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Appropriation and Articulation: Mapping Movements in *Gully Boy*

Damini Rajendra Kulkarni

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Abstract

Zoya Akhtar's commercially and critically successful coming-of-age drama *Gully Boy* (2019) ostensibly traces the history of Mumbai-based rappers Divine and Naezy. It repurposes songs performed by them and other rappers based out of the city, and features a cover version of a music video by Divine and Neazy that borrows from the visual aesthetic of the "original". *Gully Boy* is imbricated in a dissonant relationship with the dominant ideology and the idea of authenticity. On the other hand, it hints at the imaginary of a space in which people are freely able to experiment with embodied performances of their cultural capital. Thus, *Gully Boy*'s repurposing of Divine and Naezy's music video, and appropriation of songs by several other rappers, offers an opportunity to simultaneously examine the histories and politics that are at risk of seeping out through the cracks of such an articulation, and the spaces and communities created by this movement. This paper examines *Gully Boy* to follow the movement of images from counter-culture into the mainstream, and chart the consequences of this translation on the political identity of these images.

Keywords: Dissociative appropriation; Hip-hop; Articulation; Space in cinema.

Damini Rajendra Kulkarni: Savitribai Phule Pune University (India)
damini.r.kulkarni@gmail.com
Damini Kulkarni is pursuing her PhD as a Junior Research Fellow at the Department of Media and Communication Studies in Savitribai Phule Pune University. Her work has previously appeared in publications such as Film International, Film Criticism, Economic and Political Weekly, Himal Southasian, and Scroll.in, among others. Her research interests primarily include film spectatorship and reception, and feminist film theory.

Images and music of popular Hindi cinema have proven to be starkly mobile; unmoored from their "original" contexts, they travel across diverse media and ethnoscapes, reminiscent of chimera in their hybrid, revamped existence and their ability to conjure and sell improbable dreams .[1] While this outward movement has been amply traced—Rajadhyaksha's (2003) conceptualization of Bollywoodisation as an effect profoundly produced by, but not limited to Hindi cinema is a popular example—the inward pull of various digital media content into popular Hindi cinema remains under-examined. This is due to a variety of reasons, one being that while the former can be categorized (even valorized) as a repurposing or democratizing activity performed by audiences, the latter is embedded in contradictory circuits that conduct power in a series of apparently haphazard sparks and shocks. The latter is also harder to recognize, especially since this activity is often accompanied by an erasure of traces to the "original" and a destabilization of the ontology of the content being appropriated. Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* (2019) offers an opportunity to follow the latter kind of movement.

Introduction

Gully Boy (2019) hinges on the real-life stories of Mumbai-based hip-hop artists, but repurposes their histories to plug into a narrative arc that lends itself to the template of the popular Hindi film. Protagonist Murad (Ranveer Singh) is based on rapper Naezy (Naved Shaikh), while his friend, teacher and mentor MC Sher (Siddhant Chaturvedi) is based on Divine (Vivian Fernandes). The name of Chaturvedi's character appears to have been inspired by the track *Jungli Sher* by Divine.

Gully Boy traces Murad's movement from a nameless and faceless youth walking down the cul-de-sacs of one of Mumbai's poorest localities and Asia's largest slum, Dharavi, to a popular rapper who returns to visit his home in the ghetto with a wad of cash, now ironically recognized publicly by his stage name *Gully Boy* (boy of the streets).

I argue that *Gully Boy* is glaringly caught in a dual movement in its relation with mainstream ideology: it incorporates the emplaced and embodied expression of identity that is at the core of hip-hop culture, but contains its radical subversive potential and shimmering anger. Instead, *Gully Boy* shapes and channels the politics of hip-hop culture to ensure that it does not entirely burn down dominant discourses of class and religious hegemony, but stokes instead the embers of a commonly reiterated platitude that equates hard work with success. While it encourages and even nuances the definition of subversion, it supplants politically radical critiques of the dominant order, prescribing limits to the rubric within which such resistance must occur.

