

Introduction

Narrating Encounter

Do we need *another* book on global Hollywood? Is there really anything new to say? After all, Hollywood remains the most well-documented media industry in the world. Setting the standards for success and failure across the international media trade, Hollywood is so omnipresent that much of the history of cinema seems captive to its domination.

This is a different kind of book about global Hollywood.

This book is different because its starting point is a place where Hollywood *doesn't* seem to matter much—India. Let me explain. A lot of writing on Hollywood acknowledges its powerful global reach. Nevertheless, the Indian market disrupts the uniformity of Hollywood's international domination. With massive domestic industries and a popular culture beholden to various regional cinema practices, India has been, and still is, a relatively minor territory for American film distribution. In the popular imagination, Indian cinema—especially the Hindi industry centered in Mumbai—is seen as the industry that survived Hollywood, assimilating and defeating it on native soil as far back as the 1930s.

Here's a case in point. The trade magazine *Hollywood Reporter* recently featured an interview about inter-industry relations with one of Hindi cinema's biggest stars, Shah Rukh Khan. His film *Chennai Express* is a coproduction between Khan's media company, Red Chillies Entertainment, and the recently launched Disney-UTV. With its US\$454 million acquisition of the Indian media and entertainment company UTV in 2012, Disney's foray into locally branded film content in India remains one of the few places where it is directly involved in non-Hollywood production. Commenting on the Red Chillies and UTV-Disney tie-in, Khan notes that "I think that it's fantastic that the Hollywood studios are here. At first the studios wanted to popularize Hollywood films here but our cinema is deeply rooted in Indian culture. So it's good to see

them producing Indian films. We also learn a lot from the experience of working with an international studio . . . it's a sign of changing times and will benefit Indian films to go international faster."¹ What remains unspoken in Khan's statement, however, is the sheer ubiquity that surrounds press and industry accounts of alignments between the Bombay and Hollywood industries. Khan's story, and innumerable others like it, have become part of a generic textual practice that references contemporary global media's fascination with Hollywood in India.

Everyday, we are surrounded by images and stories that highlight the proliferating ties between American and Indian media, most commonly seen in the remarkable conjoining of Hollywood and Bombay cinema.² So ubiquitous are these figures of contact that they seem auto-generated by a cottage industry of connection.

A relatively new but not unprecedented trope of contact has Hollywood stars breathlessly extolling the pleasures of working in Mumbai or expressing platitudes that laud the success of a wonderful industry "over there." Major Bombay cinema stars coyly play with the possibility of Hollywood exposure while steadfastly refusing ethnically stereotyping in minor film roles. At the same time, Indian technicians—their labor characterized by outsourcing stereotypes—work at home and abroad to invigorate and subsidize Hollywood formula. All the while, Hollywood and Bombay film stars mingle at film festivals, on red carpets, and at industry parties, dining out on future associations. As standard publicity practice in both industries, these tropes of connectivity rely on the cult of celebrity to put a glamorous face on industry alignment.

There are, of course, many other connections. Indian tourist brochures reference the lucrative global exposure offered by Hollywood location shooting. Film schools in the United States and India sign agreements of understanding, committed to training the next generation of international media practitioners. Glittering industry confabs, glossy management consultancy studies, and drab commerce and trade delegation reports all testify to a gloriously collaborative future. Moving beyond promotion but announced with equal fanfare, Indo-American media mergers and coproduction agreements solemnize industry alignments.

Globalization's oracles and spin-doctors work hard to document and celebrate these proliferating associations. Commentators publicizing

these collaborations seem transfixed by the possibility of two strikingly different media industries seeking common ground. For some, editorial enthusiasm for industry cooperation deals with a perceived inversion of power relations in the international media economy, with Hollywood toppled from its position of global mastery. Affinities between Hollywood and Bombay cinema are taken as a sure sign of Indian media achievement. Furthermore, proliferating Hollywood–Mumbai connections testify to a globally relevant India. In story after story about Indian economic success, the pervasive rhetoric of industry connections take on world-historical significance. In the press nowadays, the magic of contemporary associations has clearly cast its spell: entrenched postwar asymmetries between national media are brushed aside as globalization reconciles existential contradictions between the West and “the Rest” in a new media order.

Admittedly, this turnaround in fortune is remarkable given the history of Hollywood in India. In the 1910s, India was often the last stop in the global trade of Hollywood film prints, which arrived scratched, worn, and marked by the transit of use. Nevertheless, Hollywood built on an established European distribution infrastructure in the subcontinent and rose to prominence through the 1920s, despite competition from British colonial cinema. As it reached a compromise with British cinema, Hollywood had reason to look forward to a long period of domination in the subcontinent, yet it never recovered the majority market share it enjoyed in the mid-1920s. Hollywood’s market fortunes were derailed, in part, by the emergence of sound cinema and an Indian studio production culture, particularly in Bombay. Hollywood’s subsequent decline was steady if not precipitous. Even as late as the 1930s and early 1940s, India remained the most lucrative market for Hollywood in South and East Asia and the only market in the region besides the Philippines where an American film could expect a theatrical return in the US\$ thousands. Still, the erosion of Hollywood’s distribution network, the consolidation of regional Indian film studios, and a clear audience preference for vernacular-language cinema sealed Hollywood’s fate in India.

Though its market share declined, Hollywood remained immensely popular among Indian audiences throughout the country. This popularity extended beyond the films into a wider public culture as images

of Hollywood stars regularly anchored print advertisements for beauty and health products in Indian periodicals and newspapers.³ When it came to the films, existing prints remained in constant circulation and Indian media artists accessed Hollywood as an archive of narratives and styles. For Bombay directors, writers, and technicians, Hollywood offered a way to study and occasionally appropriate film technique. For the Bombay industry, Hollywood film marked the horizon of technological achievement. Its marketing and promotional machinery was the envy of newly institutionalizing Indian industry organizations. However, when it came to its star system and bloated budgets, Hollywood was both a model and a cautionary tale. As Sumita Chakravarty and Ravi Vasudevan note, Hollywood functioned as both “a crucial marker of film form” and the “locus of both envy and resentment” in the Bombay film industry.⁴ While “Hollywood” specifically denoted American film production, it also referenced a broader semantic field that engaged the discourses of innovation, imitation, and institutionalization *within* the Indian media economy. Hollywood’s placement within the Indian mediascape belies the monolithic conception of domination sometimes adopted by historians, economists, and social theorists in presenting the univocal application of power by global American media.

After Indian independence in 1947, a series of dramatic shifts altered the relationship between Hollywood and Bombay industries. These included growing protectionist measures like rising import duties, censorship, Cold War mentalities that degraded Indian political relations with the United States, and a crisis in foreign exchange reserves. A post-war alignment between Hollywood and the U.S. government increased overseas revenue by organizing distribution to the mutual benefit of the American film studios, which effectively functioned as a cartel under the aegis of the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEA). However, trade disputes between the MPEA and the Indian government in the late 1960s and 1970s severely curtailed new Hollywood releases in India. The Indian government called for reciprocity in American distribution of Indian cinema, “higher quality” Hollywood product, and American investment in the Indian film sector. In turn, Hollywood asked for lifting restrictions on repatriating profits out of India and increasing the number of prints in circulation. Hollywood embargoes inevitably followed in the wake of stalled trade talks during this period.⁵

Hollywood's fortunes looked up as the television and home video boom of the early 1980s transformed India's relationship to global audiovisual culture. After decades of frustrated attempts to tap into India's enormous media audience, Hollywood's reanimation flickered briefly with the success of *Jurassic Park* in the mid-1990s. Since Steven Spielberg's genetically reconstructed CGI dinosaurs lumbered across screens in India, market reforms, including a rationalization of imports and a relaxation on foreign ownership, have brought Hollywood in closer contact with Indian media. Now, Hollywood shoots more films on location in India, sends its films to Indian studios for postproduction and dubbing, and seeks alliances with Indian media companies.

Over the past ten years, every above-average American film opening in India has been taken as a sign that the tide has finally turned for Hollywood. While the Indian market is still small in terms of Hollywood's global box office, an array of synergies, co-ventures, and points of institutional contact now intertwine the fortunes of the two remaining global film industries. Indeed, state and market transformations ensure that Hollywood is not incompatible with the industries that were once its competitors.

Clearly, there is an interesting story about this "other" global Hollywood. After all, the story of Hollywood in India only partially corresponds to accounts of dominance pervasive in critical media studies. Until relatively recently, Hollywood remained a minor economic force in India, stuck for decades in a single-digit market share, anywhere from 3 to 8 percent of the annual box office. Clearly, Hollywood in India must be understood beyond the conventions of mastery and mimicry that structure accounts of economic domination. A compelling alternate story about Hollywood in India would add depth to the general conception of Hollywood's subjugation of other "national" cinemas, whose resistance is heroic but ultimately futile. Breaking with such conventions usually entails a loosening of conceptual orthodoxies. In this case, Hollywood hegemony is an insufficient account of inter-industry relations between the United States and India.

Before I explain why this book doesn't tell *that* story, where political economy plays the lone starring role, let's play out the script as if it did.

Hollywood's placement within the acceleration of Indo-American economic encounter after the Indian economic liberalization policies

of the late 1980s and early 1990s reads like a narrative of inevitable victory. In other words, before liberalization, Hollywood and Bombay's encounter is akin to small-scale globalization, where collaborations are somewhat irregular and largely under the international economic radar. But *now*, after economic liberalization, things were different, right? It would be as if all the diverse historical constellations of the Hollywood–Bombay encounter could be swept up, blown through, and reassembled in a cosmology of contemporary economic interdependency.

