

# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<b>1. Hindi Films: Theoretical Debates and Textual Studies</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Early accounts: from escapist fantasy to textual pleasure	1
1.3 Ideology, hegemony and interpellation: exploiting the form of Hindi films	8
1.4 Cultural constructions: textual analysis and feminist critique	14
1.5 Beyond simplistic oppositions	17
1.6 Conclusion	18
<b>2. Audiences and Hindi Films: Contemporary Studies</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Hindi films and the South-Asian Diaspora	20
2.2 Reconciling 'tradition' and 'modernity'? North Indian men watching movies	25
2.3 Beyond 'escapism' and 'reality': North Indian women watching television	27
2.4 Conclusion	30
<b>3. Contemporary Hindi Film-Going and the Viewing Context in Two Countries</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 Why watch audiences?	33
3.2 Cinema halls and audiences in historical and geographic perspective	35
3.3 Going to the cinema in Bombay: reality, refuge or romance?	38
3.4 Hindi films in London: ethnic nostalgia or empowered viewing?	48
3.5 Conclusion	52

<b>4. 'A man who smokes should never marry a village girl': Comments on Courtship and Marriage 'Hindi Film-Style'</b>	<b>55</b>
4.1 First, the texts	56
4.2 Everyone's favourite movie	58
4.3 Romancing the family: <i>Hum Aapke Hain Koun ...!</i> and its viewers	78
4.4 Conclusion	88
<b>5. Short Skirts, Long Veils and Dancing Men: Responses to Dress and the Body</b>	<b>91</b>
5.1 Show and sell: young viewers read clothing in Hindi films	91
5.2 Clothing, the body and the erotic promise of Hindi films	98
5.3 Conclusion	102
<b>6. More or Less Spicy Kisses: Responses to Sex, Love and Sexuality</b>	<b>104</b>
6.1 Contextualising the Indian media sex debate	104
6.2 Taboo scenes: kissing, sex and the 'innocent' viewer	106
6.3 Sexuality, chastity and national honour: 'being' Indian in Switzerland and various other sexual encounters	111
6.4 Conclusion: films, experience and meaning	126
<b>7. Politics and Spectatorship 1: Viewing Love, Religion and Violence</b>	<b>130</b>
7.1 Introduction	130
7.2 Films, viewers and the politics of Hindutva fascism	132
7.3 'Counterfeit collective memories': riots, religion and subjectivity in contemporary Hindi films	135
7.4 The pleasures and pitfalls of 'othering': inter-religious romance meets jingoistic nationalism	147
7.5 Conclusion	154
<b>8. Politics and Spectatorship 2: Young Men Viewing Terrorism and State Violence</b>	<b>160</b>
8.1 Countenancing cinematic terrorism: young men take on the state	160
8.2 Conclusion	166

<b>9. Conclusion: The Tricky Politics of Viewing Pleasure</b>	<b>167</b>
9.1 Looking back at texts and audiences	167
9.2 Looking back at gender, sexuality and spectatorship	170
9.3 Politics and spectatorship	173
9.4 India and the United Kingdom	175
9.5 A note of caution	177
9.6 Implications for the future	178
<i>Notes</i>	181
<i>Bibliography</i>	187
<i>Filmography</i>	198
<i>Index</i>	201

# 1

## Hindi Films: Theoretical Debates and Textual Studies

### 1.1 Introduction

Although this book is concerned primarily with the significance for and reception by young audiences of contemporary sexual and gender iconography in commercial Hindi films, both during the analyses of film texts and during the interpretation of audience self-representations and emotions, I will of necessity be drawing upon some of the theories and ideas implicit in existing accounts of Hindi film texts. Thus, in this chapter, I delineate some strands of thought that have dominated historical and theoretical scholarship on Indian ‘popular’ or ‘commercial’ cinema in the last three decades. Notably, these include debates surrounding the *effects* of Hindi cinema, the connections between *texts* and *contexts*, the *mechanisms* and *ideologies* of the medium, the significance of *realism* for spectatorship and the role of what is characterised by Fareed Kazmi (1999) as the ‘tradition-modernity paradigm’.

### 1.2 Early accounts: from escapist fantasy to textual pleasure

‘They aren’t realistic!’ and ‘Escapist fantasy!’, are frequent criticisms of Hindi films in educated/elite Indian circles or are self-deprecatingly offered by urban Indian viewers (Derné 2000; Banaji 2005) and a number of South-Asian youth in London (Gillespie 1995). These may be perfectly valid accusations if by ‘realistic’ one means attempting to seduce or deceive the audience into believing in the perfect correspondence between the text and the world that they inhabit. In *Sholay* (*Embers*, Ramesh Sippy 1975), one of the most widely viewed and influential Hindi blockbusters of the seventies, a virtuous woman dances on broken glass until

her feet bleed in order to keep her lover alive and a man with no arms kicks his enemy to death; in *Maine Pyar Kiya* (*I've Fallen in Love*, Sooraj Barjatya 1989), a spoilt, wealthy young man works in a quarry to prove his worthiness of his beloved. None of these sequences could plausibly claim to represent the material 'reality' with which most viewers might be familiar. Yet the fact that viewers respond to these sequences with apparent engagement, cheering, screaming out, groaning and referring to them repeatedly with pleasure and/or irritation during discussion might suggest that they discover in their melodramatic construction what might be called a psychological realism or realism at the level of *emotion*. Acknowledging that this might be the case, Sudhir Kakar argues that 'to limit and reduce the real to that which can be demonstrated as factual is to exclude the domain of the psychologically real – all this is felt to be, enduringly, the actuality of one's inner life.' Pertinently, writing about the viewers of the American soap opera *Dallas*, Ien Ang (1985: 44) uses the term 'emotional realism' to explain how this type of realism inheres not in the day-to-day circumstances of viewers and characters, but rather in a more symbolic or connotative realm in which domestic arguments, betrayals, joy and sorrow form bridges between on- and off-screen life.

Such understandings, based on an implicit acceptance of the dialectical relationship between emotion and rationality, as well as on a sympathy for the messiness of both viewing pleasure and mediated 'reality', although more familiar nowadays, seem to be anathema to early critics of Hindi films. Firoze Rangoonwala's pioneering text, *75 Years of Indian Cinema* (1975), and Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's thorough but somewhat eclectic institutional study *Indian Film* (1980) display the beginnings of interest in the relationship between textual structures and Indian social structures, and between generic or 'typical' features of Hindi films and the satisfaction to be derived from them by audiences. Nevertheless, Rangoonwala's final assessment of 'popular' cinema remains, like that of Chidananda Dasgupta,<sup>1</sup> an ultimately pessimistic one in that it insists on viewing commercial cinema in *contrast* to what is defined as 'genuine cinematic art'. 'Reality' and 'topicality', judged to be missing from commercial films, are seen as being the 'soul' of true film art. In relation to those who consume the 'bulk' of Indian films, Rangoonwala's evaluation is similarly gloomy for, in his view: '[t]he mass audience mind remains equally dormant and unresponsive to change due to the dead-weight of tradition-cum-habit as well as the extraneous socio-economic factors, like illiteracy, poverty, shortages, high prices, the black economy, social inequality and the lack of opportunity, which have all made bare reality simply unbearable on the screen' (1975: 159).

So, if life were altogether better and more bearable for India's millions, would they then abandon the Hindi film entirely and opt for 'alternative' cinema, for social realism at its grimmest? Is 'fantasy' debased and 'reality' uplifting? Having gathered information on a range of institutional contexts and processes including producers and directors from the beginning of the Indian film industry to the 1970s, distribution and exhibition policies, script-writing trends from the early studio era through to the time of publication of the study, the connections between anti-colonial struggles, nationalism and Indian film as well as the star system (including actors from vernacular cinema), Barnouw and Krishnaswamy turn, at the very end of their book, to similar thorny questions about audiences. 'What', they ask, 'do Indian films – and the popular addiction to them – suggest about the "psychic geography" of her millions?' (1980: 281) In what has now become a commonplace of popular film commentary – and in contrast to Rangoonwala's implied contention that 1970s Hindi films are utterly removed from the social context of a majority of those who view them – they then proceed to elaborate their sense of the ways in which Hindi films articulate the fears and desires of audiences around the conflicting demands of 'age-old traditions' and modernity ('industrialization', 'urbanization') via thematic references to young love and arranged marriage, the dowry system, the status of women and the primacy of the joint family. Their contention that (especially) young male audiences find in the archetypal characters and family relationships of the commercial Hindi film a reassuring sense of continuity while being at the same time able to flirt with images of modernity and 'westernisation' was not new at the time of their study, and has been reiterated since in a range of commentaries (Valicha 1988: 48–60; Derné 2000). Meanwhile, chapters by Anil Saari, Lothar Lutze and Beatrix Pfeleiderer in the collection *The Hindi Film: Agent and Reagent of Cultural Change* (Pfeleiderer and Lutze 1985) and articles by Rosie Thomas (1985) and Vijay Mishra (1985) in the British film journal *Screen* began to adumbrate in more precise ways a debate about the aesthetics of the commercial Hindi film. Most crucially, notions of audience pleasure were not merely relegated to the margins of such theorising, but were explored via concepts of genre and ideology.