1 Locating Hip-Hop in Mumbai

The contradictions in *Gully Boy*'s relationship with dominant ideology are emblematic of the rigorously examined paradoxes inherent to the counter-culture it seeks to depict. A fundamental duality inheres in the political economy of hip-hop: while "its capacity to open markets, maximize profits, and commodify legitimate grief and unrest, is the material basis that drives it forward", the core of its political identity is located in its ability—indeed, its predilection—to "provoke and agitate" (Lusane 2004: 355). Neal (2004:57) reiterates that the repeated use of slogans such as "keepin' it real" and "I'm just trying to do me" within the realm of hip-hop have "expressed the ambivalence of black hip-hop artists and audiences with the commercial success and widespread visibility afforded the genre".

Hip-hop's preoccupation with authenticity is renegotiated as it enters diverse geographical and cultural spaces (Singh and Dattatreyan 2016). As it becomes embedded in transnational flows, expressions of the idea of "keepin' it real" within the realm of Hip-hop expose a tension between authenticity and locality, underscoring a conflict between the insistence that "African American hip-hop is the only real variety and that all other forms are inauthentic deviations" and the assertion that authenticity entails sticking to "one's 'own' cultural and linguistic traditions" (Pennycook 2007:111).

1. I place the word "original" in quotation marks to underline the slippages inherent to defining "originality" within the digital context, particularly in the context of the conflation of the meanings of original and real/authentic. The quotation marks are also intend to gesture toward the problem implicit in any text (including as Mumbai-based hip-hop) which is engaged in complex and layered negotiations with intertextuality being regarded as the initiator of a particular strand of argument.

Bennett (2004:194) quotes a self-styled rapper who asserts that hip-hop isn't a "black thing", but a "street thing", born of people's anger with the environment in which they live: 'It's all part of this one thing of going 'oh look man, we've had enough of this and we're gonna change it in our way'". Within the hip-hop culture of Mumbai, and specifically within the cultural topography of *Gully Boy*, authenticity becomes attached to subaltern bodies who express the conditions of their life on the streets through hip-hop in the form of Hindi that is typical to the city.

Thus, the 'original' versions of the songs and videos by Divine and Naezy, Dub Sharma, and other artists featured in the film are themselves the product of layered negotiations with ideas of authenticity, commoditization and originality. When they are (re)placed into the cultural landscape of mainstream Hindi cinema, they become involved in another set of negotiations between commercialization and authenticity. While the former moment of translation represents the movement of aesthetic from one oppressed community to another, the latter is emblematic of a counter culture being folded into the fabric of the mainstream idiom that is located in a position of privilege in the hierarchy of visual languages.

It is also crucial to underline the slippage of meaning between the conceptualization of counter culture and acts of political subversion. Kelley (1997) points out that the association of a radical political alterity with hip-hop elides the "deep visceral pleasures that black youth derive from making and consuming culture, the stylistic and aesthetic conventions that render the form and performance more attractive than the message". Since it speaks to and of subaltern identities reclaiming space, Hip-Hop originating from Mumbai's poorest places is indeed politically subversive. However, it also emerges as a counter to powerful visual regimes such as popular Hindi cinema due to its aesthetics and visual language: the form of the music and lyric is a counterpoint to the polished and smoothened aesthetic popularized by mainstream Hindi cinema.

Hip-hop is emblematic of discursive practices that have been consistently othered in dominant discourse. Foucault (1969:131) argues that an archive emerges with greater fullness and sharpness as the time that separates it from contemporary discourse increases: "at most, were it not for the rarity of the documents, the greater chronological distance would be necessary to analyze it". Transposing his argument, the repository of images and videos associated with Mumbai's hip-hop culture emerges as a counter-archive due to its distance from dominant ideology and aesthetic. Videos and music of rappers such as Divine and Naezy and the Gully Gang come together into an archive by the logic that the archive comprises that which "falls outside our discursive practice; it begins with the outside of our own language (langage); its locus is the gap between our own discursive practices" (Foucault 1969:130-131).

Gully Boy, a popular Hindi film and part of the mainstream visual culture, freely appropriates images and visuals from this archive.

2 Appropriation and Authenticity

Naezy and Divine's track *Meri Gully Mein* (In my 'hood) appears within the film as a turning point in the lives of the characters. The video that featured within the film is pictured on Singh and Chaturvedi, and shot with the same aesthetic as the video in pictured on the rappers. However, while the "original" track features the actual streets of Dharavi, the version appearing in the film has been shot in a painstakingly crafted set. Crucially, Singh's voice replaces Naezy's within the track used in the film.