As I began the research for this book, I sometimes felt beholden to contemporary events, as if they conspired to force me to write precisely *that* book about transnational economic victory. As I've already noted, the new millennium ushered in countless press accounts that spoke of Hollywood and Bombay cinema in one breath. Indeed, over the past five years, inter-industry contact has proliferated in all directions.

The first decade of the new millennium ended with an Indian theatrical strike that crippled domestic Indian exhibition. Faced with a restricted flow of new Bombay films, Hollywood focused its Indian release schedule on technological spectacle and mega-budget films like *2012* (US\$12 million gross in India) and *Avatar* (US\$16 million). Both films were among the biggest box-office draws of 2009. In the last few years, a number of American films have done well, beating out Hindi-language counterparts during opening weekends. For example, in its first week, *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, released by Paramount in India in May 2011, grossed 50 percent more than *Haunted 3D* (Vikram Bhatt, 2011). Indian releases of Hollywood sequels built on the strong starts of their franchise predecessors; films like *The Hangover Part II*, *Fast Five*, and the sequels to *X-Men* and *Transformers* all roared out of the gate.

Hollywood's agents in India took notice, suggesting targeted strategies to reach Indian audiences. For example, in late April 2012, *The Avengers* was released in India one week before its American launch. Opening in English, Hindi, Tamil, and Telegu across a record eight hundred screens (including 3D and IMAX versions), the film is now among the top-grossing Hollywood films in India. Domestically, *The Avengers* was distributed by UTV, an Indian entertainment conglomerate acquired by Disney in 2012. While the film's Kolkata scenes introducing Hulk alter ego Bruce Banner (Mark Ruffalo) were filmed in New Mexico, report-

edly in association with the city's Indian community, the film's producer claimed that "the idea was to introduce our characters to Indian audiences in a manner that they can relate to them."⁶

In June 2012, the *Spider-Man* reboot was released in India a week ahead of its U.S. release. With Indian actor Irfan Khan in a cameo role, the film was released in 1,150 prints—almost doubling the release volume of the third film in the *Spider-Man* franchise in 2007. The film opened to the best showing by a Hollywood film in India, and went on to collect almost US\$15 million. The Indian arm of the Motion Picture Association, representing the six major Hollywood studios distributing in India, strengthened its antipiracy enforcement actions in anticipation of the wide release. The film released to 90 percent occupancy in Indian multiplexes, resulting in double the opening take of most Hollywood films. Some reports suggested that Hollywood was back to double-digit market share in India, although most claimed only 8–12% of overall box-office revenue.

Hollywood's rising stake also buoyed the confidence of Indian media conglomerates, which moved toward acquiring American media interests. Most significant among these was Indian media conglomerate Reliance Entertainment's joint-venture investment in the Hollywood studio DreamWorks. In July 2009, Reliance contributed US\$325 million toward a new partnership with DreamWorks, along with Disney and a syndicate of international banks, to finance new production projects over three years. As part of its "Hollywood strategy," Reliance ended up holding 50 percent of the American studio. Reliance added to its 170 US cinemas by announcing a BIG-branded five-screen multiplex in Chicago that would transmit films over fiber-optic cable, thus circumventing the need for film prints. Just a few months later, in the fall of 2009, rumors swirled that Reliance Entertainment and another Indian conglomerate, Sahara India Pariwar, were putting in separate bids for the venerable Hollywood studio Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), the studio behind the *James Bond* films. MGM had been in financial difficulty, struggling with billions of dollars of debt and narrowly avoiding bankruptcy before a debt-restructuring rescue deal was announced in late 2009. Despite the failed deal, Indian interest in Hollywood remained undiminished. In early 2010, a Los Angeles-based producer of Indian origin, A. V. T. Shankardass, floated a US\$100 million equity fund in India called

Global Entertainment Partners (GEP). Comprising thirty-three Indian investors, GEP was designed to support American film financing in the wake of the global recession.

The reasons for Hollywood's renewed interest in India are numerous: its cinema-driven popular culture; its well-developed and varied regional industries with intricate histories of collaboration; the ongoing relaxation of the regulatory market and the availability of capital for media investment; a growing middle class with money to spend; the presence of English speakers as well as well-established dubbing practices into "local languages" like Hindi, Tamil, and Telegu; the proliferating multiplex boom; well-established diasporic audiences; and the growth of Indian ancillary markets, especially in postproduction and back-office services. The relative theatrical underdevelopment of the small cities and towns—the Indian "B" and "C" circuit—present an appealing, variegated market for innovation in exhibition. The movement of Indian broadcasters toward becoming horizontally and vertically integrated studios also creates opportunities for Hollywood collaboration.

What do the Indian media industries gain from Hollywood collaboration? Indian distributors use Hollywood alignments to leverage production agreements in other countries, while Hollywood becomes a way of driving and showcasing world cinema in the Indian context. Hollywood's interest in India also spurs British, German, and Italian co-production treaties with India, even as Indian producers work outside the state's ambit. Strangely enough, the predominance of high-profile U.S.–Indian collaborations has created opportunities for "independent" film production in India, supported by a resurgent Indian National Film Development Corporation, which took advantage of the curtailing of foreign imports in the early 1970s to help fund new art cinema. The Bombay film industry generally assumes that Hollywood's economies of scale can help stabilize the 90 percent failure rate of Indian film production by guaranteeing financing and international distribution.

Such contemporary transformations demonstrate how "national" media culture is implicated and legitimated by an array of transnational networks. That Hollywood can be located in the transactions between domestic Indian industries tells us that the older forms of differentiation in the media industry need rethinking. No longer imagined as an aspirational goal, Hollywood is now seen as a "starting point" for Bom-

bay media's global ambitions.⁷ This inversion of the traditional story of media development suggests the need for a new historiography of global Hollywood.

Should such a study be directed by contemporary events, focusing on the increasing profitability of American cinema in India and the accelerating institutional connections between Hollywood and Mumbai? As world media became captivated by Hollywood's rising fortunes in India, my own more modest interests in Indo-American media encounter were in danger of being overwhelmed by the juggernaut of economic inevitability. As accepted wisdom began to speak of Hollywood and Bombay together, this book was in danger of devolving into a story about India's transformation in a relatively short period from a Hollywood outpost to a frontier of opportunity. It was as if contemporary financial proximity between the industries was conspiring against more nuanced and even contradictory accounts.

Of course, many industry collaborations are documented according to the rhythms of rising and falling profits, but that didn't mean that an account of encounter needed to follow the same tune. *Orienting Hollywood* is an attempt to engage with textual politics and social forces to avoid substantiating boosterist accounts and box-office successes and failures. This book aims to texture the contact between Hollywood and Bombay cinema by digging into the reality and the imagination of encounter.

I have taken some disciplinary and methodological license during this project. As part of my research, I wanted to visit archives, watch movies, analyze data, and talk to people. My intention is to enliven rather than abandon traditional media analysis. In engaging empirical and conceptual methods, I have drawn on my intellectual roots in literature, cinema studies, communications, and critical cultural studies. Drawing on the humanities and social sciences, *Orienting Hollywood* takes a transhistorical comparative approach that engages equally with structure, discourse, and practice to argue against a fixed notion of industry. In other words, I want to pay closer attention to the ways media industries are produced, conceptualized, and sustained over time. How have "Hollywood" and "Bombay cinema" been produced in the history of encounter? How have the varied trajectories of circulation that constitute media industries—the movements of material objects, knowledge,

expertise, personnel, capital, ideas, and images—organized relations between global medias across time?

To answer these questions, I decided to look further back and farther afield. While I have acknowledged contemporary transformation, I have refused to neglect historicizing breaks and ruptures. For that reason, *Orienting Hollywood* traces the encounters between Hollywood and Bombay cinema from 1913 to 2013. Over this period, which maps roughly onto the first century of feature film production, there have been multiple dimensions to the relationship between the two global media industries. From competition to collaboration, contestation to coproduction, Hollywood and Bombay cinema have been brought into contact, catalyzing mutual forms of influence. Considering Hollywood and Bombay cinema synoptically, this book is a genealogy of cross-contamination, with India and the United States as both real and imagined stages of encounter.

Missions: Possible?

In the 1950s, the Indian magazine *Filmfare* featured a column called “A Film Letter from Hollywood” written by its “local” correspondent Sylvia Norris. Describing life in Hollywood for her Indian readers, Norris’s column combined gossip and travelogue to create a postcard from the land of glitz. Her breezy prose conveyed the casual exoticism that was part of *Filmfare*’s regular engagement with Hollywood. At times, however, *Filmfare* departed from these relaxed engagements in favor of windier pronouncements on Indo-American encounters. For example, in March 1958, *Filmfare* featured a different kind of Hollywood correspondence, this time written by Eric Johnston, the president of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the film industry’s powerful lobbying arm. In the article, which exemplifies the technocratic subgenre of Cold War literary poetics, Hollywood’s chief booster declares Hollywood fit for the task of global liberty, insisting on the stabilizing power of the motion pictures during precarious times: “I believe that if we could transplant the entire population of one country to another country for a long visit, and repeat the process over and over again among all the countries, we would see an end of international doubts, mistrusts,

misunderstandings and wars. We cannot do that of course. But I know of no better substitute than the motion picture.”⁸

Johnston’s Cold War felicities sum up four decades of Hollywood faith in the power of American cinema to civilize, to act as an international ambassador of goodwill, and to serve as an agent for the betterment of humankind. Since the early 1920s at least, Hollywood’s world ambitions had articulated a leading role in coordinating intercultural encounter within a broadly ecumenical vision. Johnston’s sentiment in *Filmfare* was yet another expression of global Hollywood’s inaugural feint, upgraded for new times.