Discovering in the deep populism of Hindi film imagery a refusal of plagiarism and a playful ability to borrow without imitating, Anil Saari notes that popular film 'reduces the "foreign" and "alien" and the inaccessible to a motley-shape, an object of parody rather than one which could make the film-goer feel inferior'. In an interesting foreshadowing of Ashis Nandy's 'slum's-eye view' metaphor,<sup>2</sup> Saari further argues that commercial cinema is 'the only communication media [in post-independence India] that is

willing to reflect the point of view and the perspective of that dominant section of the population which is not part of the ruling elite' (in Pfeleiderer and Lutz 1985: 25–6). In a field dominated by a supposedly insurmountable opposition between 'realism' and 'escapism', what might be on offer in this idea is the possibility that Hindi film texts may treat the representation of reality playfully, even apparently subversively, in order to enable the countenancing of reality; in this sense they might go beyond being merely 'escapist'<sup>3</sup> and, without being inherently ironic themselves, enable the taking up of ironic positions in relation to their plots and characters. This notion is not carried through by Lutze and Pfeleiderer in their analyses of the talk and letters of a selection of Hindi film fans.

Pfeleiderer, by her own admission more an anthropologist than a film theorist (1985: 83), sums up her findings after a range of discussions with viewers with implicitly reductive assertions:

Younger people might ... play with film contents in the same way as with thoughts or dreams, and unconsciously test identification processes, often in a non-serious way. Older people, however, and especially women, expect educational functions from films ... Hindi films stabilize the social system by repressing new needs and, at the same time, mythologizing 'tradition': they are an instrument of cultural continuity.

(1985: 129)

Prior to this conclusion, she had already argued that Hindi films 'serve as religious surrogates and thus turn cinema-houses into places of pilgrimage' (p. 114), that they 'may reinforce dependency patterns by producing regressive behaviour' (p. 118) and that such films act cathartically to 'discharge' viewers' own grief via the trials and tribulations of favourite screen characters. Evidently, and in a manner highly reminiscent of the Frankfurt School's critiques of 'mass culture',<sup>4</sup> the language in which these 'findings' are couched – 'regressive', 'dependency', 'repressing', 'pilgrimage' – implies, in a fairly crude manner, that Hindi film fans are, despite anything they might say to the contrary, the dupes of a cleverly manipulative political system and the pawns of a cynical commercial one. In either case, power and agency are located at the nexus of film Industry and State rather than in a dialogic or negotiated relationship between viewer and text. Implicit in her conclusion is a notion of direct effects which both devalues the *subjective pleasures* gained from films and ignores the possibility that the narratives of film viewing generated in her study might be open to a variety of interpretations and may, in themselves,

embody a range of competing and contradictory discourses on both social and psychological phenomena.

The overemphasis of Lutze and Pfeleiderer's interviews on a narrowly defined spectrum of social values mostly relating to family life has been critiqued by Ravi Vasudevan (1990), and remains a major flaw in their study of a period when Hindi films were bursting with characters raging at and fighting social injustice, state pressure, corruption and personal disillusionment. Published in the same year (1985), Rosie Thomas's explanation of the generic expectations set up by Hindi films focuses on the Amitabh Bachchan cult movie *Naseeb* (*Destiny*, Manmohan Desai 1981), in which, she argues, the urge towards spectacle – song and dance, locations, costumes, fights, stunts – takes precedence over more common 'emotional drama'. After a trenchant critique of those commentators – both (implicitly racist) Western and (elite) Indian – who dismiss Hindi cinema as 'absurd', 'vulgar' and 'escapist', Thomas points out that while disempowerment may be a key theme in the fulminations of the left-wing intelligentsia against such films, the pleasures on offer for audiences of Hindi films and the modes in which these films operate have been largely ignored. This she sees, at best, as a serious short-coming and, at worst, as pure hypocrisy, for it 'neither explains [these films] in any useful way nor offers any basis for political strategy' (1985). Elaborating the link between narrative mode and spectatorial response, Thomas argues:

Hindi films work to offer the viewer a position of coherence and mastery, both through narrative closure and by providing a focus for identification within the film ... However, spectacular and emotional excess will invariably be privileged over linear narrative development. The spectator is expected to be involved not primarily through anticipation of what will happen next, but through how it will happen and affective involvement in the happening: excitement, thrill, fear, envy, wonder, not to mention the eroticism which lies beneath the desire for spectacle itself.

(1985)

Clearly, the non-normative manner in which 'affective involvement' is called upon in this extract is a far cry from the manner in which it is generally invoked, namely *in opposition to* 'intellectual engagement' or 'political understanding' (in contrast to which such emotion appears to be a debased and uncritical response). The implicit classification of 'criticism' as a rational or intellectual activity and pleasure in films as an emotional one is an issue to which attention will be drawn specifically by the

contrasting comments of viewers and film theorists in Chapter 7. The categorising of emotional involvement or even emotional 'excess' as a positive feature of an audience's experience of popular media, recognisable in Thomas's commentary, is a key term of approval in *Screen* theory (for instance, in discussions of melodrama and the films of Douglas Sirk) and has now become one of the orthodoxies of writing about so-called 'women's genres' such as 'Soap Opera' or 'Melodrama' (cf. Gledhill 1987; Modleski 1990). This should not lessen the importance of Thomas's argument in a context where the elites and members of the intelligentsia were/are all too prone to make simplistic connections between the structures of sentiment in Hindi films and the poverty, illiteracy and superstition of the so-called 'masses' or the authoritarian and fascistic proclivities of the middle classes. Engaging with another prevalent criticism of Hindi cinema, namely its lack of 'realism' or 'verisimilitude', Thomas distinguishes between a mechanistic conception of verisimilitude or believability – which turns upon a highly positivistic notion of correspondence between a given physical world 'out-there' and the constructed one on screen – and what she terms the logic of a film's 'moral universe' which consists of the emotional responses of characters to each other and codes by which they are shown to relate. It is this latter feature of Hindi films, reminiscent of Ien Ang's definition of 'emotional realism' (1985: 44) and Sudhir Kakar's 'psychological realism' (1990: 30), which, if breached in the minds of an audience, can cause a film to become less pleasurable and even to 'flop' completely.

In the same issue of *Screen*, Vijay Mishra asserts that the moral codes and narratives of Hindi cinema are *ideologically* patterned via their similarity to those of the two most famous Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. It is his contention that, through constant borrowing from and interpretation of these two authoritative 'meta-texts', Indian commercial films legitimise and 're-inscribe' their own values within the mythic tradition. Mishra (1985) views metonymic description as fundamental to the symbolic language of Hindi films in the same way that it is central to the signification system of the *Mahabaratha* and the *Ramayana*, and suggests that the connections between individual heroes and their star personae are transformed by the symbolic role which they come to play in the minds of their audiences. Mishra poses questions about the ways in which viewers might gain pleasure both from films which reassert the power of genealogy and the patrilineal family and from those which attempt to subvert or circumvent genealogy in mild or 'imaginary' ways via the cutting loose of orphan heroes and heroines from the kinship bonds which bind others/spectators. He locates much of the power of Hindi films to gain

responses from their audiences in what he terms a 'sub-text' or 'parallel-text' which is the 'actor-text': 'Amitabh Bachchan becomes a complex 'text' in his own right, sanctioned by mythology and responding to a need for rebelliousness in the restless Indian lower middle classes' (Mishra 1985).

*The Moving Image* (1988), Kishore Valicha's erudite account of both Indian 'popular' and 'art' cinema, is another text which calls upon the concepts of *myth* and a *collective* or *popular unconscious* in order to explain the way in which Hindi films relate to their audiences. While introducing the notion of a coherent ideology, his account is couched in psychoanalytic terms and relies heavily on a dichotomy between the morally uplifting realism of 'serious cinema' and the (presumably) decadent and consumer-oriented 'popular' films. It is possible to see in Valicha's descriptions of 'popular' films a thinly veiled pity for their audiences who are caught up in a 'vicious cycle' of desire:

A distinct ideological consciousness permeates the popular film. It treats its audience as an object whose hidden desires it seeks to satisfy. It vicariously offers them sex, glamour, riches: things they lack, desire, but dare not seek ... The popular film ends up as an unalterable materiality unable to rise above its mirror-like stage of communication. It is unable to invent subjects and can only present and sell the consumer to himself. Its ideological rooting can provide it only a fixed kind of structure or 'formula' ....

(1988: 31)

According to Valicha, by assuming the distinction between feeling and intellect and between subjectivity and objectivity, the serious film is able to structure its reality in a more scientific and rational manner than the popular film, which deals only with *desire*. In attempting to explain the popularity of such commercial films with Indian audiences, Valicha refers repeatedly to the existence of a collective 'Indian consciousness' to which the structures of meaning in popular films speak (1988: 32). In his view, the audience is passive but covetous, acted upon by the combination of myth and narrative in a way that 'seduces' them while they are still 'unaware' of what is happening. Meanwhile, the films, tapping into the archetypal preoccupations and contradictory desires of the populace, present audience members to themselves cleansed of moral degradation and unified by an ephemeral sense of psychic coherence. Again, it is possible to see in Valicha's comments and concerns aspects of Frankfurt School theorisations of popular cultural 'consumption' as leading to mass deception and manipulation, stagnation, irrationality and ultimately the

triumph of capitalist economics at the expense of human consciousness and freedom.