The fragility of the relationship between dominant cultures and the repository of images and sounds from counter cultures is also underscored by *Gully Boy*'s appropriation of artist Dub Sharma's song *Azaadi* (freedom). The version that appears in the film opens differently as compared to the track which was released independently by Sharma in 2016. The earlier version of the song was produced as a response to the arrests of several students of India's Jawarharlal Nehru University (JNU), who had been taken into police custody for raising the slogan of *azaadi*, which was deemed anti-national (Dasgupta 2019). In this version, music was added to the vocals of Kanhaiya Kumar, one of the arrested students, chanting the popular *azaadi* slogan,[2] with students chiming into his demand for freedom from *Manuvaad* (the discriminatory ideology of the Hindi

2. For a brief history of the slogan, and its use in protests by Indian students, see Chaudhuri (2018).

religious scripture Manusmriti), *Brahmanvaad* (Brahminism), *Sanghvaad* (the thought-system of the right-wing outfit Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which is regarded as the current ruling party's ideological parent), *Poonjivaad* (capitalism) and *Samanthvaad* (feudalism). In the version present in the film, however, the voice that opens the song demands freedom from *Bhukhmari* (poverty), *Bhedbhav* (discrimination) and *Pakshvaad* (partisan politics). The version of *Azaadi* in *Gully Boy*, therefore, was widely accused of stripping the song of the subversive potential of the version that preceded and inspired it (Dasgupta 2019, Kapur 2019, Thakur 2019).[3]

I argue that the filmic version does not merely "water down" the subversive potential of the "original". Instead, it refocuses and shifts the subversion implicit in the song, cloaking dissent in garb that will be permitted within the dominant culture. Thus, it surreptitiously recodes the definition of subversion by radically depoliticizing the adversarial politics of the "original" and cushioning it in vocabulary that does not challenge or threaten the dominant order, but insidiously validates it as a democratic entity that "allows" subversion. Thus, while it erases the "original" definition of subversion, it also replaces it with its own negotiated construction. The problem and possibilities implied by this construct will be explored in succeeding sections.

Within the narrative of *Gully Boy*, visual and verbal language that is resonant with trauma, pain and angry rebellion (*nahin banna mujhe slumdog millionaire*, *yeh slumdog hai mission pe* which translates to I don't want to be a Slumdog Millionaire, this slumdog is on a mission), and redolent of the aesthetic of the hybrid *tapori* (vagabond) identified by Mazumdar (2007)[4] are removed from their original context in the service of a warm story in which vindication is characterized by fame, monetary success and the resulting accrual of social and political capital. Murad's ability to rap about the consequences of wealth inequality, poverty, and oppression of subaltern communities leads him to the doorstep of individual monetary success.

The commercial and critical success of *Gully Boy*—it was selected as India's official entry in the International Feature Film category for the 2020 Academy Awards, but was not nominated—caused hip-hop to explode into mainstream culture in the country. Nearly a year after the release of *Gully Boy*, Naezy, who had endorsed the film and praised Singh's performance, expressed displeasure with the consequences of hip-hop's movement into the mainstream via popular Hindi cinema: "Bollywood has a set pattern within which it takes a genre like hip-hop and limits it thereby creating safe music. The final product is adulterated and nowhere as real as the stuff that inspired Bollywood in the first place" (Ghosh 2020).

This outline of the trajectory of the fame gained by Robert Cray explains a crucial element of the politics of the movement of images and sounds of hip-hop into *Gully Boy*:

> ...it originates in a context of anguish and pain and joy and happiness, it expresses those emotions and ideas in a musical language and idiom peculiar to its view of life, it is altered as a result of cultural sensibilities and economic factors, and it undergoes distribution, packaging, and consumption for leisurely or cathartic pleasure through concert attendance or record buying. Also, in the process, artists are sometimes removed from the immediate context and original site of their artistic production. Moreover, besides everyday ways in which the music is used for a variety of entertainment functions, it may occasionally be employed in contexts that undermine its critique of the status quo, and it may be used to legitimize a cultural or social setting that, in negative ways, has partially given rise to its expression (Dyson 2004:64).

