THE AFFECTIVE NATION: TRACING THE TEMPORAL ASSEMBLAGE OF INDIAN MEDIA

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This thesis examines two films – *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008) and *Dostana* (Mansukhani, 2008) to explore the circulation of national identities within these films and the circulation of the films themselves within larger discourses of the nation, particularly India. This thesis argues that our current cultural moment require changing understandings of the idea of ‘film’, to include its multiple networks of capital and affect, and a changing understanding of ‘nation’ as materially illustrated in these films. The aim of this thesis is to conceive of a way to understand films as a collection of temporalities, and to map the duration of these temporalities as they reveal the emerging networks of circulation that change the ontology of both film and nation.

I also argue that the ‘nation’ is an affective construct, and that ‘nationness’ is the ‘trace’ or ‘residue’ that these films bear. This argument also marks a specific approach to the idea of a ‘nation’ itself that includes more than the boundaries of the state, or the ethnicity of the people, but begins to address the way objects possess certain national traces, particularly within cultural objects such as the arts. Through the thesis, I use the term ‘nationness’, or in these cases, ‘Indianness’, to describe the affective trace that an object possesses.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to everyone who helped along the way, particularly my many advisors, academic and otherwise. I’m eternally grateful for your patience and good sense.

Many thanks,
Lakshmi Padmanabhan
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God I love the sweet taste of India

Lingers on the tip of my tongue

God I love the sweet taste of India

Blame it on the beat of the drum… (Aerosmith, “Taste of India”)

To write, after all, is only to hazard the possibility that there will be a future of some sort, a “Queer Time” off the battlefield of everyday existence, in which the act of reading may take place somehow, somewhere (Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xxiv)

Freeman, in the Preface to her work *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* highlights the futurity of the act of writing, a futurity that Jose Estaban Muñoz would qualify as queer. Queer futures are the motivation behind this project – the kind of futures that allow for queer national bodies. I began this thesis, (inasmuch as one can discretely mark the beginning of an event) in Prof. Dana Luciano’s Contemporary Queer Theory class, while engaging with Gayatri Gopinath’s *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (2005), and Jasbir Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007). Both authors made strong arguments about the nation as exclusionary, in specific ways.

Left with the question of how we could conceive of the queer nation, or a nation of queers, I turned to ideas on time and the futural as a time of possibility. Muñoz begins his work with the
statement, “Queerness is not here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality” (Muñoz, “Cruising Utopia”, 1). Armed with this belief that queerness is on the horizon, and that there is a potentiality to the future, I began to explore the possibility of other times and other places as they potentialize the here and now. In between then and now, this thesis has become an attempt to think through time, its multiple valences, and politics. In the process, I have become aware of how closely Time is woven into the very being of the nation. This thesis is an attempt to speak about that relationship.

Another path that has intersected in this thesis has been in the realm of affect and media. The opening strains of ‘Taste of India’ by Aerosmith describe a kind of synesthesia where you can taste India through the beat of the drum. This sentiment, that that the nation is felt, and experienced, is precisely the moments I have attempted to describe in these pages. In doing so, I have found myself caught up in the ways by which we can create an archive of such feelings and experiences. I began with the question, ‘What does the nation mean?’ and have, over time, come to the question, ‘How does the nation function? Or what does it do?’ I want to argue, in these pages, that the nation functions as the affective link, the being of the middle, or, the being of relation, between the disparate bodies, texts, times, and spaces that I have analyzed in this thesis. To speak of the nation as a being in relation, and ‘nationness’ as the affective residue that objects bear within them allows for the kind of the nation that is constantly changing, and has the potential for a kind of queerness – a stepping out of normalcy by completely disavowing the concept. Simply put, the nation no longer consists of only a shared idea tied to a geographic
space but becomes the collection of all the affective traces of ‘nationness’ that circulate within networks of capital and pleasure. This shift in the idea of nation opens up the possibility of queer national ontologies, of nation as constantly shifting and hence malleable. It also undoes the ideological boundaries of nationalism to the extent that we can speak of a nation that need not necessarily be heteronormative or racist, but can consist of multiple, sometimes contradictory ideologies, and epistemes.

However, I do not wish to argue that the state has suddenly become inclusive of marginalized bodies, nor that power is no longer exercised on specific populations. This thesis instead conceives of a way in which the nation still possesses the potential for inclusivity. As Muñoz argues,

The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now’s totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there… we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world (Muñoz, 1).

