not working on set, Semat asked me for constant updates about the filming and tried to come to the sets whenever she could, hoping to get a photograph with Salman Khan. She was really happy about the opportunity to be in the film. As she later explained:

When people asked me what my biggest dream was, I replied that my craziest dream was to go to India and be part of an Indian production. I wasn't expecting to be cast in the movie, but even being in the place where the movie was shot was enough. I wanted to be in the middle of an Indian film production. When I learnt that Salman and Katrina were coming to Dublin I was so excited, I couldn't believe it! Being on set with Salman and Katrina... I mean they were so close to me... Salman was standing right in front of me and I felt that it was almost like a dream... there are no words to describe that ... the best part was not only to be able to see Salman Kahn or Katrina Kaif, but to be there and to watch how they do that [make the film].

(Interview 5 July 2012)

The filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin was thus particularly significant for Semat, since it allowed her to fulfil her dream to be in a Bollywood film. It is interesting that she was more excited about being part of the production and witnessing the making of the film than about actually seeing film stars in person, which confirms the eagerness of fans to participate in the creation of the media products they consume (Jenkins 2006b). My interactions with Semat also highlighted the different tastes and modes of engagement with Bollywood stars among fans. These are discernible in a conversation we had on Facebook on 18 September 2011, which shows the different degrees of affiliation that fans have with Bollywood film stars, in this case with Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif, and how this can lead to disagreements between them.

Semat wrote:

u know on Friday
there were very impolite people: a girl was trying to catch Salman's attention
and I asked her, why only Salman? why not Katrina? she's just in front of u

u know what she said?
I don't care about her, she's a too proud b****, she's nothing
and I 'm sure from the distance where we were , Katrina heard everything
I was pissed off
I would love to have a picture with Katrina too, I don't understand how they
can speak like that
I don't think she's too proud, I felt her to be very shy
but I can be wrong
but anyway it's not a reason to speak like that
I should let u have some rest
I'm speaking a lot (lol), but u know it's so hard to find people who share the
same passion that u have.

Her last comments made me realise something that I had never taken into account before: the sense of isolation that many non-Asian Bollywood fans may experience. Arguably, this is because their passion does not circulate within their cultural and ethnic communities and is therefore difficult for them to meet like-minded people. Semat later told me that most people do not understand her interest in Bollywood. However, this never deterred her from watching Hindi films because of the personal reasons at the origin of her passion. Semat had begun watching Hindi films when she was in France because she heard that Bollywood love stories were very beautiful and romantic. What immediately encouraged her to establish a connection with this cinema, however, was the similarity between Turkish and Indian culture she perceived in the films. As she said:

The two cultures display emotions in the same way, that's one of the reasons why I am so touched by Indian movies when I watch them. The way they show respect to senior people, I found it very close to my own culture. I was very impressed at the beginning because I didn't know we had so many similarities between Indian and Turkish culture and it was very interesting to realise that.

(Interview 5 July 2012)

In particular, the treatment of family values and family relationships, especially in the famous Hindi family drama *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (Karan Johar, 2001), helped

her negotiate the tensions between her traditional Turkish upbringing and the liberal customs of France, where she grew up:

When I was younger I had some difficulties between the life I had when I was outside home and the life I had in my home, because at home it was typically Turkish, but I was living in France, and sometimes it was very difficult to find a balance between the two cultures. Watching that movie and other Hindi movies really helped me to find that balance. There were a lot of things that I understood better about my relationship with my parents; the film taught me how to understand them, it helped me to grow more as a person.

(Interview 5 July 2012)

The relevance of Bollywood media in articulating diasporic identities has been explored by scholars in countries that host large South Asian communities, for example, in the UK (Dudrah 2006; Banaji 2012), highlighting the connections between the lives of diasporic subjects and the meanings they make from Hindi films. Semat's experience is an example of the ways commercial Hindi films can provide tools to shape and negotiate hyphenated identities, further serving to reconcile modernity and tradition beyond the South Asian diaspora and in the context of a country of recent immigration such as Ireland. These notions, however, are not incompatible with fans' behaviours branded as excessive such as trying to approach film stars. Mark Duffett explored negative stereotypes about fans, positing that 'psychologists often position fandom as a childish phase which revolves around a "safe," distanced rehearsal for real life' (2013: 95). The complex personal and emotional connections that fans develop for the object of their interest, however, go beyond a desire to be physically close to film stars, but can serve important social and psychological purposes in their lives. As Duffett contends, 'admirers may wish to communicate their feelings or to their star – just for the thrill – but it is important to realize that they *already* (original meet italics) feel boosted by their engagement' (ibid.: 97). Significantly, as Semat's story demonstrates, Bollywood fans do not watch

films merely to escape reality or because they are pathologically obsessed with celebrities, rather they use film narratives to negotiate their experiences, desires and hopes, and to make sense of their own lives. These notions bring to the fore the social and cultural dynamics underlying the enthusiasm and the emotional attachment characteristic of the crowds of Bollywood fans gathered around the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger*, challenging the widespread perception of dedicated fans as inherently ‘immature, vulnerable and potentially dangerous’ (ibid.: 95).

The urban film sets were easy to spot and attracted extra attention, due to the constant presence of crowds of mainly South Asian Bollywood fans. According to Srinivas, crowds of fans contribute to cinema’s visual presence in the city, which needs to be analysed to understand the significance of cinema and the multiple ways film can be experienced in everyday life. As Srinivas notes:

Cinema lives in the enthusiastic crowds that gather both to watch the films and to watch the filmmaking process. Filming in the city ... is certain to attract large crowds. ... Actual advertisement for films may have as much to do with images of the audience as it does the films.

(2010a: 11)

The possibility of tracking down Bollywood film stars around Dublin, allowed South Asians living in Ireland to experience their host country in an unexpected way, replicating celebrity spotting practices occasionally possible in India, but rarely in western countries. In India, especially in Bombay or other large cities, fans can occasionally get a glimpse of Hindi film celebrities going about town in their cars or filming scenes on location, but never get close to them. In one example, nearly every Sunday, Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan greets his fans gathered at the gates of his house in Juhu, Bombay. Sometimes his son Abhishek and daughter-in-law

Aishwarya Rai, also major film stars, join him to meet their fans. However, Irish-based Bollywood fans could never have expected to be able to see Bollywood stars at a close distance and for extended periods of time in Dublin, and so made the most of this opportunity by being constantly present around the sets.



Fig. 42: Large crowds of Bollywood fans at Trinity College (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Locations such as Temple Bar Square, The Quays, Trinity College and neighbouring Wicklow Street, Grafton Street and Essex Street, attracted particularly large crowds, since such sites were in public areas that could not be readily closed off (Fig. 42). This made the work of members of the location crew particularly difficult as they struggled to prevent onlookers from blocking the way or invading the set. As Rob recalls:

We were in very tight streets sometimes, in the city centre, in places where we would try to keep them moving and they just wanted to see the stars ... we weren't really in a position to tell them to go, it was a public place ... we had no real right to move them on ... so we relied on good will for the most part'.

(Interview 1 December 2011)

The presence of Bollywood film sets granted unprecedented visibility and the opportunity to claim ownership of the city to the South Asian community of Dublin. An ethnic minority usually inhabiting suburban neighbourhoods¹³ of the Irish capital and frequently subject to racial abuse, particularly in city centre areas,¹⁴ South Asian migrants could take control of urban spaces, experiencing, albeit temporarily, a different sense of belonging to their host country. This liminal experience can be related to the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia (1967–1984). Heterotopia is a concept elaborated by Michael Foucault and used in human geography to describe places that exist in reality but do not function according to dominant conventions. Heterotopias are sites which are connected to other places by neutralising and inverting the set of relations through which we can define them; they are linked to other places while simultaneously contradicting them. Gardens and zoos are examples of heterotopias because they gather in a single site elements that are not usually together and are composed of parts representing different places. According to Foucault, heterotopias are ‘places that do exist ... something like counter-sites, ... in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted’.¹⁵

Heterotopias are in contrast to utopias which ‘present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces’.¹⁶ In Dublin the utopian and orderly world of film sets was juxtaposed with the heterotopias of South Asian crowds, which undermined notions of order and power relations usually at play in urban spaces and in film production. The spaces around film sets thus became sites of resistance and transgression for a marginalised community of Bollywood fans, opposed to the

illusory control and organisation associated with filmmaking. Heterotopia, Foucault argues, can be found in spaces where disparate elements coexist and diversity is negotiated.¹⁷



Fig. 43: Semat's photograph with Salman Khan, Wicklow Street (Photograph: Semat Demirkan)

During filming on Wicklow Street, many fans managed to approach Salman Khan for autographs and I witnessed a middle-aged Indian man getting Salman Khan's autograph across the back of his jacket. On that occasion, Semat also succeeded in having her picture taken with the star (Fig. 43). The experiences shared by Irish-based Bollywood fans confirm the notion of the *Ek Tha Tiger* sets around Dublin as heterotopic spaces, which allowed new fan practices and possibilities of contact between Hindi film stars and their fans, together with an unprecedented visibility across urban spaces. These acts of transgression were only possible due to the temporary intersection and confluence between the Irish and Indian film industries and the transient cultural encounters these transnational and globalised cinematic

practices facilitated. South Asian fans proved to be very dedicated and resourceful in their attempts to approach the stars; the Irish crew providing location and technical services were initially not prepared to deal with crowds of sometimes hundreds of fans around the sets. As Executive Producer Brendan McCarthy commented:

We didn't expect such a massive fan presence. That was mainly a problem at the beginning as nobody expected that. Then security became tighter and the crew was able to manage crowds better. I had no awareness of such a large South Asian community in Dublin and of the dedication of the fans and of the significance of the stars to the Indian population.

(Interview 1 December 2012)

Irish location managers and trainees were totally surprised by the fans' dedication and uncanny ability to find out about locations, even before people working on sets were officially notified about them. Emma who worked on set as a location trainee recalls: 'they were so innovative in the ways they would try to get past us! They even stalked a member of the security team home'.¹⁸ Indian fans resorted to following crew members around town, asking anybody who seemed to be linked to the film, to find out when and where the next shoot would happen, informing each other about locations through the extensive use of internet platforms.

The excitement and emotion in fans of seeing their celluloid dreams materialised, often generated an obsession in fans to approach the film stars and acquire a memento as evidence of their fleeting presence in Dublin. Most people wanted their picture taken with Salman Khan, while others also wanted autographs of both him and Katrina Kaif. For this reason, usually sensible adults displayed reckless behaviour such as standing on heavily trafficked streets, pushing through fences and dodging security guards in an attempt to get closer to the film stars and take photographs of

them. During a night shoot, Salman and Katrina stood in front of the Temple Bar pub surrounded by other actors. That night, I was helping out the location trainees as large crowds of onlookers were standing around, constantly trying to enter the set. Some of the newly hired Irish location personnel were having difficulties in distinguishing Indian fans from members of the Indian crew. As Steven recalls: ‘it was difficult to get to know the faces of the Indian crew and I’m sure they would have felt the same about us ... we used the tagging system with wristbands to distinguish who was crew and who was trying to sneak in’.¹⁹ While we were working on set, the South Asian Trinity College volunteers and I also wore wristbands, which marked us as part of the production team, allowing us unlimited access to the restricted areas of the sets separated from the crowds of onlookers. I remember feeling happy and proud of wearing a wristband but, at the same time, I was conscious that the official role that it afforded required me not only to suppress my fan identity, but also to place myself in opposition to other fans, as I often had the task of keeping onlookers away from the sets. It was challenging to prevent fans from blocking sidewalks and passageways. As a result, local businesses were occasionally disrupted; during filming in Temple Bar, for example, I heard a restaurant owner complaining that onlookers were obstructing the entrance to his restaurant. Others tried pretending to be passing by or to enter the pub just to get closer to their idols, but security personnel managed to keep them at bay.

Henry Jenkins in his work on fandom does not consider it appropriate to compare media fans with religious devotees, since religion is grounded in faith and belief and fans are aware that the object of their admiration is embedded in a world of fantasy and fiction (2006b). I am aware that fans are capable of separating fiction from reality

and should not be accused of having false beliefs, however, when I witnessed the adoration that many fans had for Salman Khan, I definitely felt that he was imbued with divine qualities by many of his admirers. To this end, Dudrah observes that ‘popular Bollywood actors in India are accorded a larger than life status akin to demi-gods and goddesses’ (2006: 57). As a Bollywood fan myself, my excitement of being on the sets of a major Bollywood film production and in close proximity to famous Hindi film actors could not compare to the emotions of many South Asian fans – after all, I was able to be on set without feeling the need to approach the protagonists or constantly look at them. Interestingly, I experienced slight guilt for not understanding or sharing that feeling and still calling myself a fan.

The adoring behaviour of many Indian fans can arguably be explained by the fact that they project their dreams and aspirations onto film stars and therefore develop a strong emotional attachment to them. Significantly, the ability to embody people’s hopes and sentiments was the vehicle that propelled Amitabh Bachchan to superstardom in the 1970s through his screen persona of the ‘angry young man’. Vijay Mishra argues that his rebelliousness ‘reflected the disenchantment, the oppression, the hopelessness of the slum dweller who saw in Bachchan’s acts of “antiheroism” a symbol of his or her own aspirations’ (2002: 128). It is interesting to note that Salman Khan’s fan base has traditionally been constituted by masses of people belonging to the lower echelons of Indian society.²⁰ His early films where he played the romantic hero, however, also appealed to and allied him with the rising Indian middle classes. These films include *Hum Apke Hain Koun..!* (Who Am I to You, Sooraj Baryatja, 1994) and *Hum Saath-Saath Hain* (We Are Together, Sooraj Baryatja, 1999), which are characterised by storylines centred on the lives of contemporary Indian bourgeois families and

celebrating family values, tradition and romance.²¹ Salman Khan's middle class appeal was further strengthened by the action comedy *Dabangg* (2010). *Dabangg* contains typical elements of popular Hindi cinema, such as song and dance sequences, melodrama and romance, combined with highly stylised action sequences and a larger-than-life, unethical hero effectively portrayed by Salman Khan, thus giving familiar themes a new twist and broader appeal. As Shohini Ghosh points out in her article about Salman Khan and *Ek Tha Tiger*:

Dabangg was not only a sensational hit in Salman's traditional fan-base, but also captured the imagination of the urban middle-classes, who were prone to deride Salman-starrers as lacking "class" and "taste" The stupendous success of *Bodyguard* the following year confirmed Salman Khan's stature as a hero of both the "masses" and the "classes".²²

The vast majority of the Indian community of Ireland is composed of middle class people who came to the country to work in IT companies, employed as medical professionals, businessmen and university students – a community hardly comprising traditional members of Salman Khan's fan base. For this reason it can be argued that if Khan had come to Ireland before the cross-class appeal he gained with *Dabangg*, the number of fans following him around Dublin would have been lower and *Ek Tha Tiger* would not have been as successful. Instead, 'having swept both Salman-strongholds and multiplex audiences in India and the diaspora, *Tiger* is Salman Khan's most profitable film to date'.²³

The popularity of Salman Khan, however, was not only in crossing social classes but also generations: during the filming I was surprised to see a significant presence of children among the South Asian onlookers. Notably, it was very common to see Indian families with young children in their arms standing around the sets. They were

waiting for hours, often until late at night, hoping to get an autograph or a picture with the actors. I knew that both stars were very popular among adults and children alike, but I remember thinking it to be somewhat excessive to allow children to stay up late just to approach a film star. This is because my emotional investment in film celebrities is not as strong as for Indian fans. Significantly, I do not actually identify with film stars or project my hopes onto them, and this prevented me from understanding the sheer passion and enthusiasm that both South Asian children and adults felt for Salman Khan – feelings that I could not possibly emulate, even as a Bollywood fan. This notion became apparent many times during my experience on the film sets and especially when the filming was underway in Trinity College.