However, discourses that only underline the predatory impulses behind the movement of visuals and sounds from subversive counter cultures into fields of commercialization elide the cycles that such a linear motion has the potential to initiate. Kitwana (2004: 343), for instance, observes that commercialization of emerging artists has the potential to inspire new artists who constitute the "underground element", and eventually go on infuse "the commercial manifestation of the cultural movement". Divine, for instance, hoped that *Gully Boy*

3. Feminist activist Kamala Bhasin, who has been credited with popularising the slogan within the political landscape in India, famously called the version a "joke", while a JNU student regarded it as a "moral science lesson" (Dasgupta, 2019).

4. Mazumdar (2007:44) on the figure of the *tapori* within Bombay cinema: "In his use of the *Bambayya* language, the *tapori* represents both the specificity of and the conflictual nature of the city. Through his linguistic performance, the *tapori* shifts the course of a well-defined language system."

would help hip-hop spread to "every corner of the country" and said that it would "make people more open to the idea of hip-hop, and definitely make them more aware" (Real Gully Boys Pin Hopes, 2019).

Divine's expectation from the film is perhaps located in *Gully Boy*'s emphasis on authenticity and originality, which jostles with its erasure of subversive politics.

3 Authenticity and Emplacement

In the opening scene of the film, as Murad sits in car that he has reluctantly stolen with his friend Moeen (Vijay Varma), he is quick to delineate, define and then disparage "inauthentic" soundscapes. He refuses to regard songs that "unnecessarily remix songs to make people dance' as rap, and regards them as"*nakli*" or fake. This invocation also resonates with the soundscape of the narrative. Murad, for instance, raps about introducing the country to "real" or "original" rap, as reflected in the lyric: *asli hip-hop se milaye Hindustaan ko* (Let us introduce India to real Hip-hop).

The film's most glaring movement towards the "original" is reflected in its definition of real hip-hop as that which emanates from bodies that emerge from the underclass, and emplacement of these bodies within the spaces that define them: it is marked by repeated invocations to the spatially specific moorings of hip-hop. The song which plays at the end of the film's opening sequence is a nod to areas in Mumbai which are marked by the presence of ghettos. The first poem that Murad is shown writing within the narrative of the film is also a reflection on the hopelessness triggered by the space in which he lives. The film's version of *Meri Gully Mein* holds on to the pincodes stated by the singers as a lyrical proclamation of impact of space on their identity and body. Murad is especially asked by Sher to perform his space, his 'hood, when he is intimidated by the expertise of rappers who have "roamed the world".

Murad is thrown back into his space most spectacularly when the backdrop of the stage during his final performance features an enlarged image of his ghetto, configuring his spatial origin as an image that is capable of being soundly valorized: it becomes valuable currency in a marketplace which places a premium on a specific construction of authenticity.

With its conflation of originality and authenticity in Hip-hop with emplaced experiences of the underclass, *Gully Boy* defines itself as an aberration in the history of popular Hindi cinema's engagement with hip-hop culture. Indian mainstream culture has consistently elided the political complexities and subversive impulses of hip-hop, with popular Hindi cinema conveniently labeling simplistic, regressive, and often misogynistic tracks as rap music. Baba Sehgal, who was wildly popular in the 1990s and is often regarded as India's first rap artist, has been frequently criticized for his absurd lyrics and derivative aesthetic. Several contemporary Indian rappers, including Honey Singh and Badshah, have been condemned for objectifying women in their songs.

Against this background, *Gully Boy* goes to great lengths to define itself as representative of authentic rap, locating it in the everyday experiences of Mumbai's othered denizens, even including a critique of toxic masculinity through the lyrics and narrative context of the song *Sher Aaya Sher*: Before MC Sher comes on the stage of a cultural event at a college to perform the song, a female performer is heckled off by a young man in the audience. He then proceeds to rebuke the man with his rap: *Tu nakli waala mard, mardangi pe kalank, haiwaaniyat ki shakal, jitni tujhme garmi uss se zyaada garm mera qalam* (You're the fake kind of male, a blot on masculinity, the embodiment of evil. My pen packs more heat than you).

4 Dissociative Appropriation

Thus, *Gully Boy*'s narrative topography and soundscape is at least partially implicated in the dissociative appropriation of the images of the counter-culture towards which it turns its gaze. Although Geimer (2016) defines dissociative appropriation as a mode of reception of cinema which irritates the social psyche by taking a "critique-of-ideology" stance, his formulation lends itself to *Gully Boy*'s navigation with hip-hop culture as well.