Similar reports of inter-industry encounter, rooted in the comparative assessment of film industry practice, were perhaps less craftily utopian but nevertheless shared some underlying features with Johnston’s account. Written a year after Johnston’s article, *Time* magazine’s January 1959 “Movies Abroad” column describes Bombay film as “the zaniest movie industry on earth . . . a montage of pomp, profit and speculation.”⁹ Most of the story focuses on the rising power of film stars in Bombay’s Hindi cinema, the “new maharajahs of the film industry,” but special attention is given to the “cash and curry” mobility of female stars like Madhubala. The closing lines of the article shift toward the possibilities of Hollywood encounter, stated in more dramatic terms than Johnston’s dry diplomacy of the year before. *Time* noted that producer-director’s Mehboob Khan’s next step after the success of *Mother India* (1957) was to get “Hollywood itself to lend a co-producing hand with an even more lavish film fetchingly titled *Taj Mahal*. What will happen when Hollywood and Bombay meet, Siva only knows.”¹⁰

Some fifty years later, with the Cold War safely behind them, two new maharajahs of Indo-American film encounter did meet (at the Taj Mahal, no less). The Associated Press (AP) documented the encounter in the photograph below, which shows two major international film stars shaking hands against an iconic backdrop (fig. 1.1). Fifty years after Eric Johnston and *Time*’s predictions, Anil Kapoor and Tom Cruise’s gesture seems to reconcile a clash of civilizations with a simple assertion of friendship. Media worlds are conjoined with a momentary clasp of hands. Here, in the affective charge of a physical gesture, popular representation shifts from an earlier register of mystery to a new image of

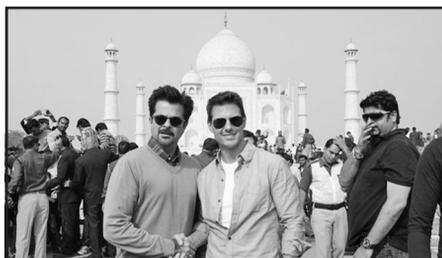


Figure 1.1. Bollywood star Anil Kapoor and Hollywood star Tom Cruise in Agra, 2011. Nyay Bushan, “2011: When Hollywood Connected with India,” *Hollywood Reporter*, January 1, 2012.

correspondence. In *Time*'s earlier account, inter-industry contact is improbable, beyond mere mortal imagination; in the new narrative visualized by the AP photograph, contact is affirmed and celebrated—though it's not clear why the guy behind Tom is holding his nose.

One of the biggest Hindi film stars of the 1990s, Anil Kapoor catapulted to fame as the lead in Shekhar Kapoor's 1987 film *Mr. India*. But he is perhaps better known internationally as the president of the fictional Islamic republic of Kamistan in the American television series *24*—the Indian version of the show premiered in October 2013—or as *Slumdog Millionaire*'s game show host. Hollywood star Tom Cruise first met Anil Kapoor at the American Golden Globes award ceremony in 2009 when he handed out the Best Motion Picture award for *Slumdog*. Two years later, Tom and Anil had completed *Mission: Impossible—Ghost Protocol* and were visiting the Taj Mahal together as part of an Asian publicity junket promoting their new film.

Standing in for national as well as industrial encounter, the AP photo performs a double function. In the first instance, India and America's long political, cultural, and economic engagement is telescoped into the frame of the photograph. In the second instance, Cruise and Kapoor stand in for the *real* star of the scene: the connection between Hollywood and Bombay cinema. The transaction represented in the photo anthropomorphizes industry relations, suggesting fraternity and partnership: interpersonal intimacy functions as a metaphor for institutional

cooperation and coexistence. In making a picture of inter-industry relations, the photo epitomizes what Ulf Hannerz famously called the global *ecumene*, the “interconnectedness of the world by way of interactions, exchanges and related development, affecting not least the organization of culture.”¹¹

Pointing the way forward for Hollywood in India, the 2011 Kapoor–Cruise AP photograph is a tantalizing image of affirmation and promise. Taken during a hasty twenty-five-minute trip to the Taj Mahal during a publicity tour for *Mission: Impossible—Ghost Protocol*, the photo shows Anil Kapoor and Tom Cruise shaking hands in front of the Taj in Agra. The Taj serves a number of symbolic functions here. It haloes Tom, encapsulating and augmenting his otherworldliness as a film celebrity. At the same time, the majesty of the white marbled mausoleum affirms the monumentality of encounter between Hollywood and Bombay cinema and reframes the actors’ “bromance” against a globally recognizable symbol of timeless romantic love. But because the Taj is already so familiar as a national metonym in countless tourist and advertising images, the backdrop is also an example of *filmi* kitsch, which is why Anil wears that mock expression of seriousness.

Commissioned in the seventeenth century by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, the Taj was constructed as a tribute to the memory of his third wife, Mumtaz Mahal. It stands now both as a monument to the majesty of South Asian imperial culture and as a potent symbol and index of Indian accomplishment. Its contemporary relevance is not without contestation, however, as in the last fifteen years Indian courts have dismissed revisionist claims that a Hindu king constructed the Taj. As the singular image of the nation, the Taj has also been appropriated in the twenty-first century as a sign of globalized connectivity between the United States and India, as the following advertisement for AT&T suggests (see fig. 1.2). Images like the AT&T ad are increasingly in vogue now, as market “liberalization” and the increased buying power of the urban middle class have fomented a mutual country-crush between India and the United States.

It was in this spirit of Indo-American connectivity that Anil shook hands with Tom in front of the Taj in December 2011. Accompanied by his *Ghost Protocol* costar Paula Patton, Tom Cruise arrived in India as part of an Asian promotional tour with stops in Tokyo and Seoul. The

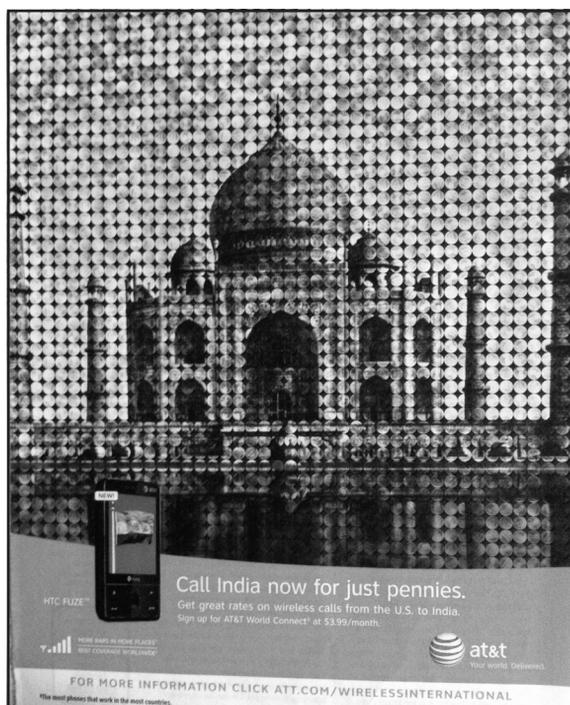


Figure 1.2. The Taj Mahal reimagined in American pennies in a 2009 AT&T ad. *Entertainment Weekly*, April 3, 2009, 13.

India leg of the tour was scheduled just before the film's December 7 world premiere at the Dubai International Film Festival. With stops in Delhi and Agra before arriving in Mumbai for press and fan screenings and Bollywood parties, Cruise's visit represented the first time that a major Hollywood star had come to India to promote a film. In Mumbai, Cruise was put up at the presidential suite at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai (which had also hosted Barack Obama), accompanied by an entourage of chef, trainer, and assistant, along with instructions that his suite's air conditioning be set to precisely 73 degrees Fahrenheit.

Ghost Protocol was released in India in 2D and IMAX 3D on December 16 across a thousand screens in four languages. Without any major Hindi film competition, *Ghost Protocol* set the record for highest opening weekend gross for a Hollywood film in India, collecting over US\$5 million, about 20 percent more than *Avatar*. In order to "position" the

film among Indian (and it was hoped, Asian) spectators, Paramount released a new poster for *Ghost Protocol* that prominently featured Kapoor. In addition, India's largest selling cola brand, Thums Up, featured as an in-product placement in the Indian release of the film, replacing shots of Coke Zero in the "original" release. The indigenous replacement didn't cause much of a corporate ruckus. After all, while Thums Up was a hugely successful response to the expulsion of Coca-Cola during the import-substitution policies of the 1970s, it had been acquired by Coke in 1993 and relaunched as a competitor to Pepsi in India.

In *Ghost Protocol*, Anil Kapoor plays an Indian entrepreneur named Brij Nath, with Cruise reprising his role as Ethan Hunt, an agent for the Impossible Missions Force (IMF). For twenty minutes toward the end of the film, the action shifts from Dubai to Mumbai, as Hunt's team works to take over Nath's telecommunications network and his prized possession, an old Soviet military satellite. Described as a tycoon possessing "state of the art technology built on Cold War knockoffs," Nath is all debauchery and *filmi* flash: a veritable amalgam of Hollywood's Asian stereotypes. Smarmy yet fey, Nath is a pirate entrepreneur with a technology network that leapfrogs the developmental presumptions of modernity. He ends, predictably, facedown and unconscious after ceding control to the IMF. Ironically, all this sounds like an allegory about the structural adjustment policy of another, more powerful IMF—the International Monetary Fund—that sought to bend the economic will of developing nations with its draconian lending policies.