Trinity College is extremely important in my embodied and participatory experience of the film's production both in terms of my research and as a fan. Significantly, on 13 September 2011 I started volunteering on set at Trinity College and became part of the crew for a few days. On that day, more Trinity College students from South Asia joined the volunteers, eager to be part of the film. I was the only non-South Asian among the volunteers and the oldest of the group, but did not notice these differences until months later when I was analysing the material collected in my fieldwork; during the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* we shared the same excitement and enthusiasm to be part of the film's crew (Fig. 44). We all wore yellow T-shirts with recognisable logos and worked closely with the assistant directors and the location personnel, giving directions to the extras and monitoring the crowds of fans present on campus. Significantly, beyond the fences blocking the entrance to the sets were crowds of mostly South Asian fans who were eager to approach the stars and find out more about the film.



Fig. 44: Myself (first left) with some of the TCD volunteers; the Vice Provost for Global Relations, Jane Ohlmeyer; and Salman Khan (Photograph: Sharon Campbell)

When Emma and I were monitoring crowds of fans to prevent them from invading the set during the filming of the dance scene on Trinity College Parliament Square, a mother kept on begging us to let her son get an autograph from ‘the hero’, as many fans referred to Salman Khan. On the same day, I witnessed an Indian child, barely three years old, screaming the actor’s name. His popularity among children took me by surprise. It was fascinating to see both parents and children equally eager to approach the stars. People with children actually had an advantage over other fans as they knew that Khan was happy to please his younger fans; he would sometimes allow families to come to the set to have his photograph taken with the children. Emma later commented that ‘they were using the children to gain access to Salman Khan ... one woman came from Drogheda every day to be on set with her kids’.²⁴ I asked my friend Anjala, an Indian woman who has been living in Ireland for many years about the extremely young age of many Bollywood fans; she explained that in India everybody

loves Bollywood, no matter their age, and small children particularly enjoy the song and dance sequences, so they get to know the stars early. Even Anjala's daughter wanted Katrina Kaif's autograph, but could not get it on set (Fig. 34), so I was given the task of obtaining the autograph for her. We were instructed not to disturb the stars during filming, but luckily I could approach Katrina on the last day of filming and she was happy to oblige, especially since it was for a little girl. Like Salman, Katrina was conscious of her appeal among younger fans and thus willing to make a special effort to please them. This is a fascinating component of the relationship between Bollywood stars and their fans that I discovered during the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* in Dublin, foregrounding the fact that my interest in Indian film is arguably very much influenced by my western cultural bias, setting me apart from 'authentic' South Asian fans, who would typically take these dynamics for granted.

Many people were excited by the presence of the stars: several girls constantly asked me and other volunteers in which hotel the film's protagonist were staying; a girl insisted on giving me a letter for the film's director and others managed to run through the fences to have an autograph from Salman Khan. These behaviours were not limited to teenagers: a grown woman who tried to approach the star had to be removed from the set by security guards. Celine also came to watch the filming; she was particularly interested in seeing the dance sequence and managed to record part of it with her digital camera. Like many Bollywood fans, Celine enjoyed watching the videos and listening to film songs before actually seeing the film in order to familiarise herself with the story and maximise her enjoyment of it. Other Indian people living in Ireland could engage with the production of the dance sequence at a different level. For example, Anjala, who lived in Kilkenny at the time and travelled

to Dublin with her family to see the dance sequence, was happy and proud to see that the hurlers included in a scene (see chapter four) were actually wearing Kilkenny jerseys. It was fascinating to see how an Indian film actually highlighted her emotional connection with her locality in Ireland. This is an example of how globalisation can operate at the level of people's emotions as Anjala's passion for Hindi cinema and her attachment to her host country intersected in the context of a transnational film production.

My ethnographic experience on the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger* allowed me to explore how fans actively interacted with the production of the film and how their presence around the film's locations allowed them unprecedented control and visibility across Dublin's urban spaces. The exploration of how Irish-based Bollywood fans exchanged information and media content relevant to the filming, has allowed me to demonstrate that Hindi film fans can be seen as a complex community that interacts not only locally, by gathering around film sets, but also virtually, on public and globally accessible internet platforms. This chapter demonstrates how fans utilised digital technologies to share their personal experiences of being on the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger*. This mode of fandom practice, not only strengthens and enhances their anticipation of the final film and their passion for Hindi Cinema, but further allows fans to become independent cultural producers, circulating their own visual material alongside media content from global media companies. These notions confirm the emergence of fandom as an integral aspect of the global circulation of Hindi film. Notably, the online activity of Hindi film fans has been examined by scholars who suggest that attention to fan practices can help media producers create effective content for new media and gain control over fan activity. As Punathambekar contends:

The shift towards examining the “fan” ... as shaped equally by industry practices, textual properties of film-based content that flow across multiple media, and social interactions in identifiable fan communities is vital if we are to appreciate and understand the centrality of spaces of participatory culture ... to the larger problematic of the emergence of “Bollywood” as a global culture industry.

(2007: 207)

In this way fan activity can be instrumentalised by production companies to promote and raise awareness about commercial films, allowing them to benefit from independently produced media content. However, new technologies and the internet are not only employed by film fans to produce and share material about existing mainstream media production; they are also effectively utilised by film enthusiasts to start making films and circulate them to global audiences. To this end, the next and final chapter focuses on the films produced by a group of self-taught filmmakers who recently moved to Dublin from the south Indian state of Kerala.

Notes

¹ ‘Neither Amitabh nor Sha Rukh, Salman Khan is the Real King... In social media sites Salman has the biggest fan following’, *Emirates* 24/7 16 January 2013.

Available at: <http://www.emirates247.com/entertainment/neither-amitabh-nor-shah-rukhsalman-khan-is-the-real-king-2013-01-15-1.491226> [Accessed 15 December 2013].

² ‘Salman and Katrina Go Back to College’ *Midday* 27 July 2011. Available at: <http://www.mid-day.com/entertainment/2011/jul/270711> [Accessed 15 August 2011].

³ Movieextras.ie is the company that provided background extras needed for several scenes of *Ek Tha Tiger*. People register to Movieextras.ie by paying a membership fee in order to be considered for extra roles for film and TV productions. Extras are selected randomly and are hired on a day to day basis.

⁴ The All-Ireland Senior Football Championship (SFC) is the premier competition in Gaelic football and is organised by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The All-Ireland Senior Football Championship Final is played on the third or fourth Sunday in September at Croke Park in Dublin, with the winning team receiving the prestigious Sam Maguire Cup.

⁵ Keane, K. (2011) ‘Bollywood Brings Tiger Back to Economy’ *Independent.ie* 12 September 2011 Available at: <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/bollywood-brings-tiger-back-to-economy-2873531.html> [Accessed 15 October 2011].

⁶ ‘Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias’. The publication of this text written in 1967 was authorised by Foucault in 1984 in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5, 1984, pp. 46-49.[Online] Available at: <http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html> [Accessed 16 May 2014].

⁷ Indiansinireland.com is an online forum where South Asian people share information about life in Ireland and events. Available at: <http://www.indiansinireland.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=32411> [Accessed 15 March 2012].

⁸ *Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif on the Sets of Ek Tha Tiger, Dublin*. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zmc673dC_xU [Accessed 8 April 2014].

⁹ Manisha is a Bollywood dancer from India. She is part of the Dharmendra Bollywood Dance School which organises Bollywood dance classes and performances around Dublin.

¹⁰ *Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif pictures Ek Tha Tiger, Dublin*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMHj_r5T3SI [Accessed 10 October 2012].

¹¹ Comments by the author of the YouTube video *Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif pictures Ek Tha Tiger, Dublin*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMHj_r5T3SI [Accessed 10 October 2012].

¹² *Salman Khan in Dublin for Ek Tha Tiger Shooting*. Available at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=818KEEFEqbE> [Accessed 9 April 2014].

¹³ The suburban centres of Lucan and Tallaght host large Indian communities. About 68% of members of the Indian community live in the greater Dublin area and approximately 32% live throughout the Country. <http://www.irelandindiacouncil.ie/community.php> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

¹⁴ 'Is Dublin Really Safe for Indians?' Available at: <http://w.indiansinireland.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=32992&p=49484> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

¹⁵ Foucault, M. (1984) 'Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias' *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 1984, pp. 46-49. Available at: <http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html>. [Accessed 16 May 2014].

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Emma Payne, Location Trainee (Interview 10 November 2011).

¹⁹ Steven Sheehy, Location Trainee (Interview 19 October 2011).

²⁰ Salman Khan has traditionally been particularly popular among underprivileged Muslims in provincial towns and urban slums dwellers (Ghosh 2012).

²¹ *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* is particularly important in the history of Hindi cinema as it was released during a period when cinema was in decline due to the prominence of cable TV, Home Video and piracy and also because the vulgarity and violence of commercial Indian cinema of the time was driving middle class audiences away from the movie theatres. As Jigna Desai argues, 'for middle-class viewers, HAHK suggested to many that it was safe to return to the theatre as the lowbrow and vulgar taste of the working class had been momentarily, at least, vanquished' (2004: 206).

²² Ghosh, S. (2012) 'The Irresistible Badness of Salman Khan: What *Ek Tha Tiger* Means in Relation to Salman Khan's Peculiar Stardom'

The Caravan: A Journal of Politics and Culture [Online] Available at: <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/irresistible-badness-salman-khan>. [Accessed 06 March 2013].

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Emma Payne (Interview 10 November 2011).

Chapter Six

The Iris Film Society: Malayalee Stories Set in Ireland



Fig. 45: Kerala filmmakers achieving a tracking shot with the aid of a wheelchair, Palmerstown (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

Introduction

This chapter draws on theories surrounding diasporic and transnational cinema, migration and postcolonial studies with the aim of exploring a body of no-budget¹ films produced by a group of migrant amateur filmmakers coming from the South Indian state of Kerala currently living in Dublin, who formed a collective called ‘Iris Film Society’. What is distinctive about the members of this association is that they have no formal training or engaged in filmmaking while they were living in India; rather, they developed an interest in making films upon their arrival in Ireland, where easier access to affordable equipment and online training resources allowed them to pursue their passion for cinema, documenting their life in Ireland by completing several film projects. The films produced by Dublin-based Keralite filmmakers are

designed to communicate with communities in India and to create a dialogue about the experience of Indians living abroad via internet platforms. These notions are linked to Jenkins' theories of media convergence according to which digital technologies allow grassroots media content to be available on the internet alongside corporate media, thus empowering independent producers to effectively distribute their works and connect with audiences at a global level. To this end, 'the emergence of new media technologies supports a democratic urge to allow more people to create and circulate media' (2006a: 258). Furthermore, it can be argued that these films are an example of transnational cinema which 'cuts across previously defined geographic, national, cultural, cinematic, and meta-cinematic boundaries' (Naficy 1994: 1).

Questions I endeavour to address in this chapter include: what is the role of filmmaking in the lives of Indian immigrants currently living in Dublin and how are their experiences represented in the films they make? Can these Irish-Indian films function as agents of dialogical encounter, furthering debates on immigration to Ireland? Moreover, how and to what effect is film used to communicate with other Indian communities? This chapter utilises theoretical readings of selected films, ethnographic accounts of film production and exhibition, alongside interviews with filmmakers, to explore how the experience of migration relevant to Keralite communities in the Irish capital is articulated through film, as well as the reactions and interactions generated by the circulation of these films.

Filming *The Circle* in Dublin

Dublin, February 2014. In the early morning, I take a bus to the Dublin suburb of Palmerstown to join the crew of a short film titled *The Circle*, directed by two Keralite

filmmakers named Jijo S. Palatty and Prince Joseph. As instructed by Jijo, I get off at a bus stop on Kennelsfort Road and wait for another member of the crew to drive me to the sets. After a few minutes waiting, Prince, co-director and protagonist of the film, collects me and drives me to Jijo's house, where filming is underway. During our brief journey, Prince explains that he works as a chef in a nursing home, but has taken that day off; he should be minding his young daughter because his wife, a nurse in a Dublin hospital, is on duty, but he hired a child-minder instead, since it is important for him to be able to complete his current film project. As he explained in an interview a few days after, Prince acted in many amateur theatrical plays in Kerala but, like Jijo, he started making films after moving to Dublin. In 2011, he wrote, directed and produced a no-budget feature film titled *Malayali vs. Malayali* (2011); yet his main passion is acting and for this reason, he was eager to play the lead role in *The Circle*.

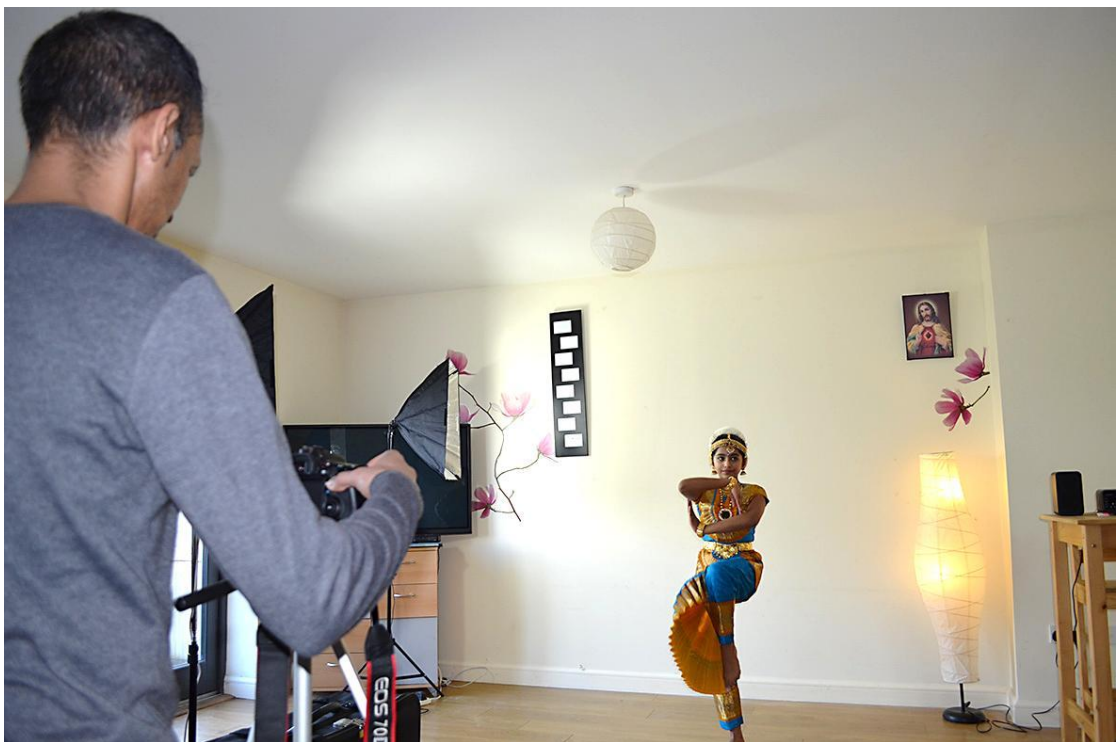


Fig. 46: Jijo setting up a shot of Angel dancing, Palmerstown (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

We shortly reach Jijo's place and find him busy positioning several lights around his living room. Jijo lives in a ground floor apartment on a residential estate. His living room with wooden floors, beech furniture and leather couches, has the standard look of many rented apartments in the Irish capital. A small picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on a wall reminds me that Jijo and his family, like many other Keralites living in Ireland, are Christians (Fig. 46). Jijo moved to Ireland in 2006. He learnt the craft of filmmaking on his own using internet resources, and started making films about the life of Indian migrants in Ireland. Jijo was happy to meet me and talk about his films several months earlier and promised to let me know when he was going to make his next film. A few days earlier, he informed me via a Facebook message about the imminent shooting of his new short, writing that I was welcome to join him and his crew and asked if I could take some photographs of the making of the film. I am really delighted to finally be invited to the filming of an Irish-Indian film production, because since finding out about the existence of a group of Indian filmmakers based in Dublin (see chapter one), I had been trying to interview them and to participate in the making of their films, but to no avail. Being a fan of Indian cinema, I was particularly interested in learning more about Indian productions happening in the city where I lived. I was determined to establish an ongoing connection with the filmmakers belonging to the Iris Film Society and, ideally, participate in the production and screening of their films. For this reason, I continued to contact potential participants on a regular basis for more than one year and eventually obtained Jijo's contact details and he agreed to meet me.

Henry Jenkins contends that the dual identity of fan and researcher 'facilitates certain understandings and forms of access impossible through other positionings'(1992: 6).