Shifting the ground subtly from a concept of *desires* to one of *needs*, Ashis Nandy (1995: 205) articulates the significance of commercial Hindi films as stemming from their ability to 'tap the fears, anxieties and felt pressures of deculturation and even depersonalisation which plague the Indians who do not find the normative framework of the established Indian middle-class culture adequate for their needs'. Explications such as these by Valicha and Nandy suggest that by the end of the 1980s notions of popular cultural structures of feeling and the power of the popular were beginning to be theorised in relation to Indian commercial cinema in more systematic ways than in preceding decades. Audiences *per se* were rarely approached directly, but were central to the explanatory efforts of theorists in that they were seen as being deeply implicated in the kinds of narratives, structures of feeling and preoccupations of commercial cinema. Nevertheless, both theoretically and within the media itself, countless critiques of the 'seductive' and 'escapist' tendencies of commercial cinema continued to be written; and these sparked, in refutation, textual studies of Hindi film dominated by the more apparently sophisticated and overtly political, but nonetheless functionalist theories of film based on *ideology* and *interpellation*.

### 1.3 Ideology, hegemony and interpellation: exploiting the form of Hindi films

Since the accounts mentioned so far, work exploring the construction of types of national or ethnic identity through popular Indian media/cinema (Chakravarty 1998; Mankekar 2000; Rajagopal 2001, M. G. Durham 2004) have brought Hindi cinema further into the academic mainstream. Sumita Chakravarty's commentary contains the propositions that, first, the '[t]rope of impersonation and masquerade is ... central to the process of movement and translation from social macrocosm to filmic microcosm' and, second, '[t]he Bombay film's prime social function may be said to be the symbolic "return" of the marginalized and the rejects of society into the body politic' (1998: 311). Watching Hindi movies, it is not difficult to comprehend why 'impersonation' and 'masquerade' become central features of Chakravarty's argument. In film after film the hero, dispossessed or exploited by the villains, returns to wealth and glory, to mete out justice and destroy the wrongdoers; evil stepmothers usurp the respect and position of their rivals to poison men against daughters and sons; rich boys turn labourers to prove their love for a beloved; men

dress as women to view female-only spaces; women dress as men to avenge crimes or avoid authority. In *Chori Chori Chupke Chupke* (*By Theft, Softly, Softly*, Abbas Mastan 2001), beset by off-screen scandals due to allegations of corrupt financing and the investigation of these allegations, impersonation is carried so far that even the foetus inside a woman's womb becomes the double of another inconceivable but much believed-in child and is blessed in a ceremony of astounding, if rather surreal, seriousness. If many successful Hindi films (cf. *Trishul* (1978), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) and *Lagaan*, (2001)) are about nothing else, then, they do seem to be about the construction of a dream-space which cuts across class boundaries, where aspiration and desire blend with blunt scepticism and common sense to reiterate the possibility, even the *probability* of true love, family harmony and justice for all. In this sense Chakravarty's second contention, namely that Hindi films are about the reinsertion of a sub-altern class into the 'body politic', becomes plausible, although it does not necessarily hold true for all Hindi films, particularly many of those released in the last decade.

If, as Chakravarty writes, the results of 'impersonation' are both a 'disavowal of fixed notions of identity' and an 'accretion', a 'piling up of identities' leading to the 'transgression of social codes and boundaries' (1998: 4), then 'masquerade' may well be central to the success of Hindi films with the impoverished populace and the lower middle classes. Is it fair to suggest as she does, then, that 'impersonation implies a form of subversion, of the illegitimate (even the monstrous) masquerading as the real thing or person, generally with the intention of displacing the legitimate?' (1998: 5). Returning to *Chori Chori Chupke Chupke*, a film produced nearly a decade after the publication of her book, one is able to see in its whimsical borrowings – from Hollywood and older commercial Hindi films<sup>5</sup> – aspects of the play on identity which is so central to Chakravarty's argument. When Madhubala (Preeti Zinta), a prostitute who table-dances at a club and has no family to call her own is being blessed and cosseted in the bosom of the elite Malhotra family to whose heir she agrees to become surrogate mother, the sense of delicious transgression and danger are powerfully intertwined on screen. When the – carefully orchestrated – possibility arises that Raj Malhotra (Salman Khan) may begin to find this upstart more attractive than his own devoted and beautiful wife Priya (Rani Mukherjee), a series of 'transformations' occur during which the two women wear each other's clothes, go into dream sequences with the same man and impersonate each other both physically and emotionally. The fact that the film ends with a transformation in the 'moral' consciousness of the prostitute, but no real material or social alteration in her

status does not necessarily mean that members of the audience would not read her as having been regenerated. She may well be perceived as *transformed and transforming* via the act of becoming 'sister' to the wife of a powerful man and mother to his child, who definitely resonates as the family's – and hence the nation's – future. In this instance not only has the notion of masquerade and impersonation been stripped, so to speak, of its negative and duplicitous connotations, but it has been legitimised as a vehicle for moral regeneration.

In terms of Chakravarty's argument, which eschews simplistic assumptions about 'identity' and 'realism', the fact that nothing 'material' has changed at the end of the film (either within its universe or off the screen) is by the by. However, for many Hindi film critics and theorists, the 'closure' offered by Indian commercial cinema to dilemmas of gender, caste and class oppression, underprivilege and corruption, is false and misleading, dangerously simplistic and disabling to political critique. While journalistic and academic commentators differ in their awareness of the importance of understanding the mechanisms by which Hindi blockbusters 'speak' to the emotions of their intended audiences, some spend considerable amounts of time analysing the processes whereby ritualised forms and conditions of production are inscribed within texts. Madhava Prasad (1998) and Fareed Kazmi (1999) offer understandings of Hindi commercial cinema which turn, respectively, on Althusserian notions of ideological 'interpellation' and Gramscian notions of 'hegemony'. In Prasad's view, while Chakravarty's reading of Hindi films correctly moves away from ahistorical and essentialist accounts of the Indian 'psyche' by placing the Hindi film within the context of the modern nation-state, her 'imperso-nation metaphor' fails to account for numerous aspects of Hindi cinema; it functions, according to Prasad (1998: 17–18) not as a theoretical framework but merely as a 'linking device' and thus neglects both audiences and generic complexities. It is to Prasad's (and later Kazmi's) studies that one can turn with the question: 'How are Hindi film audiences seen to be "interpellated" within the texts and what significance is awarded to the nature of the hegemonic discourses purveyed by Hindi films?'

Taking issue with accounts of Hindi film which see it as tailored to the 'needs' and concerns of the Indian populace, Madhava Prasad's seminal study *Ideology of the Hindi Film* seeks to locate the Hindi film within networks of politics, history and economics that are responsible for its continued production. Applying Marxist economic constructs taken from the theorisation of social relations between capital and labour, Althusserian notions of ideology and a Gramscian conceptualisation of hegemony to

the realm of Hindi film, Prasad elucidates what he calls the 'ideology of formal subsumption' (1998: 6). In this analysis, the characteristic episodic and fragmentary structure of the Hindi film, with its interludes of song and dance and its polarisation between drives towards 'tradition' and those towards 'modernity', is an expression of a conflict over dominant political and economic structures which make up the nation-state. The idiosyncratic construction of Hindi films from apparently discrete parts is, in this view, tied to the mode of production of Hindi films which situates different aspects of the film in heterogeneous sectors: music, dialogue and dance are each generated independently and combined only loosely by narrative.

Viewing cultural production in India as the site of a continuing struggle over the 'form of the state', Prasad (1998: 9) notes that this struggle is manifested through the recurring allegorical dimension of the dominant textual form in the popular cinema. Narrative, subjectivity and state authority are closely linked within Hindi films, the specificity of Indian popular films being apparent in a conflict between what Prasad names 'the feudal family romance' (1998: 55) and a construction of subjectivity which is linked to the 'modernising' project of the post-independence Indian nation-state. Thus Prasad is able to explain the ban on kissing prevalent in commercial Hindi cinema not as an expression of 'prudery' or as a salient feature of some typically 'Indian' culture but as a crucial outcome of the coexistence in the realm of politics of both pre-capitalist patriarchal ruling elites and an equally patriarchal bourgeoisie who have allied themselves to the projects of the modern nation-state. He notes that '[i]n a society of castes and traditional ruling elites, the "private" cannot be represented in public (or ... images cannot be represented from a "private" point of view) because such a representation violates the ruling classes' scopic privileges' (1998: 78).

Prasad's argument highlights the fact that for the ban on kissing to function effectively on behalf of those whom it actually serves, it has to be regarded as 'meaningless', arbitrary and puritanical or else as the expression of Indian 'tradition'. For, if one looks a bit more closely at the mismatch between the continual displays of the female body on screen and the prohibition of kissing, it is possible to read in these contradictions an authoritarian proscription of representations that portray subjectivity within a 'private' sphere. Ergo, the exploration of individual (especially female) subjectivity and the depiction of what is effectively a *private* realm – in which the 'couple' exists cut off from the family and, crucially, from the authoritarian *values* of the ruling elites – might undermine the power and influence of 'an informal alliance of patriarchies' (Prasad

1998: 98) in a way that the on-screen erotic 'objectification' (see discussion in Section 5.2) of women, wholly a spectacular or 'public' event, never could. Prasad is thus able to argue that the Hindi film is never unequivocally giving the 'masses' what they want because, by its very capitalist nature, its modern technologies and dominant ideologies are first and foremost at the service of the nation-state and a powerful coalition of ruling elites. His explanation of Hindi cinema's reasons for abjuring representations of the 'private' domain while continuing to represent overtly sexualised female figures is convincing but needs to be tested against recent films as well as against the audiences' perceptions and interpretations of 'public' and 'private' realms.