Mission: Impossible began as an American television show in the late 1960s, but by the time it was reintroduced as a Hollywood film franchise, it had exchanged its Cold War subtext for a fascination with stateless, globalized criminality. Paramount's *Mission: Impossible*, released in 1996, was a response to the collapse of the Soviet Union, whose demise dismantled the narrative justification for Hollywood's arch antagonist in thriller, action, and crime films of the Reagan 1980s. By the time of *Ghost Protocol*, the fourth installment of the film series, the action had returned to the Cold War stage, featuring secret Soviet archives and the destruction of Moscow's Kremlin.

First announced in 2009, the fourth installment of the *Mission: Impossible* series was inevitable given the worldwide successes of the first three films in the series—released in 1996, 2000, and 2006—which

earned US\$400–US\$500 million per film. The first three films had earned Rs.40, 100, and then 150 million in India. The year 2009 also turned out to be a good one for Hollywood in India, with *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* opening with 350 prints released on more than four hundred screens in English and Hindi and Telegu versions and in IMAX 3D as well. More than half of *Half-Blood's Prince's* opening collections came from Mumbai theaters, but the Hindi-dubbed version was a big hit in Lucknow and Aurangabad, and the sixth *Potter* installment was the biggest opening for an English-language film in India that year. The same year, the successful Indian release of films like *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs* and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* represented an upswing of Hollywood's confidence in the Indian market. At the end of 2009, *Avatar* was released with seven hundred prints in India in English, Hindi, Tamil, and Telegu, and also a 3D version in Tamil.

A year prior to his promotional tour for *Ghost Protocol*, Tom Cruise was already solidifying ties with an Indian fan base, tweeting thanks to Indian fans who had posted birthday wishes to him on Facebook and Twitter. Cruise wrote, “A huge THANK YOU to the wonderful people of India for their birthday wishes and kindness,” adding, “I’ll ‘see’ you at the movies Friday.” He was referring to *Knight and Day*, released in India in July 2010 in English and a dubbed Hindi version. Later that year, in October 2010, Anil Kapoor confirmed that he had accepted a role in Cruise's latest film. After the success of *Slumdog* and the international exposure facilitated by his role in *24*, Kapoor was looking to build his presence in Hollywood and had signed with the Los Angeles–based talent agency International Creative Management, the first of a group of Bollywood stars looking for American representation as a way to build a global presence.

With filmmaking planned for Rajasthan at the end of October 2010, Paramount's *Ghost Protocol* was part of a crowded slate of some forty foreign film projects seeking the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's permission to shoot in India over the preceding two years. Responding to this high demand, in November 2010, the Los Angeles India Film Council was set up to coordinate location shoots between the United States and India. Anil Kapoor noted that this declaration of cooperation between Hollywood and Bollywood was an important step toward ensuring “that our industries collaborate com-

mercially and creatively.”¹² Although *Ghost Protocol*'s India shoot was delayed, with scenes eventually shot in April and early May 2011, none of the principal actors shot any scenes in India. A Bangalore street scene featuring Cruise was recreated in Vancouver and interior scenes that placed the stars in Mumbai and Bangalore were shot in Dubai and Vancouver. For second-unit acting and chase scenes that were actually shot in South Mumbai, Cruise's double stood in for him, with crowds packing in to see the specially designed BMW “supercar” as it moved through Prabhadevi streets.

Tom Cruise did see fit to personally attend the two-day Indian promotional tour for the film, in a visit that was rumored to have cost Paramount over US\$300,000. *Ghost Protocol*'s publicity managers strictly controlled press coverage, allowing few interviews, though Indian fans were encouraged to post photos on social networking sites. *First Post Bollywood* claimed in a widely cited story published during Cruise's visit that the fan adulation upon his arrival in Mumbai was staged:

When the world's biggest star and possibly the most famous Scientologist on earth, Tom Cruise, stepped out of the Mumbai domestic airport on Saturday with his entourage, little did he know that the screaming crowds he was waving out to were not his Indian fans at all! In fact, the 200-and-odd people gathered there didn't even know who he was and they couldn't care less. They had been hired at the rate of Rs.150, or \$3 per person approximately, by a model coordinator to do the same! “Tom kaun? [Tom who?] I don't know who he is or what he does. We were told to come here by 1pm today and wait for a foreign VIP to come out of the airport gate and scream and shout when he came. None of us know who Tom is. There was a buffet lunch also for us and we were paid Rs.150 for this job today. We do this for television shows and other such events where crowds are required,” said one of the junior artists at the airport, who was hired as an excited Tom fan.¹³

In a cover story on the controversy, the *Mumbai Mirror* claimed that extras were paid between four and eight U.S. dollars, depending on their “cheering experience.” Assembled hours before Cruise's arrival, the paid crowd was a benefit for local security, as one officer noted that “mobs that randomly gather to see celebrities can be extremely unruly and

tough to control. A hired crowd is better. It behaves itself and listens to us.”¹⁴ Paramount and Wizcraft, the Indian event management company coordinating Cruise’s visit, vehemently denied the staged adulation by hired extras, known as “junior artists” in industry parlance. Both companies, along with Anil Kapoor, claimed that the enthusiasm for Cruise was “pure.”

The accusation of paid compensation and any possible corruption of adulation destabilize the authenticity suggested by the Cruise–Kapoor photo’s expression of friendship. The photographed handshake demonstrates the careful manufacture of contact, while the cheering fan connotes a spontaneous burst of emotion. One is enacted, the other supposedly real. Of course, both are socially constructed forms of expression, staging the dramaturgy of encounter, but the danger in accusations of fan compensation is that they suggest an atrophying closeness between Indo-American media ecologies. That is why Paramount’s publicists pushed back so hard on the newspaper reports. After all, the 2011 AP photo forwards a pedagogical imperative, instructing us in the way to look at the relationship between media industries. The Cruise–Kapoor handshake celebrates reciprocal engagement, framing comparison as contact. The photo suggests a meeting between equals: industries in balance, met in a gesture of equivalence. That much seems obvious. But what else does the handshake between Tom Cruise and Anil Kapoor suggest about Indo-American media relations? Sociologist Erving Goffman’s work on symbolic interaction is instructive here.

A handshake can mark the initiation of a relationship or the culmination of one. In other words, a handshake can embody a moment of initial contact or the reaffirmation of an existing social bond. This dynamic temporality affords something both new and old for the parties involved. A handshake is a reciprocal gesture that implies mutuality, equality, friendship, and partnership, a greeting, a mutual decision, the conclusion of a successful negotiation and the sealing of a new deal. These gestures are all part of what Goffman terms *facework*: those dramaturgical efforts that define social interaction.¹⁵ For all its gestural reciprocity, however, a handshake also implies an obligation; as Goffman notes, in polite society, “a handshake that perhaps should not have been extended becomes one that cannot be declined.”¹⁶ As orchestrated gestures, handshakes preserve what Goffman calls a “strict situational

solemnity,” a superficial appearance that effectively shields the true relations between participants.¹⁷

The Cruise–Kapoor handshake, carefully managed for the cameras in a staged display of spontaneity, speaks to the myriad theatrical enactments that perform the “facework” of industry. The handshake affirms a certain kind of sociality predicated on prior personal contact at the same time that it seals the possibility of future interaction. Part of the allure of the photo op is that it stages the much-lauded rebalancing of global power in the contemporary political economy. Sustained popular and scholarly engagement with the economic triumphalism of the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—has suggested a fundamental challenge to Western economic hegemony.¹⁸ This “re-orientation” of the global economy marks the brief passage of European hegemony and the restoration of an “Asia-centered world.”¹⁹ This “re-birth” of the East, staged against the decline of the West, has been widely disseminated in popular economic discourse.²⁰ Film, media, and communications studies scholars have taken this rebirth as an occasion to de-Westernize the field, shifting accounts of media globalization away from North American and Western European perspectives.²¹

Taken at “face” value, then, the handshake between the two film stars reaffirms an underlying principle of the global political economy: a rebalancing of the power dynamic between East and West (though this rebalancing is thrown slightly off-kilter by Cruise’s prominence at the center of the frame). However, the Cruise–Kapoor bromantic encounter is not just a complement to industry; it configures a site where industry is anchored and performed. Paying attention to the social, political-economic, and affective forces that produce “industry” as form and practice, *Orienting Hollywood* takes seriously this idea that industry is the product of encounter. The task of the book is to capture the texture of encounter, examining trajectories of connection and itineraries of exchange and conflict. *Orienting Hollywood* delves into the history and quality of encounter between Hollywood and Bombay cinema, offering not just a window into their relationship but framing a critical comparatist politics in film and media studies.

To return to our photo: connections are affirmed in the handshake at the same time that promises are being made. This begs a question—does the handshake attest to the *restoration* of fraternity, founded at the onset

of the feature film history? Certainly some have suggested as much, as we shall see below.