In my case, it afforded me the persistence to continue approaching my elusive research participants. The reluctance of the filmmakers did not surprise me; I understood that they were part of a very close community and did not have much interaction with people who were not from Kerala, so they were most likely uncomfortable discussing their filmmaking activity with somebody from a different cultural background. As Jijo commented in an interview:

It's not a preference, because we look up to people who mingle with them [the Irish] but still we are shy...I think it will loosen up, but it will happen when the children grow up and they will bring their school friends into the house, because until now there are very few Malayalee houses that are used to foreigners visiting.

(Interview 9 July 2013)

Among the reasons why Jijo agreed to meet me was possibly his openness to different cultures, stemming from a passion for international art cinema, alongside his desire to get in touch with filmmakers from different ethnic backgrounds with a view to collaborating with them. He explained that in order to start making films he had approached a Keralite art group, and within a few years he managed to make five short films and a feature film with them. Following these experiences he felt ready to connect with filmmakers of other communities and work on different projects, hoping I could help him with this objective in mind. So his enthusiasm for film allowed him to become a filmmaker, prompting him to accept to meet me because our common interest was arguably stronger than our cultural differences.

According to Jenkins, 'this ability to transform personal reaction into social interaction, spectatorial culture into participatory culture, is one of the central characteristics of fandom' (2006b: 41). However, Jenkins' reflections further reminded me of the need to pay attention to other cultural and personal elements

shaping my interactions with Jijo and other research participants, for ‘claiming a common identity with fans does not erase other forms of power relations that color all ethnographic research’ (1992: 6). Here, for example, and as mentioned in chapter one, I am referring to my positionality as a white, female researcher studying the activities of a group of South Asian male migrants living in a western country and the ensuing power-dynamics.

Warren and Hackney in their work on gender in ethnography, contend that the researcher’s gender affects both the fieldwork relationships and the production of ethnography (2000). Okely further suggests that ‘the differing formation and life experience of persons according to their sex/gender have implications for theorising and for self-presentation’ (1992: 12). This notion was complicated by my racial difference from the participants to my research, adding a further element of ‘otherness’ to my position. On the other hand, my Italian identity created a common ground because I shared with Keralite migrants an experience of displacement and migration, which also influences my interaction with them. Here, I could easily relate to the difficulties for Indian migrants in connecting to local Irish people and the allure of other migrant groups who share similar experiences and cultural backgrounds. Being female, Italian and migrant are personal and cultural components of my identity that shape both my research experience and my writing. Rather than being an obstacle, my ‘cultural baggage’ hopefully provides depth and uniqueness to my account of the activities of Keralite filmmakers in Dublin. As Helen Callaway observes, ‘often the anthropologist is warned about bringing her own “cultural baggage” to the field, however, ‘a deepening understanding of our own gendered identities and the coded

complexities of our being offered the best resources for gaining insights into the lives of others' (1992:30).

When I enter the room, Jijo welcomes me and briefly explains that his new film is very different from the ones he made before, most of which were focused on the experience of migration and issues faced by Indians living in Dublin. He describes *The Circle* as a murder mystery with black humour and absurd situations – in his words, ‘similar to a Wes Anderson film’. The finished film is going to be about seventeen minutes long and, like every other film that Jijo has made, has no budget. He explains that his wife and children are presently in India, so he can use his house as a location for the film. He notes that it was difficult to find a day for the film shoot as they have to coordinate between many people, all of whom are busy with work, childminding and family commitments. He then introduces me to the actors who arrived shortly after me: one is Eldo John, a Keralite man in his thirties who tells me about his passion for theatre and his plans to organise a theatrical play in a few months; another is Don John, a twenty-year-old business student, also from Kerala. Don acted in two previous films directed by Jijo, *Happy Independence Day*, a short film which will be analysed later in the chapter, and the feature film *The Third World* (2010).

Soon afterwards, Ajith Kesavan arrives, he is the cinematographer in this film, but he also directed a short film titled *Hide and Seek* (2011), which will also be analysed later in this chapter. He is an accomplished painter and has a passion for photography; his works are occasionally showcased at South Asian community events. Ajith greets me politely as he usually does every time we meet at cultural events; he seems happy

to see me on set and explains that he is going to shoot the film using two DSLR cameras. Much like other Keralite filmmakers who I tried to contact over time, Ajith never returned my calls or replied to my messages about the possibility of meeting and talking about his filmmaking activity. At this point in time I understand that, even if he has nothing against me, he is clearly not comfortable talking to me in a formal way, probably due to the lack of familiarity that Keralites have with people of other nationalities described earlier. I am aware that his reluctance to talk to me is influenced by the fact that I am a white woman and a researcher, which creates a barrier of difference between us that he might perceive as too difficult to overcome. Traditional norms regulating gender relations in India, combined with the notion that I do not belong to the Keralite community, and my clear intention to subject his activities to academic scrutiny, undoubtedly have a role in his decision to avoid my questions. Notably, the implications of gender and ethnicity in ethnography have been examined by scholars, particularly in terms of the role of women fieldworkers who often find themselves bound to the social roles assigned to females within a given community (Okely 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Pink 2007). These identity markers can often significantly reshape or restrict the scope of the research. According to Hammersley and Atkinson, ‘characteristics as gender, age, “race”, and ethnic identification may shape relationships with gatekeepers, sponsors, and people under study in important ways’ as they can ‘be a barrier to doing the research that is difficult if not impossible to overcome’ (2007: 73).

In order to avoid any awkwardness, I tell Ajith that it is fine with me if he does not want to be interviewed and I am not going to ask again. He seems relieved to hear that, and we then have a brief chat about his paintings and photographic activity.

When I do compliment his film, he comments that he is aware that it had many technical faults. Like Jijo and other amateur filmmakers, Ajith too is embarrassed about the technical glitches present in his films, feeling that these problems totally devalue and trivialise his efforts, without acknowledging that these films are actually an important way to document their presence in Dublin at a particular moment in time.

As Zimmerman contends:

[A]mateur film needs to be inserted into cinematic discourse as that place where cinema is constructed as a practice and as a discipline and not simply as a formal text removed from history. The amateur camera, then, functions simultaneously as a passport into cultural difference and out of differentiation.
(1996: 86)

Moreover, amateur films are invaluable in providing records of cultural practices happening at a local level and in a specific social context, given that they 'are open and fluid textual and historical systems, endlessly negotiating multiple historical practices and discourses' (ibid.: 85). The last cast member to arrive on set is a Keralite girl in her early teens wearing a beautiful Bharatanatyam² dance costume; she is chaperoned by her mother, father and younger sister. Jijo introduces them to me, explains that they live next door to him and that Angel – the name of the girl – is going to act and dance in the film. He informs me that they are going to film a fight scene between two main characters (played by Eldo and Prince), which will be interrupted by Angel entering the room wearing a classical Indian dance costume, dancing to hip hop music, initially oblivious of the two men fighting.

In spite of being Christians, the crew and cast members perform a brief Puja³ for good luck before starting the filming. Their Puja consists in lighting a Christmas candle and meditating for a few seconds, after which they extinguish the candle and prepare for

filming. During my time in India I witnessed many instances of similar encounters between different religions, among these are figurines of Jesus placed next to Hindu deities in a Mandir⁴ and statues of Jesus and Mary adorned with the same garlands of flowers used to decorate Hindu temples. The religious syncretism visible in India has been the object of scholarly attention and discussed in the context of India's remarkable diversity and fluid ethnic and cultural identities.⁵ According to N.K. Das, 'in the Indian context religious synthesis/syncretism has had a positive implication as a foundation and form of resistance to cultural dominance' (2006: 13-14). On the other hand, the Christmas candle used to perform the Puja and the portrait of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the wall were reminders of India's colonial history and markers of the Keralite people's post-colonial identity.⁶ As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam note, 'a celebration of syncretism and hybridity *per se*, if not articulated with questions of historical hegemonies, risks sanctifying the *fait accompli* of colonial violence' (1994: 43). Significantly, hybrid identities and practices have been linked by scholars to notions of domination and resistance (Bhabha 2004). In this context, the ancient Indian ritual of the Puja can be seen as a simultaneous form of religious and cultural resistance to dominant religious practices belonging to their host country and to India's colonisers.

This notion combined with the presence of signifiers of different cultures such as hip hop music, traditional Indian dance and western furniture design, simultaneously visible on the set, suggest that all these elements shape and influence the production of the film in the making, even if it occurs in a specific Irish location (Fig. 46). According to Appadurai, 'the locality...becomes a fetish that disguises the globally dispersed forces that actually drive the production process' (1996: 42). In this way the

film produced by Jijo and his crew becomes embedded in the global flows and multiple landscapes that characterise today's global interactions.

During the filming, I mostly stand on one side of the room with Angel's mother and sister, occasionally moving around to take photographs, always being careful not to disrupt the filmmakers' work. During a break, Angel's mother kindly brings chai for everybody and we start to chat. The family ask me about my work. When I tell them that I am writing a thesis on Indian cinema in Dublin, they express interest in my research and are impressed by the fact that I had been to India and lived there for several months. Angel and her mother have an iPad with them and they use it to take photographs of me, the crew, and the set. Ajith also takes a photograph of me on set (Fig. 47). In this instance, I realise that they are as curious about me as I am about them, and I wonder if this has anything to do with my gender and the notion that women are traditionally considered 'objects of the gaze'. As Ruth Behar notes in her discussion of female anthropologists in *Women Writing Culture*: 'the woman who is turning others into the object of her gaze is herself already an object of the gaze. Woman, the original Other, is always being looked at and looked over. A woman sees herself being seen' (1996: 2).



Fig. 47: Myself (right) with Angel and her mother on set, Palmerstown (Photograph: Ajith Kesavan)

Jijo comments that the filming is progressing according to schedule and that my presence is motivating them to get things done. Jijo is curious about what I am going to write in relation to his films and the films of other Dublin-based Keralite filmmakers. He asks if I am going to mention their limitations in terms of equipment and resources, commenting that such limitations greatly affect their work because they do not have any support or funding. Having collaborated in the making of a few no-budget short films myself, I am familiar with having to deal with the lack of professional filming equipment. Today I have the opportunity to witness how Jijo and Ajith manage to achieve complex shots in spite of their technical limitations. Ajith films high angle shots of the actors, which would normally require the camera to be mounted on a crane or jib, by holding his camera while precariously standing on a high stool. In order to film an outdoor scene of Prince walking along a footpath, Ajith and Jijo use a wheelchair to achieve a tracking shot (Fig. 45). When I see them working with such confidence, I cannot believe that these filmmakers never went to

film school and did not know anything about filmmaking until they came to Dublin only a few years ago. I remember that the first time I watched their films (see chapter one) I was very impressed by their technical quality; I now witness how they can achieve such impressive results without a budget, using only consumer equipment purchased during their time in Ireland. Jijo explained in an interview that he taught himself filmmaking and film theory using internet resources and that his taste in film evolved over the years from mainstream films to European art house. He added that lack of funding and professional equipment affected his initial approach to filmmaking, shaping the stories he scripted in his first films:

I never went to any film school. I started here from free resources, from the internet. My interest in film started in Ireland. I started watching films ... my taste changed over these five years: at the beginning I was more open to popular films, but then you start viewing these particular art house films... and my last film is very art house.⁷ ... I watch Robert Bresson ... films by Pasolini, Fellini, Bertolucci ... do I pronounce it right? Then there is somebody called Roy Anderson, ... he is a Swedish filmmaker similar to Bergman, with absurdist comedy. I like his visual style with a steady camera like a tableau; I have used those elements in my films also. ... I used to be a fan of Lars Von Trier, not anymore, I don't follow Dogme 95 now, but I used to. I was very interested in it because those people did it even though they had other resources. I did it because I had no resources, so I said 'ok, how can I make use of my position? I have no resources so what kind of identity I can choose?' so I became a Dogme 95 filmmaker. But now I don't think it's a very good idea... Now I want to do something more artistic and draw attention to the camera movements... that was my last film.

(Interview 9 July 2013).

Dogme 95 was a film-making movement started by the Danish film directors Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, Kristian Levring and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen in 1995. These directors wanted to promote a filmmaking style focused on narrative and acting, excluding the use of special effects in order to highlight the role of the director as an artist. Members of Dogme 95 needed to adhere to a set of rules designed to stop filmmakers from relying on action sequences and special effects to make the film

work. Some of these rules include the following guidelines: that filming must be done on location, without artificial lighting; the camera must be hand-held, the films must be in colour and the use of filters is forbidden; non-diegetic music is forbidden; the films must not belong to a specific genre and should not include complex action sequences or special effects of any kind (Kelly 2000). These rules were considered very provocative and innovative as they encouraged independent forms of filmmaking and promoted the inclusion of low-budget digital films in contemporary film culture.

Thanks to Dogme 95, Jijo gained the confidence to make films and, even if his artistic choice was actually motivated by lack of funding and technical limitations, it gave him the opportunity to experiment with an established European filmmaking style. The notion that an amateur Indian director actually embraced and reworked a European film form to convey diasporic narratives enhanced the hybrid and syncretic nature of his films. The encounter between cultures that have no colonial links or hierarchical relations can be regarded as positive, since it is not detrimental to the development of any of the parties involved in the exchange. For according to Gibbons:

Another way of negotiating identity through an exchange with the other is to make provision, not just for “vertical” mobility from the periphery to the centre, but for “lateral” journeys along the margins which short-circuit the colonial divide ... Hybridity need not always take the high road: where there are borders to be crossed, unapproved roads might prove more beneficial in the long run than those patrolled by global powers.

(1996: 180)

In the early afternoon, Prince collects chicken Biryani⁸ and naan bread from a local Afghan store for all of us, so I have lunch with them in Jijo’s flat. I am the only one eating with a fork (everybody else eats with their hands as it is customary in India), the only non-Indian, and woman, as Angel and her family have gone home to eat. I do

not realise this until later though, when at home writing my field notes, since the members of the cast and crew who remain on location make me feel very welcome. I therefore never feel awkward or out of place. Even when they speak Malayalam with each other I manage to grasp the general meaning of what they are saying (they are mainly talking about a Bharatanatyam dance show happening at the weekend). They sometimes apologise for not speaking in English, but when I prove that I understand their topic of conversation they are surprised, laugh and comment that I am learning Malayalam. I try to help them tidy up after lunch but Jijo says that I am their guest, commenting that they are used to doing house work because when their wives are at work, they have to look after the house. In the evening, when they finish filming, Prince drives me back to the bus stop where he collected me in the morning. He says he will be happy to tell me about his acting and filmmaking activity as soon as they finish filming *The Circle*.

Origins, Aims and Practices of the Iris Film Society

Despite their lack of formal training or institutional support, as indicated in the previous section, members of the Iris Film Society are very resourceful in the way they produce films. Since they do not have a budget or access to professional equipment, they use private homes and urban spaces as locations (see Figs. 45 and 46) and film with consumer video and DSLR cameras. Binu Daniel, one of the directors of the society, told me that the Iris Film Society was established in 2008 by several film enthusiasts, including himself and Jijo. The aim of the organisation was to promote Keralite culture through film and to organise alternative social and cultural activities to those provided by their church.⁹ Soon afterwards they started to produce films as a

way of documenting their experience living in the country for future generations of Irish-Indians. As Jijo explained:

When I first met the other people [a Keralite group promoting arts] I explained to them: why are we making these films? This is a visual document of our own life here. Maybe our future generations will love to watch this, because this is the first generation of Keralites that came down here. We are only ten years old and there is no writer among us who is writing and documenting this stuff, so at least let's document it visually. Visual art reflects many small little things a written document cannot. So this is our ambition and one reason why we started making films. This is for our future generations.

(Interview 9 July 2013)

For these reasons, the members of the Iris Film Society work as a collective, taking up different production roles as they help each other develop individual projects providing their own skills and equipment. In this way, the director of a film can be DOP, or even an actor, in a film directed by another member of the society. They explained that they could not study film or make films in India mainly because there it would have been unaffordable to go to film school or buy equipment; in addition to that, they would have to work six days per week, therefore not having the time to do anything else. Moreover, filming outdoors would be very difficult due to restrictive laws that require permission for filming in most places, alongside the constant and menacing presence of crowds of onlookers. As Prince and Binu commented:

When I was in India I had a passion for drama and we tried to make a short film over there, but there were issues: we needed a technician, who was expensive ... and at the same time, I was working Monday to Saturday, ... and I had only one free day, Sunday, just to go to church and staying with my family. If we are in India, we need more funding to make films. If we are filming on a road, if we take our a camera out, after a few minutes there will be a big crowd, too many people, some of them making very bad comments. There are also legal issues: if you want to shoot in a particular area you need permission.