Implicitly endorsing many of the ideas in Prasad's theorisation, Fareed Kazmi moves in for a closer look at a whole range of what he terms – in distinction from *popular* or *commercial* – *conventional* Hindi films (1999: 56). Initially, Kazmi's stated intention is to challenge those who continue to label Hindi conventional cinema 'kitsch' and 'escapist'. Taking the view that Hindi films are a major 'cultural and ideological force' and are nothing if not political (1999: 16), he argues that they do not *merely reflect social reality* but also *construct* it. Proposing understandings of both 'language' and 'reality' which owe much to post-structuralism and to the writings of Raymond Williams, Kazmi suggests that Hindi films are a linguistic and cultural expression of the battle over meanings and values which takes place in every society between members with different concerns and interests. Thus, after setting out a number of approaches to Hindi film such as that of media 'effects' and that of 'selective perception', Kazmi identifies his own position as being closest to that of the Cultural Studies approach utilised by the Birmingham School and Stuart Hall.

Kazmi critiques theorists such as Anil Saari, Vijay Mishra, Ashis Nandy, Lothar Lutze and Beatrix Phleiderer for what he categorises as their ahistorical and essentialist evaluations of Hindi films and their inability to move beyond the tradition–modernity binary in their thinking about both film narratives and audiences. After a trenchant interrogation of this (false) opposition, Kazmi deploys a Gramscian concept of 'hegemony' to explain the manner in which Hindi films achieve their cultural status and rally support for specific versions of reality as opposed to others. As he expresses it:

Conventional cinema works by reflecting and expressing the 'popular element', its feelings, precepts and 'common sense'. It operates by transforming elements at large in the culture – not through inventing or imposing arbitrary materials on a stunned and passive audience

[... it] works by appropriating meaningful elements already extant in the culture at large – as its raw materials – and transforming them in such a way that they express a ruling class hegemonic principle.

(1999: 72)

Furthermore, he explains, 'there is always a multiplicity of interpellations contained within the structure of almost every conventional film' (1999: 74). According to such an analysis, the various elements of Hindi films such as the songs, the dances, the sets and dialogues are all part of this project of interpellation. The themes of sacrifice, loyalty, honour, religion and joint families are intertwined with spectacular visions of hand-to-hand combat and glamorous close-ups to cast upon the audience a kind of 'hypnotic spell' (1999: 90). In case one is tempted to ask why these themes are successful in interpellating Indian audiences, in a twist ironically reminiscent of Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's 'psychic geography' formulation (1980: 281), Kazmi maintains that 'a lot of pre-capitalist elements are deeply entrenched in the consciousness of the people ... they are susceptible to, and hanker after, all these elements which are now lost to them' and that 'Hindi conventional films exploit this psychic need very effectively' (1999: 76).

Kazmi's wish to break what he considers to be the hegemonic stranglehold of Hindi conventional cinema over the minds of the Indian populace leads him to a solution which involves a redeployment of the technologies and techniques of conventional cinema within oppositional and revolutionary frameworks. 'Art' or 'serious' cinema with its conventional realist aesthetic he eschews as being of little use to such a subversive project. By contrast, a cinema which used the *mechanisms* of conventional Hindi film but focused on poverty, exploitation, oppression and marginalisation, while displaying the dignity and struggles of oppressed groups would, in his view, be truly *popular* and could hope to affect the *status quo* which conventional films maintain via their sanitised and conformist treatment of the same issues. Kazmi's proposition is both respectful of current Hindi film pleasures and attractive in its search for a transformative consciousness.

Yet – and this is one of the crucial questions of this book – who can say exactly what meanings conventional films do hold and 'subversive' films will hold for their audiences or whether the solutions offered by a group of radical film makers will of necessity be those that can alter the lives and beliefs of the mass of Indian cinema-goers? And, more important still, if all commercial films were *replaced by*, rather than *viewed along-side*, politically engaged, socially radical films, what would become of the

moments of fracture and critique, the feelings of resentment and anger that, as I will suggest in Chapters 4 to 8, are generated even at present by 'hegemonic' discourses in contemporary commercial Hindi films?

With similar concerns to those of Prasad and Kazmi but a less overriding emphasis on Althusserian formulations of ideology, there is a growing body of literature broadly defined by its interest in the changing 'cultural' and 'political' paradigms with which the mechanisms of Hindi films are intertwined (John 1998; Inden 1999; Vasudevan 2000c; 2000d; 2001a; Dirks 2001; Uberoi 2001; Mishra 2002). Amongst these texts, the writings of Ravi Vasudevan (see Chapter 7), Nicholas Dirks and Patricia Uberoi (see Chapter 6) stand out for their ability to locate discursive complexity within Hindi film texts/contexts and to posit pleasure for audiences without losing sight of the political and symbolic functions of cinema. Saliently, whatever their political opinions about the films in question, none of these commentators deny the texts' multiple possibilities of pleasure and meaning for audiences. Rachel Dwyer, meanwhile, describes the depiction of romance, sex and family life in a selection of Indian cultural texts and looks at the 'struggle for succession, being fought between the old and the new middle classes ... [which] is in fact a tussle for hegemony over India's national culture ... [where] unnameable ideologies have come into conflict' (2000: 4). Without looking too closely at these 'unnameable ideologies', or giving details of the *social phenomena* of 'romance', 'sex' and 'family life', she offers some insights into metamorphoses taking place in urban Indian popular cultural consumption in the 1990s, as well as into the relationship between textual form and social context. However, given the interest of this study in issues of gender, sexuality and religious identity, it is to the burgeoning tradition of feminist analysis of Hindi cinema to which we now turn.

#### 1.4 Cultural constructions: textual analysis and feminist critique

Ranging from analyses of the ways in which the camera 'interacts' with actors and actresses in a symbolic simulation of 'coitus interruptus' to discussions of censorship, voyeuristic pleasure during dance sequences, sado-masochistic pleasure in watching heroic suffering and female authority in the rape-revenge genre of mainstream cinema, the work of Lalitha Gopalan (1998, 2002), Jyotika Virdi (2003), Shohini Ghosh (1999, 2002), Ranjani Mazumdar (2000) and Asha Kasbekar (2001) has much to offer debates over the location of power and agency in the text-audience interaction. Mazumdar's essay takes as its point of departure the 'angry

young man' of seventies cinema – for instance, Amitabh Bachchan's character in *Zanzeer* (*Chain*, Prakash Mehra 1973) and *Deewar* (*Wall*, Yash Chopra 1975) – and shows how he is displaced by a violent and 'schizophrenic' masculine subjectivity in films such as *Darr* (*Fear*, Yash Chopra 1994) and *Baazigar* (*Soldier*, Abbas-Mastan 1993). In these movies, psychosis becomes a justification in and of itself; the hero's violent acts no longer appear embedded within his material and psychological history. Mapped onto a physical landscape/cityscape which becomes increasingly detached from 'reality', these tales are also, to Mazumdar, about the redemption or loss of the 'utopian impulse' behind the formation and defence of urban metropolises such as Bombay. Writing in 1995 about the changing narrative strategies of Hindi commercial cinema, Rashmi Doraiswamy had already noted that the sense of logic, order and moral justice created by the tales of wronged heroes taking revenge (during the seventies and eighties) was giving way to a mode of filmic story-telling which highlighted *acts* rather than *causes*, used fewer flashbacks to contextualise mental landscapes and favoured an anti-hero rather than the idealistic-utopian hero of old. This trend, it should be noted, has now come full circle, with the reintroduction in mainstream Hindi cinema of heroes whose qualities of kindness and bravery are reflected in their struggles on behalf of those they love or their communities (*Gadar*, *Lagaan*, *Swades*, *Viruddh*, *Veer-Zaara* and *Mangal Pandey: The Rising*, to name but a few).

Moving from masculine to feminine subjectivity, Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's proposition that Hindi films, by deploying female characters who are psychologically paradoxical in that they blend the absolute male-worshipping devotion of women from Hindu epics with the nonchalant use of costumes and tough behaviour supposedly attributable to 'liberated' Western women, allow male audiences to 'have their cake and eat it' (1980: 282) is echoed by Nikhat Kazmi. She writes about the appeal of the actress Madhuri Dixit as 'someone who articulates the ultimate [Indian] male fantasy by creating a female character who has miraculously resolved all kinds of contradictions into a homogenised whole. One that is smart and simple, sensuous and shy, aggressive and malleable, intelligent yet vulnerable' (1998: 54). Of course, such a view is posited entirely on readings of male audiences as interpellated within the texts selected for discussion rather than upon evidence garnered via discussions with 'real' male film viewers.

