INDO-ITALIAN SCREENS AND THE AESTHETIC OF EMOTIONS

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER AS PART OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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This thesis aims to shed light on the cultural and aesthetic implications of the relationship between Italy and India on and off the screens of Italy, following the expansion of Bollywood in Europe during the 90s. Bollywood’s propagation abroad affected the identity of the South Asian diaspora, urban spaces and aesthetics which generated what Le Guellec – describing the arrival of Indians and Bollywood cinema to Paris – named as Bollywood/India mania.

The study began with the exploration of the historical meaning of the term aesthetic in order to offer a contextualization on the sense of the aesthetic as a philosophy of art; furthermore, it established a background for further theoretical debate on South Asian diasporic identity formations within the entertainment industry of Italy.

The research methods that predominated throughout this work were those of textual argumentation, aesthetic analysis, quantitative and qualitative questionnaires and interview data. The reasons for using different and interdisciplinary methods and approaches to offer an account on diasporic cultures, resided in the attempt to reveal the multiplicities of the ‘cultural and social’ visible.

The theoretical frame that this research intends to follow is through two quite distinct disciplines: aesthetic and cultural studies. The aim is to capitalise on the productive intersection of these two disciplines to analyse parts of the South Asian cultural text on the screen and beyond it as producers of transnational images imbued with melancholic memories and melancholically conceived spaces. This work will attempt to individuate the existence of representational patterns based on the aesthetic of melancholy with its nuances and metamorphoses, which represents, narrates and constructs South Asian and/or fused identities socially and culturally on the screens of Italy. The notion of semiosphere as elaborated by Jury Lotman, was utilised to define the cultural and dialogic dynamics of mainstream products that move constantly closer to each other generating original ‘formats’ characterised by novel transnational and multiple identities.

Throughout this thesis, the emphasis was placed on the ‘encounters’, the ‘journeys’ and the ‘sharing’ of cultures, hence highlighting the possible conditions of belonging contemporaneously through multiple modalities: mentally, psychologically and experientially to multiplicities of cultures. In addition, the notion of ‘world culture’ was contemplated in an attempt to practically support what Gilroy, in Black Atlantic, shaped as ‘inter-cultural’ and translational formations.
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*Meaning is what gives us a sense of our own identity.*

*(Hall 1997: 89)*

*Introduction*

This thesis is the result of 4 years of research on South Asian realities in Italy. By providing the theoretical milieu, which draws on the notions of aesthetic and emotion, this work aims to explore the possibility of the existence of an “aesthetic of emotion” (Brady and Haapala 2003), which might be used to characterise the relationship between Italy and India. However, it was first necessary to identify the object of my research and subsequently set my main research question. To begin with, I asked myself the following: what is the kind of relationship that I intend to investigate and the type of emotion that I see is bonding the representation of the other culture?

In an attempt to answer the above question, I realised that it was important to establish if there was a past cultural relationship between Italy and India (as discussed in Chapter 4), before investigating the emotional facets of this cultural encounter. In light of this premise, this work aims to shed light on the cultural and aesthetic implications of the relationship between Italy and India both on and off the screens in Italy, following the expansion of popular Hindi cinema *viz.* Bollywood in Europe during the 1990s. Bollywood’s propagation outside India penetrated Europe, affecting the identity of the South Asian diaspora, urban spaces and aesthetics which generated what Le Guellec described as the arrival of India and Bollywood cinema in Paris, called Bollywood/India mania (Le Guellec 2006). The journalist in his article wrote about the novel cultural wave, which overwhelmed France and the rest of Europe, spotlighting urban and sensorial spaces, which were elaborated excessively and obsessively on Bollywood.

A few years following the boom of Bollywood, Italy experienced its own (re)discovery of India through two distinct avenues: (a) by the revival of cultural facets already known in Italy; (b) and, by the observation of how Bollywood was penetrating the rest of Europe. Italy, remaining outside the ‘maniac’ circuits of imitation and reproduction (such as the French case) took the way of cultural fascination. Italy began its rediscovery
of the South Asian subcontinent through the contemplation of past cultural exchanges and historical and cultural similarities. The pure fascination of one country for another clearly raises problems on the way, and the dynamics of encounters and dialogues are established in a more rationale and scientific way in order to identify concrete zones of contact. The last term is borrowed from James Clifford, who offers the following definition: “Contact Zones are borderlands between different worlds, histories and cosmologies… [these are] places of hybrid possibility and political negotiation, sites of exclusion and passage” (Clifford 1997: 249). By undertaking the study of the ‘contact zones’ between Italy and India this research aspired to explore the emotionality within these zones. Particular interest is paid to melancholy as the social and visual emotion, which actively formed a pattern of representation of South Asian culture, mainly Indian, in Italy. In this research, melancholy is studied as the emotion which is aesthetically expressed in two specific ways: socially, by the South Asian communities in Italy, with particular attention to the city of Rome, and visually by cinematic and televisual experiences of Italian directors with India.

In order to elaborate on the subject, and therefore expand on the multidisciplinary nature of this work, the body of this thesis follows two distinct trajectories of enquiry: sociological and screen-based. Thus, the two major sections characterising this research are the following: (a) the sociological perspective, which will be the approach employed and developed in Chapters 2 and 3 and (b) watching South Asia on the Italian screens, explored in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The readers are invited to participate in an imaginary intellectual journey, departing from the ‘emotional landscape’ of the Esquilino quarter in Rome through a sociological observation and elaboration of the data collected, and arriving at the destination through the investigation of the existence of ‘cultural fusion’ through screen analysis based on the depiction of South Asian culture broadcast by the Italian entertainment industry.

**Social and Theoretical Premises: An Account**

The arrival of South Asians in Italy has been relatively recent. At the beginning of the 1980s, Italy recorded a notable increase of South Asian immigration into the country; many arrived through the UK or from Germany (Denti, Ferrari et al. 2005: 34). In this migratory phase, the presence of highly skilled workers increased remarkably, particularly in the engineering and IT sectors, therefore amplifying the alleged
phenomenon of ‘brain drain’ (Denti, Ferrari et al. 2005: 34). The South Asian migration into Italy was initially concentrated in the northern regions of Emilia Romagna, Veneto (in which the agricultural activities and the breeding of cattle were managed by South Asians of Punjabi origin) and Friuli Venezia Giulia, characterised by the presence of South Asians employed in the IT sector (Bertolano 2005; Di Sciullo and Pittau 2006). The employment of South Asians, particularly from Punjab1 in the economic and commercial activities in northern Italy and their settlement in these areas, stimulated two significant trends of this diasporic phenomenon. While on the one hand, these communities became an established financial reality within the country (expanding towards the centre of Italy, particularly in Rome by the 1990s); on the other hand, the representation of South Asian aesthetics on the Italian screens began to gain a small but significant presence within the entertainment industry. The development of an interest in South Asians began in 1976 onwards with the screening of Sandokan, a popular character portrayed by Kabir Bedi, which contributed to his escalation as an international star and discussed in Chapter 5. Interest in South Asian culture and aesthetics was manifested early on by established Italian directors such as Rossellini, Pasolini and Antonioni and later by Salvatores, whose work contributed to outline a pattern of representation of the South Asian aesthetics based on a melancholic and exotic depiction of South Asians. The discussion of a representational pattern based on melancholy with its different shades and metamorphosis, is the core of this thesis and is discussed widely in Chapters 2-5.

The theoretical framework of this research follows two distinct disciplines: aesthetic and cultural studies. The aim is to capitalise on the productive intersection of aesthetics and cultural studies and unravel the discursive forces attempt to contain these areas as irreconcilable. This will be done by analysing some of the South Asian cultural texts on

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1 The Punjabi migration in Italy is a recent phenomenon and often a casual event. This migration began in the mid-70s. Numerous were the individuals that embarked on commercial ships; passing through Italy and Greece, these immigrants aimed to reach other destinations such as Great Britain, Canada and the United States. However, many migrants were unable to enter these countries. In the 1980s, the Punjabi migration intensified in countries such as Italy and Greece, due to the political tensions between the government of India and the state of Punjab. This social disorder resulted in a civil war, which caused the multiplication of immigration. Due to the absence of an effective political and a parliamentary act, elaborated and approved only in 1986/7 (Legge Martelli), numerous immigrants experienced the condition of being clandestine, therefore living in illegal and inadequate sanitary and social conditions. (Bertolano, B. (2005). I Sikh in Emilia: tra Specializzazione del Mercato del Lavoro e Reti di Relazioni. I Sikh. Storia e Immigrazione. D. Denti, M. Ferrari and F. Perocco. Milano, Franco Angeli: 163-74).
the screen and beyond it, as producer of images imbued with melancholic memories, in melancholically conceived spaces.

This research intends to channel the above-mentioned analysis through a selected spectrum of authors (Langer 1963; Langer 1966; Burton 1978; Kristeva 1989; Mesquita 1993; Kemper 2000; Boym 2001; Brady and Haapala 2003) who have attempted, through an interdisciplinary reading, to delve into the notion of melancholy as an aesthetic emotion. These theories support the idea of melancholy as an aesthetically and socially constructed emotion, which determines the representation of South Asians in Italy and supplies the theoretical and methodological framework of this research.

This chapter begins by exploring the historical meaning of the term ‘aesthetics’ (a branch of philosophy which studies the science of looking (Dufrenne and Formaggio 1988: 25)) in order to give a context to the formation of an aesthetic (defined as the idea of appreciation of the perceptible properties of an object through contemplation (Dufrenne and Formaggio 1988: 28)) fostered by the encounter of the South Asian subcontinent with the entertainment industry of Italy. A historical account on the notion of aesthetics and the definition of its field of enquiry and legacy facilitate the understanding of the notion of ‘form’ (Langer 1963) and particularly the expressive form as ‘iconic symbol’ which Langer describes as being “…created for our perception through the sense of imagination and what it expresses a human feeling” (Langer 1982: 56). If art is expressive of feelings, then the nature of feelings determines the nature of art, as argued by Langer. Feelings and emotions, by Langer’s definition, must be considered in the broadest sense. These refer to everything that can be felt, from basic physical requirements to complex emotional and intellectual tensions. The contribution to the philosophy of culture and its critical and intellectual role in the definition of the aesthetic enquiry evolved from an early view of art as a symbolic activity, which explored terms such as symbols, forms, feelings and expressions.

In response to the question: How does artwork express feeling? Langer’s work offers an insightful contribution, which deems feelings as “unspeakable” (Reese 1977: 45) entities that are however, perceived and elaborated at all levels of human experience. Emotions are the iconic symbols that are generated during the human experience. They are patterns or gestalten that, according to Langer’s theory on symbolisation, are released by the feeling as symbolic, and are therefore representative, of experiences. The form of feeling as a generation of emotional patterns of representation on and off the screen,
particularly applied to melancholy, constitutes an essential theoretical part of this research. It is supported through examples and case studies wherein the usage of the term 'melancholy as an aesthetic emotion' is contextualised. In this research, the expressive form, as intended by Langer’s interpretation of artwork, also meets the theorisation of the concept of semiosphere widely discussed by the semiologist Jury M. Lotman. The Russian semiologist elaborated the notion of semiosphere, briefly defined as a “universal set conceived as a text and made-up of cultural subsets which cohabit separately or hook into each other modifying and reorganising their meanings” (Lotman 1985: 23). The theory of Lotman, further discussed in Chapter 5, directly links with Langer’s conviction that the fundamental capacity of perceiving and manipulating patterns of representation and expression is generated from “the power of seeing one thing into another” (Langer 1966: 8).

This thesis explores the expressive forms of melancholy with specific focus on South Asian culture in Italy, which, through a sociological enquiry conducted in the Esquilino quarter in Rome (Chapters 2 and 3), charts the socio-aesthetic emotions within the urbis. At the same time, it evaluates cultural formation due to the contact between popular Hindi cinema, viz. Bollywood and Italian (visual) culture. Part of this large enquiry, has a precise aim: critically to analyse the South Asian immigration process, and investigate both aesthetic and sociological formations in Rome\(^2\) and, consequently, reflect on the status of South Asians within the Italian entertainment industry, particularly in television and cinema. In addition, several theoretical approaches and a dissatisfaction with the limitation of some academic discourses which tend to place the reading of South Asian texts within the melting pot of exoticism (Said 1994; Mason 1998; VV.AA 2007) and appropriation (Hutnyk 2000) as cultural practices will be addressed throughout the chapters of this work. These accounts are discussed throughout the thesis as being mutating and perhaps misleading notions of existing ideology.

This chapter contains the definition of the two areas of this research: the explanation of the relationship between aesthetic and cultural studies, which is the core of this work as an interdisciplinary enquiry; and the definition of a common ground of approach between the two disciplines. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to establish a theoretical

\(^2\) Rome and particularly the Esquilino quarter is the case study of this thesis and only a sample for the study of South Asian culture in Italy. Therefore, as a sample it does aim to be representative of all South Asian communities in Italy, but is a preliminary contribution to a subject unexplored until now. Due to temporal and financial constraints, a wider sociological enquiry could not be conducted.
foundation for further discussion on diaspora and their aestheticised practices, the aesthetic (of) emotions – with particular attention given to the process of the spread of melancholy – and popular visual culture.

The aim is to give a more complex account of South Asian identities, India in particular, within the Italian panorama, beginning with the early depictions of India within Italian cinematographic culture. Specifically, the films of Rossellini, Pasolini, Antonioni and Salvatores are considered and their portrayal of India in melancholic terms, making the subcontinent a film subject. Furthermore, the contact of Bollywood aesthetics with the Italian screen free from conceptual connotations such as ‘orientalism’ and ‘exoticism’ and based on co-production agreement recently signed between India and Italy is investigated in Chapters 5 and 6. The exploration of the complexity of the aesthetic (of) emotion (and the applicability to the Indo-Italian case) branches from the answer to the following questions: How have ‘aesthetic’ and ‘cultural studies’ engaged with the concept of ‘emotion’ on a theoretical level? Is it possible to trace a connection between aesthetic and cultural studies? If yes what are the terms? This question is addressed by outlining a theoretical framework and contextualisation of the term aesthetic and its implications.

Notes on the History of Aesthetics, Emotions and Aesthetic of Emotions

The study of aesthetics was conceived as a philosophical subject in the early eighteenth century, with a series of articles regarding ‘The Pleasures of Imagination’. These articles were written by the journalist Joseph Addison and appeared in the magazine The Spectator in 1712, ultimately configuring this discipline as an essentially modern phenomenon. According to the author, the intention of the article was to settle the notion of pleasures of imagination. He concluded by affirming the relevance of pursuing the study of the contemplation of (artistic) objects, as follows:

Sir Francis Bacon, in his essay upon Health, has not thought it improper to prescribe to his reader a poem or a prospect, where he particularly dissuades him from knotty…disquisitions, and advises him to pursue studies that fill the mind with splendid and illustrious objects, as histories, fables, and contemplations of nature (Addison 1712).

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The South Asian identity that this thesis intends to chart out is particularly from India, with further interest in the popular Hindi cinema viz. Bollywood.
The aesthetic discipline attempted to use universal canons and understanding to legitimise an ‘area of interest’ – regardless of many previous hypotheses and precepts – which was not considered previously as an object for a systematic observation and reflection. Addison, interestingly, offered the possibility of reading the origin of the modern aesthetic as a philosophical discipline, which takes shape by the intellectualisation of the gaze. He affirmed “sight as the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses” (Addison 1712). Thus, sight engenders a refined imagination, untrammelled by generalisation or crude interpretation of the ‘artistic’ object and summarised by Addison as follows:

A man of polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures…he can converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue. He meets with secret refreshment in a description, and often feels a greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in everything he sees…he looks upon the world, as it were in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind (Addison 1712).

The above-mentioned ‘area of interest’, by the late 1700s, began to be characterised by the emergence of a first level of subjectivity, along with its entire world of expressions, identified as personal sentiment. This peculiar ‘status of affection’ was considered and ultimately distinguished on a philosophical level as the source of all *affectus animi* – the emotions – known during the classical times as the impulsive site or the site of passion (Dufrenne and Formaggio 1988).

When dealing with the history of aesthetic it is significant to consider how this subject, which deals with taste, emotions, forms, representation, immediacy and illusion (Felski 2005), engages with experience to form the fabric of ideas and meaning. Therefore, it is essential to try to answer the following question: Which were the terms used to describe an aesthetic experience?

Among established Western philosophical scholars, the terms ‘sublime’ and ‘beauty’ have been expressions used to describe aesthetic experiences (Mothersill 1984). A comprehensive definition of the object of the aesthetic and perhaps the objectification of its purpose is set out as follows:
[Aesthetics] is a sub-discipline within philosophy that deals with questions of art and beauty...its principle concerns can be seen as those of defining the concept of ‘art’ or...how we come to recognise art work as art work, and thereby raising questions about the role of representation (or Mimesis) (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002: 67).

However, to understand its influence on the study of the conceptualisation of ‘beauty’ in art, it is worth noting that aesthetics was considered as a discipline even before 1750, when Alexander Gottlim Baumgarten coined the term from the Greek Aisthanomai, which means perception through senses, and published his Aesthetica. Baumgarten defined aesthetics as “la dottrina della conoscenza sensibile e della sua perfetta realizzazione nella bellezza” (translated as: the doctrine of the perceptual knowledge and its perfect expression in beauty) (Bertelli, Briganti et al. 1991: 59).

The ancient classical Greek culture developed a clear but unwritten sense and conceptualisation of art and beauty that gave a concrete artistic praxis. Definitions of beauty and perfection were attempted in order to supply an intellectual groundwork to 'the insolvability of the emotion'. The first of these fundamental concepts highlighted by Greek culture was the theorisation of the notion of ‘beauty’. The masculine adjective καλός – Kalos – included meanings equivalent to ‘good’ and ‘noble’ in English; Plato used it for the first time in his work titled the Republic. He used the term τὸ καλὸν (the neuter form of Kalos) in his attempts to define the ideal form. The Greek word kalos, ultimately translated as beauty, had a wide variety of meanings and included the properties, which brought satisfaction to the eyes and enjoyment to the ears.

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4 The meaning of form in Plato finds the origins in the Allegory of the Cave (or metaphor of the Cave). Plato imagines a group of people who have lived chained in a cave all their lives, facing a blank wall. The people see their shadows projected on the wall by objects that pass in front of the cave entrance and begin to ascribe forms of this shadows. According to Plato’s theory, the shadows are as close as the people in the cave get to see reality. Furthermore, Plato explains that the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall are not constitutive of reality; it is possible to perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the inhabitants of the cave. The allegory is directly related to Plato’s theory of forms. The forms that we see (the shadows of the theory of cave), are not real but they literally mimic the real form. In the allegory of the cave, the things that we ordinarily perceive in the world are characterised as shadows of the real things, which we do not perceive directly (Fine, G. (1992). On ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms, Oxford, Clarendon Press, Silverman, A. (2008). "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology" Retrieved 12 Jan 2009, from http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-metaphysics/).

5 Kalos, the ideal form according to the ancient Greek, is crucial to the term satisfaction. Kalos and satisfaction, negotiated by the beauty, meets with the Freud’s definition of melancholy as applied in Chapter 3. Melancholy according to Freud in fact is a form of reaction due to loss; in this light South Asian in Rome seek for familiar satisfaction, to compensate their loss by being away from home.
Furthermore, the meaning of *kalos* was used to enhance the quality of human character and the excellence of the human mind. Within the process of the composition of a *kosmos*, in Greek, harmony, the necessity for the ‘reproduction’ of nature was emphasised. With regards to the duplication of the nature and its objects, Aristotle contributed to the definition of the term representation. Formaggio and Dufrenne as follows give the following synthesis:

L’impulso a riprodurre…caratterizza l’uomo in quanto essere rivolto e orientato verso la conoscenza” – The impulse to reproduce characterises the man as a human being oriented towards knowledge (Dufrene and Formaggio 1988) (Translated from Italian)\(^7\).

Aristotle named the impulse to reproduce nature in order to gain knowledge as μίμησις – mimesis. The concept of mimesis underwent several changes and revisions during the different stages of development of the aesthetic as a philosophical discipline. For a long time it was conserved by classical Greek culture as the essence of their art work. An early critical contribution to the re-definition of mimesis was brought about by the poet Pindarus during the fifth century B.C.\(^8\) Pindarus used the concept of mimesis to explain the impulse behind the devotional dances, in classical Greek terms. He pinpointed the negativity of an artistic act as an imitation and thereby highlighted mimesis as an act purely generated by the expressions of the feelings of the artist, rather than an arid reproduction without emotional involvement. Expression rather than imitation, as hypothesised by Pindarus, has been reworked in the contemporary era by Langer who sees expressive form as the medium and vehicle for what she has called symbolisation of what is perceived; a form in Langer’s word is “an apparition given to our perception” (Langer 1966: 7).

The concept of mimesis went through numerous theoretical ‘adjustments’ over time, and its significance and importance within the process of reaching the ideal form of art was

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\(^6\) In the field of the ‘verbal art’, Homer referred how the concept of *Kosmos* was connected to the human harmony and coherence, following what was called *kosmos epeon* viz. the beautiful order of the words.

\(^7\) The translations of all the texts from Italian were performed personally by me, of which I have given an example. For the purpose of this thesis, due to word limit, I will only provide the English translation mentioning the language from which the sentences or paragraphs were translated from in brackets, as follows: (Translated from Italian).

\(^8\) The poet elucidates the notion of *mimesis* in his homage to the thirteenth Olympic Games. Mimesis, according to *Pindarus*, was directly related to the dances performed in veneration of the god Dionysus.
re-addressed. The contemporary Italian writer Daniele Guastini, writing about the Aristotelic ‘impulse to reproduce’, suggests the following:

Representation, presentation on another level…unified in an ontological and practical manner…is intimately related to memory as a medium towards knowledge and awareness, in order to remind something that is considered as an original reality that is fundamental for the practical life a being (Translated from Italian) (Enrile 2002: 78).

Interestingly, memory as a medium and practice – of representation – and ontological ‘exercise’, highlights an intimate bond between aesthetic and cultural study practices. David Oswell, in defining cultural studies, its practice and its subjects (and objects) comments on the complexity of (social) formation and on the complexity of the representation of cultural texts: “In their different ways, different definitions index a series of questions and concerns, not just about culture of and for people…representation of that culture” (Oswell 2006: 8). This consideration allows the possibility for aesthetic and cultural studies to find a common intellectual ground on the conceptualisation and capitalisation of their subjects which is ‘the people’, otherwise called by Guastini in aesthetic terms as ‘original reality’ and by Johann Gottfried Herder as ‘the Volk’ or the ‘ontological unit’ (Oswell 2006: 11).

Guastini applies the idea of mimesis to the post-modern position in the representation of art – as a socially constructed unit – emphasising the possibility of a third level of meaning and consciousness where practice and ontology could be brought together, facilitating and delineating a representational ‘third’ level within the process of mimesis. Regarding the idea of a third level of signification and its theoretical legitimacy, Barthes offers an important contribution. While analysing an image of the film entitled Ivan Groznyy II: Boyarsky zagovor⁹ - Ivan the Terrible – Barthes indentifies three levels of meaning within an image: (a) the informal level, the level where it is possible to learn about what we watch from the setting, the costumes, the characters and their relationships. This level is that of communication. The second level is (b) the symbolic; this level is itself stratified. There is a referential symbolism, a diegetic symbolism and an author(ial) symbolism. This second level in its totality is the level of signification (Barthes 2006). A ‘third’ level (c) of signification is characterised by Barthes as being

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⁹ Ivan Groznyy II: Boyarsky zagovor (Aka Ivan the Terrible) was dir. By S. Eisenstein, (1958)
unpredictable, yet evident and persistent: “this third level…is that of signifying [significance], a world that has the advantage of referring to the field of the signifier (and not of significations)” (Barthes 2006: 112). The third meaning of an image as text is the one ‘in excess’, a meaning which encapsulates multiple natures, both persistent and fugitive, apparent and evasive which Barthes calls the obtuse meaning and defines as follows:

The obtuse meaning is outside (articulated) language, but still within interlocution….the obtuse meaning is discontinuous, indifferent to the story and to the obvious meaning (as signification of the story); this disassociation has a contra naturam or at least a distancing effect with regard to the referent….Ultimately the obtuse meaning can be seen as an ‘accent’, the very form of an emergence, of a fold marking the heavy layer of information and signification (Barthes 2006: 113).

The third level of meaning as theorised by Barthes structures the analysis of a text differently, however, without subverting the ‘story’. It is perhaps at this level that, within the context of a film analysis, the ‘filmic’ appears at last. The filmic is that which cannot be described and often cannot be categorised; the ‘third’ level is the place of representation (and signification) of what cannot be represented.

According to the observation proposed by Barthes, through the theorisation of a third level of signification – applicable to the reading of many cultural texts – it is possible to set up the depiction of an emotional sphere. Its representability is often taken for granted as ‘object’, outside the essentialism10 or predictability of psychobiological processes and the emotion is re-written as a dynamic form within a social text. The emotions, their representability as well as their signification, have been extensively theorised in aesthetic terms (Read Jr. 1940; Langer 1963; Reese 1977) as well in cultural studies (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Gilroy 1993; Ahmed 2004). The aesthetic and social formation of melancholic memories is the object of analysis and the bond, which ties the contents of all chapters of this thesis.

10 Catherine Lutz, in her anthropological analysis of the emotions, describes the limitation as the strategy to essentialize emotions. The author points out three fundamental perspectives as follows: a) looking at the feeling as the essence of the emotion and b) explore the emotional sphere through introspective reports. However, these approaches produce inattention towards the social focus and life and fail to look at emotions in social interaction. (Lutz, C. A. and G. M. White (1986). “The Anthropology of Emotions.” Annual Review of Anthropology 15, 405- 436) Ultimately, essentialism is associated with a ‘strange’ invisibility of emotions as a problem establishing emotion as for-granted facet.
Stepping back into the history of aesthetic, the second crucial concept enhanced by the ancient Greek culture in the definition of this discipline is the word τέχνη – Tèchnē. It was a concept that referred to any product generated by technical and manual work. The Greek intellighènzia used the term tèchnē to describe four essential steps to illustrate and identify artistic activities. They are summarised as: a) human activity in contrast to the spontaneity of the nature; b) manual production, as an alternative to cognitive activity; c) deep relation based on ability and not inspiration; d) necessity for the formulation and presence of general operative norms and not simple, mechanical reproductive habit (Annas 1993). Tèchnē was formerly a medium for the creation of an artificial Kosmos and was similar to the real (or natural) Kosmos by the ancient Greeks who knew it was essential for reproducing nature. In the process of redefining tèchnē, the contribution by the philosopher and atomist Democritus\(^\text{11}\) was relevant. The philosophic morality of Democritus existed in the attainment of joy (Annas 1993) as the final purpose in the life of every being; he employed the theory of the movement of atoms in the atmosphere and explained that the atoms in the atmosphere are always in contact with the atoms in the human body and the energies of these atoms were highly interrelated. He applied this theory of atoms-in-contact to the soul, assuming that the soul was made up of atoms. He said: “As for the rest of matter, the soul (psychè) is also made up of atoms, more thin and smooth atoms…They penetrate the human body giving life and making a person a thinking human being” (Translated from Italian) (Acrosso and D'alessio 1990: 45).

Democritus’ contribution in the re-definition of the term tèchnē and its applicability to the representational Kosmos is unmistakable. The philosopher is remarkable when considering the rectification of the artificial Kosmos with the concept of artistic Kosmos, by employing the term tektáinesthai – from the Greek word τεκ (tek) – which means to conjoin. By substituting the ‘artificial Kosmos’ (previously mentioned as an original idea within ancient Greek civilisation) with the ‘artistic Kosmos’, which conjoined itself with the Kosmos of reality, Democritus explored the idea of fusion of Kosmos in order to perceive an ‘emotional side’ of the tèchnē, therefore of the practice of representation, laying the foundation for the modern philosophical discipline of Aesthetics.

\(^{11}\) Democritus was born in 460 B.C and was an eminent atomist within the Greek scientific community. He was known as the ‘philosopher of the smile’; he concluded that the necessity and the ultimate goal for human beings was the accomplishment of contentment in every aspect of life.
It is fascinating to observe how Democritus’ hypothesis on the fusion of Kosmos is an essentially modern theory when applied to the analysis of contemporary cultural texts, and an ideal foundation for Lotman’s theory of semiospheres (Chapter 5). The modernity of this theory frames the critical basis for the disciplines of aesthetics and cultural studies, hence the bond between mimesis and tèchnē which entails the possibility of expressing facets of artistic representations – through practices – under dissimilar socio-cultural circumstances.

The aesthetic as a modern phenomenon developed out of the cultural arena of Germany. The vibrant intellectual activity that characterised Germany in the 1700s saw Immanuel Kant as one of the most significant contributors in the unfolding of the features of aesthetic and its legacy. Kant observed that every form of art is embedded within the aura of observation (at the beginning of the 1900s cinema was one of the arts – the seventh – under aesthetic analysis)\textsuperscript{12}. By the end of the 1700s, the observations of Kant were a significant starting point for the contribution and qualification of the aesthetic as a social experience in art. Fieser reported Kant’s input as follows: “Recent developments within aesthetics have demonstrated a greater sensitivity to the social and cultural context within which art is produced and consumed” (Fieser 2007).

The notion of aesthetic and its artistic nature, as popular and social experience was perpetuated by the aesthetic of cinema by Canudo in his text entitled \textit{L’Ausine Aux Images}. In this text the author, who named cinema as the seventh art, proposed a philosophical interpretation of cinema as being popular. The idea expressed by Canudo introduces his aesthetic of cinema as popular and as a “need of…individuals…all over the world” (Canudo 1966: 80). He directly considers 'the popular' as essential, or rather as a need.

Similarly, Langer’s concerns regarding art and its space of enquiry effectively address the way in which expressions of individuals are uttered on the social scene (Langer 1966). Thus, the form is not related to the singular practice of an artist – outside the

\textsuperscript{12} Regarding the analysis of an aesthetic of cinema the contribution of Ricciotto Canudo seems to play and essential role. Since the beginning of the history of the theorisation of an aesthetic of cinema Ricciotto Canudo an Italian thinker relocated to France, wrote the text entitled \textit{L’Ausine Aux Images}. In this text he offered contribution on the new formed art (named for the first time by him as the seventh Art) and its general rules, or rather its aesthetic. Canudo, R. (1966). \textit{L’officina delle Immagini}. Roma, Bianco e Nero.
subjective experience – as previously presented by Bell\(^{13}\) (Meagher 1965; McLaughlin 1977), but rather, according to Langer, the form is the outward appearance of social and individual experiences; the unspeakable link of subjective and inter-subjective expressions. Langer’s approach to the analysis of the aesthetic discipline and the reading of the emotional sphere inevitably affects the individual emotional expression and the social context(s). The author establishes her perspective from the beginning of her analysis by identifying two different approaches to contemporary aesthetic and she summarises them as follows:

(a) Aestheticians speak in terms of ‘significant form’ and that the function of art is to record the contemporary scene, (b) and the other is in terms of dream, (...) maintain[ing] pure sounds in ‘certain’ combinations or colours in harmonious spatial disposition, which gives…the aesthetic emotions (Langer 1963: 35).

The observation of ‘the contemporary scene’ shows a glimmer and opens a dialogue between aesthetic and cultural studies, as pinpointed by Langer: “cultures develop some kind of art and language” (Langer 1966: 7). Wherever a society has really achieved culture, in an ethnological sense, it has begotten art at its very origin. Art is indeed “the spearhead of human development both, social and individual” (Langer 1966: 5).

Furthermore, regarding the legacy of the bond between art and cultural studies, the author asks: What kind of ‘thing’ is art that it should play a leading role in human development? (Langer 1966). The author answers by saying that this is not an intellectual pursuit, but rather it is a necessity for the intellectual life; it is not religion but it grows up with religion, serves it and, in large measure, determines it. Langer’s reading of art and society as a unique mutual relationship is essential for clarifying in the affiliation between popular Hindi cinema – as an expressive form – and the Italian culture and the novel expressive forms generated on and off the screens of one culture into the other and further explained in Chapter 5.

\(^{13}\) Clive Bell (1881-1964) developed a formalist theory of aesthetic, which was independent of emotional expression or social context. As Gould wrote: “Bell defined art and its subject in terms of property and calls it ‘significant form’. The grasp of significant form in art is, according to Bell, the source of aesthetic appreciation and one of the most exquisite human pleasures…for Bell, significant form is separate from life.” Gould, S. C. (2003). Clive Bell. *Key Writers on Art: The twentieth century*. C. Murray. London, Routledge 37-42.
While it is premature at this stage to offer a comprehensive account of what could be the essence of hybrid formation – through cultural fusion – between the Italian and Indian cultures, the cultural influence of popular Hindi cinema as an expressive form when it comes in contact with the Italian culture will be debated. A preliminary identification of the images of the South Asian community within Italy will be provided.

To discuss how popular Hindi cinema interacts aesthetically and socially with Italy and its visual culture within a given social context art is defined as the practice of creating “perceptible forms”\(^{14}\) (Langer 1966: 4), evocative forms and being expressive of human feeling. Furthermore, based on the premise of the artistic and social sensitivity inherent in definition of Langer’s perceptible form, the notion of cultural appropriation defined by Hutnyk (Hutnyk 2000) as a kind of cultural de-contextualization of symbols and meanings of a culture is debated. The aim is to retreat from socio-cultural extremism and move towards a more sympathetic definition of situations in which one culture speaks through and about another culture. The terms cultural evocations, or cultural adoption, are used here to challenge Hutnyk’s view about cultural appropriation and synthesized as follows:

[Madonna’s] *Ray of Light*\(^{15}\) includes de-contextualized symbols of Hinduism floating in ethereal New Age mush with embarrassing clunky *bharatanatyam* dance imitations. The album includes Sanskrit lyric passages – *Shanti Ashtangi* —…She capitalises on the popularity of the new Asian dance music because she (or rather her corporate organisational existence) has the global resources to present the localised creativities of those who devised the form. (Hutnyk 2000: 120).

The point that Hutnyk presents leans towards a comment on modern capitalisation. Undeniably, Madonna, the globally recognised pop star uses and benefits from new waves of cultural interests. However, using Hindu spirituality and icons of a given culture – as in Madonna’s case – does not necessarily mean that the artist ‘appropriates’ from specific elements of this culture, as discussed further in this thesis. It is possible to

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\(^{14}\) Susan Langer defines the perceptible form expressive of human feeling and a key word in art applicable to everything that it might be felt.

\(^{15}\) *Ray of Light* is the seventh album that the pop star Madonna released in March 1998. This album featured lyrics inspired by spirituality and motherhood which strongly referred to the Hindu religiosity, icons and rituality (Hutnyk 2000).
speak about imitation, fascination and reproduction according to aesthetic and emotional dynamics free from an orthodox appropriation.

By the end of the 1990s a specific Indian aesthetic moved from India and the South Asian subcontinent into Europe and the acclaimed popular Hindi cinema became a fashionable popular event (Hutnyk 2000, Dudrah 2006, Kaur and Sinha 2002). Madonna’s representation of Hindu icons and bharatanatyam dances were exactly what Hutnyk called as imitation (Hutnyk 2000). The author firmly contested the work of Madonna by demonstrating the evident clash of cultures and questioning the use of imageries and conceptions (or misconceptions). The notion of imitation as interpreted by Hutnyk sees Madonna’s attempt to give a glimpse of South Asian visual culture as an “opportunistic commercial version” (Acciari M. and Hutnyk J. 2009) of imitation relegating this notion to commercial and political conjecture. The clash of civilisation that this thesis addresses speaks of terms of sharing and fusion (in Chapters 5 and 6), which however, does not intend to provide an alibi for visual appropriation or justify Madonna’s use of South Asian imagery.

The imitation\footnote{The notion of ‘imitation’ in this thesis allures to the definition set by Aristotle and mentioned as follows: Imitation could be achieved with different means and in different ways. It is possible to imitate through the means of colours and forms such as in painting, or through the means of the voice as usually happens in poetry, or through the means of sound as normally occur in music...It is possible to imitate in response to an object; it could happen to imitate a human being superior to the normal people, as occurs within a tragic epic, or, imitate common person inferior to the mass, typical of a comedy. (Translated from Italian) – (Abbagnano N. and Fornero G. (1996). Protagonisti e Testi della Folosofia Torino, Paravia, p. 90)} of Indian practices and aesthetics as presented by Madonna certainly serves commercial purposes. However, Hutnyk’s stand fails to consider that imitation – as Aristotle pointed out – is in every form of art and is the core of reproduction. It is further filtered by emotions and, as this thesis intends to show, by socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesise that the Hindu rituals and traditional dances performed by the American pop star were ‘adopted’ in order to show novel incoming customs, rather than to embezzle from the culture itself. The term appropriation, taken from the reading that Hutnyk offers on Madonna’s Ray of Light, overstates the inevitable sharing and fusion of civilizations and presumes a continuous possession of a given culture. Ray of Light points out cultural specificities that are moving, from one place to another and are therefore subjected to changes, innovations,
and re-interpretations – which Hutnyk refers to as embarrassments – and affirmations (Hutnyk 2000).

Since the 1990s the South Asian diaspora has led to one of the most significant settlements all over the world, particularly following the “liberalisation in the 1990s of Indian culture” (Ember, Ember et al. 2004: 68), which extended into Europe and several Western countries. Due to the demographic and sociological consequences, combined with the evident necessity of cultural reproduction, the point of view of Hutnyk appears to capture the notions of imitation and mimesis, without leaving room for a wider aesthetic and further cultural considerations.

Susan Langer’s work expands the explanation of the term ‘form’ as an apparition given to our perception; she focuses particularly on the definition of ‘expressive form’ as a ‘form in motion’, or rather a form, which generates other forms (Langer 1966). Similarly Lefebvre (1991), when speaking about the production of spaces, in an attempt to reconcile between ‘real’ space and mental space, defines the social space as “A space which loses its original purpose; thus it may, in a sense, become vacant, and susceptible of being abstracted, re-appropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one” (Lefebvre 1991: 188).

Langer’s and Lefebvre’s theorisations are clearly concerned with the ‘reverse and obverse being’ in constant motion. This is what Barthes called “a front and a back, forever changing places” (Barthes 2007: 92) as they revolve around something which is in the perpetual process of transformation. However, these positions interrupt the continuity of a ‘form’ and perhaps of a ‘space’, in the name of a discontinuity which ought to be seen as the (de)constructive of the above-mentioned ‘form in motion’ – dynamic form (and spaces) – articulated by a movement and existing as long as the movement exists and continues. Both (social) space and (aesthetic) form contain a pattern of changes, which articulate and characterise the basic form/space. For a work and space to contain feeling, it must appear to be alive, exhibiting a ‘living form’ (Reese 1977); the forms of feeling are indeed dynamic forms.

It is necessary to ask, here, what is crucial in the definition of form and space? The imagination seems to be a common ground for both entities. As mentioned by Langer, the forms and therefore the works of art are “an expressive form created for our perception through sense of imagination, and what it expresses is human feeling” (Reese
1977: 46). Since a work of art is expressive of feeling, the nature of feeling will determine the nature of a work of art, therefore opening up possibilities that are different from the original form. Interestingly, Appadurai, when commenting on global cultural economy, pinpointed the changing nature of imagination and wrote:

The image, the imagined, the imagery – these are the terms which direct us to something critical and new in global cultural process: the imagination as social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people) and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity). The imagination has become an organised field of social practices, a form of work…and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility (Appaduarai 1993: 84).

When applying the concept of imagination as an aesthetic practice to the intermingling of Indo-Italian kosmos of emotions, the concept stretches its conceptual boundaries into a field of possibilities, which creates a dynamically renewed form of expression of emotions, of one culture on another. This thesis intends to discuss how popular Hindi cinema – from a social context to a diegetic one – extended its boundaries within the Italian entertainment industry in order to create a reformed and integrated expression of emotions, starting from the analysis of retained and altered images of India (in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) and compounding those received images into the variety of visions proposed by the agreement of co-production between Italy and India (in Chapter 6).

Looking back at the history of aesthetic and emotions, after the 1700s, the notion of sentiment that had been elaborated by the Greek culture shifted from its original location, the site of passion, towards a mental site (Fieser 2007). The emotions moved from the ‘heart’ to the ‘mind’, becoming a more articulated, deeply intellectual and socio-cultural field of investigation. Sentiment began to be designated as a subjective reflex, which accompanies each of our experiences. Hence, the emotions are configured between the intellect and the will, sketching the possibility for a third fundamental area within a spiritual life.
The aesthetic as a philosophical discipline was therefore born out of an attempt to establish through a critical approach a field which appears to involve the sense of representation in mutual rapport with the emotions, even before its origin as a discipline. Thus, the aesthetic started dictating the conditions and necessities for artists to produce artefacts that incorporate inner meanings, emotions and representations.

The history of aesthetics and the different ways of defining an aesthetic provided a relevant background for further considerations on this subject. This thesis indeed, is grateful to Western thinkers and philosophers, whose works on aesthetics and aesthetic constituted an invaluable theoretical milieu to speculate on the value of aesthetic appreciation. However, in order to move forward and propose a theory on ‘an aesthetic of emotion’ based on the state of remembering and contemplation, an American perspective will be taken into account. Bérubé (2005) defines an aesthetic as: a new way of seeing and perceiving the world (and its cultural manifestation). This affirmation suggests a substantial redefinition of the field of action of aesthetics until now relegated to artistic practices. Bérubé’s point of view bridges aesthetics to social practices. Therefore, this thesis embraces the above perspective, which sees the ideological border of aesthetics as being tangent to cultural studies and close to emotional resort (Bérubé 2005: 87).

**Reasoning on the Concept of Emotions**

What are emotions? When attempting to answer this question it is worth considering an amusing remark from Saint Augustine who tried to answer a question related to the nature of time: “If no one asks us about the nature of time, we would be able to answer; if we should answer the same question and explain the concept to someone who asks it, we would not be able to respond” (Fairclough 1998: 55). When enquiring about the nature of emotion and their representations, the aforementioned analogy by Saint Augustine seems to be appropriate; numerous theoretical and epistemological debates are found in the literature regarding the nature, significance and the expression of emotions (Hegeman and Stocker 1996: 82). These debates opened a range of theoretical questions such as: are the emotions essentially an intellectual phenomenon? If the emotions are considered merely as mental facts, are these facts expressions of the same sense exercised within the conscience and personal choice, or are they dependent on a different psychological mechanism whose nature is non-cognitive? Are the emotions
simple states of experience or do they have a decisive role in determining our thoughts, our moral options and our expressions?

Before moving on, it is important to clarify the difference between emotions and affects as two distinct notions, though related. In this thesis, the notion of affect will not be analysed extensively. Affect, in psychology could be referred to as a part of the process that involves the experience of feeling (Forgas 2001: 15). Furthermore, affect is an instinctual reaction to stimuli, which occurs before the necessary processes that produce emotional formations. It was largely argued (Forgas 2001) that affect influences emotional development. In the past 15 years, the notion of affect has been adopted by other disciplines, apart from psychology, to debate and bring light on the necessary differentiation of the two terms: affect and emotion. Being largely influenced by the work of Deleuze, the attention on affect has brought emotion into discourses such as aesthetic, geopolitics and urban life. The understanding that Deleuze provides on affect derives from the philosopher Benedict de Spinoza. Spinoza’s work was mostly concerned with the relationship that exists between bodies, objects and different form of collectivities (Deleuze 1988). Spinoza argued that bodies are repeatedly influenced by other bodies, thus, being simultaneously affecting and being affected (Deleuze 1988: 67). The capacity of affection of bodies to meet and exchange depends upon the entire history existing between these processes of encounter and formation, which are continuous and in constant flux (as explained through the notion of semiosphere in Chapter 5). Through the notion of affect, Spinoza individuated the intellectual avenue to portray the relentless relations between bodies and the result from their impact. Encounters resulting from physical and cultural journeys are characterised by continuous changes in affects that Deleuze, interpreting Spinoza’s thinking, explained to be: “An actual increase or decrease in the power of acting, for the body and the mind alike” (Deleuze 1988: 49).

Affect is largely understood as a variation of power and Deleuze explains these variations as influencing 'the power affecting and being affected by others due to an encounter. Therefore, affect, according to Spinoza and Deleuze is an indication of power rather than an emotional manifestation, which instead, is the node of this thesis.

Deleuze develops the notion of puissance as an immanent power rather than the power to dominate another (in Del Rio 2008). For Deleuze, Puissance is “the kind of power embedded in affect, whereas the concept of power as pouvoir operates within the actual
plane of organization” (in Del Rio 2008: 24). Deleuze notes that puissance is the ability to affect and being affected in order to form a set of assemblages\textsuperscript{17} (Parr 2005); these in turn form heterogeneous and initial elements of feeling. While affect is understood as being a process of power in constant mutation, emotion is rather a complex manifestation post-affect. This thesis intends to focus not on the pre-emotional process or on the puissance of certain manifestations, but rather on the emotional response(s) and therefore elaborate on the possible formation of an aesthetic: an aesthetic of emotion.

The field of emotions has historically been interested in areas such as philosophy, history, sociology and gender studies (Hegeman and Stocker 1996). Over the last thirty years, emotions have become a subject of enquiry for a closer and more analytical observation in the aesthetic, anthropology and sociological disciplines. An early interest in emotion as a topic of investigation was demonstrated by Aristotle’s analysis of emotions and the concept of emotional response.

During Aristotle’s time in Plato’s academy, the philosopher focused on the impact of emotions, as distinct from bodily sensations, as he tried to explain emotions and emotional response as a cognitive reaction. By building the cause into the definition of individual emotions, Aristotle was substantiating his own thoughts by stating that issues related to essence and issues related to cause are one and the same. When he was asked the question: what is an eclipse? Aristotle answered as the deprivation of light from the moon by the obstruction of the earth; in unison, when he was asked the question: what is the cause of an eclipse or why does the moon suffer an eclipse? Aristotle answered by asserting that light fails due to the obstruction of the earth. For the philosopher, knowing the essence of an eclipse means knowing the cause of the eclipse. Similarly, this occurs with emotions: “knowing the essence involves being able to give a definition that shows why” (Fortenbaugh 1975: 58) a perspective which highlights the emotion and its expression as a complex phenomenon.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Assemblage is an articulated notion developed by the philosopher Deleuze. Parr synthesised the definition of Deleuzian’s assemblage as follows: “Deleuze calls assemblage (agencement): a conjunction of a number of persons, forces and circumstances, capable of its own collective experiences and actions”. (Parr, A., (ed.), (2005), \textit{The Deleuze Dictionary}, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, p. 285).

\textsuperscript{18} Interestingly on the complexity of emotions Aristotle offers an exhaustive explanation in the second book of \textit{Rhetoric}. The thinker defined anger as: “a desire of revenge accompanied by pain on account of (diai) an apparent slight to oneself or to one’s own, the slight being unjustified. Making use of his own logical tools, Aristotle construes the thought of outrage as the efficient cause…Anger is not a
Once Aristotle focuse[d] on the cognitive side of the emotional response and clarified that an emotion can be altered by a variety of reasons, he was able to delve deeper into the study of emotions. The philosopher stressed that emotions are borderless entities and are therefore impossible to confine. When shifting from rhetoric to a poetic discourse Aristotle seemed to maintain his point firmly as explained by Fortenbaugh:

[Aristotle] comes to see that the emotional response appropriate to comedy is neither the laughter of an envious man nor the laughter which follows upon personal abuse. Rather it is the laughter that follows upon perceiving mistakes and deformities which do not cause pain or destruction and only those plays which present such mistakes and deformities are satisfactory comedies capable of evoking the comic emotion of finding something funny (Fortenbaugh 1975: 59).

Aristotle adopted a double inclusive approach for reasoning about emotional response; he recognised the existence of bodily and cognitive facets of any kind of emotions. Aristotle, more than other thinkers of his era, developed the concept of emotion – and emotional response – as being multilayered, complex and intricate. The emotion that will be analysed here to support the Indo-Italian case of this thesis is melancholy in its complexity. This aesthetic emotion and how it is socially and culturally reorganised to produce texts and meanings will be investigated.

It is worth considering Mauss’ reflection on the nature of emotions and the self in human beings, which gives a perspective on the subjective and collective nature of emotions:

Even when the spirit of the human being is entirely invaded by collective emotions and representations, which are dedicated to a collective activity…the individual is the source of particular actions and impressions. Whatever the power that the collective imposes on the individual; there is always a side untouched as a personal sanctuary where the self-conscience is preserved (Translated from Italian) (Bernardi 1995: 67).

pain, which happen to occur together with the (meta) thought of outrage. On the contrary anger is necessarily caused by the thought of outrage, so that such thought is mentioned in the essential definition of anger. The same is true for fear (...) fear is not some pain of bodily disturbance distinct from cognition. It is a complex phenomenon which necessarily involves not only painful disturbance but also the thought of danger.” (Fortenbaugh, W. W. (1975). Aristotle on Emotion. London, Duckworth, p.78).
The intention of this work is to explore the ways in which emotions vary cross-culturally and define them more as a social fact and tool rather than as an internal state, starting from Mauss’ depiction of emotions as an inner sanctuary and gradually moving towards a social state. An analysis will be made of the possibilities of translating the emotions and the social processes surrounding the individuals from different cultures outside a familiar space: the motherland and its melancholic representation. The established schism between the individual and the social approaches to understand a person (an autochthon, as well as an outsider) within a different society has been bridged in the process of studying emotions and cultures (Mattalucci 1997).

However, the antagonism between the aforementioned dichotomised terms renders it necessary to make a distinction between the emotions which can be defined as follows: a) Private feelings that are not usually culturally motivated or socially articulated; and (b) Sentiment identified as socially articulated symbol and behavioural expectation.

From this perspective, the premise of Aristotle and Mauss on the structure of the self and emotional sphere seems to take shape; the cultural analysis on the concept of socially articulated emotions highlight how the expression of the emotion(s) are the feelings of the individual, benchmarked by Mauss as the ‘Sovran’ self (Bernardi 1995).

**Emotions and Cultural Studies**

Research on the relationship between the cultural meaning of emotions (Ahmed 2004) and emotions as a subject per se expanded and considered them as socio-structural correlations of a given context; thus, highlighting the necessity for various traditions and cultures to discuss the concept of emotion (Lutz and White 1986). Lutz, working on the anthropology of emotions, defines them in relation to a known social context:

In the first instance, emotion can be defined as being ‘about’ social relations, emotional meaning systems will reflect those relations and will, through emotion’s constitution of social behaviour, structure them. In addition, social and economic structures are related to the way in which persons or selves are constructed more generally (Lutz and White 1986: 113).

Furthermore, Lutz stresses that the extensive basic principles of social organisation and formation are defined by ‘stability’ and ‘status’; both are characteristics of a distinctive
audience of a community and are related to the emotional performance of each individual (Lutz and White 1986). While the emotion is defined as a mode of action, it could also be an active factor which builds up social structures and social – emotional – sharing within a given community (Frijda and Mesquita 1996; Singh-Manoux and Finkenauer 2001). As Singh-Manoux and Finkenauer suggests:

Emotional sharing is a term used to describe the process during which a person, having experienced an emotion, recounts this experience to his or her social environment. The process essentially entails the transmission of information and experience of a personal and emotional nature, from the person experiencing the emotion to his or her socio-cultural environment (Singh-Manoux and Finkenauer 2001: 652).

As explained further in Chapter 3, all the families observed had a common emotional base – the feeling of missing their homeland was in fact personally experienced and shared by all members of the family, and extended to the urban area where the family lives: the Esquilino in Rome. Particular is the case of one of the immigrants who was interviewed for this thesis, Mr. B.S., who, living in Rome with his family from Punjab, felt the necessity to provide an emotional resort by opening a video shop specialised in South Asian films. Mr B.S. declared:

There was a high demand for Indian films, particularly Bollywood films, among people like me, in Rome from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh that are here with or without family…These films narrate our traditions, our culture and so through these films we don’t think too much about who we left there; we enjoy ourselves, we speak our language and we miss India less than we otherwise would. (From participant observation).

As further exemplified within the course of this thesis, the South Asian immigration is a relatively new migratory phenomenon. Due to this reason, this thesis does not concentrate necessarily on a specific category of research by selecting respondents according to age, gender, sexuality or other cultural axes. Rather, the provenance of the respondents and their ‘status of residency’ in Italy were the only criteria used during the
selection process. This method of selection allowed a wider range of South Asians to be considered for this research.19

The ‘emotional sharing’ as suggested by Lutz is corroborated by the interview with Mr B.S. (Chapter 3) and can be strongly correlated to social relations (Kemper 2000). The nature of emotions and their social function allows the individuals to adjust to the limitations imposed by the social milieu, by blending an emotional response to the network of their social relations. Furthermore, the aesthetic effects of such intermingling of emotions with the social interactions of the immigrants are fuelled by a collective emotional response within a given context. Langer calls this ‘expressive form’ (Langer 1963, 1966).

The attempt of Kemper’s work to outline social modes in order to define the emotions involves the integration of positivist and constructionist viewpoints to convey a binary expression of emotion within a social context. Social relations are expressed conveniently within two structured dimensions, which are ‘power’ and ‘status’. Kemper writes that emotions must be understood as: “reactions to the power and/or status meanings and implications of situations” (Kemper 2000: 46).

Drawing on the concept of status, the author defines the social life as differentiated not only by the dimension of giving and taking orders, but also by membership and togetherness where “one shares identity, race, ethnicity, gender, social class, occupation and community or rather the standard sociological grouping” (Kemper 2000: 49). Sharing identities constitutes a decisive factor within a social context, and membership represents the essence of emotional energy (Kemper 2000); this is determined by the nature of the sharing process, which provides the members with a sense of ‘inclusion’.

Applying Kemper’s theory to the context of the South Asian community in Rome, the melancholic feeling is the essential emotional energy, which governs the landscape of their settlements and is the sentiment projected by the community. Indeed, the emotion of melancholy permeated the Esquilino quarter: primarily by creating strong social communitarian relations and secondly by spatially influencing the creation of an aesthetic that is unfamiliar to the local culture. Therefore, the Esquilino quarter is urbanistically different to other areas of Rome in that it is continuously challenged and being changed by the constant arrival and departure of immigrants. Walking within the

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19 This is part of the conversation (elaborated in Chapter 3) with Mr. B.S. from Punjab, living in the Esquilino quarter in Rome.
Esquilino, it is possible to observe how this quarter has developed an extraordinary ‘emotional landscape’ shaped by the intertwining of sounds, odours and aesthetics, all of which are expressions of a constant evolution, in which time and space are governed by shared emotions.

Ahmed offers an interesting terminology to define the process that occurs when two entities meet: the “soft touch” (Ahmed 2004). The metaphor of soft touch sees the borders of a nation compared to the skin; they are soft, fragile, porous and easily shaped by the proximity of others (Ahmed 2004). Equally, while theorising on his notion of semiosphere, Lotman mentioned that the borders of cultural, social, narrative and emotional sets could turn into a transition zone. The boundary is the place where what is ‘external’ is transformed into what is ‘internal’. It is a filtering membrane where cultural texts give rise to contrasts, fusion, hybrids or ‘creolization’, thereby highlighting the soft boundaries of a nation (Lotman 2001; Virtanen 2001). The notion of soft touch is substantiated by what Lotman describes as a boundary. Ahmed writes that: “The use of metaphors of ‘softness’ and ‘hardness’ shows us how emotions become attributes of collectives, which get constructed as ‘being’ through ‘feeling’” (Ahmed 2004: 122).

Ideally, the soft-boundaries of the Esquilino, have absorbed the emotions of its immigrants. These emotions are now integral part of this urban body, and are visually constructed.