Orienting Hollywood, Part 1

In what is perhaps the first full-length academic study of the Indian film industry, Panna Shah offers 1913 as the shared date for the founding of the Indian and the American film industries: “It is a strange coincidence that *Harischandra* should have been presented at more or less the same time as Adolph Zukor presented the first multiple-reel feature film *Queen Elizabeth*, which paved the way for the future feature films. Thus apparently as far as the origin of feature film goes, both East and West started together. The West, however, advanced rapidly, while India lagged far behind.”²² Shah’s founding narrative is a bit off historically. D. G. Phalke’s *Raja Harischandra* was preceded as a feature in 1912 by Ram C. G. Torne’s *Pundalik* (not to mention Hiralal Sen’s “lost” features, dating back to the early 1900s). Also, what she calls *Queen Elizabeth* was actually a French production titled *Les Amours de la Reine Elizabeth*, directed by Louis Mercanton, which Zukor partially financed and distributed in the United States by obtaining the rights to the film.

Furthermore, Panna Shah’s apocryphal rendering of the mutual origins of Bombay cinema and Hollywood acknowledges the question of development but underemphasizes D. G. Phalke’s call to link film with the nativist concept of *Swadeshi*. *Swadeshi*, the “home manufacture” economic movement, connected to anticolonial nationalism, advocated for a thorough transformation of the colonial political economy by outlawing foreign economic exploitation in favor of autonomous economic development.²³ Phalke’s own self-promotion as the patriarch of the Indian film industry aligned neatly with these commitments—he claimed that “my films are *Swadeshi* in the sense that the capital, ownership, employees and stories are all *Swadeshi*.”²⁴

Despite these historical tensions, the fiction of common origin has endured to the extent that 2013 is being touted as a dual centenary. If Bombay cinema and Hollywood were not exactly separated at birth—like the iconic twin brothers of Hindi film melodrama—industry celebrations of the apocryphal Indo-American film century continue to thematize the restoration of an estranged kinship (see fig. 1.3).



Figure 1.3. Hollywood and Bombay cinema, reunited—one lone wolf above a pack of wolves. Billboards at a South Delhi movie theater, January 2014.

While the idea of a common origin might be more fiction than fact, it nevertheless suffuses much Indo-American film industry interaction. Take for example the keynote speech at the 2012 Frames conference, the long-running industry confab hosted in Mumbai by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). The Frames 2012 keynote speaker was MPAA Chairman Chris Dodd, who remarked in his opening comments, “I am honored to be here to celebrate with all of you something else that unites our two countries—Movies.”²⁵ Similar acknowledgments of bilateral unity were on the program for Frames 2013, with keynotes delivered by film and television executives from Disney, Viacom, and Sony, as well as the dean of the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television.

Of course, foundational myths invoking an Indo-American film century are convenient and retrospective mappings, allowing industry folk to validate negotiations and comparisons. Nevertheless, origin stories are useful ways of tracing long-standing itineraries of connection.

Indeed, if we look back to 1913, we can see how India figured prominently in Hollywood's self-conception both on- and off-screen. In its very earliest imagination of global expansion, Hollywood instantiated the tropes of transcultural encounter with India, particularly through popular actuality, travelogue, and ethnographic genres.

Despite the political, legal, and economic disenfranchisement of workers of Indian origin in turn-of-the-century Southern California, India before Hollywood primarily resonated as a lifestyle: the public's fascination with Theosophy, "bungalows" dotting the Pacific Coast (named for the Indian thatched roof houses), and hand-woven Indian "dhurrie" rugs that decorated Southern California homes. While Indian furnishings complemented the eclecticism of California's local aesthetic, early short films at the dawn of Hollywood were designed to demonstrate the lengths to which American film companies would travel to secure more exotic entertainments. These included Edison's *Dramatic Scenes in Delhi* (1912), *Views in Calcutta* (1912), and *Curious Scenes in India* (1913), Powers's travels films like *Views of Bangkok, India* (1912), and Mutual's *Life in India* (1913). Such "descriptive" or "scenic" films featured banyan trees and royal palms, landmarks and ruined remnants of past conflict, and natives at play and at work in the hustle-bustle of colonial urban life.

In the Dorsey Expedition pictures, like Reliance's *Up from the Primitive* (1912), which used animal life from the Ganges to demonstrate evolutionary principles, Western cameramen were depicted as intrepid "film explorers" bearing the marks of their encounters with the East's savagery. In showcasing India as a setting for imperial grandeur, Edison's Durbar films competed with heavily promoted films from Gaumont and Pathé that showcased George V's coronation as emperor of India. Edison's films also screened against Kinemacolor exhibitions of Durbar footage in New York in 1912.

"Educationals" like Éclair's *Life in India* (1913) showed industrious natives plying a variety of trades, and were paired together with films like Essanay's *China and the Chinese* (1913) to form a compendium of oriental behavior. Extending beyond racialized pedagogy, longer two-reel films, shot on location and in the studio, elaborated on India as a signifier of danger and, at the same time, a safe safari destination. For example, Zukor's Arab Amusement Company released an animal series

called *Wild Life and Big Game in the Jungles of India and Africa* (1913). Typically hyperbolic advertising from Zukor promised that “the soul of India has stolen into the film . . . !”²⁶ and the film was endorsed by Teddy Roosevelt, well-known for his love of big-game hunting. There were other popular pictures in a similar vein. Solax’s *Beasts of the Jungle* (1913), where an American engineer loses his daughter to the wild tropics, was full of wild animals and an Indian “atmosphere” that helped to popularize the animal picture. Selig’s *A Wise Old Elephant* (1913) was also set in India, but was filmed on the Selig wild animal farm in Los Angeles. To decorate his films, Selig hired a naturalist to tour India (as well as Australia, Japan, South America, and Africa) for plants, vegetation, and animals for the farm. By 1915, the Selig Zoo was one of the best furnished in the United States, with two dozen Bengal tigers and a number of “sacred monkeys.”

In addition to these stories, early cinema also popularized dramas of anticolonial uprising, including Francis Ford’s *The Campbells Are Coming* (1915), which featured murderous sepoys and native princes that attack “an English town” in India full of women and children. Such was the popularity of these “sepoymen stories” in the teens that American film studios planned to construct permanent “India” sets in California to streamline their production.²⁷

Early on, the American industry went on location to India to film short travel films that required geographical validity. However, as the industry moved toward longer features, “animal films” could be shot in the studio (as described above, some had their own zoos) and “India” could be suggested by a tree, a tiger, and a well-placed turban. Producers often used recycled stock scenic footage to buttress films shot in the studio.

It is clear that these representations of India allowed Hollywood to imagine a nascent global enterprise where white supremacy was confounded and thrilled by Asian mystery. Reflecting on the conventions of adventure and astonishment, we can see how India served to “orient” Hollywood as a spatial and symbolic practice. What were the permutations and implications of this orientation?

India played a key role in the representation of Otherness in early Hollywood, providing what Edward Said calls an “imaginative geography” that symbolized Hollywood’s sense of its boundaries as well as the “kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions” that populated the

“unfamiliar space” outside its own.²⁸ Of course, Hollywood produced “India” in its own studios as well as by traveling to South Asia, and the fabrication of scenarist attraction was as critical to the representation of alterity as the travelogue footage filmed “on location.”

For Hollywood, then, India functioned as real and diegetic space. In furnishing the requisite tropes of Otherness to orient Hollywood’s modernity, these permutations of site and scene constructed India as a “contact zone,” Mary Louise Pratt’s term for those social spaces “where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”²⁹ Interactions within this contact zone served to anchor Hollywood transculturalism, although the mysterious danger of Asia signified what Homay King calls an “enigmatic indecipherability” that threatened the limits of Hollywood modernity.³⁰ Hollywood’s early Indological fascination was part of a broader representational logic through which American “envisioned” Asia.³¹

At its inception, Hollywood invested in strategies of meaning-making that constructed India as a mysterious backdrop to exoticism and a place of mystery (see fig. 1.4). Representations of India helped propagate an iconography of exoticism that oriented Hollywood in particular directions. As Sara Ahmed notes, the question of orientation is always “a matter of residing in space,” a desiring directionality that locates a body in space as well as the possibilities of its extension to other spaces.³² Following this idea, it is clear that at the same time that India represented the power of Hollywood to bring a distant and exotic land close to home, it also framed the spatial limits to Hollywood’s ambition. This spatialization—the ways that industries “take place” in spatial configurations—informs my second usage of the term “orienting.”

India played multiple roles in this spatial orientation of Hollywood. For as central as India was to signifying Hollywood orientalism, South Asia marked the edge of American cinema’s material circulation, as used film prints entered South Asia marked by the passage of transit through more lucrative international markets in Europe. In addition, India emerged as a kind of translation point between Orient and Occident. As early American film companies sent cameramen on globetrotting tours to gather footage for the popular scenic shorts of the time, India featured prominently as a stopover between China and the Middle East.



Figure 1.4. “What the flashlight revealed”—American cinema casts a light on Indian debauchery. Here, Roscoe Harding photographs the Indian prince’s harem, revealing the abducted, plaintive English girl in the background. Still and caption from *Motography*’s review of Selig’s two-reel *The Flashlight*, released in 1915. John C. Garret, “The Flashlight,” *Motography*, November 6, 1915, 970.