This thesis is one such attempt at thinking of other ways of being, of being part of a nation.
“Make maps, not photos or drawings”

(Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 25)

Ideas about ‘nationalities’ and non-normative subjectivities have been demarcated as mutually exclusive both theoretically and in popular discourse, where criticisms of progressive identity politics are made in ‘national’ terms. In 2009, India saw significant media uproar around gender issues, when women were attacked at pub for “violating traditional Indian norms” (“Mangalore Pub Attack”, *IBN Live*, emphasis mine). This was one incident in a long line of ‘moral policing’ by right-wing religious activists whose repeated justifications remain nationalistic. Similar reactions occurred in 2005, when Khusboo, a famous South Indian movie star stated that Indian men should give up their "outdated thinking that a woman must be a virgin at the time of her marriage" and use condoms to prevent the spread of the AIDS epidemic in the country. This comment got her arrested, with several defamation suits and public interest litigations filed against her. The Chief Minister of the state of Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanidhi, declared that she had committed a “violation of Indian culture" while the Health Minister, ostensibly someone who would be invested in promoted safe sex, disavowed her statements by claiming that, “It is not that we Indians don't have sex. It's just that we don't talk about it.” (“The Fatwa Against Mini-Skirts”, *Der Spiegel*) These comments repeatedly set up boundaries between specific identities –women, LGBT, or ‘progressive’ politics against the ‘nation’. Such binaries establish apparently stable definitions of both the ‘nation’, and the specific identities it opposes.
In this thesis, I follow two lines of argument. First, we must conceive of film as a collection of multiple temporalities that allow the duration of the film to extend beyond its running time. Such an argument possesses interesting implications for the study of ‘film’, and the reconception of transnational networks of capital and affect. As I will outline later, this marks a shift within theory on film since it expands the word ‘film’ to include more than just narrative or cinematic effects, though these remain important concepts. Also, this argument allows for a mode of analysis in which we map the networks that the films circulate within rather than argue about the limited representations that the film provides.

Next, I argue that the ‘nation’ is an affective construct, and that ‘nationness’ is the ‘trace’ or ‘residue’ that these films bear. This argument also marks a specific approach to the idea of a ‘nation’ itself that includes more than the boundaries of the state, or the ethnicity of the people, but begins to address the way objects possess certain national traces, particularly within cultural objects such as the arts. For example, a conception of nation as affective allows us to address the way an object such as the film *Dostana* (Mansukhani, 2008) despite being completely set in Miami, Florida, speaks of and to ‘Indians’ while *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008), which is primarily shot in the slums of India, may or may not be an ‘Indian’ film. This ambivalence of the national is precisely the reason why I argue for the nation as affect. Through the thesis, I use the term ‘nationness’, or in these cases, ‘Indianness’, to describe the affective trace that an object possesses.

Both arguments are contingent upon an understanding of temporality as it shapes ontology.
I will presently address the many terms and definitions that these two arguments pertain to. However, most importantly, the latter argument allows us to speak of the kind of ‘nation’ that is constantly changing, and hence uncoupled from strict boundaries both theoretically, and materially. Theoretically, an understanding of nation as affective allows us to speak of multiple experiences of ‘nation’ that don’t necessarily belong to one ideology or another. Materially, the conception of the nation as affective allows us to speak of nations beyond, or outside of the physical boundaries of the state.

Both ways of understanding the nation are important, I argue, because we are seeing a reassembling of the nation in our times, predicated upon decentralized systems of distribution and consumption, particularly linked to cultural products and services. Such systems are beyond the merely economic, and have become the very way in which the bodies have been reconfigured into systems of consumption. As Homi Bhabha notes in his essay, “DissemiNation” (1993), “The emergence of the later phase of the modern nation, from the mid-nineteenth century, is also one of the most sustained periods of mass migration within the west, and colonial expansion in the East (Bhabha, 200).

Along with the migration of bodies, we now see the diffusion of cultures as tied to changing technologies of distribution. The bodies that emigrated still possess links to the space they left behind through systems of consumption, and cultural objects are circulating between spatially and temporally distanced people in multiple ways. I am particularly thinking of the circulation of film, for example, with growing audiences in the diaspora that Indian directors are
producing films for, just as these films then also circulate in the more general public, for example, Brian Larkin notes the large audiences for Bollywood film in specific parts of Nigeria in his essay, “Itineries of Indian Cinema: African Videos, Bollywood, and Global Media”, though we can see several such examples in every aspect of cultural productions from music, to literature, and a multitude of other media. This thesis attempts to address how these cultural objects, in this case, film, bear the trace of the nation – a trace that I term affective.