(Prince Joseph, interview 21 March 2014)

When we moved to Ireland the technology was within reach ... and also affordable with the salaries we get here. In India it's not like that: the salaries are low and the cost of technology is much higher, so we would need to work one or two years to afford technology.

(Binu Daniel, interview 22 April 2014)

Since the members of the Iris Film Society are collectively engaged in the pursuit of making films and learning skills from each other, they can arguably be defined as a 'community of practice', as understood by Etienne Wenger:

[C]ollective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprise and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities *communities of practice*.

(1998: 45)

Due to the collaborative nature of their work and the fact that their films are inspired and influenced by their avid interest in film, it can be argued that the activities and structuring of the society are a form of 'produsage'. The term produsage results from the combination of the words 'production' and 'usage', coined by Australian media scholar Axel Bruns. According to Bruns, produsage is a 'fluid category of participation ... undertaken by "producers" through collaborative processes of creation and re-creation. Built on technical affordances that encourage iterative approaches to tasks, fluid roles and lack of hierarchy' (Bruns quoted in Jenkins et al., 2013: 183).



Fig.48: Poster of a screening organised by the Iris Film Society

The society organises screenings of the films they produce; these events usually take place in community centres and are mainly attended by Keralite people.¹⁰ However, the posters and other advertisement of the events are in English (Fig. 48), arguably an attempt to reach wider audiences beyond the Indian community. Another important platform that allows members of the Iris Film Society to showcase their films is the internet, in particular YouTube. Some members also attempt to circulate their films through festivals and art competitions. These activities are explored later in the chapter to demonstrate how these films can be employed to create a dialogue between communities.

Significantly, even if the films of the Iris Film Society are produced in Ireland, they foreground elements of South Indian culture given that they are characterised by a mixture of English and Malayalam language, reflecting the transnational experience of

Indian migrants. Of course, this is not the first instance of Indian migrants using amateur filmmaking to convey diasporic narratives. For example, Sandhya Suri's documentary *I for India* (2005) is constructed through her father's amateur films and audiotapes and explores his process of transnational identity formation following his experience of migration from India to the UK. Stuart Hall sees transnational identities as being 'always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation' (1990: 222). Following Hall, I argue that this process of identity formation can be identified in the representations of migrant lives found in the amateur films produced by members of the Iris Film Society. Significantly, this kind of filmmaking can be considered an example of what Hamid Naficy calls 'accented cinema'. Naficy coined the term 'accented cinema' to refer to the particular characteristics of films by exilic and diasporic subjects. He contends that 'the accent emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisanal production modes' (Naficy 2001: 4). Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, in their book on migrant and diasporic cinema in Europe titled *European Cinema in Motion*, explain the distinction between 'migrant' and 'diasporic' filmmakers:

"Migrant" ("first generation") film-makers have themselves been part of a migratory movement and departed from a place of birth or residence in search of better economic conditions or a more secure and stable socio-political environment. "Diasporic" filmmakers are typically of the second, third or later generation. They were born and raised in a diasporic setting and have no, or only a very remote, first-hand experience of migration.

(2010: 16)

According to this distinction, members of the Iris Film Society can be considered 'migrant filmmakers' whose sensibilities have been influenced both by their direct experience of migration and by the prominent role cinema has in their culture.

Significantly, the activities of the society are inspired by the longstanding tradition of producing independent films and of using cinema to address social issues present in the South-Indian state of Kerala. Directors such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G. Aravindan and Shaji Karun made well-crafted artistic films with poetic stories grounded in real life circumstances that allowed the cinema of Kerala to achieve international recognition. Moreover, in the 1960s the Film Society Movement started in Kerala with groups of filmmakers being established across the country to promote cinema as a serious art form. Even today, Kerala has the largest number of film societies in India. For this reason it is hardly surprising that members of the Keralite community of Dublin decided to create such a society in their host city.

As Gokulsing and Dissanayake note, ‘Kerala’s literacy rates are the highest in India and there is a strong literary and theatre tradition that has aided this film culture’ (2004: 134). The 1980s were the golden age of Malayalam cinema, marked by the commercial success of art films addressing social issues and portraying strong female characters. On the other hand, Kerala’s mainstream film industry produces cheap entertainment characterised by slapstick comedy, sex, and action. These films ‘bear the imprint of melodramatic musicals...catering to the escapist taste of the bulk of film-goers’; their ‘appeal depends largely on the drawing power of the actors’ (ibid.). However, ‘Malayalam cinema deserves attention for its enriching of the artistic tradition of film’ (ibid.: 135). For example *Naalu Pennungal* (Four Women) by Adoor Gopalakrishnan was released in 2007; it tells the story of four women from different social backgrounds, earning its director the Indian National Film Award for best direction. This rich cinematic history constantly reminds Keralite people of the possibilities that film offers as a form of expression – a history and legacy arguably

underpinning the activities of the Iris Film Society. For this reason, many Keralite filmmakers are critical of Bollywood, considering it a low form of entertainment, given that they endeavour to make film more in line with the Keralite art film tradition. Nonetheless, Jijo commented that not every Irish-based Keralite filmmaker is interested in directing art films and most of them prefer to produce films for the purpose of entertainment:

Our filmmaking industry is very lively in Kerala and most of the national award winning films for the last twenty years...are from Kerala. There are filmmakers who are internationally renowned. For example, Adoor Gopalakrishnan is considered second to Satyajit Ray and he is from Kerala. So we are trying to connect with that parallel strand and make films here... Not everybody though, other guys who are making films are not on that path, they are more on the popular front.

(Interview 9 July 2013)

Irish-Indian 'mainstream' films are different from quintessential Bollywood films or popular Malayalam films in the way they do not typically include song and dance sequences with a focus on spectacle, but can be linked to similar cinematic trends developing in Kerala. Significantly, a new trend called 'New Generation Cinema' started in Kerala in 2010, consisting of experimental films made by emerging directors, which became very popular among young urban audiences. These films are made with small budgets, often using DSLR cameras and marketed online. They are not socially or artistically engaged and made merely for entertainment, so they can be considered commercial films. They are characterised by urban stories built around ordinary people deeply rooted in Keralite life, but heavily influenced by western films, especially in the way women are portrayed as strong and independent. An example of these films is *Traffic*, made in 2011 by Rajesh Pillai, characterised by multiple narratives of people crossing each other's path by chance.¹¹ The 'New Generation Cinema' and the activities of the Iris Film Society developed at the same time, sharing

small-scale modes of production, unconventional styles and representations of female characters. This confirms the vital importance of technological advancements in the twenty-first century in enabling the emergence of new forms of independent cinema. The works of the Iris Film Society are not the only instance of migrant Keralite filmmaking, given that short films have been produced and circulated by Keralite film students and amateurs based in Australia, the US, the UK and the Gulf Council Countries, among other territories during the past decade.¹² However, they represent the first occurrence of Indian migrant filmmaking in Ireland and they constitute a fascinating object of study not only because of their narrative, but also in terms of the social and economic conditions that determined their production.

From House Husbands to Filmmakers

The films produced by the members of the Iris Film Society are influenced and shaped by their belonging to a community characterised by strong social ties, an active interest in cultural activities and atypical domestic arrangements. Significantly, most of these filmmakers are married to Indian women who work as nurses in Ireland and are the main breadwinners in their households. Kerala, thanks to its high literacy rates, which is 92% among women, produces 80% of Indian nurses. However, India's high unemployment and low wages in Kerala, prompt nurses to seek opportunities abroad, where they are in high demand and are rewarded with higher incomes and better working conditions.

Main Immigration Stamps	Main categories of Persons permitted to be in the State
<p>STAMP 0 (Temporary and Limited Permission) This person is permitted to remain in Ireland on condition that the holder does not receive State benefits and has private medical insurance. The holder must be fully supported by a sponsor in the State and/or is of independent means. The holder is not entitled to work or engage in a trade , business or profession unless specified in INIS letter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A service provider sent to Ireland by an overseas company to carry out a particular task for a limited time • An extended visit in exceptional humanitarian circumstances • Visiting academics • Non-EEA retired person of independent means <p>For further information see this guideline note Stamp 0</p>
<p>STAMP 1 This person is permitted to remain in Ireland on conditions that the holder does not enter employment unless the employer has obtained a permit, does not engage in any business or profession without the permission of the Minister for Justice and Equality and does not remain later than a specified date.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-EEA national issued with a work permit • Non-EEA national issued a Green Card Permit • Non-EEA national who have been granted permission to operate a business in the State • Working Holiday Authorisation holder
<p>STAMP 1A This person is permitted to remain in Ireland for the purpose of full time training with a named body until a specified date. Other employment is not allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-EEA national studying accountancy
<p>STAMP NUMBER 2 This person is permitted to remain in Ireland to pursue a course of studies on condition that the holder does not engage in any business or profession other than casual employment (defined as 20 hours per week during school term and up to 40 hours per week during school holidays) and does not remain later than a specified date. Also the person has no recourse to public funds unless otherwise provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-EEA national attending a full time course of study
<p>STAMP NUMBER 2A This person is permitted to remain in Ireland to pursue a course of studies on condition that the holder does not enter employment, does not engage in any</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-EEA national attending course of study not recognised by the Department of Education and Science

business or profession, has no recourse to public funds and does not remain later than a specified date.	
STAMP NUMBER 3 This person is permitted to remain in Ireland on conditions that the holder does not enter employment, does not engage in any business or profession and does not remain later than a specified date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-EEA visitor • Non-EEA Minister of Religion and Member of Religious Order • Non-EEA spouse/dependant of employment permit holder
STAMP NUMBER 4 This person is permitted to remain in Ireland until a specified date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-EEA family member of EEA citizen • Non-EEA spouse of Irish citizen • Refugee • Non-EEA person granted family reunification under the Refugee Act 1996 • Programme refugee • Non-EEA parent of Irish citizen child where parent was granted permission to remain in the State • Non-EEA family member of EU citizen where family member qualifies under the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) (No. 2) Regulations 2006 (S.I 656 of 2006)

Fig. 49: Details of main immigration stamps issued by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service - <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Stamps>

The shortage of health staff in West Germany during the 1960s caused the first instances of Keralite nurses' migration. This trend then extended to Persian Gulf Countries, such as Kuwait and Dubai. It then moved to the US, the UK and Ireland in the 2000s. Malayalee nurses often have an arranged marriage in India, and bring their husbands, most of whom are graduates, along with them. The stagnant economic context of Kerala prevents young men from finding employment in spite of their degrees. For this reason many are eager to marry nurses and to follow them to wealthier developed countries. Restrictive immigration policies, however, do not allow men to obtain work permits during the first few years of their stay. Thus most of

them stay at home, doing housework and minding the children. To escape social isolation, these men often establish sports and theatre groups and Malayalam schools for their children. This predicament is common to Keralite men who followed their wives to Ireland.

Immigration to Ireland is regulated by the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS), which was established in 2005 in order to deal with matters related to asylum, immigration, citizenship and visas. Immigration is regulated through a system of stamps (Fig. 49) determining the rights of different categories of people who are not nationals of countries included in the European Economic Area. As spouses of non-European nurses holding a work permit, Keralite men are permitted to stay in the country with Stamp Number 3, which forbids them from working or conducting any kind of business activity. This means that their life is very limited and they are relegated to domestic chores and childminding. However, in Dublin, several of these nurses' husbands developed an interest in cinema during their stay in the country and used the free time they had at their disposal to pursue their passion. Despite being highly educated and skilled, they cannot obtain full-time employment for several years; they thus have to resort to working part-time in delivery and catering jobs and looking after the home and the children while their wives are the main breadwinners. Keralite men based in Ireland are very active in their close-knit community, often organising cultural and educational events in collaboration with various arts and community associations, such as acting workshops, which inform and contribute to their filmmaking activities. The fact that several of them do not work on a regular basis allowed them more time to acquire filmmaking skills and to develop various film projects. Being a house husband however, is not easy for men coming from a

male-dominated culture where men are supposed to be the heads of their families. In her article on marginal masculinities in the Indian family, Radhika Chopra analyses the role of the dependent husband in India embodied by the figure of the North Indian *ghar jawai* – the husband who lives with his wife’s family, emphasising ‘the shame and degradation that haunt the *ghar jawai* and his family’ (Chopra 2013: 42).

The transnational experience of Indian nurses’ husbands in Ireland has been observed by scholars such as Marie Percot, who examines the challenges to traditional masculinity and gender norms among diasporic communities of Keralites, where men have to adopt non-traditional gender roles: ‘the men I met in Ireland have to assume a new division of labor within their couple; for a new generation, it comes to assume a job for long considered as a purely women’s job’ (Percot 2012: 85). However, Jijo and other Keralite men commented that this is a problem mainly felt by older men who started their family in India and were used to traditional gender roles, but things are easier for younger men who left India as soon as they got married. As Jijo explained:

If you come here when you are younger, it’s easy not only to adapt to the world outside but to adapt to the world inside [the home] as well: you know that your wife is working so you know you have to do the kitchen work, and to take care of the baby, it’s easier for a younger man to adapt.

(Interview 9 July 2013)

These issues, however, affect many nurses’ husbands and have been further explored by Sheba George in her study of Keralite communities in the US. George contends that ‘all the immigrant men faced a loss of both patriarchal authority within the family and of social and economic status in the wider society’ (2000: 161). For these reasons, the predicament of Keralite men forced to adopt non-traditional domestic roles is heavily featured in Irish-Indian films. In the following discussion, I illustrate how

issues related to masculinity, gender roles, and identity formation along with notions of deterritorialisation and cultural difference, are thematically portrayed in the films produced by Dublin-based Keralite filmmakers.

Negotiating Migrant Identities in Irish-Indian Short Films

In this section I set out to address some of the themes, concerns and tropes that characterise several significant films produced by Keralite filmmakers. In these productions, cinema is used as a site of articulation of migrant identities and Irish urban locations become the backdrop for processes of cultural transitions and exchanges through which hybrid and ‘in-between’ (Bhabha 2004) identities are formed. Some of the ubiquitous themes foregrounded in these films have been addressed elsewhere in contemporary migrant and diasporic films (Ezra and Rowden 2006; Berghahn and Sternberg 2010; Loshitzky 2010; Durmelat and Swamy 2011; Kakasi 2011).

Taken together, these accounts of migration and diasporic cinema, challenge the notion of a fixed European identity reflecting how migrant cultures serve to negotiate and ‘construct a new image of the “Old World”’ (Loshitzky 2010: 14). In a similar way, Irish-Indian films can help reflect on the changes occurring in Irish society due to immigration since the 1990s. Agnes Kakasi has explored the representation of migrants in Irish film, suggesting that ‘a growing body of Irish films that engage with immigration ... reflects Irish filmmakers’ desire to comment on the social and cultural changes that Ireland has been facing’ (2011: 47-48). Kakasi further posits that ‘the future will most probably see the emergence of an Irish migrant cinema whose voice will alter notions of Irish film and Irishness in its essence’ (ibid.: 48). I want to

suggest that the films discussed in what follows represent an example of this emergent Irish migrant cinema.

These films constitute a small component of works produced by Keralite filmmakers based in Dublin. I have decided to examine these particular films because of their overt focus on the thematics of migration, integration and the depiction of Ireland as a host country. Other films have been produced, both shorts and feature length, across various genres such as comedy, drama, romance, thriller and even horror; however, their engagement with migrant concerns and transnational experiences is limited.¹³ My decision to discuss mostly socially engaged films is related to my attempt to explore how film is used to articulate the experience of migrants living in Dublin and to further highlight the hyphenated national identity of films which blend elements of Irish and Indian culture. This approach emphasises the transnational nature of these films, which exist across national boundaries.

Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden have explored the concepts and debates that characterise the developing field of transnational cinema, contending that ‘the impossibility of assigning a fixed national identity to much cinema reflects the dissolution of any stable connection between a film’s place of production and/or setting and the nationality of its makers and performers’ (2006: 1). They further argue that transnational cinema ‘comprises both globalization ... and the counterhegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third World countries’ (ibid.). The concept of transnationalism is therefore useful in understanding how these Irish-Indian films exist across nations and cultures, challenging the idea of autonomous national cinemas and the dominance of mainstream media companies.

Hide and Seek

Hide and Seek (2011, 11 mins.) is a short film directed by Ajith Kesavan, it features a group of Indian children playing hide and seek in Dublin's Phoenix Park.¹⁴ When the game is over they notice that one of them, a boy called Jobe, is missing, so they all look for him, thinking he is just trying to cause trouble. This narrative allows the director to show the children running around various part of the park, visibly at ease in the Irish landscape. In his essay 'Landscapes of Exile', Baden Offord explains that the trope of the landscape is effective in conveying the complexity of belonging and the experience of exile and contends that 'landscape...offers a very sophisticated means of communicating specific ways of knowing, and as a metaphor can provide a striking narrative about cultural encounters' (2008: 6).

In this instance the physical landscape of a Dublin park becomes the backdrop for transcultural encounters, suggesting a harmonious interaction between migrants and Irish spaces and people. Significantly, when the children eventually find Jobe, they realise he has been trying to help a disabled Irish man who fell off his wheelchair. The man thanks the children in an emotional and heartfelt scene as they help him sit back on his chair (Fig. 50). The film concludes on a happy note as the children push him around the park to a cheerful children's tune (Fig. 51).



Fig. 50: Film still from *Hide and Seek*



Fig. 51: Film still from *Hide and Seek*

The interaction between Indian and Irish characters displayed in this film is uncommon in Irish-Indian films as the works of members of the Iris Film Society rarely include non-Indian characters. Jijo explained that this is because they still do not know many non-Indian people, so they are unsure how to represent them. *Hide and Seek* shows Indian children having a positive connection with the space of Phoenix Park and an Irish person, suggesting a sense of belonging and desire to contribute to their host country. Moreover, the notion of Indian children helping a disabled Irish man can be seen as an expression of what Ghassan Hage has called

‘participatory belonging’ (2003). Hage explored the connection between non-white migrants and nation in the context of Australia and points out the difficulties of having an emotional investment in a host nation without identifying with its past. He asks:

Can a migrant ever genuinely care for the nation without such an identification with its past? Can he or she ever experience the same intense sense of participatory belonging that people who are assumed to identify more fully with the past feel?

(2003: 83)

Hage contends that experiences of care and solidarity are useful to migrants for ‘identifying with all or some of [the nation’s] we and we’s and all the affective baggage they carry with them’ (2003: 100). Narratives driven by children are often mobilised in film as a vehicle for social criticism and reflection on complex themes such as solidarity, ethics and integration. The innocent acts of kindness performed by the children portrayed in *Hide and Seek* therefore suggest that care and compassion can effectively contribute to creating a sense of belonging to Irish urban public spaces for migrant communities.

Marasim

Marasim (Relationship, 2012, 15 min.) is written and directed by Nirmal Khan and produced with no budget with the collaboration of Jijo S. Palatty and Ajith Kesavan. The story of *Marasim* is centred on the predicament of an Indian man who moved to Dublin to follow his wife, a nurse who was hired by an Irish hospital. He is therefore unable to care for his elderly mother who had to remain in India due to restrictive family reunification laws.¹⁵



Fig. 52: Film still from *Marasim*



Fig. 53: Film still from *Marasim*

Throughout the film the unnamed character is alone. He is shown pensively sitting in his living room, driving around Dublin city centre and walking across Phoenix Park. Long shots of him walking along deserted pathways enhance the sense of loneliness and isolation that pervades the film (Fig. 52). Feelings of alienation, loneliness and emotional conflicts characterise the experience of the protagonists of several other Irish-Indian films (some of which are explored in the following sections), and are often associated with the experience of migration and dislocation. Significantly, loneliness is a recurring theme in migrant films as it common to many transnational lives. As Naficy contends in his writings on accented cinema: ‘loneliness is an inevitable outcome of transnationality, and it finds its way into the desolate structures

of feeling and lonely diegetic characters' (2001: 55). The protagonist's only interactions with others are represented by phone calls he exchanges with his wife and two younger brothers, who are also married to nurses and live abroad, as they try to convince him that the best solution is to put his mother in a nursing home since none of them can look after her.

In one scene the protagonist slowly approaches the Papal Cross¹⁶ – a well-known landmark of the park – accompanied by the voice-over of his mother lamenting the fact that she is a burden to her sons, enhancing his sense of guilt (Fig. 53). Religion seems the only crutch that can provide him with solace – a notion reinforced by a close up of a rosary he is carrying with him. The importance of religion in the lives of Kerala Christian men has been explored by George (2000, 2005). Many Keralite men based in Ireland are also very active in their church and religious community; however, references to religious practices are rare in the works of Irish-based Keralite filmmakers. In her book titled *Transnational Cinema and Ideology*, Milja Radovic explored the representation of religion in transnational films to convey ideologies inherent in migrant and non-migrant communities located across Russia, the Balkans and the US. According to Radovic, in many transnational productions 'religion has more the function of a *signifier* – of social identity and consequently socio-political practice, self-perception and otherness' (2014: 55). In *Marasim* and other Irish-Indian films, however, scant references to religion occur through imagery such as rosaries and crucifixes when characters are experiencing difficult times, suggesting that religion represents a form of spiritual comfort rather than having a political or ideological function.

At the end of the film, the protagonist receives a call from one of his brothers informing him that their mother has passed away. This tragic ending intensifies the sense of loss and sadness present throughout the film and typical of transnational narratives. As Ezra and Rowden explain, ‘more often than not, transnational cinema’s narrative dynamic is generated by a sense of loss’ (2006: 7). The loss experienced by the protagonist of *Marasim* can be seen as symbolic of the sense of loss inherent to many diasporic and exilic narratives, whereby people leave their homeland to achieve a better life but they lose something in the process. As observed by Edward Said, ‘the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever’ (2000: 173).

Happy Independence Day

Jijo S. Palatty’s *Happy Independence Day* (2009, 11 mins.) is centred on the challenges faced by a Keralite teenager named Robin in negotiating his diasporic identity. Significantly, the story unfolds on India’s Independence Day celebrated annually on 15th August to commemorate India’s independence from British rule. The beginning of the film conveys the sense of isolation of the young protagonist who is feeling lonely and marginalised in Dublin’s city centre. He is often shown standing on the side of the frame, suggesting his separation from other people who are walking along busy streets. In this scene, a group of white Hare Krishna’s chanting outside a department store references the globalising aspects of Indian culture, while a tourist bus passing by helps locate the action on Dublin’s O’Connell Street (Fig. 54). Naficy observes that this kind of representation is very frequent in exilic and diasporic films: ‘Sadness, loneliness, and alienation are frequent themes, and sad, lonely, and alienated people are favourite characters in the accented films’ (2006: 122).



Fig. 54: Film still from *Happy Independence Day*



Fig. 55: Film still from *Happy Independence Day*



Fig. 56: Film still from *Happy Independence Day*

In the next sequence Robin argues with his family because he wants to speak English and embrace Irish culture, while they are trying to cling to Malayalee culture and language, do not feel comfortable in Ireland and plan to move back to India. His father reproaches him for being too westernised. In this example the mother is shown in a domestic role washing dishes and trying to defend her son, while the father is represented in a position of dominance and authority. During the argument, Robin's little brother is drawing doodles similar to Celtic spirals together with Indian flags (Fig. 55): these images can be seen as symbolising Irish and Indian cultures coexisting, creating a hybrid cultural formation, an 'in-between' space where migrants can negotiate their own identities beyond fixed national binaries. Homi Bhabha suggests that a hybrid conception of culture is called for in order to dismantle systems of cultural dominance, contending that 'these "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself' (2004: 2).

The negotiation of cultural differences inevitably creates tensions and divisions. Significantly, in the following scene Robin meets his girlfriend Jenny, also from a Keralite family. He tells her that theirs is a union of convenience, expressing the need to integrate into Irish society. She does not share his views and complains because he insists on speaking English. Their dialogue is intercut with scenes where Jenny is filmed talking to a voice off-screen and explaining that she is unhappy at school as her Irish class mates do not have anything in common with her and avoid her as a result. Robin repeatedly prompts her to say something in English and she says, 'Happy Independence Day', highlighting the opposition between their culture and the culture

of their host country. At the end of their conversation, Robin breaks up with Jenny and leaves her in tears. In this instance, they are framed on the backdrop of a wall covered in graffiti and Robin is wearing dark western clothes while Jenny wears a pale pink salwar kameez (Fig. 56). These elements clearly not only point to tensions between tradition and modernity, between Indian and western culture, but also suggest that these forces are embedded in an already hybrid western urban space displaying signs of global cultural influences such as American hip hop street art. The presence of globally circulating cultural elements adds a further dimension to the transnational nature of the film, highlighting its 'glocal' nature in the way it is set in 'urban localities that, by virtue of their ethnic and cultural hybridity, are linked to spaces that are global rather than binational in reach' (Hargreaves 2011: 27). Much like the Hare Krishnas present at the beginning of the film, elements of American popular culture are a common sight in urban spaces across the world, suggesting that this film is not simply about Indian and Irish culture but includes references to global cultural flows with a supranational reach.

The film ends with Robin walking along Dublin's Henry Street surrounded by white Irish people, rather than standing on the side of the street as he did at the beginning of the film. This final scene signals that he has made his choice, deciding to become part of Irish society, marking the evolution of his hybrid identity. As previously discussed, this notion of diasporic identities as hybrid and in flux is elaborated by Stuart Hall in his essay 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' where he points out the constant transformation that characterises hybrid identity formations in diasporic contexts:

The diaspora experience ... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*.

Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference.

(1990: 235)

Short Sight

Short Sight (2011, 13 mins.) is written and directed by Biju Mulla and focuses on the shifts in gender roles that affect many Keralite families outside India. It is a dark comedy portraying the predicament of a submissive man, Sanal, who agreed to an arranged marriage hoping for a better life and ended up married to a domineering nurse, Reena, who works in a Dublin hospital. From the outset, the film shows how gender roles and power relations can be reversed in a Keralite household.



Fig. 57: Film still from *Short Sight*. Sanal ironing his wife's uniform



Fig. 58: Film still from *Short Sight*

The film opens with Sanal ironing a nursing uniform. Shortly afterwards Reena enters the room and angrily reproaches him for not having done that earlier (Fig. 57). Reena is depicted as overly contemptuous and Sanal as excessively sheepish – such exaggerations add to the comedic tone of the film. However, their interaction is reminiscent of the beginning of Jijo S. Palatty's *Duality Show* (2008) where one of the protagonists (played by Ajith Kesavan) is aggrieved when his nurse wife gives him a list of chores and errands to carry out while she is at work. Unlike *Short Sight*, *Duality Show* was characterised by a realist style and aesthetic and was the first film made by the Iris Film Society. The fact that it addressed the loss of status of Keralite nurse's husbands in their households, suggests that this concern is deeply grounded in reality for Keralite men. The film continues with Sanal preparing his daughter for school. A soothing soundtrack plays while he lovingly combs her hair, indicating that she brings some happiness and solace to his grim life. He then receives a phone call from his friend, also a house husband, and all they talk about are cheap broadband packages. This behaviour is clearly reminiscent of housewives discussing the best grocery deals or the most effective cleaning products, highlighting the shift in traditional gender roles they embody. This notion is further reinforced as Sanal is shown cleaning the house and preparing dinner. In this scene, Irish products are on display in his kitchen and around the house, suggesting the hybridity (Bhabha 2004) characteristic of Keralite migrants' everyday lives (Fig. 58).

In the next scene, Sanal's mobile suddenly rings and he rushes out of the house as the background music creates suspense. While he is frantically driving, road signs and Dublin buses are included in the frame, making the entire scene easy to locate in the south side of the Irish capital. The sense of tragedy is heightened by Sanal

approaching the Children's Hospital in Crumlin. As soon as he stops, his wife enters the car and scolds him for being late because he forgot to collect her at the end of her shift. The film ends with Reena humiliating Sanal by arguing that he is not worthy of her. *Short Sight* is Biju Mullaamkuzhithadathil's first attempt at filmmaking, providing a comedic treatment of real challenges to traditional masculinity that characterise the lives of many Keralite men.

Parakayapravesham

Parakayapravesham (To Take Another Human Form, 2013) is another short film directed by Jijo S. Palatty concerned with gender and generational conflicts, as well as the challenges of adapting to a different culture. The protagonist of the film is a middle-aged Indian immigrant who moved to Dublin to follow his wife employed as a nurse in an Irish hospital. It is clear that he does not have a job and finds it difficult to adapt to western life. The protagonist feels isolated and frustrated as he realises that his family is becoming increasingly distant and aloof because of his refusal to embrace western culture. The beginning of the film sees the protagonist at ease while he is at home wearing south Indian clothes and eating Indian food with his hands, but he feels very uncomfortable when he is trying to wear western clothes and eat an unappetising sausage with cutlery (Fig. 59). In this scene, extremely high and low camera angles, together with dark colours and low lights, invoke the loneliness and isolation of the protagonist. The camera cuts to a suit hanging from a wardrobe menacingly towering over him which conveys the man's manifest aversion for everything western.



Fig. 59: Film still from *Parakayapravesham*



Fig. 60: Film still from *Parakayapravesham*

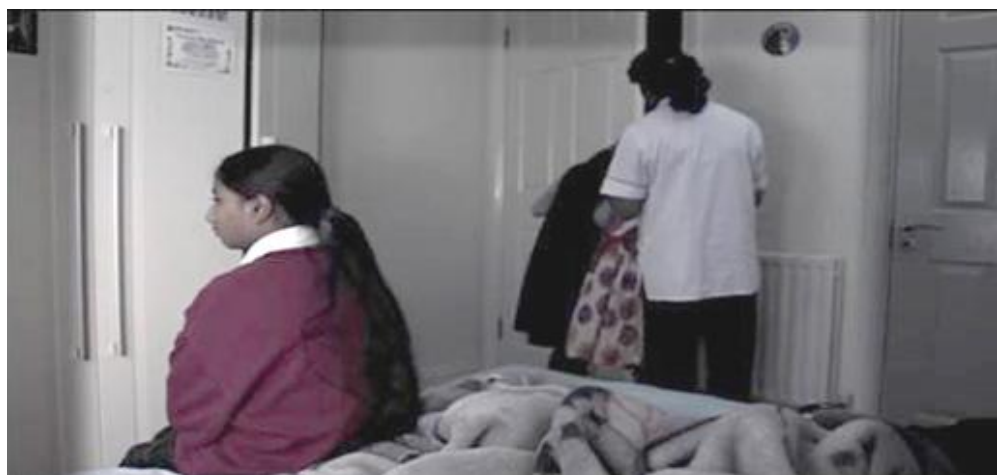


Fig. 61: Film still from *Parakayapravesham*

The protagonist is a traditional patriarchal figure, typically used to being the head of his household in India. In Ireland he feels that his children are embarrassed by his refusal to embrace western culture and are growing apart from him. He has lost the

status and respect that he took for granted in India. Sheba George in her ethnography of nurses' husbands observes that, 'the immigrant men experienced loss of status in two ways: both in terms of their relations to their wives and in relation to their position before immigration' (2000: 155). This instance is represented in *Parakayapravesham* in a scene where the protagonist tries to give a ball made of rubber waste to his five-year-old son on his birthday, yet the child refuses it and treats him with contempt (Fig. 60). Arguably, the ball is supposed to represent the culture and values that are traditionally passed down from father to son.