Since it was neither Near- nor Far-, and somewhat distinct from the Middle-, India was ideally positioned as entry point into the East. This bolstered Hollywood’s own sense of spatial self-imagination. Decades before the Institute of Pacific Relations declared Hollywood “as close to Asia as it is to Europe,”³³ the American film industry thought of itself as the Archimedean point between East and West. In its capacity to represent the distant at home, Hollywood’s imagination of India helped to coordinate this fictional centrality. Yet India’s role in spatializing American cinema reflected not only Hollywood’s journey eastward—from the beginning of Hollywood, in fact, India served as a way to orient the Orient.

Historically, India named a kind of limit to Hollywood. On the one hand, Hollywood’s early popularity in the subcontinent confirmed its universality. On the other hand, the challenges Hollywood faced after the introduction of sound cinema in India illustrated its linguistic provinciality. Beginning in late 1910s, India shifted from subject and style to a possibly lucrative market for the American industry. India was critical to the orientation of Hollywood at the dawn of a cinematic century marked by the successes and failures of inter-industry encounter.

While global Hollywood’s domination is often likened to an imperial regime, it is clear that Hollywood’s dominion in India was precarious after the 1920s. There is little sense to the notion of a “Hollywood raj”

in India. Indeed, if economic domination is one of the key measures of global Hollywood, then India has been something of a sticking point in Hollywood's hegemony. In other words, while global Hollywood is commonly seen as the epitome of cultural imperialism, its historically lackluster market impact in India is proof—as many accounts show—that the empire can indeed strike back. This rhetoric of insurgency is exemplified by a number of contemporary comparisons and is another way to “orient” Hollywood. For example, Kaushik Bhaumik notes that, “from very early times, the crucial factor connecting Bombay and Los Angeles is a contested relationship between subaltern and hegemon.”³⁴ Similarly, Heather Tyrell claims that “the reasons for Bollywood’s resistance to colonization by Hollywood are aesthetic and cultural as well as political.”³⁵ Lalitha Gopalan observes that the playful jabs taken at *Jurassic Park* (1993) and *Titanic* (1997) in recent Hindi and Tamil cinema “confidently acknowledge that Indian cinema audiences belong to the same virtual global economy where films from different production sites exist at the *same level*—a democratization of global cinephilia.”³⁶ Echoing this logic, the editors of a recent Indian media anthology claim that “if Hollywood represents the homogenizing effect of American capitalism in global cultures, a study of Bollywood allows a unique opportunity to map the contrasting move of globalization in popular culture.”³⁷ Assessing the international impact of India media poses the opposite argument, evidenced by *Newsweek*’s claims that “globalization isn’t merely another word for Americanization—and the recent expansion of the Indian entertainment and film industry proves it.”³⁸ However, while inverting its directionality, these assessments retain domination as a characteristic theme in Hollywood–Bombay relations.³⁹

As I noted above, Hollywood has also been energized by more contemporary reorientation—the Indian economic “miracle” of the past twenty years. The global economic expansion of the 1990s was fueled, in part, by the rise of “emerging markets” in Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The economic growth of these BRICS nations represented twenty years of liberalization and privatization. India, in particular, was thought to have shrugged off the derisory label of the “Hindu rate of growth.” While world media routinely ignored significant deprivation and crisis, particularly in the agricultural sector, Indian corporate growth was lauded as second only to China. State support and sanction

for Bombay media's corporatization initiatives attempted to capitalize on the information sector's explosive growth in the period following liberalization.⁴⁰ Celebrations of this success enabled the global projection of India in events like Delhi's hosting of the 2010 Commonwealth Games, which, like the Olympics in Tokyo in 1964, Seoul's 1988 Olympics, and the 2008 Beijing Olympics, was designed to showcase Asian modernity on a world stage. Exemplifying India's prominence at an address to the Indian parliament, Barack Obama recently called the U.S.–India strategic and economic relationship “one of a defining partnerships of the 21st century.”⁴¹ India served as a fulcrum in America's “pivoting” toward Asia in global political and economic relations.

As we now know, Obama was speaking during a global recession. Initially, the global financial community thought that the Indian economy would survive the brunt of the downturn. However, international confidence in the Indian economy clearly eroded as direct foreign direct investment (FDI) fell by more than 30 percent in 2010, to US\$24 billion.

The FDI crisis is just the tip of the iceberg. Coming to a consensus, the world press has replaced once-breathless stories of India “shining” with the view that India is sinking. The international investment community cites a litany of Indian financial woes: uncertainty about tax laws; overly complex licensing procedures; rising inflation; higher lending rates; intractable corruption; protectionism; insecurity about intellectual property protection (particularly patents, but also copyright); weak infrastructure; a slowdown in industrial production; plummeting currency rates; a real estate downturn; and an expanding trade deficit.⁴² International skepticism about India's economic future continued to grow through 2011, though India eased foreign ownership rules on international retailers, opening the door to a greater Wal-Mart presence in India (later reversed when members of the governing coalition threatened to revolt). Nevertheless, once common bullish long-term forecasts of double-digit growth now claim a more modest 6 percent. Any idea that India might be the new Europe is now a prognostication of economic gloom rather than a signal of booming times ahead. The steady depletion of confidence in what Gurcharan Das once called “the India story” has created confusion about what direction the state and capital should take.⁴³ Indian finance authorities vacillate between continued liberalization that might foster international investment or increasing

protectionist measures to help raise revenues and nibble away at the deficit. While the troubling election of a new right-wing government in 2014 has generated renewed international faith in Indian macroeconomic conditions, there is still the prevailing sense that the boom times may be a thing of the past.

However, the exhausted narrative of the Indian economic “miracle” presents another opportunity for a reorientation of media industry relations. While economic interdependency is critical to the proximity between industries, can’t we consider what *other* forms of contact are available? If contemporary events have exposed the endemic nature of economic precarity, perhaps we can reject the monopoly of financially driven comparison and look instead at multiple frames of relationality between media industries. One benefit of the economic crash is that scholars can take a breather from accounts of economic magnitude, but this means changing entrenched conventions of industry comparison.

Developing economic alignments dominates industry talk about finance, but it also suffuses academic methodologies. After all, despite the rhetoric and texture of media encounter, straightforward economic magnitude is central to descriptions of screen transit, with legitimacy granted to those accounts that demonstrate definitive, measurable, and spectacular market impact. For example, in his study of the international development of film industries before World War II, Gerben Bakker excludes Japanese, Indian, and Hong Kong industries on the grounds that “since 1945 they have become quite successful relative to Europe, but before that they were internationally insignificant.”⁴⁴ Similarly, Manuel Castells suggests that the Indian film industries have “evolved largely independently from the global network of media networks,” and only now, because of state and market subsidy, are more enumerated “structures of collaboration” between Indian and American media industries proliferating.⁴⁵ To follow Bakker’s rationalization, we needn’t be interested in Hollywood in India, which, in the mid-1990s, made about as much money as it did in Israel and less than it did in Poland. To follow Castells, we needn’t look at Hollywood in India outside the high-profile corporatization of Bollywood made possible by the economic liberalization of the early 1990s. For all their analytical clarity, such approaches run the risk of missing the more ephemeral, less enumerated points of

contact that seep into and slip beyond official histories and formal political economies.

Orienting Hollywood proposes to disrupt the conventional geometry of media industry comparison, constructing epistemologies of relation that recognize but also challenge the conventions of economic interaction. In calling for a more textured type of media comparison, I want to look across geographic zones of media circulation, but I also want to excavate the forms of contrast invoked in histories of encounter. This dynamic comparativism has methodological and conceptual consequences. A spatiotemporal approach recognizes that comparison not only maps the encounters between industries, but also frames how “industry” is defined. A critical approach that attempts to deepen and broaden logics of connection must recognize that comparisons have complex legacies and politics. Retaining the efficacy of comparison as a critical force requires the appreciation of its analytical, figurative, and historical nature. Such a critical approach also requires an acknowledgment of the limits of comparison as method and practice.

To Affinity (and Beyond!): Media Industries in Comparison

Central to both empirical and interpretive work, comparison is a widely used type of scholarly analysis, informing methodology, theory, and practice in the humanities and social sciences. As a gauge of measurement in both quantitative and qualitative methods, comparison regularizes difference within standard frameworks—in other words, comparison is a form of framing. This suggests stasis, but comparative methods are also dynamic because they organize claims and engage contrasts. At the same time, comparison tends toward objectification by formalizing phenomena in the process of analysis, creating trajectories of proximity and distance, networks of affinity and dissimilarity, and taxonomies of features both shared and exceptional. But comparison is also a tremendously broad enterprise. Susan Friedman has usefully described a number of imperatives to comparison, from the cognitive (comparison is integral to analogical and figural thinking) to the socio-cultural (comparison is a way of organizing human behavior and social relations) and the ethicopolitical (comparison can either revivify or reject the “romance” of the universal and the singular).⁴⁶

Interdisciplinary work means thinking critically about comparison, engaging the multiple dimensions of comparativity produced across disciplinary cultures. This means understanding comparison as a kind of “traveling concept,” Mieke Bal’s term for the movement of meanings between disciplines, scholars, and histories, with “processes of differing assessed before, during, and after each ‘trip.’”⁴⁷ Thinking archeologically about media, for example, Katherine Hayles suggests that a comparative media studies can provide a “rubric” for the study of print and digital productions in a way that is historical, formal, procedural, and material. Multiplying approaches to and theories about media transition can help ward off teleologies of technological development.⁴⁸ In a more sociological vein, Daniel Hallin and Paulo Mancini suggest that a comparative approach to media demystifies assumptions about the universality of media practices while making possible certain structural similarities that link media systems to one another.⁴⁹ The focus here is on the generation of concepts and theories through “ideal types,” those necessarily abstract “concepts and generalized uniformities of empirical process.”⁵⁰ Both the genealogical and sociological approaches to comparative media represented by Hayles, Hallin, and Mancini are united by a project of clarification, yet they preserve Bal’s possibilities for more experimental and speculative forms of comparison. Capturing the contradictions of comparison with a focus on media structures, Sonia Livingstone declares that the comparative study of cross-national media industries is both an “apparent impossibility and an urgent necessity.”⁵¹

Yet, comparison, like familiarity, can also breed contempt, especially when you consider its history of institutionalization. Postwar intellectual formations like area studies used comparison to justify Cold War mentalities, focusing on the regional and the national as a geopolitical unit.⁵² The institutionalization of comparison in modernization theory forged a policy alignment between university and state interests. Comparison’s role in this disciplinary history was to frame the national as an index of psychological, social, and cultural disposition. In this way, the national was a “modular” form, capable of registering difference through a common discourse.⁵³ Modernization theory activated such national distinctions to organize media industries in hierarchies according to their development. Even in oppositional disciplinary cultures like

political economy, which seek to address structural inequality and the management and redistribution of resources, the national serves as a site to amass data and situate power. Approaching media industries in terms of national aggregation can lead to accounts of straightforward economic magnitude that overshadow the complexities of screen transit described above.