Emotions are recounted as a sign of our present state in addition to specific signs from the past, which filter into the present. Thus, as mentioned by Ahmed, emotions are not only involved in the human sharing as established by a reaction, but are also part of the personal and collective history, which shapes the ability to control emotions, or ‘appropriate’ experiences at different times and places (Ahmed, Castañeda et al. 2003; Ahmed 2004). Accordingly, part of this doctoral project intends to consider how emotions shape, and consequently create, bodies of expression and emotional forms, in addition to investigating how melancholy, filters through time and particularly spaces of the diasporic South Asian communities in Rome. This thesis will examine how melancholy, a prolific emotional condition among the South Asian community in the Roman quarter, extends its reach into the hosting society, which interprets and ‘aestheticizes’ melancholy as a trait and expressive form of the South Asian community abroad.
**Adopted Methodologies**

**A Premise**

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson argue that all research commences with a set of concerns and questions that the authors define as foreshadowed problems (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995); they refer to the work of Malinowsky and how the term foreshadowed problems is critical to: “an exploration and contemplation of components and implications of a common prefigured problem with the help of available secondary literature” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 21).

This research was also a journey through unknown problems and matters, and similar to a journey, was structured in three phases: the departure, the transit and the arrival (Leed 1992). This journey evolved due to the culmination of my passion, cinema, and my personal life. Through Sridhar, my partner in life of Indian origin, I came to observe how the screening of popular Hindi films among a group of South Asian friends was emotionally dynamic. Being involved in the discussion on how they were watching and experiencing Bollywood film “at home – in India” and how a Bollywood film was “here in the UK…just a way to be at home”, I became interested in and fascinated by their feelings of missing their homeland, their memories, attachments and emotional responses. Being an Italian living abroad, I have been, by reflex, drawn into this sense of missing ones homeland as expressed by my partner and through my friends’ interactions. Their sense of missing homeland was elaborated on a personal level and further expressed within their community of origin. My partner and my friends expressed their discomfort while being together and all of them are from India, indeed. My friends and I have similar sets of attachments such as going to the cinema according to specific modalities – however obvious it can be – to cuisine and weather conditions, notoriously different from the UK. However, these attachments for my motherland and the feeling of melancholic memories are undeniably mediated by a geographical certainty in which the distance between Italy and the UK is shorter than between India and the UK. Hence to reconnect with my own homeland is relatively easier. Having lived in the UK for 6 years, I have had the chance to watch popular Hindi films at the cinema theatre, or to listen to Bollywood music on the radio and purchase Bollywood films in areas of predominantly South Asian population.
While being a student in one of the most esteemed Departments for Film Studies in Italy (the department of D.A.M.S. at the University of Bologna), I did not have the opportunity to study Indian cinema and I was unable to watch Indian films at the cinema theatre. This raised my curiosity and I began to wonder why I could not experience the same in Italy. I also realized that the academic system in this discipline was lagging behind in terms of acceptance and expertise, which in part might have been due to the Italian entertainment industry’s interests in Indian cinema. When my research began, the problem, which I immediately faced concerned my strong personal/emotional involvement with the subject. Interestingly, a reflection by Elisa Facio, captured by Rajinder Dudrah on the nature of research, enlivens and outlines my research methodology as follows:

Researchers many times may find themselves struggling to maintain emotional neutrality. Neutrality is important but difficult when the research is intimate. However, emotion was part of doing research but also issue of my research. (Dudrah 2001: 48)

This quote perfectly captures the mood in which this research was undertaken; furthermore, it demonstrated interest and focus on emotion(s) as being part of this investigation on an aesthetic and sociological level. Concerned about the neutrality of the researcher, but simultaneously encouraged by personal observation, I began to ask myself about how popular Hindi cinema reached – emotionally and aesthetically – the screens of Italy, apart from being a natural way for immigrants to live their origins.

The methods that are predominant throughout this work are those of textual and aesthetic analysis and qualitative interviews. This choice was due to the necessity of gathering information directly from the subject studied, without any form of mediation.

**Remarks on Methodology**

This cross-cultural and interdisciplinary thesis is based on observation and the collation of data collected over three years, which included: a) four extensive interviews with people from the Italian and Indian entertainment industry; b) numerous informal interviews with male and female South Asians aged between twenty-five and sixty, conducted intermittently between May 2006 and April/May 2008 in Rome; c) questionnaires and d) notes from participant observation. As outlined at the beginning of this Chapter, this study aims to observe the role and the perception of Bollywood, to
illustrate some of the complexities and negotiations of the South Asian aesthetic within the Italian (visual) context.

The methods of analysis employed for this thesis are multiple, in order to obtain a variety of information under different point of views. This research project is mostly based on textual analysis of each of the aforementioned cultural forms, and qualitative extended interviews. The extended interviews were possible after an initial participant observation with the production of a short amateur video. The first attempt to approach the South Asian communities that populate the Esquilino quarter in Rome was unsuccessful and raised questions and difficulties in terms of communication and trust, which is explained in detail in Chapter 2. In subsequent visits, however through a cultural mediator – who facilitated the relationship between autochthons and foreign citizens – a positive communication and empathy with the subject studied was established (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 2001).

The questionnaire ‘Watching Bollywood’ (in Appendix) was developed in multiple languages including English, Italian, Hindi and Bangla, in order to facilitate the comprehension of the queries by the interviewees, and was distributed around the Esquilino area (see map in Chapter 2) in Rome where there is a major South Asian settlement.

Furthermore, extended interviews were conducted with artists and representatives from both Italian and Indian audio-visual industries in order to investigate the cross-cultural uncharted topic of Italo-Indian cultural relations. Interviews with Mr. Kabir Bedi, Dr. Sergio Scapagnini, Mr. Riccardo Tozzi, Ms. Selvaggia Velo and Gabriele Salvatores are presented in Chapter 4 and 6. Two producers were interviewed – Tozzi and Scapagnini – in order to clarify the current position of Italy and India in terms of co-production, post-agreement signed in 2005.

By drawing on a range of theories and differentiated methods of analysis, this thesis attempts to investigate and elaborate on diasporic South Asian popular cultural texts and aesthetics by, investigating the results generated by the juxtaposition of the Italian and Indian media/visual-cultures. The aim is elaborate and analyse this juxtaposition, which

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The production of a short amateur video was part of the visual material collected within three years of research within the Esquilino. It was particularly useful to visually testify the nature of the South Asian settlement in the quarter. Watching the video a posteriori raised questions related to the urban and spatial reorganisation of this area and therefore queries regarding South Asian aesthetic and cultural formation.
sees the engendering of newly (in)formed South Asian/Italian aesthetic expressive forms within the public sphere of the community in the Esquilino.

Due to the cultural, aesthetic and the social issues that this thesis raises, it was necessary to employ a range of methodologies rather than constrain the flux of information by selecting only few methodologies. One of the methodological arguments of this research project resides in the possibility of revealing how South Asian communities in Rome construct their representational emotionality, their emotional identity and the articulation of it within the Roman quarter. A number of analytical and collaborative methods were used to examine them, such as participant observation, questionnaires and interviews.

The following section summarises the methodologies employed in this thesis and the *raison d'être* behind personal choices, personal aspects of this research such as the use and reading of popular texts and the interpretation of extended interviews for a broader epistemological discussion of the aesthetic emotion and particularly the *mimesis* of melancholy within a determined sociological context of enquiry.

**Textual Analysis**

While, the emergence and development of cultural studies and visual studies as fields of enquiry, which draw on interdisciplinary intellectual reasoning, have been mapped extensively (Hall 1980; Hall 1999a; Guinz and Cruz 2005; Oswell 2006), contemporary research on the aesthetic (of) emotions and their development as cultural texts has only been partially developed (Felski 2005).

By the 1970s, textual analysis had begun to meet the sociological approach to the study of mass-media text. As mentioned by Dudrah:

> These studies were interested in the mass media's role in the construction of social and political consensus, whilst simultaneously intervening against dominant American communication models…which implied a notion of the audience as passive consumer of mass culture (Cohen and Young 1980; Hall 1980). The result was an increased focus on social messages and on the political implications of media messages (Dudrah 2001: 49).

However, when semiotic analysis was finally integrated, it became the method of ‘reading’ the importance of the text and the social contexts of the production and experience of events. Therefore we could synthesise the process as an encounter of
literary studies and sociology culminating in cultural studies with textual analysis as a distinctive aspect. Significant in this process of interdisciplinary theoretical production is the contribution of Stuart Hall (1999b) with the essay entitled ‘Encoding-Decoding’. The author understands the cultural production and reception in terms of “preferred, negotiated and oppositional” (Hall 1999b: 34) reading models made by different audiences of mass-culture as texts. Thus, as noted by Hall, the audience represents one of the concerns that cultural studies raises in its investigation. Furthermore, it is important to look at how the audience was theoretically read and analysed within a cultural text advancing the hypothesis of studying the audience not only as a ‘textual-subject’, and therefore passive element, but also as an element primarily involved in the production of a cultural text (Dudrah 2001; Dudrah 2002).

Cultural studies then set the dilemma for a relationship between the audience and the text, however, seeing the viewers as a link in a social chain made up of multiple relationships. Hence, the text can be seen as a vehicle of expression, and in this thesis will be considered as an active process and expression of aesthetic form, while on the other hand, the audience is understood not as a mere receiver or a passive ‘cultural absorber’ of texts, but rather a the dynamic element involved in the construction of meanings and forms. In this way textual analysis tries to observe some of the aesthetic, social and cultural implications and contexts in which popular South Asian cinema operates. Part of the textual analysis of this thesis focuses on the importance of the audience, particularly the South Asian audience in unfamiliar sites and how they construct cultural texts dynamically through the emotion of melancholy, in addition to the way in which melancholy is visually captured and developed by Italian film-makers when approaching South Asian issues.

**Textual Analysis and Theories**

The analysis of popular Hindi cinema as popular texts within the Italian visual media such as sitcoms, advertisements and television serials is necessary to establish an interested and sustained academic consideration, which until now has been overlooked. Furthermore, as argued in the introduction of this chapter and demonstrated throughout a series of examples in this thesis, South Asian identities and popular culture are terms, as much as exoticism and orientalism encapsulated within a variety of fallacies. This type of approach had produced misleading notions and discourses of India in Italy, until now.
Therefore, the textual analysis of films and television programs present specific concerns regarding the representation of South Asian aesthetics as transnational phenomena, which are transformed, into a dynamic form. The dynamic aspect of such forms enables the formation of ‘fused forms’ of expression and rolls out new paths of vision through melancholic experiences. It is also worth considering and elaborating on how popular texts ‘work’ and bond aesthetically and culturally with emotions and people.

Thus, the development of discourses on melancholy as an aesthetic form is given through the analysis of the Esquilino quarter in Rome (Chapter 2) and its inhabitants (Chapter 3), as well as the analysis of four Italian directors and their representation of India on the screen (Chapter 4). This work, so structured, aims to establish the basis for the discussion of melancholy as an aesthetic and cultural form of expression within the urban and diegetic spaces in which India is the (film) subject. Consecutively, the intention is to give an account on the melancholy as an aesthetic form, which enables contemporary representations of India on the Italian screens.

The use of key theories is crucial to this research work to unearth and appreciate the dynamics between texts, spaces, emotions and social relations. This research process acts as an exploration of the social and aesthetic realms and discloses the self of the researcher. In this thesis, the interest and research discussion emerge from personal curiosity, passion, personal life and general interest.

This thesis began with the observation of two traits: the constant neglect of non-Italian and non-American cinematographic industries with their language and popular form21 in Italy, and the impossibility to watch a different international cinematography apart from the stagnant and dominant American market (80% of the films distributed in the Italian theatres). These occurrences, along with the possibility of looking at emotions from aesthetic/sociological points of view, are part of the attempt to explore South Asian popular culture intellectually and culturally within the Italian panorama. In doing so, it is possible to determine what Bhabha, in Dudrah’s work, suggests as a: “productive matrix that defines the ‘social’ and makes it available as objective of and for action” (Dudrah 2001: 65).

21 More attention has been paid to other form of Cinema like the Bengali Art Cinema particularly within the Florence Indian Film Festival and other form of Indian entertainment such as folkloric dances.
These readings introduce the South Asian popular culture, particularly popular Hindi cinema, into the Italian politics of representation and entertainment. They open the possibility for the academic environment to understand the terms of this intercultural dialogue by reflecting on notions of inter-visuality, human/aesthetic experience and social relations. The film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*\(^22\) perfectly relates to the latter notion as it captured many of the sensibilities of contemporary and traditional India and its practices, social acceptance and institutional representation of the family. *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* unlocked ideas and images of the family as depicted by the Italian cinema, where the family is the propagator of events, decisions and the creator of inclusion and exclusion of practices. Monicelli and the Turkish director Ozpetek are contemporary authors working within the Italian panorama, worth to be cited. These two directors presented the image of Italian families as cultural engines and creators of conviviality in their films: *Parenti Serpenti*\(^23\), *Le Fate Ignoranti*\(^24\) and *Saturno Contro*\(^25\).

The film as a socio-cultural piece of art was entrenched in an established institutional and social form: the family nucleus. Experiences using different types of films (within Italy) and different types of spaces of viewing, for which these films are conceived, opens up further consideration on the nature of cinematographic industries abroad. Therefore, this thesis, by inevitably travelling within a dynamic social context, looks at a type of an aesthetic, which unreservedly contaminates visual texts; these are mostly television products. The analysis of specific television programs and advertisements broadcast in Italy (in Chapter 5) provides the premise for an account on the formation of an Italo/Indian cultural and aesthetic identity.

**Questionnaire (in the Esquilino) and Extended Interview with Representatives from both Cinematographic Industries**

Textual analysis was a useful method for describing, reading and interpreting the new language of representation of popular texts belonging to the South Asian performative identity on the Italian media. The use of a questionnaire was necessary to give a voice to the South Asian ‘social actors’ populating the Esquilino in Rome, in order to obtain a comprehensive set of information regarding the historic and sociological rationale

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\(^{22}\) *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* dir. by Karan Johar, (2001)

\(^{23}\) *Parenti Serpenti* dir. by Mario Monicelli, (1992)

\(^{24}\) *Le Fate Ignoranti* (Aka dir. *Tableau de famille*) by Ferzan Ozpetek, (2001),

\(^{25}\) *Saturno Contro* dir. by Ferzan Ozpetek, (2007)
behind the diasporic settlement in the Roman quarter. Besides the questionnaire, it was essential to understand the entertainment practices among South Asians in Rome. In order to have a wide understanding of their entertainment practices, it was necessary to look at places and spaces\textsuperscript{26} of diasporic-emotional organisation.

\textit{Using the Questionnaire}

The questionnaire (Appendix) was designed and distributed among shop owners within the area of the Esquilino through the help of a cultural mediator Mr. Siddique Nure Alam (alias Bachchu), who lives and works in Rome and manages a consultation agency for South Asians, called the Dhuumcatu Association\textsuperscript{27}. The questionnaire was prepared to obtain information from respondents in an anonymous way. This was done in order to avoid researcher influence through any form of embarrassment, anxiety, misunderstandings and distrust, as occurred during the initial field work earlier mentioned, and discussed further in Chapter 2. The questionnaire, aimed to chart out the viewing habits of popular Indian cinema within the South Asian immigrant community in Esquilino: if they were able to watch it in Rome, how, with whom and where. This investigation was important in order to understand the particular modality of viewing popular Hindi cinema or other forms of popular South Asian cinema in Rome. The final part of the questionnaire asked the recipients to expand on their general impression about the hosting land, the possibility of sharing culture and/or the possibility of identifying with the culture of their ‘new home’, in order to trace a general understanding of the emotions behind their permanence in Rome.

As already stated, the survey was presented in four languages. A few informal unrecorded interviews were held with Italians living and working in the Esquilino. Some of the answers provided by the Italian respondents highlighted a superficial reminiscence of Bollywood cinema in Rome. The following comments were translated from Italian:

\textsuperscript{26} The term ‘place’ is the physical aspect of a space, implying architectonical and geographical organizations. The term ‘space’ is employed in order to explain the cultural and social human organization and the personal and collective experiences within a given location. The ‘space’ is therefore the area in which material and human objects are located, the area where all events occur and where material and human interact.

\textsuperscript{27} http://www.dhuumcatu.net/ - Official website describing the activities of the Dhuumcatu Association.
1- I have never watched Bollywood films, but sometimes I have the chance to listen to their songs from the neighbouring shops. They make me smile and move my feet (Elio, 58, retired).

2- Yes I do watch these films; I buy them in some Indian shops and I watch them at home by myself. But here in the cinemas they are not there. But why don’t they show some of them on the television instead of those endless soap operas? At least we may see what happens on the other side of the world (Lilla, 48, B&B owner).

The questionnaire proved to be an important aide to understand how melancholy is formed, and how this emotion culturally and socially determines a meaning and pattern of representation of South Asians in Rome. The survey provided the basis for reading this phenomenon, which raised the following questions: How is Popular Hindi Cinema experienced? How does melancholically produce meaning among the different social actors of the Esquilino?

**Using Extended Interviews**

Extended interviews were used to understand specific aspects and to hear those voices, which were uncovered in the study of South Asian communities outside their homeland. Qualitative interviews are important to explore aspects of the South Asian popular culture in Italy, which in itself is diverse and geographically widespread. Furthermore, qualitative methods imply the necessity of critical contemplation on the part of the researcher in order to maintain a distanced approach from the answers collected in the data. The extended interviews helped to reveal the nature of identities, and the necessity of negotiation to be internationally recognised and perhaps transported within another cultural and entertainment sphere as revealed by Kabir Bedi during an interview held in Rome in November 2007.

The extensive interviews, especially with protagonists of both Italian and Indian cinematographic industries are not simply a narration or speculation on the possibilities of Indo-Italian co-working arrangements; rather, they involved elements of autobiographical memory, self-narration, discourses on co-productions and identity-formations. These aspects are particularly evident in the interview with Kabir Bedi, well

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28 These testimonies were collected informally with the owners of a B&B when I stayed overnight in Rome, during one of my fieldtrips.
known in Italy as being the protagonist of the television series *Sandokan la Tigre della Malesia* (1976).

The relationship between South Asian popular texts and the possibility of including these within the Italian entertainment scene, if deprived as Riccardo Tozzi\(^\text{29}\) mentioned “of some plastic-narrative elements that in Italy would not be understood” (translated from Italian) could open the possibility for Bollywood production to also be seen by autochthons. However, the Bollywood industry in Italy lives a tremendous dichotomy: on the one hand, ‘pure’ Bollywood films are not on the circuits of distribution and are therefore rarities ‘watchable’ only a handful of art-house cinemas or festivals, on the other hand Bollywood could lose its ‘popular’ nature, to become an ‘art-house film’. Yet, films made in Bombay area a blank canvas that open up the possibility of creating interchangeable narrative elements and therefore Italo-Indian identities. The research aim is to unfold the latter concept, as this is not explained in simple terms due to the method itself.

**Journeys as a part of methodology**

As mentioned earlier on this chapter, this research is composed of multiple journeys and therefore characterised by three specific moments, which are: the departure, the transit and the arrival. The types of journeys that this thesis traced are methodological, physical and intellectual. This introductory chapter represents the departure of my journey in which the main areas of research are presented and key concepts are set. Notions such as emotion, melancholy and exotic melancholy are the keywords of this journey(s). The journey was not only part of the methodology, which physically took me to Rome, but also a component of my research, which studied the migration of South Asians in Rome.

The transit on the different aspects of this journey, aimed to provide clarity on the cultural and aesthetic relationship between Italy and India. In order to understand and uncover the emotionality articulated in the journey of the South Asian diaspora in the Esquilino quarter, this thesis made use of methods from the social enquiry. Particularly useful were the questionnaires (which uncovered the existence of a generalised emotion within the community: melancholy) and interviews/participant observation with 3 selected families. The information obtained from the 3 observed families were

\(^{29}\) Information collected in a personal Interview with the Tozzi, Producer of Cattleya in May 2008. Cattleya is a Production Company located in Rome.
invaluable. By spending a day with each of them, it was possible to observe the emotional specificities of their journeys.

What are these journeys? My journey as a researcher, the journey of immigrants in Rome, the journey of Italian directors to India, the journey of Bollywood cinema (and its aesthetic) to Europe and, Chapter 6 suggests the end of a journey and the beginning of another one.

The ‘arrival’ is the result of multiple exposures of an emotion with the different stages of the journey. The social and cultural exposure of melancholy puts this emotion on display creating fascination, loss and memories. These emotional ‘statements’ are analysed through a variety of methodologies in order to understand how they take place.

The selection of various methods of research resulted in an effective and satisfactory way to investigate the cultural relation between Italy and India.

**Combination of Methods**

As outlined earlier, this thesis dips into a range of methods, each with different characteristics and implications during the design, execution and writing-up of the research results. The methodological strength of the research is driven by contemporary theoretical routes of inquiry, which originate from disciplines such as Media and Film Studies, Philosophy of Art and Cultural Studies, which are applied throughout this thesis.

The theories are discussed at the beginning of each chapter, as these help to arrange conceptual arguments and give a framework to the analysis of the chosen popular cultural texts and their relation to the phenomenon of cultural identity formation and representation. Besides offering a textual and aesthetic reading of the cultural texts – such as films and television shows – an account of how each text and identity is produced and sustained is given. In addition, how their related practices of production, distribution and consumption actualise and elaborate the Italo/South Asian identities and emotions on the screen spaces will be discussed, particularly in Chapter 6.

Throughout this thesis, a theoretical framework provides a starting point for a critical consideration of the aesthetic, social and cultural world under observation. It also provides a site for research questions to arise and, in part a place for the organisation of
the data to be organised. The data gathered also stimulates the reflection on the theories used and considers their suitability for the investigation.

Thus by drawing on the data gathered with the questionnaire and extended interviews an account from the respondents on the use and signification of certain television products was obtained. The latter helped to elaborate on a new social prospective (from an audience point of view) offering an aesthetic approach that focussed on the visual/emotional formation of an Italo/South Asian Identity on the screen.

**Strengths and/or Limits of a Multiple – Interdisciplinary – Research**

Using a wide range of methodologies to address the issues raised by this thesis could be its strength as well as its limitation; qualitative research encapsulates a multitude of methods and approaches (Byrne 2002). Due to the imprecise nature of a qualitative method, a research strategy needs to be carefully evaluated and the methodologies cautiously selected to cover the field of research so that partial or perhaps inaccurate results are not obtained. This thesis intends to use different methods to offer an account of diasporic cultures, devoid of the supremacy of one method over another. Multiple and interdisciplinary methods and approaches should be used in an attempt to render the cultural and social multiplicities visible. In addition, the conclusions have been solely based on the socio-cultural analysis of the South Asians living in the Esquilino.

**Aesthetic and Cultural Studies: An Account**

The discipline of cultural studies in Britain largely deals with popular culture, a form of culture that expresses the terms of entertainment rather than art form, ordinariness rather than eliteness and standardisation rather than individuality. Much interest in cultural studies has been conveyed and flagged by sociological and anthropological concerns rather than by aesthetic interest (Oswell 2006). However, the theoretical context that this thesis reveals is the possibility of creating a bond between aesthetic and cultural studies for a wider understanding of popular cultural bodies, representations and meanings on and off the screen. An earlier account on cultural studies and its nature, which is important to refer to, is supplied by Raymond Williams as follows:

> Popular was not identified by the people but by others, and it still carries two older senses: inferior kinds of work (cf. popular literature, popular
press as distinguished from quality press) and work deliberately setting out to win favour (popular journalism as distinguished from democratic journalism or popular entertainment); as well as the more modern sense of well linked by many people, with which, of course, in many cases, the earlier senses overlap. The recent sense of popular culture as the culture actually made by people for themselves is different from all these; it is often displaced to the past as folk culture but it is also an important modern emphasis (Williams 1988: 236).

Williams elaborates on different ways of thinking about popular culture. A wider notion of popular culture is enclosed within the structuralist relationship between power – of the ruling class – and people; a different notion of popular culture embraces a populist concept, which guides us towards the idea of ideological persuasion and popular culture as produced by the craftwork of the people. In diverse ways these readings of ‘the popular’ raises questions, which are not engendered solely with the culture ‘for’ and ‘of’ the people but rather about the mimesis of that culture and its meanings. Gellner refers to culture in the previously mentioned terms as follows:

Culture is now the necessary shared medium, the life-blood or perhaps the minimal shared atmosphere, within which alone the members of the society can breathe, survive and produce. For a given society, it must be one in which they can all breathe and speak and produce; so it must be the same culture. Moreover, it must now be a great or high culture, and it can no longer be diversified, locality-tied, illiterate little culture or tradition (Gellner 1983: 111).

In Gellner’s words it is possible to observe how popular cultures are not necessarily antithetical to high cultures. The existence of high culture could be essential to the subsistence of popular culture, with the two diversifications directly in dialogue as mutually dependent. This approach is partially in contrast with Williams’ theorisations. For Williams the problem of culture is presented more in terms of the relationship between high and popular culture as well as aesthetic and anthropological notions of culture (Williams 1988). On the one hand, culture is shaped by relations that generate a distinction between ‘of elite’ and ‘of the people’, while on the other hand, culture is understood as an artistic form, detached from social, ethnographic and anthropological issues unless influenced by the heritage of romantic aesthetics (Bérubé 2005). This
thesis intends to probe and demonstrate the unnecessary separation between the two disciplines, and capitalise on the creative association of aesthetics and cultural studies which define the milieu and activities of the people and their expressions.

Interestingly, the American academic has world critically stressed the interaction between aesthetic and cultural studies. Two major positions have emerged while considering the two disciplines, and are the following:

a) Cultural studies clearly establish a barrier with art and aesthetic (Felski 2005)

b) The anti-aesthetic approach is the new model (Felski 2005)

Here, the work between cultural studies and aesthetics focuses on the content and context while simultaneously giving attention to the form. Against misconception, this thesis intends to look at cultural studies not as a discipline competes with aesthetics, but rather as one that “expand(s) the definition of what counted as art by taking popular culture seriously” (Felski 2005: 35).

The influences existing between cultural studies and aesthetic are clearly explained by Hebdige’s essay titled *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*. As reported by Bérubé, Hebdige gives an example to clarify the issue through a direct association between the aesthetic of the European avant-garde and the British subcultural style of the 1970s (Bérubé 2005). Hebdige described the experimentalism of punk the culture. The author states that combined mass-produced products such as dog collars, safety pins and garbage bags were inspirational for avant-garde European artists as the use of these materials evoked and imitated the consumer culture. Clearly, the line between the notion of intellectual and popular created a sophisticated and ironic contextualisation of art form and expression.

In Hebdige’s view, ‘the text’ and ‘form’ work together in aesthetic and cultural terms accentuating the relevance of “not only what a text means, but also how it means” (Felski 2005: 38). The interest in knowing how a text produces meaning lies at the core of cultural studies, and many popular forms of entertainment such as sitcoms, rap music, pop music and Bollywood films rely on sophisticated manipulation, of stylistic conventions.

Returning to Williams’ theoretical approach, cultural studies were not only defined just by the object of the analysis but also by the framework and methods thereby indicating the importance of “discovering the nature of a practice and its conditions” (Williams
This implied that cultural studies recognised ‘meaning’ as being dynamic and interactive, itinerant, open to changes and not interested primarily in content (Bérubé 2005; Felski 2005). Furthermore, Bennett’s description of cultural studies as an interdisciplinary field that stimulates ‘intellectual traffic’ between various fields in the humanities and social sciences is also useful for this study (Bennett 1998; Bérubé 2005).

This thesis is stimulated by the ‘intellectual traffic’ existing between these two disciplines; furthermore the intent is to use both disciplines to investigate the Indian phenomenon in Italy, looking at ‘how’ and ‘what’ meanings are produced by pondering the results of the convergence of reading contents and emotional form(s).

**Melancholy as Aesthetic Emotion**

As the title of this thesis suggests, the intention is to explore melancholy as the emotion beneath representational patterns of the South Asian culture in Italy, with specific attention to India.

Emotions have often been described as a multi-component (Scherer and Wallbott 1994) or as a multifaceted phenomenon (Frijda 1986). The experience of an emotion involves not only individuals at a passive level, rather, it involves them actively as well; the emotion activates the processing of an event and its implication by recycling or rehearsing the event (Horowitz 1979). This rehearsal is believed to enable individuals to gradually tolerate more distressing aspects of an event, as written by Horowitz (1979); if not, people may find acceptable meanings in an event (Tait and Silver 1989) and rebuild their belief system, which may have been affected by the emotional event (Frijda 1993).

On the one hand the emotional processing allows the individual to integrate and assimilate emotional experiences into existing beliefs, while on the other hand, where necessary, it helps the individual to recover from certain events or elaborate on them. The complexity of emotions and therefore the complexity of theorising on the definition of emotions at a cognitive and sociological level act as a stimulus for a philosophical and aesthetic reflection on the aesthetic formation of emotions, which is the core of this work.

To enable a discussion on the different ways in which melancholy has pervaded my reading of the South Asian culture in Italy, it is necessary to present the theoretical framework which will support this thesis and define how melancholy could acts as an
emotional pattern of representation, construction and self representation – on a sociological and cinematic level. Melancholy is a complex emotion (Frijda 1986) characterised by a negative/positive dichotomy, which embodies its nature; Kristeva defined it as “amorous passion’s sombre lining” (Kristeva 1987: 5).

This thesis will explore melancholy as a collective shared emotion within the Roman quarter, drawing on Freud’s theories of mourning and melancholy. Freud explained melancholia as an emotion generated by a loss and mentioned that this complex emotion is engendered with a kind of negative and positive or sweet and bitter remembrances of something, someone or freedom that has been lost (Freud 1998). Similarly, Brah suggests that the ‘loss’ engendered by ‘dispersion’ and ‘displacement’ is recovered through: a) memories of what has been left behind; and b) reorientation in order to form new social networks (Brah 2002).

Melancholy often plays a role in our encounters with individuals, locations and art, being present in a variety of our aesthetic responses to the natural environment. This complex emotion generates an aesthetic in everyday conditions caused by the memories of what is lost; the formation of this aesthetic as a social phenomenon is discussed in details in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Furthermore, the complexity and the multilayered perception of this emotion distinguish it from being associated with sadness or depression, but stimulate fascination. This last aspect is discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 in which the elaboration and re-elaboration of India on the screens, occurs through melancholic filters, thereby producing fascination among Italian spectators.

In this regard, this thesis aims to answer questions such as: What are the terms that establish melancholy as the emotion underlying social manifestations within the Esquilino quarter in Rome, in which the South Asian communities settled? How does it become a shared emotion, which can work on a filmic level to represent India in Italy? How does the complexity of this emotion unfold, creating nuances of the same emotion?

When discussing regarding the representation of emotions, philosophers tend to consider mainly two contexts in which it is possible to talk about emotion and representation: music and fiction. Music is considered the art, which expresses and ‘represents’ emotions par excellence (Reese 1977). Moreover, in the Western tradition it is common to describe certain kinds of music with expressions, which recall an emotional approach and perhaps human conditions such as the ‘allegro’. Music is in fact a cultural resource
for the social construction of emotions (DeNora 2001) and, it pervades everyday life (Juslin and Sloboda 2001: 31). With regards to the reaction of a spectator to an event which renders manifest the emotional response to a fictional audio-visual product Brady and Haapala ask “Why, for example, are we moved by the fate of a fictional heroine when we know that the object of the emotion is not a real one, but only fictional?” (Brady and Haapala 2003).

The emotions considered in these contexts are, typically, straightforward. For instance, enjoyment and delight or sorrow and unhappiness, especially with respect to a fictional video, exemplify the set of emotions experienced while watching a fictional product. Hence fear, ecstasy and physical excitement are direct extreme exemplifications of emotions. In addition, as Laura Marks explains, emotions and physical reactions to audio-visual stimuli are strongly correlated to our senses and organised as a multisensory experience: “the experience of viewing a film is a multisensory experience, not because of the actual odours in the theatre, but because the sense perceptions work in concert” (Marks 2000: 212). The interaction of all senses, which are undeniably linked to the memory of a given object, work simultaneously, in order to produce a kinaesthetically-organised visual experience which is the result of a biological and cultural interaction of our senses dialoguing with a text or with the subject screened on a white canvas (Marks 2000). Marks’ interpretation of the organisation of senses varies culturally – as well as individually – and “often the sensorium is the only place where cultural memories are preserved” (Marks 2000: 195).

The analysis offered by Marks on senses does not exclude a broader reading of emotions; these are dynamic devices, which activate and organise the sensorium by attracting a number of philosophical issues that arise from the relation between art, images, memories and emotional elaboration, highlighting the complexity of these relations and their dilemmas. Melancholy is a complex phenomenon and emotion which plays a key role in numerous art works under two different perspectives: a) melancholy acts within the space of production; and b) melancholy affects perception.

Looking back into the history of philosophy and literature, there have been several studies regarding melancholy as an emotion that has been categorised as a ‘clinical’ matter (Dell and Jordan 1972; Burton 1978; Radden 2000). Radden describes a melancholic attitude as one normally associated with a mental illness or an unusually dominant temperament (Radden 2000) which was extensively theorised by Aristotle.
The definition of melancholy as a strictly clinical definition was expanded by Robert Burton with the seminal *Anatomy of Melancholy* in 1621, in which melancholy was treated not only as a purely medical issue but rather offered a non-clinical approach. The three sections of the book were divided thematically: a) the first section of the book is dedicated to the causes and symptoms of everyday melancholia; b) the second section suggests possibilities to cure melancholy; and c) the third section explores more complex and esoteric melancholies, including the melancholy linked to love and religion. From the beginning, Burton, in Dell and Jordan’s work, established the conditions, which lead to the transformation of the term melancholy. Burton considered Greek thinkers such as Hippocrates and Galen who ascertained melancholia as a material as well as an immaterial emotion. He commented: “…choler adust becomes troublesome melancholy, as vinegar out of purest wine putrefied or by exhalation of purer spirits, is so made, and becomes sour and sharp” (Dell and Jordan 1972: 87).

As mentioned earlier, Burton moved the subject of melancholy beyond its constrained medical-scientific explanation; the English scholar’s account of melancholy flows into a less pragmatic and scientific explanation of the process with the following description:

> The first proceeds from the brain and is called *head melancholy*; the second sympathetically proceeds from the *whole body*, when the whole temperature is melancholy…and *love melancholy*. In this hard matter, I confess, to distinguish these three species one from the other, to express their several causes, symptoms, cures, being that they are often confused among themselves, having such affinity… (Burton 1978: 1123).

Burton, undeniably presents the subject of melancholy as complex, intrinsic and generated by the interconnection of bodily and mental characteristics, in which biological feelings intermingle with intellectual sensations.

Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin present further authoritative examples on the discussion of melancholy. Adorno describes melancholy as an assertion of aesthetic quality, which challenged the idea of melancholy as a purely ‘medical’ condition; while Benjamin suggested a more detailed account of melancholy in his work on the tragic German drama *Trauerspiel*. Benjamin’s discussion on melancholy associated this complex emotion with sadness and depression, linking melancholy with a clinical
tradition (Benjamin 1998). In lieu of looking at melancholy in aesthetic terms, Adorno failed to discuss and unravel a possible social and cultural contextualisation of melancholy as emotional text; this lack of contextualisation limited its definition to an equation in which melancholy is associated solely with sorrow and depression. This demolished the intellectual complexity of this emotion as a dynamic facet of cultural and artistic production and perception (Adorno and Tiedeman 1998). While Adorno hinted the possibility of widening the discourse on melancholy in aesthetic terms, neither Adorno nor Benjamin discussed melancholy as a subject of aesthetic and cultural investigation.

The fostering of melancholy as dual and complex distinguishes it from immediate and direct emotions such as sadness, depression, sorrow and despair. The twofold nature of melancholy could be explained as the alternating of positive and negative facets, which produce “contrasts and rhythms of pleasure” (Brady and Haapala 2003: online). These aspects, combined with reflection create a refined feeling of this emotion. Like every emotion, melancholy arises from a particular context or a variety of contexts (Freud 1998). Melancholy and its facets come into play around an aesthetic situation, which engenders a new aesthetic dimension (Braudy and Cohen 1999).

To discuss the aesthetic nature of melancholy it is necessary to define its objects and a contextualisation of the place in which it arises; to begin, with the distinctive aspects of this emotion must be analysed. This premise is crucial for the methodological frame of this thesis. By dividing the work into two major areas – social and cinematic – the scope is to define the places in which melancholy is manifested in order to elaborate *prima facie* an aesthetic emotion, which in its complexity illustrates how this emotion operates with moving images.

As argued, melancholy has been repeatedly connected with depression, nostalgia and sadness; the terms are often used synonymously, fostering a kind of camouflage of the nature of melancholy. Therefore, it is necessary to move beyond the rather narrow meanings raised by the clinical tradition and expand the notion of melancholy as a composite and refined emotion with qualities of its own, qualities which have shaped the perception of South Asians in Italy.
Modern approaches to the notion of melancholy as being complex and multilayered have been put forward by the work of Freud, who described this emotion along with unhappiness, dejection and apathy (Freud 1998). More recently Kristeva wrote:

*Melancholia* here designates the clinical symptomatology of inhibition and asymbolia that an individual displays sporadically or chronically, often in alternation with the so called manic of exultation. These two phenomena (dejection-exultation), in less marked forms and in more frequent alternation constitute the *depressive* temperament of the neurotic (Kristeva 1989: 6).

Albeit the definition of melancholia in Kristeva’s theory overlaps with depression and hence with the clinical tradition (Kristeva 1989: 6-10), the writer offers a view of the two emotions, relying firmly on Freud’s view.

It is useful to maintain a distinction between melancholy and depression as well as a distinction between the clinical definition of melancholy and the broader emotion-based use of the term. While depression drives towards a sense of inability to complete tasks and therefore build up the feeling of being unmotivated, melancholy, is a manageable state which “involves the pleasure of reflection and contemplation of things we love and long for, so that the hope of having them adds a touch of sweetness that makes melancholy bearable” (Brady and Haapala 2003). The reflective and contemplative facets of melancholy confer on this emotion a productive status as it provides an opportunity for expression linked to the loss of something or someone and longing for it. This aspect was demonstrated through the interviews with South Asians in Rome and with the director Gabriele Salvatores.

The reflective nature of melancholy is based on the idea that its objects are mainly experienced through memories, thoughts or imaginings related to ‘the absent’ (Frijda 1986; Frijda 1993; Freud 1998). Reflection, as explained by Burton, implies solitude that is the characteristic milieu for melancholic expression (Burton 1978). Solitude as applied to marginalisation facilitates the imaginative reflection involved in melancholy. The role of imagination in melancholy is two-fold: a) firstly, imagination binds past experiences with the present through the elaboration of memories, and therefore it evokes melancholy; and b) secondly, imagination is employed to embellish or fantasize about the memories of melancholy, imagining ones return to some place, perhaps to
one’s origins (Brah 2002). Thus imagination, drawing significantly from memory, provides the anchor to which melancholy is solidly attached. The result is the possibility of prolonging the emotion thus creating new scenarios as sources of pleasure (Burton 1978; Brady and Haapala 2003) and remembrance. Furthermore, drawing from diverse times and spaces an interlacing narration is created (Brady and Haapala 2003).

Both memory and imagination points to the central role of reflection, which characterises and distinguishes melancholy as a type of emotion. The multiple shades of reactions in melancholic evocation typify this emotion as a complex one; consequently, it is characterised as an emotion, which embodies both pleasure and displeasure as well as positive and negative connotations. This duality – positive and negative – confers a second level of complexity to melancholy. It is this spectrum of diversified and disparate yet connected layers that portray its engagement with aesthetic and cultural experiences; this is discusses through the examples of South Asian immigrants in Rome, in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Here, melancholy is understood and elaborated in specific social and cinematic contexts. To shape its ‘visual’ nature, Susan Langer's terms of 'form' and particularly 'expressive form' as are used as follows: “…an apparition given to our perception. It might be something, which takes material shape like building a statue or a transient. [It is] a passage purely imaginary of apparent events that constitute a … work of art” (Langer 1963: 3).

The two distinct sections of this thesis, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, speculate on social and filmic texts, through a series of journeys that delve into melancholic conditions, which are: (a) the one of South Asian immigrants in Rome, and (b) the melancholic remembrance that have characterised the portrayal of India on Italian screens.

Furthermore, not only does this thesis aim to investigate the penetration and impact of South Asian migration to Rome, but also prompts the debate of aesthetic considerations as liberated from beauty and sublime. The attention is directed towards the study of an aesthetic as an ally to emotion. The formation of an aesthetic based on melancholy, is the foundation, which ties the chapters of this thesis together, and the investigation begins with the social analysis.
2. Chapter 2 - The Roman Urban-Stage: The Esquilino quarter

Beholding Rome and all her noble works,  
Were wonder-struck, what time the Lateran  
Above all mortal things, was eminent;

Dante Alighieri, Paradise, 36, XXXI
Henry W. Longfellow’s translation of Dante’s Divine Comedy (Institute for Learning Technologies 1997)

The above quote is taken from verse 36th in the 31st canto of the Paradiso section of Dante Alighieri’s The Divine Comedy. During his imaginative journey into the netherworld, the ‘divine writer’ reaches his final destination: Paradiso. Saint Bernard accompanies Dante during the last part of his journey towards the celestial path to Heaven, moving closer and closer to God. On his way, the author describes the environment around him. The splendour and beauty of the place evoke the images of the Lateran in Rome, just above the Esquilinus hill, as a stupendous site of Rome.

The city of Rome has been an area of research and a space for exploration and discussion from several points of view: sociological, political and cultural. An interesting approach to the city with regards to the cultural identities and formation of spaces is the concept of a ‘third eye’ on the world through the camera lens. Jean Rouch offers a fascinating perspective regarding the idea of the camera acting within a boundless space among the people. During an interview (Toffetti 1995) the French author mentioned how the camera, is employed first for personal use and later “to depict the rest: the world, the people and their emotions” (Toffetti 1995: 87).

The social and cultural reading for this thesis is conducted in Rome and particular attention will be given to one of the quarters of the city, Rione Esquilino. The (social) space of the Esquilino will be analysed as suggested by Henri Lefebvre:

…not (as) a thing among other things; nor a product among other products: rather, [sublimating] things produced and [encompassing] their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder (Lefebvre 1991: 73).
The Esquilino quarter will be analysed using historical and sociological points of view combined with a cultural-geographical approach to investigate through qualitative (questionnaire and interviews) and quantitative (census and statistics) methodologies the aesthetic of emotions, which dictate the organisation of the urban space.

By engaging the disciplines of history, sociology and specifically cultural geography, it is possible to ‘read’ the way in which the city inspired debates around modernity and, more recently, postmodernity, addressing the urbis as ‘plural’ in its formation and endowing its space as a ‘plural/cultural’ entity, besides disclosing the social and plausibly cultural inequalities among the inhabitants. Furthermore, studies about the cities have revealed connections between local and global geographies, outlining links among different cultures:

In order to understand the cities, we argue that it is necessary to rethink their geography...it also involves using a geographical imagination to understand how the cities are produced, on the one hand, in a context of social relations that stretch beyond the city, and on the other, by the intersection of social relation with the city (Dudrah 2001: online).

The Esquilino is an emblematic area of Rome; it is the site where dichotomies such as acceptance and rejection, harmony and disharmony share a common cultural space. This quarter is a place of different ethnic groups and settlements that engender discussion about integration, civil cohabitation and reciprocal respect. However, despite the several definitions and debates around the Esquilino, the area has been benchmarked as the multicultural quarter par excellence (Romamultiethnica 2006). Despite the eminent reference of this area of Rome by Dante Alighieri during his ‘divine’ journey, the Esquilino is not a classical tourist attraction. The quarter is rich in monuments and tributes to the numerous historical epochs of the urbis, which accent the historical and sociological complexity of this area.
**Historical Background**

The name Esquilino derives from the Latin words *Esquiliae/Esquiliārum* within the *Subūra* valley\(^{31}\) which means the outskirts of the city. The Esquilino was called *Esquiliae* to designate one of the four Serviane regions of the ancient *Urbis* of Rome, which was divided into four major areas: Palatina, Collina, Suburrana and *Esquiliae* (Figure 2-1). The Esquilino, also called *Aesquiliae, Exquiliae* and *Ex-quilinvs* is the name of the largest of the seven hills of Rome and means ‘the one outside’ the wall of Rome. The residents of the quarter were called *exquilini* meaning the foreigners (Baracconi 1971).

The Esquilino is an area located between the Lateran, the church of S. Maria Maggiore and Porta Maggiore (Figure 2-2). This was a vast flat area with three major hills: the *Fagutal* to the West, the *Cispius* to the North and the *Oppius* to the South. Since early Roman times (Serviane and Augustea ages), the Esquilino has been a densely inhabited quarter, with modest terraced houses, with luxurious buildings constructed on the slopes of the *Carinae* of the *Cispius* hill (Cerchiai 1989).

Aqueducts and major road networks criss-crossed the Esquilino, connecting different regions of the Roman Empire; several pottery shops surrounded this area of the city. This quarter experienced a major drainage scheme and the restoration started in the *Mecenate* era and was completed during the *Augustea* era. The renovation comprised the

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\(^{30}\) The original logo of the Esquilino quarter depicts a green tree and three hills on a silver background.


http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=131a.e9456
construction of several villas belonging to patrician families and gardens were included into the imperial possessions. Among the innumerable monuments still present in the Esquilino, religious and public buildings are hard to find. The Temple of Isis and Serapis, built probably in the I century B.C. and the Temple of Minerva Medica (Figure 2-3&Figure 2-4) built around the III century B.C., are two examples of monuments that are still preserved in the area. The the Minerva Medica, currently situated in Via Giolitti, contains the statue of Athena with helmet with a serpent on her feet (Figure 2-4), discovered during a major excavation around the area. The monument was named after the statue, which presumably belonged to the Horti Liciniali.

During the age of Constantine, the edification of the Papal dwelling in Laterano, owing to conspicuous donations by the emperor, benchmarked the transformation of the Esquilino from a site of major păgănus monuments to a place of săcras venerated Christian memorials. From the beginning of the IV century B.C., the Church built the basilicas of Sts. Vito and Modesto, St. Eusebio, St. Bibiana and the lost churches of St. Matteo and St. Andrea Cata Barbara (Baracconi 1971).

The numerous attacks by the Barbarians and the Gauls on Rome reduced the habitability of the Esquilino, forcing inhabitants to move towards the valley called Campo Marzio. While the Esquilino experienced the loss of residences, which characterised the first phase of the Exquilinus’ decline, the Popes elected after the barbaric attacks restored and redecorated the Bishop’s residence and the religious monuments in the area.
Figure 2-3: Temple of Minerva Medica.
The ruins are set between Via Giolitti and the rail track leading to Termini train station.

Figure 2-4: Statue of Athena/Minerva.
Found in the Temple of Minerva Medica after the excavations in 1887, currently conserved by the Vatican Museums.

Following the Avignon exile of the Popes, the Esquilino experienced the highest level of urban decadence (second phase) and only a few churches were restored. During the early Renaissance, the Esquilinus was restored and new streets such as Via Gregoriana (now called Via Merulana) were added to the existing plan.

Between 1585 and 1590, Pope Sisto V started the conversion of many areas of Rome, which had been abandoned and left in appalling conditions by the previous Pope Gregorius XIII. Pope Sisto V commissioned the restoration and completion of monuments such as the dome of St. Peter in the Vatican, the Sisto’s loggia within the church of St. Giovanni in Laterano (Esquilino) and a chapel within the church of St. Maria Maggiore (Esquilino). Under Sisto V’s papacy, the creation of major Vie (streets) connecting different Rioni (such as Rione Monti and Rione Esquilino) began; the new urbanistic map was marked by grandiose streets which led to the Vatican. Due to Pope Sisto V’s architectonic and urban reconstruction of Rome, the first urbanistic plan of modern Rome was developed. The magnificence and pomp emphasise the modernisation of Rome, highlighting the Papal authority in the city. In addition, several major aristocratic Horti (villas) were built within the Esquilino area (Cerchiai 1989).
The Villa is no longer present but the door, named Porta Alchemica, is still visible in the public Garden of Piazza Vittorio.

Important villas built and partially conserved in the heart of the Esquilino include: *Horti* Palombari (Figure 2-6) and *Horti* di piazza Vittorio (Figure 2-5) and many others. Around 1800, the municipality of Rome renovated different quarters of the *urbis*. In the 1850s, the borders of the Esquilino were fixed with the Termini train station crossing the area and new terraced, bourgeois blocks were built, adorned by luxurious gardens. The last important public intervention in the Rione Esquilino was the construction of the underground; Piazza Vittorio is the main stop in the Esquilino area. This lengthy history of the Esquilino explains the social history and the dynamics that have characterised the area since its beginning.
The Esquilino Today

Figure 2-7: Current map of the Esquilino.

This image was taken from GoogleMaps and re-elaborated. The blue lines delineate the Esquilino’ borders.

At present, the Esquilino (Figure 2-7) presents a dichotomy in terms of social-definition. Diana Alessandrini, journalist and writer, working for the RAI (Radio Televisione Italiana) recently wrote a book entitled *Roma: Il futuro è un cantiere. Dall’Architettura industriale alla nuova architettura, cronache e immagini della città eterna*. The writer tells about the social evolution of the Esquilino and describes the area as *un unicum* in the centre of Rome, which is nevertheless underestimated and forgotten. In addition she says: “that the quarter will end up becoming the outskirts, in a deteriorated sense, of the city of Rome” (translated from Italian) (Alessandrini 2005: 25). The journalist also sees the Esquilino quarter as a ‘social laboratory’ in which different ethnic groups could meet
Eraldo Affinati, a writer and a high school teacher in Rome, said:

I was born in the Esquilino and I have seen the quarter changing before my eyes. As known, for several years the Esquilino has been populated by Asians and in particular by the Chinese, and more recently by South Asians. There are many problems in this area of Rome, but nevertheless a kind of integration among dissimilar cultures has been created (Translated from Italian) (Battini 2004: online).

Stefano Liberti offered a further interesting point of view in the preface of the book *Il mondo in casa. Storie da una piazza italiana*. He describes the heart of the Esquilino, Piazza Vittorio, as the place (and space) for encounters and exchange *par excellence*. As the square has been a site of passage for differentiated cultures for several years, it has lost the meaning of a space enclosed within defined cultural and historical borders, thereby becoming a ‘non-space’ (Samgati 2006). Among the squares perceived as ‘non-spaces’ the author indicates Piazza Vittorio as the core of the multiethnic ‘melting pot’ *viz.* Esquilino. Piazza Vittorio is the area in which audacious multicultural experiments take form but it is also the heart of urban degradation. Piazza Vittorio is a place of internal (the residents—immigrants and autochthons) and external (observers) contradictions; the square is an ‘urban stage’ in which human relationships are based on the mingling and encounters of the immigrants and local people and their reciprocal curiosity or distrust. Samgati\(^32\) states:

Whoever comes to Rome by train can enjoy, approaching Termini, a tracking shot on the past. Approaching the train station from any direction, on the final track, the rail lines converge and the coaches climb the Aurelian walls with a gaze to the Porta Maggiore. While the train decelerates, it is possible to get a glimpse of Piazza Vittorio on the left (Translated from the Italian) (Samgati 2006: V).

During the 1880s following the *unificato* of Italy, Rome became the capital city and the Esquilino became the landing place for ‘local’ immigrants. The heart of this *Rione* is Piazza Vittorio, which is a ‘buffer-zone’ between the city and the train station. It is a place of transit and relaxation break for both travellers and residents. The quarter has

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\(^{32}\) Samgati is a Sanskrit word which means ‘same path’. This is the pseudonym used by eight researchers involved in problems related to migration and intercultural cohabitation.
inexpensive hotels, B&Bs and diversified commercial interests; this is the area where various human cultures encounter one another and clash. This particular urban net represents the typical European system of re-organisation of urban space and therefore the re-organisation of all aspects of life (Samgati 2006). The Esquilino quarter is strongly reminiscent of areas such as Gare du Nord in Paris, the Gare Saint Charles in Marseille, the area around the main train station in Berlin and the historical area of Athens in Greece (Vyzoviti 2006).

The geographical origins of the ‘new’ residents reflect the ethnic diversity within a new social space; these groups come from Central and North African countries, the Middle and Far East and South Asia. This part of the city created connections and encounters between culturally different individuals, generating confusion, conflict and hybridism. The peculiar boisterous atmosphere of the Esquilino persists within the turbine of human mobility and social change.

In 1956, the Italian writer Carlo Emilio Gadda wrote a mystery novel entitled *Quel Pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana*. In the novel, a detective is in charge of uncovering the murder of a woman in the Esquilino area. Enquiries among the persons that populate the area are blended with a description of the human magma; the protagonist describes life in the Esquilino depicting the different levels, moods, emotions, dialects and jargon. Gadda describes the Esquilino as being populated by:

> Fat housewives who with fatigue wandered from one pavilion to the next, from celeries to dry figs: they bargain at the stalls, rubbing each other’s bay leaves between fingers thumb, and grope to open their way out, with bags bursting at the seams. Suffocating and gasping, women walk within that greasy and bursting area full of water like a pool-trap, where the water slowly crams and traps their lives within the grand fair (Translated from roman dialect) (Gadda 1973: 58).

It is still possible to find the same multicultural crowded atmosphere in the Esquilino, but the housewives depicted by Gadda who came from the outskirts of Rome, now come from China, Nigeria and especially from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. This is corroborated through the social enquiry conducted by Flavia di Luzio, who wrote: “Piazza Vittorio is characterised by a growing presence of Asian immigrants originating mainly from India and Bangladesh” (Translated from Italian) (Di Luzio 2006: 20).
The Esquilino and its multiplicity can be viewed as an open micro-cosmos (Figure 2-7), with a well-defined urban place constructed by extra-urban elements, such as different languages and odours from different cuisines including Chinese, Italian and Indian, and religious services. There is a flow of people with their own national identity and distinctiveness which links the autochthons culture to the rest of the world.

During the last twenty years the Esquilino has undergone changes in terms of identity and social relations, while conserving its typical and distinguished commercial character (Di Luzio 2006). Many of its businessmen left the quarter due to the increased competition from the Chinese stores, leaving the space to non-autochthon communities. Since 1995, the commercial activities managed by Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian and Chinese communities have increased dramatically. The urban and domestic, as well as the palpable and impalpable impact of the communities populating the quarter, strongly determined new imaginary geographies in which the spaces inhabited have turned into an emotional landscape dictated by axioms of memories and everyday gestures. While on the one hand the roads of the quarter with the amenities and delis managed by immigrants exhibit non-local merchandising, on the other hand the blending of different sounds produced by the musicality of languages and odours of different cuisines characterise the Esquilino as an urban place as well as a conceptual space of formation. Celebrations, which include gestures and tactility linked to festivities such as the Hindu Durga Puja and the Islamic Eid-al-Fitr, at the end of the Ramadan, make the Esquilino a sensuous tactile place, as well as a space for reconnections and bonds with the homeland.

*The South Asian Immigration in Rome: Data and History*

The municipality of Rome holds the following statistics on the presence of legally registered South Asians. The following table shows the South Asian citizens, present in Rome divided into the countries of origin, year of registration and gender.
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Table 2-1: Presence of Bangladeshi (Male and Female) in Rome since 1966.

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Table 2-2: Presence of Indians (Male and Female) in Rome since 1930.

Data obtained from the Municipality of Rome (Comune di Roma).

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### Table 2-3: Presence of Sri Lankan (Male and Female) in Rome since 1963.

Data obtained from the Municipality of Rome (Comune di Roma).