Geimer defines dissociative appropriation as a mode of spectatorship in which spectators appropriate critique-of-ideology readings to construct myths about the self, but do so without shifting or altering everyday practices that in way would challenge the ideology being criticized— spectators' appropriation of the text's critique of ideology remains dissociated from their everyday lives and practices. Thus, within this mode of reception, "spectators may appropriate critique of ideology readings... as a way to understand themselves but not to influence their everyday practices" (Geimer 2016:89).

Within Geimer's formulation of dissociative appropriation, criticism-of-ideology offers spectators with a way to define and map the contours of the self, without performing any activities to counter the ideology. These activities are eschewed since they would entail a vast number of changes in the spectators' everyday lives, and also necessitate the accrual of coping mechanisms required when identifying and challenging a hegemon. He adds that as a consequence of the disjunctures of postmodernity, such a mode of reception is likely to be a norm rather than an oddity.

Gully Boy mobilizes its politically aware stance on ideas of originality and authenticity of hip-hop to configure its identity as separate from the many incarnations of hip-hop culture that have appeared in Hindi cinema. However, it is able to extract the subversive politics of Sharma's *Azaadi*, and Divine and Naezy's *Meri Gully Mein* and graft it on to the bodies of Murad and Sher (the former played by an established and successful Hindi film star) without fraying or tearing (or even causing ripples in) the fabric of the narrative that characterizes the popular Hindi film. *Gully Boy* is thus engaged in act of dissociative appropriation.

As it incorporates the words and stories of rappers who have taken strongly subversive stances, transposing them into settings which will not harm status quo, *Gully Boy* describes the dissociative appropriation performed by hegemonic cultures in relation to the images of cultures which are located at the periphery of (or outside) the dominant discourse.

The dissociation and irony inherent in *Gully Boy*'s appropriation of the images produced by hip-hop artists is writ large in its negotiations with embodied identity and subversion. This appropriation appears absolutely straightforward on the surface: It can easily be conceived as predatory given *Gully Boy*'s erasure of the bodies of Divine and Naezy from its narrative. However, on the other hand, it is able to represent a spatial imaginary which facilitates- and even encourages- individuals from oppressed communities' crafting and perfecting embodied performances of their own cultural capital.

5 Reconfiguring Space

Forman (2004) observes that rap tracks, in their "almost obsessive preoccupation with place and locality, are never solely about space and place on the local scale" but "identify and explore the ways in which these spaces and places are inhabited and made meaningful". In fleshing out Murad's narrative, *Gully Boy* is able to nuance the lyric of *Meri Gully Mein* with meanings that are made significant by the character's embodied navigations through the streets. As he cavorts around the lanes of his locality in *Meri Gully Mein*, Murad manifests a range of meanings by evoking the embodied experiences of living in the ghetto that have preceded the song in the narrative of the film. *Meri Gully Mein* thus becomes emblematic of Murad's already-established struggle with the paucity of space in his home ("*Meri gully mein hain ghar chhote chhote lekin dil mein hain jagah beshumaar*" which translates to "My street is marked by tiny homes, but large hearts"), his firm insistence on not wanting to be involved in Moeen's petty crimes ("*Gareebi chalengey lekin farebi karengey nahin*" which translates to "We might be poor but we are not thieves for sure"), and Murad's sustained love and empathy for his mother ("*Maa pe gaali toh chamaat meri gully mein*" which translates to "Talk about my mum and get whacked on my street").

MC Sher introduces to the narrative a space which is open to "anyone who has something to say", and to which Murad is instantly allowed entry. Within the space, when Murad requests MC Sher to perform the poetry that he has written, he is swiftly rebuked. With a trace of hesitation, Sher remarks: "I write my own stories, man. Tell your stories yourself." Sher's insistence on Murad telling his own story is the manifestation of an episteme that underscores the relevance of body and embodied identity in socio-cultural discourse. This becomes most dramatically evident when Sher buoys Murad's flagging spirit with a suggestion to bloom his physical and

emotional hunger through his poetry. Ultimately, within this space, which has not been specifically emplaced within the geography of the city, Murad is able to perform verses that speak in his language, of his embodied identity and to the consequences of inhabiting a body in a marginal space.[5]

Film critic Nandini Ramnath (2019) observes that *Gully Boy* implies that "rough-edged street poetry and the right body language are apparently all that are needed to gain access" into the rapper community and the space that it occupies. I argue that far from flattening out the complexities of the narrative, this spatial imaginary is at the core of the revolutionary potential of the film. In conceiving a space in which each individual is empowered to perform their embodied cultural capital, it presents a possible location of rupture.