Desperate to reconnect with his son, the protagonist tries to adapt to western culture clumsily wearing a suit. Misinterpreting the instructions he received from his daughter in order to change into a modern and straightforward man, he walks up to a friend's house to reveal that his wife is cheating on him, causing his violent reaction. In this scene the urban landscapes he encounters during his journey are shown as extremely grim and unwelcoming. A dark colour palette and cloudy skies make the shiny and modern buildings in the background look cold and inhospitable, signalling the protagonist's dislike for modernity. Defeated and angry, he returns home but his family is unsympathetic to his predicament and frustration, as suggested by a shot of his wife and daughter turning their back on him (Fig. 61). In this sequence, his wife and daughter are framed wearing respectively a nurse's uniform and a school uniform, indicating that they have a role in society, but he does not. The film ends with the protagonist throwing his suit away and desperately screaming toward the camera, capturing the pressure from his family and society to become a different person. These representations of western behaviours can arguably be linked to Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry – a subversive strategy by which what appears to be assimilation

into a dominant colonial discourse is actually a sly form of resistance. According to Bhabha, ‘mimicry represents an *ironic* compromise’ (2004: 122) between the pressure to adjust to a dominant colonial discourse and the rejection of practices perceived as alien. Thus, representing an Indian man struggling to wear western clothes, eat western food and walk through a western urban space, all significantly depicted as unappealing, opens a space for hidden agendas of subversion. In other words, the protagonists failed attempts to adapt can be perceived as a criticism and resistance to western culture. Significantly, Bhabha reminds us that, ‘mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal’ (ibid.).

Parakayapravesham was made with no budget and with a non-professional cast and crew. Before making this film, the director produced three short films and one feature film. This film marks a departure in style compared to Jijo’s previous works. In *Parakayapravesham* Jijo abandoned naturalistic tones with an emphasis on realism, in favour of a more stylised cinematic language, with dramatic camera angles and adjusting the films colour and lighting to convey the protagonist’s frustration. In the end credits Jijo acknowledges that his film was influenced by the works of legendary French filmmaker Robert Bresson and Swedish film director Roy Andersson, the latter renowned for his style characterised by absurdist comedy and grotesque imagery. Jijo explained that in this film he attempted to refine his style in order to reach wider audiences by participating in short film festivals. *Parakayapravesham* was selected for screening at the Uruguay International Film Festival in Montevideo in 2013; at Vibgyor International Film Festival in Thrissur, Kerala in 2013; and at Fokana Film Festival, Illinois, USA (2014), where it won the best short and best director awards. It was the first film made by the Iris Film Society to be entered in a festival.

Connecting with Wider Indian Communities Via YouTube and Online Dissemination

The challenges portrayed in the films analysed above are felt by numerous members of the Indian diaspora all over the world. When members of the Iris Film Society embarked on a journey rooted in the experience of the Malayalee community, they arguably did so because they wanted to make films about something they were familiar with and could readily relate to, and, most importantly, they wanted to use cinema as a tool to share their experiences and to communicate with other Indian communities. For these reasons, Irish based Keralite filmmakers upload their finished films on YouTube where viewers can see them and leave comments (Fig. 62).



- [Shafi Shamsudin4 years ago](#)
nice work guys.....good acting, nice camera.e,tc.....expecting moreeeeeeeeeee.....
- [gdurcan1234 years ago](#)
This pathetic situation has forced many hard working men to flew from Ireland.
- [gdurcan1234 years ago](#)
Real experience of most of the mallu men in a women dominated country. Only few of them (say 5%) enjoy earnings equal to nurses. Few people satisfy themselves with Bottom cleaning and Pizza delivery (most demanding) jobs. Rest all happily spending time with cooking, eating, drinking and sleeping. Also, few smart people enjoy life with so called social works like politics (Indian national congress in Ireland, hahahaha) , churches, clubes etc.
- [zachariamenan4 years ago](#)
nice camera, direction, acting, editing, but it gives a wrong message about the life abroad and a bad picture about working wife's attitude towards husband....

Fig. 62: Comments about *Short Sight* left by viewers on YouTube

This helps the filmmakers connect and communicate with Indian audiences based in India and beyond despite not having access to official film distribution networks.

Significantly, Burgess and Green explain that ‘to understand YouTube’s popular culture, it is not helpful to draw sharp distinctions between professional and amateur production’; rather, it would be helpful to think about ‘YouTube in terms of a continuum of cultural participation’ (2009: 57). Ezra and Rowden have explored the influence of media globalisation and digital technology on the wider circulation of transnational cinema, arguing that ‘in the twenty-first century, convergence is becoming ever more virtual, not only in technological terms as the coming together of different media in a single site, but also in the increasing mediatisation of cultural interaction’ (2006: 6). The availability of affordable filmmaking equipment and internet platforms such as YouTube thus allows stories of Indian migration to Ireland to reach wide audiences and to establish a dialogue about the themes addressed in the films. The internet further enabled other Indian migrant filmmakers to connect to members of the Iris Film Society confirming the importance of video production as a means of communication among migrant communities.

The way home videos are used by migrants to maintain a social presence in their home countries has attracted the attention of scholars and filmmakers.¹⁷ Graeme Rodgers and Andrea Spitz have explored how the use of a video messaging service between Mozambicans settled across the Mozambique/South Africa border successfully enabled social relationships in a context of forced migration, noting that ‘video emerges as a powerful format for revealing the personal, social and cultural implications of the forms of separation and displacement that are becoming so characteristic of a globalised world’ (2007: 20). These dynamics can be identified also in the context of the circulation of Irish-Indian films. Significantly, most films produced in Dublin are watched hundreds, sometimes thousands of times and often

receive encouraging and appreciative comments, allowing viewers to become instantly familiar with the activity of Malayalee communities in Dublin, irrespective of their location. In general people appreciate their films, with the realisation that the technical flaws reflect their lack of training and resources, and can relate to the issues portrayed in the films. It can be argued that the presence of Irish-Malayalee films on YouTube, bring viewers together in what Benedict Anderson defines ‘imagined communities’ (2006) who are connected through media artefacts that can be accessed and discussed from literally anywhere in the world. Elaborating on Anderson’s notion of imagined communities, Appadurai contends that nowadays’ imagined communities exist beyond national boundaries in virtual spaces he terms ‘diasporic public spheres’. As Appadurai writes:

[A]s mass mediation becomes increasingly dominated by electronic media..., and as such media increasingly link producers and audiences across national boundaries, and these audiences themselves start new conversations between those who move and those who stay, we find a growing number of diasporic public spheres.

(1996: 22)

For some of the Keralite filmmakers, connecting with other Malayalee communities is the main aim of their filmmaking activity; they therefore do not aspire to submit their films to competitions and festivals. Biju Mullamkuzhithadathil, the director of *Short Sight*, stated: ‘I use film to communicate with Malayalam communities around the world. I am not interested in sending it to festivals to get awards or so, I am mainly making movies for the public’.¹⁸ This flow of communication allows the experience of migration of Irish-based Keralite communities to be shared by other Indian migrants and non-migrants. Appadurai suggests that when mass migration is ‘juxtaposed with the rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts, and sensations, we have a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities’ (ibid.: 4).

Short Sight received mixed responses because of its subject matter. The film is unconventional compared to the majority of Keralite Indian films, given that it portrays a woman in a position of power and a man who is subject to her control and fearful of her. Interestingly, the director mentioned that while many Indian viewers complimented him for his film, recognising that it reflects the reality of many men, others complained about the story, arguing that he should not have addressed such a topic as it provides a questionable depiction of the lives of Indian men abroad and of the behaviour of working Indian women (Fig. 62). These reactions point to the tension and schisms prevalent in the Keralite community which is organised around Christian religious congregations – generally characterised by extremely conservative attitudes in relation to class and gender, strong ties to Kerala and separation from Irish society and other Indian migrant communities. The persistence of traditional and exclusionary attitudes has been explored by scholars in the context of Keralite communities in the US, highlighting that ‘it is the connections to Kerala that re-create the old oppressive gender and class relations in the immigrant community’ (George 2000: 171). These conservative views, however, are not shared by all members of the community and liberal Keralite migrants find it difficult to distance themselves from their conservative community and be included into the wider Irish society. Significantly, in 2015 Jijo started working on a film project, which was not yet completed at the time of writing, depicting the experiences of liberal Irish nurses suspended between their migrant community and Irish society.

Keralite filmmakers further advertise their films through online Malayalam newspapers and websites. As the news spreads about their activities, also Indian

newspapers have started publishing articles about them. This notoriety enables the filmmakers to organise screenings of their films in Kerala, raising their profile as successful practitioners engaged in the production of meaningful artefacts. I argue that through this avenue, Keralite filmmakers not only illuminate the lived experience of Indian communities in Ireland, but also find a way to reassert their masculinity by becoming active producers of cultural media. This notion can be linked to the activities on social networks examined by Marie Percot in her ethnography of nurses' husbands in Dublin. According to Percot, 'men have obviously more time than their wives to spend in these activities of communication. However, this kind of monopoly allows them to appear as the actual head of the family and to reaffirm their image as successful migrants in their home country' (2012: 84).

Screening of *The Circle*, Kerala House

At the beginning of April 2014, Binu Daniel, one of the coordinators of the Iris Film Society, invited me to a screening of Jijo S. Palatty's *The Circle*. I was particularly happy to receive his invitation as I had not participated in any of their film screenings previously. Additionally, I was involved in the production of *The Circle* and was therefore eager to see the completed film. Binu informed me that the screening was going to be held on a Saturday evening at the Ballyowen Castle Community Centre in the Dublin suburb of Lucan. The community centre hosts Kerala House, a Keralite association that organises classes and recreational activities for Malayalee children and also provides meeting spaces for other Keralite organisations such as the Iris Film Society. The logo of Kerala House often appears in the credits of films produced by the society in acknowledgement of the support they provide. I reached the venue following a long bus journey from the city centre accompanied by my partner Babu. A

middle-aged Keralite man was standing outside the centre and accompanied us to the screening room located at the first floor of the building. He explained that Kerala House organised activities for Malayalee children every Saturday afternoon and that they rent the space from the city council. Along the way he showed us classrooms and meeting rooms; some were full of children playing or dancing, others were occupied by men sitting around large tables. He was very friendly and obviously took pride in the work that Kerala House was doing for the local Malayalee community.



Fig. 63: Binu Daniel of the Iris Film Society introducing the screening of *The Circle* at Kerala House (Photograph: Giovanna Rampazzo)

As we entered the screening room, we noticed that it was full of predominantly male Indian children playing chess. Binu came to meet us and explained that he conducted chess classes for children; his son was also present and proudly showed us his chess books. Babu commented that chess classes reminded him of his childhood in England, where South Asian children were encouraged to play chess as it was considered a worthwhile pastime. I could not help but notice that there were very few girls and

women present in the centre; even the children who played chess were all males, with one or two exceptions, suggesting the gendering of cultural activities. The class finished a few minutes after our arrival and most children were collected by their fathers. Some of the children, like Binu's son, remained in the room to watch the film. Prince, Ajith, Basil and other members of the cast and crew of the film entered the room and greeted us, visibly happy to see us. Jijo was not present because he was in India for a month. They helped Binu move the desks out of the way and set up the projector and the roll up screen needed for the screening. In the meantime, more Malayalee people entered the room. Prince's wife and young daughter arrived, together with Angel and her mother. They politely said 'hi' and sat at the back of the room together with other Keralite women, while men were sitting at the front, suggesting the marginal role of women in the activities of the society (Fig. 63). Scholarly work on migrant Indian nurses states that, even if women are the main breadwinners and their employment status grants them power and authority within their household, their role in the context of migrant Keralite communities is very limited. As George explains:

In the sphere of community, specifically the religious congregation ... instead of changes parallel to those in household and work, there is a "reactive compensation". Here, Kerala Christian men seek out opportunities for participation and leadership that counterbalances their diminished powers at home.

(2000: 162)

The fact that women were sitting at the back during the screening suggests that these dynamics are at play within the Iris Film Society. This notion is reinforced by the fact that there are no women members of the society and their involvement in the films is limited to acting roles. Binu explained that women are too busy with work and looking after their children to be more involved in filmmaking, however, he

mentioned that some women do express an interest in filmmaking and he would be happy if they could become part of the society in the future. Moreover, he stressed the importance of the help and support the filmmakers are constantly receiving from their wives in the realisation of their projects: ‘the support of the women is great, we couldn’t do it without the support of the families and the wives. Even if they are not in the front, they are at the back and they are our backbone’.¹⁹ Relatedly, Prince mentioned that his wife Feba always acts in his films, often helping him develop scripts and ideas for film projects. However, even if Feba enjoys filmmaking and helping her husband with it, she does not want to become a filmmaker too, as she commented: ‘I like it but I don’t want both of us to go on that side, that’s his passion’.²⁰ The limited involvement of women in the work of the Iris Film Society suggests that their films are characterised by an exclusively male perspective on migration and life in Ireland, that filmmaking is still a male prerogative and a way for nurse’s husbands to compensate for their diminished status in the labour market and the family by asserting their leadership and restoring their active role in society.

Babu and I were assigned front seats and shortly before the screening, Binu welcomed all the participants and thanked us for coming along, stressing our background in film studies and film production, as well as my academic interest in Indian cinema (Fig. 63). Binu then said something in Malayalam about forthcoming screenings and, as Jijo was not present, he played a video interview with him about the making of the film. The interview was in Malayalam and so was the film. It was frustrating for me not to understand what they said, but I understood that Babu and me were the only non-Keralite people in the room, so we could not expect them to speak in English for our sake; following the screening Binu was happy to summarise his speech and later on

Jijo gave me the link to a subtitled version of the film which he uploaded on YouTube. During the screening, people were mostly silent, but when Prince appeared on the screen pulling out a gun, his daughter enthusiastically yelled ‘Dad!’ Other children cheered too, signalling their appreciation of the action sequence. The film was enjoyable and well directed; the actors also did a good job and everybody in the audience seemed pleased and clapped when it finished. After the screening, I complimented the members of the cast and the crew for their good work and thanked Binu for inviting me. He thanked me for coming and for bringing Babu along, promising to keep me informed about future screenings.

Before leaving the room, I talked to Kiran, a Drogheda-based filmmaker, also part of the society, who mainly produced music videos. Kiran told me about the upcoming production of a short film which was going to be shot in Drogheda²¹, featuring a mixed Irish and Indian cast. He gave me the contact number of one of the members of the production company to allow me to get in touch with them. As a result, I had the opportunity to attend the filming and also play a small role in it. The completed film was titled *Onam* (Darren Thornton, 2014) and revolved around a group of South Asian children attending a secondary school in Ireland. *Onam* showed how its young protagonists negotiated cultural differences, teenage crushes and rivalries in an effective and humorous way. The film was produced by Calipo, a Drogheda-based arts organisation led by Darren Thornton and Collette Farrell specialising in theatre and film productions centred on young people. Prompted by the availability of European integration funding for projects on migrant communities, and feeling that there was ‘a lack of representation of the Indian community in the media and in Irish cultural life’,²² Thornton and Farrell decided to make a film on the sometimes uneasy

interactions between Irish and Indian teenagers ‘to give young Indian teenagers an opportunity to share their voice creatively and very much portray their culture and community in a very positive light ... to promote understanding and respect between the two different communities’.²³ Kiran explained that he helped the producers of *Onam* find Indian teenagers willing to act in the film. He was always friendly to me, but never agreed to be interviewed nor allowed me on the sets of his videos. For this reason, I was particularly grateful for his help in this instance. I found the information Kiran shared with me particularly significant, not least because it was about an Irish-Indian film I did not know about, but also because it was the first instance of collaboration between Irish and Malayalee filmmakers. Jijo and other members of the Iris Film Society mentioned several times that they wished to collaborate with non-Indian filmmakers and to make films with an international cast and crew, but nothing had materialised thus far. For the moment their collaboration is still limited to Kiran sourcing Indian teenage actors for a short film made by an Irish production company; time will tell if this collaboration is destined to evolve in the future.

Screening of Irish Indian Short Films at the Indian Film Festival of Ireland 2014: A Conversation Between Irish and Indian Filmmakers

Since my first encounter with Jijo and other members of the Iris Film Society I had been trying to find opportunities for them to showcase their films to wider audiences not limited to the Indian community, hoping the Indian Film Festival of Ireland could provide a platform for their work. I tried to include their films in the 2012 edition of the festival and Siraj agreed to show them at Movies@Dundrum before the main features included in the programme. Unfortunately they were produced on a consumer digital format that was not supported by the equipment in the cinema theatre, so it was not possible to screen them. I was sorry to disappoint the filmmakers who were

looking forward to an opportunity to have their work included in the festival. I promised I would try to include their films in subsequent editions of the event. An opportunity presented itself in 2014, when, during a meeting held in preparation of the fifth edition of the festival, Mary and Siraj proposed to team up with educational institutions and organise screenings in universities. This decision was motivated by the fact that funding was withdrawn in the previous year because the festival did not organise enough educational events and they hoped to rectify that. They asked me if I could host a screening in the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) – my academic institution. I proposed to screen a selection of Irish-Indian short films produced in Ireland.