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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka (Ceylon)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>2,962</td>
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As evident from the information given in the tables, taken from the 2006 census, the major presence of South Asians in Rome is constituted by the Bangladeshis (10625), Sri Lankans (652), Indians (5707) and Pakistanis (1240). The immigration and settlement of South Asian communities in Rome is a rather recent phenomenon that began in the 1970s and increased in the 1980s, as shown. The immigration of the Indian communities to Italy began in the 1970s after embarking on cargo boats as a consequence of ‘progetti migratori itineranti’ (translated as: itinerant migratory projects) (Bertolani 2005: 165).

In the 1970s Italy, which had open frontiers, was a temporary stop and a gateway to other destinations such as the UK, Canada and the USA (Denti, Ferrari et al. 2005). In the 1980s, the arrival of immigrants intensified due to political tension between the central government of India and Punjab (Tatla Singh 1999; Torri 2000). The Indian migrants in Italy were mainly Sikhs from Punjab who developed a complex system of migratory network (Denti, Ferrari et al. 2005; Sai 2005) as mentioned in Chapter 1. This migration began in the northern regions of Italy, particularly in Lombardia, Veneto, Friuli and Emilia Romagna. The majority of the initial migration was concentrated in Vicenza and Cremona the two cities, which currently have the largest settlement of Punjabi people in Italy (Denti, Ferrari et al. 2005). The immigrants were initially employed as farmers in Veneto and Lombardia. Italy's grandest Gurudwara was opened in Castel Gomberto, near Vicenza, which is an evident sign of the economic, cultural and social growth of the Sikh community in Italy (Sai 2005). Many immigrants settled, in the region of Emilia Romagna, in the provinces of Parma, Modena and Reggio Emilia, and in the village called Novellara, where the second largest Gurudwara in

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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>81</td>
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</table>

Pakistan Totale/total: 39, 5, 44, 167, 18, 185, 922, 318, 1,240

Table 2.4: Presence of Pakistani (Male and Female) in Rome since 1964.
Europe is found. Furthermore, many individuals and families from Punjab reached Italy through an important channel of penetration: the circus (Bertolani 2005). By word of mouth and familial networks, a prominent community of Indians settled in the northern regions, working in the circus. This gave them work and housing (Bertolani 2005: 166).

The immigration of South Asians to Rome does not have a recorded history yet. A comprehensive social and cultural survey needs to be conducted. According to the numerous immigrants interviewed informally in the Esquilino, a substantial percentage of them had migrated to Rome through friends and family who were residing in Italy. Many South Asians moved away from the villages in the North to the capital, due to its numerous opportunities for work. A network of stores and businesses was created and oriented towards the commercialisation of merchandise from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, as was recorded in the May 2006 fieldwork report.

To provide an overview on the ongoing settlement of South Asian presence in Rome, it is worth considering the recent data collected by the Ministry of Work, Health and Social Politics in Italy. Table 2-5 was obtained following a series of personal communications with the office of social politics. The table contains information regarding the presence of the second generation of South Asians in Italy. Information such as countries of origin, age, occupation and the number of second generation of South Asians in Rome are reported below.

The Table 2-5 shows the results of the census conducted in Rome in July 2010. The results are clear: the second generation of South Asians in Rome are mostly composed of children and teenagers between 10 and 18. Only Maldives show a presence of children between the age of 3 and 8, which possibly suggests the arrival of the 3 families registered through the census, no longer than a decade ago.

An interesting aspect was highlighted by the presence of South Asian children and teenagers adopted by Roman families, a reality which does not exempt the screens. In Chapter 5 and 6, two examples respectively one from television (Curry Cultura (2004) - broadcasted by RaiSat) and the other from cinema (Lezioni di Volo a film directed by Francesca Archibugi in 2007) showcases the stories of adopted South Asian teenagers – naturalized Italian – ironically characterized by a distinct roman accent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provenience</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation/Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>Students (secondary school and college) 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>12-18</td>
<td>Students (secondary school, college) 29  Workers in family business – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Students (secondary school, college) - 9  Workers in family business – 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri-Lanka</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>Students – 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td>Nursery and primary school- 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian (adopted South Asians)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students (University level), professionals – 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2-5: Second generation South Asians in Rome.

Summarising the general trend of immigration in Italy, it is worth considering several aspects. Migration plays a central role in the analysis of economic and social trends, which characterized Italy that has evolved over the past twenty-five years from a country where emigration was prominent, to a country lucrative for immigration. For nearly a century, the migratory phenomenon in Italy has been valuable in balancing the labour market; a large group of Italian workers migrated overseas being attracted by economies of a variety of countries, which reduced the level of heavy unemployment in Italy starting from the 1930ssignificantly. Since the eighties, but especially in the nineties, there has been a reversal of the trend: a significant increase in immigration into Italy portrays it as a land for settlement rather than as a land for secondary or temporary passage to Northern European countries. Thus, Italy turns into ‘the last resort’ for migrants that foresee Italy as a possible alternative to other countries often regulated by very strict and stringent rules of migration. In recent years, the Italian public is paying increasing attention to the situation of international and illegal immigration becoming a topic of much discussion and debate. The average growth, that has characterised the flow of immigrants since the mid-80s is very close to double every 10 years according to the data reported by the Ministry of Internal affairs (Einaudi 2007).

The reasons underlying the choices for many foreigners to settle and live in Italy are essentially two:
1- Its geographical location in the Mediterranean makes Italy particularly vulnerable to the flux of illegal migrants from the North of Africa, particularly Libya, increasing the pressure of responsibilities as a peripheral country of the European Union;

2- The geography of the country with international borders composed mostly of coasts make it within easy reach, rendering an accurate supervision on the influx of the allegedly called ‘boats of hope’ more complex (Einaudi 2007: 45).

The Italian case is also unusual due to the organised crime that has sparked a concrete question on labour and new ‘slaves’ from abroad (Einaudi 2007: 47). Italy, as mentioned, is a country which shifted from emigration to immigration and within the European panorama is a case in itself, completely different from France and England; it is a state which is fragile in its political actions, less centralized, with a weak colonial past and strong references to secularism (Aruffo 2010: 13). Before this phenomenon, Italy was also experiencing internal migration from the South to the North, which transferred the surplus labour of less developed areas of the South to the industrial centres of the North. This turnaround was mostly fuelled by the cessation of Italian emigration and the repatriation of many Italians to their native country on one hand, and the presence of labour coming from North African countries on the other (Einaudi 2007). Italy, despite the difficult consistencies of the State, political patronage and the profound inefficiencies of the public services, presents an alternative solution: the informal structures. These types of social resolutions are exemplified through solidarity, school, family and local or private institutions which tend to create a real alternative to exclusion.

This background was necessary to provide a more continued social and historical context on the immigration in Italy. Like other types of migrations to Italy, the South Asian immigration is a recent and untracked phenomenon, initiated in the North of Italy at the beginning of the 1980s. As explained, the South Asian diaspora, who predominantly began settling in Italy were of Punjabi origins (post operation Blue Star). Their arrival in Italy was planned through the help of the mentioned informal structures, which were recruiting labour from abroad in order to support the local economy of northern Italy leading to legal migration. Due to this reason, the South Asian migration appears to be framed as an unconventional occurrence in relation to the general migratory trend within Italy.
However, it is difficult to locate and chart out a homogeneous and pragmatic historiography of this migration within Italy. The diversity within India forces South Asian immigrants to relocate due to different reasons such as persecution within the country of origins (an event that strongly characterised the migration of Sikhs to the North of Italy) or religious factors (this is the case of a large community of women from Kerala who migrated to Italy to become nuns) to name the most prominent (Ester Gallo 2008).

**Field Work – May 2006/ April 2007**

The initial fieldwork was conducted in the Esquilino area in May 2006. The intention was to record the presence of the South Asian diasporic settlements in the area. During the first journey, a short video was produced; that illustrated the prolific presence of diasporic amenities within the Esquilino district (Figure 2-8, Figure 2-9 and Figure 2-10). The short video was used as a tool for *a posteriori* analysis and observation of the ‘visualscape’ and ‘soundscape’ of the quarter. The video addressed issues related to the cultural (re)organisation of the South Asian diaspora in Italy, depicting their attachment to the homeland, selling distinctive products such as salwars, sarees, sacred images of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, Bhangra music, devotional and folk music and popular films produced in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Many South Asian residents living and working in the Esquilino use their limited knowledge of Italian that is often mixed with English or their native language to sell their products, which are disparately displayed in the shops. Observing the windows of these shops, glued images on the inner side of the glass – a mix of Bollywood stars blended with Hindu gods and goddesses – were visible when the shops were open. The pictures are familiar to the South Asian communities in the quarter. With the first examination of the stores a pivotal question arose: Are these shops diasporic bodies that provide complex spaces for the formation of different identities and cultural inequalities filled with melancholia for their homeland? Or are places where an emotional bond could create new identities linked with the ‘new’ home?
The shop window displayed a collage of posters of Bollywood stars, Indian dresses and sacred images which shows the cultural engagement of South Asian aesthetics and facets with the rest of the urban space. (Personal Picture)

The restaurant shows writings in Italian, English and Hindi. The place engages with the urban area aesthetically and synaesthetically in which other senses such as the olfaction and tactility are evoked and performed. (Personal Picture)

Through informal chats with the South Asian immigrants in the Esquilino, it was learned that selling products from their homeland was a way to remain emotionally involved with their origins and at the same time advertise and inform the local people about the products of their land. These practices embrace the notion of ‘homing desire’ presented by Brah (2002). The ‘homing desire’, or rather the desire for the diasporic community to have a home (often thinking about home as the place of origin), resides in the myth of a return to one’s land and origins, and they lived experience of localities, or in other words, the experience of the ‘hosting’ land. Accordingly, the community of businessmen can be ‘imagined’ (Anderson 1991) to be enveloped by a space composed of melancholic attributes, which depicts the cultural and aesthetic bond with their
homeland on the one side and the possibility of a transnational syncretism and new identity formation on the other.

**Esquilino: Sketching an Emotional Landscape**

In order to sketch the emotional landscape of Esquilino, it is important to first put the emotions felt by the immigrants into context and investigates if their melancholy produces expressions, which are translated into an urban aesthetic. In May 2006, an attempt was made to interview South Asian shop owners located along the major roads, such as Via Principe Amedeo, Via Filippo Turati and Via Principe Umberto in Esquilino. Many of the shopkeepers were reticent to answer questions regarding origin, identity, culture and the reason for selecting Italy as their new land of settlement. Important questions arose as a result of the reactions of the immigrants: how do different cultures, through languages (visual or spoken) and their interaction, influence the way we think and interact with members of different cultures; and is it possible to break down this barrier in order to have intercultural dialogue?

In response to hostility directed towards a ‘questioning stranger’ that was linked to the suffocating presence of journalists in the Esquilino following tragic episodes due to poverty and poor living conditions of the immigrants in Rome, a cultural mediator was found, to help gain the trust of the immigrants and partially overcome the barriers that prevent intercultural dialogue. A search was conducted to find an association or institution, which could function as a cultural mediator. The Dhuumcatu Association was chosen because it was actively involved with the immigrants in the quarter. The legal representative and founder, Mr. Siddique Nure Alam, reported the numerous activities of the association in and around Rome. The association is committed to the respect of politics of racial and multiethnic relationships through the social integration of many foreigners living in the Esquilino.

The purpose of the first meeting with Mr. Alam was to discuss the possibility of finding a cultural mediator for further research purposes in the Esquilino. The dialogue helped to

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33 Particularly following the event, where an apartment was destroyed by the fire and a Bengali lady named Mary Begun with her son Hasib Mohamod died after jumping out from the window to escape the fire that engulfed and charred their room.

explain the feelings of distrust and suspicion that characterized my first visit in May 2006. The cultural mediator was trusted by the community and acted as an intermediary, which enabled and facilitated the dialogue by ameliorating the level of trust. The immigrant community was suspicious of the nature of the questions and wondered who would be the recipient of this information. Their fear, as confessed later to the mediator, regarded the possibility of me being involved with a governmental institution that investigates the clandestine conditions of many immigrants in Italy. Mr. Alam expressed the reason for the suspicious behaviour of most of the South Asians approached for the interview during my first field visit, through a personal communication as follows:

...the reason for their distrust is very simple. The Esquilino quarter is an area continuously monitored and with constant raids from journalists, especially after September 11th. The words that distinguish the work of a journalist are: ‘Can I ask you a question?’ ‘Can I interview you?’ Even for those who speak little Italian, these phrases can be easily understood and creates a feeling of distrust towards the interviewer (Translated from Italian) (Siddique 2007).

The following article exemplifies the way in which the journalists and their ‘false propaganda’ damage the image of immigrant workers in Italy:

The Dhuumcatu informs everyone, that after the 7th July 2005 episode in London, the European governments have initiated raids, combing the areas of higher ethnic population for immigrants, especially for Muslims. In Rome, the ‘regime of terror’ resulted in the area around Piazza Vittorio being deserted and the raids intensified indiscriminately on houses, commercial establishments and apartment buildings belonging to foreigners. Dhuumcatu reports that the victims of these attacks and its consequences are always faced by immigrant workers who are exploited and subjected to a continuous combing process, while the real terrorists remain outside due to the ‘give and take’ politics of the government which safeguards them. Against the false propaganda and repression, which touches the immigrant workers, especially Muslims, we announce that we will organize a protest, demonstrating in Piazza Vittorio in Rome

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34 Personal communication via e-mail received from the Assistant of Bachchu, Alessandra, on the 23rd of Feb 2007
on the 16th of October 2005, in association with the Committee of Immigrants in Italy (Translated from Italian) (Meltingpot 2005).

It is interesting to note that the feeling of distrust existing in both the Italians and the South Asians, as well as the presence of ‘cultural differences’, appears to create an obstacle and an element of suspicion, delaying the affirmation of concepts such as intercultural and interethnic dialogue. The complex network of human relationships, emotions and the dearth of mutual acceptance affect the possibility for intercultural communication and cohabitation in the Esquilino area.

Investigating the Dhuumcatu association and its involvement with the needs of immigrants, a negative aspect of legally supporting the immigrants was revealed, where the feeling of distrust seemed to emerge once again. The following material demonstrates the way in which the association was targeted and accused of international terrorism. The article was titled: Grave intimidazione contro l’Associazione Dhuumcatu. Perquisizione? (Translated as: Grave intimidation against the Dhuumcatu Association. A Raid?). The news states:

On the morning of 18th September 2003 at 6.45 a.m., the police – Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza – entered the Dhuumcatu office with the charge of international terrorism. From our point of view, this attack was not against Bachchu because he can be easily found in the public offices such as the questura (office responsible for police force) and prefettura (prefecture) for administrative duties. This attack was against the immigrants registered with the association (more than 6000) and against the whole population of migrant workers (Translated from the Italian) (Association 2003).

Furthermore, a press communication received from the Dhuumcatu association through an e-mail said ‘Un anno e mezzo di governo Prodi e quali risultati? La vita dei cittadini immigrati continua a peggiorare’ (Translated as: After a year and half of Prodi’s government what results can we see? The lives of the immigrants are continuing to worsen.) (Dhuumcatu 2007).
On the association website (www.dhuumcatu.net) it is possible to view pictures (Figure 2-11) and a video of the demonstration held in Piazza Vittorio on the 28th October 2007 to protest against the expulsion of immigrants and to advocate the issuing of work permits. Piazza Vittorio is often used as the place for such ‘events’ spectacularizing the square as follows:

As immigrants, we keep protesting from this square…if the square warms us, if the square supports us then we will have the possibility of having our rights recognised…if you do not scream, if you do not shout, no one from this square will be able to hear you (Translated from Italian) (Pavese 2007).

From the above articles, the complications involved in intercultural dialogue are evident, and indicate the importance of a socio-cultural intervention to overcome obstacles and achieve mutual acceptance and cohabitation among the residents within the multiethnic area.

While visiting the Esquilino quarter and pausing at Piazza Vittorio, the sense of an ‘urban place’ was replaced by the idea of the piazza as a non-framed space surrounded by invisible cultural borders which evoke the image of it as a contemporary ‘urban stage’. In this regard, it is worth considering the work of Judith Butler on ‘performativity’ in gender studies, which was influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis phenomenology, the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss and the speech-act theory of Sartre. Butler describes performativity as the tool that “reiterates the power of
discourses” (Butler 1999: 36). The concept places emphasis on the way in which identities are brought into life through discourses. Applying the above theory to the analysis of the aesthetics of emotions in an urban context, the discourses of migrants can be perceived as ‘performative acts’. Butler theorises that ‘performative acts’ are types of authoritative speeches, which can occur and are enforced through law or norms of the society that are rehearsed and repeated on a daily basis. Similarly, it can be argued that by substituting the subject of the enquiry from gender to emotion, it is evident that an emotion is enacted over and over again, privately and publicly, through continuous everyday spectacles, supporting the idea of the Esquilino as an ‘urban stage’.

In this light it is worth trying to answer the following question: what is the emotion that theoretically produces the spectacles and an aesthetic necessary for the Esquilino to be imagined as an emotional landscape? During the field work, due to direct contact with the South Asian immigrants in the Esquilino, it could be observed that they live a dichotomy with overlapping feelings of sadness and pleasure (due to political complications and a ‘homing desire’ as mentioned above), the bittersweet attributes associated with melancholic emotion (Kristeva 1987; Freud 1998). Melancholy is an emotion, which is often stimulated and characterised by reflection through the contemplation of memory, people or places (Frijda and Mesquita 1996; Freud 1998; Butler 1999). Interestingly, contemplation and reflection are states of mind that are often regarded as typical of an aesthetic expression and a distinctive emotion in its own right (Brady and Haapala 2003; Fieser 2007). These aspects of melancholy are analysed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, in which arisotetelic contemplation and reflection are discussed through examples from selected South Asian families living in Rome, and specific Italian director who depicted India on the screen.

Through the recollection of impressions, opinions, desires and memories of the South Asian Diaspora who were interviewed during this work, it was apparent that melancholy was the emotion driving the everyday spectacles and aesthetic of the Esquilino, and consequently configuring it as an emotional landscape, which has been socially and culturally re-thought and redesigned35.

35 It is important to mention that the Esquilino was, and still is, considered by the municipal authorities as deteriorate example after a case limit called la Pantanella. The latter was a pastificio (industry making pasta) abandoned and awaiting restorations. At the end of the 1980s this building was occupied by thousands of immigrants, who were living in poor hygiene conditions, with a lack of light and water. After the place was evacuated, the presence of immigration in Piazza Vittorio increased. Out of
Immigrants’ Voice in Local Politics

Further research in Rome revealed that the South Asian immigrants tend to become involved in politics to seek institutional representation and political recognition. While walking towards the Esquilino from the train station, many political posters were observed glued onto the walls of several buildings publicizing that candidacy of a non-Italian leader for an administrative position duties within the local government (amministrazione municipale – Municipio I - circoscrizionale) of the Esquilino (Figure 2-12).

Below the name of the candidate, the message reads: “This is our opportunity; all immigrants can have a better life. Let us make our rights heard.” The picture presented in Figure 2-12 is a visual code for the reconfiguration of the Esquilino area as a contemporary urban space, which stands against the political marginalisation of the immigrant community in the quarter. It is an urban proclamation which brings hope to the immigrants and therefore to the space (Anderson and Holden 2008). These characteristics form the building blocks for cultural changes in the quarter by providing a ‘political voice’ to the émigré. They form parts of an assemblage that ameliorates and amplifies the experience of the immigrants in ‘living the localities’.

Figure 2-12: Personal picture showing political propaganda.

Poster glued on the public walls in Via Principe Amedeo and Via Carlo Alberto. The poster shows the name and image of a non-Italian candidate – Afsar Nurul, and as mentioned on the poster he is known by the inhabitants of the quarter as Hiron – to become the Leader of the Municipio I. The Municipality of Rome, due to the extension of the city, is divided into offices in charge of different quarters. The 2332 immigrants most of them were coming from the Indian subcontinent (Indian, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and North Africa. In 2001 a ‘new Pantanella’ was born near the area of the Tiburtina train Station and removed in August 2004. Di Luzio, F. (2006). Roma Piazza Vittorio: convivenza di genti e di culture. Roma, Universitá La Sapienza. Page, 44
Municipio I is the office, which includes the Esquilino. Afsar Nurul was a candidate for the foreign community of Municipio I, as mentioned on the poster. The advert poster, as per other Italian candidates, presents the candidacy in multiple languages, which are Italian, English and Bangla. The posters represent an example of political propaganda.

Through the assistance of Dr. Marina Saccone, a psychologist working for the municipality of Rome, interesting information regarding the image of the immigrants in the Italian media recorded through a report from the Censis\textsuperscript{36} was obtained. She also revealed the ‘political injustice’ inflicted on the Director of the Dhuumcatu association by Rome’s electoral department. In spite of being the first person to file the nomination papers for the position of Additional Counsellor (Consigliere Aggiunto) representing all immigrants in Rome within Campidoglio and Municipi, Rome’s electoral department issued a statement announcing that Mr. Siddique Nure Alam had withdrawn from the elections. The Dhuumcatu association suspected grave irregularities in the manner in which Rome’s electoral department conducted the December 2006 elections. They immediately declared that the withdrawal was false propaganda of the electoral department against Mr. Alam, as he had respected all the norms for a clean political campaign. To clarify the abnormalities in the election procedures, the association organised a press conference at the association’s office in Via Nino Bixio 12 (Figure 2-13) on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 2006 (Association 2006).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure2-13.jpg}
\caption{The Dhuumcatu office as shown on the map by the green arrow is located in the Esquilino and near the heart of the quarter Piazza Vittorio.}
\end{figure}

Nevertheless, this attempt by Rome’s electoral department to silence the ‘voices’ from the immigrant community was successful. The municipality of Rome has thwarted most of the attempts made by immigrants for political integration supported by the

Dhuumcatu Association. This treatment places them on par with clandestines and denies them their freedom of representation.

**Attempt Towards Socio-cultural Expression and Integration**

The Dhuumcatu Association, established on 16th October 1992\(^{37}\) (Association 2007) as a non-lucrative organisation with social aims and values, is pivotal for the cultural expression and negotiations of social integration for immigrants in the Esquilino quarter. At present, there are approximately 8000 individuals registered with the organisation, all of them are South Asians: mainly Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis. The Dhuumcatu organisation carries on activities to safeguard the civil rights of immigrants; it assists immigrants when applying for a *permesso di soggiorno* (work permit) and other categories of permanence in Italy such as family reunion, political asylum and providing legal assistance to safeguard the working rights of immigrants. Of particular significance is their commitment to development and formation of a multiethnic social conscience. Dhuumcatu promotes cultural events to support the homeland cultures, amplifying the awareness of them in the Italian territory and intensifying social research activities. Among the most important cultural events, the Dhuumcatu Association participates in the organisation of the Boishakhi Mela\(^{38}\) (Figure 2-14). This is the Bengali New Year’s Eve, which highlights the value of the original cultural patrimony and preserves the ‘emotional’ bond with the homeland.

The press communication, advertising the Boishakhi Mela 1414 (2007) read:

> In collaboration with the Region of Lazio, the local authority of social politics, the province and municipality of Rome and the associations of Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis in Italy, we will be celebrating the Boishakhi Mela, which has reached the VII edition. This is a Festival

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\(^{37}\) Unpublished report on the activities conducted by the Dhuumcatu Association, received through personal communication.

\(^{38}\) Relevant, in this respect, is the celebration of the Bengali New Year’s Eve; South Asians greet the new *Bosho* — the New Year — according to an ancient calendar. In the year 2007, this was celebrated between the 22\(^{nd}\) and 29\(^{th}\) of April. The Boishakhi Mela was contemporaneously celebrated in Los Angeles, Huston, Washington DC, Tokyo, Sydney and London as an effect of the migratory fluxes. From the year 2000, on the 21\(^{st}\) of February, the Bangladeshi community celebrates the festivity of the Bangla language and commemorates students who become martyrs while defending the Bangla language against the Pakistani Army. The celebration is called: Martyrs of the year 1952 (I martiri del ‘52). From the year 2005, the Dhuumcatu organises the celebration of the Islamic festivity *id-al-adha* and the *id-al-fitr*, with the sacrifice of mutton. These rituals celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan. During these days, the Islamic community in Rome convenes in an essential moment of collective prayer within the Gardens of Piazza Vittorio in the Esquilino, transforming the square into an open mosque.
dedicated to the Bengali culture, which promotes the interest of all South Asian communities in Rome but also for Italians, reaching a presence of 20,000 individuals. The celebration will be held in Parco Centocelle in Rome from the 22nd to the 29th of April 2007. Annually, the program includes music from internationally recognised Bengali and Indian musicians, dances, theatrical performances, photographic exhibitions, arts-crafts and typical cuisine (Translated from Italian) (Association 2007).

As previously mentioned, the Dhuumcatu Association plays an administrative role, works on the so-called Politiche della multietnicità ed integrazione sociale (translated as: Politics of multiethnicity and social integration) and collaborates with other minor organisations to form the Comitato immigrati in Italia (Committee of immigrants in Italy) (Association 2007).

The association supports the religious practices of the South Asian communities with such as funerals by arranging for the deceased to be transported back to their homeland and organises the celebration of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriages in diplomatic sites.

Since 1992, the Dhuumcatu has been involved in editing and developing a monthly periodical titled ‘Il Dhuumcatu’. The journal presents various topics such as foreign politics, local crime news and a major section dedicated entirely to specific immigration problems regarding the legal regulations related to migration in Italy. The Dhuumcatu Association often collaborates with Universities in order to organise social research and congresses featuring topics concerning racism, intercultural dialogues, new ethnic settlements and immigration to Italy. The congresses co-organised by the association to
date, which expanded the academic dialogue on immigration through testimonies from the foreign communities in Rome, include:

1. On the 10th of May 2005, in collaboration with the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’, Dhuumcatu organised the conference: Visioni di conflitto e di mutamenti urbani (translated as: Visions of conflict and urban mutations).

2. Inclusione/Esclusione, le minoranze straniere in Italia (translated as: Inclusion/Exclusion, the foreign minority in Italy) was the title of the conference organised with the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’, on 29th November 2005.

Since 2005, the association has been involved with the Department of Sociology at the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’ in a sociological study titled: Immigrati, Identità culturale e partecipazione politica: un’indagine del comune di Roma (translated as: Immigrants, Cultural Identity and politic participation: research conducted by the city of Rome).

Despite the Dhuumcatu Association’s commitment to improving the socio-cultural and political expression and integration of immigrants in Rome, progress has been slow and not without difficulties. In October/November 2008, the South Asian community was prohibited from celebrating the Durga Puja in the gardens of Piazza Vittorio by the municipality of Rome, following the celebration of Eid-al-Fitr, to reduce the festivities in the gardens. The incomprehension and insensitivity of the municipality had problematised the image of the immigrants as being devoid of a religious identity. This lack of compassion had generalised the immigrants into a single mass of individuals. Despite the ordinance, the Hindu community, with the support of the Dhuumcatu Association, celebrated the Durga Puja illegally at the gardens in Piazza Vittorio. They expressed their cultural and religious identities clandestinely. Therefore, the socio-cultural integration within the context of the quarter is often challenged and hindered by governmental institutions and politics, creating an image of the immigrants as a disobedient body in the minds of the locals. Therefore, in summary, the Esquilino becomes a physical and conceptual space in which different nuances of melancholy co-exist, and are articulated as follows:

1. By openly living their religious and cultural identities, the immigrants produce and experience a sense of pleasure through celebrations, which connect them to their homeland.
2. Simultaneously, the festivities are celebrated in a climate of disobedience and anxiety, which produces a sense of displeasure about living in that locality, which reminds them of their diasporic status.

In contrast, the general ideas, fears and prejudices of the locals towards the immigrants are presented on the local and national media, particularly through news broadcasts as will be demonstrated further.

**Depiction of Immigrants on Italian Television**

This part of the research was conducted in an attempt to understand how the media portrays the images of migrants and their socio-political condition in Italy, and if the message is derogatory in nature or not. In 2002, the Censis\(^{39}\) began a two-year project titled: *Immagine degli immigrati in Italia tra media, società civile e mondo del lavoro* (Translated as: The Image of the Immigrants in Italy Among Media, Civil Society and the Job-world). The research was a diachronic comparison of the images of immigrants in Italy depicted by the major Italian television channels: RAI, Mediaset and La7 (Censis 2002).

The information reported by the Censis revealed that the image of the immigrants on television had improved. In 2001, the immigrants appeared in the television news with a negative connotation in 95.4% of the cases. In 2002, this percentage fell to 88.3% and the television was principally capturing the immigrants through alternative forms such as documentaries, video and magazines regarding customs, societies and talk shows (Table 2-6 and Table 2-7), in order to improve and identify the new types of settlements in Italy. Most immigrants, irrespective of their gender or age, were often portrayed in a negative light, building up concerns, reservations, suspicions and distrust in the conscience of the local viewers.

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\(^{39}\) Censis was founded as a social study and research institute in 1964 in Rome, becoming a legally recognised foundation in 1973 through a Presidential Decree. It enjoys the support and participation of several large public and private institutions. During the past forty years it has carried out studies, provided consultancy, developed models and submitted proposals in the area of socio-economic processes and policies. It has gained the reputation of being one of the most prestigious and reliable national research institutes in the fields of social sciences and economics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Category</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telegiornale/News broadcast</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubrica del Tg/ News feature</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inchiesta/Investigations</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotocalco di costume e società/Video-magazine of cultures and society</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibattito/ Talk shows</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programma specifico sull’immigrazione/Specialised program on immigration</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varietà/ Variety</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programma satirico/Humoristic program</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribuna politica/Political tribune</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totale/Total                                               | 100.0| 100.0|

Table 2-6: A table depicting the representation of immigrants on Italian television.

The table indicates the categories of television programmes speaking about immigrants in percentages. (The categories are: news broadcast, news feature, investigations, video-magazine of cultures and societies, talk shows, specialised program on immigration, variety, humoristic program, political tribune.) (Censis 2002).
Table 2.7: A table representing the percentage of positive and negative associations of immigrants on the Italian television.

This table indicates the position and connotation of the immigrants on the Italian Television as a percentage. (The connotations are: victim of a negative action, actor of a negative action, total negative actions, object of positive action, actor of a positive action, total positive actions, actor of a neutral action, object of a neutral action, total neutral actions, others and total) (Censis 2002).

**Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was used during the second field trip to the Esquilino in order to investigate (a) the depiction of immigrants (South Asians in particular) on Italian television and how this depiction is perceived by the migrants; (b) the cinema viewing habits of immigrants. In this section, only the part of the questionnaire concerning the depiction of migrants on the Italian television and associated views will be discussed.

The questionnaire was translated into four languages: English, Italian, Hindi and Bengali in order to facilitate the comprehension of the thirteen questions by the ninety-seven
respondents (100 questionnaires were given out, ninety-seven were returned). The questionnaire had five questions about their origins and their outlook regarding the representation of South Asians on the Italian mainstream channels. The aim was to obtain a deeper perspective and the opinions of the diasporic communities about how their culture was being portrayed on the Italian television channels. The rest of the questionnaire dealt with the cinema viewing habits of the migrants, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The questionnaires were completed by South Asians from India (44), Pakistan (14), Bangladesh (37) and Sri Lanka (2) living in the Esquilino quarter. The respondents ranged in age from twenty-three to fifty-six, of which eighty-nine were male and eight female (the questionnaires were given out mainly in shops to their customers; it was found that the majority of shop owners and their assistants were men). Most of the respondents had moved to Italy for work reasons (81 out of 97) and the rest (16) came to Italy to be reunited with their families.

Figure 2-15 shows a graph of the part of the questionnaire relevant to this section, which substantiates the findings. As evident from the responses to the questionnaire, most of the respondents felt unrepresented or represented negatively by Italian television (Q3, Q4, and Q5). To Q3, sixty-two interviewees had watched some aspect of South Asian culture presented on the mainstream channels (mainly through commercials and sitcoms), and to Q5, while twenty-three of them agreed to some aspects of their culture being screened, forty-eight respondents differed in their opinion. This demonstrates that the majority of the respondents felt that programs and commercials on the Italian channels misinterpreted their culture.
Q2: Do you watch Italian mainstream channels?
Q3: Do you think there are, or there have been recent programs on the TV that catered for or portrayed South Asians or their culture, such as sit-coms, advertisements, documentaries etc.?
Q4: In general, do you think that the South Asians have been depicted on TV in a positive way?
Q5: Do you think the programs have represented any aspect of your culture?
Q5.c: Was the representation of aspects of your culture very similar to what is your vision of those aspects in reality?

Figure 2.15: Esquilino questionnaire data (Part 1) – Visibility of foreign cultures on Italian TV.

While Table 2-7 depicts that the images of immigrants on the Italian screen are negative and detrimental to the identity and status of being a migrant, the graph in Figure 2-15 shows how their cultures are mostly ignored or relegated to melancholic representations (discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5). From the Censis research and the questionnaire, it is evident that the depiction of South Asian life on Italian television is only marginal (mainly through commercials) and does not correspond to the community’s needs. This attitude developed by the television circuits in Italy creates two distinct perspectives: (a) the increasing subsidiary image of immigrants strongly shapes the social and cultural alertness, distrust and prejudices in the local people; (b) a sense of marginalisation, melancholic expression and estrangement is produced among foreign communities due to a lack of acknowledgement, increasing the sense of ‘missing homeland’. The proliferation of a derogatory image and unenthusiastic depiction of non-autochthon communities on Italian television increases the sense of separation rather than fostering intercultural dialogue and integration.
The Esquilino: A Summary

The multi-cultural turmoil in the Esquilino, which socially, culturally and urbanistically generated reflects a space that is not only a quarter within the city, but rather a city in itself wherein identities are reformed in what Lefebvre calls cosmos. Kofman and Lebas (1996) collected Lefebvre’s thought on the function of a cosmos, which the French sociologist defined as: “[a] luminous and ordered space, the apogee of place” (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 88). The city, in Lefebvre’s words, encompasses a symbolic dimension; monuments, avenues and squares are tools of the cosmos, the world and society. The case of Athens, presented by Vyzoviti, partially reflects the situations in Piazza Vittorio and its gardens in Rome; both are spaces in which immigrants meet, settle and “get together” (Vyzoviti 2006: 13) for socio-political events and festivities. These activities do not always engender the favour of local and governmental institutions. By getting together and creating an area predominantly dominated by South Asian amenities (leaving almost no space to Roman business), these communities reinstate their desire to solidly belong to a (new) place, without forgetting their place of origin. However, the complexity of the exchanges in the Esquilino does not restrict this area as locus of encounters; rather, Piazza Vittorio creates its own space of action and its own model of an ‘urban stage’. It is a space of encounters, clashes of lives, experiences and cultures, thereby uniquely structuring this area of Rome.

Recent studies on the urban anthropology and sociology of the Esquilino (Di Luzio 2006; Lakhous 2006; Samgati 2006) have presented this urban space as a crucible for the flow of cultural forms across borders (Appadurai 1997). The locals and non-locals have mutually created a feeling of distrust towards each other in a structurally uneven discourse. The population of the Esquilino quarter is a scattering of cultures, languages and aesthetics, which are dynamics of mobilisation, which Ferguson defines as a “syntagmatic chain of differences” (Ferguson 1999). In such a melting pot of cultures, symbolic forms of different ethnicities clash and compete with that of the locals and with each other.

The quarter and its emotionally and culturally reshaped space is the outcome of relations of exchange, which create peculiar sets of networks that exist in any particular urban place.
An aesthetic of emotions in public spaces

As illustrated earlier, part of the Esquilino is characterised by a predominance of shops managed by South Asians. In order for the movement of cultural goods to occur, a formal and informal infrastructure has been produced, which provides the physical channels that facilitate the flow of transnational cultures. Cultural forms such as performances, representations and experiences become imbued and knitted into the urban network.

The South Asian diaspora, by migrating and settling abroad, has reorganised its cultural milieu leading to the construction of ‘feel like at home’ spaces (Baradwaj, India, 45). Baradwaj’s comment clearly summarises the emotionality in the Esquilino today. The area appears to be constructed on pragmatic absences (Frijda and Mesquita 1996) and feelings of loss (Freud 1998), which are reconstructed and reinforced via memories. Melancholic emotions are reorganized urbanistically and reinforced publicly through an unsorted collage of amenities of South Asian origins. Bazaar or other South Asian shops distributed within the quarter narrate multiple stories, the story of a journey, the story of new and old lands and the story of something left-behind, or lost forever. Despite all these stories recount different type of journeys, they are characterized by the same emotional matrix synthesized by the following testimonies:

Arjun (55, Shop owner): When I left India, many years ago, I left my family, my house and my heart there.

Rajan (58, Shop owner): I thank Italy, but I lost something when I left my beloved India.

Sita (37, wife of a shop owner): Every time we go back to India and we come back to Italy, we lose a little part of ourselves. Every time. 41

These statements, best synthesize the way loss is integral part of their migration, making of this experience an aesthetic of melancholy throughout the Esquilino quarter. Simultaneously, this emotion became an aesthetic, is the cement that contributes to construct and keep alive memories within their new (public) homes.

40 From a personal conversation with a shop owner in April 2007.
41 From personal conversations. These informations were collected during my visit to the Dhuumcatu Association.
Piazza Vittorio, the gardens and the avenues that interweave the Esquilino suggest an area, which has been assembled urbanistically and emotionally through melancholic narrations. Lefebvre argues that spaces are constantly reformed by necessities (Lefebvre 1991); as demonstrated by the South Asian settlement in the Esquilino, the space is constructed with aesthetics which re-establish a bond with what has been lost of their culture. A new historical and emotional layer is superimposed, and continuously changes this quarter over time. The Esquilino is a space formed by strata that make the space seem like “flakes of a *mille-feuille* pastry” (Lefebvre 1991: 86), far from being homogeneous and discrete. The observation of the quarter led to the consideration of how shop windows of Indian bazaars or Indian restaurants are dynamically embedded in the urban context as expressions of new contacts. They embody Lefebvre’s definition of social space, which captures the essence of an encounter as follows: “Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another” (Lefebvre 1991: 86).

At the Esquilino, cultures, ethnicities and feelings are lived daily through emotional aesthetics entrenched in vivid actions, exchanges and dialogues that peculiarise and animate the infrastructure of this Roman quarter. In Lefebvre’s words the situation can be summarized as: “the…images of the effort, of will, of subjectivities, of contemplation becoming disjointed from real activities” (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 87).

The different shops present in the quarter are physical realities that exemplify the need of immigrants to develop an economical and social dimension within the city. As Lefebvre suggests, these shops are expressions directly linked with the intangible facets of contemplation and melancholy that produce an aesthetic from transnational emotions. The urban experience is the synthesis of the expressions and forms of a particular assemblage of sets that shape the unique configuration of this quarter as an emotional landscape.

In summary, qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to unearth how shops situated along the streets of the Esquilino are factual sites of social and emotional expression of South Asians in Rome. In Langer’s words these expression are called ‘expressive forms’ (Langer 1966). As demonstrated in this chapter, these forms have generated an aesthetic of melancholy, which epitomizes the struggle of immigrants, their lives, their journeys and the meanings of being a member of a diasporic community, which changes the socio-cultural landscape of the quarter.
In the next chapter the investigation of an aesthetic based on melancholic emotion moves to the study of three select families and their private – emotional – spaces. The intention is to understand if this aesthetic phenomenon (and the emotional conditions, which characterize the migrations of many South Asians in Rome) is essentially public or invest the personal sphere as well. To examine this perspective, methodologies such as participant observation and extended interviews were employed to obtain invaluable information of their lives away from the land of origin.
3. Chapter 3: (In)Visibility of Hindustani Cinema in Italy – Thinking about India

The Art of cinematography is not the representation of real facts, but rather the evocation of the sentiments that embrace the facts.

(Translated from Italian) (Canudo 1966: 66)

A Premise

This chapter intends to map out places and spaces in which popular Hindi cinema is viewed and screened in Rome in order to engage, on a geographical level, the sense of melancholy that inhabits the private and public spaces of the city. In this regard, it is pertinent to revisit some observations mentioned in the previous chapter and analyse further how the images of Bollywood stars on the shop windows can be used to discuss the contradiction of location and dislocation that are regular features of diasporic position (Brah 2002). In the previous chapter, the Esquilino was studied not merely as a sociological enquiry, but as an unfolding of the emotions of non-native residents in the quarter and the area was read beyond the pure scientific approach, which would frame the Esquilino as an area of settlement for immigrants. The intention was to trace a connecting thread, which links the emotional network behind their diasporic status, investigating this space, which is an expression of melancholy, remembering and site of “living – (urban) – memories” as a “privileged space…of belonging” (Brah 2002: 188). Images of Bollywood stars are put up and exhibited on the interiors of the shops (including the windows), but are physically detached from the infrastructure of the city, every night when the shutters of the shops are closed. These images provide as visibility and cultural identification for the migrants, in addition to creating a form of exclusion from the rest of the urban space, suggesting that the migrants are living a condition of ‘insiderism’ as they are devoid of constant visibility. In this chapter the limitation of visibility will be examined through the perspective of the cinema-viewing practices of South Asian immigrants.
Going to the cinema is a practice that involves the spectator, on a personal level of entertainment as mentioned by Corbett “…taking a night off watching films” (Corbett 2001:17). In addition, studies on the audience, reception and consumption (Allen 1990; Turner 1991; Lewis 1992; Dudrah 2002; Kuhn 2002; Jancovick, Faire et al. 2003; Dudrah 2006) demonstrate that cinema-going is a socio-cultural experience; David Morley states: “(Cinema-going is) best understood as having a solid habit, and certain types of socialised experience” (Morley 1992: 157). Watching a film becomes a way of celebration or paying tribute to a collectivism, which simultaneously generates a communitarian-feeling-praxis of identification (Lewis 1992) and consumption (Jancovick, Faire et al. 2003). Memories and senses are involved in the experience of watching a film, not only the senses of sight and hearing, but rather the entanglement of “the sense[s] of perception work[ing] in concert” (Marks 2000: 212), called the ‘sensorium’ (Marks 2000). Laura Marks defines this as:

The organisation of senses, [which] varies culturally as well as individually; thus we would expect cinema to represent the sensorial organisation of a given culture. Often the sensorium is the only place where cultural memories are preserved. (Marks 2000: 195)

As already seen in the introduction, Laura Marks theorises the idea of a sensorial space wherein memories are embedded, conserved and possibly re-experienced through the cinema-going and the cinema theatre spaces, therefore conferring an explicative utterance on the seventh art. As mentioned earlier, Morley decodes the experience of going to the cinema as pure entertainment, intersecting with Turner’s belief of cinema production as a process “which does not end with the distribution” (Turner 1991: 94), but concludes “with the spectator, and the process of reception” (Turner 1991: 94).

Paying heed to this premise, this chapter deals with spaces and modalities of vision and diffusion of Bollywood, trying to answer the following questions: where is popular Hindi cinema projected in Rome? Is the experience of watching Bollywood cinema a collective public event within given space of viewing or is a personal event happening within a domestic space? Do the cinema screenings and festivals, in Italy, reinforce the status of popular Hindi cinema as an internationally acclaimed phenomenon, or does the Bollywood phenomenon attempt new tendencies of perception and distribution within the Italian panorama? These issues will be clarified by the analysis of data gained through questionnaires and extended interviews in this chapter.
The reception of popular Hindi cinema is examined through the collection of commentaries regarding the modes of viewing Bollywood cinema by the residents in the Esquilino quarter. The collection of information was divided into two major parts: questionnaires and participant observation. The questionnaire was distributed with the help of the mediator (Mr. Alam) mentioned in the previous chapter. A second questionnaire was prepared and sent to Ms. Selvaggia Velo, the organiser and director of the *River to River* Florence Indian Film Festival, to obtain information regarding the reasons for conducting the Indian Festival in Florence, the space in which the films were consumed and enjoyed, the audience type, the participation of South Asian communities and the strategies used for the organisation of the festival.

The questionnaire endeavoured to monitor the sites where popular Hindi cinema circulates and observe if the cinema-going experience of South Asians in Italy retained its ritualistic status or not. Besides the festival, it was also significant to observe the space where Bollywood films are viewed in Rome and who are the spectators. The intention was to capture and make a note on the emotionality behind the rites of watching Indian films with particular interest in the nature of the spaces – public and/or private – where the viewing happens. The second part of this work involved the participant observation aimed at studying the spaces of viewing Bollywood in Rome. For this purpose, an entire day was spent with three South Asian families residing in the Esquilino, in order actively to observe their Bollywood viewing habits. The families were selected with the help of my cultural mediator who approached them and explained the nature of my research.

**Watching Bollywood in Rome: Where and how?**

This enquiry commenced with the initial fieldwork, *in situ* observation and research in the Esquilino. When walking through in the streets of the quarter during different periods of my study, it was noticed that the few cinema halls present were mostly unusable and in need of major structural repair, or did project any South Asian films. Further enquiries to my cultural mediator were made regarding alternative modes of entertainment for the many South Asian immigrants in Rome. A questionnaire was distributed, in order to understand if the absence of South Asian screenings was merely an impression due to infrequent visits to the area, or a socio-cultural condition in which the immigrants live. The research investigating the absence of screening popular South
Asian films and particularly Bollywood films by cinema halls in Rome began with a questionnaire distributed to the South Asian diaspora residing in the Esquilino area. The questionnaire qualitatively and quantitatively framed the film-viewing habits of South Asians and recorded the spaces where they occurred. However, this study is not representative of the cinema viewing practices of the entire South Asian community of the quarter. This would have required a more in-depth consideration, which was not possible due to time restrictions. Similarly, the participant observation focused on a sample of South Asian families, which presents an initial reconnaissance of film viewing practices within the quarter. The three case studies presented in this chapter outline instances of viewing-Bollywood and the emotionality beneath these experiences.

**Esquilino Questionnaire (Part 2) – Watching South Asian films in Rome**

This part of the questionnaire is comprised of six questions enquiring about the respondents’ cinema viewing practices. The questions focused on recording the possibilities of watching popular Hindi cinema or any other kind of South Asian cinema in Rome. The responses to the questionnaire are illustrated in Figure 3-1.

The aim of the survey was to uncover aspects of personal experiences and the engagement of the South Asian communities with cinema spaces away from their homeland. Questions 6, 7 and 8 asked if the respondents watched Indian films, Bollywood films and other South Asian films. All three questions asked for a list of the titles they had watched. The respondents generally responded positively to all three questions as shown in Figure 3-1, however the titles listed by them did not always match the industry in the question, particularly in Bangladeshi respondents.

Mr. S. M. (23) from Bangladesh answered as follows:

Q6 – Yes, the titles I remember at the moment are *Devdas* with Shahrukh Khan and Aishwarya Rai, *Aakrosh, Bhabhi, Maa, Laloni*™ etc.

Q7 – Yes, *Dilwale Dulhaniya le Jayenge, Krazzy-4*™ etc.

Q8 – Yes, the films I have watched are *Inquilaab, Dilwale, Dil*™, etc.

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Esquilino Questionnaire - Watching South Asian Films in Rome

Q6: Do you watch Indian Films?
Q7: Do you watch Bollywood Films?
Q8: Do you watch other South Asian Cinema?
Q9: Do you go to the cinema here in Rome to watch Indian Films?
Q10: If your answer to the above question is yes, were there local (Italian) spectators?
Q11: Do you watch Indian films (or other South Asian Films) at home on DVD?

Figure 3-1: Esquillino questionnaire data – Part 2 – Watching South Asian films in Rome.

This selected example demonstrates that South Asian diaspora, particularly the Bangladeshi community, do not differentiate themselves in terms of their cinema viewing practices suggesting a cultural pastiche; their viewings can be considered as assemblage of films from different South Asian entertainment industries available at the shops in the Esquilino.

Questions 9 and 10 asked:

Q9 – Do you go to the cinema theatre here in Rome to watch Popular Hindi Films, or any other South Asian films? If yes please specify which movies did you watch and the name of the cinema theatre.
Q10 – If your answer to the above question is yes please specify if there were locals (Italian) spectators. Were there South Asian spectators? If yes could you please say approximately how many?

As shown in the graph (Figure 3-1), the majority of the respondents replied negatively to Q9 (89), implying that only a minority (8) had gone to the cinema in Rome to watch South Asian films. Dr. A. N. (41) and Mr. D. K. (47), both from India, provided detailed answers; the two respondents declared:

Dr. A. N. – Q9 – I went to the cinema in Rome just a couple of times. I went to watch non-Bollywood films, mostly American films which were dubbed in Italian and for this reason I don’t go so often, simply because I can’t understand Italian very well. The Indian films that I have watched in Rome, which were not at the Esquilino, were Lagaan\(^{45}\) and Monsoon Wedding\(^{46}\) (screened in a cinema theatre in Rome, but I can’t remember which one). I didn’t like so much the film of Mira Nair, anyway. Then at the Esquilino gardens, I have watched Company, Shakti the Power, Main Hoon Na, Waqt, Krrish and Bluffmaster\(^{47}\). Later on, I came to know that there were other films from Bangladesh but I don’t watch Bangladeshi cinema, so the only way for me to enjoy some Bollywood films is at home with my family. For me to go to the cinema is unusual, we go to the cinema on special occasions, otherwise we are at home mostly with family and friends. Dr. A. N. – Q10 – When I went to watch Lagaan and Monsoon Wedding at the cinema theatre, I was with my husband, my children and an Italian friend. Most of the people present at the screening were Italians and as far as I can remember there were only a couple of Indians. Mr. D. K. – Q9 – I went to watch Indian films when they were screened in Rome. I am a metro driver and I saw advertisements about Indian films being screened in Rome, posted on the walls of the tube. I told my wife about it and with a few friends we went to the cinema theatre. We have watched Monsoon Wedding, then Lagaan and we had a lot of fun. I bought the DVD of Lagaan and sometimes we watch it again and again. A few years ago, I went to an open cinema called Cineporto. This place is only open during summertime, and there we watched several films like Saathiya, Koi ...Mil Gaya, Munna Bhai Mbbs, Dev and Kaante.

\(^{45}\) _Lagaan: Once upon a time in India_ (2001) dir. by Ashutosh Gowariker  
\(^{46}\) _Monsoon Wedding_ (2001) dir. by Mira Nair  
Then we went to watch *Yes Boss, Karan Arjun, Mr India* and *Train to Pakistan*48. However, the movies were screened only in summer for two or three years and then they stopped. We watched a few movies at the Esquilino gardens, again during summertime. There we watched *Krrish, Bluffmaster, Main Hoon Na* etc. and what was good was that the entrance was free. Recently nothing else is being screened publicly so we watch films at home with friends and family on DVD.

Mr. D. K. – Q10 – We went to watch *Monsoon Wedding* and *Lagaan* in Rome but I don’t remember now, the name of the theatre. It wasn’t here in the Esquilino. Then we went to Cineporto, and Esquilino Gardens. There is no other cinema that screens Indian films and I have never seen any other advertisements, as far as I know. When we went I was with my family, the cinema theatre was filled with Italians and some Indians. I remember at the Cineporto there were some Indians and at the Esquilino Gardens there were many Indians and Bangladeshis. I know that next year, hopefully, there will be *Bollywood the Show*49 at the Teatro Olimpico, I have seen many advertisements while working, we are planning to go and watch it.

As evident from the responses given by Dr. A. N. and Mr. D. K., Bollywood cinema is not screened on a regular basis by the cinema theatres in Rome. Thus, as explained by the respondents, the screening of Bollywood or other South Asian cinema in Rome happened through dedicated events, but the official circuits of cinema in Rome did not screen films from these industries. These ‘happenings’ are presented as emblematic and rare celebrations of a cinema practice, which limits and marginalises the entertainment and the leisure moments of the South Asians in both time and space.

The responses to the questions demonstrate that the screenings of South Asian films and Bollywood in Rome is a practice confined to a small number of exhibitions. The projection of popular Hindi cinema in Rome strengthens the prospect of categorisation and pigeonholing of South Asian films, which creates two discernible tendencies. On the one hand, it clearly manifests the dissatisfaction of immigrants in Rome who


49 *Bollywood the show* was a theatrical performance which travelled to Italy. It was hosted between April-May 2009 at the Teatro Olimpico in Rome and in May 2009 at the Teatro degli Arcinboldi in Milan (Lo Spettacolo. (2008). "Bollywood the Show." 2008, from http://www.it.bollywood-show.de/html/show.html.)
acknowledged these spurious screenings as a summary of events crammed into a few ‘exceptional’ days. This increases the feeling of missing ones’ homeland and creates a need to reorganise film viewing as a private communal practice within alternative spaces. On the other hand, by pigeonholing South Asian films and omitting them from the circuits of Roman cinema halls, it restricts the locals and prevents them from watching and appreciating the South Asian culture through entertainment, thereby reducing intercultural dialogue and understanding. In addition, it prevents them from looking beyond melancholic and stereotypical exotic depictions by Italian authors that have profoundly shaped previous representations of India and the subcontinent (discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

The familiarity of watching Indian films at gatherings dedicated to South Asian cinema and festivals clearly limits the opportunity for the South Asian spectators to experience it as a permanent cinema-going ritual. The spectator searches for alternative and permanent ways of entertainment and home-based projections, which is unmistakably evident from the responses to Q11 (Do you watch Popular Hindi films, or other South Asian films only at home?) in Figure 3-1. Almost all (eighty-nine out of ninety-seven) of the respondents said that they have watched South Asian films at home with family, compatriots and friends (sixty-nine respondents said that they watch at home with family, sixteen with South Asian friends and four with Italian friends). Eight respondents did not answer the question. The enjoyment and creation of entertainment opportunities, within the domestic environment certainly stresses the cultural closure which film festivals and dedicated events create. Watching popular Hindi cinema (and other South Asian films) is still considered an intimate family affair; the urbis of Rome does not integrate the entertainment necessities of South Asians within the social texture of the city, nor does it take further initiatives to offer a continuous platform for leisure through the South Asian film industries. This tendency corroborates how the image of the South Asian subcontinent is embedded and frozen within melancholic patterns of imagination and representation amidst the entertainment practices of the Italian culture.

**Participant Observation – “Hamara Ghar is our cinema theatre”**

The questionnaire distributed amongst the South Asian communities in the Esquilino area revealed the absence of regularly scheduled Bollywood films in Rome. Most of the respondents (approximately 90%) living and working within the quarter spoke about the
discontinuity in the screening of popular Hindi films in association with Apollo 11\textsuperscript{50}, and only a few of them remembered the Cineporto screenings\textsuperscript{51}.

Apart from lamenting that it is impossible to go to the cinema “like I was doing in India” (Mr. A. C. – India – 41) or “like my friends do at home back in India” (Mr. T. M. – India – 32) the only consistent entertainment offered is through inexpensive and pirated DVDs available in shops managed by South Asian immigrants. As Turner points out, DVD and videotapes certainly are expedients, which supply “visual narration and pleasure for the audience” (Turner 1991: 97); this is corroborated by personal observation of the three South Asian families. However, alternative audio-visual entertainment (other than cinema) does not produce the same fulfilment that cinema-going does; furthermore, it does not exploit the pleasure of being ‘magically’ captured by the magnificent illusion, “(nor) does it replicate the experience of the darkened cinema with its larger-than-life images and Dolby stereo sound” (Turner 1991: 97).

Due to the lack of opportunities to observe cinema-going of South Asians in Rome, the film viewing was observed in a domestic context. The domestic environment is presented as the only alternative for watching South Asian films. On the one hand this jeopardises the social meaning of cinema-going as a ritual and communitarian experience in public spaces, and on the other hand it limits the objective space of social and cultural exchange which fixes a stereotypical idea of India within the Italian consciousness. This is discussed further in Chapter 4 and 5; these two chapters aim to clarify how the limited social exchange between Italy and India, determined stereotypical representations (and understanding) of India on the screens of Italy.