Definitions of national identity and the origins of nations have served as the fuel for a large body of research on the topic, from a wide variety of disciplines ranging from historical accounts of the creation of nations, political and economic studies of the boundaries of nation-states, to ethnographic accounts of the idea of nation and community. In 1882, Ernst Renan delivered a lecture titled, “What is a Nation?” at the Sorbonne, in which he outlined the ways in which the nation wasn’t linked to any specific determinist cause but a convergence of historical factors. He argued that, most importantly, the nation is conceived as

a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future… A nation’s existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as the individual’s existence is a perpetual affirmation of life (Renan, 19).

Interestingly, Renan argues that time is of primary importance to the nation in the form of shared pasts and the potential for shared futures. This brief glimpse of time in the definition of
nation is one that I shall return to. Most recently, thinking about nationalism has been deeply influenced by Benedict Anderson’s seminal text, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), which echoes Renan’s argument that the nation came about as a convergence of historical factors. For Anderson, the nation is,

an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (Anderson, 6)

And later, “the nation […] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (Anderson, 7). For Anderson, the nation will remain limited because the logical opposite could not be true, i.e. “No nation imagines itself as coterminous with mankind” (Anderson, 7).

However, in this thesis, I argue that the nation, as it functions, is not limited to a discrete space or group of people. I argue that we see emerging networks of relations – capitalist, and affective, that look quite different from a conception of nations as discrete entities. A large body of literature in the last two decades has dealt with these changing networks of global relations under a variety of fields – transnational studies, diaspora studies, postcolonial theory, multiculturalism, and so on. Writing only a decade after Anderson, Homi Bhabha sees the nation as ‘metaphor’, arguing that “The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin…[it] transfers the meaning of home and belonging… across those distances, and cultural differences, that span the imagined community of nation-people” (Bhabha, 200) and allowing for the shift toward a kind of nation that circulates without the limitation of a discrete geographic space. Bhabha also notes that the nation is narrated, i.e. we come to know the nation through the stories, the
metaphors, and the language we use to create it. Such a notion allows one to understand the
importance of media technologies in the formation of nation. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam
note in their introduction to *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media*, “The
cinema, as the world’s storyteller par excellence, was from the outset ideally suited to relay the
projected narratives of nations and empires” (Shohat & Stam, 9) Similarly, JP Singh notes in
*Globalized Arts*, “The idea of territorially bound cultures is increasingly hard to sustain in the
face of global networks enabling rapid flows of representations and other forms of cultural
knowledge” (Singh, 94). As Singh argues, creative expressions, in this case film, need to be
taken seriously since they reflect and constitute our realities (Singh, 2). This intertwining of
nation and its narration through cultural products, as it reflects the decentered networks of
relations, is one I attempt to analyse in this thesis.

In order to do so, I turn to a lineage of poststructuralist theory drawing most concretely on
the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their two volumes of *Capitalism and
Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus* (2004), and *Mille Plateaux* (1987). In this next section, I outline
some key concepts that run through the thesis, and serve as the basis for my analysis of nation
and temporality.

In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari traverse a wide range of theory,
taking to task whole systems of thought from psychoanalysis, and semiotics, to Marxism, and
political philosophy. While their work addresses multiple levels of thought and being, I would
like to highlight some specific concepts that I deploy through this text. Still others will be
explained as they are encountered in specific chapters. While Deleuze and Guattari’s work has provided several fruitful lines of analysis in disparate fields, I mobilize their theory drawing on two specific genealogies – queer theory on emotion, and technoscience criticism. As I will presently outline, both these lines of thought meet through a specific turn in critical theory that has been termed the ‘affective turn’.