Similarly, expressing the frustration of many feminists with the representation of women in commercial Indian films, Maithili Rao's essay 'To Be a Woman' (1995) appears to speak both about films and for female

spectators. In her words, 'women's response to popular cinema is a ceaseless love-hate thralldom because the film image ostensibly celebrates her eroticism while reducing her to a passive sex-object' (1995: 241). Increasing 'permissiveness' on the screen is seen as simply one more complicating factor in the chain of iconography which binds and degrades women, fusing within individual heroines the old dichotomies of 'vamp/prostitute/dancing girl' and 'chaste wife' and making the idea of 'woman' merely more appealing to certain men while heroines become less psychologically coherent. Male viewers who would previously have had to cheer for dancing girls and then to fall silent in respect for the loyal piety of the heroine are now, apparently, given the licence to imagine, beneath the demure sari, the sexual delights which the heroine displayed and *promised* when, as an unmarried youngster, she cavorted in 'itsy bitsy fluff' or 'disported in diaphanous saris under waterfalls' (Rao 1995: 243).

Rao's critique is not merely of the evident and overt physical characterisation of women on screen. After assessing the themes and stylistic characteristics of a number of films through the 1980s and 1990s, Rao writes of the film *Aaina* (*Mirror*, Deepak Sareen 1993), that 'the condoning of psychic violence done to women [goes] largely unnoticed. Meekness and patience are rewarded whereas the ambitious woman's attempt to exploit her sexuality for personal fame [is] condemned as morally reprehensible' (1995: 253–4). It is the way in which Hindi commercial cinema appears to reinforce certain oppressive patterns of thought and self-image for women that comes across in Rao's essay as most deeply disturbing. This impression of the 'power' of film texts forms a connection to the enjoyable writings of 'self-taught' feminist film theorist Shoma A. Chatterji. In her book *Subject Cinema: Object Woman*, Chatterji argues, among other things, that male masquerade on screen does *not* give women the identity and integrity they desire (1998: 259), upholding instead male superiority and dominance, and that contrary to performing an 'idealising' function, 'myth' in Indian popular culture has functioned to perpetuate images of women which are 'beautiful', but in which their 'inner strength' – if they have any – 'mainly derives from a man, dead or alive – father, brother, husband or son' (1998: 49). Again, Chatterji's critiques of the depiction of women – and sometimes men – in a number of contemporary commercial films may serve as a reminder of the ways in which accounts of cinema such as Chakravathy's (1998), which emphasise the democratic and disruptive potential of 'masquerade', fail to engage fully with the awkward, authoritarian or subjugated subjectivities constructed and spoken to by many Hindi films.

## 1.5 Beyond simplistic oppositions

Ashis Nandy insists that commercial cinema in India is highly 'protective towards traditions and towards native categories' and that mass audiences exhausted by the 'dominant principle' of Indian life, 'modernity', are only too willing to find in Hindi films a refuge from the 'oppression and exploitation in society ... inflicted in the name of modern categories such as development, science, progress and national security' (1995: 196–206). Nandy's apparently anti-modernist stance has generated controversy amongst critics on a number of occasions (Mankekar 2000: 197–8, 218–19), and, I suggest, rightly so. For, not only does such a position rest upon a misconception of what 'modernity' is and what 'tradition' may be, thus ignoring the power relations involved in constructing both categories, it also deepens the polarisation between these two categories to such an extent that coexistence becomes a paradox and people feel that they have to choose between them, thus allying themselves with views and beliefs they do not share simply for the sake of apparent consistency. If his argument were that Hindi films frequently operate around the binary of modernity and tradition, there would be no shortage of commentators to agree with him (Bahadur 1978; Dwyer 2000: 210). Indeed, what such descriptions tell us is that Hindi films, when analysed, are perceived to be structured around the *themes* of modernity and tradition which are, within each film, first of all defined in specified ways (that may or may not serve the interests of the audiences watching) and, second, critiqued, endorsed or elided in ways that appear to make the film as saleable as possible. However, this does not mean that the cynical value-laden definitions of 'modernity' and 'tradition' made by certain film makers, the invention or appropriation of certain traditions – women dancing in backless blouses, the veneration of husbands and elders – and the disavowal of others – kissing on the lips, class equality, choosing one's own life partner, women going out to work – need to be endorsed and accepted by critics as expressive of especially *Indian* values.

In fact, implicit in the identification of Hindi films with a popular longing for 'tradition' is a dangerous political trend which ignores and erases certain social, economic and cultural experiences even as it legitimises and sanctifies others: as Purnima Mankekar (2000: 218) rightly points out: 'the romantic recuperations of traditional community ... elide inequalities within communities, including so-called traditional communities.' Fareed Kazmi too argues that the danger in viewing Hindi films as expressions of a popular longing for traditional values, and as repositories of some ideal morality which functions to fulfil the needs of

the 'survival sector', is the 'trap' of 'dehistoricizing and essentializing tradition' allowing almost any barbaric practice or repressive idea to be justified in its name (1999: 62). Arguing against the impulse to analyse Hindi films in isolation from their social and historical contexts, and for a reading of each film which does not reduce it to an expression of the same never-changing cohort of specifically Indian values, Kazmi (1999: 64) emphasises that 'the important thing is to understand what concept of "modernity" and what concept of "tradition" are invoked and to what objective social use they are put.' In a similar vein, and succinctly disrupting the *apparent debate* over the deployment of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in Indian cinema and the role of these concepts for the public who consume the films, Madhava Prasad writes:

the 'traditional' is by no means identical with the interests and desires of the displaced masses .... It is true that popular films deploy this binary frequently and that thematic conflicts are structured around it. But to treat it as if it were a transparent representation of some real conflict between these two concepts is to fall into an ideological trap. For the construction of tradition is part of the work of modernity.  
(1998: 107)

This perspective is the one that should be borne in mind even when individual films appear to take sides in some simplistic tug-of-war between the old and the new or 'India' and 'the West'.

## 1.6 Conclusion

In an attempt to assess the theoretical significance of existing critiques of Hindi commercial cinema, it was noted in Section 1.2 that some commentators view Hindi films as textbook/formula productions relying on archetypal roles or stereotypes to drum up repeatedly – at one level for commercial gain, but eventually in the service of political or ideological motives – a debilitating emotional response in audiences. Such arguments, based on 'mass manipulation' models of media effects, tend to privilege classical notions of 'realism' and to label Hindi films either as 'escapism' or as uncomplicated vehicles for deleterious ideologies. However, as Bob Hodge and David Tripp suggest, 'judgements about "reality" are complex, fluid and subjective. Modality decisively affects interpretations and responses, so it cannot be ignored in any account of the media' (1986: 130). While Section 1.2 raised theoretical questions about the type of 'realism' apparently demanded of cinema before it would be regarded as

more than mere 'escapism' for a population ground down by toil or made vulnerable to its 'effects' by superstition and illiteracy, I will be exploring ideas about 'escapism' and 'realism' further in relation to young women's pleasures in film narratives about the family and romantic love in Section 4.2.1 and in relation to viewers' responses to filmic riot sequences in Section 7.3.2. Implicit in early critiques of Hindi films was a notion of 'fantasy' – used in opposition to classical notions of 'reality' rather than in its psychoanalytic sense – and of *emotion as being debilitating and irrational*. This apparently clear-cut distinction between 'emotional' and 'rational' engagement, between 'fantasy' and 'critique', can be seen to be challenged from the mid-eighties onwards by critics using *Screen* theory, who wish to validate the pleasures of emotional 'excess'.

Other models of media consumption become evident in arguments about the ways in which popular 'needs' and perceptions are translated into the gross caricatures, utopian imagined communities and Manichean oppositions of commercial Hindi films. In line with such a theoretical base, other critics and theorists cited in this chapter have viewed Hindi films as the scum or froth at the surface of the boiling pot that is Indian society. They have written of its inequality, corruption and sense of injustice bubbling to the surface in a series of 'actor-texts' or roles and salient images which represent destruction, cleansing and the reorganisation of the social realm or harmony, a golden age and the dutiful interaction of individuals with their families, elders and communities. Implicitly taking issue with commentators who rely solely on the notion of ideological interpellation to delineate the meanings films may have for audiences, Bob Hodge and David Tripp argue that 'ideological effects cannot simply be read off from ideological forms analysed in isolation from the cognitive and social processes that constitute them' (1986: 99). However coherent, the readings offered to date by feminist critics of Hindi films remain primarily textual and, in order to clarify and sustain debates over the *meanings* constructed from such textual structures, *contextual* or historical, and sociological or audience research become crucial features of contemporary Hindi film scholarship.