With the support of the cultural mediator, it was possible to observe three South Asian families; two from India and the last one from Bangladesh. After being introduced to the families the nature of this research and the reasons for observing their domestic behaviour when watching a film, were explained. The family members were extremely

\textsuperscript{50} The Apollo 11 is a cultural association operating in Rome which organises cultural events. The association of artists, intellectuals, cultural and social operators has its site in Via Conte Verde 51, in the Esquilino area. As mentioned on the website: L’Apollo 11 è un art factory. – (translated as: The Apollo 11 is an Art Factory), and intends to work by employing the cultural pluralism present in the quarter. Apollo 11. (2008). "Presentazione." from www.apolloundici.it/Apollo11/presentazione.asp.)

\textsuperscript{51} Cineporto (literally the port of cinema) is an open cinema theatre which is opened during summer time. Cineporto is located in the city centre of Rome, exactly on one of the banks of the Tiber River, in Monte Milvio area rather far from the Esquilino. The Cineporto hosted in 2004, 2005 and 2006 films from the Bollywood industry. The screenings were put forward under the denomination of ‘other’ cinema which undeniably posits the idea of far cinema with ‘otherness’.

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welcoming without any form of distrust and further enquiries. Each family visit lasted a day. The heads of the three households were:

(a) B. S. – Barnala, Punjab, India
(b) M. K. – Khopoli, Maharashtra, India
(c) I. K. – Jamalpur, Northern Bangladesh

The first family was from the city of Barnala in Punjab located in the north of India. After exchanging formalities with Mr. B. S. (56) and his family, he welcomed the observer into his house on Sunday 27th April 2008. He lives with his wife and two sons. Mr. B. S. spoke candidly regarding the reasons for his permanence in Italy, the reasons behind the decision to move away from India and more specifically how he felt about being in Italy and the modalities of watching Bollywood cinema in Rome. He began his story by explaining that he left India at the end of the 1980s due to political reasons, looking for the possibility to develop his business away from home. He tried to go to the USA, but due to visa restrictions he abandoned this idea and decided to follow a compatriot to Italy. His friend’s son was living in Rome and there was the possibility of staying with a friend abroad, thus, Mr. B. S. moved to Rome. Initially, he worked at a supermarket and then after reconnecting with his family in India and periodic visits to the Esquilino open market, he decided to start his business in the same area, selling music and films from India.

Mr. B. S. agreed to record parts of the conversation. An excerpt from the conversation is given below:

M. A. (interviewer): What was the reason(s), which made you decide to open a business which deals with film and music strictly from India?
B. S.: There are several reasons. Well Monia, first of all there was a high demand for Indian films, particularly Bollywood film, among people like me, from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, that are here with or without family, in Rome. So I decided to open this business, I thought it would be a good investment at that time. Many fellow nationals, you know, even Pakistanis have been asking for Bollywood films. These films narrate about our traditions, our culture and so through these films we remember our past, our land and also, we can speak our

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52 As requested by the participants, their identities have been maintained anonymous and indicated by their initials.
language among friends and many customers. They come so often now that many of them have become my friends.

M. A.: Is there any place in Rome where you can watch a Bollywood film with your friends?

B. S.: As far as I know there is no place. A few years ago the Apollo 11, a local cultural organisation, planned to show some Bollywood films in Piazza Vittorio. This happened rarely and in conjunction with films from all over the world. I took my family and few friends to watch *Krrish*\(^{53}\), but it was a long time ago and that was the only time. What we do is to watch films at home, like what we will be doing today. I have invited some friends and my new friend Monia, [laughter]… to have some Punjabi food and watch an old film *Aradhana*\(^{54}\), if you don’t mind, and this is what we do almost every Sunday, when my shop is closed.

Mr. B. S. started his journey through bittersweet memories by taking out a large colourful wooden chest and showing pictures of his family in India, his parents, brothers and a sister, pictures of his city and his house. He asked his son to switch on the CD player which played *Mere Sapno Ki Rani*, an old song from the film to be screened that evening. Mr. B. S. explained that his wife had cooked traditional Punjabi dishes to please their guests. This created a festive mood. This was the effect of a collage of sounds, black and white and colour images and odours which filled the little room in which the interview/observation took place.

At around 2:00 pm Mr. B. S.’s friends arrived and, after chatting for a while, a buffet lunch was served. Several dishes including *navratan korma* and *basmati rice* to *Punjabi chole*, *rajma*, *roti* to end with *gulab jamun* and *Lassi Patiala* had been prepared and were on the table. The smell of food and the music in the background profoundly pervaded the entire room, clearly identifying and defining the utterance of the place itself. Prior to the buffet lunch, the youngest daughter of one of the guests performed a dance sequence based on the songs *Mere Sapno Ki Rani* and *Tumko Mujhse*, from the soundtracks of the film.

Following lunch, *Lassi* was served and Mr B. S. switched on the television and the DVD player, with the curtains half closed and some of the food still left on the table. The screening of *Aradhana* began, with subtitles in English. The plot of the film was tragic,

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\(^{53}\) *Krrish (2006)*, directed by Rakesh Roshan

\(^{54}\) *Aradhana (1969)*, directed by Shakti Samanta
laughter and tears filled the room. The viewing of the film was not silent but there were rather loud comments and critiques. As a researcher, I took notes, while observing the people and their emotional response, listening and writing down their comments, which made me understand their involvement with the film. One of the spectators remarked with an unmistakable Indian accent “yaar, Amitabh Bachchan is fantastic. How many of his films we watched when we were in India!!”. Another gentleman, while commenting on the female protagonist (played by Jaya Bachchan), turned to his wife and said “hmmm, you looked just like her when you were younger”. These comments transported the entire group emotionally back to their origins and to their past memories. This allowed the objective outsider to detect feelings of melancholy and of missing homeland. The atmosphere within the room was intense and from the comments recorded was obvious that each spectator was emotionally involved in the plot of the film, as the tragic events unfolded. Although I was in Rome (my homeland) to conduct this research, I could connect, share and understand the feelings that pervaded their memories, as I too live diasporically in the UK, away from Italy.

The film-viewing did not involve merely sight and hearing but it was rather a multisensory experience (Marks 2000). The smell, touch and taste of food were fully and bodily experienced. The sensorium, as previously quoted in Laura Marks’ words, undeniably engaged with the viewing of the film in Mr. B. S.’s home. The room became a space containing different emotions, which were played up by memories, reminiscences and recollections of a collectivism, which recalled the cinema experience. The room where the film was screened became a kind of miniaturised cinema theatre; however, it was a ‘forced space’ of viewing. The memories were strongly evoked throughout the screening; however the dimension of the television could not convey the same involvement provided by the cinema screen. The television reduces and sets the film-watching practice in a nutshell; it confines and limits the experience of being engrossed in a larger-than-life audio-visual content. The food preparation and its consumption, the music and film viewing formed a space where memories of Mr. B. S. and his family find refuge. These rituals perpetuate the meaning that the objects, pictures, images and sounds in Mr. B. S.’s home are volatile and serve the present as a ‘prosthesis’ for memory evocation. The experience of spending the day with Mr. B. S.’ family and friends was similar to the distinct social practice of going to the cinema. However, it was constrained a domestic space in which public and collective practices
converged. The memories linked to homeland were revitalised and reformed by stimulating senses, and living exclusively on a domestic level without further social elaboration or sharing of experiences in urban public spaces.

The melancholy of the group observed, was characterised by their past memories returning to consciousness which reminded them of what has been lost, as Freud theorised, and which can only be relived in a limited and reassuring domestic space. The bitter-sweet feeling of remembering impacted their lives in two distinct ways: it created a form of cultural immobilisation of their past for a lost – or temporarily lost – way of life and triggered the organisation of their sensorial memory into the present localities through hidden and ‘home-made’ events.

The second family came from Khopoli in Maharastra, a town close to Mumbai. Following an initial telephone conversation with the mediator, Mr. M. K. invited me to join him and his family at 8:00 am to attend a pooja\(^{55}\) in honour of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi in preparation for the Akshaya Tritiya\(^{56}\), a Hindu celebration which will be described further. Mr. M. K. and his family were very welcoming. Mr. M. K. has an extended family formed by two family units: Mr. M. K., his wife and a daughter formed one unit, while Mr. M. K.’s sister and her husband formed the other. The house was small and extremely colourful; part of the wall was pink/fuchsia as shown in Figure 3-2. The numerous little statues and images of Hindu gods and goddesses arranged on the shelves all over the house made the house seem smaller than it was.

Part of the living room was dedicated to the altar to perform the pooja and the shoes had to be removed near the entrance. To record the images and colours in the room and the decorations and garlands that adorned the altar, Mr. M. K. allowed pictures of the gods on the walls to be taken, which were representations of Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi (Figure 3-2). Permission to photograph the altar was politely denied.

The altar was composed of images of Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi adorned with flowers of different colours; gold and silver jewellery ornamented the altar, along with lit incense. Each significant process and act of the ceremony, such as the awakening of the gods, the

\(^{55}\) Pooja is a Hindu term for worship, which begins with the lighting of an oil lamp, prayers, offering of flowers, food, incense and aarti (offering of light – usually camphor).

\(^{56}\) The Akshaya Tritiya is a Hindu holy celebration and day that falls in the third Thithi – Lunar day – of the Hindu calendar Vaishakha. Vishnu who according to the Hindu religion is the god, within the holy trinity, who preserves the world, governs this month. Details on the Hindu celebrations and meanings were provided by my to-be mother-in-law, Mrs. Radha Govindarajan.
prayers, the chants and the offering of flowers and food, were initiated with the ringing of a bell. The pooja lasted for about two hours; the altar was visible, untouched and left decorated throughout the day.

![Figure 3-2: Sacred images of Lord Vishnu, the Holy Triad (Goddess Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati) and Lakshmi, captured from the wall of Mr. M K’s living room.](image)

Following the pooja, Mr. M. K.’s wife prepared an abundant breakfast, which was a mix of European and Indian, cuisine. The table was prepared hastily, after a silent and composed breakfast Mr. M. K. explained the meaning of the ceremony, which they performed. He said that, on 7th May 2008 that year, the Hindus celebrated the Akshaya Tritiya, a celebration, which falls on the third day of the Hindu month Vaishakh. It was a holy day in which the birth of Lord Parashurama the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu was celebrated. Furthermore, the word Akshaya in the Hindu tradition means ‘the one who never diminishes’. He explained that the altar for the pooja, highly decorated with flowers and fruits were offerings in honour of Goddess Lakshmi, and that Hindus believed that anything that was acquired on the holy day of Akshaya Tritiya would be multiplied.

Mr. M. K. was asked why he celebrated the pooja on the 3rd of May, the day of our meeting, and not on the 7th as the calendar suggested. He explained that the 7th would have been a Wednesday and therefore, for work reasons, it would have been impossible to perform the pooja entirely. However on the 7th, before going to work Mr. M. K. and his family would perform a condensed pooja to respect the holy day.
M. K.: Being in Italy I had to get used to a new lifestyle, a new language, a new climate, new people and everything around me. Our celebrations are different from the ones in Italy; here the holy days are Saturdays and Sundays, so my family and I perform our poojas in the morning before going to work and on weekends too.

M. A.: Have you always adjusted your lifestyle since your permanence in Italy?

M. K.: Well now I have made them my habits and I don’t have to adjust anymore, maybe if I would go back to India I need to readjust again (laugh). But when I moved to Italy…well everything was very difficult and new for us. I moved to Italy in the 90s, with my wife. We lived with friends of friends in a small village in the north of Italy, near Cremona. There I was working in the countryside and I was taking care of a farm, but I was not too happy. I was an accountant when I was in India and I really liked my work. I then decided to move to Rome and after few months of searching through Indian and Bangladeshi friends, I found a job as an accountant for a Bed & Breakfast here in Rome near Trastevere.

M. A.: Why did you decide to live in the Esquilino although you are working in Trastevere?

M. K.: The Esquilino is my second home. Here, I find Indian goods, groceries, food items and other needs coming from my land, which my wife or I can buy and also there is the open market where vegetables are good and cheap.

M. A.: And what about films?

M. K.: Yeah films as well! There are several shops where I can buy Indian films, especially Bollywood films to watch at home with some friends, during weekends. I like to buy films in my friend’s shop, a Punjabi guy, and we all call him ‘Lovely Singh’. They are cheap DVDs and some of them are pirated versions. Anyway, this is the best way for us to be at home and enjoy movies from our own culture. We are from Maharashtra and our place is not so far from Bombay. You know, when we were in India we used to go to the cinema theatre quite often and while going there with my doston (translated from Hindi as: friends), I met a beautiful girl who then became my wife. She was younger than me and she was living not too far from the cinema theatre. We fell for each other and after a short period of time we got engaged and later married. I do have nice memories about cinema in India. But now here, hamara ghar (translated from Hindi as: our home) is our cinema theatre.

M. A.: Do you go to the cinema in Rome?
M. K.: Here in Rome?…Well you can go to the cinema, but there are no films from India. I don’t like those kinds of films where women are half naked, like on TV, so I don’t go. I like to go to the cinema to see nice stories and love stories, which do not trouble my family and me too much. Several years ago I went with my wife to watch Moonson Wedding and Lagaan. These are the only Indian films we watched here in Rome. Last year we went to watch The Darjeeling Limited. It was a funny film but it was not an Indian film. Unfortunately here you don’t get Indian films, only American…mmm well yeah most of them are American and obviously some are Italian films too. In India you can find deshi and videshi (translated from the Hindi as: Deshi ‘from the country’ videshi ‘foreign’) films.

M. A.: I am very much impressed by the images on the walls, how necessary are these to connect with your culture?

M. K.: Outside my house I am disconnected from our country, to use your terms. Well…apart from the shops around the Esquilino area and a few shops at the Pigneto, a quarter very different from the Esquilino, I don’t have the sense of being at home, the smell of rice and spices in my house, the Bollywood films and my faith are the only things that make me feel connected with my origins. So I thought that at least when I am at home I have to be surrounded with images that are familiar to me. Well…of course we are a very devotional family and these images make me feel like I am in India.

M. A.: This is fascinating, the way you can re-establish the linkage with your land through images. All these coloured pictures talk to me definitely about India and about Bollywood aesthetic, to some extent. These scenarios also remind me of Bollywood, the images here on the wall make me think about the classical era of Bollywood, the colourful display of shining dresses and jewelleries consumes my imagination.

M. K.: Ours as well (laughter). Yeah you are right; many films from Bollywood were inspired by the Hindu religious traditions…and in many films there would be at least one pooja scene [laughter]. Colour is part of what we are and part of where we come from. We celebrate colours with a festival called Holi. The festival is beautiful in India, the meaning is described in our sacred scriptures of Vedas and

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Puranas\textsuperscript{58} and then there is a pooja called Holika Dahan celebrated several days before the Holi day and it glorifies the victory of good over bad. During the Holi day, there is no pooja but it is a day of enjoyment. Since we came to live in Rome we celebrate the Holi at home with friends visiting us. My wife and sister prepare food and we dance and sing, but we obviously cannot play with colours like we did when we were in India. Our life turns colourful that day as we decorate the house with flowers we buy at the Esquilino markets and so, we try to have a colourful life around us.

The talk with Mr. M. K. highlighted the significant role that colours assume in their lives; particularly as an expressive form to recall and perpetuate their beliefs and their culture in a foreign land. The colours become forms of expression of melancholic remembering. The religious images and the colourful decorations in Mr. M. K.’s house undeniably suggest imaginaries elicited from a larger spectrum of memories in which colours are not merely celebrative and decorative facets, they are also a narrative element of melancholic reconstruction of familiar acts within a non-familiar environment. The colours and iconographies within the house suggest their diasporic status of ‘who they were’ rather than ‘who they are’\textsuperscript{59}, creating a sense of cultural recollection. Indian practices are followed and celebrated within constrained spaces in which melancholic forms of evocation and expression are exacerbated.

Following the conversation with Mr. M. K., the table was laden with food. Lunch was simple and made of rice, chapattis, daal and aloo gobi. After lunch, the DVD

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\textsuperscript{58} Vedas are holy texts of the Hinduism, believed to teach the truth about life. The word originated from the Sanskrit work Veda, meaning “knowledge, wisdom”. According to Hindu tradition the Vedas were supposed to be directly and orally revealed and therefore to have originated from gods. Puranas originate from the Sanskrit word purāṇa meaning “of ancient times, old” and contain the essence of the Vedas. The Puranas are characterised by a composite structure, which narrates the history of the universe from the creation to the destruction. The Puranas were meant for the masses rather than for scholars.

\textsuperscript{59} On the 25th and 26th June 2009, the University of Westminster hosted a conference entitled: Indian Cinema Circuits: Diasporas, Peripheries and Beyond. Dr. Greg Booth, from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, presented a paper entitled: “Mediating Nostalgia: The production and reception of reflexive songs scenes in the Hindi cinema”. While talking about the creation of new song scenes that engage with viewers in cultural and experiential way, memories are evoked. Furthermore, Booth comments that when the viewers are located in a diasporic context, there is a spatial and chronological distance, which if stimulated may exacerbate a nostalgic response; Booths define the nostalgic response as explicit of ‘who we are and what we are about’. Booth, G. (2009). Mediating Nostalgia: The production and Reception of Reflexive Song Scenes in the Hindi Cinema. Indian Cinema Circuits: Diaspora, Peripheries and Beyond, Old Theatre University of Westminster, London - 25th and 26th June 2009. Booth’s analysis of the response of the South Asian diaspora to music and songs, clarify further the distinction that this thesis intends to set between a nostalgic response and a melancholic response. The latter, as explained further, is governed by what Freud calls ‘the loss’ and plays on ‘what we were – rather than what we are’ therefore strongly associated to a sense of deprivation and loss, unrecoverable status from the original condition.
*Munnabhai MBBS*\(^{60}\) was screened on the television. The viewing of the film was not a noisy, loud experience such as in Mr. B. S.’s house. The screening of the Bollywood film was part of a quiet weekly ritual, which re-linked the family to their cultural roots and substantiated the envisioning of their religious origins through the numerous colourful images on the walls. This evoked and built a new daily life in a new home away from their homeland.

The third family was from Bangladesh. Their city of origin was Jamalpur, located in the northern part of Bangladesh. This group was not formed by a classic family nucleus of father-mother-children, but was a recomposed family formed by two brothers and their two friends between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-eight, who were staying in Rome to continue their education. They were most familiar with English and so was the dominant language of the meeting.

Our meeting began late in the morning at about 11:30 am on the 4\(^{th}\) of May 2008. The main contact, Mr. I. K. (28) explained that he had lived in Italy since September 2005. Mr. I. K. moved to Italy first and two years later his brother Mr. A. K. (25) and two of their friends joined him. Mr. I. K. and Mr. A. K. were PhD students in Engineering at the Universitá Roma III, in Rome. The house was very simple; there were no decorations on the walls or in the other parts of the house.

During the conversation, Mr. I. K. narrated the story of his arrival in Rome. He had reached Rome on a student visa and lived with other students until the arrival of his brother and friends from Bangladesh.

I. K.: the department where I work is very pleasant and people are nice. Most of my colleagues in my lab speak English; I don’t speak Italian yet, but I am taking some lessons, but it is quite difficult as a language. At the moment, I can manage a few words when I go to the supermarket or to the post office. Here at the Esquilino I can find people from my country, I can speak Bangla, celebrate my religious festivals and there are also many shops, which are managed by people from Bangladesh. I like to be in the Esquilino, more than other areas like Pigneto, which is far from the city centre, and it is quite degraded really! There is also the Dhuumcatu Association, which is able to assist me with any documents regarding visas, as I had to renew it last year. The director Mr. Bachchu is from Bangladesh,!

\(^{60}\) *Munnabhai MBBS* (2003) dir. by Rajkumar Hirani
a funny guy, he was the person who contacted me asking me if I was available to meet you. He is married to an Italian lady; it is quite difficult really for us to get married outside our country and religion, but somehow they have managed to do so.

The final comment offered by Mr. I. K. draws attention to cultural differences. Despite living away from the land of origin and residing in a country in which interracial marriages are a new cultural practice (Tucci 2008), Mr. I. K.’s consideration could be deciphered as a form of racial mistrust and difficulty in accepting an inter-cultural union, which surpasses strict traditions. His declaration suggests an approach to living a diasporic status, which does not involve integration with the locals but rather retains an orthodox and conservative attitude towards his culture and tradition.

M. A.: Do you have any connection with other compatriots here in Italy, apart from Rome?
I. K.: I have a friend in Padova, and the sister of my brother-in-law in Milan. But I don’t have too much contact with her. We went to visit her last year and she came once to visit us here in Rome, but that is all… really!
M. A.: So how do you spend your time, apart from studying?
I. K.: Yeah studying is the first thing we all came here for. We would like to get our higher education and return to Bangladesh. I would like to get married and my parents have found a Bangladeshi girl for me. So I hope by the end of next year (2009) I’ll be able to finish and go back. My brother still needs to work some more but then he intends to come back too. About how we spend the time, well, when I am not at the University or studying at home, I like to go to visit an Italian friend here in Rome especially over the weekends to watch football matches…and of course…we both support Rome (laugh). If I am at home with the rest of the guys we watch a film on our computer, as you can see we don’t have TV so we download movies. I am able to download Bangladeshi and Bollywood films.
M. A.: And have you ever been to the cinema theatre to watch a film from your country or a Bollywood film here in Rome?
I. K.: No never as a habit. There are no cinemas that show such films, not even here at the Esquilino. Through the Apollo 11, I know that there are films from India being screened but I have never been able to see a film from Bangladesh. There were few Bollywood movies but that’s all I think. Anyway…I download
movies so that I can watch them with my brother and my friends living with me. We don’t go to other cinemas, here in Italy films are dubbed in Italian and we don’t understand the language very well.

M. A.: Is there any cultural association, in the Esquilino, which promotes Bangladeshi films or in general South Asian culture that you are aware of?

I. K.: As I have mentioned before there is the Apollo 11, but they show movies only rarely. As far as I know this is the only one. I know about families that organise kinds of reunions with friends to have lunch and have some fun watching movies…but there aren’t public associations for these things…Or maybe there are but honestly I am not aware of them.

M. A.: How would you see the possibility of having scheduled regular screenings of South Asian cinema in the Esquilino?

I. K.: It would be nice to have something like that. There are many South Asians living in Rome. Of course it would be significant to have films from each of the South Asian countries, but frankly I don’t know if this is possible. I believe Rome is still very hostile towards this option, or perhaps the entertainment industry here in Italy doesn’t see the possibility of enlarging the market to the east, yet. The cultural integration here is quite on the surface.

M. A.: Could you tell me more about what do you mean by your last sentence?

I. K.: Well many things don’t work here. But I don’t want to complain because I have been studying here in Rome for almost three years and I am not sure I could do the same being in Bangladesh. The problem is that sometimes I really miss what I was doing in Bangladesh such as going to the cinema with friends was one of those. Now watching a film for me is something I have to do at home with a very small group. Sometimes, I watch a film on my own if no one is at home. But I can’t decide to go to the cinema simply because there aren’t cinemas where I can watch what I want. So…I think that opportunities for us to participate in local events are still rare in Rome. There may be some South Asian films shown here and there, but what about the rest of the year? When I say that the integration is on the surface I mean that, at least in my case, while I have been treated equally in the lab where I have been welcomed without discrimination, on a social and cultural level we are not equal to the locals, yet. So the only way to connect with our origins is to take advantage of situations, which are rarely created and rely on activities at home.
The idea of integration claimed by Mr. I. K. appears to be confused and difficult to rationalise on a theoretical level. On the one side, the impression presented by him on an intercultural marriage between Mr. Bachchu and his wife seems to adulterate a form of ‘purity’ of his own culture which suggests an objective impossibility of mixing cultures; on the other side, Mr. I. K. demands to be fully integrated and acknowledged within Rome. Although this reveals the difficult inclusion of immigrants within a socio-cultural text of the city, his impression of integration seems one-sided.

The conversation continued as follows:

M. A.: When you travelled to Milan, did you find the situation to be similar to Rome?
I. K.: Well…yeah pretty much like Rome, perhaps there are more opportunities but I am not really sure about it. As my contact in Milan told me, it seems there is a big Indian community not too far from Milan. In Milan there are people from all over the world, I would not be able to say exactly from where.

By speaking with the three family members – Mr. B. S., Mr. M. K. and Mr. I. K. – similar answers were recorded regarding the impossibility of watching South Asian films in Rome publicly and continuously; the families had to adjust and create their own leisure exclusively within domestic environments.

Social and cultural integration does not really exist in Rome on an extensive level rather it is limited to symposia, discussions and intellectual readings of the city as highlighted by Lorenzo Tavolini, a member and organiser of the cultural association Apollo 11. In this regard Tavolini, on the webzine Caffeeuropa stated:

Italians and foreigners in the quarter who have want to meet and share common cultural activities such as watch films, read books, debate social themes and so forth, form part of the Apollo 11...There is integration within the quarter which is rare in other peripheral areas of Rome, which instead, should be promoted and developed (Translated from Italian) (Battini 2004).

The cultural sharing within the Esquilino, as mentioned by one of my interviewees, is “quite on the surface” (Mr. I.K.); this statement problematizes the effective integration of immigrants in Rome on social and cultural levels (Lakhous 2008).
South Asian Cinema in Piazza Vittorio

Information gathered from the questionnaire and participant observations were supplemented with further research conducted online to find names of cultural associations and events which cater to the entertainment interests of South Asians. A cultural association called Apollo 11 (as mentioned by some of the interviewees) encourages multiethnic cultural events and festivals in the Esquilino. The Director of the association, Mr. Mario Tronco, co-founded an orchestra called *Orchestra di Piazza Vittorio*. Musicians from different ethnic backgrounds form the group, which commemorates and reflects the spirit of the quarter. A request to interview the Director of the association proved futile due to his commitments in organising events and festivals in addition to performing at concerts in Italy and abroad. Therefore, information about Apollo 11 and its commitments was obtained from their website and from the secretary, Ms. Cristiana. The following images Figure 3-3, Figure 3-4, Figure 3-5 and Figure 3-6 (obtained from the website of Apollo 11) show a few rare events that the Esquilino hosted.

Figure 3-3: Billboard of the event celebrated in Piazza Vittorio in September 2004.

This event was organised with the support of the Indian Embassy in Rome. The image on the board is a frame from the Bollywood film titled *Shakthi the Power*, directed by Krishna Vamshi (2002) with Shahrukh Khan and Aishwarya Rai. The program of this event included the following films: *Company*, dir. by Ram Gopal Varma (2002), *Shakti The Power* and *Khudgarz*, directed by Rakesh Roshan (1987).
Figure 3-4: Billboard of the first event dedicated to Bollywood and Chinese cinema in 2005.

The event was promoted by Apollo 11 and supported by the municipality of ‘Rome I’ office. The message on the top of the image states the following: “After the success of last year’s event ‘Bollywood in Piazza Vittorio’, this year we inaugurate the first edition of Esquilino Affair, which aims to present six films from the Indian and Chinese cinema industries. These are the countries from which most of the communities of the Esquilino come from. The movies are in original language with English and Italian subtitles. The films are selected with the support of Indian and Chinese video-shops owners of the area. The aim is to provide free entertainment for everyone and the possibility of watching international films on the big screen; on the other side it allows the Italian audience to cast a sidelong glance at Asian contemporary cinematographic production.”


Figure 3-5: Billboard of the Esquilino Affair – second year.
The event was organised in September 2006 with the collaboration of the Apollo 11 and the Bollywood films screened were the followings: *Krrish* dir. by Rakesh Roshan (2006), *Bluffmaster* dir. by Rohan Sippy (2005), and *John and Jane* dir by Ashim Ahluwalia (2005).

![Billboard of the Esquilino Affair event held in Rome in June 2007.](image)

Figure 3-6: This is billboard of the Esquilino Affair event held in Rome in June 2007.

The event hosted films from Romania, Bangladesh and one from Italy set in Bangladesh. The program included the following Bangladeshi films: *Nironton* dir. by Abu Sayeed (2006), *Ontarjatra* dir. by Tereque and Cathrine Masud (2006) and the Italian film *Le Ferie di Licu* dir. by Vittorio Moroni (2006) which was a docu-film on the story of a Licu a Bangladeshi man living and working in Rome, who decides to get married through an arranged marriage and reconnect with his tradition. After a month in Bangladesh to celebrate the marriage between Licu and his to-be wife, Licu comes back to Rome with Facy who terribly misses her home.

The above billboards and images of non-local films (Figure 3-3 to Figure 3-6) display how attentive Apollo 11 is to South Asian cinema. On the wave of the success of Bollywood in Europe, Apollo 11 welcomed this industry by promoting dedicated events such as *Bollywood a Piazza Vittorio*. The screenings of these films were occasional episodes aimed at cultural integration, even if practised “on the surface” as Mr. I. K. mentioned. Viewing these films creates a strong cultural categorisation which unfolds on two levels. It could be argued that as screenings are infrequent and their locations are difficult to find, the sense of segregation increases dramatically. This cultural and social phenomenon reinforces the logic of ‘otherness’ among Italian spectators, therefore supporting the notion that this industry “does not sell on an international market” (Rajadhyaksha 1985: 148). Nevertheless, Bollywood films that are screened retain their popular\(^\text{61}\) nature originally intended for the South Asian audience. Simultaneously, they

\(^{61}\) Popular is here intended as the commercial meanings explored by Stuart Hall, who put it as follows: “the things which are said to be ‘popular’ because the masses of people listen to them, buy them, read them, consume them and seem to enjoy them to the full…this is the market of commercial definition
are gaining the status of cinema for elites by establishing the modalities for autochthons to watch these films as a rare opportunity to “cast a sidelong glance at South Asian contemporary cinematographic productions” as mentioned in Figure 3-4. However, watching a Bollywood film at the Esquilino releases an emotional response in two specific ways. While on the one side the Bollywood screenings in Piazza Vittorio provide a provisional entertainment and pleasure among the South Asian community, on the other side, the event melancholically reinforces the need for home-based cinematic viewings. These practices were experienced socially and on a regular basis, as previously mentioned by one respondent. The conversations/observations of the three South Asian families in Rome supported what Mike Featherstone points out: “[the] extension of cultural repertoires and the enhancement of the resourcefulness of groups…create new symbolic modes of affiliation and belonging” (Featherstone 1996: 78). The observed families watched Bollywood films at home as a means of symbolic evocation of lost traditions that are kept alive through patterns of melancholic aggregation and by virtual ways of connection. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Giardini di Piazza Vittorio, the site where the screenings occurred, is a space, which propagates a sense of melancholic affiliation and aggregation and the discontinuity of film screenings increases the sense of melancholy among the migrants.

The blank canvas used for rare cinematographic events acts as a filter of pain; however, its daily absence creates melancholic elaborations of memories within domestic contexts. The cultural association Apollo 11, as stated on the website, has clear aims which play on ‘Obiettivi di un cinema della Memoria’ (translated as: the objectives of a cinema of memory). The association acquired an old cinema hall within the Esquilino, formerly used as Bingo hall in order to transform this theatre into a ‘cinema della memoria’ (Cinema hall of memories). However, due to a lack of funding and

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62 According to the Greek etymology, the pain is typical of nostalgia and accompanies a profound sense of loss; while melancholy, different from nostalgia, is a condition which manifests not only pain, but also its opposite and it swings from a bitter to a sweet memory and back, elaborating it in the present. The pain due to nostalgia is largely depicted in Italian literature by authors such as Marsilio Ficino, Tasso, Pirandello, Foscolo, and poets such as Leopardi, Ungaretti and Carducci. Due to the vast history of Italian literature, however, it is difficult to supply a full list of writers and poets who have depicted nostalgia through their writing. Therefore the mentioned names are not an exhaustive list, but rather the citation of famous authors who have (together with many more) marked the complex articulation of nostalgia within the Italian literature and culture.
governmental permits the theatre is still not ready and unfit for use, six years after its purchase. The initial aim of the project was to restore the cinema hall with the purpose of amalgamating the moods and needs of the residents of the quarter, by creating the first intercultural cinema theatre of Rome where “clandestine” (Apollo 11 2008) films from all over the world could be screened. Having a cinema theatre that would screen “clandestine” films aptly summarises the condition of many immigrants in Italy who are clandestine due to inadequate politics and regulations regarding immigration issues in Italy, as discussed in Chapter 2. The Apollo 11 intended to restore the cinema Apollo hall in order to foster a cultural re-connection through cinema-going practices to watch ‘national’ cinemas. The existence of a functioning cinema hall would have helped to bond the homelands of the migrants with their new homes, providing a space where emotions could be collectively lived. However, the restoration and therefore the access to this communal space has been delayed and therefore the emotions are melancholically elaborated and re-lived in private spaces which are a blend of concealed experiences at home. Cinema-going in the Esquilino is rather a ‘non-going’ process, which is forced into spatially and temporally personal spaces and enjoyed privately. As confirmed by the posters (Figure 3-3 to Figure 3-6), the film screenings are occasional and therefore the cinema-going experience is an anticlimax of this social ritual.

River to River Florence Indian Film Festival: Reflecting on a Festival

The research on the alternative spaces where popular South Asian films are screened resulted in the sighting of two film festivals: the River to River Indian film festival held in Florence and the Asiatica Filmediale held in Rome. The Asiatica Filmediale is an annual festival focusing on art-house films from the whole of Asia, with very few films from the South Asian subcontinent, therefore offering very little content for an in-depth consideration in this section. Therefore, the analysis will be directed to the River to River Indian film festival, which is dedicated entirely to the South Asian film industries. Although the River to River film festival is organised in Florence, it is important to focus attention on festivals as being gateway for popular South Asian cinema, and particularly Bollywood, to be viewed.

63 During numerous visits to the Apollo Cinema, the building has always been closed and no programs were advertised outside the hall. Later, in 2008 the chance arose to visit the Apollo 11 association. The secretary explained that the cinema was acquired by the Municipality of Rome. However, due to several – imprecise – reasons linked to funding and permits which were not accorded, the restoration did not take place yet.
In 2001, the River to River festival took place for the first time with the following precise intentions:

At a time when commercial Indian cinema benefits from great popularity in Europe, thanks to directors who have been attentive to popular tradition such as Buddhadeb Dasgupta and Mira Nair - the last winner of the International Film Festival in Venice - it seems appropriate for us now to concentrate on the independent films of quality. River to River Florence Indian film festival presents a first reconnaissance of non-commercial cinema which is the low cost independent Indian production. (Translated from Italian) (Marziali and Velo 2001: 3).

Clearly, the festival embraces the logic of rejection and promotes a cinema for the masses, in order to pay homage to the cinema for cinephiles. As Dina Iordanova puts it: “The very nature of the festival as a transitory exhibition venue precludes the idea of flow that is at the root of distribution” (Iordanova and Rhyne 2009: 27). The River to River film festival follows this mechanism indeed. In spite of the undeniable absence of the popular Hindi cinema within the Italian entertainment circuits, which problematise Iordanova’s idea that “Hollywood and Bollywood films do not need the festival network to reach their audience” (Iordanova and Rhyne 2009: 25) the festival celebrates the low cost independent Indian cinema annually. This choice of looking at “Indianness, human interests and dramatic content” (Rajadhyaksha 1985: 149) reflects the attitude, which has characterised the Italian approach to India and its cultural and cinematographic apparatus since 1985. As commented by Lino Miccichè, former director of the Festival del Cinema in Pesaro: “The fascination with India is bouncing from one city to another such as Paris and Avignon; but it is only a casual coincidence that the Pesaro film Festival will host Indian cinema. Pesaro reclaims its own pride in screening ‘diversity’” (translated from Italian) (D'Agostini 1985).

Contemporary to the Pesaro Film Festival, the law regulating the clandestine immigration in Italy, law n. 943 des. was established. The law which initially was comprised of few articles, further on in 1987, was revised and articulated becoming the Legge Martelli (translated as the Martelli’s Law) called after the minister of internal affairs in the 1980s in Italy. Part of the Legge Martelli is collected in the following website curated by RAI – the major Radio and television broadcasting corporation in Italy: http://www.rai.it/RAInet/societa/Rpub/raiRSOPubArticolo2/0,7752,id_obj=32254%5Esezione=associazio
niarete%5Esubsezione=00.html.

This episode is important not only in juridical terms, but unlocks a reflection on the cultural and political opening of the Italian government towards foreigner cultures. In line with the cultural and political happening, the Pesaro Film Festival did not ignore the fascination for the foreign products and included within the program the screening of a few films from India.
The persisting attitude of the festival to ignore and voluntary exclude Bollywood or other popular South Asian films from the program, concurs with the pre-existing approach of distribution and diffusion of popular contents. An example is the Pesaro Film Festival that was held in Pesaro (Italy) in 1985. On a different level, popular Hindi cinema in Rome momentarily underwent a ‘de-popularisation’ with the framing of Bollywood as part of an art-house event on India with a specific audience. The exhibition, called Visioni Indiane dalla mitologia a Bollywood (translated as: Indian Visions from the mythology to Bollywood), was held from the 6th July until the 4th September 2005 at the Squderie del Quirinale in Rome.

The River to River Florence Indian Film Festival is normally divided into sessions, where documentaries regarding travel to India, India as a film subject and retrospective documentaries on the South Asian subcontinent are screened. This organizational format divided into thematic compartments was later adopted by the Roman exhibition at the Squderie del Quirinale. As stated on the website of the festival, River to River welcomes films from the entire South Asian subcontinent. This opens the doors to a wider South Asian community of viewers, rather than ‘regionalising’ the festival even further.

The logo of the festival, visibly mimics the Hindi script (Figure 3-7). The Shirorekha serves as a support for the letters written in Roman script and undeniably functions as a vehicle for the evocation and construction of Indian aesthetics in Italy.

Figure 3-7: The logo of River to River Florence Indian Film Festival.

This is the logo as presented on the website and catalogues of the event, which clearly mimics the Sanskrit and Hindi calligraphy. (http://www.rivertoriver.it/).

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65 The exhibition at the Squderie del Quirinale proposed, de novo a ‘Bollywood Season’ where a few films on India, documentaries on trips to India and the popular Hindi cinema were indistinctly screened; Bollywood was merely a facet of India, decontextualised by the globalised discourse which depict Bollywood within a wider context of “cultural conglomerate”. Rajadhyaksha, A. (2008). The ‘Bollywoodization’ of the Indian cinema: cultural nationalism in a global arena in The Bollywood Reader Dudrah, R.K. and J. and Desai. Maidenhead, Open University Press: 190-200; 192)

66 Shirorekha is the line in the Hindi and Sanskrit scripts connecting the different letters to form words.
In order to understand the mission of the festival, which was unable to cover what was lacking in the “current cultural scene of films” (Müller 2000) in Italy, an interview in the form of a questionnaire was sent to Ms. Velo. The extract of the written interview (translated from Italian) is provided below:

M. A.: what is the turnout of the festival and who is the audience?
S. V.: During the last edition (2007) with one cinema hall available and seven days of projections, we had 2200 spectators. The target of the festival is varied: there are insiders (such as film directors, journalists, other festival’s directors, etc.), students, India-lovers and cinema-lovers, curious people and aficionados that follow the festival every year.

M. A.: Thus, is this a festival for a restricted audience or do you think it offers a wider reception than a festival of film d’essai – Art Cinema?
S. V.: This is a festival essentially for cinéphiles, but in recent times it is opening up more and more. Surely it is not a commercial festival.

M. A.: Is the festival involving South Asian diasporic communities in Italy in need of reconnecting with the homeland, or is the intention to be exclusively a window promoting foreign cinema? If yes what are the terms and the cultural strategies to accomplish this status?
S. V.: The festival aims to promote ‘other’ cinema increasingly referred to as ‘other’ in recent years. However, over time the festival would also like to reconnect with South Asian realities and their homeland. This happens with the films screened in a dedicated section, which are becoming progressively more known. There are films that are screened in the section ‘competition’ and these belong to the independent South Asian cinema too, which is far from the Bollywood circuits. These films show realities, which South Asians do not particularly love. Perhaps one day the festival will have to screen Bollywood films to demonstrate the difference between the two genres…Furthermore, South Asian communities do not come to River to River because they would rather buy a pirated DVD where there are three Bollywood films recorded and they watch it at home with the family, eating and relaxing, exactly in the same way they do in India. (From part of the written interview with Ms. Velo).

The final statement clearly displays a conceptual misunderstanding of the cinema-going habits in India. As affirmed by my respondents, going to the cinema to watch Bollywood
films was an integral part of their leisure. Despite the attempt to produce a ‘unique’
festival, as claimed by Ms. Velo, the problem that the festival raises clearly regards the
audience. Who are the intended participants and the audience for this yearly festival?
Certainly not the South Asian masses! As the interview dramatically highlights, River to
River delivers a sense of ‘otherness’ in the eyes of local spectators and continues the
practice of cultural exclusion of popular entertainment for the South Asian diaspora. The
festival, like other public events held in Rome, does not provide the possibility for South
Asian migrants to reconnect with their homeland, thereby enabling melancholia to
pervade their everyday life.

As demonstrated by the catalogues of the annual festival (Marziali and Velo 2001;
Marziali and Velo 2002; Velo 2003; 2004; 2005; River to River 2006; 2007; 2008) the
program offers a range of films which are not only representative of a kind of
cinematography, viz. Bengali art-films, but are often combined with non Indian films
telling stories about India. This seems to follow the mechanism of representation, which
Rajadhyaksha summarises as follows:

There seems to be increasing pressure from foreign responses…to keep
this ‘film-as-object-of-anthropological interest’ attitude alive. I think this
is part of the pressure to find viewpoints towards the ‘fascinating’ in a
strange region that are not contemporary and international. Strange
argument – a representative from the Hawaii festival said their festival
motto was ‘Where Strangers meet’ and hence Herzog’s Where the green
Ants Dream was a perfect film for them to screen (Rajadhyaksha 1985:
151).

As Rajadhyaksha stated regarding the tenth International Film Festival of India held in
Bombay in 1985, the Hawaiian representative believed in the festival as a space where

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67 As presented in the first catalogue among the eight films presented, two were documentaries
released by Tom Coeman (Bollywood the Indian Dream – 2000 – Belgium) and the second one was a
documentary released by Lula Buarque de Hollanda (Filhos de Gandhi – 2000 – Brasil). On the second
catalogue of the festival was screened Twilight Men (2002) directed by Roko Belic and Folco Terzani and
a vast retrospective dedicated to Ritwik Ghatak. On the third catalogue there are the following films: East
is East (directed by Damien O’Donnell – UK – 1999) In Othello by Roysten Abel (India – 2003), L’India
Vista da Roberto Rossellini (directed by Roberto Rossellini – Italy – 1959); furthermore films from Nepal,
Bangladesh and Pakistan such as Bhedako Oon Jasto... (directed by Kiran Krishna Shrestha – Nepal –
2003) Itihaas Jinehara Laagi (directed by Pranay Limbu – Nepal – 2003), Swara (directed by Samar
Rater Kotha Bolte Eschechi (directed by Kawsar Chowdhury – Bangladesh – 2001)

68 The original title was Wo die Grünen Ameisen träumen (1984) dir. by Werner Herzog.
foreigners meet and endorsing what River to River addresses: ‘foreigners’ and ‘estrangement’ as explained further. The festival mostly welcomes ‘other’ cinema (as literally mentioned by Ms. Velo and reported by the above interview) engaging with stereotypical concepts of historical and cultural differences, poverty and exotification of the South Asian subcontinent. At the same time, it creates estrangement among the viewers due to the association of different meanings by each type of audience (Cinephiles, locals and South Asians). The framing of the South Asian subcontinent as an ‘object-of-anthropological interest’ falls within the depiction which is “obsessed by the notion of ‘Indianness’, human interest and dramatic contexts” (Rajadhyaksha 1985: 149). These choices increase the erroneous cultural belief, which portrays India as an exotic land, reinforcing melancholic patterns of representation and reception; therefore, Indian culture functions as an “explanation for all things Asian” (Alexander 2008: 5). This perhaps explains the paradox of the title of the festival. Despite screening films from the entire South Asian subcontinent, it is called an ‘Indian film festival’. Furthermore, the Italian audience continues to see India and its imagery as the land of suffering, poverty and of snake charmers, hence relying on pre-existent patterns of imagination and aestheticisation which taps into the work of Italian directors of yesteryears. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. In addition, the following response from Ms. Velo epitomises the festival’s notion of mimesis (translated from Italian):

M. A.: If you were to define the intellectual-cultural mechanism beneath the ideology of River to River, would you define it as a festival, which intends to ‘evocate’ or ‘appropriate’ a cultural Indian legacy?
S. V.: I would definitely say that the festival does not intend to ‘appropriate’ but I would see the work of the festival more as evocation. Or perhaps not even that. I would rather say that the festival is like a display window, in which we try to show and live a piece of India in a week.

Ms. Velo’s point of view strongly neglects what Sumita Chakravarty writes about the importance of popular entertainment for the Indian diaspora:

Indian commercial cinema has come to symbolize an order of psychic investment for immigrants of Indian origin all over the world…in a fundamental sense, evoke the problematic scenario of originary desire: the desire of origins (with the accompanying discomfort, pain, and guilt)
that lies at the very heart of the attempt at new identity formations on the part of displaced peoples (Chakravarty 1993: 3).

Notwithstanding the festival being intrinsically identical to the logic of the ‘affair’ deployed in the Esquilino by the Apollo 11, it constantly disengages with the ‘popular’ need of experiencing cinema-going as a pure form of entertainment, which would provide “an emotional and material link that needs to be reaffirmed due to the distance from their…homeland” (Kaur 2002: 309). Therefore, River to River, by screening art-house films for the élite, excluded a large part of the crowd, supporting the marginalisation of South Asian migrants in two distinct ways: culturally (by deliberately omitting the commercial cinema from the program) and socially (by negating an occasion for togetherness and entertainment to the South Asian masses which however, does not solve the problem of providing a constant and regular venue for habitual cinema-going practices).

**Negotiation of Melancholy: Memory, Senses and the Meaning of Spaces**

No one more than Fellini understood that going to the cinema and finding oneself in a dark room to contemplate moving images, is like lying on the bed and dreaming, like going back into the total passivity of the mother's womb, in a kind of collective masturbation, legitimised by the laws of the imagination (Translated from Italian) (Bispuri 2003: 48).

As reported by Bispuri, the Italian director evoked the sensations that the cinema-going experience provides on a physical and psychoanalytical level. He suggested the enchanting idea of watching a film as a dreaming and fascinating affair, which takes the spectator passively back to a beloved place. The place suggested by Fellini is that of birth; the director described the physical experience of going to the cinema-hall as going back into a mother’s womb. This metaphor can be used to symbolically explain the experience of South Asians watching Bollywood films collectively in a cinema hall; the pleasure of shared viewing fuels reconnections with their homeland, through the acts of dreaming and recollecting familiar images.

The idea of evocation of what was lost is powerfully tied to the definition of melancholy put forward by Freud in “Mourning and Melancholia” (Freud 1998). Freud distinguishes the two terms mourning and melancholy as follows:
Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on…[whereas in melancholy] the object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love…[and when a loss of this kind has occurred] one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost…This would suggest that melancholia is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness (Freud 1998: 234).

In his analysis of mourning and melancholy, Freud identifies loss as the reason for mourning and melancholic reactions; the latter are identifiable with loss of love or other kinds of emotional abstraction such as the love for freedom, independence and love for the ‘lost’ (or faraway) country.

As confirmed earlier by the outcome of the questionnaire, the majority of the respondents watched Bollywood films at home; this was further supported by the testimonies provided by the families observed and interviewed through participant observation. According to the data that emerged from the participant observation, watching Bollywood films was a form of ‘commemoration’ of loss, which was kept alive through weekly rituals of cultural recollections. The analysis that Freud offers of melancholy, as being an emotional reaction to the sense of emptiness and absence of something familiar, robustly substantiates the findings that emerged from the questionnaire results and participant observation.

The homes of Mr. B. S. and Mr. M. K. were adorned and packed with decorations which were devoid of Italian traits; the spaces were adorned with decorations typical of Indian aesthetics, such as: posters of Hindu divinities, ‘altars’ for Hindu poojas and images of Bollywood stars. However, it was not possible to fully document these spaces for the purposes of this thesis, as the hosts denied permission to photograph their private dwellings. The cultural mediator explained that this could have been due to two major reasons: (a) a feeling of invasion of personal space, (b) the intolerances and xenophobic representation of immigrants by the media as discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The sensorial space of the houses observed was vigorously extended beyond the architectural dimensions, the affective montage of odours, tactility and sounds gave momentum to the evocation of memories for the families, resulting in the interiorisation and domestic representation of lost object(s). This kind of sensorial montage and its
characteristic as being melancholic finds support in Benjamin’s words: “All purposeful manifestations of life...have their end not in life, but in the expression of its nature, in the representation of its significance.” (in Eiland, Jennings et al. 2002: 34). While on the one hand, ‘the loss’ is clearly embodied within the rituality of their customs epitomised by distinctive practices, on the other hand, these practices which in Benjamin’s terms are ‘purposeful manifestations’ – of their sensorial life in India – do not cease to exist within their lives and therefore within their cultural context of manifestation and origin. Rather, they exist within the moment of demonstration and significance outside the original context, therefore missing their cultural utterance within the everyday life away from home. As emphasised by Benjamin, the cultural ‘manifestations’ of their life away from India finds its end in the representation of the significance within their homes abroad.

The loss and the consequent melancholic responses and representations are strongly characterised by an internalisation and elaboration, which happen on a personal level and expand differently and subjectively (Freud 1998).

**Specificities of loss. An aesthetic of emotion in private space**

In 1988, the Italian director Giuseppe Tornatore filmed *Cinema Paradiso*\(^{69}\), which screened *la grand illusion* that the cinema was able to offer (Figure 3-8). The spectators on and off the screen were intensely catapulted into their own desires thereby offering the possibility of dreaming.

![Two frames from Giuseppe Tornatore’s film Cinema Paradiso.](image)

**Figure 3-8: Two frames from Giuseppe Tornatore’s film Cinema Paradiso.**

The two frames show Totó adolescent (played by Marco Leonardi) who, after filming his dear and far true love Tina (played by Agnese Nano), kisses the projected illusion of her image on the wall and therefore the representation of her absence – Illusion and representation of the absence.

Giuseppe Tornatore’s film functioned similar to many Bollywood films watched by South Asian immigrants in Rome. The emotions in Aradhana, for instance, extended beyond the television screen into the everyday-domestic space negotiating pleasures, memories and absences through melancholic representations of what was missed.

The negative image of immigrants on the Italian television discussed in the previous chapter and their social, political and cultural marginalisation is augmented by the lack of ‘popular’ entertainment. This marginalises them even further, and isolates them from the rest of the community, which deters intercultural communication and integration, and increases their melancholy. As substantiated by 92% of the respondents to the questionnaire, by the participant observation and the festivals, the obligatory and only resource for immigrants to personally re-live, enjoy and experience their national cinema is within the enclosed spaces of their homes. An aesthetic based on melancholic emotional response to the loss of their land, saturates the walls of the houses of the families studied. As mentioned earlier, melancholia is the emotion that shifts from positive to negative attitude and vice versa and it pervades the domestic space of the families visited. This emotion is personally and intensively lived through cultural practices that connect their origins with their new homes. The results gained through the use of participant observation, questionnaire and extended interview with Selvaggia Velo, assert the dearth of communitarian realities for globalised entertainment in Italy and in particular, in Rome.
4. Chapter 4 - Tracing the Filmic-Melancholy: India as a Film-Subject.

A Westerner who goes to India has everything, but in reality gives nothing. India, instead, which has nothing, in reality, gives everything. But of what?

(Translated from Italian)

Pier Paolo Pasolini, from the film *Appunti per un film sull’India*, 1968.

**Introduction**

The study on the Esquilino, in addition to being a sociological research was, aimed at unfolding the emotions and feelings of non-native residents in the Roman quarter. As testified by the results of the questionnaire provided by the South Asian migrants, while represented on the screen (64%), 68% of them did not connect with what was portrayed because it did not speak the ‘popular’ terms of their entertainment. The festivals and the episodic events in Rome (which were allegedly moments of leisure) presented two major issues: a) discontinuity of screenings and marginalisation (in the Esquilino gardens as discussed in the previous chapters) as well as the transitory nature of a festival (Iordanova and Rhyne (2009); and b) intended intellectualism, which set aside the popular entertainment. The latter provided the conceptual grounds for investigating the modalities of encounters between Italy and South Asia (particularly India) and the aesthetic manifestations of these encounters. Consequently, this chapter aims to investigate the patterns of representations of India in Italy and why these representations do not connect with the immigrant South Asian community. Furthermore, it is pertinent to identify the existence of any representational patterns to facilitate the debate on the contemporary audio/visual products circulating on Italian television, following the boom of Bollywood in Europe. This is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

In order to examine the existence of these patterns of representation, the imagery created by Italian directors while narrating India on the screen has been observed. Directors such as Roberto Rossellini, with the film *Matri Bhumi* (1959), Pier Paolo Pasolini, with the
short documentary *Appunti per un film Sull’India* (1968), Michelangelo Antonioni with *Kumbh Mela* (1977) and Gabriele Salvatores’ *Nirvana* (1997) will be considered.

The aforementioned directors were chosen for two important reasons:

(a) In a 2007 workshop titled *Using Moving Image Archives in Academic Research* which consisted of several presentations dealing with recent concerns regarding conservation and film archiving, Dr. Stephen Hughes from SOAS, University of London presented a paper entitled ‘Working on the limits of the archive: anthropological strategies for the historiography of early cinema in India’ which dealt with the issues related to the access of film archives in India and the challenging state of film conservation in the subcontinent. His speech was studded with captivating references to the early cinematographic linkages between India and France and India and Germany. Following his presentation, we had a tête-à-tête conversation and I asked Dr. Hughes if he ever encountered or recollected information on a potential association between Italy and India. He mentioned that short footages exist, but they are, difficult to access, locate and hence view, but that they are of inestimable interest as they have been unexplored. While on the one side this talk stimulated my interest in understanding the historical connection between the two countries therefore opening new doors to unexplored portions of the history of co-production and offering insight on the construction of melancholy as a pattern of representation of India in Italy. On the other side, due to funding restrictions and schedule, I was unable to pursue this avenue of research and investigate the origins of the relationship between the two countries. A fieldwork in India might have unearthed the emotional and aesthetic liaison of these industries since the silent era; however, this project is on my personal research agenda for the future.

(b) Secondly, the above directors were chosen because they are contemporaries. The existence of contemporary documentaries and docu-fictional films such as *Sotto il cielo di Ahmedabad* (2007) dir. by Francesca Lignola and Stefano Rebecchi in which India is represented through the eyes of emerging Italian directors and presented at the Florence Indian Film Festival or within specific ‘South Asian’ elite gatherings, deprives these visions of a popular essence and marginalises the majority of the audience. Furthermore, the film was not easily accessible. The authors chosen are directors who have distinctly translated the
social, psychological and philosophical concerns of the human being onto the screen; these authors have created a dialogue with the majority of the audience through popular avenues. However, the issues of the selected films are associated with conventional depictions attached to notions such as exoticism and tropicalism, which frames the subject – India – in conservative and often predictable images. The questions that this chapter intends to answer are: How do the narratives of these films contribute to the creation of a pattern of representation of India? Furthermore, is it possible to determine if the directors have maintained an exotic representation of India or have they embraced novel and reformed aesthetics?