A festival screening at DIT represented the perfect opportunity to showcase these films, because it would happen in an auditorium equipped with consumer screening facilities that would be compatible with non-professional digital file formats. I believed that an academic environment could encourage a discussion on the themes and issues portrayed in their short films and hopefully put them in contact with people who could appreciate and provide constructive feedback on their work. Siraj was happy with my idea and confirmed that I could be in complete charge of the event. I was really glad to be able to organise this screening and decided to compile a selection of short films portraying issues of migration and the diasporic lives of Indians in Ireland. I selected four short films made by various members of the Iris Film Society discussed earlier in the chapter: *Happy Independence Day* (2009); *Short Sight* (2011); *Hide and Seek* (2011.); and *Parakayapravesham* (2013). Since the time slot allocated could accommodate more screenings, I decided to include in the event two short films about the Indian community in Ireland made by Irish filmmakers, as a counterpoint to

films made by Indian directors. One of these films is *Onam* (2014), discussed earlier. Another film I thought should be included in the programme was *Me Buddy, Muhammad* (Eleanor Walsh, 2014, 13 min.), the graduation film of a group of DIT students centred on the friendship between a white Irish boy and a South Asian boy. Interestingly, the film features one of Siraj's children in the titular role and Siraj himself in a supporting role. In addition to its obvious links to DIT and to the festival, the film conveyed a compelling story about friendship and respect between different cultures that could fit well with the other films in the programme.

After informing each filmmaker about my intention to screen their films they provided me with a copy of their respective films, promising that they would try to be present for a Q & A session. The Keralite filmmakers were particularly happy to have their films finally included in the festival programme. As the attendance to the festival was in general quite poor, I was terrified that nobody would come to the event, mainly because it was held on a Saturday and clashed with other festival screenings. Jijo and Biju, along with Eleanor Walsh and Louise Byrne, the director and producer of *Me Buddy, Muhammad*, confirmed they would attend the screening. On the day of the screening I was very nervous because I had never hosted such an event before and afraid to ruin it due to my inexperience. Moreover, that morning I went to another festival event held at Trinity College, a masterclass with director Shyam Benegal, and barely fifteen people were in attendance. For this reason I was afraid that if so few people showed up for one of India's most prolific and renowned directors, nobody would be present at my screening. I went to DIT well in advance and set up the equipment in the lecture theatre; while my partner Babu helped hang flyers signposting the screening at the main entrance and along the corridors. Jijo and Biju

arrived together with a friend, followed by Louise and Eleanor, whom I was meeting for the first time. By 1.30pm, when the screening was scheduled to start, I had an audience of barely ten people including the filmmakers. I suggested waiting a few minutes in case people were on their way and quickly tried to contact some friends who were at the previous event – they had other plans for the afternoon. Trying to gain some more time, I approached the only person in the room I did not know and asked him how he found out about the screening. He was a middle-aged Irish man, who explained to me with disappointment that he was supposed to watch *Samvidhaan* at the Irish film Institute, but the screening was cancelled due to a technical issue. He saw the short films screening advertised in the festival programme and decided to attend. He told me that his name was John and worked as a set designer and as a film and television director. He was sorry to have missed *Samvidhaan*, but was looking forward to watching the Irish Indian short films as he had not seen any before.

Resigned to the fact that nobody else was coming, I began to introduce the screening and the filmmakers. I was flustered and worried that the filmmakers present at the screening would be disappointed by the poor turnout and would blame me for inadequate advertising on my behalf. I was so nervous that I mixed up Eleanor's and Louise's names, but somehow managed to introduce and screen every film without major problems. After the screening, I started the discussion by asking Eleanor why she decided to make a film about the Indian community. She explained that the previous year she got a summer job in an area of Dublin where many Indian people lived. She thus became aware of their presence in Irish society and this led her to realise that migrant communities are rarely represented in Irish film and media – for this reason she decided to make *My Buddy, Muhammad*. I then asked her if it was

difficult to make the film in terms of finding resources and participants. She confirmed that since they were making a film about immigration many people became interested in the film, including the Office for Integration of Dublin City Council and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, who provided funding for the project. She added that people and organisations from the local area where they were filming were extremely supportive of their project. Siraj in particular was very helpful and encouraging, always present around the sets in case they needed anything.

John observed that he really liked *Me Buddy, Muhammad*, but was particularly impressed by the works of the Indian filmmakers and could not believe they never studied film. When he asked whether they tried to submit their work to film festivals or receive production funding in Ireland, Jijo replied that they did not have much success with that and until then the only person who showed a real interest in their films was me – such an admission made me feel proud for having tried to help them, but also sorry for not being able to do more. John remarked that migrant communities are similar to local working classes in the way they lack representation and agency in Irish media. Eleanor commented that she was impressed by the filmmaking techniques displayed by the Keralite filmmakers and that dramatic camera angles such as those used in *Parakayapravesham* are rarely seen in western films. She added that she could relate to the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by the film's protagonist, as she felt similar emotions when she was away from Ireland. Eleanor's reaction to Jijo's film reflects Bill Nichols' notion of 'discovering form and inferring meaning' as a way of making sense of non-western films, developed in his analysis of audiences' responses to Iranian film. According to Nichols, 'recovering the strange as familiar takes two forms: first the acknowledgment of an international film style ... and second,

the retrieval of insights or lessons about a different culture' (1994: 18). Eleanor then asked Biju and Jijo if the portrayal of the Indian characters in *Me Buddy, Muhammad* was believable from an Indian point of view and they said it was. She was wary of misrepresenting Indian culture and traditions and was relieved the characters she created were considered authentic by Indians not involved in the film. Other people in the audience had positive comments and said they were pleasantly surprised by the quality and compelling narratives of the short films. At the end of the talk, John took Jijo's contact details to send him information about sources of funding and associations supporting community arts projects. The filmmakers thanked me for organising the screening and were happy to have the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas. I was relieved to hear that they found the experience useful and were not disappointed.

Despite the small audience, I felt the screening went reasonably well in the way it facilitated a dialogue between Irish and Indian filmmakers, providing a space where representations of the Indian community of Ireland could be showcased and discussed. Moreover, thanks to John's contacts, Jijo could later obtain an award through the 'Artist in the Community Scheme' managed by Create Ireland²⁴ on behalf of the Arts Council of Ireland,²⁵ for the production of a short film focused on Indian nurses living in Ireland. I was really glad to find out about such a positive outcome and proud to be able to play a small role in it. This represented a breakthrough for Jijo who can now be recognised as a filmmaker in his own right beyond the Keralite community. Significantly, in a message he sent to announce his award he stated 'I consider being recognised as a filmmaker by The Arts Council of Ireland an achievement in itself',

suggesting how important it is for a migrant filmmaker to become part of the community of artists of his host country.

In this chapter I have examined how the transnational experiences of Keralite immigrants to Ireland are articulated in short films made in Dublin. These amateur productions show, on the one hand, how the medium of film can be effectively used to address the issues migrants confront in their everyday lives, and on the other, it can become a powerful tool for communication and socio-cultural exchange. Much like the home movies embedded in the British-Asian Documentary *I for India*, filmmaking proved to be central in the life of several Indian migrants living in Dublin and filmmaking ‘has served to help them not only to document but also make sense of their transnational lives’ (Cross 2014: 79). This chapter has hopefully demonstrated how the films of the Iris Film Society are circulated via the internet and in community gatherings, enabling Keralite male filmmakers to not only regain a sense of agency and self-worth, but, significantly, to be regarded as artists and cultural producers in their own right. Moreover, by circulating their films on internet platforms they establish a dialogue with communities in India and beyond sharing their perspective on the lives of Indians in Ireland. Their ongoing activity and success at receiving Irish government grants to develop their projects suggests the presence of an indigenous instantiation of Indian cinema – one in opposition to big budget commercial cinema such as *Ek Tha Tiger*. Additionally, the emergence of Keralite diasporic films is testimony to the evolution of transnational film production in Ireland, paving the way for future research on Irish migrant cinema.

Notes

¹ A no-budget film is made without any funding or form of financing. Film students and other people starting out in filmmaking commonly make no-budget films because there are no other options available to them. All the actors and technicians are employed in these productions without remuneration. Usually the director of a no-budget film works alone, or uses a very small crew of volunteers to assist him or her. The film equipment is bought or rented with the filmmakers' own money.

² Bharatanatyam is a classical Indian dance form that originated in the temples of South India. It is known for its grace and sculptural postures. Bharatanatyam is one of the most popular and widely performed dance styles and is practiced by male and female dancers all over the world.

³ A Puja is a prayer ritual performed by Hindus to honour and worship deities, to spiritually celebrate an event or to invite auspiciousness and abundance to one's life. First the deity is greeted, sometimes with a *diya* or lighted incense stick. Then the devotee connects with the spiritual manifestation by meditating or chanting hymns and mantras. A quick meditative puja is sometimes offered without an idol or image.

⁴ A Mandir is a Hindu Temple, 'a house of gods'. It is a space designed to bring human beings and gods together, infused with symbolism to express the ideas and beliefs of Hinduism.

⁵ According to Bennema:

[A] new pan-Indian identity has emerged, which is supranational, cosmopolitan, accommodating and increasingly homogeneous, despite regional or subcultural parochialisms. This ongoing identity debate is very relevant to the Indian church. What does it mean, for example, to say, 'I'm an Indian Christian' or 'I am a Tamil or Naga Christian'? Is there scope for the categories of 'Hindu Christian' or 'Muslim Christian' – a follower of Christ within Hinduism or Islam? Can a 'Hindu Christian' perform *puja* to Jesus in a Hindu Temple...?

(2011: 60)

⁶ Although Christianity was first introduced in Kerala by St. Thomas the Apostle in the 1st Century AD, which originated from the community of Syrian Christians (as they follow the Syrian Rite) or Saint Thomas Christians, other denominations of Christianity were later introduced by western missionaries. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is practiced in the Roman Catholic Church and in some Anglican and Lutheran Churches with their origins in Europe.

⁷ Here he refers to *Parakayapravesham*, discussed later in the chapter.

⁸ Biryani is a mixed rice dish made with spices, rice and meat or vegetables. Variations of Biryani are present in the cuisine of various South Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

⁹ In her ethnographic research among Keralite communities in the US, Sheba George illustrates how the church plays a pivotal role in the social and cultural life of Keralite migrants, as the majority of them are Christians. Her accounts clearly show that the husbands of nurses who got a job outside India, struggled to find suitable employment and were often supported by their wives. As a result, men got more involved in the activities of their local Malayalee church. As George notes, 'it appears that the church is a space where the men successfully compensate for their diminished status at work and at home' (2000: 170-171).

¹⁰ The engagement in film production and exhibition of the Iris Film Society is reminiscent of the work of other amateur filmmakers based in Ireland, such as the Spence brothers. Roy and Noel Spence were former school teachers based in County Down, who have become celebrated figures throughout Ireland since their transition into amateur filmmakers, alongside their creation of some unique screening venues: bespoke cinemas which have appropriated the furnishing and ephemera from a range of closed commercial cinemas (Chambers 2013).

¹¹ Radhakrishnan, M.G. (2012) 'The Bawdy and the Beautiful: Malayalam cinema pushes the envelope' *India Today*, 7 July 2012 [Online] Available at: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/malayalam-cinema-pushes-the-envelope/1/204102.html> [Accessed 15 October 2014].

¹² In their article titled "*One More Dirham*": *Migration, Emotional Politics and Religion in the Home Films of Kerala*, Menon and Sreekumar explore the activities of Keralite amateur filmmakers belonging to an Islamic home-film movement. Notably, these films circulate beyond India and they are popular among Keralite migrants living in the Arab Gulf, reflecting experiences of migration and shifting gender roles in Keralite Muslim families.

¹³ These films include: *Similarity* (Jijo S. Palatty, 2009, 14 mins.); *Moonam Lokam* (The Third World, Jijo S. Palatty, 2010, 122 mins.); *Malayali v/s Malayali* (Prince Angamaly, 2011, 77 mins.); *A Girl by the Window* (Santhosh Joseph, 2011, 11 mins.); *Paaropakaaram* (Altruism, Jai K. John, 2012, 11 mins.) *Hridayam Sakshi* (Upon My Heart, Nirmal Khan, 2013, 9 mins.); *7pm Rose Park* (Jai K. John, 2014, 19 mins.); *Vattam* (The Circle, Jijo S. Palatty, 2014, 28 mins.); *Irish Days* (Artes Jolly, 2015, 25 mins.).

¹⁴ Dublin's Phoenix Park at 707 hectares (1752 acres) is one of the largest walled city parks in Europe. The Phoenix Park was established in 1662 by James Butler, Duke of Ormond, on behalf of King Charles II. It was conceived as a Royal deer park and a herd of Fallow Deer has lived in the Park since the 1660's. Shortly after the Park's acquisition it was enclosed within a stone wall. Áras an Uachtaráin, the residence of the President of Ireland dates from 1750 and is located in the centre of the park adjacent to the United States Ambassador's residence, which was built in 1774. Available at: <http://www.phoenixpark.ie/about/> [Accessed on 25 February 2016].

¹⁵ In Indian culture elderly parents traditionally live with their children, in particular with their eldest sons. As Glucksmann explains:

Hindu culture places the onus for elder support primarily on the eldest son. Across Southeast Asia, traditions of filial piety survive and children are strongly socialised into the duty of paying back to parents what they have been given. Failing this obligation still entails shame.

(2006: 68)

¹⁶ The Papal Cross is a large white cross that was erected in Phoenix Park to commemorate the visit to Ireland of Pope John Paul II on the 29th September 1979.

¹⁷ See for example the documentary series *The Last Peasants* (2003) which focuses on the use of home video by Romanian migrants to maintain a social presence in rural Romania while living in urban centres located in Western Europe. Ann-Belinda Steen Preis explored how Sri Lankan refugees based in Denmark exchanged home videos with relatives in Sri Lanka, highlighting the importance of maintaining transnational relationships through the performance of physical absence (1997).

¹⁸ Biju Mullamkuzhithadathil, Interview 7 July 2013

¹⁹ Binu Daniel, interview 22 April 2014.

²⁰ Feba Joseph, interview 21 March 2014.

²¹ Drogheda is an industrial town located about 50 km north of Dublin. Its origins can be traced back the 12th century when it developed as a Norman settlement on the River Boyne. In recent years Drogheda's economy has diversified from its traditional industries, with an increasing number of people employed in the retail, services and technology sectors. The town also has a community of independent artists and musicians who operate at a local level rather than moving to Dublin for employment.

²² Collette Farrell, Producer, interview, 8 August 2014

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Create Ireland is an Irish national development agency for collaborative arts in social and community contexts. Create supports artists across all art forms who work collaboratively with communities in different social and community contexts, be they communities of place or communities brought together by interest. See <http://www.create-ireland.ie/> [Accessed 28 November 2015].

²⁵ The Arts Council (In Irish: An Chomhairle Ealaíon) is the national agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in the Republic of Ireland. See <http://www.artscouncil.ie> [Accessed 28 November 2015].

Conclusion

This study has traced my ethnographic journey following the tracks of Indian film culture in its multiple manifestations in and through the city of Dublin. Significantly, several journeys have been discussed throughout the chapters: that of Indian film across numerous screening spaces and exhibitionary sites; the journey of Bollywood film crews to Dublin; the movement of Bollywood fans across the sets of *Ek Tha Tiger*; and the migratory journey of South Asians and other migrants to Ireland. The aim of this study was to explore how formations of Indian cinema play out in the Irish capital at the level of the 'local' and the 'everyday', with a view to establishing their links to processes of globalisation, set against historical and socioeconomic contingencies prevalent in the last decade and beyond. This was achieved by critically framing different instantiations and formations of Indian film in Dublin foregrounding my dual identity as an Indian film fan and a researcher. Participant observation at various levels across multiple sites where Indian films were exhibited, consumed and produced, together with semi-structured interviews with social actors of various South Asian and western ethnic backgrounds, allowed me to identify and explore the cultural geography, social practices and socio-economic triggers related to the presence of Indian film culture in Dublin.