First, this project draws heavily on theories of affect or the ‘affective turn’ in theories of society. While the definition of ‘affect’ holds multiple valences, for the purpose of this thesis, the term signifies in two ways that are not necessarily distinct. Patricia Ticineto Clough, in her work *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007) builds on Brian Massumi’s work to define affect as “bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body’s capacity to act to engage, and to connect” (Clough, 2). Meanwhile, Jasbir Puar, in her essay, “Prognosis Time: Towards a geopolitics of affect, debility and capacity” (2010) argues that “affect is something of a residual phenomenon that escapes emotion: the trace effect as it were, of a recognizable commodity.” (Puar, “Prognosis Time”, 161) Simply put, one can argue that affect is the body’s capacity to change, and affect becomes the trace of that change. Clough goes on to note that the affective turn “expresses a new configuration of bodies, technology, and matter instigating a shift in thought in critical theory” (Clough, 2). The shift that she refers to is one that Massumi calls for in his work, *Parables for the Virtual* (2002)

In it, Massumi calls for the theorizing of the body that Clough emphasizes, stressing the need for a theory of change and bodily capacity. He argues that recent scholarship in cultural
studies has focused on ‘subjects’ rather than bodies where subjects are completely determined by external mechanisms of power. These subjects are linked to static identities. For example, the woman, as a subject, is linked to a stable population of women, and a universal body of woman. One’s identity is then defined by the various subject positions that one occupies, for example, woman+Australian+lesbian+mother. Such subject positions map onto a societal grid where individuals are understood according to their positions on this grid which are determined by the interstices of the subject positions they occupy. Puar highlights the problematic politics of such identity formations in her work *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007). She states, “As a tool of diversity management, and mantra of liberal multiculturalism, intersectionality colludes with the disciplinary apparatus of the state” (Puar, “Terrorist Assemblages”, 212). Massumi begins to outline a theory of the social that would account for the movement of bodies through space and time – something that he sees as currently lacking in a cultural theory that is focused on positionality and subjects as the site of analysis. Massumi, building on Henri Bergson, a French philosopher of time, argues that ontologically, the body is always in movement, and any coherence that a ‘body’ or a subject may have is only provided retrospectively, in the act of thinking about a thing, i.e. “a thing is when it isn’t doing” (Massumi, 6, emphasis in original). For Massumi, as for Bergson, “Position no longer comes first, with movement a problematic second. It is secondary to movement and derived from it. It is retro movement, movement residue” (Massumi, 7). The example that both Bergson and Massumi provide of this argument is the solution to Zeno’s paradox. While the paradox explores the trajectory of an arrow, stating that its flight path would be a series of points, and the area between two points would have even infinite number of points between it, and hence, the arrow
would get swallowed up in the ‘transitional infinity’ (Massumi, 6) of its path, Bergson, and
Massumi argue for an understanding of the arrow not as a discrete object moving from point to
point but as a ‘continuity of movement’ (Massumi, 6). He states, “if the arrow moved it is
because it was never in any point. It was in passage across them all… a path is not composed of
positions. It is nondecomposable: a dynamic unity” (Massumi, 6, emphasis in original).
Following this example, as I do with film, and the ‘self’ within film, this calls for a conception of
an object (film, self, nation) as consisting of all its movement through timespace, i.e. through the
networks it circulates within.

Such a conception of ontology has several consequences for a theory of society. One such
consequence is that time becomes of utmost importance since time becomes the process by
which one can map change, and movement. Time, as much as space, become the ways to observe
the change in bodies. A commitment to affect, hence also in some sense, requires a noting of
time. Hence, through the thesis, I trace the temporal movements of objects to make apparent the
changes they undergo.

Building on the same geneology of theory, and addresses the same question of ontology,
Amit Rai, in his work *Untimely Bollywood: Globalization and India’s New Media Assemblage*
(2009) explores the notion of duration, as it is tied to the ontology of the object. He argues that
ontology is duration, i.e. that a media object consists primarily of the multiple times embodied
within it. Duration, for Rai, is “both the nested temporalities that are lived through the
assemblage, and the duration it has as an entity in its own right” (Rai, 5). The mapping of these
two distinct but related temporalities of the assemblage/media object (in the case of this thesis, film) is the organizing principle behind my method of analysis for this thesis. Rai, like Massumi, argues for the ontology of an object to be conceived of as its movement through time and space. In the following chapters, I map the ‘nested temporalities’, i.e. the multiple times located within the diagesis of the films, as well as the temporal movement of the film as a distinct object. While the first kind of map calls for a close reading of film, the second allows for a discourse analysis of the film’s circulation. Taken together, I attempt to map the duration (and hence the ontology) of these films as they reconfigure the ‘nation’ within and among them.