The methodologies employed in this chapter are a combination of approaches, which tap into filmic and cultural analysis and interviews, which intend to compensate for and disclose unexplored aspects. The only interview possible was held with Gabriele Salvatores, who recounted his personal experience with India as a genesis for his film Nirvana. Existing material, such as recorded interviews, were used to support the argument for this thesis because personal interviews with the other directors were not possible, due to their demise prior to the commencement of this research. A synopsis of all the films mentioned is offered prior to the discussion about what they offer to the argument of this chapter.

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70 An interesting example of this subtext which sees the ideal dialogue between director and audience is portrayed in the film directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, entitled Nuovo Cinema Paradiso (1988) a film in which the audience is the subject par excellence. Premising that the entire film is played on dialogic perspectives between representation and viewing, the sequence which strongly depicts this interaction is the screening of La terra Trema (1948) directed by Roberto Rossellini. The audience of a remote town in Sicily, other than contesting loudly and vigorously the censure of kiss scenes, experience a profound sense of identification with the subject represented: the life of the fisherman ‘Ntoni’ (Antonio Arcidiacono) who decides to leave the job where he is exploited, aiming to be independent. The choice of Rossellini to employ all amateur actors and actresses, and then set the story in Sicily, reinforces the necessity of the director to play in between a “refined art decadent, and programmatic Marxism” (Malanga, P., P. Mereghetti, et al. (1996). Dizionario dei Film. P. Mereghetti. Milano, Baldini & Castoldi.: 1516). The comments, which disclose self-recognition and symbiosis, are the voices of the masses and the people. The partial viewing of La terra Trema in Cinema Paradiso untangles the effective participation of Rossellini in matters related to the everyday life with the aim to speak directly to the people (Malanga, P., P. Mereghetti, et al. (1996). Dizionario dei Film. P. Mereghetti. Milano, Baldini & Castoldi.: 1517).
Rossellini’s India Matri Bhumi (Mother India): “It is from reality that I proceed in order to penetrate into the interior of things”

I remember the night I left to go to India, I could not sleep. Anxiety, excitement, and also a bit of anguish of the adventure that I was about to attempt, provoked my insomnia. (From an unsent letter written by Roberto Rossellini about his journey to India) (Gallagher 1998: 465).

In December 1956, Rossellini went to India where he spent nearly one year travelling and filming. He produced two major works from the material he gathered. The first was a documentary composed of ten episodes dedicated to India and broadcast on French television; the program was titled J’ai fait un beau voyage (1957) (translated as: I had a good trip). Afterwards, the same episodic program was screened by the Italian national television RAI and titled L’India vista da Roberto Rossellini (1958) (Translated as: India as seen by Roberto Rossellini), which the director said was “the land of realism par excellence” (Gallagher 1998: 473). Both transmissions were original and spontaneous, with different interlocutors (Rohdie 2000). The ten episodes were broadcast in Italy between January and March 1959 within the program entitled I Viaggi del Telegiornale (Translated as: The Journeys of the News). The program was released in a studio and was hosted by the journalist Marco Cesarini Sforza and Roberto Rossellini (Figure 4-1).

Figure 4-1: Interview between Rossellini and Marco Cesarini Sforza during the I Viaggi del Telegiornale. Image conserved at the Cinema Massimo in Rome.

The episodes of Rossellini’s film were introduced by the journalist and given further commentary by the director. L’India vista da Roberto Rossellini was a kind of talk show

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71 The sentence was pronounced by Roberto Rossellini and reported by ‘Entertain’ page six in an article written by Hoveyda and Rivette. This translation in an abridged version of the interview with Hillier, J. (1985). "The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave." Cahiers du Cinéma 1: 212.
about India imbued with personal, historical and cultural memory of the director. The interaction of Rossellini with Marco Cesarini Sforza was dynamic and characterised by constantly changing roles. The director, by being an interviewee, a narrator and a spectator presented his own India under various perspectives filtered through his melancholic viewpoints. As emphasised by Michelone and Rohdie, Rossellini stimulates the recognition and interpretation of the images through verbal emphasis in order to encourage the representation of India as an open and indefinite subject (Michelone 1996; Rohdie 2000).

The second major project largely used footage from the first work for television, adapting and structuring the images in a fictional narrative for a cinematographic screen; the film was entitled *India Matri Bhumi* (1959) (translated as: India Mother Land). Rossellini defined the two products *L’India vista da Roberto Rossellini* and *India Matri Bhumi* as a documentary and a contemplative work of poetry (Rohdie 2000). The episodes released for the television consumption acted as a set of notes from which *India Matri Bhumi* took form; the adaptation and rewriting was considered as an elaboration and fictionalisation of the documentary presented for television. Nine years after the Indian independence, *India Matri Bhumi* recounts the history and stories – narrated in four episodes – of the subcontinent “crawling with people inhabiting the old and the newly independent India” (abstract from *India Matri Bhumi*).

**Introduction**

*India Matri Bhumi* begins with images of Mumbai. A pan-shot of the city illustrates the crowds in the city, people in movement “le persone si addensano e formicolano” (translated from Italian as: *people crowd together and swarm* – abstract from the film). A voice-over (which is the narrative voice of Pasolini) emphasises the density of people in India comparing them visually to a nest of swarming ants. Pasolini recounts the variety of races, religions, professions and classes in India post-independence. The commentary underlines the differences that exist in India and narrates the stories of tolerance that holds these differences. The introduction to India is noisy and embedded in the deafening traffic of cars and swarming of human beings; the soundtrack is composed of rhythmic, loud, syncopated drumming and the images are stitched together through a fast montage, which joins the scenes. The combination of these filmic elements conveys a strong sense of movement and change; the historical changes of
India and the evidence of the social resurrection from the British colonisation impressed the visionary sensitivity of Rossellini. The director represented India through pauses and reflection, which moved between the sweet memories and the bitter legacy of the colonial period. However, by the end of the introduction, the voice-over informs and reassures the spectator that the purest Indian life is the one experienced in the villages.

Names of the cast members were not available. However, a reference to this missing information was supplied at the beginning, which mentioned “the actors are all non-professionals who were chosen in the places where filming took place” (translated from Italian – abstract from the film).

**Episode One**

This episode is focused on rural India (in an imprecise location); fields and rivers surround the land. The life of an elephant is intermingled with that of a man, its mahout. The narrator informs the spectators that the young mahout falls in love with the daughter of the head of a troupe of travelling puppeteers. She shyly responds. The love story between the young couple is interchanged with images of the elephant, which comes closer to a female elephant. With the help of a schoolmaster, the mahout is able to obtain a proposal letter, which the schoolmaster writes on his behalf. A marriage is arranged. Two months later, the female elephant is pregnant and must separate from the rest of the bull elephants who trumpet at their separation. The wife of the mahout is pregnant too and she leaves to go to her own village accompanied by her mother.

**Episode Two**

This episode begins in the foothills and valleys of the Himalayas. The narration moves to the holy city of Benares with its steps leading down to the Ganges, the place where the cremation of corpses and last rites take place followed by the dispersion of the ashes in the river. The raconteur highlights the continuity between life and death in India. The camera moves towards a river parallel to the Ganges and the site of a hydroelectric dam nearing completion. The narrator shifts to the actor who is an engineer working on the Hirakud Dam project. The man, his wife and their child are in the administration office where he receives his last payment. Bidding farewell to the site, he takes a ritualistic bath in the lake. There is a final banquet with friends and colleagues. His wife is upset as
they leave Hirakud and the couple argue. Finally, he stops and calls her gently, after which they walk away together with their child.

Episode Three

The camera tracks the nearby fields of cultivated rice cultivation with an appropriate voice-over. The narration then shifts to an eighty-year-old man who has lived next to a forest and with animals all his life. He wakes up in the morning beside his wife in joy and tranquillity. The old man comments on the devotional side of the woman that performs the Puja to Lord Ganesh every morning. Every day he takes a walk in the forest with his two cows; he smokes a cigarette and finds his closeness to nature. A tiger then comes into view, which walks close to the old protagonist and is framed as part of this uncontaminated forest. A sudden noise disturbs and alarms the man and the nature around him. He finds traces of blood in the forest and a wounded tiger; he knows that a wounded tiger is dangerous. That night a tiger kills a man. A meeting among the residents of the village is held, where it is decided that the tiger has to be hunted down. The old man wakes up early the next morning and goes to the forest. There is a forest fire, which chases the animals away including the tiger to another forest where the animals might be safe. The episode ends with the old man commenting: “The world is large. There is room in it for everyone”.

Episode Four

The protagonist of this episode is a monkey. It begins with a terrible heat wave and its devastating effect on animals and humans. A man and his monkey are walking through an arid land with vultures circling overhead. The monkey (called Ramula) and its owner are travelling as fairground performers. The man collapses due to the heat and dies; Ramula is frightened and runs off. The monkey arrives in a village where there is a circus and seeks to make contact with other monkeys, but is rejected as they smell the scent of humans near the lonely Ramula. It tries to make contact with a human; however, it is rejected once more. The narrator indicates that the monkey is then adopted by a circus owner and starts performing again on a trapeze.

Subtended Emotion and Narrative(s)

Each shot in India Matri Bhumi provokes innumerable visual and emotional reverberations, which circularly inspire other shots without moving away from the
original theme of the integration between nature – represented melancholically – and man whose life is regulated by contemplation and a full acceptance of nature.

The film represents India as being devoted to animals by including them in three of the four episodes. However, the second episode was particularly engaging. The protagonist of the episode, following the tour of the gigantic installation of the dam at Hirakud, performs his ritual bathing, at sunset, in the artificial lake, which was created during five long years of work. This shot appears as the finest shot of *India Matri Bhumi*, with a beauty and iconic richness, which looks beyond the result of its plastic qualities and arrangements. The scene appears as a summary of the film, showing a fusion of the old and the new, of man and nature and of the present that meets the past through a liberating bath that symbolises the blending of past memories and the tangibility of the present. The realisation of *India Matri Bhumi* reconnects with previous works of Rossellini such as *Viaggio in Italia* (1953) and *Stronboli Terra di Dio* (1949), but at the same time, it represents a landmark and a change of register in his work (Padgaonkar 2008). Rossellini’s modification of aesthetic, narration and *mise-en-scène* in his prior works were clearly benchmarked by the adjustment of his lifestyle which had been lived entirely in Europe; for *India Matri Bhumi*, the director decided to live abroad, in India, a choice which profoundly impacted his project on India and redefined the dramatic conventions of the film story (Guarner 1970; Aprà 1991, Padgaonkar 2008).

The first episode frames the visual methodology of the film; this is based on the resonances between shots and abridgements in the narratives, which are extended on multiple personal levels such as the reflective, melancholic, introspective and contemplative, all ‘emotional devices’ that elaborated the relationship between nature and mankind. The film is intensely pervaded by these different levels of understanding that overwhelm its subject. The film appears to be determined by a strong melancholic emotion, which encapsulates not only the relation between man and nature or the memories and the dreams of the protagonists, but also it unravels the interlacing nature of the film themes with Rossellini’s personal life during the making of the film (Padgaonkar 2008, Rombi 1996; Russo 2007). The entwining of numerous emotional and personal experiences anchored in the past and the present, filtered Rossellini’s observation of India, occasionally resulting in a bewildered complexity (Gallagher 1998).
Despite being divided into episodes, the film presents an intrinsic unity deriving from the coherence of the director’s thoughts and reflections in which the film is engrossed entirely. *India Matri Bhumi* repeats the stylistic principles seen in *Viaggio in Italia*; the film is entirely constructed on emotional ellipsis and follows a filmic rhythm in crescendo (Aprà 1997a). Despite the opening of the film introducing rhythms, which communicate the fast and cutting-edge life of the new India, the episodes are characterised by a slow shooting (Aprà 1997a, 1997b). In every episode, the footages express a wise and illustrative gentleness about the subject; the camera introspectively and synthetically narrates numerous facets of life in India. *India Matri Bhumi* does not attempt to reach an end, nor does it aim to set the conclusion of a personal search or the definitive and authentic reading of India. Rather, it tends to underline universal dichotomies such as nature and man, old and modern, religious and secular, all glimpses of the contemplation of a traveller/director. The film does not claim to make any definitive judgement on the current reality of the country or its history. The film shows a country that is constantly changing and developing. It was edited in Italy following Rossellini’s long journey; the director, during the screening of the film on television, pinpointed that “the only truth lies in the moment just captured and not in the later moment of montage, which is filtered by second, metabolised reflections” (Rossellini 1959: episode 9).

Rossellini believed that the film had a ‘revelatory sense’ – revelatory of a reality of India and revelatory of his perception, desires and love for the country (Aprà 1997a). The bath the young man takes in the Hirakud dam pinpoints unmistakably the search for equilibrium between nature and humankind; the imaginary bath acts as a melancholic momentum of reflection in order to purify the life and mind as a possible reconciliation of what is lost with what is about to come.

*India Matri Bhumi* unlocked the possibility of reading India, within the Italian context, as a land of melancholic narrations. These narrations were shaped by a personalised vision and approach to the subject and through the actual experiences of the director. *India Matri Bhumi* was, according to Godard, “the creation of the world” (Godard 1959), a new visionary world made of personal and re-elaborated truths.
At the beginning of 1961, Pasolini travelled to India with the Italian writers Alberto Moravia and his wife Elsa Morante. They visited Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other parts of southern India. This first journey to India generated the production of two books; the first one written by Alberto Moravia entitled *Un'Idea dell'India* (translated as: The Idea of India) and the other entitled *L'odore dell'India* (translated as: The Scent of India) written by Pasolini. Curiously, although Pasolini and Moravia travelled together, the book written by Moravia presented a pragmatism and concreteness while describing and constructing India, which differs from Pasolini’s intellectual approach. In Moravia’s work, what matters are not the landscapes and the colourful notations, but rather, the writer attempts to unmask the causes of false opulence and the tragic poverty of the country. Moravia narrates about the degeneration of religious ideas such as the “superstition of Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism that complete this desolate social framework” (Translated from Italian) (Moravia 2000: 38).

Pasolini’s book stimulates, as the title implies, a vast cosmos of senses- the sensorium (Marks 2000) - underlying emotional response and perceivable through reading and imagination. Moravia’s book has the characteristics of an essay, or rather a journalistic report, while Pasolini’s work has the feel of a poem that offers a panorama of feelings analogous to the sense of sacredness that he found in India (Pasolini 1990). Moravia remarked that the vision of India presented by Pasolini was depicted as poetic, personal and permeated by a kind of contemplative sentimentalism. The writer said that Pasolini’s operation was melancholic and devoted to a peasant-religious world that still existed at that time in India but was beginning to disappear with the industrialisation process (Moravia and Paris 1990).

Pasolini returned to India in 1967; this journey took the director to the states of Maharashtra, Utter Pradesh, Rajasthan and finally to the city of New Delhi. This trip was undertaken in order to do a series of shootings for a medium length film titled *Appunti per un Film sull’India* (translated as: Notes for a film on India). The film was written, directed and narrated by Pasolini and presented in the section ‘documentaries’ at the 25th edition of International Venice Film Festival in 1968.
The voice-over by Pasolini accompanies the spectator for the entire duration of the film:

I am not here to make a documentary, a chronicle, a commentary or a survey on India, but a film on a film. The fundamental themes of this film are the themes regarding the third world, the themes regarding religion and hunger (Translated from Italian) (Pasolini 1968).

*Appunti per un film sull’India* is a film which, as the title exemplifies, is a collection of *appunti* (translated as: notes) to be used in the preparation of a future film (which was never released), on the history of a maharaja. According to an Indian legend the maharaja (the title was not explicitly mentioned), offers his own body to a group of tigers to feed them (this story/legend happened before the Indian independence). Following the independence of India from the British colonisation, the family of the Maharaja disappeared and all of his friends die due to famine.

Pasolini had planned to direct a film on the development of the political consciousness in Asian countries, some of which, like India, were newly freed from colonial regimes and were being governed by democracy. In order to represent the cultural, political and historical changes of the subcontinent, the director used poetic language\(^{72}\) to narrate the local tales which acted as a metaphor for everyday life animated by “Sentiments violently and perhaps (over)ambitiously revolutionary, so revolutionary that making the film itself became a revolutionary act, naturally and absolutely free, almost like an anarchy” (Translated from Italian) (Golino 1981: 34).

The above statement clearly frames *Appunti per un Film sull’India* as a film based on melancholic perspectives. While on the one side, the film is structured on personal contemplation and on a poetic language, on the other, Pasolini does not abandon his own political approach and the ideology that are characteristic of his early cinema – acts which are melancholic *per se* – and powerfully represented in films such as *Accattone* (1961) and *La Ricotta* (1963).

Returning from India, Pasolini presented his idea of a film on India to several producers, who disregarded his proposal. Despite numerous rejections, he was able to produce his film with the support of RAI; it was broadcast on channel TV7. Pasolini edited a series of footage of Bombay’s streets and its peripheries; he created a montage of interviews

\(^{72}\) The desire to communicate ‘messages’ through metaphors and poetic language was the pivotal characteristic of the cinematographic language which Pasolini employed during his last years as director before his premature death. Ferrero, A. (1998). *Il Cinema di Pier Paolo Pasolini*. Roma Marsilio.
with common people, intellectuals and personalities from the entertainment industry such as the director M. K. Abbas and the screenwriter Mohan. The elegiac harmony of the villages presented in Pasolini’s film embodied the intention of the director to escape from the idea of releasing a mere documentary. Pasolini was also confronted with his own poetic conception of history, politics and societies, which governed the entire nucleus of the film. The characters were non-professional actors and part of the crowd who conferred a neo-realistic nuance to the nature of the film. Images of poverty and death are alternated with images of the social rebirth of India post independence. The “film within the film” (Gallagher 1998: 119) informs that the family of the Maharaja, now in Varanasi, renounces prosperity and wealth preferring idealism, austerity and reality. The sequence ends with the comment which forms the epigraph to this day to the Westerner: “An Occident who goes to India has everything, but in reality gives nothing. India, instead, which has nothing, in reality, gives everything. But of what?” (Translated from Italian in epigraph). These were the final lines spoken subsequent to the scene of a body being carried to a funeral pyre.

The book L’Odore dell’India ends similarly. On a cold wintry morning, Pasolini and Moravia, are warming themselves close to a fire around a group of friends of a deceased person. The book ends as follows:

Thus, comforted by the warmth without giving offence to anyone, we come up very close to the unfortunate deceased being almost burned with the flames of his cremation. Never, anywhere, at any time, in any action during our entire trip to India, did we experience something with such a great sense of communication, of peace and, almost, of joy. (Translated from Italian) (Pasolini 1990: 213).

Appunti per un Film sull’India is structured by analogies and the mirroring of time and space already elaborated in the book. The connection with his book establishes the temporal and spatial frames for the film: the past appears to be in constant dialogue with the present and future, being expressed through a coherent and logical collage of images. Reminiscent of his previous films such as the Edipo Re (1967), the images, but particularly the sounds, constitute a pastiche of dialects between past and present practices. Pasolini’s film on India is a collage of textual and historical instances and internal analogies such as: the repetition of likenesses. The truth and reality of Pasolini’s image of India does not take a mere fictional path, since the fiction is dismembered and
disjointed, but it also takes a stylistic one. The director emphasised the incantatory type of speech in order to construct a narration, which divert from the ‘tale-like’ plot of the film, with the sounds and the rhythms of dream-like situations. As noted by Rohdie, Pasolini’s language was: “Artificial, constructed, mirrored, imitative, a dream language and producer of dreams…Pasolini’s dream language tended towards the paranoid. It was declarative, hectoring, exhibitionist, prophetic and absolute” (Rohdie 1995: 47).

Indeed, Pasolini regarded cinema as entirely and inherently dreamlike and contemplative (Ghirardini 1987; Ferrero 1998). His films were conceived and edited according to the technique of complex collages, which produced a non-linear and non-commercial narrative. The collage, like an act of remembering, became an intrinsic part of the voyages, “through a maze of reflecting analogies” (Rohdie 1995: 48). The tales are embedded and superimposed in films such as Appunti per un film sull’India and Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte (1974). Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte – aka The Arabian Nights – is inspired by an old, mysterious and ‘exotic’ tale of the Middle East. Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte was inspired by a dream Pasolini had during his last period as a director. The films of Pasolini in the 1970s followed the idea that “the truth does not reside only in one dream but in many dreams” (Morandini 2009: 305). The protagonists of Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte, are a young couple Nur-ed-Din (Franco Merli) and Zumurrud (Ines Pellegrini) who are dragged along by the force of fatality and absolute feelings73 (Ferrero 1998), similar to the invisible protagonist of Appunti per un film sull’India.

The background story of the maharaja in Appunti per un film sull’India appears to be framed by a poetic language like Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte; the two films are encapsulated within the same melancholic and introspective structures fostered by unconditional, unreserved sacrifice and total emotionality. The journey and the traveller as narrative expedients in the two films are wedged by melancholic feelings, which are unable to find an outside or beyond space of expression to the vortex of fiction, which binds the films and their aesthetics. The diegetic worlds captured and created by Pasolini, particularly in Appunti per un film sull’India, were phantasmagorical and existing in “non-time and before-time” (Ferrero 1998: 78). The language of the diverse worlds of India is the absolute language of the film, more than the languages of the

characters within the film (Ferrero 1998); Pasolini intended to communicate the message of this film through a non-symbolic, mythic and yet poetic form (Ferrero 1998; Micciché 1998).

Deleuze argued that Pasolini’s films suggested a potentiality of cinema, a form of cinema, which shifts from the ideal to theoretical and metalinguistic and therefore becoming the cinema of poetry (Deleuze 1986; Ferrero 1998). Here, the cinema of poetry is interesting in relation to the discussion of the melancholy as the emotion underlying the representation of India in Italy, and profoundly exemplifies this emotion as being the impetus for the production of Appunti per un film sull’India.

The cinema of poetry contains the subjectivity and the personal feeling of the director and the celebration of art. In Pasolini’s work, subjectivity embraces sensibility, passion and emotion, but not necessarily signification (Rohdie 1995; Ferrero 1998); besides, it aligns the (ir)rational emotions with the rawness of reality. Pasolini’s film appears to be created under the influences of solitude and meditation; both were conditions that he was comfortable using in his projects (Micciché 1998). Sweet-sorrow aspects associated with melancholy are common themes in romantic poetry (Brady and Haapala 2003). The subjectivity of the director and his melancholic contemplation of the subject – India – were merged in images from the past and the present.

The form of Appunti per un Film sull’India would have been the ‘notes’ for a more elaborate film to be made (but never released), which would have employed a structure similar to Appunti: a central fictional story interrupted by a commentary. However, the project for a larger film highlighted initial problems based on the assumption that the fiction within it could not be told adequately and that ultimately, fiction would only exist as an idea and not in practice (Rohdie 1995).

The documentary produced by Pasolini on India was celebrated as a cinema of poetry (Pasolini 2000). The film was regarded as a form of pure art and language; hence, being more aesthetically expressive than meaningful (Pasolini 2000). However, despite Pasolini’s comments, the camera in Appunti per un film sull’India captures the intrinsic meaning of the film, documenting and narrating themes of historical isolation and sacral circularity of life and death, which are images forming a melancholic collage of poetic contemplation.
Kumbh Mela: the Absolute Melancholic

“If you have ever been to Indian cities, they are like Naples only with sweetness (dolcezza), Bombay and Calcutta are especially so” (Rohdie 1995: 42). In 1994, Calcutta dedicated part of the yearly cinematographic festival to Italy and particularly to Michelangelo Antonioni. The cinema hall was crowded and Antonioni was greeted with a standing ovation, from many Indian spectators. Antonioni’s tremendous strength in the face of the disabilities he had as the result of a stroke, which mainly affected his speech, was celebrated. He was decorated with garlands of flowers and a red tika on his forehead (Rohdie 1995). The festival hosted the screening of Antonioni’s documentary on India entitled Kumbh Mela.\footnote{The Kumbh Mela is the "Festival of the Urn" that pours out the nectar of immortality upon humanity. It is a great roving festival that has moved around India for more than 4,000 years, erecting temporary cities along the Ganges River. Millions of Hindus following their faith are gathered every twelve years to wash away their sins in the holy waters. The festival occurs four times every twelve years. The 2001 Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, India was the largest gathering of humanity in recorded history. It was not just the final Kumbh Mela in a twelve-year cycle of festivals. It was the final festival of twelve cycles - the conclusion of a giant 144-year cycle, making "Maha" Kumbh Mela, the Great Kumbh Mela. This 144-year build up of spiritual meaning made it a powerfully auspicious time for pilgrims to bathe in the Ganges. Even the planets and stars joined in, providing heavenly alignments not seen for 144 years. Here, east joined west at the opening of the 21st century. Roughly seventy million people came from all over the globe to pray for peace and rebirth for self and the world, truly a meeting of ancient and future in a remarkable moment. Bultrini, R. (2001). Bagno finale del Kumbh Mela cinquanta milioni nel Gange. La Repubblica Roma.}

Kumbh Mela is a forgotten documentary, made and edited by Michelangelo Antonioni in 1989 and presented at the Cannes Film Festival during the same year. The film did not end by being trapped in dynamics and specificities of the festival circuits. Rather it found a way through the dim époque, which characterised the 1970s in Italy as an alternative and positive example to escape the political tensions within the country. The documentary was eighteen minutes long, and in it Antonioni employed the ‘old’ material collected during his trip to India in 1977 (Micciché 1998). The director travelled around India during the religious celebration of Kumbh Mela – held every twelve years in the city of Allahabad, in central Uttar Pradesh. The festival, as narrated, takes place between mid-January and mid-February, at the confluence of the three holy rivers: Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati. A chaotic arena of worshippers is harmonious depicted. They stand on an imaginary line that connects the river and the sky – a symbolic representation of the meaning of the festival itself – is shown. During that year, the Ganges was running low and there was room on the vast riverbed for the innumerable mass of pilgrims to move and participate to the religious event. To perform the
purification rites, the devotees flow together towards the place where the rivers meet. The film recalls others such as *Gente del Po* (1943-7), *Il Grido* (1957), *L’Eclisse* 1962) and *Il deserto Rosso* (1964) directed by Antonioni in which the water is not only a plastic element of the *mise-en-scène*, but rather a significant component of the narrative, representing the absolute (Tassone 1990:47). Humans and landscapes, shapes and atmospheres change continuously in *Kumbh Mela*. People become part of the landscape through an amalgamation of bodies, water and dust, which characterises the composition of the image. The short film-documentary suggests the strength and fragility of life, thoughts dedicated, like a hymn, to melancholy. The dissolution – the loss – and reformation, as with a phoenix, are the sources of a melancholic beauty of this film in which: “reality is lost in the images and images are lost to abstraction” (Rohdie 1995: 43). Out of such apparent emptiness within which the subjects fade away, new figures take form and new images are born; Antonioni’s film moves delicately along an uncertain line between the abstract and the figurative, the complexity of the image composition and its subjects, the memory and the present.

*Nirvana: a Cyberpunk vision of India*

**Early Contacts with India**

Particular attention will be devoted to the analysis of *Nirvana*, an experimental-fictional film in which India is depicted as being imbued with tradition and progress and presented as the pulsating core of a cyborg diaspora. The reading of *Nirvana* will be conducted by drawing on the theory of cyborg diaspora as per Indira Karamcheti’s definition, which highlights how an “(un)settled disposition of e-lines creates an e-space within which it is possible to meet South Asian communities created by memories” (Karamcherti 1992: 43). In order to explain the depiction of India in *Nirvana*, it is important to elaborate on the historical and cultural premises regarding the interest for Indian culture in Italy, and the development of philosophical concepts necessary to introduce the work about and interest in India of the Italian director Gabriele Salvatores.

Stepping back, it is significant to outline the influence of India in Italy and more extensively the ‘contact’ and interest of South Asian practices like meditation, yoga and the fascination for topics such as spirituality and enlightenment which had begun by the end of the Second World War. In 1945, while Italy was rising from the devastation of
the Second War World, the editor Frassinelli published *Siddhartha*, written by Hermann Hesse. Hesse wrote *Siddhartha* a few years following his long journey to India in 1911. This journey took forward the understanding of Buddhism and spirituality in Europe, highlighting the sensitivity of the writer (Freedman 2009).

The success of *Siddhartha* was not immediate, it became known worldwide after Hesse won the Nobel Prize for Literature for the same book in 1946. The contribution for the understanding of oriental philosophy and practices, and the international success of *Siddhartha* worldwide, is attributed to young people – mostly students – who began seeing Siddhartha, the protagonist, as an icon (Freedman 2009). The protagonist of the book is a boy who experienced a complex and introspective search for himself through rebellious and disobedient behaviours which were against the rules of conduct within his cultural context.

Numerous aspects of South Asian culture and philosophy captivated the Western world. The mysticism and holiness that indistinctly belong to Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and practices such as meditation and devotion to natural elements like water, fire and flowers (particularly the lotus), which were facets of a distant culture, inspired young hippies between in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s (McCleary 2002). The music was one of the most successful channels, which disseminated nuances of India among the young generation of hippies. The sounds evoked by western music were reminiscent of the sounds of Indian instruments such as the sitar, which the Beatles famously used in the 1960s. The sitar was also adopted by Italian musicians but for spiritual purposes rather than for entertainment (Miles 2004; Pollini 2008).

**Salvatores’ View of India**

Like his predecessors, Salvatores visited India and still visits India at least once a year as revealed during a personal interview with the director. The interview with Salvatores took place on the 27th April 2007 and opinions on his vision and perception of India were exchanged, in order to understand his interest and emotional involvement that inspired the film *Nirvana* (1997). As mentioned by Salvatores, the film took place following his personal experience with the Indian land, its aesthetic and culture:

I came to know India through the music and the Anglo-American literature of the 1950s and 1960s. I was fascinated and therefore thinking about India as a marvellous and faraway world. I started to dream about India since when I heard
Indian music and melodies and how these sonorities were crossing western musical genres like Rock Music…I was delighted…India is a venerable lady, who has looked many many times into the well of wisdom and human knowledge, with smiling eyes veiled with misery and melancholy. The latter is the consciousness of the human condition (Translated from Italian - personal interview).

Salvatores’ construction of Nirvana relied on filtered and westernised images and sounds of India, echoing the mediations of the hippy culture. His personalised perception and representation of the subcontinent was emotional and melancholic as the result of an internal and external journey. The experience of Salvatores was profoundly mediated by contemplation as an essential condition of knowledge and acceptance of human diversity.

The numerous journeys of Salvatores to India nourished his desire for shooting a film about India or in India (mentioned during the interview with the director). The high costs of production did not discourage Salvatores from relying on in-studio reconstruction of an imaginary India, which aesthetically mixed images of what he had seen and read about this land.

*Nirvana* was shot in 1997 but did not have success at the box office (Valenti 2001). The Italian audience was not ready to understand the complexity of Salvatores’ cyberpunk vision of India; two very distinct genres were unusually mixed: the exotic-adventure with the cyberpunk in order to produce a sci-fi film. The plot of *Nirvana* begins by setting a time and space: Christmas 2005, in a futuristic megalopolis called l’agglomerato del Nord (translated as: The Northern Agglomeration). The Northern Agglomeration is a multiethnic city organised and divided into sections: the Chinese, the Indian with Bombay city, and the Moroccan with Marrakech city.

Figure 4-2: Two frames of the opening scene from Nirvana, which represents the Goddess Kali.
The opening scene (Figure 4-2) begins with an incessant snowfall on the Northern Agglomeration. Jimmy (Christophe Lambert), the protagonist, is shown sitting alone after his girlfriend Lisa (Emmanuelle Seigner) left him a year earlier. Jimmy is a successful videogame designer who works for Okosama StarrGames, a multinational leader in the field of videogames. His latest game, Nirvana, will hit the stores on Christmas Day. However, despite his professional success, Jimmy is unhappy because his life seems meaningless. Jimmy’s computer is damaged by a virus that has hacked his game Nirvana and the protagonist Solo (Diedo Abatantuono). Solo, has gained consciousness in an imaginary world, doomed to repeat for eternity the same fabricated actions in what is only the appearance of real life. The following dialogue between Solo, Maria – a ‘cyber-prostitute’ (Amanda Sandrelli) – and Gaz-Gaz (Leonardo Gajo) – the fighter who in the game tries to kill Solo – illustrates the awareness and fragility of the entire world in which these characters exist. Solo, tries to hide from Gaz-Gaz and calls Maria using the number given by her the day before:

Solo: Who are you?
Maria: Who are you? You called me.
Solo: My name is Solo. I had your phone number in my head. Have we seen each other before?
Maria: Let me see you! Ah yeah. You must be the Italian who was at Chung Li’s restaurant yesterday. I gave you my phone number. Don’t you remember?
Solo: All this has already happened. There is something weird. I have the feeling that someone is about to pop out. See?
Gaz-Gaz: I found you Spaghetti. I am scoring this point.
Solo: Wait! I know what you are about to do. You will point your pistol, squeeze the trigger and shoot me.
Gaz-Gaz: Good! How did you guess?
Solo: Because it has happened already. You have already come up the stairs, I was telling it to Maria. (Dialogue translated from Italian).

Clearly, Salvatores employs the concept of *Maya*\(^{75}\) belonging to Hinduism and Buddhism; regarding the idea of Maya the director stated the following:

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\(^{75}\) *Maya*, in the Hindu traditions, is the name of the mother of Siddharta, meaning ‘illusion’. 
Maya is an illusion, the reality as an illusion and it is one of the important themes in my movie and also important in the American sci-fi of the 1960s and 1970s. Maya is a world where you don’t know what is real and unreal. (Translated from Italian - personal interview).

This world has now become unbearable for Solo who asks Jimmy, his creator, to release him from this Maya by erasing him from the game. However, a copy of the game is stored securely in the Okosama StarrGames data bank. In order to free Solo, Jimmy has to hack into the data bank and seeks allies to accomplish this task. In the Moroccan district of the Agglomerate called Marrakech city, he finds Joystick (Sergio Rubini), an improbable character who, in this multiethnic cyberspace, speaks with a defined accent from the city of Bari and spends time surfing the web and hacking into data banks of multinational companies. Naima (Stefania Rocca), a friend of Joystick, offers to help Jimmy; she is a young expert in hardware who has lost her memory and can only insert artificial memories into her brain as her own memory. He begins his quest in search of Lisa, and a virus to liberate Solo from his circular cyber existence within the Nirvana game. Salvatores depicts his characters within the Northern Agglomeration in a cyberpunk style as a “consensual hallucination” (Gibson 1986: 84).

The setting of cyberpunk is essentially urban, or at the very least suburban; the earth is depicted as an alien and inhuman space in the future of Nirvana. Environmental catastrophes, social chaos and out-of-control technology are all widely featured. The surroundings become bleak, gritty, garish and noir-ish in a world of fast high-tech society (Robins 2000) and the cyberspace is projected as “the same kind of nowhere-somewhere” (Robins 2000: 135). The cyberpunk city depicted by Salvatores does not have a name, a homogeneous social identity or a geographical location, but it is referred to as “the city” and the spectator only knows that it is located in the North. The agglomeration’s quarter is a place, where multiethnic societies do not co-exist but are rather ghettoised and clearly named according to the culture of origins. The landscape and setting of Marrakech city (where Jimmy finds Joystick) clearly recall the architecture of the Middle East. Looking for a virus able to erase the game Nirvana, Jimmy and his friends move away from Marrakech, heading for Bombay city, another quarter and the heart of the Agglomeration. To reach the viscera of Bombay city, the trio accesses a lift, which descends into the core of the agglomerate: Bombay. There they
meet an Indian man (Avinash Ganesh) who is an expert in the creation of software viruses.

The images of India are presented in a dual form: on the one hand, it is prophetically represented as a technological powerhouse, and on the other hand, Salvatores merges technology with rituality, in which gestures and practices such as Hindu *poojas* portray devotional times and spaces. The whole Indian quarter depicted by the director does not come purely from the reading of India, as filtered by historical events. The numerous journeys of Salvatores in the South Asian subcontinent impacted his personal depiction of Bombay in *Nirvana*. The personal interview held with the director revealed his deep fascination for India; Salvatores shared the story of his first time in Bombay. He explained that his journeys to India were inspirational for the creation of his personal view of Bombay city in *Nirvana*. Salvatores’ anecdote regarding his first time in Bombay began in a taxi. He was sitting in a taxi listening to bhangra music in the background. Outside the window, there were lights everywhere; however, the attention of the director was captured by an enormous gathering of people all around a wooden statue of Durga. Salvatores was witnessing the *Navaratri*, a Hindu festivity, which symbolically celebrates the destruction of evil. The crowded jubilation of Durga, the colourful lights and the Bhangra music in the background created a blend of experiences, which are visually summarised in the Agglomeration del Nord.

His very personal experiences and knowledge of South Asian culture is addressed in the film as follows:

*Nirvana* starts from a philosophical-theological concept belonging to the Buddhist-Hindu practices. I was playing with a videogame with Diego Abbatantuono, my friend in life and the character Solo in the film. Hilariously he told me ‘Do you think that after we switch it off the protagonists of the game go back home and come back again after we switch it on again?’ I immediately thought about the concept of parallel reality, and I began to ask myself questions such as: What do we see that can be real? And what is false? I thought about the Hindu God Nataraja (Figure 4-3) dancing within a circle, and I thought about the concept of

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76 In Hinduism, Durga (the invincible) is a goddess having ten arms riding a lion or a tiger.
77 The Navaratri is a Hindu celebration which sees the symbolic destruction of the evil through the lighting of huge wooden statues with demonic faces. This symbolizes the victory of good over evil, culminating in the release of goddess Durga into a water-body.
reincarnation. I said, well Diego might be true, the protagonist of a videogame dies but if you reset the game one more time he lives again. Solo, the protagonist of the game in my movie, asks his creator to interrupt this cycle of birth and death trying to reach Nirvana towards the annihilation of this cycle.

Bombay city was fundamental in this movie in order to set a multiethnic framework; but there is something special in Bombay city. While the protagonists enter in other quarters easily, through doors, to access Bombay city quarter they have to go down and inside the earth; they have to decide to go there being committed, symbolically, through an inner journey to India (Translated from Italian – Personal interview).

Interestingly, Nirvana offers a multilayered vision of Bombay city (and India) formed by meanings and suggestions; it is the result of tradition, representation of distinctive rituals and beliefs which are blended with dark and noir cyberpunk atmospheres. Conceptually, the space in Nirvana is constructed and formed by layers of significance, the articulation of bodies and expressive forms, emotions, segments, territorialities and by imaginary running lines, depicting spaces without defined borders which are simultaneously identified by names which undeniably suggest specific, geographically distinct quarters. The multidimensionality of the space is not only terrestrial but is linked to the notion of Nirvana. According to the Buddhist tradition, Nirvana is a state in which an individual is free from earthly feelings. The shift from one territory to another, within the film, reflects the contractions and convulsions of thoughts and memories in which the mind flows, in an attempt to reach the state of consciousness about the inexistence of every reality. There is nothing in Nirvana, but only the absence of everything physical.

Differently from his predecessors, Salvatores abandons ‘nature’ as subject. He offers a private and inner vision of Bombay, which appears to be his own contemplation of Bombay. In Nirvana, Bombay city is a mysterious and multilayered place, which leaves behind exoticised connotations, such as excessive coloration, and archetypal elements of an Indian reality made of rural gestures or mythical narrations. Nirvana, as the title suggests, embraces a meta-representational dimension, named by the director as an “other dimension” (Translated from Italian - from personal interview).
Salvatores’ approach to India is visceral and linked “to my vision and fantasy and to my memories, bitter and sweet of my experiences with India” (Translated from Italian personal interview). Furthermore, Bombay city is comprehensively portrayed as the place where extreme physical (and mental) passions occur; by the end of the film, in Bombay city, the protagonist Jimmy makes love with Naima who inserts Lisa’s memory in her mind, creating a translational body-mind experience.

The director Bombay defines the images of Bombay as being dual and alternating (from personal interview). The city, on the one hand, is a collage of emotions, memories and occurrences that take form in Jimmy’s experience; on the other hand, it is the place where the protagonist finds the virus needed to delete the game.

The Indian world of Nirvana is designed through cyber terms and communities, which are interestingly defined by Indira Karamcheti as Cyborg diaspora (Karamcheti 1992). The author employs this terminology regarding the potential community that contributes to breaking the fossilisation of the concept of ‘Indianness’ within a diasporic South Asian community. The notion of “Indian essence that survives despite all vicissitudes and changes of cultural and environmental circumstances” (Translated from Italian) (Gajjala 1998) determines the strength of a community that survives strongly on and through memories. The on-screen revelation of Bombay as a cyborg-city and the presence of several actors of South Asian origins, who perpetuate rites of life and death as melancholic gestures of their lost India, seem to actualise the cyborg diaspora: the formations of imaginary diasporic online communities, or rather the diaspora which continues to reproduce a common diasporic sensitivity based on the melancholy of an imagined India (Karamcheti 1992: 261-276). The depiction of the South Asian diaspora in the district of Bombay in Nirvana appears to link with the image of the migrants
illustrated in the previous chapters; the film predicts the arrival of the first South Asian communities in Italy in the 1990s. *Nirvana* offers a metaphor of the city in the near future, structured in multicultural quarters (similar to the Roman example of the Rione Esquilino) in which the diaspora works and settles. The unfolding of the city and the notion of nirvana is cinematographically disclosed through sub-textual expedients, which establish a kind of hallucinations that enables cyborg-diaspora to make sense of both their actions and circulation of information.

The space of *Nirvana* is the space of memories, which as a matrix, reconnects the real (the memories of a journey to India and from India) with the non-real as an illusion, which is the essence of cyberspace, interconnected with avenues of philosophical and spiritual significance (Robins 2000).

Salvatores concluded the interview by pinpointing his bond and melancholic experience with India:

> India is like the bellybutton or the uterus of the planet, which involves me on a mental level. I love to remember what Nehru once said: ‘It is easy to find a door to enter India, but it is difficult to find an exit door from India’ (Translated from Italian – personal interview).

**Tracing the Filmic Melancholy**

This chapter aims to understand the formation of the imagery of India and its culture in Italy. To further the discussion of the diasporic and emotional formations explored in the previous chapters through sociological enquiry, it is pertinent to try and answer the following question: Does melancholic emotion play a role in evoking pre-existent ideas of India in the minds and memories of the locals? In addition, what are the nuances of melancholy manifested by the directors analysed? Did they contribute to creating a common idea on the representation of India in Italy?

From a theoretical point of view, the study of the directors discussed earlier is essential to establish the existence of an aesthetic based on melancholy, which in all four cases appear to be complex and a multilayered (Brady and Haapala 2003). The question, which becomes pertinent now is: are current representations of India (on the screens) still linked to melancholic aesthetic? In order to understand the aesthetic affiliation with contemporary forms of representation of India (discussed in Chapter 5), particularly
following the Bollywood boom in Europe, the consideration of an emotion and the consequent aesthetic formation – on the screen and through the screen – is necessary. This consideration will attempt to outline if the formation of an aesthetic based on melancholy is currently: a) associated with the contemporary South Asian diaspora living in Italy and particularly in Rome; and b) if there is a clear connection with the emotional pattern underneath the representation of India on the Italian screens.

The depictions of India offered by these Italian directors were based on the amplification of personal visions of India and emotional impact. Albeit expressed and represented through different points of view and dissimilar use of the cinematographic medium, all of them followed common paths such as reflection on the nature, externalisation of extreme feelings, contemplations on the physical and meta-representational dimensions.

The recollection and contemplation of an event and its significance to evocation and memory, highlights the narrative role of melancholy. By unfolding the narrative suggested by this emotion, it is possible to investigate the specificities of how this emotion is conceptually manifested. The subject India is constructed through emotional moments and reflection; by examining the melancholic response of Italian authors to the subject India, one can see that the narrative of the films is replaced with the narrative of their personal sensations and memoirs, which are different nuances of melancholic contemplation.

As Chapter 3 intended to confirm, melancholy is a complex emotion, which is unfolded through transnational experiences. In Roberto Rossellini’s *India Matri Bhumi*, Pasolini’s *Appunti per un film sull’India*, Antonioni’s *Kumbha Mela* and Salvatores’ *Nirvana*, melancholy is the source for their narrations expressed through different modes and sensitivities. The stories contain the bittersweet aspects that are attributes of melancholy (as theorised in Chapter 1 and corroborated by South Asians in Rome in Chapters 2 and 3) and the intermingling of the directors’ views as strata of experiences – synthesised in melancholic interpretations – evoked through reflectivity.

The melancholy that the directors have constructed on screen is not framed in ‘clinical’ terms, which characterised the early definition of melancholy (Burton 1978); there is no representation of despair or depression. Rather, there is a kind of refined or sublimated mellow sorrow and joy, which, through reflection, has brighter aspects and intellectual facets. Reflection, as explained by Burton, implies solitude, a characteristic milieu for
melancholy (Burton 1978). Melancholy and solitude are often expressions of nature that are, frequently used by the Italian directors as an intellectual and cultural retreat from everyday life. Nature, as Rossellini reminds his audience, is the place in which melancholy is evoked and operates through the tantalising paths of remembrance in which he remained wedged, while narrating ‘his’ India on the screen. Nature was the core of Rossellini’s and Pasolini’s work on India in which humans, animals and nature were living in a balanced symbiosis and the essential plot of the drama was unleashed between people and nature or nature and a dream (Gallagher 1998) which weaved a narrative of melancholy.

Rossellini, Pasolini, Antonioni and Salvatores indistinctly narrate about a land in which time plays intermittently with past and present moments, with absences and presences and with memories that are negative and positive facets of remembering. This creates a contrasting rhythm of pain and pleasure. The representation of their India appears to be a fusion of visions generated by the observation and elaboration of ‘alien’ practices and costumes, which fascinate the western spectator and nourish a sense of the exotic, of ‘the never seen’ and ‘always dreamt’ scenarios anticipated by the adventure literature at the beginning of the 1900s with Emilio Salgari’s *Sandokan* (1900). It is worth commenting here on the notion of exotic while attempting to answer a few questions. When Goethe wrote in the Elective Affinities that “You cannot walk among palm trees with impunity, and your sentiments must surely alter in a land where elephants and tigers are at home” (Goethe 1994: 47), was delineating distant habitats of inhabitants who would belong to the imagination of the western readers. Salgari’s books portrayed numerous lands and framed them within western imagery as exotic dream territories to be explored. Is India a land to dream about? Is it an exotic place? What makes a place exotic?

**Notes on the Notion of Exotic**

Peter Mason explains the notion of exotic through an analysis of the process that produces this idea. He mentions several places that evoke the exotic including Samarkand and Nepal (Mason 1998: 1) both distant from the Western countries. Mason explains that the idea of exotic is culturally constructed and ends when actual journeys and explorations take place that weaken the capacity for wonder. However, the contemporary presence of immigrants in Europe from all over the world, the opening up to differentiated kinds of tourism and the repetitiveness of images and itineraries
presented by tour brochures, demonstrate the difficulty and predictability of contemporary thought regarding the exotic. The latter has acquired a *déjà vu* quality and travelling has become mere tourism (Mason 1998).

Within the Italian culture, India and its customs have often been classified as exotic and a land of popular - exotic - Hindi films which are glamorously colourful, glittering and shining.78 These interpretations ‘tropicalise’ discourses on the image of the South Asian subcontinent abroad (Plazzi 2001; B.d. 2002; D.g 2002; Malavasi 2002; Tassi 2002).

The exotic qualities, as argued by Mason, are not factors that exist prior to their discovery but the act of discovery as such, produces the exotic through a process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation of the subject (Mason 1998). The exotic and exoticised lands are not new within the Italian cinematographic panorama.

Documentaries in particular found a fairly large space in the cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. The documentaries produced during the 1950s/1960s in Italy were quite heterogeneous in nature. On the one hand, it is possible to recognise post-Second World War ideas in documentaries with *auteur* such as Rossellini, Antonioni, and Pasolini who embraced a narrative strategy, which tapped into the juxtaposition of fictional and non-fictional methods of narration. On the other hand, there is the ‘exotic documentary’, often reconstructed in a studio or deliberately falsified79 and conceived as a spectacle or spectacularisation of the real (Nipoti 1989: 130), that problematized the legacy of the content narrated and treated the audience as a passive, subjugated uncritical entity.

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78 The examples provided by Mr. Ontani and the aesthetics developed on the Italian television, corroborate this aspect, and is investigated further in Chapter 5.
79 With Regards to the falsification of images famous is ‘the Jacobetti’s case’. Gualtiero Jacobetti, was known within the Italian cinematographic panorama for the realization of ‘videogiornali’ and the film titled *Il Mondo di Notte* (1959). The approach of Jacobetti to the exotic/erotic matter was strongly characterized by crudity and visceral images of violence in name of *Mors tua vita mea* which in all his films was on the background of falsified milieu. Famous are the titles of: *Mondo Cane* (1962) *Mondo Cane* 2 (1963), and the realisation of *Addio Africa* (1966). In December 1964 became famous the case of Jacobetti in Africa while filming the scene of the death sentence of three young African man. The journalist Carlo Gregoretti, on the Italian weekly journal *l’Espresso*, denounced the insensitivity of the film-director and the untrue work conducted by him while filming the event. Jacobetti asked to suspend the shooting because he needed to change the object of his camera due to changing in light. The episode caused indignation and Jacobetti was accused to be the ‘killer’ of the three African guys. The film-maker tried to justify himself saying “I did not kill them, anyway they were going to be executed independently by my work there”. The aesthetic falsification applied in the reproduction of an event, ‘sold’ to the spectator as true scenes, becomes the core of the discussion; besides *Addio Africa* reveal cruel images of violence and death which caused the accusations to Jacobetti on the *Espresso* as follows:

The cultural construction of the exotic in Italy was mostly characterised by the ‘colonial geographic improbability’ depicted in Emilio Salgari’s novels. At the beginning of the 1900s, he was the major source for Italians to access and explore exotic locations. Salgari spent his youth reading the adventure novels of Thomas Mayne-Reid, Gustave Aimard and James Fenimore Cooper. These writers intrigued the young Salgari and inspired him to become a writer. Since he could not travel to different parts of the world, Emilio Salgari decided to ‘visit’ the world through the written word, studying maps and beginning to craft his own legend based on an “imaginary geography” (Dudrah 2001). Salgari circulated the idea that many of his stories were based on his own exploits; his imagination knew no boundaries. The characters that he created were all travellers who tamed the Far East, Africa, India and both poles. However, Salgari is most remembered by the critics for the adventures of pirates such as *Il Corsaro Nero* (translated as: The Black Corsair) and *Sandokan the Tiger of Malaysia*. Sandokan narrates the adventures of merciful pirates who ruled the Malaysian sea. The character of Sandokan, interpreted on television in the 1970s by Kabir Bedi, became incredibly successful in Italy and the rest of Europe.

The captivating way that Emilio Salgari narrated faraway lands by riding on geographic fantasy impressed the minds of many readers and seventy years after the success of the book, *Sandokan* attracted a large number of spectators. Interest in the exotic ‘elsewhere’ (Adinolfi 2008) comprehends and postulates a spatial instance, which gives the possibility of dreaming and imagining the distant lands represented on the screen or narrated by a book. This enhances the power of wonder.

**The Exotic Orient: Said and Mason**

To understand how India has been ‘imagined’ and represented is important to look briefly at how scholars have embedded ‘their India(s)’. The analysis performed thus far, which will continue in the next chapter with the study of contemporary television programmes that have India as subject, indicates a set of specific, repetitive textual and visual practices and narrativities used to produce and construct specific ideas, places and people of South Asia. In Italy, narrative works, particularly Salgari’s books, developed overlapping images and terminology crammed in the language and ideology of the colonisers and colonised. This is the point raised by Eduard Said in his book regarding
the construction of the Orient in literature over a period of time. Said claims that the use of specific languages can instantly produce specific ideological orientations (Said 1993). Thus India, in Italy – through geographical fantasy – embodied the epithet of ‘the Orient’, ‘The East’ and ‘the other’, generating conceptual forms of alienation and exoticism due to the geographical distance. The production of these terminologies problematized the subject of India and its cultural baggage (Mitra 1999). The South Asian subcontinent and its cultural practices are essentialised into conventional representative elements such as the Sandokan phenomenon fashioned through literature and the screen.

Historically, during the illuminist era between the 1770s and the 1800s, the German school (the works of Hegel and Schlegel are significant) initiated the ideological distinction between the Orient and Occident in Europe, and scrupulously focused on the ideological construction of the Orient as ‘the other’. Within contemporary cultural studies, the theoretical problem which sees the sharp distinction between the East and the West, the Orient and the Occident is critically undertaken by Eduard W. Said, who wrote:

Orient is merely imaginative. 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, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial style (Said 1994: 2).

The theoretical background offered by the German school aimed to highlight the philosophical and critical distinction between the two terms Orient and Occident, which embrace the ‘imaginative’ connotation of the exotic. Said’s analysis calls attention to the notions of the Orient and the Occident, the East and West as two concepts ontologically unstable drawn from the human effort to partially identify ‘the other’; this created a dominating cliché of a simplistic definition of ‘the other’ from ‘the Orient’ (or Occident) through ‘exotic’ facets. Said’s point of view seems to present a vision of the globe as a whole, which deconstructs the existence and distinction of ideologies which frame the

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80 The ‘illuminism’, the intellectual movement that embraced Europe in the 1700s, emerged as the enlightening renewal of the world through the use of the reason. The illuminism, aimed “to erase ignorance and superstition of the world, by eliminating the barbaric and irrational residual of the medieval era and of the feudalism”. Salinari, C. and C. Ricci (1989). Storia della Letterature Italiana. Bari, Laterza Editore.
Orient and the Occident. Nevertheless, Mason points out that the Orient and the exotic exist at the moment we speak about it; he explains that these notions are always produced by a process of decontextualisation. Mason explains that decontextualisation is the process which shifts the subject from a setting elsewhere (it is this ‘elsewhere’ which renders the place as exotic) and transfers it to a different setting that is decontextualised and different from the original place (Mason 1998).

In this respect, the notions of orientalism and exoticism appear to be incongruous. Said talks about the image of the orient with geographical specificity that is often interconnected with views of actual domination and political positions. In contrast Mason draws attention to the ability of the exotic to serve the imagination; the human desires involving the ‘emotional’ are shaped into a cultural construction.

**Exotic Melancholy**

By examining the content of the films mentioned and considering how the diegetic spaces were culturally and ideologically constructed, it is possible to extrapolate a set of propositions that sequentially release the emotion of melancholy with all its nuances. Melancholy, as discussed earlier, is a composite emotion which involves shades of other emotions such as love, sadness, pleasure and trepidation and each of these shades may be a response to either the entire narrative or aspects of it, which are typical of longing and evoking. The overall emotions that encapsulate the representation and narration of India in Italy are a combination of fantasies, poetics, idealised and exoticised impressions and sensations, which are the result of contemplative and introspective elaboration of memories. The films exemplified the versatility, complexity and nuances of a filmic melancholia.

As pointed out, the above directors – through different and personalised interpretations – disclose different sides of melancholy, corroborating on the one hand the reading of this emotion as complex and multilayered, e on the other hand, constructing an informative network, or rather an intellectual pattern based on a common tool of representation: Aristotelian contemplation.

Aristotle, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, defined contemplation as the highest form of moral activity because it is continuous, pleasant and complete (Reale and Antiseri 1989; Abbagnano N. and Fornerio G. 1996). Interestingly, Aristotle did not
identify pleasure as being positive, but rather as an emotional fragment that is incomplete without its opposite: displeasure (Fortenbaugh 1975; Reale and Antiseri 1989; Abbagnano N. and Fornero G. 1996; Radden 2000).