This localised approach enabled me to examine the manner in which Indian film circulates across multiple sites located within a specific geographical area characterised by fluid and changing socio-economic conditions and recent experiences of immigration. These changes were shaped by the rapid economic boom Ireland experienced between 1995 and 2007 and by the sudden recession that followed. In the

space of some fifteen years, due to the massive immigration triggered by the economic boom, Dublin has changed dramatically drawing in almost two hundred different nationalities among its population. The concomitant rapid growth of the South Asian community of Dublin is linked to the increased visibility of Indian film culture in a transnational context where multiple cultures and ethnicities coexist.

The complexity of the socio-economic context and of the cultural practices relevant to this study emphasises the suitability of a multidisciplinary approach, situated across film and cultural studies, fan studies and media ethnography. This flexible perspective allowed me to examine varied instantiations of Indian film in an Irish context, alongside my personal journey as an Italian fan of Indian film in a transnational environment. Significantly, this thesis has endeavoured to examine the effects of the circulation, consumption and production of Indian film in Dublin through the lens of fandom, demonstrating how such an innovative approach could promote new understandings of the presence of Indian cinema in a transnational context. Theoretical engagement with the work of scholars who are also fans of the cultural products of their research (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2006b; Monaco 2010; Duffett 2013), helped me negotiate my dual positioning as Bollywood fan and researcher across this thesis, further reflecting on how my identity as a white, Italian, Hindi film enthusiast shaped my approach to the study of emerging forms of Indian film culture. Importantly, the events and locations examined in this thesis were not clearly established from the outset, rather they emerged from conducting research as a fan of Indian film and letting my fandom guide me through different fieldsites and experiences. For this reason, I could not have anticipated my journey through all these different sites at the beginning of the PhD and my research process enabled me to

create a geography of fandom shaped by my desire to engage with my object of interest. This notion brings to the fore the importance of my agency as a researcher in shaping this study and in creating new knowledge.

Notably, my decision to employ an immersive and embodied research approach foregrounding my duality as a scholar and a fan led me to conduct participant observation in order to engage with other fans and gain access to key sites of film production and consumption. Immersive fieldwork and participant observation across different sites are rarely employed in film studies, therefore this thesis advocates their effectiveness as innovative ways of gathering data and substantiating information that would be difficult to obtain otherwise. To this end, a fan-based approach enabled me to observe fans not merely in relation to film consumption and exhibition, but also in their interactions with the production of a Bollywood film. Significantly, during the filming of *Ek Tha Tiger* I had the opportunity to examine how fandom is expressed and performed across sites of film production, which represents a distinctive approach to the study of film. In this instance, I believe that the reflexive accounts of my personal experience included in this text integrate and complement the experiences of other fans and are effective in illustrating local manifestations of Indian cinema in Dublin. In fact, incorporating the voices and experiences of both South Asian and western social actors (including myself) in this study, offers a broader perspective on the interactions created by the presence of an ethnically-specific cultural product in a newly constituted multi-ethnic environment, illustrating how the imagination of diverse participants interacts with, and makes sense of, Indian film culture. Across the chapters comprising this thesis I have demonstrated how these elements, together with the exploration of exhibition practices, cultural events promoting Indian cinema, and

Irish-based Indian film productions, effectively brought to the fore the links between local and global socio-economic processes affecting the circulation of a transnational media product such as Indian film. My embodied, immersive and fan-based approach to this study thus proved to be effective in yielding new knowledge about the diverse modes of distribution and circulation of Indian film in the Irish capital, which would have been impossible to achieve through a uniform methodological frame. I believe that this distinctive approach to the study of Indian film in transnational contexts has the potential of furthering understandings of transnational cinema and of challenging traditional ways of conducting film studies research.

As my project draws to an end, I want to reflect on the changes occurring among the people, places and events I have examined during the course of my research in order to identify further avenues of enquiry. As discussed in chapter one, given my interest in Indian cinema and sustaining the personal relationships I established with many of the social actors who participated in my research, it was not an option for me to leave the field when my research was completed, principally because the 'field' is an integral component of my fan identity. Remaining in touch with my participants and regularly visiting the venues and events featured in my thesis, thus allowed me to keep track of their current situation and evolution.

The representation of migrant subjects in Irish film has recently been object of scholarly attention (Kakasi 2011; Asava 2013). These studies advocate the need for 'a new interdisciplinary approach to Irish film that builds on "race", ethnicity and migration studies together with film theory' (Kakasi 2011: 39). Examining racial representations in Irish film and visual culture can arguably further debates on race

relations, expanding constructions of Irish identity by incorporating notions of hybridity within the national concept of Irishness (Kakasi 2011; Asava 2013). As mentioned in chapters two and six, in recent years, Irish directors have begun producing films centred on South Asian characters such as David O’Sullivan’s *Moore Street Masala* (2009), Darren Thornton’s *Onam* (2014) and Eleanor Walsh’s *Me Buddy, Muhammad* (2014). The developing interest of independent Irish filmmakers in Indian stories is further reflected in another low-budget film currently being produced by an emerging young director called Steve Clarke Dunne and his crew. The title of the film is *Don Sanjay*, featuring a young South Asian man who becomes a prominent figure in Dublin’s underworld. A short sequence of the film has been released in an attempt to raise funds to complete the production. Significantly, the sequence of *Don Sanjay* had been chosen as the closing film of the 2015 edition of the Indian Film Festival of Ireland.

The choice of an independent Irish film with elements of Indian culture to mark an important part of the festival (mainstream Hindi films by established Indian directors were chosen as closing films in previous years), suggests that the event might evolve in a direction less focused on commercial Hindi cinema and more supportive of independent local productions. Additionally, the attention and positive response the film received from members of the audience and festival guests, who praised it as a timely representation of an ethnically diverse Irish society, confirms the increasing relevance of migrant stories in Irish cinema. For this reason, it would be useful to conduct further research on representations of South Asian culture in Irish films, exploring if and how they contribute to creating a dialogue between cultures, possibly proposing new and fluid concepts of Irishness.



Fig. 64: Jijo S. Palatty (first from the right) with the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins (centre) and other winners of the Next Generation Award, Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon (Photograph: Arts Council)

Representations of South Asian migrants are increasingly recognisable in the ongoing work of the group of Keralite filmmakers based in Dublin discussed in chapter six. The last project they completed is a short film titled *Irish Days*, about a group of Indian friends travelling to Dublin. The film was made by Artes Jolly and Kiran Babu Karalil and has been available on YouTube since October 2015. I have not seen most of the members of the Iris Film Society for a long time, but have been regularly in touch with Jijo, who informed me that he recently received an additional bursary award from the Arts Council and is currently working on a film project about Irish-based families of Indian nurses with liberal views titled *Colour Code*. Additionally, in December 2015 he was also awarded a 16 x16 Next Generation bursary as part of a special initiative of the Arts Council in collaboration with the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme, in recognition of the role of artists in the events of the 1916 Easter Rising. The award consists of a monetary bursary, along with the participation in a collective week-long residency in an arts centre located near the Northern Irish border

later in 2016. The awards were presented during a ceremony that took place at the residence of the president of Ireland, where artists had the opportunity to discuss their projects with President Michael D. Higgins in person. During his address, the President highlighted the central role of artists in shaping Irish society and the importance of creativity to people's right to participate fully in society.

These notions resonate with Jijo's ambitions and motivations for making films. Significantly, as noted in chapter six, winning awards is not as important to him as being officially recognised as an artist and filmmaker within Irish society. Only sixteen bursaries were awarded to emerging artists of various cultural backgrounds (see Fig. 64) working across film and visual arts, literature, music and dance. The fact that a South Asian filmmaker (along with other non-Irish nationals) has been considered a suitable recipient for a national arts award, suggests that the Irish Arts Council is becoming aware of the importance of the contribution that migrant artists are making to Irish society. Moreover, the notion that the award is connected to the celebrations of the centenary of the Easter Rising, confirms the linkages between the circulation of Indian film and events related to Irish history and society. Of course, this award further symbolises a victory for the wider Indian community of Ireland, which is now being represented and gaining visibility in the Irish artistic circles. This represents a significant achievement for a minority migrant group of recent formation in Ireland, especially considering the fact that migrant and diasporic Keralite communities are traditionally close-knit and their participation in host societies is limited (George 2000; Percot 2012). The awards won by Jijo are significant, since they signal the emergence of a small community occupying a marginalised position in the social fabric of Dublin, further demonstrating that an engagement with art, in this

case filmmaking, can provide a gateway to active participation and recognition within Irish society. Moreover, these awards clearly demonstrate that Dublin-based Keralite filmmakers, despite their racialised position, their lack of formal training and institutional support, alongside the precariousness of their organization, can actually achieve recognition as artists and receive state funding for their projects. It would be therefore interesting to explore further examples of emerging Irish migrant cinema in order to establish if and how they impact on existing notions of Irish cinema and Irish identity.

Since the beginning of my research Cineworld Dublin has consistently screened Hindi films and occasionally regional Indian films; however, in the past two years, other multiplex chains have been screening, with increasing regularity, mainstream productions in Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and other regional Indian languages. These cinemas include, among others: Vue Cinema, located in Clondalkin, an urban area of the county of South Dublin; IMC Cinemas, in venues located on O'Connell Street in Dublin city centre, and in the northern suburb of Santry; and Rathmines Omniplex (previously known as Swan Cinema, a former venue of the Indian Film Festival of Ireland) in the southern suburb of Rathmines. These developments are linked with an increased demand for commercial Indian films by growing South Asian communities settled in specific areas of Dublin. For this reason, it would be interesting to explore how the audience for these films is imagined, as well as the impact of these screenings on the locality where these theatres are situated. The availability of mainstream Indian films on cable TV channels and internet platforms allows South Asians and others with an interest in Indian cinema to view films in their homes. The private consumption of Indian film and television in diasporic contexts

has been explored in other European countries such as the UK (Gillespie 1995; Banaji 2006) and Italy (Acciari 2012). These notions suggest the need of further research on viewing practices within domestic spaces in an Irish context, in order to establish the role they play in processes of identity negotiation and belonging within minority communities in Ireland.

The social dynamics raised by my ethnographic study pose urgent questions to Irish cinema and current scholarship on Irish film. For example, what can be done to enhance the inclusive potential of migrant cinema? Are the Irish creative and cultural industries doing enough to support the work of migrant filmmakers in an increasingly multi-ethnic Ireland? Should the focus rest exclusively on attracting international productions? Can a balance be found between the two? How can Irish national cinema and Irish film studies expand their attention to an exploration of films focused on migrant identities in Ireland? Drawing on the findings of my study, I suggest that at present Irish government-funded creative and cultural industries are not sufficiently proactive in supporting film projects that foreground migrant narratives, but rather concentrate their efforts in attracting big budget international production such as *Ek Tha Tiger*, as outlined in chapter four. However, the awards won by Jijo raise hopes that this tendency might be changing and that the relevance of Irish migrant cinema is starting to be recognised as a vehicle to a more inclusive and cohesive society.

The circulation of various forms of Indian film culture, together with the emergence of an Irish-Indian migrant cinema in Ireland, constitute hitherto unexplored fields of research. I thus hope that this thesis partially fills this gap in the context of Irish film studies, adding to the literature on the globalisation and international circulation of

Indian cinema. The methodological choice of conducting this research as an Italian Hindi film fan, while not limiting the scope of my inquiry to South Asian participants, will hopefully make a contribution towards the evolution of Indian film studies. Most significantly, this study has endeavoured to open up new avenues of inquiry for further scholarly engagement with manifestations of Indian film culture in transnational contexts.

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- Far and Away* (Ron Howard, 1992) 140 min.

Naalu Pennungal (Four Women, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 2007) 105 min.

Gangaajal (Prakash Jha, 2003) 150 min.

Gulaab Gang (Soumik Sen, 2014) 128 min.

Happy Independence Day (Jijo S. Palatty, 2009) 11 min.

Available on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=_oOgUhmKkts

Hide and Seek (Ajith Kesavan, 2011) 10 min.

Available on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=recZbPLxMjE

Hum Aapke Hain Koun..! (Who Am I to You, Sooraj Baryatja, 1994) 199 min.

Hum Saath-Saath Hain (We Are Together, Sooraj Baryatja, 1999), 170 min.

I for India (Sandhya Suri, 2007) 70 min.

Jab Tak Hai Jaan (As Long as I Live, Yash Chopra, 2012) 176 min.

Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham... (Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sadness; Karan Johar, 2001) 210 min.

Kabul Express (Kabir Khan, 2006) 106 min.

Kajarya (Madhureeta Anand, 2013) 132 min.

Kal Ho Na Ho (There May or May Not Be a Tomorrow, Nikhil Advani, 2003) 188 min.

Kaiyodu Kai (Rajan Sharma, 2003) 183 min.

Krrish (Rakesh Roshan, 2006) 175 min.

Life Goes On (Sangeeta Datta, 2009) 78 min.

Maanikya (The Ruby, Sudeep, 2014) 165 Min.

Malayali vs. Malayali (Prince Angamaly, 2011) 76 min.

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfwgJHO73ek>

The Man of Aran (Robert J. Flaherty, 1934) 76 min.

Marasim (Relationship, Nirmal Khan, 2012) 15 min.

Available on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=3sHniZxGZmg

Mardaani (Masculine Female, Pradeep Sarkar, 2014) 111 min.

The Master: Shyam Benegal (Khalid Mohamed, 2014) 90 min.

Me Buddy, Muhammad (Eleanor Walsh, 2014) 13 min.

Michael Collins (Neil Jordan, 1996) 133 min.

Moonam Lokam (The Third World, Jijo S. Palatty, 2011) 112 min.
Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAWDFwt4tYo>

Moore Street Masala (David O'Sullivan, 2009) 5 min.
Available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duTckWCVAfw>

Mrs. Brown's Boys D'Movie (Ben Kellet, 2014) 94 min.

My Name is Khan (Karan Johar, 2010) 165 min.

New York (Kabir Khan, 2009) 153 min.

Onam (Darren Thornton, 2014) 19 min.

Parakayapravesham (To Take Another Human Form, Jijo S. Palatty, 2013) 15 min.
Available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YodBc-bfJs0> and
<http://www.parakayapravesham.blogspot.ie/>

Queen (Vikas Bahl, 2014) 146 min.

The Quiet Man (John Ford, 1952) 129 min.

Raajneeti (Politics, Prakash Jha, 2010) 170 min.

Raanjhanaa (Beloved One, Anand L. Rai, 2013) 140 min.

Rowdy Rathore (Prabhu Deva, 2012) 143 min.

Sachein (John Mahendran, 2005) 154 min.

Samvidhaan: The Making of the Constitution of India (Shyam Benegal, 2013) 600 min.

Sangam (Confluence, Raj Kapoor, 1964) 238 min.

Saving Private Ryan (Steven Spielberg, 1998) 169 min.

Similarity (Jijo S. Palatty, 2009) 14 min.
Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DzHbwiW2-A>

Shanghai (Dibakar Banarjee, 2012) 120 min.

Sholay (Embers, Ramesh Sippy, 1975) 198 min.

Short Sight (Biju Mullaamkuzhithadathil, 2011) 13 min.

Available on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=hEJpjHKvq2E

Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones (George Lucas, 2002) 142 min.

Superman Man of Steel (Zack Snyder, 2013) 148 min.

Swades (We, the People, Ashutosh Gowariker, 2004) 210 min.

Tevar (Attitude, Amit Sharma, 2015) 159 min.

Teraa Surroor (Your Desire, Shawn Arranha, 2016) 106 min.

Traffic (Rajesh Pillai, 2011) 122 min.

Vattam (The Circle, Jijo S. Palatty and Prince Joseph, 2014) 28 min.

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xw6g8NST0x0>

Waking Ned (Kirk Jones, 1999) 91 min.

Water (Deepa Mehta, 2005) 114 min.

When Brendan Met Trudy (Kieron J. Walsh, 2001) 95 min.

Zanjeer (Chains, Prakash Mehra, 1973) 146 min.

Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara (You will not get Another Life; Zoya Akhtar, 2011) 153 min.