# Index

- Actors 7, 14, 19, 39, 124, 125  
Agarwal, Purshottam 131  
Agency 4, 14, 65, 75, 83, 170  
Ang, Ien 2, 62  
Anti-Muslim sentiment 163–5  
    in films 142  
    by politicians 27, 139, 163–5  
    amongst viewers 27, 133–4, 139, 164, 173  
    and violence 130–1, 139, 173  
*Astitva* 44, 126  
Audiences of Hindi films 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 20, 89, 147, 168–80  
    configuration of 36–7, 41, 44–6, 49–51  
    critique and anger 54, 80, 140, 152  
    diasporic 20–5, 48–52, 114, 147  
    and effects discourse 4, 18, 46, 54, 89, 140  
    in India 7, 10, 13, 38–48, 147  
    as mass viewers 2, 4, 6, 7, 13, 17, 18, 30, 31, 37, 80, 154, 157  
    male sections in 15, 99, 132, 166  
    studies of 25–32, 72, 81  
    theories about 2–3, 5, 7–8, 10, 12–13, 25, 31, 33, 42, 57, 58, 99  
    representations of 33, 48  
Audience responses 19, 33–5, 43–6, 48, 54, 70, 78, 132, 156  
Audience participation 37, 44–6, 49–50, 132  
    applause 44–5, 48  
    male 15, 45–6, 132, 166  
    female 44, 48  
    youth 26, 32, 46, 49, 57, 99  
  
Barker, Martin, and Brooks, Kate 31, 48, 70, 77  
Barnouw, E. and Krishnaswami 2–3, 13, 15  
Bharatiya Janata Party 27, 80, 81, 82, 142  
  
Bharucha, Rustom 80, 89  
The Body 94, 95–7, 98, 99, 101, 102, 103, 130–1, 171–2  
    and clothing 31, 68, 90–1, 92, 93, 94–103, 111, 172  
    and Hindi films 11, 68, 94–103, 111, 148, 171–2  
    and violence 130–1, 136, 148  
*Bombay* 128, 135–43, 144, 146, 147, 154, 155, 157, 158, 166  
*Border* 152–4, 159  
Brah, Avtar 22, 23, 24, 177  
British-Asians 20–4, 48–53, 62, 64, 65, 113–20, 126, 165, 175–8  
    *also see* Diaspora  
    as audiences 20, 22, 24, 48–53, 93, 175–8  
    representations of 62, 63, 64, 93  
    youth 21, 24, 41, 53, 63, 68, 113, 114, 116, 120, 126, 165  
Bruzzi, Stella 98  
Buckingham, David 31, 34, 74  
    and Bragg, Sara 101  
Butalia, Urvashi 131, 149  
  
Caste 10, 11, 25, 29, 36, 37, 45, 56, 58, 59, 72, 80, 81, 134, 145, 161  
Chatterji, Shoma, A. 16, 159  
Chakravarty, Sumita 8–10, 141, 162  
*Chori Chori Chupke Chupke* 9–10, 39–40  
Cinema, theories about 2–19, 25, 26, 99  
Cinema halls  
    in Bombay 36, 38–48, 140, 147  
    and class 33, 34, 37, 40, 41, 49, 51  
    conditions in 35, 36, 27  
    and courtship 35, 38, 42, 44, 47, 48, 109  
    and escape 35, 41–2, 49, 50  
    and gender 35, 43, 44, 47, 53, 171  
    in London 34, 35, 36, 37, 48–51

- Cinema halls – *continued*  
 and multiplexes 33, 52  
 as social spaces 33–4, 38, 41, 44–6,  
 49–52, 176  
 and privacy 32, 38, 47, 48
- Class  
 composition of audiences 9, 10,  
 33, 34, 36, 37, 44, 46, 49, 53  
 consciousness of 30, 37, 40–1, 59,  
 79, 81, 113, 114, 128, 144,  
 160–1, 162, 175–6  
 and Hindi films 8–10, 11, 13, 14,  
 17, 25, 30, 32, 33, 36, 40, 47,  
 53, 60, 79, 81, 84, 103, 111,  
 113, 117, 160–6, 168, 173, 175  
 and identity 7, 8, 28, 33, 40, 59,  
 81, 84, 117, 128, 146, 157–8,  
 160–1, 173, 178
- Class-linked stereotypes 6, 7, 88, 13,  
 14, 28–9, 33, 113, 128, 133, 149,  
 157–8, 160, 161, 163, 164, 173, 174
- Communal identity  
 and films 38, 128–9, 133, 135–47,  
 148, 149–54, 155, 161–3, 166  
 and marriage 134, 158  
 and riots 130–3, 135, 138, 146,  
 173–4, 155, 156, 157, 161, 162
- Collective viewing 23, 32, 44, 46,  
 47, 48, 51, 54, 101, 130, 135, 152,  
 153, 155
- Clover, Carol 31, 166
- Conflict in India and the diaspora  
 between classes 14, 35, 64  
 intergenerational 18, 21, 24, 57,  
 59, 72  
 over representations 11, 35, 37,  
 98–102, 165  
 over politics 11, 27, 155, 165  
 involving religion 27, 59, 84, 131,  
 136, 138, 145, 152, 165
- Contradictions 11–12, 15–16, 68–70,  
 89, 159, 169, 172  
 in interviews 70, 89, 159, 172  
 in films 11, 15, 169  
 and self-contradiction 68, 70, 123,  
 172  
 and compartmentalization 68,  
 183*n*6
- Courtship 27, 54, 55–89, 170–1
- Crying  
 during viewing 45, 51, 52, 54, 67  
 listening to film songs 125, 126  
 on screen 67, 83
- Culture, xiv 4, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 21,  
 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 33, 35, 42, 52,  
 75, 80, 92, 113, 114, 118, 161,  
 165, 177  
 and subculture 124
- Cultural Studies 12, 31, 33
- Derné, Steve 1, 3, 25–7, 32, 35, 42,  
 46, 57, 89
- Diaspora (South-Asian),  
 and cultural consumption/  
 performance 20, 21, 31, 23,  
 30, 177  
 definitions of 21, 22, 23, 31, 175,  
 177  
 experience of 20, 23, 27, 31, 105,  
 175–8  
 and hybridity 20, 23–4, 30, 31–2,  
 68, 175–6  
 and nostalgia 21, 22, 48–53, 60,  
 64, 175–6  
 and Indian politics 27–8, 73, 105,  
 129
- Dil Chahta Hai* 27, 38, 48
- Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* 21, 54,  
 55, 56, 58–78, 83, 87, 88, 111–19
- Discourses  
 in Hindi films 6, 22–3, 26, 28, 64,  
 74–6, 81, 83, 86, 88, 89, 90, 93,  
 103, 104, 105, 123–6, 127, 143,  
 157–9, 162, 168, 171, 172, 173,  
 174, 177  
 And hegemony 10, 14, 23, 64, 65,  
 77, 81, 83, 92, 93, 97, 103, 113,  
 115, 131, 132–3, 176, 177, 180
- Discursive frameworks  
 of viewers 28, 31, 64, 67, 71, 72,  
 77, 83, 91, 94, 97, 106, 110–13,  
 123, 124, 126, 143, 146, 155,  
 157–9, 168, 170, 174  
 of film makers 31, 71, 72, 74, 76,  
 86–7, 119, 120, 147
- Doraiswamy, Rashmi 15
- Dowry 3, 45, 46
- Dudrah, Rajinder Kumar 24, 34

- Duty  
 in Hindi films 57, 59, 74, 76, 81, 88
- Dwyer, Rachel 14, 17
- Effects discourse  
 and films xiii, 1, 4, 12, 19, 27, 28, 31, 91, 109, 110, 111, 114, 119, 127, 153, 175  
 and research findings 12, 18, 27, 31, 127, 156, 169, 170, 175
- Emotion 2, 5, 6, 10, 18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 48, 54, 58, 61, 62, 66, 67, 68, 70, 75, 77, 78, 84, 90, 107, 108, 125, 126, 127, 140–1, 143, 147, 152, 158–9, 164, 168, 169, 180
- Empathy 37, 52, 56, 64, 66, 102, 126, 143
- Escape 35, 42, 47, 49, 50, 58, 113
- Escapism 4, 18, 19, 27  
 versus realism 4, 168–70
- Ethnicity  
 and ‘authenticity’ 23, 111, 163  
 beliefs about 23, 31, 64, 118, 149, 162, 163, 173–5, 179  
 and gender 23, 31, 64, 65, 130–15,  
 and marriage 135–7, 139, 151  
 and popular culture 8, 20, 30, 31, 52, 129, 130–55, 162–6  
 and sexuality 121, 130–3, 173  
 (see also *under* hero)  
 and violence 130–5, 137, 139, 147, 166
- Eve teasing *see under* sexual harassment
- Excess 5–6, 19, 79
- Family  
 and audience pleasure 3, 19, 26, 32, 34, 35, 37, 47, 51, 124, 126, 165, 171  
 in films, as a joint unit 9, 11, 21–2, 56–89, 120, 123, 175  
 and patriarchy 6, 14, 28, 46, 56–89, 103, 114, 120, 122–3, 127, 131, 172  
 roles within 11, 22, 28, 44, 56–89, 103, 114, 131, 148, 175
- Fantasy 1–3, 15, 19, 26, 35, 61, 91, 99–100, 121, 129, 153, 168, 170  
 and reality 19, 168 (see also *under* Realism and Reality)
- Fascist politics 6, 27, 130–3  
 and film imaginaries 80, 129, 130–59  
 audience responses to 130–59, 168, 174, 180
- Film messages  
 and encoding/decoding 25, 26, 30, 84, 115, 117, 118  
 as subtexts 151, 165
- Fiza* 160, 162–4
- Film Viewing 4, 21–2, 24, 25–7, 32, 33–54, 58, 62, 70, 89, 90, 100, 102, 110, 137–40, 155, 169, 171, 176, 177, 178
- Formula 7, 18
- Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* 15, 38, 39, 128, 133, 146, 147–53, 154, 155, 158, 159
- Gahlot, Deepa 98
- The Gaze 11, 46, 100, 101
- Genre 3, 6, 14, 38, 45, 139, 178
- Geraghty, Christine 33, 35, 42
- Ghosh, Shohini 14, 102, 121, 170
- Gillespie, Marie 1, 24, 53
- Gledhill, Christine 6, 57, 70, 170
- Gomery, Douglas 35, 41
- Gopalan, Lalitha 14, 56–7, 89, 99, 133, 143–4
- Gopinath, Gayatri 121, 179
- Haan Maine Bhi Pyaar Kiya* 49–52
- Hero  
 and anti-hero 14–15, 160, 162–4  
 and ethnicity 63–5, 135–6, 148–51  
 heroic consciousness 8–9, 70–6, 94, 148, 151, 160, 135–6  
 sexual restraint 68, 70, 76, 77, 111  
 star status 58, 70, 96, 114  
 trustworthiness 65, 68–9, 89, 114, 148–51
- The Heroine  
 and clothing 9, 16, 17, 94–6, 91–103