Lefebvre (1974:54) observes that "a revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses". *Gully Boy*, in delineating a spatial imaginary that allows, and even encourages embodied performances of cultural capital performs a sort of reverse movement—it creates a space which will lend itself to the start of a revolution, and outlines the conditions for creation of such a space.

The revolutionary potential of a space such as this is hinted at during the final rap song: *Apna Time Aayega*. When Murad is required to perform in an opulent place that is designed to intimidate—and is wholly removed from the spaces within which the film's discourse locates "authentic" rap—he carries his space with him. Sher and the rest of his companions accompany him to this alien place, pulling him back to the identity that he built within the underground rapper community of his 'hood. Murad, a Muslim who has grappled with varying shades of discrimination due to his religion within the narrative of *Gully Boy*, wears visible markers of his religion and exalts over his emplaced and embodied identity in the song *Apna Time Aayega*[6] ("*Mere jaisa shaana laala tujhe naa mil paayega*" which translates to "I am the smartest alec you can find").

6 Contradictions, Double Movements and Articulation

The removal of embodied identity from rap has formed the basis of debates around the appropriation of rap music by commercial interests. The problem with commercialization of rap tracks is often that it amounts to cultural forms of oppressed communities being stripped of their "vitality and form-the heritage of their creators" (Blair and Hatala 1992). In returning historicized and emplaced experience to Hip-hop, while erasing the voices and bodies of the rappers, *Gully Boy* locates itself precariously in relation to the 'original' images, sounds and words.

It is evident that *Gully Boy*'s moments of navigation with the images of the hip-hop culture thwart neat categorizations. The film's renegotiations with ideas of authenticity, historical identity and subversion underscore the difficulty of charting the politics of the movement of images from counter cultures into dominant visual media. *Gully Boy* can thus be conceptualized as a text that glides between dominant and subversive visual cultures, while never quite settling neatly on one. I argue that the difficulty of pinning this sort of movement within a text such as *Gully Boy* lies in its ability articulate a range of different cultures in a way as to bring out the contradictions inherent to the episteme that locks dominant and oppositional cultures in an irreconcilable binary equation.

Hall's conceptualization of articulation links the socio-political and historical locations of spectators to the formation of ideology, and plays on the two meanings of the term- 'to speak' and 'to connect'. He elaborates that the theory of articulation offers a way to understand how "ideological elements come, under certain con-

5. Viewed in this context, it is instructive that Murad enters this space for the first time to a rapper elaborating on how the excoriation of body leads to a silencing of voice and a flattening of identity. Murad enters to the lines "*Pakdo, maaro, kaato, cheer do, saaf suthari chamdiyon pe gehre gehre neel do, dheere dheere saare gaddar khud hi maan jaayengey*" (Grab them, rip them, cut them, flog them, I wanna see deep welts on their clean skins. Gradually, all the traitors will concede).

6. The ambivalence of the Hindi word "*apna*", which could mean an honorific I or a collective we, and the significance of "my/our time will come" as an emboldened Murad takes control of the space, points to the politics of the film's relationship between collective identity, space and time.

ditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects" (Grossberg 1986: 53).

Gully Boy represents and defines a moment of articulation in which a range of visual cultures that are located at varying distances from the dominant ideology are at play. As it simultaneously engages with images from the counter culture of Mumbai's hip-hop scene and the ideological idiom of the popular Hindi film, it lends itself to the conceptual rubric of articulation. While it moves between different forms of visual and narrative aesthetics, it becomes a hybrid object that creates links between the repositories of the images and sounds produced by these forms of knowledge.

While the idiom of popular Hindi cinema and the ideological conventions of hip-hop are being articulated by *Gully Boy*, it brings into existence a discourse that in turn articulates the postmodern subject- the spectator engaged in the very form of dissociative appropriation that *Gully Boy* itself performs at specific moments. This spectator is hinted at within the narrative in the guise of Murad's stepmother, whose appreciation for Murad catalyzes more tension within the narrative, and Skye (Kalki Koechlin) who appreciates his music but does not alter her everyday practices to accommodate the knowledge she has gained after her encounter with him and his life.