Yet the national remains an important force for engaging with the spatial and temporal practices that organize media industries. Sanctioned by state and market bureaucracies, media industries are implicated in the processes of national legitimation in the domain of law (through intellectual property, authorship, and domicile), in the routines of cultural work (through labor laws and censorship), and by enacting exclusivity in the field of cultural policy (through quotas, import restrictions, spectrum allocation, and communications infrastructures). Intersecting these institutional itineraries is a more experimental dimension or sense of culture, where the national delimits an archive of vernacular forms linked by custom, habitation, and language that can transcend territorial limitations and create new forms of collectivity and practice. Taken together, the notional concepts of the national as a common frame of reference for cultural belief/action and the notational concepts of nation as a marker of attribution and circulation have created a powerful incentive for media industries to continue to “think nationally” even in a globally dispersed field of cultural production.⁵⁴

In media industries scholarship, the national is a dynamic frame of comparison that assembles and focuses modes of coherence and dispersion. On the one hand, the national in media industries discourse refers to a set of representational practices produced under a centripetal logic of “local” coherence—in terms of authorship, location, audience, narrative, genre, and style—and a set of institutional practices through which the state exercises a mandate of preservation against the tide of the foreign—in terms of subsidies for film production, quotas, and other import restrictions. On the other hand, national media refers to a set of relationships produced through a centrifugal logic that prioritizes dispersion over cohesion, whereby movements like Mexican cinema and New German cinema are validated as national expressions not because of their exclusivity but through their international circulation and relations with other industries.⁵⁵

These complex modes of inclusion and exclusion are assembled under the sign of national distinction in the media industries, and not always according to the same logic. For example, for decades the Indian government engaged with the film industry as a revenue source (via taxes) or a source of moral decay (via censorship). Hollywood played a critical role in the imagination of national transformation, as Indian economic liberalization encouraged the proliferation of institutional contact between Bombay cinema and Hollywood. The government's desire to more fully recognize the industrial legitimacy of the film sector can be seen in the economic "reforms" of the late 1980s, part of a wave of broader global transformations between the state, capital, and media. For example, in the 1980s, the South Korean government implemented economic reforms to position media production as a national strategic resource in the global market.⁵⁶ Unlike in India, this strategy was a deliberate response to Hollywood's dominance in Korea, enabled by the direct distribution of Hollywood films to local theaters in Korea beginning in the late 1980s.

In another example of the complex deployments of the national, anthropologist William Mazzarella details the rise of mass consumerism in India since the mid-1980s. As Mazzarella argues, this consumer shift marks a fundamental transformation of the older logic of developmentalist self-sufficiency, represented most strongly in India's import-substitution initiatives during the 1970s. Mazzarella notes that the liberalization of Indian consumer markets and the influx of foreign brands in the past three decades have completely reorganized the infrastructure of Indian marketing. One of the most unexpected outcomes of the post-developmental aspirational allure of a "consumption-led path to national prosperity," Mazzarella insists, is the connection of Indian self-sufficiency *with* the recruitment of foreign investment.⁵⁷ In other words, within the logic of globalization, the *foreign* can function as a signifier of the national where it once might have functioned as its antithesis.

Clearly, the national is a complex register of comparison, requiring careful deployment as an analytic. It can serve as a vital and energetic way to study media industries in global and local contexts, but not at the expense of other frames of reference. Tracing the material itineraries of commodity transit does not always map onto preexisting national

configurations—there are many places where, as Eric Cazdyn puts it, “film and the nation fly away from their fixed borders.”⁵⁸ For those of us interested in working on media industries, our task is not simply to refuse the national as a ready index of comparison, but to compare differently: to figure a politics and practice of relation that is transformative as well as taxonomic.

In *Asia as Method*, the critical scholar of East Asian history and cultural studies Kuan-Hsing Chen calls for a form of scholarship that refuses a central, ideal reference point around which to structure comparison. He suggests an “inter-referencing strategy” as a response to classic foundational strategies of comparison, one that multiplies frames of reference. His framing of the “West” is especially useful:

Rather than continuing to fear reproducing the West as the Other, and hence avoiding the question all together, an alternative discursive strategy posits the West as bits and fragments that intervene in local social formations in a systematic, but never totalizing way. The local formulation of modernity carries important elements of the West, but it is not full enveloped by it. Once recognizing the West as fragments internal to the local, we no longer consider it as an opposing entity but rather as one cultural resource among many others. Such a position avoids either a resentful or triumphalist relation with the West because it is not bound by an obsessive antagonism.⁵⁹

In this way, we might gesture beyond comparison to what Rey Chow calls “entanglement,” an analysis of encounters figured “through disparity rather than equivalence.” By disrupting tidy classifications, entanglements signal a “derangement in the organization of knowledge caused by unprecedented adjacency and comparability or parity.”⁶⁰ Entanglement may be a form of comparison appropriate to the task of demonstrating that Bombay and Hollywood media histories are disjunct, adjacent, and intertwined.⁶¹

These entanglements are scattered across inter-industry relations over the last century of encounter between Hollywood and India. For example, as early as the 1930s, Hollywood’s local agents worked with regional and central film industry organizations in India to lobby the British colonial government to reduce import duties on film stock and

equipment and to decrease entertainment taxes. Three decades later, the Commissioner of Entertainment Tax in Uttar Pradesh put forward a plan to establish a “raw film” stock industry in UP, with investment from Kodak and Hollywood distributors in Bombay.⁶² Also in the 1960s, at a time when Indian revenue was minimal for global Hollywood, the Motion Picture Export Association claimed that American cinema performed “an invaluable service in supplying entertainment to professional men and their families and civil servants.” American cinema was deemed critical in India, especially “to the large body of high school and college students, who [relied] on English language films to sharpen their conversational skills in that tongue.”⁶³ And in the early 1970s, the Indian government linked American imports to a reciprocal arrangement sponsoring the commercial exhibition of Indian films in the United States. Two decades later, in the 1990s, reciprocity framed American and Indian cinema working together to secure common copyright interests.

The challenge for a comparative study is to systematize these encounters yet stay attuned to the particularity of interaction. Any narrative of inter-industry engagement must account for ruptures and breaks as well as continuities across a shared history. We must also avoid flattening encounter into symmetrical engagements, as if relations are always configured according to equal stakes. This means paying attention to the different cultural forms that organize media industries in distinct ways.⁶⁴ At the same time, we must understand industry interactions in terms of the “occasions” for which they are oriented and intended.⁶⁵ In addition to this “occasionality,” we might also—to follow Rita Felski and Susan Friedman’s formulation—engage media industries as “*agents* as well as *objects* of comparison.”⁶⁶

Of course, both Bombay cinema and Hollywood have rich and widely documented histories. As yet, however, there has not been a full-length work that looks at how these histories are entangled, considering the partial and strategic alignments between industries as well as minor alignments and fleeting moments of mutual interest. In highlighting industries in transit and in contact, *Orienting Hollywood* elucidates how media artifacts are distributed across multiple trajectories, territories, and histories of exchange. At the heart of this inquiry is a central question—what were the close encounters that drew Hollywood into

Bombay media ecologies, establishing mutually contaminating points of contact?

Encounter is the primary theme of this study and comparison its primary method. *Orienting Hollywood* deploys archival research, interviews, political economy, discourse, and textual analysis not only to document encounter but also to show how it was staged and imagined. Evidence is taken from a wide array of materials ranging from the archive to the screen: policy documents, industry sources, interviews, reports, memos, and other ephemera, fan letters, the trade press and popular journalism, and of course the films themselves. In terms of methodology, this book works toward disarticulating the classic text–industry–audience triad that has structured much media studies inquiry. Along with its privileged objects, this analytic prescribes countervailing disciplinary priorities: textual analysis is suited to the task of exegesis; political economy articulates industry to the national and global; and ethnography opens up diverse occasions of viewing and forms of belonging. *Orienting Hollywood* insinuates itself in the fissures between these disciplinary approaches.