The filmic narration on nature and dystopic nature – as in the case of *Nirvana* – consists in the imitation of ‘the real’ according to the dimension of the possible, and the purpose lies in the ‘purification of passions’ through emotional liberation. Aristotle saw pleasure as being operated by art, which is similar to the modern notion of ‘aesthetic pleasure’.

The construction of India and the evocation of melancholia through cinematic language occur according to the Aristotelian aesthetic of pleasure; images of beauty and its opposite, of kindness and cruelty confer on melancholy the complexity of being formed by sets of opposites which shape the fascination for India.

The encounters that the Italian directors had with India were significantly affected by the experience of being away from home for a long time and therefore by being temporary immigrants and temporary diaspora. The journeys of Rossellini, Pasolini and Salvatores, (but not Antonioni), were characterised by extended time in India, journeys wherein the condition of being a tourist was substituted by the one of being *émigré*, a status which generated a ‘missing homeland’ emotion. As Salvatores mentioned:

> I loved India, I felt like it was the remote and rural place where the origins of the world took place. India was the place where all my curiosities could be cultivated and satisfied and many questions regarding the origin of life could be answered. For this reason, Bombay city as narrated in *Nirvana* is in the heart and inside the earth. Bombay city is the core of life and of the origins, a magma of beings in which people, animals, advanced technology and tradition live together. These masses of beings bemused me, and despite my fascination and complete enthralment, I missed my home (Translated from Italian – Personal interview).

Melancholic feelings, which are characterised by the constant mutation and vacillation of positive and negative memories, are established on a personal and communitarian

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81 Plato condemned art for the reason that it would stir up sentiments and emotions loosening the rational elements that dominate it. Aristotle overturned the exact interpretation given by Plato; the philosopher explained that the art does not charge us, but it discharges us emotively, and the type of emotion that it gives a restoration of the human being.
level as ‘private’ and ‘social’ sentiments, which nourishes the immigrants observed at the Esquilino and the directors who were analysed here. The different multiple experiences of the Italian directors in India and the record of their journeys through videos, documentaries and fictional narrations were widely inspired by the variegated facets of India. The features of this land were observed, emotionally absorbed, transposed and played with, in order to create an aesthetic dimension and form, which were culturally and personally filtered by different sensitivities.

The personal knowledge and acquisition of the distant land are carefully bound into a nutshell in the memory of the traveller/film-maker(s); their presentation of India is mediated by personal perceptions that move from being enthusiastic to being unenthusiastic. Their experience, and their emotional ‘waves’ were clearly presented in their depiction of India and its paraphernalia. The experience of the Italian directors in South Asia produces distinct aesthetics and forms, which are intellectually rooted with the sense of loss, the idea of being far and of being interpreters of nature.

Socially and cinematically there is an encoding of pleasure and pain, a condition that Brah called “the question of origins” (Brah 2002: 192) as explained below:

Where is home? On the one hand ‘home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origins’. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality… in other words, the varying experience of the pain and pleasure, terror and contentment (Brah 2002: 192).

Brah’s statement, which theoretically synthesises the above-mentioned assumptions, provides a dialogical frame, which defines the pattern of representation of India in Italy perpetuated culturally and socially on and off the screen. This pattern appears to be shaped by melancholy – the aesthetic emotion – that plays an essential role in the encounters between social, visual and cultural discourses (Langer 1966; Ahmed 2004).

The consequence of the formation of this aesthetic is visible in recent programs broadcasted on Italian television, which I will be discussing in the next chapter, and reflects the current political climate involving matters of immigration in modern Italy. The current politics, culturally and socially, limit (as documented by the activity of the Dhuumcatu association) the life and expression of diasporic subjectivities; the
negotiations for new political, economic and cultural realities are complex. This difficulty is naturally associated with diasporic status in which the homeland is missed. This condition is exemplified by the migrants in the Esquilino – as demonstrated in the previous chapters – and by Salvatores in India.

The common thread that has linked the work of this thesis is rooted in the formulation of melancholy as a representational pattern using the paradigm of ‘the journey’, in which the individual simultaneously ‘leaves behind’ and ‘discovers ahead’. These multiple journeys (the physical and emotional journey of South Asians, the experience of my journey to the Esquilino and the journeys of the Italian directors to India), presented in this research, converge into one journey via a confluence of narratives told through individual and collective memories.

The depiction of the South Asian subcontinent by the directors analysed had an impact on the locals (Italians) through a visual and emotional text, which offered to a selected audience a ‘vicarious’ manner of experiencing India. Nevertheless, these types of films do not appeal to the South Asian communities (nor to a South Asian spectator in a broader sense) who see an image of India that is globally isolated without a transnational flow of people and culture and encapsulated by stagnant positions. Therefore, the films being screened only within the circuits of festivals, renders the subject inactive and unable to fully integrate within a wider commercial circuits.

Instead of being constructed on geographic, anthropologic and ‘scientific’ certainties, India cinematically remains trapped within an “act of memories” (Bal, Crewe et al. 1999), which does not transmit an updated image of the subcontinent in Italy.

**An aesthetic of emotion on screen**

As demonstrated in this chapter – and corroborated by the field work in Rome among the South Asian communities – melancholy acts within a defined diasporic context

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82 It is important to comment the episode which occurred during the conference entitled ‘Re-Presenting Diaspora in Cinema and New (Digital) Media’, held on the 24th – 25th July 2007 at the University of Exeter. I participated at the conference with a paper entitled ‘Be Thought Free and Experience the Nirvana: a Cyberpunk Vision of Indi@’. The paper aimed to investigate the possibilities sketched by Nirvana on and off the screen, in order to establish the formation of new multicultural cinematographic texts. Following the presentation of my paper and the view of a clip showing ‘Bombay city’ from the film Nirvana, a discussion emerged. While I was trying to argue that the representation seen was a synthesis of the director’s memories, South Asian spectators (and academics) replied and highlighted that these images of ‘Bombay city’ were alien to them, further pointing out that these images were narrated through exotic perspectives, too private and personal, which were not speaking to a South Asian audience.
impacting the urban and social space of the Esquilino, and at the same time, it relies on ‘stored information’ – memories – for its aestheticisation. By reconsidering Said’s point of view discussed earlier, the use of a melancholic language to narrate about India on the screen (and out) in Italy has produced a specific ideological direction. This ideological orientation produces a system of knowledge – an epistemology – of India and its culture in Italy, which do not claim the absolute truth or an absolute scientific understanding, but creates a ‘cultural commodity’: a clear representational pattern, producing an aesthetic of emotion. This led to the creation of a standard way of thinking, representing and constructing India (and its population) socially and visually, on and off the screen, in the minds of the locals.

Since these standards were articulated through cinema, and urban texts, it is important to try and answer the following questions: What are the mechanisms underlying the creation and narration of this standard? Are there any references to exoticism, which render the subject melancholic? What causes one to think about India as a distant, maternal and mysterious land? Furthermore, do these standards influence the contemporary audio-visual products, which show the interaction between of India and Italy? The next chapter attempts to answer the above-mentioned questions, offering a reading of contemporary audio-visual products broadcast on Italian television after the Bollywood boom in Europe. The aim is to understand if the representation of South Asians on television challenges the dominant depiction described thus far.
5. Chapter 5: Influence of Bollywood Aesthetic on Italian Television

The French sociologist Henri Lefebvre wrote in his seminal *The Production of Spaces* that “space is whole and broken, global and fractured, at one and the same time” (Lefebvre 1991: 356). While trying to answer questions related to the cultural and aesthetic interaction between Italy and India (which is discussed in the previous chapter), it is necessary to address how the physical and conceptual space of this cultural exchange changes, breaks and mends. Therefore this chapter, bearing in mind both the social and visual aspects of the formation of melancholic aesthetics explored in the previous chapters, looks at recent television products that have been influenced by the overwhelming presence of Indian culture in Europe. This audio-visual reading of contemporary trends seeks to investigate how the diegetic space of Italian screens – following the rediscovery of India through the diffusion of Bollywood cinema – currently speaks about India. This analysis will attempt to explore novel possibilities generated with the fusion of formats in television, and will observe if a melancholic language reinstates the existence of an aesthetic of emotion. For this reason, it is central for this research to acknowledge that the forces that Lefebvre describes as “defining the experience and production of spaces” (Lefebvre 1991: 353) engages with the diegetic space on the Italian screen in which South Asian aesthetics, particularly Indian, have been constructed. The aim is to determine the existence of a representational pattern based on melancholy on-and-off the screen and if it could be due to the lingering presence of the Italian directors discussed earlier. Particularly, the analysis will focus on sitcoms, commercials and television serials as case studies, highlighting how the ‘produced’ on-screen spaces process novel narratives of ‘journeys and encounters’.

Through the theory of the Russian semiologist Jury Lotman and his notion of semiosphere, the possibilities offered by fused formats and the generation of an aesthetic of emotion (on the Italian television) is presented here. Fused aesthetic raise issues regarding cultural engagement with reciprocal (Italian and Indian) subjects and cultural appropriation (Hutnyk 2000); however, the terminology adopted by Hutnyk—cultural appropriation – will be revised in order to understand fusion as one culture being evocative and suggestive on another rather than in ‘appropriative’ terms.

The programs focused on are *Curry Cultura* (2002), *Sweet India* (2004) and *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* (2005). In these programs, the characteristics from Bollywood cinema
such as pervasive colours saturating and overwhelming the *mise-en-scène* and the plastic composition of scenes are typified by vivid and lurid forms. The discussion of an aesthetic evocation rather than a cultural appropriation, in this chapter, raises the following question: is it possible to turn an aesthetic into market opportunism? Or does this aesthetic underpin what Homi Bhabha – invoking Benjamin’s work – calls 'continua of transformation' (Bhabha 1994)?

While selected commercials and television series evidently tapped into aesthetics from popular Hindi cinema, Italy’s renewed interest in India and its visual and cultural paraphernalia began when the Golden Lion was awarded to *Monsoon Wedding* – aka *Matrimonio Indiano* (Italian title) (2001, dir. by Mira Nair) at the Venice Film Festival in 2001. Journalist Mariano Valerio pointed out that, the outcome of Mira Nair’s film was a chain reaction, which exalted India and its visual culture on the boom of Bollywood cinema in Europe. She wrote:

> Today in Italy and in the West, the Indian culture seems to be entering a golden age [see the success of Mira Nair, the novels of Shashi Tharoor or Arundhati Roy and the continuous reprinting of L’odore dell’India by Pier Paolo Pasolini] or better, it seems that the long awaited hybridism, not considered to be the contamination of one culture by another but rather as real fusion, characterises the exchange between two cultures in which both play an active role (Translated from Italian) (Mariano Valerio 2003).

This quote is part of a larger online article regarding the television program entitled *Curry Cultura* conceived and directed by Stefano Pistolini and Massimo Salvucci for the on-demand channel RaiSat. The article highlights the interest that western countries – particularly Italy – have in Indian art, fashion, cuisine and visual culture, in addition to the revitalisation of novels written by Roy Tharoor and Pier Paolo Pasolini. This article describes the tendency to speak about India through mechanisms, which trigger the evocation of this country in the reader through established representational patterns, such as in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s work on India. Mariano Valerio traces the path of the ‘Indian wave’ by exploring cosmopolitan cities such as London, New York and Paris and reports that these cities contain ethnic quarters that are predominantly Chinese, Arabian and Indian with numerous markets and restaurants that emanate ‘exotic’ odours (2003). The image proposed is a cultural and visual cosmos far from being understood.
by the institutional provincialism of Italy which was and still is toiling to acknowledge and culturally assimilate quarters such as the Esquilino in Rome, which is undeniably a piece of this cosmopolitan and transnational mosaic.

At the beginning of 2003, following the boom of *Monsoon Wedding*\(^{83}\) in Italy, Bollywood productions such as *Devdas* (2002, dir. by Sanjay Leela Bhansali), *Asoka* (2001, dir. by Santosh Sivan) and *Lagaan* (2001, dir. by Ashutosh Gowariker) received significant attention at international film festivals i.e. Cannes, Locarno and the Oscar competition in Hollywood. This gave the Indian visual culture a hegemonic aesthetic position in Europe (Malavasi 2002; Spinelli 2002). Even though *Moonson Wedding*, was not a Bollywood production, it initiated the reading of Bollywood cinema as a transnational phenomenon. Similarly, ethnic quarters inhabited by South Asian communities were rediscovered and reconfigured socially and culturally (Gopinath 1995; Dudrah 2001; Brosius 2002; Samgati 2006; Vyzoviti 2006; Goldkorn 2007).

Districts such as the Esquilino, downtown Athens and *le quartier Indienne* in Paris are spaces which, when explored, provide visitors with a variety of non-local amenities and products. Consequently, the interest in South Asian settlements and Indian culture and the increase in the attention for the popular Hindi cinematography captivated Italy as well. Films such as *Asoka*, *Devdas* and in particularly *Lagaan* were dubbed in Italian and were advertised and screened throughout Rome, as confirmed by several respondents in the Esquilino. The new trend launched by the Bollywood aesthetic within Europe and Italy’s newfound interest in India generated the production of programs on four channels of RaiSat (RaiSat Art, RaiSat Cinema, Gambero Rosso and RaiSat Show) in February 2003. The programming on India illustrated and narrated the phenomenon of “cultural fusion” (Mariano Valerio 2003). The meaning of fusion through evocation, between India and Italy, will be discussed extensively in the final chapter.

As mentioned by the author the aim of, *Curry Cultura* was not to be a series of short documentaries on India or on Indian culture; but rather “on how Indians have immigrated resettled and been accepted outside their country, particularly by the Western countries.” (Translated from Italian - personal phone conversation with

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\(^{83}\) The film earned at the boxoffice $30,787,356 worldwide. Italy, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Malta all together were the counties for which the film collected the higher boxoffice which was: Italy $2,207,869 and UK, Ireland, Malta $2,214,809. (Foreign), B. O. Retrieved 18th May 2009, from http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=monsoonwedding.htm.
Massimo Salvucci, 24th October 2006). *Curry Cultura* broadcasted twenty-eight fifteen-minute episodes; the episodes showcased the length and breadth of India ranging from visual arts to cinema, music, literature and gastronomy to architecture. The episodes included interviews with protagonists from the Italian and Indian artistic arena, who were questioned about the idea of the fusion of cultures.

Drawing on testimonies extracted from *Curry Cultura*, the topic of cultural fusion between two countries is further discussed through Jury Lotman’s notion of semiosphere.

**Jury Lotman on Semiosphere**

In this section, the term ‘culture and space’ will be examined under the aegis of Lefebvre and Lotman’s influential works. While Lefebvre defines space as dynamic and changing constantly (Lefebvre 1991), Lotman provides the intellectual terms of this constant movement through the elaboration of the concept of semiosphere. Lotman affirms that cultures are composed of dynamically related systems of information conveyed by signs, forms, aesthetics and narratives in all possible modalities and organised by psychological and related perception of spaces. Spaces move and change constantly and their shifts contribute to the construction of the views of a changing world.

As pointed out by Irene Portis Winner, “cultural systems generate specific types of messages organised by cultural codes and conveyed in any modality, both verbal and nonverbal” (Portis Winner 1980: 56). The messages are called culture texts by Lotman, these texts are dynamically typified by a variety of characteristics and are polyfunctional and sharable. On these premises, the intention here is to offer a reading of a specific and unique aesthetic *viz.* popular Hindi cinema in dialogue with Italian television and to elaborate on the juxtaposition of these two specific texts. The combination of aspects belonging to both texts, generate new types of texts, or views, which encompass elements of several systems among which there is tension and interaction. This interaction of codes will be discussed further in this section.

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84 On the 26th October 2006, I had the opportunity to have a phone conversation with Mr. Massimo Salvucci. Before this conversation, I asked Mr. Salvucci for a tete-a-tete meeting, which was, unfortunately, denied due to working reasons. However, he was able to discuss with me the ideation of *Curry Cultura* over the phone, from which I could take a few notes.
The texts, which Lotman identifies as sets, are context-sensitive, functioning according to the ‘sender’ and the ‘receiver’ of the texts. The discussion of these texts is based on the interpretation of the aesthetic function in culture which has, as shown through the urban space of the Esquilino, an important organisational and visual value. Lotman understood that cultures are governed by a system of rules and by a repertoire of texts (Eco 2001) generated by a combination of different co-existing cultural codes. In order to explain the continuous exchange of codes when different cultures are in contact, Lotman developed the notion of ‘boundaries’. As further argued the idea of boundaries presents the opportunity to explore how a culture is formed and how different cultural systems distant from one another in time and space, can be compared.

By studying and applying semiosis to culture, Lotman was able to theorise and comprehend that a code identified in a culture is incredibly complex. In the 1960s, Lotman understood that the multifunctionality and multiplicity of codes in a given culture gives rise to fusion and hybrids. Lotman, worked on the concept of semiosphere as an analogy to the biosphere, and defined it as a universal set conceived as a text and made-up of cultural subsets, which cohabit separately or hook into each other thereby modifying and reorganising their meanings (Lotman 1985; Lotman 2001):

Imagine a museum hall where exhibits from different periods are on display, along with inscriptions in known and unknown languages, and instructions for decoding them; there are also…plans for the tour and rules for the behaviour of the visitors…this is an image of the semiosphere. Then we have to remember that all elements of the semiosphere are in dynamic…correlation whose terms are constantly changing (Lotman and Uspenskij 1978: 218).

The notion of semiosphere engages with the concept of boundaries. The circumferences of semiospheres are places of continuous and incessant exchange and dialogue. This process is explained through the conceptualisation of boundaries, which can be seen as an ambivalent notion *per se* as it separates and unites the semiospheres unremittingly (Lotman 2001). In order to understand the semiosphere as a producer of meanings and the boundary as a gateway for exchange and aesthetic translation Figure 5-1 has been employed to visualise the process of dialogic fusion of cultures. Here, semiospheres of different cultural entities come into contact within a semiotic context, creating an inter-dialogic and continuous reciprocation of aesthetics and forms.
The transnational and cultural movement of Bollywood away from India comes in contact with other aesthetics and cultural settings resulting in dialogue and the blurring of individual aesthetics and narratives. The boundaries, as represented above, belong to each of the entities involved in the process of communication. The boundaries are elements which, through intercultural friction, trigger a mechanism which translates texts of ‘alien’ semiosphere into another language that is understood locally or universally; a boundary is the space in which what is ‘external’ to a specific semiosphere becomes ‘internal’ and *vice versa*. Lotman synthesises the multifunctionality of a boundary as being:

A filtering membrane which…transforms foreign texts so that they become part of the semiosphere’s internal semiotics while still retaining their own characteristics…innovation comes about when the principles of one genre are restructured accordingly to the laws of another, and this ‘other’…enters the new structure and at the same time preserves a memory of its other system of encoding (Lotman 2001: 137).

Elaborating on the notions of boundary and semiospheres, and applying them to the reading of the effect that an aesthetic from India (or from Bollywood) on the Italian television, it can be seen that the semiosphere of Bollywood/India is constantly translated and separated from its original creative nucleus. The effect of the ‘transnational’ factor filtering into Italian television facilitates the movement and exchange of codes, at the boundaries, forming novel audiovisual texts. The space of the semiosphere is intersected by boundaries of different languages and the emerging meanings are hierarchically placed on different levels of understanding. This mechanism frames the boundary as sectional, which runs through the semiosphere, creating a multi-
level system of communication and exchange. Furthermore, as suggested by Lotman, the innovative forms of aesthetic which are generated by contact are translated, thereby preserving the memories and producing expressive forms as a consequence of the emotional status (Langer 1966).

**On Curry Cultura: Towards the Definition of Cultural Fusion**

Everything began with the commercial, which won the Mezzominuto d’Oro awards. Following this occurrence, a song reached Italy, a song and dance to be precise, which broadened in Italy a trend that was spreading in London: the Indian style, the cultural contamination of Western lifestyle with tones and manners from the most problematic and fascinating subcontinent (Translated from Italian) (Liberace 2003).

The interest for Indian culture ‘invading’ London and major cities in Europe (as Liberace mentions above) began to extend to Italy too, capturing the attention of the entertainment industry, cinema and other forms of art. The overwhelming interest that captivated Italy was synthesised in the television program entitled *Curry Cultura* (broadcast between February and June 2004), which, as mentioned earlier, created programs on different aspects of Indian culture. The relationship between the winning advertisement, mentioned by Liberace, and the realisation of *Curry Cultura* was strong and as mentioned by Massimo Salvucci: “*Curry Cultura* is not a program on Indian culture, rather, [it is based] on this cultural encounter and cultural enthusiasm on a concept which goes beyond globalisation” (Translated from Italian from a personal phone conversation held in October 2006 with Mr. Salvucci).

Interestingly, the program tapped into terminologies that suggest mixing and the potential for fusion. Curry, a word contained in the title, is currently employed in a double sense. Curry powder, from the Dravidian term *Kari* (Collingham 2005), also known as masala powder, is a mixture of various spices; this blend of spices is commonly used in Indian cuisine. The term curry also has a cultural connotation; used as a generic description by the Western countries, ‘curry’ describes a general variety of spiced dishes of Asian and South Asian origins. On this premise, the title could have been used metaphorically to inform the audience that the content of the program would present a mix of issues and attributes such as art, cuisine, cinema etc. of India.
The opening title and corpus of the program *Curry Cultura* suggest a blend of aromatic powders and imagery as shown in Figure 5-2 and Figure 5-3.

Figure 5-2: Opening titles, extrapolated from original video – *Curry Cultura*  
Figure 5-3: Opening program, extrapolated from original video – *Curry Cultura* (2)

Figure 5-2 and Figure 5-3 were created through a graphic technique, which suggests the mood governing the program. The opening title shows through a series of superimpositions followed by a collage of images taken from different disciplines of India and its aesthetic. The first layer of images shows a female profile (Figure 5-2), followed by a close up of her face (Figure 5-3); the second layer shows curry powder on a white background, designed with circular lines evoking the circularity of the world and the multidimensionality that India and its culture embrace outside its geographical borders. The semiosphere of an Indian aesthetic and the semiosphere of Italian knowledge about India, penetrate each other through “sectional boundaries”. These boundaries are spaces existing between the semiospheres and create a multi-level system of significances (and novel) set of communications (Lotman 1985). This area sanctions the encounter between the two countries and establishes the premises to develop new media format.

The same graphic technique discussed earlier, was used to superimpose leaves of a tree and graffiti-style ‘art’ on images of unidentified Hindu temples, fusing aspects from the West and the East (Figure 5-4). The piece dedicated to art utilised a mixed way of conveying how visual representations have been influenced by Indian aesthetics. Through interviews and collages of diverse images, the objective of the program was to capture and assemble the general feelings and ideas about the sense of mixing cultures, fusing practices and the generation of new imaginary communities. The latter raises
issues relating to the immigrants’ view on the representation of their culture on television (as discussed in Chapter 2). The contact between cultures – as the case of India and Italy showcased – creates a form of imagination, which invents Nationalism and “nations where they do not exist” (Anderson 1991: 6).

Figure 5-4: The first part of the program was dedicated to Art.

Among those interviewed in the episodes dedicated to art, a young Indian lady explained how the process of communication between different cultures is often based on misconceptions. She said:

    What is the cultural mix? If you come to India you think about eating Indian food, but in reality tea did not originate in India, the chilli pepper does not grow only in India. Then, we can assume that the cultural fusion is a historical phenomenon, which we cannot confuse with the cultural mix or with the project of the globalisation plotted by American multinationals (Translated from Italian) (dialogue of a testimony extrapolated from ART, in Curry Cultura).

Theoretically, the cultural imagination discussed by Andersen and the above-mentioned testimony recorded in Curry Cultura, problematizes and affects the possibilities for these nations to be seen and understood away from a conventional aesthetic lingering from the place of origins, or from acquired knowledge of India. The quotation extrapolated from Curry Cultura clarifies certain common fallacies and shows that the mixture of cultures is a contemporary event based on the revitalisation of previously-acquired misconceptions about cultures, ‘seasoned’ by misleading beliefs which, however, build the idea of a nation upon the imaginations of other cultures abroad.
The viewpoint, expressed visually in *Curry Cultura* reiterates the existence of imagined communities such as Italy and India which did not meet historically, but yet they persistently (re)construct their knowledge of each other on memories and practices that lead to melancholic modules of representation. The persistence of the Italian culture filtering the Indian imagery through exoticism is evident in the work of Luigi Ontani, an Italian painter who participated in a major exhibition where Italian and Indian cultures came into contact in the 1970s (Figure 5-5 and Figure 5-6).

![Figure 5-5: Front Cover of the exhibition ‘Lattico in Viaggio’](image)

L’Attico is a Roman Art Gallery managed by Fabio Sargenti who is an art dealer, writer and interested in theatre. The image is part of the catalogue of the exhibition titled ‘L’attico in Viaggio’ curated by the art gallery L’Attico and organised at the local library Auditorium in Madras, India.

The effect produced by the hippy and psychedelic cultures in the work of Ontani is undeniable; the image in Figure 5-5 shows a perception of India as an illusion, almost a hallucination. In line with the filmic depiction of a poetic India offered by Pasolini, Ontani in the 1970s portrayed his own visualisation of India as the ‘orient’ *par excellence*. His orient appears to be imbued in shades of pink and orange and the landscape is astral; domes and minarets, the architecture of ‘exotic faiths’ are the
symbols of this mythic and mystic land, benchmarked by a clear reference to exotic indications: the palm or coconut trees. The Indian subcontinent, affirms Ontani in the interview offered to *Curry Cultura*, “evokes a sense of far orientalism” (Ontani in *Curry Cultura*, 4th April 2004, episode 2-Art), where the Indian sacredness of temples and religious icons are interpreted with irony and melancholy. Ontani briefly states his approach to the Indian culture as follows: “When I found the illusion of my artistic life in relation to India, it was evident that the stimuli and the practical externalization would be a form of nostalgic orientalism. With pleasure I have represented it with paradox and irony” (Translated from Italian, Ontani in *Curry Cultura*, 4th April 2004, e.2-Art).

The last interview of the episode on art was with the Indian ambassador to Italy. While flipping through the pages of a book which illustrates ancient Indian architectures, the ambassador addressed that the learning factor is central: “These temples are more than 1400 years old and you are very competent in terms of restoration. Your school of restoration of painting in Florence, for instance, is very important. So this is one area where we want to learn from the Italians.” (Translated from Italian; a monologue of Indian Ambassador in Italy, from ART in *Curry Cultura*, 27th April 2004, e.10-Art).

The three interviews mentioned above bring to light recurring aspects of a cultural superimposition of *modus pensandi* of one culture on another. The perception of India within the Italian artistic panorama relies on culturally standardised clichés which tap into orientalism and are explained through the notion that a given cultural identity is always constructed. The representation of Indian culture and aesthetic in Italy underwent the socio-historical process which Said explained by asserting that each epoch creates its own ‘other’ that can function and affirm its own cultural hegemony (Said 1994). Furthermore, he adds that Orient and Occident (different from East and West) do not exist; these are provisional products of our culture (Said 1994). Said pays attention to what this thesis has attempted to demonstrate since Chapter 1: the imagination and representation of India within Italian entertainment relies on melancholic, dormant and provisional interpretation of the Indian subcontinent, which is melancholically contemplated. The translation and interpretation of the aesthetic of one culture by another is a social action that is oriented towards “the reciprocal orientation to some kind of reply as an inner-subjective exchange” (Schütz 1944: 505).

While Italy sees and presents South Asian aesthetics through culturally established perspectives, it is interesting to highlight a possible reciprocal communication between
the other cultures through the acts of learning, approaching and delivering as part of an exchange. This is a meaningful experience which “is oriented towards and anticipates a future state” (Schütz 1944: 509), as this work intends to demonstrate in Chapter 6.

Returning to the analysis of *Curry Cultura*, the ‘spiced’ program dedicated a series of episodes to cinema (2004, 6 episodes). RaiSat cinema tried to unfold the Bollywood phenomenon – Bollywoodmania (Mariano Valerio 2003) – and its impact, as well as the interest, unleashed within the European context. The episodes dedicated to cinema involved testimonies from Italian directors and their personal engagement with the Indian imagery (Figure 5-7 and Figure 5-8).

Figure 5-7: Superimposition of Bombay with an old building (1).

Figure 5-8: Superimposition of Bombay with another old building (2).

This image and the one above show a superimposition of Bombay’s crowded streets with an old building employed by Gabriele Salvatores as part of the set for the film Nirvana, in which the director set and imagined a quarter called Bombay city.

Among the Italian directors interviewed, Gabriele Salvatores offers a very descriptive testimony of his personal experience with India. The author describes his contact with the subcontinent as follows:

Mumbai ah! In Bombay there was the Hindu New Year’s eve, it was raining and there was the monsoon. On the road there were enormous and colourful statues of Ganesh and Parvati on the beach and skyscrapers. There was an enormous rotating neon-light indicating ‘Om’ (Figure
5-9\textsuperscript{85}, and then those skyscrapers and the roads were completely painted with colourful pink and orange powders and I was in a car with a taxi driver who was listening to Bhangra\textsuperscript{86} music…a tech and Indian mix of music, together. There you are totally projected into the future. (Translated from Italian – Gabriele Salvatore’s dialogue extrapolated from Curry Cultura).

The series of episodes entitled Show (2004, 7 episodes) narrated the contamination of various artistic expressions such as the mixing of western and eastern sonorities and the connection between traditional Indian theatres (however left unspecified) from the classical Hindu text Mahabharat with dialectics from Peter Brook’s theatre of cruelty. Special attention was paid to Bollywood Dreams the musical, produced by Andrew-Lloyd Webber in 2002.

Despite the enthusiasm promoted by the ‘mission’ of Curry Cultura on Bollywood aesthetic, the series of episodes entitled Cinema, and mentioned earlier, did not explore this industry. Instead, Bollywood cinema was presented as mediated and filtered by the director’s experience of the Hindu New Year’s eve is used melancholically in the film Nirvana as he re-created the set for the futuristic city of ‘agglomerate of the North’ using similar aesthetics as seen from Figure 5-9.

\textsuperscript{85} It is important address Bhangra music in order to contextualize further the notion of fusion that this Chapter seeks to address.

By definition, Bhangra is a traditional music dance of Northern India, developed particularly in Punjab; it was an integral part of Punjabi harvest especially of wheat, but as the name suggests, also of hemp. The word Bhangra seems to derive from ‘Bhang’ a word used widely in India and abroad to mean cannabis, especially herbal cannabis, to be used ground and mixed with milk, sugar and dry fruit. In the late 1970s, Bhangra became a sophisticated form of popular music and later become a ‘fusion’ phenomenon. However the meaning of Bhangra within the Punjabi folk history sees three versions of the origin of the word. The first meaning explains Bhangra as derived from the Punjabi word Bhungra, meaning action on a land. The second meaning of the term is the above mentioned Bhang; while the third possibility of Bhangra’s origin is more linked with the sound produced by beating the drums, dholi, which are commonly played at the beginning of Bhangra songs. Salkind, M. (2003). "A Voyage to India. An examination of Bhangra music in South Asian pop culture." Retrieved 15th Jan 2008, 2008, from http://brown.edu/Students/INDY/alpha/013003/arts/2.html.

\textsuperscript{86} As mentioned by Dudrah, Bhangra underwent several transformations narrated as follows: “the song and music shifted from joyous harvest celebration to working class drama, theatricality and performance with a strong sense of 1980s doom and gloom”. (Dudrah, R. K. (2007). Bhangra. Birmingham and beyond. Birmingham, Birmingham City Council Library & Archive Service.) The arrival of Bhangra music in Italy was benchmarked by the success of Punjabi M.C.. On a weekly Italian magazine, Panorama, an article highlights the Anglo-Indian musician in Italy and his appearance as a guest within the Sanremo Italian Music festival. Part of the article says: “It is a hammering rhyme aired by all the radios in these days, an infectious rap at the top of the hit. It is not by the predictable Eminem: it’s Panjabi M.C., an Anglo-Indian hip-hop singer and the song is Mundian to back de.Punjabi M.C.…is a window opened on an exotic world of rhythm. Pippo Baudo has invited Panjabi M.C. to the Sanremo Festival on 6\textsuperscript{th} March; he will be accompanied by Tara Gandhi, the respected Mahatma’s niece. This is just an example of how high the Indian Fever is” Trombetta, S. (2003). Help! Indians are coming Panorama: 22-23.
western cliché. *Curry Cultura* assembled frames collected from *Bollywood Dreams* as a reference to the contemporary Bollywood cinema. The image portrayed does not reflect the complexity and the nature of this industry. Despicably, Bollywood is still related to the pre-existing notion inhabiting the consciousness and knowledge of Italian criticism—that Bollywood films are musicals (Tassi 2002). The television program synthesises the experience of watching Bollywood uniquely as a collection of vibrant colours, engaging songs and dances set in a magnificent scenography.

Figure 5-9: Footage of a futuristic city extrapolated in *Nirvana* directed by Gabriele Salvatores.

The image is extrapolated from the film *Nirvana*, directed by Gabriele Salvatores in 1998. As explained in Chapter 4, the film is set in a futuristic area composed of quarters called the agglomerate of the North. The composition and plasticity of the frame instantly evokes through the lighting Happy New Year in the centre of the footage the description of Bombay as experienced by Salvatores. This reiterates how the patterns of his representation in *Nirvana* are shaped by his memories and his elaboration of his ride within Bombay’s crowded streets. Salvatores’ depiction and narration are profoundly based on melancholic emotions as expressive forms of representation.

*Curry Cultura* problematizes the perception of Bollywood and conjures this cinema through elements of melancholic, typified and commodified aesthetic (Hutnyk 2000; Ray 2009) decontextualised, synthesised and mediated for a western audience. The last seven episodes, entitled *Gambero Rosso*, were dedicated to cuisine (June 2004, 7 episodes). *Gambero Rosso* showed the finest Indian Restaurants in Italy and in Europe, through a random collection of images.
The opening sequence of *Gambero Rosso* undoubtedly takes us into the world of Bollywood imagery. The frame captured in Figure 5-10 is part of a major cultural mosaic that *Curry Cultura* intends to offer, but which, opens up issues on the use of Bollywood images as a kind of cultural and aesthetic obsession. What are the reasons behind the choice of a love sequence from what seems to be a Bollywood film to introduce episodes dedicated to food? The composition of Figure 5-10 appears to generate further observation on the concept of fusion and once again the multilayered formation technique is used.

The voice-over in *Gambero Rosso* recounts how different aesthetics are determinant in providing information about differences between regional gastronomies. Similar to the construction of the other episodes, *Gambero Rosso* employed interviews within the corpus of its narration, with particularly significant interviews with Mr. Avinash Ganesh, the first South Asian to open an Indian restaurant in Italy, and Majid Valcarenghi, the founder of the main Osho\(^7\) centre in Tuscany.

The reading of *Gambero Rosso* intensifies the sensation that images, sounds and human experiences have been gathered and presented through melancholic tools of narration and raises the question: What is the connection between cuisine, Bollywood and spiritual practices? Apart from an evident connection which bonds faith with devotional practices of food preparation as offerings to God, personally experienced and recounted in Chapter 3, the connection between the multilayered images of Bollywood-faith-food does not seem to provide any further significance.

\(^7\) Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) was an Indian philosopher whose teachings highlighted the importance of acts such as meditation, awareness, love, creativity and humour. His teachings affected the Western New Age. (Guest, T. (2005), My Life in Orange: Growing up with the Guru, London, Granta Books)
Despite the fact that popular Hindi cinema is celebrated as a ‘filmic gateway’ capable of speaking to various cultures universally and on different themes through the use of spectacular devices, the perpetration of fusion based on the casual collages of images, such as Bollywood-faith-food, reduces its communicative power. Particularly, *Gambero Rosso* is constructed through a non-linear Ejzenštejnian ‘montage of attraction’ (Figure 5-11) in which arbitrarily chosen images, independent from the actions, are presented not as fluxing and chronological sequences but rather according to the way of narration which would create the maximum psychological impact on the spectator (Eisenstein 1975; Miller and Stam 2004). Therefore, the narration is produced and characterised by a diegetic text imbued by visual, cultural and sonorous factors assembled casually as fugitive perceptions of a fashionable event and recounted as an audio-visual mix of information.

Figure 5-11: Footages from the opening sequence of *Gambero Rosso*.

The television program *Curry Cultura* seems to have embedded in its conception the notion of fusion, which enveloped its narrative and structural format. Although various subjects which were relating to India had been assembled to present a novel cultural formation, the programme when broadcasted appeared to be based on a cacophony of exotic images and sounds from India, rather than being able to clearly and genuinely narrate about India. Once more, the result was an assemblage of personalised views of India as an international phenomenon tapping into memories and past representation of this country.

The final part of *Curry Cultura* was entitled *Bollywood Party* (June 2004, 3 episodes). As a series of unorganised images, *Bollywood Party* was made as a collage of edited frames, extrapolated and re-edited from Bollywood films, such as: *Ghatak* (dir. by Rajkumar Santoshi, 1996), *Josh* (dir. by Mansoor Khan, 2000), *Mast* (dir. by Ram Gopal Varma, 1999), *Daraar* (dir. by Abbas Alibhai Burmawalla, 1996) and *Mother India* (dir. by Mehboob Khan, 1957). Bollywood imagery as expressed and elaborated in
Bollywood Party is an allegory of a cultural and aesthetic fusion, which finds further complication in the recent development of Bollywood in Italy.

In 2007, Bollywood films began to be screened on Italian television during the summer. The series that gathered the films was entitled Amori con...turbanti. This programming grew out of an earlier event, the ‘Italy/India Business forum’, organised by the Festival del Cinema di Roma (discussed further in Chapter 6). In Amori con...turbanti the films screened were borrowed from the Bollywood industry and were entirely dubbed in Italian. However, these films were deprived of songs and dance sequences, therefore presenting Bollywood cinema as dramatically transformed with an ex-novo format. The RAI website reported:

We have revised the length and maybe the appearance of these films, to be accepted by the Italian audience as well. Italians do not have the patience sit and watch such long films; despite speaking about universal values, they seem to be conceived only for an Indian audience. To be able to make this agreement work, and show this cinema in Italy as well, it is necessary to compromise in length and form. (http://www.rai.tv/dl/RaiTV/homeTv/amoriconturbanti/2007.html) (Retrieved on 15th November 2009).

Amori con...turbanti is literally translated as “Loves with...turbans” (a problematic image of India as standardised and clichéd, which in extreme conditions as Prof. Purnima Mankekar pointed out, within the 4th International conference of South Asian Popular Culture at Manchester (2009), could evolve into racial violence against South Asian communities particularly following the September 11th 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers in America); in unison the word conturbanti (literally meaning provocative or exciting) was divided into con...turbanti to produce a double meaning: Love with turbans and/or provocative loves. This image of Bollywood films, filtered through fallacy and misunderstanding based on conventional visions of this industry as ‘exciting loves with turbans’, establishes a hegemonic pattern of fusion which still sifts and selects notions and images of India as exotic. This notion recalls the tendency that dominated the visual culture of Italy in the 1960s. As Salizzato argues, the national audiovisual milieu of the 1960s in Italy was essentially dominated by two specific kinds of ‘pseudo’-documentaries, characterised by a thin construction of narratives or interest in geographic location, called: the exotic documentary and the erotic documentary.
These two sub-genres often blurred their boundaries, merging into an exotic-erotic documentary (Salizzato 1989). However, being partially away from this tradition, Curry Cultura reports about a cultural fusion where the narrative and the aesthetic choices developed a wider idea of fusion, which interprets India and its Bollywoodian nuances as exotic forms that are still encapsulated within melancholic imaginations of a faraway land.

*Un Medico in famiglia 5 – Memories and Fusion?*

The television series considered here is the fifth season of a popular Italian sitcom broadcast by RAI 1, entitled *Un Medico in Famiglia*5 (translated as: A Doctor in the Family 5). *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* narrates the story of a traditional Italian family, the Martini's. The plots of the episodes are characterised by family encounters and discussions during important family times such as lunches and dinners in which emotional relationships of love, grandfather/father/child interactions and misunderstandings are unravelled within the dynamics of an extended family, played by old and new generations. The fifth season of this television serial (2009) was dominated by the relationship of rejections and acceptance established between neighbours. For the entire duration of the series the Martini family deals with a patriarchal Indian family called the Devi. The multicultural background, set in an imaginary area of Rome called Poggiofiorito, is the area in which the peace of the quarter composed of friends and inhabited by families, all related to one another, is interrupted when an Indian neighbour moves in. At the beginning, some of the residents are hostile to the Indian family.

Poggiofiorito, the imaginary quarter on the hills of Rome, does not match the degraded area of the Esquilino. Poggiofiorito is a wealthy ‘unreal’ quarter, marked by large villas. There is nothing similar to the decadent aspect of a multiethnic arena such as the Esquilino, and initially there is no intention of intercultural cohabitations. However, despite Poggiofiorito being initially depicted as unrealistic, it is simultaneously the idyllic set in which diversified cultures meet and talk in one of the most popular and widely seen sitcoms in Italy.88 *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* included different cultures,

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88 As the press office of RAI and the Frasi office (in charge of monitoring the audience on the Italian television) reported, the first episode of *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* registered 12,883,000 viewers against the 8,958,000 spectators of other channels. Following the first episode, the viewing of *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* ranged from 7,500,000 people to 6,500,000, constantly remaining the most viewed prime-time program on television during May 2007.
other than Italian, crossing the imaginary border of a provincial bourgeois area, by embracing the interest in distant cultures and costumes embodied in stereotypical aesthetics and narrativities such as: the Guru, images of elephants, turbans, sarees and oriental practices such as yoga and ayurveda. Each encounter between the two families (Martini's and Devi's) is characterised by a reverential gesture of respect and greeting accompanied by the Hindi word Namaste\textsuperscript{89}.

![Figure 5-12: Nonno Libero (Lino Banfi).](image1)

Nonno Libero enclosed within a typical Roman villa. (Frame captured by the opening theme song).

![Figure 5-13: Nonno Kabir (Kabir Bedi).](image2)

Nonno Kabir sitting on an elephant and in background, the shape of a Maharaja’s castle profile. (Frame captured by the opening theme song).

\textit{Un Medico in Famiglia 5} was composed of twelve episodes and the two major protagonists were the heads of the respective families: grandfather Kabir (Kabir Bedi) and grandfather Libero (Lino Banfi), known in Italian as Nonno Kabir and Nonno Libero (Figure 5-12 and Figure 5-13). The two grandfathers emblematically present the clichéd aesthetics in which the two cultures are enclosed. While Nonno Libero (Figure 5-12) is symbolically ‘locked’ into a typical Roman Villa, Nonno Kabir (Figure 5-13) is depicted sitting on the back of an elephant, and wearing a turban. The Maharaja’s castle in the background establishes a precise geographical setting, and the elephant possibly suggests the means for a – long – journey away from India. The location is presented with different spatial coordinates, from the image in which the Martini’s villa is situated. Both images have a blue sky, green land surrounding the house and speculatively positioned floral design. These are the only visual facets common to both frames.

\textsuperscript{89} Namaste or Namaskar is a Sanskrit word composed by Namah and Te and it means to bow to greet reverentially. It is an Indian greeting, often used as a parting phrase or as gesture. When performed it is accompanied with a minor bow and with hands pressed together in front of the chest (Nand Verma, K. (2003). \textit{Hindi}. New Delhi, Mahaveer Publisher. Page 12).
However, the exploitation of icons belonging to the history of India is evident. The icons screened, particularly Kabir Bedi as a Maharaja, carry fallacies and conceptual dichotomies, nourishing a lack of verisimilitude. How can a Maharaja (who, being a king lives in luxury and great comfort) come to Italy, in an imprecise geographical residential area of Rome, to open a restaurant and live in economic difficulty? Paradoxically, the Maharaja settling in Italy can be imagined as a king who has lost his inheritance as a result of independence and the de-recognition of the Sovereign in the Indian subcontinent. Furthermore, if nonno Kabir is not a Maharaja as depicted, why is a person of Indian origin constantly presented on the Italian screens in conventional clothing? These questions are part of the rationale that link the construction of South Asians on the Italian screen through hegemonic and melancholic recovery drawn out from exotic certainties which “preclude the possibility of finding the space where the alternative can become a part of the dominant” (Mitra 1999: 89).

Nonno Kabir arrives at Poggiofiorito riding an elephant accompanied by his family in a kind of procession. Why is the elephant the means for his journey? Did he come on an elephant from India? Were they a family who had migrated initially to the north of Italy working in a circus (Denti, Ferrari et al. 2005) (as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3), perhaps among elephants? These details are obscured within the narration; the information revealed within the course of the story is of Kabir – an Indian man who has emigrated from Punjab – and has moved to Rome with his grandchildren, two brothers and one sister, who live with him because their parents are deceased. After moving and settling in Poggiofiorito in Rome, the Devi family starts an Indian restaurant called 'Little India'. Similarly, in the vicinity, nonno Libero takes care of his grandchildren left in his custody by his son, a medical doctor who migrated to Australia for work. Nonno Libero is a full-time grandfather and, in this series, the newly elected mayor of Poggiofiorito.

As the story progresses, Little India becomes a meeting point for the entire female neighbourhood who are infatuated by the charisma and wisdom of Kabir, and rush to his yoga and meditation classes. Nonno Libero soon decides to meet Kabir (their first encounter is shown in the second episode entitled: Face the Tiger [22nd March 2007, episode 3] – translated from Italian). The relationship is initially conflicting, dominated by misunderstanding; Libero, as mayor of Poggiofiorio, is against the opening of Little India.
The title of this episode *Face the Tiger*, melancholically recalls *Sandokan*,90 the television series broadcasted in 1976, directed by Sergio Sollima and adapted from a story of Emilio Salgari (Figure 5-14) (see Chapter 4). The full title of *Sandokan*, for the Italian screen, was *Sandokan La Tigre della Malesia* (translated from Italian as *Sandokan the tiger of Malaysia*) to which the script of *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* intentionally alludes.

The references to *Sandokan* are multiple. As mentioned earlier, nonno Kabir is the centre of attraction for several women living near the restaurant, including Libero’s wife (Milena Vukotic) and Cettina (Lunetta Savino) (the former housemaid of the Martini family, now a close friend and neighbour). The two ladies are charmed by the wisdom, kindness and gentle manners of their new Indian neighbour and refer to him as Sandokan. This is corroborated by the first casual meeting between Cettina and Kabir, while disposing of the garbage. Cettina, looking at him, invokes the Virgin Mary with a folkloric Neapolitan accent as follows:

* Cettina: (with an astonished expression) Oh Virgin Mary! Sandokan is here!
* Kabir: (with a welcoming and serene expression) Pardon me, I just wanted to dispose off the trash.

90 The Pubspei (producer of Un Medico in Famiglia 5) employed a renowned Indian actor familiar to the Italian audience and to the Bollywood industry: Kabir Bedi. He was the major protagonist of a mini television series entitled *Sandokan the Tiger of Malaysia*, co-produced by RAI – O.R.T.F. and Bavaria Film and hosting an international cast: Kabir Bedi (Sandokan), Philippe Leroy (as Yeanez his faithful friend) Carol Andrè (Marianna - the Pearl of Labuan), Adolfo Celi (as Brooke) and directed by Sergio Sollima. Sandokan was a pirate known throughout the South China Sea, a highly motivated warrior consumed by his hatred for British colonialism; Sandokan fights for the independence of his small kingdom, the island of Mompracem. The mini TV serial was a major success on the Italian television and later in Europe, the USA and South America, making Kabir Bedi an international star.
Cettina: Oh, yes…please do it!

Kabir: Can I introduce myself? My name is Kabir Devi. I live in that house (pointing at the house with his finger).

Cettina: Oh it cannot be!!

Kabir: Why not? I really live there!

Cettina: Well no I thought that it cannot be because the man who rented the house to you, my husband, told me that there is a grandfather with his grandchildren living there…and you cannot be a grandfather, because you are too young.

Kabir: In India we get married very young. Maybe too early!

Cettina: Your wife is lucky!

Kabir: Which wife?

Cettina: (embarrassed) Eh nothing! Nothing! I am Cettina Cargiulo, married to Mr Torello. But, when I was a child my cousins called me the Pearl of Mondragone, like the Pearl of Labuan, the name of the promised bride to Sandokan.

Kabir: (with a confused expression) Sandokan?? Who?

Cettina: ehmm…I am sorry. I have to go now.

Kabir: Namaste!

(Translated from the original dialogue in Italian)

The Devi family has an intertwined relationship (even sentimental relationship) with the Martini family. Emilio (David Sebasti), niece of Libero and a medical doctor in a small medical practice in Poggiofiorito, meets Sarita (Shivani Ghai)\(^1\) (Figure 5-15), granddaughter of nonno Kabir and an expert of ayurveda, and employed in the same medical practice as Emilio. Their relationship begins as a professional relationship followed by an intimate friendship and ending in a mutual love for each other. The marriage of Emilio and Sarita is initially denied as Sarita was promised to an Indian fiancé called Ravi, through an arranged marriage. Emilio discovers that Ravi is using the Devi family for his own interests, so Kabir breaks the engagement with Ravi and the

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\(^1\) Shivani Ghai was known to the Italian screens through the film (dubbed in Italian) *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) (Figure 5-15) directed by Gurinder Chadha, with Ashwaya Rai and Sonali Kulkarni (well known Indian actress who worked with with the Italian director Lamberto Lambertini in Vindavan Film Studios (1998) – analysed in the next Chapter – and Fuoco su di me (2003).
arranged marriage is cancelled. Ultimately, Sarita and Emilio get married. The series comes to a happy ending when Sarita, learning about the secret relationship that her grandfather had with a famous Italian singer, Caterina Morelli (played by Carol Andrè – the pearl of Labuan in the television series *Sandokan*), challenges tradition and Kabir finally marries the singer.

Figure 5-15: Shivani Ghai (wearing a pink Salvaar), Ashwaya Rai (in the middle) and Sonali Kulkani, in *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) dir. by Gurinder Chadha.

The Martini and Devi families appear to shatter rules and tradition to promote intercultural dialogue, acceptance and racial mix by celebrating the two marriages all together at Little India with a grandiose event to which everyone is invited. Fusing aesthetics and tradition, practices and languages, Little India becomes a utopian intercultural world in which cultural recognition and understanding occurs seasoned by Bhangra music. Everyone in the Martini family is captivated by the overwhelming Indian wave by dressing and sharing gestures of respect and cordiality. Once again, specific aesthetic references such as in Figure 5-16 problematizes the representation of Indian culture on the screen. Has nonno Libero inherited the status of a king too? Why does the entire Martini family wear South Asian dresses that do not belong to the Italian culture?
Figure 5-16: Martini and Devi families at the marriage party.

Nonno Libero wearing a typical Indian dress with the turban, Libero’s wife wearing a saree and Nonno Kabir, while waiting for the marriage to begin.

*Un Medico in Famiglia 5* undeniably attempts to honour the audio-visual agreement between Italy and India (discussed further in Chapter 6) by introducing an Indian family (with its folklore) within the plot. The abandoning of the traditionalism in *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* (as happened in the previous 4 series), which tells stories purely linked to small Italian realities, leaves the place to stories that cross-over the imaginary border of a provincial area, and looks beyond.

**Reading ‘Un Medico in Famiglia 5’: Controversies and Coherences**

As Lino Banfi (Nonno Libero) mentioned during the press conference in Rome ((P.V.) 2007), *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* dedicates attention to social events contingent on contemporary Italy, such as the incessant flux of immigrants within the peninsula. The poignant history of migration in Italy, particularly in the last fifteen years, is studded with journeys that see migrants who legally and illegally reach the coasts of Sicily and the little island of Lampedusa as shown almost daily in the news, on overcrowded and crumbling boats packed with people often exhausted and in search of hope.

The program draws attention to an Indian family who has reached Italy through ambiguous means (perhaps on an elephant?). The Devi family is socially structured as a recomposed\(^2\) family nucleus, hailing from Punjab, travelling through the UK and finally

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\(^2\) The Devi family (de)constructs the idea of traditional Indian family nucleus composed of a father, mother, children and eventually grandparents as traditionally shown in most of the popular Hindi films. However, traditional practices such as arranged marriages are attempted. The sociological concept introduced by the Devi family (and by the Martini within a ‘western’ society) is the notion of ‘recomposed family’. As explained by the sociologist Maria Laura Zanatta, the recomposed families are defined as
settling in Rome. *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* characterises an interesting sociological experiment; while the arrival of a South Asian family in Italy creates hesitation among the inhabitants of Poggiofiorito, after the first meeting there seems to be complete acceptance. Looking back at how marginalisation was experienced by immigrants in Rome (as explained in Chapters 2 and 3), it is worth considering an ‘imagined social evolution’: how is the cultural and social acceptance constructed on the screen? Are there references to the sociology of immigration as manifested in the Esquilino in Rome?

The attempt to construct a sociological phenomenon through a fictional program – such as *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* – appears to have failed. The Devi’s are portrayed in diasporic terms, as defined by Barbara Burton and Sara Gammage, who, drawing on the work of Brah formulate their definition of diaspora as follows:

> Diasporas are often composite formations made-up of many journeys to different parts of the globe, each with its own history, its particularities; each Diaspora is an interwoven and multiple travelling, a text of many distinctive and perhaps even disparate narratives. (Burton and Gammage 2004)

However, despite the sociological frame in which the Devi family is set, the aesthetic construction of this encounter of culture lacks verisimilitude, relegating the construction of South Asian culture on the screens of Italy, again, to melancholic and exotic formations. The Martini’s family wearing South Asian dresses (particularly Nonno Libero in Figure 5-16) and dancing to Bhangra music regress to the melancholic and hallucinating vision of Ontani. India is dramatically missed by the Devi family who visually narrate their story and belonging by involving the Martinis in a kind of collective cathartic remembrance as a commemorative expression of their origins. The cultural roots of the Devis are relived through illusion and melancholic feelings of loss and sweet memories in which what has been lost is recreated in new localities. In this context, Homi Bhabha's idea of a 'locality' provides an insight into the cultural understanding of this term: “The locality is... more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism.” (Bhabha 1994: 140). In Bhabha's terms, the fictional

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‘locality’ constructed in *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* conceptually resembles the space of the Esquilino in Rome, where migrants from the South Asian sub-continent have settled and formed new localities. The depiction of the Devi family is played within the constrained space of the Little India restaurant. The latter appears to have been used as a spatial negotiator, which unites the past (in which the homeland is melancholically evoked through sensorial stimulation) with the present localities.

**Conviviality of the Screen: “Sweet India”**

*Sweet India* is the title of an Italian sitcom broadcasted by RAI 2 during the summer of 2006. As mentioned during an interview with one of the screenplay writers – Carola Silvestri – *Sweet India* was the result of echoes from the success of Popular Hindi cinema and Punjabi MC Music in Europe. Carola Silvestri had this to say in an interview:

> Within the past few years, the interest for India in Europe is widely spreading, including in Italy. The ethno-electronic sonorities of the Indian Punjabi MC accompanied us all over the past summer. Films such as *East is East*, *Monsoon Wedding*, *Bend it like Beckham* and *Natale in India* were on top at the box offices in Europe. We are lucky that we ride this wave. We set the story within the Indian community; because this population is considered commonly as linked with the image of Gandhi and therefore promotes an idea of peace. (in Zizzari 2006: 12) (Translated from original interview in Italian).