Rai’s work is closely tied to this thesis in both site and methodology. He explores the ways in which film as a medium in India is changing; from viewing practices, to technologies used, narratives, and capital flows. He uses the term ‘media assemblage’ to describe these interconnected sites of analysis. For Rai, ‘film’ cannot be understood as simply a text involving narrative or cinematography, nor merely the socio-economic practices involved in its circulation. Rather, Rai conceives of the media assemblage as the constantly ‘becoming’ or emerging combination of bodily sensation, affect, capital flows, viewing practices, and networks of circulation that films are imbricated within, including the technologies involved (digitization, ‘surround’ sound, editing processes, 3D technology, etc.) the sites of circulation (internet videos, pirated DVDs, ‘first day first show’ events, ‘malltiplex’ cinemas or single-screen theatres), the actual bodily sensations of viewers, and so on. As Puar notes in *Terrorist Assemblages*, “The assemblage as a series of dispersed but mutually implicated and messy networks, draws together enunciation and dissolution, causality and effect, organic and
nonorganic forces.” (Puar, “Terrorist Assemblages”, 211) which is in line with Rai’s thinking of the assemblage as the interrelations of various sites and times of the media event, in this case, film.

In keeping with this focus on temporality as the object of analysis, I would like to briefly highlight the work of queer theorists of time, particularly Elizabeth Freeman and José Estaban Muñoz as they influence the arguments within this thesis. Freeman, in her work, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010) highlights the politics of temporal analysis. She outlines a process of chrononormativity, or “the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity” (Freeman, “Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories”, 3). Dana Luciano, in her work, *Arranging Grief* (2007) also addresses a similar process of temporal arrangements, referring to it as chronobiopolitics, or “the sexual arrangement of the time of life” (Luciano, 9). In her work, Freeman calls for a deviant chronopolitics that “posits the value of surprise, of pleasurable interruptions from elsewhere and other times” (Freeman, “Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography”, 59). Muñoz, in his work, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), outlines a similar project. Muñoz argues that, “The present must be known in relation to the alternative temporal and spatial maps provided by a perception of past and future affective worlds” (Muñoz, “Cruising Utopia”, 27). He also argues that such a modality of critique allows us to explore the potentiality of being (Muñoz, “Cruising Utopia”, 91) Potentiality, as a term, possesses several definitions. Munoz builds on Giorgio Agamben’s explanation of the term in his work; *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (2002) Munoz explains potentiality as “a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is
present but not actually existing in the present tense” (Muñoz, 9). Massumi echoes this sentiment when he argues that “Potential is the immanence of a thing to its still indeterminate variation” (Massumi, 9) Both authors contrast it to the concept of possibility which can be explained as regulated variations, i.e. the known, already existing variations of the future.

This argument for a deviant chronopolitics is the method by which I analyze the films to highlight the interventions of other times and places. Such an analysis is productive in illustrating the multiple temporalities of the film, and, in conjunction with Rai’s argument of ontology as duration, allows me to conceive of the film as a collection of multiple temporalities, whose duration extends far beyond the running time of the film itself.

Finally, the site of analysis for this project is centered in theories of film and visuality. While the discipline of film studies has spanned many decades, and involves a large institution of academic research, I wish to address, broadly, the turn within the discipline towards a critical mode that has variously been termed multicultural, or transnational, and even postcolonial. In this section, I wish to briefly address the question of why film? And then to trace some strains within film studies, particularly from India, that have addressed similar concerns of the film and nation. I will also place this project in relations to some current work in the field and highlight why it is important to think of film as a temporal medium.

I first approached films as a site of narrating the nation. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam highlight in their work, *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media* (2003),
“Contemporary theory sees nations as narrated, in the sense that beliefs about the origins and evolution of nations crystallize in the form of stories. The cinema, as the world’s storyteller par excellence, was from the outset ideally suited to relay the projected narratives of nations and empires” (Shohat & Stam, 9)

Jyotika Virdi, in *The Cinematic ImaginNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (2003) addresses the importance of film in the context of India when she highlights the fact that the Indian film industry is the largest in the world, and produced over 1200 films in 2009. It is the third largest in terms of revenue, after Hollywood and the Japanese film industry with earnings of $2.2 billion (“Chinese film industry races close to Bollywood”, *Times of India*). Besides its size, Virdi also discusses the reach of films over the written word in a multi-lingual country where literacy rates vary sharply across class, gender, and geographic positions.