The Heroine – *continued*

- and erotic 'objectification' 11–12, 16–17, 33, 96–103
  - psychic traits of 15–16, 29, 68–9, 73, 87, 108, 135, 148–51
  - and tradition–modernity discourse 16, 22, 27, 29, 65, 87, 103
  - and women viewers 22, 61, 67, 69, 70, 73, 82, 87, 103, 151
- Hindi films and viewer responses
- codes 6
  - costumes 5, 21, 81, 91–103, 153, 156, 168, 169
  - dance sequences 1, 5, 11, 13, 14, 45, 58, 78, 81, 100, 101, 102, 108, 111, 126, 168, 171, 172  
(*see also under* Hindi film songs)
  - and feminism 14–19, 44, 45, 94, 98–101, 105, 170, 178
  - and history 30, 81, 130–8, 141, 148–51, 153, 155–7, 173–7, 178
  - and melodrama 2, 6, 26, 40, 48, 111, 168, 169
  - moral universe of 6–7, 9, 10, 15–16, 17, 28–9, 30, 59, 76, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, 100, 101, 115, 117, 119, 122, 127, 162, 165, 168, 170
  - politics of 11, 24, 38, 66, 70, 90, 127–9, 130–59, 160–6, 167
  - and rape 14, 33, 44–6, 56, 92, 108, 113, 125, 128–9, 132, 142–3, 144, 150, 151
  - and sexual harassment 68–70, 91, 92, 93, 94–5, 105, 172 (*see also* Hindi films *and* rape)
  - structure of 2, 6–7, 8–11, 17–19, 169–70
  - symbolic function of 6, 8, 89, 131, 144, 177
  - vengeance in 14, 15, 56, 88, 144, 160
- Hindi film endings 5, 10, 27, 56, 57, 75, 89–90, 162, 169–70
- Hindi film songs 11, 13, 21, 42, 45, 50, 58, 63, 78, 80, 101, 116, 124, 136, 139–40, 148, 152, 153, 168, 169, *see also* Hindi Film – dance sequences

Hindu Right *see also* Religious nationalism

- ideology of 23, 80, 128, 130–2, 134, 140, 174
  - and Muslims 130–5, 142, 144, 155–6, 157, 174
- Hollway, Wendy 34, 74
- Hollywood
- Hindi film borrowings from 9
  - representations 99, 121, 127, 149
  - viewing by South Asians 51, 52, 53, 178
- Honour 13, 30, 46, 56–7, 65, 71, 73–4, 77, 81, 85, 94, 102, 104, 111, 128, 131, 173
- Horror
- expression of 45, 112, 138, 149, 166
- Hum Aapke Hain Koun...!* 21, 54, 56, 58, 78–87, 88, 93, 122, 135
- Hum Saath Saath Hain* 21–2, 93
- Hybridity 20–1, 23, 24, 31, 68, 175, 176–7
- Hypocrisy 5, 46, 114, 126–7
- Identity 167–70
- and class *see under* Class
  - and diaspora 22–4, 27, 31, 59, 175–7
  - and gender 10, 16, 59–60, 67–8, 131, 154–5, 170–1
  - and Indian nationalism 8, 23, 29–30, 128, 142, 152–3
  - performance of 23, 31, 68
  - and religion 23, 29, 128, 134, 142, 147, 153, 154, 155
  - and subjectivity 9, 23, 24, 34, 54, 67–8, 157, 170–1
  - and transformation 9, 10, 31, 54, 166, 170
- Identification 4, 5, 17, 46, 48, 64, 70, 76, 83, 97, 100, 125, 127, 132, 135, 136, 157, 166, 172
- Ideology
- and Hindi films 3, 7, 8–14, 27, 32, 70, 81, 92, 132, 153, 167–8  
*also see under* Discourses *and* Discursive Frameworks
- Imagination 16, 57, 89, 99, 140, 148, 152, 167

- Imagined communities 19, 29, 165–6  
 Impersonation 8–10, 16  
 'Indianness'  
   and authenticity 21–3, 31, 64, 81,  
   111–23, 161, 164–5, 176  
   and chastity 11, 59–60, 64, 92,  
   103, 110–14, 123  
   and gender 26–7, 77, 79, 83, 93,  
   100, 102, 111–23, 127, 128, 149,  
   153, 161, 164, 172, 173, 177  
   markers of 21–3, 30, 31, 59–60,  
   81, 92, 175–6, 104, 105,  
   110–11, 114  
 Interpellation 8–10, 11–13, 19, 30,  
   169–70, 173  
 Intersectionality 22, 23, 127, 157,  
   167, 179  
 Interviews 5, 23, 25, 32, 34, 35–51,  
   53, 54, 57, 63, 70, 72, 74, 81, 86,  
   88, 89, 97, 102, 107, 108, 110,  
   116, 120, 122, 137, 156, 178  
 Irony 4, 13, 30, 52, 54, 70, 71, 83,  
   84, 90, 97–8, 124, 143, 158, 168,  
   174, 175, 176, 177  
 Izzat *see under* Honour  
 Jenkins, Henry 33, 35  
 John, Mary, E. 14, 59, 69  
   and Niranjana, T. 105  
 Kakar, Sudhir 2, 6, 99, 149  
 Kannabiran, Vasant and Kannabiran,  
   Kalapana 131–2, 134  
 Kasbekar, Asha 14, 31, 100  
 Kashmir 27, 146, 159, 160, 165  
 Kazmi, Fareed 1, 10, 12–14, 17, 18,  
   80, 81, 86, 89, 169  
 Kazmi, Nikhat 15, 80  
 Kissing on screen 11–12, 99, 106–11,  
   115, 171  
   'ban' on 11, 99  
*Kuch Kuch Hota Hain* 93, 125–6  
  
*Lagaan* 9, 15, 38, 44, 49, 145  
*Lajja* 38, 44–6, 49  
 Liminal space  
   cinema as 42, 44  
 Love  
   filial 21, 61, 78, 79, 84, 86, 73,  
   122, 170  
   as socially disruptive 73, 56, 123  
   and romance 3, 9, 26, 38, 39, 55,  
   56, 57, 59, 60, 64, 69, 71, 72,  
   73, 84, 85, 87, 89, 105, 139,  
   150, 153, 171, 172, 173  
   and women's agency 82, 83, 93,  
   101, 107  
 Lovers  
   in Hindi films 2, 3, 8, 19, 44, 45,  
   50, 55, 56, 57, 60, 62, 63, 66, 68,  
   75, 84, 85, 88, 89, 94, 104, 108,  
   112, 120, 123, 126, 135, 137  
   repression of 73, 82, 84, 85, 88,  
   137, 139  
  
*Maachis* 128, 154, 160–4  
*Maine Pyar Kiya* 2, 9, 56  
 Maira, Sunaina 23, 105  
 Mankekar, Purnima 8, 17, 25, 27–32,  
   170  
 Marriage 55–89  
   arranged 3, 23, 45, 59, 62, 66, 67,  
   72–3, 85–6, 87, 88, 115  
   and clothing 93, 96, 97, 103  
   and elopement 57, 72–3, 88  
   for love *see under* Love  
   in Hindi films 56, 57, 60, 62, 67,  
   77, 83, 84, 85–6, 87, 88, 104,  
   126, 128, 137, 139, 170  
   and pre-marital sex 105–6, 112,  
   113, 115, 117  
   as 'semi-arranged' 59–60, 77  
   and weddings 21, 22, 81, 84, 93,  
   135  
 Masochism  
   and viewing pleasure 14, 67,  
   143–4, 166  
 Masses 2, 4, 6–7, 12–13, 17, 18, 30,  
   31, 37, 154, 177  
 Mayne, Judith 130, 155, 172  
 Mazumdar, Ranajani 14–15  
 Meaning  
   and Hindi films 7, 11, 12–13, 14,  
   19, 20, 22, 28, 31, 35, 58, 70,  
   74, 87–8, 89, 94, 100–1, 103,  
   106, 108, 112, 126–7, 132, 147,  
   158, 169–73, 178, 179  
   and identity 20, 22, 73, 112,  
   127–8, 132, 149, 178