The chapters in *Orienting Hollywood* are somewhat loosely organized, but they cohere around the theme of Hollywood–Bombay relations. Such a “thematic orbit” of rather loosely interconnected chapters makes possible a number of forms of inquiry:⁶⁷ to document the history of influence, to trace the nature of interoperability, and to thematize the character of interaction. Employing a comparative framework, and proceeding in thematic rather than chronological fashion, each chapter in this book is organized around three or four case studies. This itinerary follows a historiography that Kent Ono has called *retracing*, “an attempt to read the historical as part of the contemporary, next to the contemporary, within the contemporary, and by the contemporary.”⁶⁸

Chapter 1, “Framing the Copy: Media Industries and the Poetics of Resemblance,” shows how the dynamic of copying framed relations between the two media industries. In this chapter, I argue that the historical relations between Hollywood and Bombay cinema can be traced through the problematic of the copy. Moving through a variety of examples across a hundred years of industrial interconnection, I show how the copy institutes the work of analogy between Bombay and Hollywood, creating frameworks of comprehension and comparison between

them. This chapter's critical, analytical, and historical imperative is motivated by the idea that the copy not only produces similarity between the industries—that seems obvious—but that the copy is capable of signifying difference and distinction as well.

Although the copy frames the comparison of media industries, it does not flatten out asymmetries between them. In fact, the copy attests to the fundamental inequalities of comparison, the political and cultural struggles over the meaning of innovation and influence in the global media. Mapping a trajectory that is both historical and spatial, this chapter frames copying by investigating the economic, cultural, and institutional arenas in which the work of analogy takes place. I begin with those rules of geopolitical transformation that try to institutionalize imitation in ways that preserve structural domination between the West and the Rest. I then focus on intellectual property as a specific manifestation of this institutional logic of imitation to show how copy practice in the historical formation of Bombay cinema became a problem for Hollywood. I end with a close analysis of contemporary Bollywood remake culture, demonstrating how the copy is evoked as a way to draw distinctions between the global media industries. Throughout this chapter, I try to complicate the easy historicism that places one industry as “less developed” than another, as if there was a singular trajectory of/ called “progress” along which industries are thought to develop from the cottage to the globe.

Chapter 2, “Managing Exchange: Geographies of Finance in the Media Industries,” examines the spatial distribution of filmmaking regimes between Bombay and Hollywood, focusing on the ways in which money and investment possibilities manage the exchange between the film industries. This chapter takes on a number of interrelated case studies in the transnational geography of finance: repatriation, coproduction, and outsourcing. Focusing on key moments in the history of Indo-American media relations from the 1920s to the present, these case studies form a triptych around the figure of exchange. After I describing the Indian conglomerate Reliance's investment in American studio DreamWorks, demonstrating how Hollywood has moved from creditor to debtor in a century of inter-industry encounter, I shift away from the high-profile, slick rhetoric of global media investment toward the granularity of financial exchange. This first section focuses on the 1950s

and 1960s, as Hollywood profits were “blocked” in India and American studios looked for ways to first repatriate, then expend their money. Complicating the smooth, invisible exchange presumed by statistics and industry data, this section shifts the rational discourse of numbers toward the messy materiality of exchange between media industries, “re-embodiment” money as an actual transaction. The second section looks at the history of Hollywood’s Hindi productions in India. I begin with an appraisal of Hollywood’s early engagement with Indian locations as a geographic index. This engagement combined fiction with reality, with screen representations of India produced through travelogues and the fabrication of American scenarists. The imagination of India played a critical role in the worlding of Hollywood space and place.

The shift to India as an actual production location, after some fitful attempts in previous decades, took off in earnest in the mid-2000s, with a number of Hollywood studios committing to “local language” production. In this section, I trace the production and reception of two failed Hollywood coproductions—*Saawariya* (Sony, 2007) and *Chandni Chowk to China* (Warner Brothers, 2009)—to indicate the limits of crossover productions. The cultural anxieties of coproduction are most clearly exemplified in the national and ethnic attribution of labor in contemporary outsourcing discourse and practice, which serves as the subject of my third case study. The structural transformation of cultural labor and new technologies of remote management, both made possible by a neoliberal alignment of government and industry, institutionalize older labor prejudices even as they disaggregate discrete spheres of cultural production. This section traces the cultural politics engaged by India’s location as Hollywood’s virtual workshop.

My third chapter, “The Theater of Influence: Reimagining Indian Film Exhibition,” focuses on the rise of the multiplex theater in India over the past fifteen years, as it transformed the economies of scale in film production and distribution. The multiplex is the primary point of entry not only for new film genres and foreign cinema, but also for the new economic cultures of corporatization and multinational investment in the Indian film industries. This chapter analyzes the cultural politics of the new Indian movie theater and its iconic display of modular forms of consumer mobility. Designed to offer a premium service built around the coordinated release of high-budget domestic and foreign features

in major urban centers, multiplex theater construction in India arose alongside the reconsideration of urban space in the national imaginary. Yet, as I show in this chapter, the multiplex is a relatively recent manifestation of theatrical innovation in India, a transformation in which Hollywood has played a critical role.

In the first section of this chapter, I trace the history of American influence on the reorganization of the built environment and in the architectural imaginary of exhibition. Hollywood has long been interested in establishing Indian theater chains as a way to enhance the distribution of American cinema. This history of American influence on India's exhibition infrastructure is bookended by two key failures: first, Universal's unsuccessful bid for Madan Theatres in the 1920s; and then, seventy years later, the failed attempt of Warner Brothers to build a multiplex chain in Maharashtra in the mid-1990s. The second section of this chapter places the Indian multiplex within a broader retail imaginary in India. The Indian government once gave relatively low priority to cinema construction, focusing sparse steel and concrete resources to projects more amenable to developmental modernity like dams, roads, bridges, and other material infrastructures. Now, however, nationwide investment in the retail sector places the multiplex alongside the shopping mall in a new disciplining of the consumer. In this section, I locate the Indian multiplex within a network of public amusements that produces forms of elite urban sociability. Collapsing the space of the mall and the multiplex marks a certain entry point "into" the West; defined by the architectonics of consumer mobility, these places are also gateways into the globalization of Indian life. In the third section of this chapter, I focus on the capital city Delhi's Chanakya movie hall, a modernist landmark and iconic theater for Hollywood in India that was recently razed to make way for a new multiplex theater. That a beacon of architectural modernism was itself subject to the logic of modernization attests to the rapaciousness of urban development in the postcolonial city. Chanakya's demolition and the protests that surrounded it engage the ironies of progress that suffuse the multiplex era.

Chapter 4, "Economies of Devotion: Affective Engagement and the Subject(s) of Labor," focuses on the routes and routines of working bodies in transnational screen culture. Drawing the historical into contemporary practice, I attend to the question of how subjectivity

and labor—marked by racial, religious, class, and national difference—become implicated in various itineraries of contact between Bombay and Hollywood. My interest here is in both the formalized trajectories through which labor travels and the more extemporaneous processes that distribute the activity of real and represented bodies in the social worlds of work. In this chapter, I show how the production of cross-cultural intimacy is inscribed in industry exchange, creating forms of affinity tied to the circulation of laboring bodies between Hollywood and Bombay. Engaging these bodies—across different histories and scales of movement—can illuminate the ways in which media work is materially, socially, and culturally organized. Here I focus on the cultural politics of “traveling” bodies, detailing how categories of difference are inscribed within an “affect economy” of transnational media industries.⁶⁹ The connections made by stars, fans, and industry representatives between Hollywood and Bombay cinema maps the distribution of emotional engagement across media worlds. In this way, laboring subjectivities become a key site of transcultural media encounter.

In print stories, festivals, and correspondence, expressions of devotion and religious affiliation become part of an industrial configuration in which attachment emerges as a symbolic resource. Reading the journalistic, corporate, and fan archive, this chapter considers “geographies of intimacy” across three case studies in the history of Bombay and Hollywood encounter.⁷⁰ The first two case studies show how interpersonal encounters signify industry relations through different travel narratives. The first case study addresses the promotional discourse of celebrity tourism that construes labor as leisure, garnering starstruck press and popular devotion. I show how the common discourse of Hollywood star travelogues depends on tropes of comparison, particularly those predicated on a kind of racialized Otherness. My second case study looks at letters and other forms of correspondence that cast American and Indian media relations in more informal and personal terms. As a frame for inter-industry relations, epistolary communication capitalizes on the “affective economies” of attachment.⁷¹ The third and most extensive case study engages devotion in a more historical register, focusing on the popular characterization of Indian film work as “Hindu” at the same time that religious caste was used to characterize tensions between labor and management in interwar Hollywood. This parallel trajectory of ap-

propriation enables a historical comparison between the social worlds of Indian and American labor, even as anti-Asian nativist anxieties came to the fore before and after the formation of Hollywood. Taken together, these case studies highlight the affective charge of interaction, showing how intersubjective intensities of contact are mobilized in the intimacy of encounter between media industries.

In the concluding chapter, “Close Encounters of the Industrial Kind,” I offer a final engagement with Hollywood–Bombay cinema relations in order to illustrate the historical complexity of circulation. I show how a single film distributes a plurality of objects, agents, meanings, sites of reception and distribution, and point out those places where media industries are made and engaged in historical and contemporary contexts. In showing how Hollywood and Bombay cinema drift and are taken up in different places and times, my intention is to frame media industries not only as preexisting administrative systems but as textual, institutional, and creative arrangements. This more textured, nuanced understanding of industry allows for the thickening of connections between Hollywood and Bombay within the transit of historical encounter—and that, in short, is what this book is all about.