The act of articulation performed by *Gully Boy* is not unique to the film (much as dissociative appropriation is not a conscious activity unique to certain spectators), and can be seen to occur in several postmodern media objects of the dominant culture that draw on visual archives associated with counter cultures. This suggests that the relationships between new media objects and the various images and histories to which they speak, and from which they draw, can be configured as forms of articulation that bring specific media objects into being, and by implication, configure a set of politically emplaced spectators who engage with these objects.

This is not essentially a purposeful activity performed by media texts. As Stewart (1988: 163) states of graffiti (a pivotal element of Hip-hop culture that also appears within the narrative of *Gully Boy*): writers or artists do not always intend to point out "paradoxes of consumer culture", but the "paradoxes inherent in the production and reception of graffiti are paradoxes that are shaped by the contingencies of this historical conjuncture". Similarly, the contradictions inherent in *Gully Boy*'s appropriations and articulations are shaped by the historical and political linkages that exist between dominant cultures and counter archives.

Gully Boy also symbolizes another form of articulation: the joining of specific portions of the self to a negotiated conceptualization of the Other.

If, as outlined in Section 2, the repository of hip-hop's images on the internet can be conceived as constituting an archive on the basis of their distance from the dominant discourse, their existence underlines a lived identity that is as Foucault (1969:130) said of the archive, "at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us."

Gully Boy's strategic engagement with an archive that attempts to define the discursive practices of bodies that have been consistently othered within the mainstream discourse, articulates specific versions of the self as outlined by dominant ideologies, and a portion of the identity of the subversive and even unspeakable Other. This is especially evident in its construction of space, as outlined in section 6, in which disparate bodies perform their cultural capital, and embodied identities can be performed and (re)negotiated. In this sense, a text such as *Gully Boy* becomes a temporary bridge that allows the translation of strategic aspects of identity and discourse between different archives.

Within this context, Geimer's description of a spectator who appropriates dissociatively in order to define and delineate the self is rendered especially relevant. As *Gully Boy*, itself a text of dissociative appropriation, articulates a specific definition of the self to a carefully defined Other, it also articulates an ideologically emplaced spectator who will map the film's negotiation of identities on to their own definition of self and identity.

In this way, *Gully Boy* represents the conceptualization of articulation as both product and process: the film is a product of the process of articulation, implies a specifically articulated spectator, and represents a moment of articulation.

Derrida (1995) traces the etymology of the word archive to the Latin word *arkhe*, and locates it at the junction of "commencement" and "commandment". While he goes on to map this duality on the official archive's negotiation of public and private domains, he returns to it in his allusion of the "revolutionary and the conservative" potential of the archive, which he equates with the power of the citation that occurs at the beginning of a text: "it [the archive] keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion, that is to say in making the law (nomos) or in making people respect the law". Viewed in this way, the opening text which evokes the "original" *Gully Boys* Divine and Neazy, performs the function of both commencement and containment: it locates the origin of the story within a counter culture, but contains it to a specific definition of "originality" to which it resolves to remain faithful.

Within the archive itself, therefore, Derrida (1995) locates duplicity: an archive keeps, but also freezes. The articulation performed by a text such as *Gully Boy* locates and papers over this duality. While Gully Boy takes from the archived repository of gestures and visual and lyrical idioms from Hip-hop, it churns through the crevices of the aesthetic to retain selected contours while expunging others. The articulation performed by *Gully Boy* thus enfolds within it the duality of revolutionary subversion and cautious conservatism, bridging together and emblematizing the archive's capacity to commence and contain.

Watkins (2004: 558) visualizes popular media culture as that which is "best understood as a perpetual theater of struggle in which the forces of containment and resistance remain in a constant state of negotiation, never completely negating each other's presence or vigor". *Gully Boy* indicates that dominant culture's relationship with images and histories of counter cultures, defined by their capacity to reflect back on them while also appropriating them, are crucial within this theatre. As it is imbricated in a shifting relationship with the archive, which itself symbolizes revolution and conservatism, self and other, I have argued that *Gully Boy* demonstrates a crucial way in which this struggle is palimpsestic, depositing layers and dimensions of meaning on images as they move across different visual constituencies. In the process, it underlines the manner in which cultural artifacts with smooth surfaces that elide ideological struggle also have the potential to articulate the different poles of this productive tension.

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