Meaning – *continued*

- negotiation of 19, 23, 28, 54, 70, 73, 103, 106, 126, 132, 178
- Media critiques 170–80
- Media studies 20, 179–80
- Memory 57, 87, 130, 122, 125, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 155, 169
- Methodology xv–xvii *see also* Interviews
- Mishra, Vijay 3, 6–7, 12, 14, 131
- Mission Kashmir* 146, 154, 159, 160, 162, 165–6
- Modality 18, 24–5, 62, 69–70, 127, 139, 175
- Modernity 10, 11, 12, 17–18, 23–5, 27, 30, 68, 93, 96, 97, 135, 165
  - and tradition 1, 3, 11, 12, 17–18, 25–7, 31, 80–1, 176
- Muraleedharan, T. 127
  
- Nair, Bindu 98
- Nandy, Ashis 3, 8, 17
- Narula, Smitha 131–2
- Nation State
  - and Hindi film 10–12, 135, 140
- Nationalism 3, 29, 30, 54, 119, 129, 147–9, 157, 179, 161–2
- Negotiation
  - of meaning 32, 42, 70, 4, 155
- Non Resident Indian
  - audiences 20–1, 121
  - films 27, 158
- Nostalgia 21–2, 48–53, 60, 64, 175–6
  
- Oppositional reading 25, 77, 83–8, 97–8, 102, 169
- ‘Others’ 6, 33, 46, 54, 65, 94, 102, 110, 143, 173–5
- ‘Othering’ 22, 26, 29, 154–5, 173–5
  
- Pakistan,
  - and Hindi films 38, 147–9, 163, 174
- Pakistanis
  - film representations of 38, 147–8, 149–52, 153, 154, 155, 156, 163, 164, 165
- Pardes* 20, 55, 59, 66

## Parents

- and film discourses 57, 62–89, 112–13, 123–4, 135
- and viewer loyalties 59, 61–2, 63–89, 97, 113, 114, 116, 124, 141, 170, 176
- and viewing 20, 24, 48, 49, 50, 53, 101
- Patriarchy 11–12, 28–9, 56–7, 62, 66–8, 70, 76, 86, 88–9, 93, 97–8, 100–1, 128, 177–8
- Patwardhan, Anand 46, 132
- Pfleiderer, Beatrix and Lutze, Lothar 3–5
- Pity 7, 54, 83
- Pleasures
  - of (Hindi film) spectatorship 1, 2, 3, 5, 13–15, 18–19, 31, 40, 42, 46, 47, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69–70, 79, 83–6, 89, 94, 99–100, 102–3, 125, 127, 147–53, 155, 158, 167–80
- Power 4, 5, 6–7, 11–12, 14, 16, 17, 25, 27, 42, 56, 67, 76, 77, 88, 98, 112, 129, 131, 138, 140, 149, 166, 168, 174, 180
- Prasad, M. Madhava 10–12, 14, 18, 159
- The Private sphere 180
  - representations of 11–12, 135
  - cinema halls as part of 32, 54
  - and public contexts 11–12, 26, 34, 36, 37, 54, 94, 98, 100, 115, 126, 140, 157, 163, 176, 180
- Psychoanalysis 7, 19, 149
- Psychological responses 2, 5, 6, 15, 16, 23, 28, 32, 42, 58, 65, 66, 100, 107, 123, 127, 140, 164
- Purity
  - ethnic and sexual 23, 70, 74, 75, 95, 98, 111, 119, 150, 158, 174
- Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* 56–7, 122–3, 124
  
- Rai, Amit 24, 42
- Rangoonwala, Firoze 2–3
- Rao, Maithili 16
- The Ramayana*
  - and popular culture 6, 29, 45

- Rao, R. Raj 121
- Rape 105, 113, 121, 125–6, 127, 130, 131, 132, 133, *see also under* Hindi films
- Rationality 2, 5, 7, 19, 27, 141–2, 143, 158–9, 170, 180
- Realism  
and Hindi cinema 1–7, 10, 18–19, 26, 53, 60–2, 139, 141, 163, 167–8
- Reality 1–4, 7, 12, 15, 18, 19, 22, 27–30, 38, 47, 63, 69–70, 72, 137, 152, 163
- Rebellion 25–7, 29
- Religion  
and Hindi films 4, 13, 20, 22, 24, 28, 31, 38, 46, 53, 81, 84, 85, 103, 113, 128, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135–54, 164, 166, 168, 174, 177, 178  
and marriage 59, 72, 85, 88, 96, 134  
and ethnic/class identity 14, 20, 28, 32, 46, 81, 84, 96–7, 128, 129–33, 135–59, 173, 178–9  
and politics 28, 38, 81, 84, 96–7, 128, 129–33, 135–59, 173, 178–9
- Religious Nationalism 29–30, 131–4, 154–9, *see also under* Religion
- Riots (*see under* Communal politics)
- Romance  
in films 11, 14, 21, 38, 39, 56–8, 60–1, 66–7, 69–78, 87, 106, 114, 117, 122–4, 126, 127, 128–9, 134, 135, 136, 148, 150, 162, 170, 171–2, 178  
in viewing communities 14, 38, 59, 66, 68, 105, 114, 117, 122, 126, 170, 171–2
- Saari, Anil 3, 12
- Sacrifice 13, 30, 57, 71–5, 80–1, 88, 150–3, 170
- Sarkar, Tanika 130, 131, 149, 155
- Scepticism  
about films 9, 48, 52, 54, 79, 84  
about community dictates 9, 52
- Segal, Lynne 129
- Servants 42, 78, 80, 84
- Sexual harassment 69, 91–5, 104–105, 172 (*see also* Hindi films *and* harassment)
- Sexuality 94–129  
and the body *see under* The Body and films 16, 23, 25, 27, 28, 31, 81, 90, 91, 94, 95, 98, 100, 101, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 111–29, 131, 137, 143, 168, 170–1, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180
- Shame  
and gender 27, 56, 92, 102, 112, 122  
and viewer narratives 108, 109, 110, 120
- Song and dance sequences *see under* Hindi films *and* Hindi film songs
- Spectacle  
pleasures of 5–6, 31  
in Hindi films 5–6, 87, 99, 136
- Spectatorship 22, 33, 35, 48, 49, 53, 54, 100, 103, 130, 139, 141, 155, 156, 158, 167–80
- Srinivas, S. V. 35–7
- Staiger, Janet 35, 54, 176
- Subjectivity 7, 11, 75, 103, 135–41, 170  
and ethnic identity 11, 68  
female 11, 15, 29  
feminine 15  
heroic 160, 166  
and masculinity 15, 160, 166  
and nationalism 11, 30  
and objective viewing 7  
of viewers 75, 103, 135–41
- Switzerland  
as a film location 61, 62, 63, 64, 111
- Taste 21, 33, 47
- Television 33, 44  
and British Asian viewers 22, 24, 49, 53, 124, 169  
and Indian viewers 25, 27–30, 53, 169  
serials on 28–30, 179

- Thapan, Meenakshi 93, 100  
 Thomas, Rosie 3, 5–6  
 Tradition 1, 3, 11, 12, 17–18, 23, 24,  
 25–7, 31, 59–60, 66, 68, 75, 77,  
 78, 80–1, 92, 93, 102, 110, 176,  
 180  
 Uberoi, Patricia 14, 57, 59, 74, 75,  
 76, 80, 81, 84, 89  
 Valicha, Kishore 3, 7–8, 159  
 Vasudevan, Ravi 5, 14, 22, 41, 133,  
 135, 136, 137, 144, 166  
 Viario, Maurizio 103  
 Videos 33, 34, 53, 84  
 Violence  
 audience responses to 44, 94–5,  
 127, 130–59, 160–6  
 in Hindi films 15, 16, 44–6,  
 94, 127, 133–59, 160–6,  
 168  
 in society 29, 105, 115, 127,  
 130, 137–9, 140, 142, 145–6,  
 148  
 and the body 29  
 Viridi, Jyotika 14, 57  
 Vitali, Valentina 80–1  
 Voyeurism 14, 70  
 Weddings 21, 22, 81, 84, 93, 135  
 Women  
 in Hindi films 3, 4, 6, 9–15, 17,  
 22, 25, 26, 44–6, 50, 61, 68–9,  
 70, 71–88, 91–103, 111–12,  
 117–18, 119, 120, 121, 122,  
 128, 142, 143, 144, 170–3  
 in audience studies 25, 26–30,  
 42–3, 132–3, 170–3, 178, 179  
 Williams, Linda 35, 45  
 Xenophobia  
 in Hindi films 9, 28, 147–9, 153,  
 174  
 amongst viewers 147, 153, 174  
*Yaadein* 27, 38, 45, 48, 100, 199  
 Youth 20–7, 53, 59, 64, 105, 133,  
 179, 182  
 in audiences 41, 42, 48, 50, 53  
 diasporic 1, 20–7, 31, 68  
 Young Men 26, 39, 42, 105  
 and Hindi films 44, 50, 68, 76,  
 113, 114, 117, 118, 160–6  
 Young Women 26, 42, 94  
 and Hindi films 21–3, 31, 36, 43,  
 44, 50, 71, 91–2, 94, 99, 116,  
 118, 172