However, the statement from Carola Silvestri raises problems and places ambivalences within the sitcom; while on the one side the proclaimed success of popular Hindi cinema and Punjabi music abroad is a mania – outlining the wide use of the aesthetic of this cinema as inspiration for the production of novel and fused audio-visual products – on the other side, it is a clamorous statement of conventionality and misconception as further analysed from the advertisements. *Sweet India* was produced in the Solaris Cinematografica studios in Rome, which hosted a complete reconstruction of a restaurant, Sweet India, managed by an Italo-Indian family. The director, Riccardo Donna, commented on the experience of *Sweet India*:
On the set, it is possible to breathe a multicultural and familiar air at the same time. This is the first sitcom dedicated entirely to racial integration within our country (Italy). The story narrates the vicissitudes of the Ragalan family. Half Indian and half Italian, the family moves to Rome after leaving Delhi for unclear reasons. Once in Rome, the family opens a restaurant, a theatre of amusing and sometime surreal situations, which involve a father, a mother, a grandfather, two sons and one daughter between fourteen and twenty years of age (Anonymous 2006) (Retrieved on 15th Jan 2008 and translated from Italian).

A blend of Italian and Indian facets characterised *Sweet India*, such as a rickshaw coming directly from Bombay, a Vespa 5, basmati rice and terracotta decorations – elements that shape the space of the restaurant. Furthermore, who are the protagonists (and owners) of *Sweet India*? There are no Indians (or South Asians) within the cast. The actors are all Italians, except one (Shel Shapiro) who is of English origin. The Ragalan family’s composition is variegated and geographically mixed as shown in Figure 5-17.

![Figure 5-17: Ragalan Family, in Sweet India.](image)

In order from left to right: Amal Ragalan (Shel Shapiro) grandfather of the house, who listens to whatever he wants, pretending to be deaf to what he is not interested. Raul Ragalan (Gianmaria Biancuzzi), he is the youngest of the family, a brilliant fourteen-year-old boy, very intelligent and the pride of his father George. Yamil Ragalan (Alessandro Parrello), the eldest among the children. He unhappily works in the restaurant and dreams of having a ‘western’ wife. Radha Ragalan (Roberta Mattei), Radha is eighteen, completing high school and enthusiastic about being in Rome; she dreams of marrying her schoolmate Marco. Claudia Bianchetti (Edy Angelillo). Of Roman origins Claudia during the 70s, leave Rome with her friend Gabriella, a hippy\(^93\), attracted by South Asian lands. Their trip ends in India. There Claudia

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\(^{93}\) As mentioned in Musica e Memoria, an Italian website dedicated to music and its sociological and historical impact on the society, a synthetic Chapter is dedicated to the hippy culture in Italy. The article mentions as follows:

In opposition to the military life, still evoked, it quoted some of the landmarks of the hippy and psychedelic culture, a season of hope and of ‘peace & Love’. The space here does not belong anymore to the one of sci-fi, but to the one of Indian culture, that so much was influencing the cultural life of those
meets George whom she married. George Ragalan (Francesco Foti). George Ragalan is employed in the Italian embassy in India, and there he meets Claudia. After twenty years in India, they all move to Rome and he becomes the manager of the restaurant Sweet India.

The adventures of the Ragalan family were screened in the morning palimpsest; this is the reason, which hampered the success of the sitcom. The broadcasting of *Sweet India* began on the 1\textsuperscript{st} July 2006 and lasted until the 23\textsuperscript{rd} August 2006, with a reception of 5.3 media share. Despite the failure in terms of audience reception, *Sweet India* depicted ironically and harmonically the new migration of South Asians in Italy and the formation of novel cultural identities (the Italo-Indian identity), beginning the disassembly of a milestone of popular Hindi cinema – the Indian family – and the formation of emerging mixed families.

**Little India & Sweet India: Spaces ‘in between’**

In culinary terms, fusion – fusion of tastes and fusion of aromas – produces the idea of mixing tastes, scents and colours. The term may also be used to try and explain the diegetic cultural melting pot that the restaurants in the two sitcoms host (*Un Medico in Famiglia 5* and *Sweet India*). First, it is worth probing why the restaurant is a privileged place of expression, and then examining what kind of socio-cultural formation might the reading of a diasporic fiction engender?

As mentioned earlier, the Little India and Sweet India restaurants are spaces ‘in between’; they are spaces for the collection of memories melancholically re-evoked through cultural practices encompassing sensorial and emotional aspects. In addition, these spaces are expressions of a new home, in which emotional and sensorial facets are synthesised in the formation of cultural fusions of practices, spaces, families and traditions.

The diegetic restaurants in the two sitcoms resemble the nature and specific aesthetics of piazza Vittorio in the Esquilino. The Little India and Sweet India like the square Piazza Vittorio in the Esquilino quarter (see Chapter 2 and 3) are landing points of celebration and melancholic reconnection with ones origins, in addition to being a space in which a

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years: the 1960s and the 1970s (with the main example of the Beatles). The sitar, the Indian instrument launched within the western musical panorama by the Beatles with the song entitled *Norwegian Wood*, it was not a simple instrument, as well as the music was not a pure entertainment music, but a medium to come closer a superior level, the enlightenment necessary to comprehend the life. Many were the journeys of young hippies towards India, for which the life was essentially nomad. A memorable trip was conducted by a group of young European Hippies, nourished by many Italians who crossed Athens, Istanbul, The Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to reach the main destination: India.
busy economic activity circulates, thereby enhancing the social relevance of the place. Similar to piazza Vittorio, which had hosted practices linked to the celebration of the Kolkata Festival in 2007 originally conceived within other spaces of belonging, the restaurants establish this reflective relationship with the origins. In 2007, Piazza Vittorio was the stage of a joint celebration of the Sanatan, the Hindu celebration of the Goddess Durga with a dedicated pooja, and the Eid al-Fitr, the Islam festival, which concludes the month-long fasting of Ramadan. The entire community was invited to participate in this shared intercultural celebration. By an unusual occurrence, where the lunar month of Sawwal, linked to the Islamic culture, coincided with the month Sharat according to the Hindu calendar, when the two festivities were jointly celebrated. Interestingly, the events were co-celebrated publicly in Piazza Vittorio, not only by the gathering members from the different beliefs but also by locals and residents. The square was a boundary-less space where (inter)cultural performances took form.

At the same time, the restaurants of the two sitcoms present the same intellectual turmoil that piazza Vittorio experienced: these are spaces where multiple practices occur (Hindu pujas, yoga and meditation) weakening the idea of a mere site of conviviality. The sense of this space extends into the consideration regarding the social nature that Sweet India and Little India establish visually. Apart from being the site of encounters, these ‘in between’ spaces underpin – melancholically – linkages with what has been lost (Freud 1978), and tie novel connections to the present forming, as per Lefebvre’s notion, a space which “…sublimates things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder”.

Similar to the celebration of Durga Puja in Piazza Vittorio which gave the Hindu community the possibility to experience the cult of Durga in Rome (where devotees showed veneration to the Goddess by offering food and flowers followed by the Prashad94), Little India hosts the celebration of the marriage between Sarita and Emilio which formalises the restaurant as a place where one is secure, and in which ritualistic traditions are maintained. In Lefebvre’s words, the construction of the diegetic space of the restaurant, as pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, is “global and fractured”. The transnational journey of the migrant family produces an imaginary physical fracture with their homeland. Simultaneously there is an acceptance of their new localities that

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94 The Prashad is an odorous milk drink given to the Hindu followers and to the guests following a Puja, as a blessing.
leads to the formation of multiethnic families. Moreover, in this case, the preparation and consumption of food are not merely symbols relating to human necessity, but are an imaginary thread with memoirs and a way of educating the hosting land and community of their cuisine, in an attempt towards cultural clarity and acceptance. Despite this, there could be a speculative reading; the audio-visual recording of the first visit to the Esquilino for this thesis supports this view. Entering the shop managed by a businessman from Bombay (Mr. S. G., 56), we started having an informal conversation without any pre-established questions. As the conversation developed, a question was proposed to him on whether he was able to find similarities between the Italian and the Indian culture. He answered without any hesitation as follows:

Yes, there are a lot of similarities. I like the similarities that we have in cuisine…and also you are noisy as much as we are and often the noise of Rome reminds me the clatter of my city, Bombay. But even though there are similarities I miss Bombay, I miss my family and friends (Extracted from the original dialogue recorded, May 2006).

Home, language, memories and marginalisation are recurring problems for immigrants in Italy. However, the fictions speak of, the migrants’ identities developing narratives about plurality, fluidity and always being in movement (Bromley 2000). Therefore, the restaurants on the screen and piazza Vittorio in the Esquilino quarter are centres that are transformed by “the process of local-global dialectic in which once-migrant groups have syncretised the so-called ‘host’ cultures and have unsettled the common sense” (Bromley 2000: 3).

In spite of the theoretical framework of this analysis that engages intellectually with the production of new spaces and attempts to form a hypothesis about the formation of novel identities, it does not concretely and actually translate the condition of numerous South Asians in Rome. Both fictions ironically and positively translate the migration as a positive experience in which the migrants are optimistically depicted as being integrated within the diegetic society. Both Un Medico in Famiglia 5 and Sweet India clash with the idea that a film is a site of conflicted but yet interconnected discourses situated within concrete social and historical institutions (Cook 2005).
The misleading construction of the migration experience, as presented in the two sitcoms, is a dangerous message, which is promulgated on a large scale, as mentioned by Kabir Bedi during a personal interview:

Films here [Italy] tend to be either entertainment comedies or great cinema from great directors and a few in between. So television becomes the main life and blood of entertainment in Italy; people watch everything on television…so you realise how huge it is (From a personal interview with Kabir Bedi held on the 27th November 2007).

Kabir Bedi illustrates how television is determinant for the diffusion of entertainment within Italy. Despite the supremacy of television over other forms of screen-entertainment in Italy, which results in a hegemonic distribution of audio-visual material over the spectators (through this medium), *Sweet India* and *Un Medico in Famiglia 5* did not develop alternative and innovative ‘inclusive’ formats that could talk to a wider audience, nor did they foster a fusion of cultural entities which would mingle and assemble into an *unicum*.

These depictions which are aired on television under the guise of being humorous sitcoms, however, do not speak directly to the South Asian migrant community in Rome who cannot identify with what is narrated and constructed on the television. Ananda Mitra (Mitra 1999) raises significant points on the position and representation of South Asians in the narrative of an audiovisual product. The representation of South Asians, she mentions, is built around images such as Gandhi (as she refers to the film *Gandhi* (1982), dir. by Richard Attenborough) while other South Asians normally play peripheral roles; in both cases Mitra states “the audience is presented with an image of a person from South Asia and those images ultimately become the ‘obvious’ way of thinking about South Asians”. Hence, it is insufficient to introduce an Indian family within the plot of the film/television program in order to appeal to a broader (local) audience. The result is the marginalisation of the immigrants with the plausible and sole alternative of watching popular Hindi cinema at home.
The Advertisements

Parallel to the production of sitcoms, advertisements inspired by India and Bollywood aesthetics flourished on the Italian television. It is interesting to note the comment given by Kabir Bedi during the interview:

The Italian view of India and the East is a much more romantic, mysterious, spiritual view than say people of an English-speaking country have. English people see India as an ex-colony, an underdeveloped country, of snake-charmers and beggars. Now they see India and they say oh! India is developing as well! They see information technology, progress. But Italy always had this romantic, mysterious, spiritual view of the East and in a sense I, through the character of Sandokan, symbolised that form. (From a personal interview with Kabir Bedi held on the 27th November 2007).

The comment of Bedi draws attention to the construction of stereotypes based on preset – exotic – beliefs related on the history of Italy with India, which concretely began with the diffusion of the book Siddhartha written by Herman Hesse in 1911. The book gained immediate success in Italy95 following the Second World War conflict. This book proposed values such as spiritual harmony and spoke about practices such as meditation which ideologically impacted Italy and the cultural conception of India, which was picked up later by the Hippy culture (see Chapter 4) and followed by the psychedelic cultures. The contemporary tendency to rely on pre-existing constructions – and aesthetic – hypothesises the revitalisation of a ‘modern hippy culture’, in which the modern aesthetics of Bollywood cinema are criss-crossed and embodied in the paradigm of advertisements.

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95 Siddhartha narrates the story of a young Brahmin who decides to challenge the patriarchal tradition wandering around India in search of spiritual inner lights. The story of Siddhartha offered the readers inspiration and hope in order to obtain freedom and relief from the bloody Second World War. In Italy the book of Herman Hesse was edited by Frassinelli in 1945, and was successively circulated among universities constituting an alternative reading beyond the borders of classical studies.
To understand how old and new tendencies work together to generate novel aesthetics, it is worth considering some of the advertisements that appeared on Italian television. Particular attention will be given to *The Sculptor* (dir. by Matthijs Van Heijningen, 2002) for Peugeot 206, *Gandhi* (dir. by Spike Lee, 2004) for Telecom Italia, *The Wedding* for Rio Casa Mia (dir. by Francesco Nencini, 2003) and *The Guru* (2003) for Coca-Cola.\(^\text{96}\)

The advertisement entitled *The Sculptor* (Figure 5-18) was produced in Italy, but the story was set in India. The protagonist is a young Indian gentleman who longs to own the new Peugeot 206. He decides to modify his old car by using any means necessary – even through the help of an elephant, frame 6 in Figure 5-18 – into the shape of a

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\(^\text{96}\) I was unable to find the name of the director; therefore the information results are incomplete. I tried to contact Coca-Cola through e-mail in 2006 but unfortunately I did not receive any reply.
Peugeot 206. Proud of the changes inflicted upon to the car (frame 12 in Figure 5-18) he exhibits his newly transformed car to the people present in the square.

The commercial entitled Gandhi (Figure 5-19) produced for Telecom Italia and directed by Spike Lee hosts the father of pacifism sitting in an ashram, who through the use of a modern web cam is speaking to the world (frame 1 and 2 of Figure 5-19). People from all over the world are listening to his speech, which reminds them “if you want to give a message it must be a message of love, it must be a message of truth. I want to capture your hearts. Let your hearts clap in unison with what I’m saying. A friend asked yesterday, ‘Did I believe in one world?’ How can I possibly do otherwise, of course I believe in one world”97 (abstract from Gandhi’s speech – Telecom Italia); everyone listen to Gandhi’s words, using different means; a couple sitting on a park bench near the Coliseum use a mobile phone (frame 4 of Figure 5-19), a group of business men in an office in the centre of London using a computer, a Chinese man sitting in front of a television (frame 5 of Figure 5-19), two Masai sitting with a portable computer (frame 6 of Figure 5-19), and a woman with a group of soldiers at Red Square in Moscow watching a maxi-screen. At the end of the advertisement the slogan says: If he could have communicated like this, how would the world be today?

The other series of advertisements that appeared on the television in Italy were The Wedding (Figure 5-21) for Rio Casa Mia (a commercial which was advertising a washing powder) and The Guru (Figure 5-20) for Coca-Cola.

97 The original speech was given by Gandhiji within the Inter-Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, on the 2nd April 1947:

I do not think that I should apologise to you for having to speak in a foreign tongue. I wonder if this loudspeaker carries my voice to the farthest end of this vast audience. Will some of those who are far away raise their hands if they listen to what I’m saying? Do you listen? Alright. Well, if my voice doesn’t carry, it won’t be my fault, it will be the fault of these loudspeakers…What I want you to understand if you can, that the message of the East, the message of Asia, is not to be learnt through European spectacles, through the Western spectacles, not by imitating the tinsel of the West, the gun-powder of the West, the atom bomb of the West. If you want to give a message again to the West, it must be a message of love, it must be a message of truth. There must be a conquest [applause], please, please, please. That will interfere with my speech, and that will interfere with your understanding also. I want to capture your hearts and don’t want to receive your claps. Let your hearts clap in unison with what I’m saying, and I think, I shall have finished my work. Therefore, I want you to go away with the thought that Asia has to conquer the West. Then, the question that a friend asked yesterday, ‘Did I believe in one world?’ Of course, I believe in one world. And how can I possibly do otherwise, when I become an inheritor of the message of love that these great un-conquerable teachers left for us?  

**The Guru** tells the story of an Indian waiter who is catering a marriage reception (Figure 5-20). Being thirsty, the waiter decides to drink a bottle of coke, but the lady of the house catches him in the act and reprimands him. The taste of the drink compels him to start singing a Bollywoodian melody, with Italian subtitles, and the show is completed by dances and a colourful background. The lady of the house is swept off by the playful whirlwind of dances and songs and asks the waiter “Cosa significa?” (translated from Italian as: what does it mean?), to which he answers: “Segui la voce del tuo spirito!” (translated from Italian as: Just follow the voice of your spirit!).

Another advert considered here is titled *The Wedding* with a marriage proposal as the main theme. The groom’s side is depicted as an Italian family and the bride’s side as an Indian family as per Figure 5-21(1). The bride’s parents gift the groom with a bottle of Rio Casa Mia soap, as part of a – clearly pantomimic – dowry⁹⁸ ritual and the sound of tabla accompanies this ritual. The gift becomes the reason for a joyous celebration with colourful and choreographed dances – Figure 5-21(3) – and ends in a jingle for the

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⁹⁸ Dowry or Dahej is the payment in cash and/or kind by the bride's family to the bridegroom’s family along with the giving away of the bride (called Kanyadaan) in Indian marriage. Kanyadanam is an important part of Hindu marital rites. Kanya means daughter, and Dana means gift. (VV.AA. "Dowry in India." Retrieved 7th September 2006, from http://www.indianchild.com/dowry_in_india.htm.)
wedding to be under the elegy of an ‘auspicious’ cleaning soap. Everyone sings an ‘oriental’ canzonet in Italian, but in a stylish Bollywood manner with Italian karaoke subtitles.

Figure 5-20: The Guru, advertisement for Coca-Cola.

Figure 5-21: The Wedding, advertisement for Rio Casa Mia.
The wedding is presented in both commercials from different points of view. *The Guru* is the viewpoint of a waiter who works in a reception of a wedding in which the mood of the video is encapsulated within the aesthetics that is reminiscent of an Indian wedding. Rio Casa Mia’s commercial constructs the wedding through vivid colours, Bollywood dances, flowers, colourful sarees, bright jewellery and revised *videshi*-dowry practices which embrace an aesthetic of “appropriation” (Hutnyk 2000), however, without a lucid decodification for a larger audience as the questionnaire pointed out by the sociological enquiry within this thesis.99

*Further Discussion*

The space of *The Sculptor* was modelled on an allegedly typical periphery of an Indian town, which as suggested by the two creators Roberto Greco and Giovanni Porro, was “evoked by personal journeys to India and by the unquestionable success that Bollywood cinema had gained in Europe in recent times” (from production notes, obtained via personal communication). In a theoretical frame, the line adopted by the creators of *The Sculptor* appears to embrace the perspectives – as per most of the Italian directors discussed in Chapter 4 – depicted and evoked by memories, journeys and fascinations. Consequently, the periphery depicted in the advertisement for Peugeot is based on the construction of an ‘Indianness’ which can be recognised and decoded. This decodification occurs through images conserved and revived, from the cultural memory that Italy has of India; this process takes place through a melancholic and collective remembrance of what Italy already knows of India.

In the Telecom commercial, the historical figure of Gandhi raises issues of nationalism and colonialism inextricably linked to the history of India. For this the image of Gandhi is constructed on historical memories, which speak to ex-hippies and simultaneously address the South Asians in Italy, through the recognisable and reassuring figure of Gandhi. Interestingly, the articulation of Gandhi on Italian television which does not undergo any visual alteration in order to maintain his image and his speech appears to create and in some form reinstate an unaltered aesthetic of memories, which partially jeopardises the notion of Hutnyk on appropriation, and serves what was earlier mentioned by Mitra as “the obvious way of thinking about South Asians” (Mitra 1999:

99 Most of the interviewees at the Esquilino quarter mentioned within the questionnaire that they failed to see a representation of their culture on the Italian television.
56). When Hutnyk wrote on the term ‘cultural appropriation’, the author analysed the work of Madonna and the singer's use of aesthetics belonging to the South Asian Culture. Hutnyk commented as follows:

In 1998, with her new album released simultaneously across the globe, Madonna donned a bindi for bad imitations bharatanatyam dance moves on a chart-topping video. Academic discussions on appropriation do not offer any moves towards a transformatory politics capable of a response to this…In order to challenge Madonna's efforts to include 'authentic' Asian styles in her music, or to condemn Kula Shaker's trinketising versions of temple harmony and Hindu spiritualism, there is no need to posit a fixed and authenticated Asian 'Culture' as the benchmark for critique. Madonna and Kula Shaker patently get it wrong as they play into the hands of Hindu fundamentalism and essentialising fantasy. But what is offensive is that they have the industry backing to circulate their fictions worldwide in ways that have consequences in other spheres - for example in perpetuating notions of India as the land of timeless spirituality, elite exploitation and social struggles etc. To question this does not require a fundamentalist notion of true or traditional roots nor even a strictly agreed 'imagined community' (Hutnyk 2000: 125).

The writing of Hutnyk, in which the author theorises the notion of cultural appropriation, is appealing and precarious. The aesthetics employed and explored by the world of advertisement in Italy taps into South Asian imagery by fleeing away from any claim of authenticity, which therefore destabilises the orthodoxy of Hutnyk on the unstoppable dialogic exchange between cultures and aesthetic, as well as for the intersection of diversified arts. While on one side, the commercial employed figures which have historically and socially constructed meanings off and on the screen such as “if you want to give a message it must be a message of love…it must be a message of truth” (as Telecom ‘appropriated’ the image of Gandhi to support its campaign on communication), on the other side, the performance of ‘the father of the nation’ undeniably functioned as a universal tool to reach, numerous South Asian residents in Italy. By, personally not being a fan of the work of Madonna, it is easy to concur with Hutnyk debunking the singer's effort, however, the theorisation of ‘cultural appropriation’ bypasses and ignores the possibility of looking at Madonna’s
performance – and the Italian advertisements – as dialogic, but rather as ways of communication with a larger group of viewers, that seek a transnational consensus through recognisable icons and signs.

Here, Lotman's notion of semiosphere seems to critically explain the inevitable formation of the phenomenon of alleged ‘cultural appropriation’. As explained previously, semiospheres are places in which dialogic entities are in continuous and incessant conversation. As demonstrated by Figure 5-27, the construction of popular Hindi cinema outside of India inevitably suffers and loses its original intent as it passes through the porous boundaries which intersect and exchange information of different natures – such as aesthetic, linguistic, social and historical to name a few. When translating the notion of semiosphere, in social terms, transnationalism needs to be taken into account; the term is intended to be used here as the linkage which is established between people and the slackening of the cultural boundaries between countries. The loosening of the boundaries of nation-states undeniably produces the penetration of different cultural factors into others as a result of journeys in and out of a nation or more than one nation. The idea of transnationalism as Stephen Vertovec puts it “provides an umbrella concept for some of the most global transformative processes and developments of our time” (Vertovec 2009: 12) which produces a sequel of cultural reconfiguration and translations.

Nevertheless, analysing to what extent transnationalism influenced the two advertisements *The Wedding* and *The Guru*, there is a further consideration to take into account. *The Wedding* and *The Guru* make use of visual aspects suggested by the penetration of Bollywood in Europe within their commercials. However, mimicking exterior aspects of dances and songs – which characterises the majority of popular films in Hindi (Arnold 1988) – the narrative devices and the emotional essence of the Bollywood industry are altered on the Italian screens. As demonstrated within the preceding Chapters of this thesis, popular Hindi cinema:

... has come to symbolise an order of psychic investment for immigrants of Indian origin all over the world…in a fundamental sense, evoke the problematic scenario of originary desire: the desire of origins…that lies in the very heart of the attempt at new identity formations on the part of displaced peoples (Chakravarty 1993: 3).
The Wedding and The Guru seem to fragment this industry by making use of song and dances only for a visual impact rather than for continuity in the narration. In this way, the content of these aesthetic disengages from the feeling of desire (mentioned by Chakravarty). The two ads, despite maintaining their commercial nature, appear to have disconnected from a wider audience. While on the one side South Asian spectators do not contextualise the use of dances and songs (in Bollywood style), on the other side, these advertisements stimulate the memories of an exotic India for the local audience. As mentioned earlier, the Italian screens do not seem to translate the narrative and emotional function of dances and songs, which a comprehensive representation would provide; rather this type of dismembered representations supply gratuitous material for further kitsch definitions. The importance of songs and dances in the narrative of Bollywood film is misunderstood and misused by the Italian entertainment industry.

Songs and dances of Bollywood cinema, in Italy, are perceived and read as additional to the film, but, as mentioned songs and dances are an intrinsic of part (and expedients) of the narration. Dances and songs – in Bollywood style – in both Rio Casa Mia and Coca Cola are unfettered from the narrative context and employed to evoke an idea (however mistaken) of this industry. The discussion of Lotman’s notion of semiospheres problematizes how porous borders could filter only part of a visual culture, and the porosity could in fact select – erratically – only parts of another culture. The semiosphere of Lotman demonstrates how transnationalism (and transnational culture) – intended here as a socio-cultural process based on breaking borders and on the culture of métissage (Hawley 2001; Allatson 2007; Vertovec 2009) – could present this cultural exchange, in which elements of it are often misread, as generating aesthetics linked to pre-acquired information on the South Asian subcontinent more than an intellectual elaboration of ‘migrated’ aesthetics.

The event titled Bolly Bolly held in Rome at Villa Francia, accessible through the few tickets available, on 16 March 2010 synthesise this concern. Bolly Bolly mentioned as follows:

BOLLY BOLLY
’Cause you are in Bollywood!
The magic of Bollywood world will be there only for one night: we will start in the evening and we will go on all night long. The ingredients are right, an effervescent curry masala will be necessary to escape from the reality. The night is in Technicolor: orange, gold, blue, violet and fuchsia are the only colours accepted. Wear the most beautiful Saree and jewels you have, decorate your hand with the henna and do not be afraid of using glitters and silks. Do not be afraid of being kitsch, because Bollywood is tres chic!
**Inheritances – Televisual Melancholy**

Popular Hindi cinema which offers “what appear(s) a viable alternative to the self-centred individualism that often seems to come with westernisation” (Johnson and Johnson 2008: 317) seems to be threatened by Western individualism which “undermines traditional institutions, especially the institution of the family” (Johnson and Johnson 2008: 317). However, in Paul Gilroy’s terms, the slackening of cultural bonds with globalisation allows gestures of mutual cultural respect (Gilroy 1993) positioning cultures “as a dynamic site of social contest and interaction” (Curtin 2002: 46), resulting in the process of mixing and matching. This is further corroborated by the analysis of Hannerz, who wrote that these ‘breaks’ produce a territory in which “habitats of meaning” (Hannerz 1992) are created. The multiple significations accumulated by these differentiated habitats make up of “cultural repertories” (Vertovec 2009), which affect and in turn influence the construction of identities on the screens, as demonstrated in this thesis. In this perspective, is the position of Marie Gillespie is critical when discussing the notion of tradition/translation within a wider discourse about ethnicity on television. Gillespie, who employs the concepts of cosmopolitanism and transnational interchangeably, asserts that “the experience of migrants and diasporas is far from being marginal: it might represent an imminent global/universal future” (Gillespie 2005: 22).

The author accepts McLuhan’s point of view which states that “the implosive power of the media may now make just about everybody a little more cosmopolitan” (Gillespie 2005: 22), problematizes the way in which the construction of different identities is rendered on the screen, besides neglecting the historical misrepresentation of a culture. Gillespie’s positive model of viewing other cultures – particularly Punjabis in Britain – could be accepted for the South Asian/Italian case but with great difficulty because as demonstrated by the case studies of this thesis, marginalisation is a key word within the social and visual analysis of South Asian culture in Italy. However, despite the grandiose and ‘apocalyptic’ vision proposed by Gillespie on the “imminent global/universal future”, one can sympathise with the author while writing about different cultures ‘in contact’ hypothesizing the possibility of building common interests, an idea which would be “at odds with nation-states” (Gillespie 2005: 22), which the final chapter of this thesis intends to spell out.

Throughout the histories of different cultures, misrepresentation and misconstruction of cultures and various forms of essentialism and reductionism have occurred on different
levels, from visual art to social enquiry. These facets have always been the primary *raison d'être* for human conflicts, within diverse social, urban and diegetic contexts just to name a few. These realities have fuelled the necessity to supply a pattern for “cultural harmonization” (Vertovec 2009) or a form of cultural understanding within the course of human interaction for further exchanges and debates.

In the Italo-Indian case a cultural harmonization is necessary to clear the misconception (based on melancholic revitalization of pre-acquired and constructed pseudo-knowledge of India in Italy) of an aesthetic based on different nuances and manifestations of melancholy. The sitcoms and the advertisement analysed are characterised by an aesthetic of memory, or rather by a collage of what is remembered about India from past experiences, without paying attention to new migratory tendencies. This position renders the depiction of South Asian culture in Italy stagnant and inert establishing a controverted epistemology between these two countries. Therefore, undeniably, this representational pattern, which was presented by the Italian directors of yesteryear (see Chapter 4), still exists. The following chapter does not aim to corroborate the existence of an aesthetic of emotion which was largely discussed in the past chapters, but attempts to analyse the consequences of the Audio-visual Coproduction Agreement (appendix), between the two countries, on recent productions.
6. **Chapter 6: Looking Beyond Melancholy. New Indo-Italian Perspectives, Projects and Forms.**

The encounter between Italy and India produced a specific aesthetic of melancholy on different levels of signification, which occurs socio-culturally as well as on the screen. As demonstrated, this specific aesthetic pattern took form through diverse journeys (physical, cognitive and emotional), which highlighted specific nuances of melancholy defined both physically and intellectually.

The scope of this chapter does not merely reside in summarising how melancholy effectively appears in creating an aesthetic pattern of representation for the South Asian culture in the context of a transnational emotionality. Rather this chapter aims to explore how journeys, migrations and transnationalism on the small screen reflects the substantial transformations happening within society; the audio-visual products analysed here are visual extensions concerned with border-crossings and exchanges that broaden and significantly expand the process of cultural (and media[tic]) transformation that is, already in progress.

On these premises, it is pivotal to underline the limits and the strengths of the possibilities between Italy and India to co-produce, by giving an account of the newly established co-production agreement between the two countries signed in 2005 and followed by a major meeting between the two industries, during the Roma Film Festival in October 2007. During the Rome Film Festival on 19th of October 2007, the commission of the festival paid a tribute to the Indian Industry with a number of transversal events such as the screening of Art Films and ‘La Nuova Bollywood del box office’ (translated from Italian as: the new Bollywood on the Box Office) (VV.AA 2007). As a part of an 'Indian Day', ‘India-Italy Business Forum: Entertainment industry within a growing global partnership’ meeting took place where delegates from both countries, with representatives from the governments, entertainment industries and economies were present. The Italian press gave great coverage to the event. An interesting comment was published in the Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero* that remarked on the potential interest of the Italian spectator in this industry and therefore the necessity for hosting more of this distant cinema within the Italian theatres; the journalist concluded his article with:
[Bollywood is] an industry of impressive dimensions and also a formidable mythological machine able to stir passions by employing the power of the narration and pushing people outside their own houses. It is part of the grand collective ritual of cinema-going. (Translated from Italian) (DeCataldo 2007).

The encounter of the popular Indian cinema with the western cinema industries engaged the attention of the spectator fostering the possibility for Italy and India to co-produce. On the 13th of May 2005 Italy and India signed the official document agreement titled ‘Audio Visual co-production agreement between the Governments of the Italian Republic and the Republic of India’ (in Appendix). The document sanctioned the intentions of the two industries to collaborate by developing their relationship on specific statutes, as follows:

CONSIDERING that it is desirable to establish a framework for the development of their audiovisual relations and particularly for film, television and video co-productions;

CONSCIOUS that quality co-productions can contribute to the further expansion of the film, television and video co-production and distribution industries of both countries as well as to the development of their cultural and economic exchange;

CONVINCED that these exchanges will contribute to the enhancement of relations between the two countries… (Republic of India and Republic of Italy, 2005).

The full document contains by eighteen articles that explain and give structure to the nature of the agreement; the product of the Indo-Italian co-production should be as follows:

A “co-production” is a film including feature films, documentaries, science films, animation films and commercials, irrespective of length, either on film, videotape or videodisc, which can be shown in cinemas, on television or on video recorders jointly invested in and produced by producers from the two countries… (The Republic of India and the Republic of Italy, 2005).
The above text ascertained the nature of the benefit of a co-produced film, the division of responsibilities in terms of economical investment, shooting location and creative processes. The agreement has been advertised within major cinematographic circuits, such as the Venice International Film Festival, for a long time and lately by Cinecittà Holding prior to its official document.

‘Italy meets Bollywood’ was the first event after the official signing of the alliance between the two countries. A delegation of Italian producers visited India with the purpose of forming the first network of contacts, besides exploring and verifying the possibility and opportunity for a reciprocate collaboration in the process of co-producing stories with an interest and appeal suitable for the respective countries. Gaetano Blandini, head of the Italian Film Board at the Ministry of Culture in 2005, mentioned that:

It will take some time before the co-production agreement will become law, but while waiting, we are using a technical way around this: co-partnership deals. In fact, Cattleya has already created a co-production with India for the film Flying Lessons directed by Francesca Archibugi on this basis (Paternó 2006).

Despite the celebration of this artistic alliance and the emphasis given by the media to the rapport between Italy and India, the two countries have only co-produced two films so far. The first, produced in 1995, was entitled Vrindavan Film Studios, directed by Lamberto Lambertini; however it is not officially recorded as a co-production, as the agreement was edited ten years after the shooting of the film. The second reel is the already mentioned Lezioni di Volo (translated from Italian as Flying Lessons) directed by Francesca Archibugi. The Italian production company Cattleya represented by Riccardo Tozzi (who was interviewed for this thesis in May 2008) was among the producers that sponsored this film. The two films co-produced will be discussed further on in this chapter.

**Italy and Co-productions**

To introduce the nature of this audiovisual co-production, it is necessary to understand the premises on how a co-production agreement works in Italy, in order to articulate a larger discourse on the possibility drawn by this alliance. According to the Italian
Ministry of Cultural Affair’s web site, thirty-seven countries have International Film Co-Production agreements with Italy. They are listed in Figure 6-1.

**Accordi internazionali di coproduzione cinematografica**

**International film co-productions agreements**

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<td>Algeria</td>
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<td>Argentina</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Austria</td>
<td>Gran Bretagna (*)</td>
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<td>Belgio</td>
<td>Germania</td>
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<td>Comunità francese del Belgio</td>
<td><strong>India</strong></td>
<td>Sud Africa</td>
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<td>Brasile</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Cecoslovacchia</td>
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<td>Cina</td>
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<td>Nuova Zelanda</td>
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Figure 6-1: The Figure illustrates the countries with which Italy has established co-production agreements and India is among the official list as marked.

The website to read the integral agreement in both languages Italian and English is the following: http://www.cinema.beniculturali.it/cinema.html (last access: 1st March 2008).

The official co-productions are allowed between Italy and the countries mentioned in Figure 6-1 through an executive text or an agreement of co-production. What are the benefits of a co-production? There are two main advantages: a) the film (co-produced) will have dual or plural ‘citizenship’ depending on how many production companies from the respective countries support the release of the film; and b) the film productions could benefit from the financial and creative support of all the countries involved in the release of the film, therefore aspiring for a more generous and widespread distribution.

Italy is one members of the European Agreement of Common Productions of Films, which regulates the co-productions between three or more countries. Most of the co-production alliances are based on bilateral agreements signed by the governments of the two countries and probated by the respective parliaments. However, due to the complexity of certain bureaucratic processes and perhaps the sluggishness of the Italian

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101 The term ‘citizenship’ is here deployed to highlight the (inter)national characteristic of a co-produced film, therefore revising the concept of making and distributing film as a problem of nationality.
parliament, these procedures experience obstacles, as confirmed by Gaetano Blandini while answering the question - “What procedures govern co-production deals between Italy and other countries?”:

Once the two parties have signed co-production agreements, they then have to be passed by both houses of the Italian parliament before they actually become a law. This process takes an average of twelve to eighteen months, so for example the most recent deals we have signed with China (in December 2004) and India (in May 2005) have yet to enter into Italian law. This is a bit difficult for our foreign partners to understand as it is often much quicker for them to ratify these types of agreements (Leigh 2005).

Could this aspect lead to a delay in the co-production of film between two or more countries? Blandini continued:

Yes and in fact to avoid these problems a modification was made to the Italian law regulating the industry of cinema in 2004. The Culture Minister – in agreement with the head of the Film Board and the Cinema Commission – can make an exception allowing certain co-productions that would fall under the co-production agreement (with specific cultural, economic or industrial interests) to actually go ahead – even though the deal is not yet law. This is the current state of affairs for the co-production pacts with China and India (Leigh 2005).

In addition to the advantages of co-productions mentioned above, Eric Enrich summarises the copyright ownership of the audiovisual work as follows:

Co-producers have made the promised contributions and, they are the co-owners of the intellectual property rights due to a producer with respect to an audiovisual work (copyright) and all the integral elements of it – brand names, masters, cuts, sketches, characters, sequel rights, remakes, spin-offs etc. – in proportion to the respective contributions (Enrich 2006).

However, the constant change of the productive and legislative norms regarding co-production agreements requires a continuous updating of the official texts in many cases. The texts are periodically modified in order to allow a constant exploitation of
these alliances and improve the effectiveness in the international market. The history of Italian co-production partnerships with other countries dates back to the Second World War. Italy and France were the first European countries to sign a co-production agreement, in 1949 (Jäckel 1996). The Franco-Italian agreement was a response of the two governments to bring back production levels in Europe back to pre-war levels\textsuperscript{102}, and to offset the damaging effects of the invasion by American films (Jäckel 1996). The Italian and French industries had significantly increased their production with the French and Italian actors achieving international recognition; furthermore, many of the co-produced films were not only popular in both their domestic markets but also in the rest of Europe and beyond (Jäckel 1996). This system, based on reciprocity, produced the expected results. The co-production was the product of a ‘dialogue’ between countries with ‘cultural affinities’ in terms of industrial and institutional frameworks; both of which claimed relatively equal success until the 1980s (Jäckel 1996).

The ongoing research by the Italian entertainment industry to co-produce in order to offer higher quantity films to the market and to be competitive at the box office with the American productions is rooted within the European context. The official statement made by the Italian producer Mr. Riccardo Tozzi during the EFA (European Festivals Association) congress on co-productions held in Italy in 2002, expressed the interest and perhaps the expectations of the Italian cinematographic companies in co-production agreements. Tozzi summarising his comment to a European audience, stated “It is convenient to co-produce, even just to entrench the film in other territories such as Spain, Great Britain and France” (Ramberti 2003).

However, the need to co-produce led Italy to look overseas, and g India was a significant candidate. Within the same EFA in 2002, Marco Müller, an Italian producer for Downtown Pictures, spoke in favour of a “cinema del meticciato” (translated from Italian as: ‘half-cast cinema’), which could seek alliances and stimuli outside conventional sites and as ironically expressed by the producer “from the Nevada desert to the plateau of Anatolia” (Ramberti 2003).

\textsuperscript{102} The 1920s were a period of extraordinary and prolific activities by European film companies such as the British, Scandinavian, German and Italian which established a strong market in order to combat the economic and cultural domination of Hollywood on the market. For several reasons many attempts collapsed in the 1930s. The European dynamic were revived in the late 1940s through the negotiation by national governments of international co-production treaties. (Jäckel, A. (1996). European Co-Production Strategies Film Policy. International, National and Regional. A. Moran. London, Routledge.)
Despite the need for and the profound interest in to co-producing with other counties, Italy still faces the inexperience of the producers in terms of knowledge of other cinematographic industries. Gaetano Blandini states:

Unfortunately there are still too few Italian producers who work in and have knowledge of other markets. And I'm not just talking about the international markets or the new markets we all hear about, but more specifically those closer to home, first and foremost in Europe. There are very few Italian producers who know about this field. This is why our projects have problems breaking through and finding support on a European level – for example through Eurimages but even through the MEDIA programme – because our producers have a cultural deficit in terms of their relationship with other countries (Leigh 2005: online).

In order to corroborate part of the findings on co-productions, an extended interview was held with Riccardo Tozzi, Director of Cattleya in Rome in April 2008. Tozzi’s production company emerged as the most prolific Italian production company dealing with issues linked to racism, transcultural and interethnic experiences. The extended interview, as part of this thesis’ methodology, was employed to uncover facets of the specificities of other entertainment industries and their current relation with the Italian cinematographic industry.

The producer expressed his concern regarding the co-production of audio-visual material with a country like India in the following terms:

First of all we have to work on knowing each other’s culture and learn not to rely on what we think we already know of that specific culture. Ideally we should abandon certain kinds of stereotypes. We need to learn how to decipher and read their ‘yes’ and their ‘no’, as they have to do with us. Initially, it is absolutely necessary to have a cultural mediator to translate modalities or representation, but the real need is for a cultural translation. When I went to Japan with a delegate from Mediaset, the way in which certain emotions were expressed were absolutely alien to the way I, and all of us in Italy demonstrate certain kinds of feelings.

Essentially, we have to know each other despite what has been proposed and filtered into the respective culture, of the ‘other’, until now (Personal Interview with Riccardo Tozzi, Acciari 2008).

This interestingly opens a new perspective on what the Italian media is used to with regard to other cultures, which in this context is India. Tozzi’s point of view put forward a reflection and proposes a possibility of looking at a subject through other perspectives than those built on standardised and stereotyped characteristics. It encourages a parallel thinking away from what characterised South Asia(ns) on and off the screens of Italy until recently. The intention of coming into contact with what is unknown about India overshadows the repetitiveness of melancholic representative patterns, fostering the birth of a novel way of representing and thinking about this country.

Furthermore, the Italian producer Sergio Scapagnini of Indrapur Cinematografica further emphasised that “the treaty would help stimulate production of culturally vibrant films, besides giving a boost to the development of the Italian film infrastructure” (http://in.rediff.com/movies/2005/nov/29italian.htm 2005). Kress and Leeuwen have written that the visual communications of a given society can only be understood “through the range of forms or modes of public communication available of that society” (Kress and Leeuwen 2006: 121). However, the aim of the co-production between Italy and India aimed is to surpass the aforementioned concept by laying aside the usage of cultural (de)codifications on a specific society and its culture, and give space to images that are free from exotic connotations.

As mentioned by Sergio Scapagnini:

A co-production treaty would encourage the Indian film makers to invest in Italian talent and its locations. In return, they would benefit from the Italian film expertise and the films could be eligible for Italian film tax incentives, which are designed to encourage investment in our domestic industry (http://in.rediff.com/movies/2005/nov/29italian.htm 2005).

Co-production: Terms of Innovations

As mentioned above, ‘Italy meets Bollywood’ was the first official meeting between the Italian and Indian entertainment industries. A delegation of an Italian representative visited Mumbai to establish a series of contacts to initiate a collaborative relationship.
The first aim was to open Italy to Bollywood productions for a ‘dream’ landscape and for the song-dance sequences. Secondly, the meeting highlighted two intentions: a) as in 1949 with France, to give more space to Italian cinema and co-produced films within an international panorama as well as for the local cinema theatres hosting a large number of Hollywood productions; and(b) to make Bollywood appear and appeal internationally, specifically in Italy. While in the first instance the co-production between the two countries represents the possibility of speculating on the strength of each nation, in the second phase the co-production could potentially open the possibility of seeing ‘joined-minds’ films – to use the expression of Bollywood producer Yash Chopra who took part in the Forum in Rome Film Festival.

The main concern a rising collaboration between Italy and India highlights, regards the second aspect of the alliance, aimed at increasing appeal to a wider-global audience. The treaty so far has provided a real opportunity for an early cultural reconnaissance and traces a line of reciprocal understanding. While promoting a movement towards another culture, it in turn deviates from fixed and pure ideas regarding pre-constructed aesthetics of the respective cultures, and forms “coalitions” as referred by Anne Jackel (Jäckel 1996: 97).

This long preamble was necessary to contextualise how Italy and India intend to move ahead and go beyond outmoded representational patterns. As argued in thesis through examples which have ranged from socio-cultural study to audio-visual analysis, the representations of exotic elements melancholically re-inscribed within the narrative of films or televisual products in Italy, pose a question on the viability of audio-visual co-productions within the country's cultural milieu, which, abandoning the obsolete images of India could foster a new language and formats for a wider and diversified audience.

This chapter addresses the following questions: Is it possible to free the subject India from exotic connotations in light of a new language developed with a co-production agreement? How is it possible to leave behind the misleading notion of melancholic exotic, which has enveloped the image of India within the Italian culture?

As already stated, the two countries have co-produced two films to date. The film *Chase* at €5 million was going to be the first official co-production between the two countries,
but it did not take place\textsuperscript{104}. However, the first practically co-produced film (in terms of effective collaboration between Indian and Italian troupe and cast, with location in India and with an Italian director) was \textit{Vrindavan Film Studios} directed by Lamberto Lamberti in 1995. This film was produced prior to the agreement and for this reason it was not registered as an official Indo-Italian co-production. Nevertheless, \textit{Vrindavan Film Studios} is deployed as a significant example to be used to hypothesise on the ‘de-exoticization’ of India on Italian screens. The second film is \textit{Lezioni di Volo} (translated as: \textit{Flying Lessons}), directed by Francesca Archibugi in 2006.

\textbf{Lezioni di Volo}

\textit{Lezioni di Volo} is discussed first because it is the only film successfully co-produced under the Indo-Italian agreement. The film presents a mixed artistic cast including Giovanna Mezzogiorno (Chiara), Andrea Miglio Risi (Pollo), Tom Karumathy (Curry), Angela Finocchiaro (Annalisa), Archie Punjabi (Sharmila) and a mixed technical cast including Francesca Archibugi (Director), Soono Deenanath Mishra (costumes) and Battista Lena (Music). The film was a co-production that pooled the following production companies: Cattleya (Italy), Khussro Films (India), Babe Films (France), Acquarius Films (UK) with the collaboration of RAI Cinema\textsuperscript{105}.

The film narrates the story of Apollonio – referred to as Pollo by his friends\textsuperscript{106} – and Curry. The two young friends are eighteen years old and both have the same interest: to spend most of the day on the Ponte Milvio to spit on pedestrians' heads to the detriment of their schooling. Pollo and Curry\textsuperscript{107} fail the final exam at school just before the beginning of the summer, but as they are inseparable friends, the two decide to invent an excuse to leave Rome for the summer. Curry (an adopted boy from India) invents an excuse to go to India to seek his roots, thereby playing on the emotions of his parents

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Chase} was the title of the first official co-production between the industry of India and Italy. The film was supposed to be produced by Aditya Bhattacharya, directed by Anubhav Sinha and entirely shot in the region of Lazio. The information was gathered through an exchange of some e-mails with Maurizio Sperandini, responsible for the production area of Cinecittà. As he mentioned the (official) reasons of the failure lay on change in screenplay and financial gap, but nothing was added further. I have tried to contact Mr Bhattacharya but I have been unable to receive further information regarding this film.

\textsuperscript{105} Rai Cinema S.p.a is a branch of RAI (Radio Televisione Italiana) an organisation which allows RAI to participate in national and international cinematographic production. Among the principal aims of RAI cinema there is the possibility of intervention in activity such as production of cinematographic and audiovisual in order to develop the industry of Italian cinema and combine market with quality (http://www.raicinema.it/) – Accessed on 12 Jan 2008.

\textsuperscript{106} Pollo is translated in Italian as chicken.

\textsuperscript{107} The nicknames of the two boys ‘Pollo and Curry’ translate to chicken and curry.
and obtaining their permission. Pollo, on the other hand, has to convince his father, a strict Jewish antique dealer in Rome, that he cannot leave Curry alone on this complex emotional trip to India. Once the two friends leave Rome and reach India the impact is tough, not “come pensavamo” (translated as: not like we thought) and mostly unpleasant even if restricted to the circuits of grand hotels. “Qui sputano, puzzano e suonano il clacson” (translated as: here people spit, stink and they sound their horns) says Curry to his adoptive mum while speaking with her over the phone; besides, he is worried about the fact that “qui tutti mi scambiano per indiano, nun poi capì!!!” (Translated as: here everyone mistakes me for an Indian, you wouldn’t believe it!!! - with a distinctive Roman accent). Reaching India and sitting in a taxi Pollo and Curry look at each other and, disappointed, ask: “te l’aspettavi così?” (Translated as: ‘did you expect it to be like this?!’). A short while after reaching India, it is suggested they take their first excursion around the desert, where they lose everything, including money and documents and with no possibility of living in hotels they begin to wander around with no destination. However, the misadventure does not seem to end for the two boys. After surviving a local riot where Pollo and Curry are separated, the Italo-Indian guy is sucked in to the crowd and finds himself confined among Indians. Nevertheless, through different encounters the two boys begin to experience the world of international ONLUS (Organizzazione Non Lucrativa di Utilità Sociale) and charities where they will meet Chiara, an Italian doctor working in a village in the Thar dessert. Pollo and Curry begin to experience their trip in India, not only as an ‘external’ and physical experience, but an internal one as well. Curry begins his trip towards his past, his origins, while Pollo contemplates his future. Curry, despite the excuse concocted to run away from a Roman summer of homework, understands the need to search for his biological mother. Thus, he goes to Kerala while Pollo falls in love with Chiara, who is older and married to a Scottish doctor. However, the figure of Chiara will be pivotal for the formation of Pollo as, she will help him to understand who he would like to become “quando avrai 30 anni” (translated from Italian as: when you are 30.)

**Analysis of Lezioni di Volo**

The screenplay, written by Francesca Archibugi and Doriana Leondeff, considered in the current Italian cinematographic panorama as a petite prodigy, represents the different generations not only as opposite polarities (a common tendency in the contemporary panorama of Italian cinema), but also showing the characters of different ages, engaged
in the difficult search for their identity, of who they were and who they would like to be. Furthermore, Francesca Archibugi seems to *mettre en scène* the sociological and psychological mutations, which characterise adolescence in this era with accuracy and sensitivity. This is combined with the eternal dilemma posed by race politics (Gilroy 1993), which sees white and black, not only as marginalisation and 'ghettoization' of cultures or dominance of one culture on another (for instance Curry is well integrated person within the Italian society has a very strong Roman accent an as we have seen, is perplexed to be taken as Indian). The game played by the association of terms is articulated throughout the narration. One more time, just as happened in *Curry Cultura* (discussed in Chapter 5) the language of this film plays with culinary terms. In fact, the protagonists’ names pollo and curry translate as chicken and curry. This association seeks to cultivate the language of likeability, and cuisine (or a place of conviviality) appears to be the avenue, which foster cultural dialogue alongside reinstating ethnic identities. This is evident in a testimony of an Indian businessman collected during one of my trip to Rome, and from the analysis of Indian restaurants as shown in television programmes, both discussed in Chapter 5.

*Lezioni di Volo* does not deploy elements politicised by post-modernism and certainties of racial realism, which as Gilroy states: “...the resort to ethnic absolutism can only be a source of weakness in the long run. It is already a source of inertia and confusion” (Gilroy 1993: 59). In light of Gilroy’s reflections, it must be determined if the considerations of white and black have to carry on highlighting the ‘pigmentation’ – as part of the ethnic absolutism – (a problem that exists under the masquerade of cultural politics and race politics). Therefore Curry and his Romanness definitely elide the issue, of the skin colour as a problem within the contemporary society. However, the debate regarding black, white and race politics is only mentioned, but is not the core of this discussion. Rather, the nucleus of the analysis looks back at the image of India that has been strongly perceived as exotic within the European territory, particularly in Italy.

After the boys are left with no money and no place to stay, they are erroneously directed towards a local train station that at night is transformed into a place where squatters take shelter at no price. Dark and unlit, the obscure space absorbs every pigment of colour and the only light, coming from the moon, is bluish, overshadowed and filtered by the gratings of the windows (Figure 6-2); besides the only communal sound is the silence interrupted by the echoes of people coughing.
When the two boys are lost in the crowd, as mentioned earlier, Curry began looking around the city for his friend Pollo. He is trapped in a busy, noisy, dusty market (Figure 6-3). With his broken English he attracts the attention of an Indian guy, Curry touches his arm and asks: “Scusa, mmm, excuse me have you seen a long boy, a long white boy?” The Indian to whom he is talking to looks at him, winks and begins to laugh, misinterpreting Curry’s intentions as being homosexual; he discharges him with a vulgar Roman expression. Once more the background is far from the luxurious, embossed and elaborated aesthetic compositions distinctive in images of most Bollywood films, and far from the images created by travel adventure narratives at the beginning of the 1900s with stories of Maharajas living in stunning castles. Rather, the market is a place of passage and exchange *par excellence* within the urban space of the city however, depicted with drops of colour, which do not inscribe a style but to a certain extent, negate the colour itself within its narration, in favour of a visual pragmatism.

Figure 6-2: Pollo and Curry in a train station in India before they are separated.

After losing all their documents and money and asking directions to a hotel, Curry and Pollo are directed towards a train station which during the night time is used by many beggars as a place to sleep.

Figure 6-3: This shot is captured from the sequence when Curry wanders in search of Pollo.

He is roaming around the city, a space which appears to be hostile to him, where Indians do not speak his first language (Italian) and his English is broken, insecure and ready to be misunderstood as happened in the narration captured in this image, where the Indian man on the right misunderstands Curry as being gay. Curry complains at him by saying “What are you laughing at?”
Figure 6-4: A snapshot from the movie *Lezione di Volo*.

After being separated by the crowd Pollo, in his wandering, starts to be affected by dysentery and meets Chiara. After losing his friend Pollo, Curry meets by chance Chiara the Italian doctor that keeps Pollo under observation. She comes to know that he is looking for Pollo and she takes Curry to the place where he is resting.

Figure 6-4 is a snapshot captured from the sequence where Curry runs to meet his lost friend Pollo again, escorted by Chiara. The image is accompanied by suspense music with a beating tabla guiding the spectator towards a sense of hope, a sound that extends the sensation of time passing and the impelling necessity of Curry to meet Pollo again. The scenario is compressed, minimal, dim and claustrophobic. The scene gathers the presence of six characters, including four Indian women occupied with domestic practices such as stitching and the preparation of *papadum*, Chiara and Curry. Through a dolly shot followed by a movement which shrinks the diegetic space, the camera captures life within a half-lit housing complex, with a sky-blue light which wraps the scene rendering the characters as nuances of this intimate place, interrupted only by a few spots of colour. In Figure 6-2, Figure 6-3 and Figure 6-4 the aesthetic of colourlessness pervade the diegetic space. Pollo, Curry and the spectator seem to experience a ‘decolourised’ India. The place is depicted through the language of realism deprived of the exotic filter, which have characterised the depiction of India in Italy.

The story of the film highlights facets linked with themes of generational clashes on the one hand, and on the other, the film uses partially the language of the Italian comedy where love, passion and juvenile pain are narrated on the background of an India that is devoid of a certain level of folklore. India is presented without shininess, brightness or colourfulness, the expected facades to which the Italian spectator is accustomed. As interestingly suggested by Roberto Nepoti, a journalist for the Italian daily newspaper Repubblica, the film is an example of how the individual memories are abandoned and
the melancholic evocation of India stands aside. Archibugi explores the otherness of the other by visually constructing the diegetic space on cultural facets which are anti-exotic. The journalist ends his article as follows:

The style of the film is realistic [there is an explicit childbirth scene] with authentic locations accurately anti-exotic. The film is poles apart from the practice of ‘in Studios’ of Bollywood; possibly it is closer to the films of Mira Nair, purified from the glamour. The courageous goodwill of the director to conjoin realism of the images with epic elements from the narrative regarding the adolescence is consolidated by the choice of the director to “disappear” behind the camera and leaves the story to be narrated by itself (Translated from Italian) (Nepoti 2007).

**Vrindavan Film Studios**

*Vrindavan Film Studios* (1995) was a film directed by Lamberto Lambertini and produced by Indrapur Cinematografica. It presents a mixed cast including Enzo Decaro (Francesco), Gaetano Carotenuvo (Ravindra), Sonali Kulkarni (Radha), Mohan Agashe (Hiralal), Soumitra Chatterjee (Vishnu), Roopali Ganguly (Annapurna), Goutam Ghose (Goutam), Paolo Graziosi (Narada) and Tullio Sorrentini (Ganesh). Furthermore, the film had a mixed technical crew: Lamberto Lambertini (Director), Anna Napoli (Film Editor) and Antonio Monroy (Art Director).

*Vrindavan Film Studios*, as mentioned earlier, does not fall under the co-production agreement between the two film industries, but due to the intent, interest and common effort it could certainly be considered as an early co-production, precisely a film that conjoined the efforts of the industries of both Italy and India. Furthermore, as similar to *Lezioni di Volo*, *Vrindavan Film Studios* was partially financed by RAI and further supported by RAI Trade108.

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108 As mentioned on the website of Rai Trade, the activities involved are as follows: As witness to more than half a century of Italian art, day-to-day life and customs, Rai plays a leading role in Italian and international culture. Rai Trade promotes Rai's many and varied audiovisual properties, and markets the rights internationally. One of its objectives is to contribute to the spread of Made in Italy products throughout every sector of the audiovisual industry. Rai Trade serves as an amplifier for Italy's lifestyle, popularising the country's heritage of images, sounds and ideas. Its structure, though highly developed, gives it agility and an in-depth knowledge of market dynamics: these are the distinguishing characteristics of a company that combines proven professional skills with a dynamic approach to its business activities.
The plot of *Vindravan Film Studios* is based on numerous anecdotes disclosed by the producer Sergio Scapagnini during a personal interview. Through the use of an extended interview to Scapagnini, it was possible to understand the complexity of this film and the producing conditions further, surrounding the creation of this film. The interview took place in Rome in May 2008. Part of the interview transcribed here explains the network of meetings, friendships, emotions and the choices that made the realisation of the film possible. As stated by Sergio Scapagnini at the beginning of the interview:

During the 1980s we went to India with a theatrical group from Naples, as the only Italian representative in this beautiful theatrical festival, called East West Theatre Encounter, organised by the TATA foundation with the Max Muller Bhavan, German cultural institute, which in India is the most active among the mitteleuropean presence there.

I met the director of the Max Muller Bhavan and I asked him to host within the festival this fantastic Napoletan group. The director and *pater familias* was Lamberto Lambertini and the group was called *Peppe e Concetta Barra*, two fantastic Napoletan artists. The performance was filmed by Goutam Ghose an Indian director with whom I became a very close friend. When the cinematographic agreement of co-production between Italy and India was signed, Goutam and I were present in order to avoid any kind of obstacles...I am not a planning person and when you find Calcutta on your path you cannot stop and so I have definitely embraced my two passions: culture and charity (Translated from personal interview in Italian) (Acciari 2008).

Thus, as further confirmed by Scapagnini, the planning behind the film had a strong emotional component, a deep sense of memory and melancholy all imbued within the story which is an intermingling of human experiences, reciprocating knowledge of the ‘other’ and respect. Cultures in communication, sharing experiences and self-representation are all facets that emerge within the plot of this film as well as within the history of its production.

The story narrates the making of a film within a film. *Virindavan Film Studios* recounts the story of Francesco, an Italian writer who has returned to India, the land that he loved and left years before. While he is in India, his intention is to meet up with his old friend Goutam, a film director who manages the family owned Vrindavan Film Studios,
specialising in one of the most interesting and beautiful forms of Indian cinema, the ‘Epic Indian Films’.

Figure 6-5: A scene when Francesco reaches Calcutta.

Francesco reaches Calcutta and while sitting in a taxi a local band crosses the tramline. The band plays “Meera Joota Hai Japani”, sung by Mukesh from the film *Shree 420* (1955) directed by and starring Raj Kapoor. This song becomes the soundtrack of the sequence where Francesco, sitting in the taxi, is on his way to Goutam’s house. The image shown (Figure 6-5) is the poster of the Hindi film *Kan Kan Men Bhagwan* (1963) directed by Babubhai Mistry (Figure 6-7), a film with a religious theme and with the main song “Sab Ko Naach Nachata” characterised by a devotional and spiritual lyric which states: “Lord is the creator of all things, but he is not the one who created the caste and religious differences” (translated from Hindi). The references to other films are the layers of a complex narrative made of several sub-texts. This articulated structure wraps the film in memories from the past.

The ambition of Francesco and Goutam was to work together to realise a film jointly. Equally, their aim was to extrapolate and make a film out of a set of tales called the *Kathasarit Sāgara*\(^\text{109}\) (translated from the Sanskrit as: Ocean of Streams of Stories). The tale narrated is the story of a beautiful girl Radha (Sonali Kulkarni, Figure 6-6), her husband and her husband’s best friend. After going on a pilgrimage, the two men end up

\(^{109}\) The *Kathasarit Sāgara* is an ancient Sanskrit book dated around the twelfth century which contains a series of tales written by Somadeva. The tales have a common characteristic: all have an enigma to solve at the end of the narration.
sacrificing their lives by cutting their heads off in the temple of the Goddess Kali\textsuperscript{110}. Radha, in search of her husband and his friend, finds their bodies gruesomely beheaded inside the temple.

Following this brutal discovery, Radha, in tears, looks at the statue of Kali and asks her to return the two bodies. Kali, seeing Radha's pain, agrees to grant her wish and put the heads back on their bodies, however, mistakenly switching them: the husband’s head is placed on his friend’s body and vice versa. Who then is her husband? For Francesco and Goutam, to stage this story represented a good occasion to question the sense of real and imaginary. On the set, the actors got involved with the story and attempted to shed the ‘veil of Maya’ transforming the film into a source of imagination and knowledge; the latter confers an educational purpose on the film. As presented to the Italian audience, it is an unusual way to recount and construct India on the screen; images and scenes are embedded in a kind of ‘fantastic-realism’ away from the Bollywood opulence and from stereotypical images of camels, elephants, snake enchanters and Sandokans. Furthermore, the film, which was released in 1995, the year of the centennial celebration of cinema, pays tribute to the ‘seventh art’ (Canudo 1966) with a monologue of an old sage (Samarat Sewrupsa) who is a friend of both Francesco and Goutam. He looks into

\textsuperscript{110}Kali is also known as Kalika from Bengali \textit{Kālī} and \textit{Kālīkā}, and from the Sanskrit word \textit{Kal} which means time. She is the Hindu goddess often associated with death and destruction. Despite her negative connotation, Kālī is not the goddess of destruction but rather of time. Often Kālī is grossly mistaken to be one of the major Hindu Goddess whose iconography, cult, and mythology commonly associated her with death, sexuality, violence and paradoxically is her later description as motherly love. It is partially true to say that Kali is the goddess of death, she rather brings the death of the Ego as the illusory self-centred view of reality. Therefore, to worship Kali does not mean to worship the death but rather is a goddess who helps devotees to overcome the idea of ‘the body’ or ‘I am the body' reinforcing the concept and the awareness that the body is a temporary condition. Therefore, a persona attached to the ego will not be receptive of Kali and she will appear in a fearsome form.
the camera, advising the spectator that we are watching an illusion close to reality, and sets the concept of life and cinema in symbiosis. The monologue says:

Cinema is not 100 years old, it is thousands and thousands of years old and so is life, because life is a projection, a projection of images, it is all there in your head you switch it on and zac! It goes on...you switch it off and zac! It is gone (Monologue translated from Italian, *Vrindavan Film Studios*).

The concept of spectatorship is challenged here, but what we see and what is experienced seems to be entirely entrusted to the five senses, our memories, our knowledge and practices; besides, Lambertini’s film does not solely act as a film which speaks about Maya (the illusion of reality), but as remarked by the old sage of the village (and by the producer Scapagnini), it aims to engage intellectually with the audience, projecting a part of life to the spectator. Drawing from *Vrindavan Film Studios*, Sergio Scapagnini remarks on the importance of the audience as follows:

Vrindavan is dedicated to Maya and is the most beautiful and intense movie about India made by a foreigner. The cinema *per se* and the film guides you in a world that, as in a dream, makes you accept the illusion as true; then you can draw more information from the illusion. When you remove the Maya’s veil, you are not only using the five senses but you are also listening to an interior voice; hearing your interiority you complete your perception and that is everything that you really need. This is the reason why the cinema is more important in India, than in any other country. The Indian spectator is predisposed to catch the best from the magic of cinema. In order to enjoy totally the two cinematographies (Italian and Indian) you need to prepare the public; while very similar, these two audiences have different approaches to the spectacle (Translated from Italian) (Acciari 2008).

*Vrindavan Film Studios* attempt to overcome the problem of exotic images. Similar to *Lezioni di Volo*, the images of India do not present the characteristics showcased in the television programs analysed in Chapter 5, but rather the aesthetic in *Vrindavan Film Studios* moves away from the stereotyped Bollywood aesthetics. The vivacity and vivid coloration gives way to a more realistic representation of India and perhaps echoes to a
certain realism of the Bengali cinema with reference to the cinema of Satyajit Ray. Images of India are polished from the colourful world of popular Hindi cinema, from shining jewellery and silky tinted sarees; this India is ‘decolourised’, but Bollywood is not ignored within the narrative of the film.

Returning to the scene where Francesco reaches India, it is evident that Bollywood cinema is strongly evoked in this sequence. Francesco, sitting in a yellow taxi waiting for the tram to pass, catches sight of the image of Kali – Figure 6-7, Clip 1 – which is drawn on the side of the tram suggesting the presence of Kali within the film to be produced by Goutam and Francesco (as the film of Scapagnini/Lambertini and Goutam Ghose). While crossing the tramline a local band coming in the opposite direction – towards the camera – plays “Meera Josta Hai Japani”. The film centres on Raj (Raj Kapoor the star and director, as already mentioned), a poor but educated orphan who comes to Bombay with dreams of success.

![Figure 6-7: Sequence of Francesco’s arrival in Calcutta.](image)

The song “Meera Joota Hai Japani”, composed by Shankar Jaikishan, which literally means ‘My shoes are Japanese’ (translated from Hindi), became hugely popular and a patriotic symbol of the newly independent India. Its chorus goes:

Mera Joota hai Japani
Yeh Patloon Inglistani
Sar pe lal topi russi
Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani
Translated from Hindi as:

My shoes are Japanese
This pantaloon is from England
The red hat on my head is Russian
But even then, my heart is Indian

Significantly, this song accompanies the wandering of Francesco and it is used in two distinct moments of his arrival in India: a) when crossing the city’s roads he notices the wall is entirely decorated with images of Hindu divinities (Figure 6-7, Clip 5); and b) when Francesco reaches the train station – Figure 6-7, Clip 6 – and its dark unlit (dis)order is the background. While the journey takes place, the voice-over reconstructs and narrates the thoughts which guided Francesco in writing a letter to Goutam prior to his visit to India which says:

Dear Goutam,
How long has it been since my last trip?
I want to be sincere with you, my first impulse was to stay right here, that’s right not to come. I froze at the mere thought that our project after so many years was finally becoming concrete. Then little by little I began to hear once again the subdued voice of immense India.

From this letter it appears as though the Italian director (within the movie) is a profound lover of India, its culture and practices. Like Raj in Shree 420, Francesco imbued into a different culture, opens his heart to India, the land he once left.

The composition of the sequence – Figure 6-7, Clips 1 to 6 – strongly refers to popular Hindi films of the past and simultaneously sets the tone of the film itself. Vrindavan is not a tribute to the Indian culture, but in a broader perspective it is a reverence to the nature of cinema and its illusionary dynamism. Thus, Vrindavan is a film within a film consisting of multiple stories that creates a centrifugal spreading of knowledge and awareness of the illusion of cinema and an interchange-ability of roles. In the film, the screenwriter Francesco and the film director Lambertini switch their identities and ideas just like two men – the husband and the friend of Radha – in the myth. The body of this multilayered tale is played by the interaction of several narrative levels: the encounter between two cultures, the character of Narada which acts as a storyteller, the fantastic dimension of Hindu Gods and Goddesses and the illusory game of cinema (Leavitt
The film also creates a world of illusions, a world in which the borderline between the real and make-believe is extremely fluid.

The camera in *Vrindavan Film Studios* explores the area between fantasy and reality, sensitively depicting the human emotions and bringing out hidden meaning; India (and its cultural visual baggage) is investigated thoughtfully escaping exotic clichés. The images and re-evocation of Bollywood are not visually appropriated but are poetically and intellectually employed in order to evoke human emotions. Lambertini comes in and out of the fiction interrogating the protagonist on questions regarding the relationship between life and the cinema. By employing references from Bollywood cinema, *Vrindavan Film Studios* situates Bollywood cinema as “within the context of globalisation…wherein the production, techniques, finances and aesthetic sources are increasingly being brought into contact with each other from different parts of the same production centres as well as from around the world” (Dudrah 2006: 148).

As mentioned earlier, *Vrindavan* derives from an Indian legend, with Indian landscapes and practices. However, the film did not try to fuse aesthetic elements but rather the work was intellectual in an attempt to obtain a fusion of different perspectives (Italian and Indian). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the synthesis that the film brings about is a “fusion of minds”, as expressed by Yash Chopra during the Roman Film Festival in Rome 2007. However, this fusion does not originate a hybrid product but rather, the intent to work together outside the diegetic space for the creation of a novel audio-visual language capable of communicating universally and talking to a larger audience.

The Indian and the Italian press (Mishra 1996; R.G. 1996; Ray 1996; Rombi 1996; Sathaye 1996; Scognamiglio 1996; Silvestri 1996) acclaimed the film, which was projected in both countries; moreover, it played a leading role in international film festivals, where its intellectual value was highly recognised. *Vrindavan*, despite being an unofficial co-production, is an ideal ground on which it is possible to think powerfully with regards to the co-production between Italy and India in practical terms. The reel in fact is not a film about India but a film about cinema, *Maya*, life and, perhaps, as mentioned by Madhujian, a film where the line between cinema and life blurs (Madhujain 1996).
Reflections and Journeys

Figure 6-8: Clip from the film *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1999) dir. by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

Aditya Bhattacharya (VV.AA 2007: 32) has mentioned that Sergio Scapagnini and Goutam Ghose capitalised on the collaboration between Italy and India in taking forward their project and making *Vrindavan Film Studios*. On the other hand, very few scattered Hindi films have employed images from Italy (shooting in Italy) within their narratives such as *Sangam* (1964, dir. by Raj Kapoor) and *Coolies at Bombay central* (1975, dir. by Ketan Mehta). Furthermore, Italy met India (transversally) in the film directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*\(^{111}\) in 1999. In the narrative, the location in the West was originally set as Italy. However, Italian scenes were actually shot in Budapest, Hungary, which could still be considered as the West. In a particular sequence in Budapest/Italy the two protagonists, Sameer (Salman Khan) and Nandini (Aishwarya Rai), enter into a taxi with a banner displaying 'West Travel' on its rear window (Figure 6-8). West is critical in the construction of the specificities of culture on the screen. In this film, Italy and Hungary are used without any distinction between them. However, despite Budapest being “in Italy” and therefore the urban Hungarian space becoming “the Italian space”, as mentioned in the Trivia of the film in the website www.imdb.com, the director thought that a name like Budapest and Hungary would not connect enough with the masses, therefore the Hungarian scenery (effectively economical in terms of production) was shown within the film as being

\(^{111}\) *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, is a Hindi Film directed in 1999 by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. The plot of the film is about an intermingled love story. Indian-based traditional family of Pundit Darbar (Vikram Gokhale) gets a visit from Sameer Rafilini (Salman Khan), from Italy, who has come as a pupil to learn music and singing. Darbar and his family accept him. Sameer meets Nandini (Aishwarya Rai), Darbar’s daughter, and both fall in love. But Darbar wants Nandini to wed Vanraj (Ajay Devgan). Sameer promises his guru that he will leave India not marrying Nandini. Nandini is heartbroken, and unhappy and reluctantly marries Vanraj. When Vanraj finds out that Nandini is in love with Sameer, he takes her to Italy (Hungary), so that both can be together again. While in Italy Nandini realises that her true love is his husband whom, for love of her was ready to give her freedom.
Italian. This misleading construction of each others’ land corroborates the finding of this thesis. Both Italy and India are constructed on the screens as being exotic and distant; an aesthetic of emotion is directly connected to exoticism which is a culturally constructed notion and the result of imagination, aesthetic conventions and impressions lingering from the melancholic process of remembering (Mason 1998). The exotic images of the Indian subcontinent have been inscribed within the Italian culture as epistemological, oriental and exotic, as seen in Rossellini’s, Pasolini’s and Antonioni’s films and in recent television productions.

The attitude of Italian readers and spectators towards India and its visual culture is evoked and melancholically reconstructed throughout a series of internal and external ‘journeys’. Geographically the journeys, from Italy to India and from India to Italy, are disentangled diegetically (through Pasolini, Rossellini, Salvatores and Bedi) and extra-diegetically (by the South Asian Diaspora in Italy) as points of reference, exchange and knowledge. Physical as well as mental journeys entail diversified types of obstacles as well as discoveries and movements from one place to another. The journeys described and experienced, in this thesis, provide an opportunity for travellers to extend themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally as they respond to challenges and learn more about themselves and possibly about their identity (Featherstone 1996).

As shown by the co-productions made so far, producers and directors pursue the interest of depicting the other side of the world, moving away from obsolete representations and looking at the ‘otherness’ of the ‘Other’. In conclusion, part of the interview with Sergio Scapagnini, which represents the quintessence of the spirit that animated the Italy-India Business Forum of Rome in 2007, is transcribed below. This selection of the personal interview summarises and explains the essence of communication and the necessity for the respective knowledge of each other's country, the modality of the other country’s entertainment industry – as earlier highlighted by Riccardo Tozzi – and the spectator's expectations. As mentioned by Sergio Scapagnini:

> Regarding the emotions of the spectators...you need to create certain inner sentiments, to allow the spectator to accomplish a work of art...for instance, the sentence selected for the protagonist of the last film I produced – *Fuoco su di me*[^112] [Fire on Me, directed by Lamberto](http://example.com)

[^112]: *Fuoco si di me*, directed by Lamberto Lambertini (2006). The story of Eugenio, a young soldier of the Napoleonic army, in Napoli in 1815 after the era of Gioacchino Murat. Eugenio is in love with...
Lambertini, 2006] is a sentence of a French writer called La Marten, which says: “the spectacle is in the spectator”. This is a sentence, which characterised the romanticism in literature. The real form of art is not when the artist says 'this is so' about a work; without the spectator the art does not exist. For instance, if you put the painting of Mona Lisa in a room of the Louvre museum and lock it, it does not exist...it exists because it is looked at and completed within the spectator; this happens in every spectacle and particularly in cinema.

[It is essential] to prepare the spectator to understand different languages of a representation, which might be very similar, but for ancient reasons different forms of narration have been chosen; therefore the popular Indian cinema does not look like other cinema.

In India the transmission of knowledge has been perpetuated through dance-theatre; this testifies that there are passages of the history of communication regarding 'how' to convey and spread meaning. We have different experiences. Therefore when an Italian watches an Indian film with a mythological topic it is difficult [to decode it]. For them (South Asians) to watch a film with a mythological subject embodies a supreme form of entertainment and knowledge at the same time. The projection on the screen of such a topic allows, in my opinion, the Indian audience to live the power of cinema completely (translated from Italian) (Acciari 2008).

Interestingly, the few co-productions released to date between India and Italy has resulted in products which are neither hybrid representations of the two countries, nor a fusion of their stereotyped aesthetic emotions. The alliance moves away from images of memories and the melancholic forms on screen introduced by the Italian authors of the 1960s and with Salvatores in the 1990s. It appears as though Italy, as well as India, are exploring the possibilities offered by co-production treaties with overseas and transnational countries in order to identify new avenues for joint ventures and fund raising. As Dudrah puts it: “Indian producers are keen to market their films with crossover appeal amongst international audiences with an eye on maximising their

Graziella a beautiful Italian woman played by Sonali Kulkarni, an Indian actress who played the part completely acting in Italian.
profits and this makes co-production treaties with other countries all the more important” (Dudrah 2006:150).

During the Rome Film Festival 2007, producers of both industries strongly supported this audio-visual agreement and encouraged taking advantage of a widening technical and artistic cast, by investing in “foreign talent” (Dudrah 2006: 150) and advanced technologies in order to produce, market and distribute quality movies worldwide. As discussed extensively, the aim of the coalition between Italy and India is to work on recording and evoking India and Italy devoid of an a priori image of one another that is away from the respective exoticisations of their cultures and their standardised aesthetic forms in order to develop a comprehensive language to be understood by multiple audiences.

The depiction of Indian culture on the Italian screen has produced and occurred under the elegy of melancholy with its multilayered nuances. The new dialogue between the two industries, established post co-production agreement unties the tendencies that have been on the base of the construction of South Asia in the screens of Italy. The language of comedy and realism, as discussed in Lezioni di Volo and Vrindavan appear to take the place of melancholia. This trend envisages the fragmentation of a mono-audience culture/sphere into a wider public culture/sphere in which the ‘spectacular’ will appeal to a larger and diversified audience transnationally. I share the following compelling part of an optimistic reading put forward by Alberto Farassino who synthesized the spirit of this chapter and the formation of a transnational audience:

Who goes to the cinema, today as well as yesterday, does not want solely stories, emotions, passions but the audience wants to live the movement of the world, as those that, when the earlier railway lines were constructed, were getting on a train not to go somewhere but only to see, with a sizzling velocity, the panorama outside the window (Translated from Italian) (Farassino 2000: 13).
7. Conclusion

This thesis, as discussed in Chapter 1, is a metaphoric journey of many: my journey in and out of the Esquilino, the journey of South Asian immigrants in Rome, the journey of Italian directors to India and is the intellectual journey that brought India and Italy closer to each other. The aim of this journey was to end the flow of exotic images and erroneous construction of each other’s land. This articulated journey happened on a physical and a methodological level. By providing a socio-visual set of references, this journey crystallized the socio-emotional (Chapter 2), psycho-spatial (Chapter 3), historic melancholic (Chapter 4), and intersectional (Chapter 5 and 6) approach to theorise on a specific complex emotion – melancholy – as an aesthetic form. By analysing melancholy and its theoretical nuances, it has been possible to speculate on how this multilayered emotion is culturally constructed and becomes a pattern of aesthetic representation and (self representation) of South Asians in Italy.

The intellectual engagement with Susan Langer’s work was especially useful in providing insight into theorising emotions as the ultimate form of (art) expression (Langer 1963, 1966). Langer’s ‘expressive form’, provided the theoretical base on which further investigations were constructed. The expressive form, as a cultural production formed by emotional elaboration, theoretically supported the explanation of cultural formation of a specific aesthetic within the Esquilino quarter. Furthermore, Langer provided a specific terminology, which helped in defining the South Asian culture in Italy. The notion of form as ‘iconic symbol’, mentioned in Chapter 1, positions the formation of an aesthetic in the urban space as complex and multi-sensorial human experience.

It is important to note that this thesis cannot be thought to be a comprehensive study of South Asian migration in Italy, nor did it aim to be so. Instead, this project endeavours to focus on a small area to begin the investigation and open up a new area hitherto unnoticed by the academic community. First, the ‘expressive form’ produced by South Asian subjects in Italy are highly symbolic; it speaks loudly about these subjects’ origins and ‘homeland’. The kind of emotional apparatus that frames the settlement of South Asian migrants outlined the Esquilino as an, ‘urban stage’ in which emotion sensuously and spectacularly constructs a ‘feeling’ for the place. Walking along the roads of the Esquilino, it was necessary to understand how this ‘emotional landscape’ was
constructed; a survey and a further participant observation, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 were conducted among a section of immigrants residing in the area from which important discoveries emerged. The participant observations with the families were particularly significant and challenging. This qualitative research technique provided the opportunity to study “people in real-time situations” (Asa Berger 2000: 161), by being part of the group studied. As a researcher it was necessary to maintain a balance between the roles of being ‘participant’ and at the same time an ‘observer’ (Asa Berger 2000). Though it was an arduous task to negotiate these two roles, this methodology enriched my research regarding the aesthetic melancholy among the families studied.

Not only did South Asian migrants experience a disconnection and metaphoric loss of their ‘country’ for which Freud provided an extensive intellectual insight, but also the material impossibility to re-connect on a communal level. Entertainment proved to be private, infrequent and occurred within domestic spaces; the absence of constant entertainment highlighted the effect of a place on emotional aesthetic formation and the ways in which these emotions filtered to their ‘inner’ spaces every day.

The sociological enquiry stretched to other kinds of analysis regarding the diegetic space in which South Asian culture was constructed in the movies/television products produced and/or experienced in Italy. Aristotle’s notion of contemplation served as a theoretical tool to frame historical cinematic narratives of India and to establish a melancholic ‘form of expression.’ The dominant ‘contemplation’ of India on the screen produced a specific representative modality based on the repetition of pre-acquired fallacies about the subcontinent. The discussion of recent programmes broadcasted in Italian television (see Chapter 5), highlighted the indolent knowledge of Bollywood cinema and obsolete use of its aesthetic. The perpetuation of a melancholic aesthetic, from the past, was exemplified in both the television programmes and the advertisements studied. However, the language of some of the adverts suggested an important change towards a more transnational idea of diegesis.

In this regard, the co-productions, explored in Chapter 6, were a useful inroad into thinking about a ‘third eye’, as a third view on the world or a ‘third’ (and multiple) way to feel. Barthes observes a ‘third level of signification’ as an order of meaning, which is “inarticulable (…) persistent and fugitive” (Barthes 2006: 112) and “unspeakable” (Langer 1963: 78), but representable in its complexity.
Therefore, is the language of co-production able to overcome the static views on each others’ culture and present a ‘third’ cultural and cinematic entity? Indeed, the analysis of films such as *Lezioni di Volo* and *Vrindavan Film Studios* provides an opportunity to do so. It is not my intention to theorise a third vision or a third eye here which can free cultural fallacies. The idea of a ‘third eye’ is an interesting concept, which represents the opportunity for further intellectual investigation; currently, the hope is to experience a more sophisticated way of depiction that is free from pre-constructed patterns of representation.

The final chapter represented the arrival at the destination of this academic journey, hailing the audio-visual agreement between the two counties; the possibility of co-productions could potentially establish what Yash Chopra intended as “the Union of Mind” (Festival del Cinema di Roma) in order to promote a more dynamic cultural diffusion.

**Indo-Italian aesthetic of Emotion**

Emotions, as largely discussed, are dynamic elaborations and reconfigurations of a process that negotiates the relationship between individuals and their social environment. Thus, an emotion establishes the relationship between the social actor and the environment (Campos, et al 1989: 399).

The dynamic aspect embedded within emotions makes these expressions one of the main sources of any form of interaction. Single and personal emotion can influence the emotion(s) (or the emotional setting) of other individuals; emotions can operate in series involving a group of people in a process of reciprocating influence and creation as happened in the Esquilino quarter. Here, South Asian immigrants have been reciprocally influenced and have created an aesthetic as result of their emotional loss.

The investigation undertaken into the Esquilino quarter, did not intend to be exhaustive on the social study of the settlement, but it aimed to provide an initial understanding on the emotionality that inhabits their new dwellings. The capital city appeared to be the ideal starting point for this type of enquiry to shed light on South Asian communities and their emotional responses (in aesthetic terms) within the Italian panorama to their departures.
In psychology, emotion is commonly associated with the display of facial expressions, gestures, postures and characteristic voices as physical manifestation. As argued by Frijida (1986: 112), the display of emotions with their specificities varies culturally; emotions are exhibited in different forms varying from the most discrete and distinct to the most dramatic and prolific gestures (Frijida 1986).

The cultural understanding of India and its culture displayed by Italy was mostly melancholic. The encounter between Italy and India with their relative cultural backgrounds is an unexplored subject, which deserves attention and focus. The contact between the two cultures inevitably produces cultural manifestations, as the outcome of differentiated journeys and encounters.

The type of emotional manifestation that this thesis analysed is melancholy. The study of this complex and multilayered emotion, which find its roots in Aristotle’s work, is deconstructed in order to shed light on how and why melancholy creates a pattern of representation and generalization of South Asian culture on the Italian screen. Each chapter of this thesis focused on differentiated aspects of this encounter that culminated in the formation of an aesthetic of emotion.

Much as a physical body, the urban space of the Esquilino was studied as a metaphor of the body (Chapter 2 and 3) which manifests – through the settlements of South Asian immigrants – an aesthetic emotional response of their journeys from India to Italy. The amenities and the different shops of South Asians, which I have personally met, not only represent a source of income for the migrants, but also a specific emotion, which is generated during the moment of transit while moving away from the place of origins.

In order to give a wider perspective of the encounter between Italy and India, this work moved to study and analyse the possibility of looking at melancholy as generator of an aesthetic emotion on the screen (which were discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). To unearth how melancholy operated in the creation of representational pattern, which sees India and its paraphernalia constantly framed by exotic terms, Aristotle’s study of melancholy was employed. This study resulted to substantiate two distinct pathways: a) the connection between a melancholic state and the journey, and b) the introspective nature of melancholy.
In 2005, Italy and India signed an audio-visual agreement for co-production. The aim of this agreement was to produce an aesthetic free from emotional bondage, thereby liberating India from exotic connotations (see Chapter 6).

This Journey

This thesis, as mentioned earlier, is constituted by multiple journeys that occurred on different levels of intellectual and emotional engagement. When Leed wrote *From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*\(^{113}\), he studied not the story but rather the different forms of a journey, which he sees structured in three different phases: the departing point, the transit and the arrival (Leed 1992).

It may seem obvious that the prevalence of one phase over another as the motivation or main impulse to travel is the genesis of the different typologies or journeys and of travellers. The analysis of these different moments of a journey produces significant intellectual observations on the nature of the journey of this thesis. The beginning is always an ordeal. For ancient civilizations a journey was often the way God punished humans (Palaktsoglou 2007), in modern times, journey has assumed a sense of pleasure and a form of freedom. Ultimately the journey envisages a process of conflicts and encounters (Farassino 2000; Palaktsoglou 2007), which has shaped the meaning of my personal journey into the study of South Asian culture in Italy.

As earlier mentioned, the first stage of a journey is the departure, which could be voluntary or imposed – specifics which socially and historically diversified the migration as being diasporic or exiled (Chambers 1994; Van Der Veer 1995; Israel 2000; Braziel and Mannur 2003; Naficy Hamid 2006) – or without a specific destination, but having several objectives, such as emancipation, knowledge and conquest of an identity.

The essence of the journey appears to reside in the phase that Leed calls transit (Leed 1992; Farassino 2000). It is within the transit that the journey is profoundly lived, as the ultimate experience of visiting the world. Transiting is an essential element of this thesis and means glancing through knowledge, comparisons and encounters.

The journeys of modernity often annul the experience of transit. Departures and arrivals (which compel the end of a journey) are only through places which Augé called the non-

\(^{113}\) The references to Leed’s book have been translated from the Italian version.
luoghi (translated as non-places) (Augé 1993: 53): airports, waiting rooms and train stations. However, these places – particularly the Roman train station near the Esquilino quarter – apparently deprived of an identity, inspired the social enquiry, which this thesis undertook. These types of destinations are often new departure points. My visual, intellectual and emotional journey began at the train station in Rome, where the encounters with South Asians began. The melancholic emotionality that was felt in the streets of the Esquilino (and emphasised during the personal interviews/participant observations with three South Asian families) formed the ground for further analysis of melancholy. This complex emotion, as well as the feelings of anger or rage discussed by Sara Ahmed, has “often been described as negative or even destructive” (Ahmed 2004: 200) which however, could “be enabling or creative” (Ahmed 2004: 201). The theorisation of a model of construction of South Asian identity on and off the screen of Italy took two paths, two different journeys to investigate the different nuances of the same emotion: one among people, and the other watching them on the screen.

The arrival, as Leed mentions, is the moment when the traveller feels like a stranger and can become a process, however long, of assimilation which often takes the traveller into a process of identification (which as a researcher was necessary to avoid) and incorporation of the subject studied. The traveller is the one who brings stories and new unknown information to the place of arrival. The destination of this thesis (which was intended since the inception to be a personal, emotional and intellectual journey) ends with a final consideration, which sees melancholy as the foundation, for the aesthetic of emotion in the case of Italy and India. Melancholy, as demonstrated throughout, shows us how histories remain alive and how these can shape lives and the world in the present.

In conclusion it is worth recalling Ahmed’s enquiry which sums up the spirit of this thesis “Where we go, with these feelings, remains an open question” (Ahmed 2004); this work did not aim to establish a truth but rather provides the grounds for further intellectual journeys into emotions as cultural-aesthetic formations on and off the screen.
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**Audio-Visual Material**

**Filmography**

*India Mathri Bumi*, dir. by Roberto Rossellini, (1959)

*Appunti per un film Sull’India*, dir. by Pier Paolo Pasolini, (1968)


*Nirvana*, dir. by Gabriele Salvatores, (1997)


*Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, dir. by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, (1999)

*Vrindavan Film Studios*, dir. by Lamberto Lambretini, (1996)

*Lezioni di Volo*, dir. by Francesca Archibugi, (2007)
Films Mentioned

*Mother India*, dir. by Mehboob Khan, (1957)


*Mondo Cane*, dir. by Gualtiero Jacobetti, (1962)

*Mondo Cane 2*, dir. by Gualtiero Jacobetti, (1963)


*Viaggio in Italia*, dir. By Roberto Rossellini, (1953)


*Edipo Re*, dir. by Pier Paolo Pasolini, (1967)

*Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte*, dir. by Pier Paolo Pasolini, (1974)

*Gente del Po’,* dir. by Michelangelo Antonioni, (1943-7)

*Il Grido*, dir. by Michelangelo Antonioni, (1957)

*L’Eclisse*, dir. by Michelangelo Antonioni, (1962)

*Il Deserto Rosso*, dir. by Michelangelo Antonioni, (1964)

*Sotto il cielo di Ahmedabad*, dir. by Francesca Lignola and Stefano Rebecchi, (2007)

*Gandhi*, dir. by David Attenborough, (1982)

*La Ricotta*, dir. by Pier Paolo Pasolini, (1963)

*Stronboli Terra di Dio*, dir. by Roberto Rossellini, (1949)

*Accattone*, dir. by Roberto Rossellini, (1961)


*La Terra Trema*, dir. by Roberto Rossellini, (1948)

*Ivan the Terrible*, dir. by S. Eisenstein, (1958)


*Parenti Serpenti*, dir. by Mario Monicelli, (1992)

*Le Fate Ignoranti*, dir. by Ferzan Ozpetek, (2001)

*Saturno Contro*, dir. by Ferzan Ozpetek, (2004)


*Bhabhi*, dir. by Ataullah Hashmi, (1960)


Dilwale, dir. by Harry Baweja, (1994)
Dil, dir. by Indra Kumar, (1990)
Lagaan: once upon a Time in India, dir. by Ashutosh Gowariker, (2001)
Monsoon Wedding, dir. by Mira Nair, (2001)
Shakthi the Power, dir. by Krishna Vamshi, (2002)
Main Hoon Na, dir. by Farah Khan, (2004)
Waqt, dir. by Yash Chopra, (1965)
Krissh, dir. by Rakesh Roshan, (2006)
Koi… Mil Gaya, dir. by Rakesh Roshan, (2003)
Munna Bhai MBBS, dir. by Rajkumar Hirani, (2003)
Yes Boss, dir. by Aziz Mirza, (1997)
Mr. India, dir. by Shekhar Kapur, (1987)
Train to Pakistan, dir. by Pamela Rooks, (1998)

Television programmes

Sandokan, dir. by Sergio Sollima, (1976), broadcast RAI 1
Un Medico in famiglia 5 (2008), broadcast RAI 1
J’ai fait un beau voyage, Dir. by Roberto Rossellini, (1957) broadcast by ORTF TV
L’India vista da Roberto Rossellini, (1958), broadcast RAI 1

Episodes title:
Gli Animali in India, (11/03/1959)
Il Pandit Nehru, (04/03/1959)
Hirakud, la Diga sul Fiume Mahanadi, (24/02/1959)
Kerala, (18/02/1959)
Le Lagune di Malabar, (11/02/1959)
Verso il Sud, (04/02/1959)
Varsovat, (28/01/1959)
Architettura e Costume di Bombay, (21/01/1959)
Bombay la Porta dell’India, (14/01/1959)
India senza Miti, (07/01/1959)

Sweet India, (2006) broadcast RAI 2

Curry Cultura, (2004) broadcast by RaiSat

Advertisements

The Sculptor for Peugeot, dir. by Matthijs Van Heijningen, (2002)
9. Appendix

Audio Visual Co-Production Agreement Between The Government Of The Italian Republic And The Republic Of India

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC AND THE GOVERNMENT OF REPUBLIC OF INDIA, hereinafter referred to as the “Parties”,

CONSIDERING that it is desirable to establish a framework for the development of their audiovisual relations and particularly for film television and video co-productions;

CONSCIOUS that quality co-productions can contribute to the further expansion of the film, television and video production and distribution industries of both countries as well as to the development of their cultural and economic exchanges;

CONVINCED that these exchanges will contribute to the enhancement of relations between the two countries;

Have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1

In this Agreement, unless the Agreement otherwise requires:
A “co-production” is a film including feature films, documentaries, science films, animation films and commercials, irrespective of length, either on film, videotape or videodisc, which can be shown in cinemas, on television or on video recorders jointly invested in and produced by producers from the two countries and made in accordance with the terms of recognition given by the competent authorities of India and Italy under this Agreement. New forms of audio-visual production and distribution shall be included in the present Agreement by exchange of notes between the Parties.
Co-production projects undertaken under the present Agreement must be recognized by the following authorities, referred to hereinafter as the “competent authorities”: In Italy- by the Ministry of Cultural Properties and Activities, Department of Entertainment and Sport, General Management of Cinema; and in India – by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
“Co production” produced under the terms of this Agreement shall be taken in either of the two countries as National Production with every benefit available as National Production but will abide by applicable national law for distribution and production. These benefits, however, accrue to the producer from the country, which grants them.

ARTICLE 2

The co-producers in either of the two countries shall satisfy themselves about each other's capability, including their professional knowledge, organizational capability, financial backing and professional reputation.
The Government of India and Italy shall in no way be responsible or liable with regard to satisfaction of either of the co-producers.
ARTICLE 3
Any benefits under this Agreement shall be available for co production only when
investment of finance, material and management including creative and other inputs not
below 20% of the total cost comes from co-producer of one country provided always
that specific percentage contribution will be decided amongst producers themselves.
Notwithstanding anything stated in above paragraph, the two parties may at any time
decide jointly in writing to make appropriate changes, in percentage, as maybe deemed
fit.

ARTICLE 4
The producers of a co-production shall be citizens or permanent resident either of Italy
or India subject to any sort of compliance of the obligations created by European Union
Italy as a member.
In the event of dire need of co-production, persons other than citizen or permanent
resident as stated hereinabove are permissible to be engaged without losing the character
of co-production in case advance written permission from both the countries is obtained
after explaining the reasons of inclusion of such person.

ARTICLE 5
Live action shooting and animation works such as storyboards, layout, key animation, in
between and voice recording must, in principle, be carried out alternatively in Italy or in
India.
Location shooting, exterior or interior, in a country not participating in the co-production
however, is acceptable at discretion if the script or the action so requires and if
technicians from Italy and India take part in the shooting.
The laboratory work shall be done in either Italy or India, unless it is technically
impossible to do so, in which case the laboratory work in a country not participating in
the co-production can be permitted by the competent authorities of both countries.

ARTICLE 6
The co-production shall have the original soundtracks in English or Italian or in other
Indian language or dialect, which can further be dubbed in any of these languages.
In the event, if script so desires, any other language can be used for stray dialogues with
permission from authorities
It will be necessary that the dubbing or sub-titling of the co-production will be done or
performed either in India or Italy. Dubbing or sub-titling in Indian languages should be
performed in India and dubbing or sub-titling in Italian in Italy and dubbing or sub-
titling in English could be performed in Italy or India depending upon the agreement
between co-producers.

ARTICLE 7
A co-produced film shall have two negatives or one negative and one dupe negative, or
as agreed between the two co-producers, with two international sound tracks for making
copies. Each co-producer shall own one good quality print, one dupe positive and one
international sound track and have the right to make copies. Moreover with the approval
of the co-producers either co-producer may use the footage from the above-mentioned
material for other purposes. Furthermore, each co-producer shall have access to the
original production material in accordance with the conditions agreed upon between the
co-producers.
ARTICLE 8
Both Italy and India will facilitate entry and short stay in either of the two countries for directors, actors, producers, writers, technicians and other personnel prescribed in each co-production contract as per the applicable laws and importing of equipment shall also be in accordance with the applicable laws.

ARTICLE 9
The sharing of revenues by the co-producers shall, in principle, be proportional to their respective contributions and be specified in the agreement between the co-producers. The respective contribution of each co-producer may be decided mutually on the basis of principles elaborated in Article 3.

ARTICLE 10
The minority investment co-producer shall pay any balance outstanding on his contribution to the majority investment co-producer within sixty (60) days following delivery of all the materials required for the production of the version of the film in the language of the minority country. The majority investment co-producer will have the same obligations towards the minority investment co-producer. Failure to meet this requirement shall entail the loss of benefit of the co-production. This requirement will invariably be reflected in the contract drawn up between the co-producers to enable projects to be recognized under this Agreement.

ARTICLE 11
Approval of a proposal for the co-production of a film by the competent authorities of both countries is in no way binding upon them in respect of the granting of permission to show the film thus produced.

ARTICLE 12
When a co-produced film is exported to a country, which has quota limitations:
in principle, the co-produced film shall be included in the quota of the country of the majority investment;
if both co-producers have made an equal investment, co-producers of both sides shall decided the quota in question through mutual consultation, so that the co-produced film can be included in the quota of the country that can make better arrangements for the export of the film;
If difficulties still exist, the co-produced film shall be included in the quota of the country of which the director is a national.
Notwithstanding the above, in the event that one of the co-producing countries enjoys unrestricted entry of its films into a country that has quota regulations, a co-production under this Agreement shall be entitled as any other national production of that country to unrestricted entry into the importing country if that country so agrees.

ARTICLE 13
A co-production shall when shown, be identified as a “Italy-India Co-Production; or “India-Italy Co-production” according to the origin of the majority co-producer or in accordance with an agreement between co-producers. Such identification shall appear in the credits, in all commercial advertising and promotional material and whenever the co-production is shown.
ARTICLE 14
In the event of presentation at international film festivals, and unless the co-producers agree otherwise, a co-production shall be entered by the country of the majority investment co-producer or, in the event of equal financial participation of the co-producers, by the country of which the director is a national.
Prizes, grants, incentives and other benefits awarded to the cinematographic or audiovisual works may be shared between the co-producers, in accordance with what has been established in the co-production contract and in conformity with applicable laws in force.
All prizes which are not in cash form, such as honorable distinctions or trophies awarded by third countries, for cinematographic and audiovisual works produced according to the norms established by this agreement, shall be kept in trust by the majority co-producer or according to terms established in the co-production contract/agreement.

ARTICLE 15
The competent authorities of both countries shall jointly establish, through a subsequent exchange of notes the rules of procedure for co-productions, taking into account the laws and regulations in force in Italy and in India.

ARTICLE 16
No restrictions shall be placed on the import, distribution and exhibition of Indian film, television and video productions in Italy or that of Italian film, television and video productions in India other than those contained in the legislation and regulations in force in each of the two countries, including in case of Italy the obligation deriving from the norms of the European Union insofar as the free circulation of goods among Italy and other European Union countries in concerned, will be respected.

ARTICLE 17
Any difference or dispute regarding the implementation of this Agreement shall be settled by mutual consultation and negotiation. This does not absolve the right of co-producers who enter into various contracts to seek legal remedies—such remedies may include conciliation, mediation and arbitration.
The rights arising out of this Agreement will not be enforceable at the instance of third party(ies) who are not signatory to this Agreement.
An appropriate Joint Commission may look after the implementation of this Agreement. A meeting of the Joint Commission shall take place in principle once every two years alternately in the two countries. However, it may be convened for extraordinary sessions at the request of one or both authorities, particularly in the case of major amendments to the legislation or the regulations governing the film television and video industries in one country or the other, or where the application of this Agreement present various difficulties and shall submit to the Authorities in the two countries, for consideration, the necessary amendments in order to resolve any difficulties arising from the application of this agreement as well as to improve it in the best interest of both countries. The recommendations of the Joint Commission are not binding on the two Governments.

ARTICLE 18
- The present Agreement shall come into force when each Party has informed the other that its international ratification procedures have been completed.
• It shall be valid for a period of three (3) years from the date of its entry into force, a tacit renewal of the Agreement for like periods shall take place unless one or the other Party gives written notice of termination six (6) months before the expiry date.
• Co-productions which have been recognized by the authorities and which are in progress at the time of notice of termination of this Agreement by either Party shall continue to benefit fully until completion from the provisions of this Agreement. After expiry or termination of this Agreement, its terms shall continue to apply to the division of revenues from completed co-productions.
• DONE in three originals at…..this……. Day of ……… 2005, each in Italian, English and Hindi language, all versions being equally authentic. In case of any divergence in interpretation, the English text shall prevail.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, duly authorized thereto by their respective Governments, have signed this Agreement.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF
REPUBLIC OF INDIA

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
ITALIAN REPUBLIC
INTERVIEWS

Five extended interviews were held in total. The interviews were conducted in Italian; I have provided a brief summary below in English.

Mr. Kabir Bedi (Indian Actor)

The interview with the Indian actor Kabir Bedi took place in Rome in November 2007. I had the chance to meet Mr. Bedi during the special event Italy-India Business Forum within the Festival del cinema di Roma. I met Mr. Bedi, in his roman apartment. The interview lasted for 1 hour where questions were asked in order to understand further the terms of the co-production agreement and his role as ‘ambassador’ of two cultures.

Mr. Bedi recounted his experiences with the series Sandokan as being pivotal to construct his success and image in Italy. He informed me that living in both Italy and India made the importance of a company focusing on coproductions clear to him. His company was formed in collaboration with Mr. Aditya Bhattacharya and is named Italia India Cosulenza Cinematografica. The company will provide organizational support for Italian or India productions which wants to shoot in each other country.

Mr. Riccardo Tozzi (Italian Film Producer)

The interview with Mr. Tozzi was held in Rome in June 2008. I met Mr. Tozzi within the Italy-India business forum as part of the Roman Film festival and exchanged a few e-mails to set up an appointment. I was invited to attend a meeting at his production company Cattleya; Mr. Tozzi is the director of this company. Cattleya together with Khussro Films co-produced the film Lezioni di Volo discussed in Chapter 6. Following his talk at the Italy India Business Forum, the core of our conversation focused on of the co-production agreement, for which Mr. Tozzi had his reservations and doubts. The producer imagined a more complex process of understanding each other’s country’s cinematic imaginations. Tozzi explained that both the two industries needed to learn the other’s respective ‘language’ and rules of representation. He said: “The aim is to individuate facets that could work and could appeal to both industries and audiences overcoming stereotypes”. (Translated from Italian).
**MR. SERGIO SCAPAGNNINI (Italian Film Producer)**

The interview with Mr. Scapagnini took place in his office in Rome in June 2008. Scapagnini is the director of the production company, Indrapur Cinematografica, which produced the film *Vrindavan Film Studios*. Mr. Scapagnini is a pivotal figure of my research. His extensive knowledge of South Asian faiths and philosophies was inspirational. His talkative nature and his interest in my research guided the nature of our conversation. The history of *Vrindavan Film Studios*, a rare-to-find film was discussed in detail. He began a long conversation (the chat with Mr. Scapagnini lasted over 2 hours) of his engagement with India and especially with Calcutta was compelling. He took me through his journey of memories and his numerous trips to Calcutta. The core of our conversation highlighted his dedication and passion for India and for its cinematographic culture. *Vrindavan Film Studios*, he said, “was an exciting experiment of non-commercial cinema to look beyond the story and reflects how aesthetic devices, inspired by the Hindu religion, can talk to [a] western audience without necessary connecting with India through elephants, maharajas and snake enchanters”. (Translated from Italian).

**MS. SELVAGGIA VELO (Film Festival Director)**

Ms. Velo is the director and organiser of the River to River Florence Indian Film Festival held in Florence yearly. The festival claims to be the only Indian Film Festival in Europe; as such I imagined the cinematographic offerings to be far-ranging and comprehensive. However, the program and the purposes of the festival were rather disappointing. The questions, sent to Ms. Velo via e-mail, focussed on understanding the nature of the festival, the impact the festival has socially, and audience demographics. Most of the responses provided by Ms. Velo have been translated in Chapter 3 to discuss the marginalization of Bollywood cinema from entertainment circuits of Italy.

**MR. GABRIELE SALVATORES (Italian Film Director)**

The interview with Gabriele Salvatores was held in Rome in April 2007 in the office of his production company – the Colorado Film. The director was asked to answer questions regarding the production of his film *Nirvana* studied in Chapter 4. Salvatores supplied a cornucopia of material for my discussion of melancholy as a recurring trope regarding depictions of India in Italian movies. Parts of the answers have been included
in Chapter 4 supplying information that profoundly crystallized Salvatore’s *maya*. He concluded his interview by saying the following: “My trips to India have been vital to construct Bombay as a city in my films; each of my own visual and sonorous memories of the ‘real’ Bombay in which I lived have found their way into my conceptualisation of Bombay in the film Nirvana.” (Translated from Italian)
Questionnaire (प्रश्नावली)

Gender (जाति) (sesso) [F] [M] 

1. Which of the following category best describes your origin? (Please tick where appropriate) 
(आप किस मूल जाति से सम्बन्धित हैं? (Quali delle seguenti categorie descrive la tua origine etnica, scegli le risposte piú appropriate))

(a) Asian 
(b) Black 
(c) Black and Asian 
(d) White and Asian 
(e) Italo – Asian 
(f) Asian – Indian 
(g) Asian – Bangladeshi 
(h) Asian – Pakistani 
(i) Asian – Sri Lankan 
(j) Other (please specify)

2. Do you watch Italian mainstream channels? If yes which channels? (Guardi canali televisivi Italiani? Se si quali canali?)

3. Do you think there are, or there have been recent programs on the TV that catered or portrayed South Asians or their culture, such as sit-coms, advertisements, documentaries etc.? (Credi che ci sono, o ci sono stati programmi televisivi che hanno rappresentato la cultura sud asiatica come ad esempio sit-com, pubblicità, documentary etc?)

4. In general, do you think that the South Asians have been depicted on TV in a positive way? (In generale, pensi che I sud asiatici sono stati rappresentati positivamente in TV?)

5. Do you think the programs have represented any aspect of your culture? (Pensi che I programmi abbiano rappresentato aspetti della tua cultura?) 

YES/NO (है / नहीं) (SI/NO)

a. If yes could you please write which aspects? (Se si, potresti indicare quali aspetti?)

b. If some aspect of your culture were represented do you think it was done in which way? (Se alcuni aspetti della tua cultura erano rappresentati pensi che siano stati fatti in che modo?)

a. Exotic (विदेशी) (Esotico)

b. Racist (राजनीति) (Razzista)

c. Spiritual (धर्म) (Spirituale)

d. Nationalist (देश धर्म) (Nazionalista)

e. Realistic (वास्तविक) (Realista)

f. Intercultural (अंतर संस्कृतिक) (Interculturale)

g. Others – please specify (और कोई – विस्तार में बतायें) (Altro specifica)
c. Was the representation of aspects of your culture very similar to what is your vision of those aspects in reality? (क्या आप उन निरूपण से सही हैं?) (La rappresentazione di questi aspetti era vicina alla visione che tu ne hai in realtà).

YES/NO (है/नहीं) (SI/NO)

d. Which facets of your culture were well represented? And why? (आपने संस्कृति से सम्बन्धित कौन से विचार सही थे? और क्यों?) (Quali aspetti della tua società erano ben rappresentati e quali mal rappresentati? E Perché?)

6. Do you watch Indian Films? If yes please specify. (क्या आप भारतीय फ़िल्में देखते हैं? अगर हैं, तो क्रिया बताएं कि किस तरह कि फ़िल्में देखते हैं.) (Guardi Film Indiani? Se si dimmi che tipo di film)

7. Do you watch Bollywood Films? (क्या आप बॉलीवुड फ़िल्में देखते हैं?) (Guardi I film di Bollywood?)

8. Do you watch other South Asian Cinema? If yes please specify. (क्या आप कॉड और दक्षिण एशिया के फ़िल्में देखते हैं? अगर हैं, तो क्रिया बताएं.) (Guardi altri film di origine Sud Asiatica? Se si specifica quali.)

9. Do you go to the cinema here in Rome to watch Indian Films? If yes please specify which movies you watched and the name of the cinema theatre.. (क्या आप यहां रोम में सिनेमा हाल जा कर भारतीय फ़िल्में देखते हैं? अगर हैं, तो कौनसी फ़िल्में कौनसी सिनेमा हाल में देख ले थे?) (Vai al cinema qui a Roma per guardare Film indiani? Se si specifica quali film e il nome del cinema)

10. If your answer to the above question is yes please specify if there were local (Italian) spectators. If yes could you please approximately tell me how many? (अगर आपकी उत्तर की पत्ती में हैं, तो ज्ञात बताएं आपके सिनेमा हाल में कितने इटालियन लोगों को देखा है?) (Se la tua risposta è si specifica se c’erano anche spettatori Italiani. Se la tua risposta è sì potresti dirmi approssimativamente quanti?).

11. Do you watch Indian films (or other South Asian Films) at home on DVD? (क्या आप घर में भारतीय (या और कॉड दक्षिण एशिया के) फ़िल्में डीविडी वह देखते हैं?) (Guardi film Indiani, o di altre cinematografie sud Asiatiche a casa?)

YES/NO (है / नहीं) (SI/NO)

If yes with whom? (Please tick as many you feel it apply to you)
(अगर हैं, तो किस के साथ?) (Se si con chi?) (Indica quelli che ti sembrano più appropriate)

a. Family (परिवार सहित) (Famiglia)
b. South Asian Friends (दक्षिण एशिया के दोस्तों सहित) (Amici Sud Asiatici)
c. Italian Friends (इटालियन दोस्तों सहित) (Amici Italiani)
f. With Italian friends and family all together (इटालियन दोस्तों और परिवार सहित) (con amici Italiani e famiglia tutti insieme)
g. With children (बच्चों सहित) (con i bambini)
h. Only with my wife or husband or with my
d. Other friends
(दूसरे दोस्तों सहित) (Altri Amici)

partner.
(सिखे अपने पति/पत्नी/सत्यी के साथ) (Con mia moglie o marito, con la mia/o compagno)

i. Other – specify
(किसी और के साथ – विस्तार में बतायें) (Altro specifica)

12. Add any comments if you like. (और कुछ बताना चाहते हैं?) (Aggiungi altri commenti se vuoi)

13. Please write your name or a fictional name and beside it indicate with an (F) if fictional or (T) if your true name, please add also your age. (कपया आफ्का सही या कल्पनिक नाम लिखौ। सही नाम के आफ्के (T) और कल्पनिक नाम के आफ्के (F) लिखौ। आफ्का सही उमर बतायें) (Scrivi il tuo nome o un nome fittizio con accanto una (F) se fittizio e (T) se il tuo vero nome, inoltre aggiungi la tua età)

Thank you for your kind help!!
आपकी सहायता के लिये शुक्रिया !!!

Monia Acciari (University of Manchester – UK)