Another reason for this focus on film has been due to the way in which films have managed to circulate within our current global networks of capital and pleasure. Not only do films manage to travel across the global markets – sometimes transcending national boundaries, and always negotiating the various networks of production, distribution and consumption that they find themselves in, the medium of film itself has seen marked changes in recent times. As Amit Rai highlights in *Untimely Bollywood*, there increasingly occurs a form of ‘media synaesthesia’ (Rai, 9) where qualitative shifts have occurred in film consumption practices as brought about by technological advancements, and social practices from “cinema hall, to DVD, to cell phone
ringtones, to JPEG/MPEG, to the internet, not to mention from dialogue to song” (Rai, 9), all these various media feed into the ontology of a film itself – a fact that I will repeatedly illustrate in the subsequent chapters. Hence, I see film as a productive beginning to an understanding of the kind of media networks of capital and pleasure that I wish to address in studying the nation. While I use films as the primary point of departure for tracing the nation, the aim of this project is not so much to provide a comprehensive representation of Indian national cinema or even to attempt such taxonomy but rather to look at filmic events and their movement within circuits of pleasure and power as one place in which the nation is constantly emerging yet never fully arrived. In fact, film only serves as a piece in a very large, constantly emerging assemblage of media itself.

As I mentioned earlier, theorists have highlighted the ways in which film has been particularly linked to the narration of national imaginaries. Film theory outside of ‘classical Hollywood’ has particularly focused on the ties between developments in film narrative and the changing faces of the nation. In the context of India, several such histories abound with M.K. Raghavendra’s *Seduced by the Familiar: Narration and Meaning in Indian Popular Cinema* (2008) serving as a particularly good example. There has also been a sustained emphasis on studying the geneology of Indian film, often located in oral traditions, and myths such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata as some founding texts, particularly for Indian film.

Just as film as a medium has tackled the nation as a construct, so too, theory of film has repeatedly returned to this question. Several illustrious theorists in the field have tackled these
questions, and just as we have seen the Indian nation-state undergo multiple societal changes, so too has film theory. Initial writings addressed the relationship of ‘Indian’ film to euro-american culture, as Madhava Prasad outlines in *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (1998). Theory then began addressing film’s position as mass culture in relation to high culture, as Jyotika Virdi does in *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (2003). As Wimal Dissanayake highlights in “Rethinking Indian Popular Cinema: Towards newer frames of understanding” (2003) Indian popular film often dismissed as unworthy of study due to its apparent lack of engagement in social themes and critical frames of reference. (Dissanayake, 202) Such conceptions have changed with work from several prominent authors such as Madhava Prasad, Ravi Vasudevan, Ashis Nandy, and so on.

Recent debates have centered on the term ‘Bollywood’ as a descriptor of Indian cinema, marking the changing centers of film production, and the demand for recognition of Indian films from regions and languages outside of hindi films made in Bombay. Ajay Gehlawat, in his work *Reframing Bollywood: Theories of Popular Indian Cinema* (2010) highlights the several contradictory ways in which the term has been employed from exclusively Bombay-based popular cinema that is dominated by regional, ethno-linguistic, and socio-economic hegemonies as well as to include all Indian film in an exoticising, universalizing theoretical move. These arguments have served particularly useful in carving out a niche within film studies for a study of ‘indian film’, and undertaken important definitional work. However, such theory considers both the idea of ‘indian’ and ‘film’ as fixed categories. This seems to speak less to the film’s circulation and functioning in larger discourses.
There have been a few recent moves to address the change in film production and circulation, particularly the importance of consumption practices and reception in the study of film. Brian Larkin’s essay, “Itineraries of Indian Cinema: African Videos, Bollywood, and Global Media” (2003) which traced Bollywood films and their reception among the Hausa people of Nigeria, and S.V. Srinivasan’s exploration the fan activity surrounding Chiranjeevi, a popular Telugu actor, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, in his essay, “Devotion and Defiance in Fan Activity” (2000) are good examples. Most recently, an attempt has been made to synthesize these two approaches to theory through a mode of critique that takes into account both narrative and audience reception of films including work done by Lalitha Gopalan in her work Cinema of Interruptions: Action Genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema (2002), and Tejaswini Nirajana’s work, Mobilizing India: Women, Music, and Migration between India and Trinidad, (2006) as well as her essay with Vivek Dhareshwar, “Kaadalan and the Politics of Resignification: Fashion, Violence, and the Body” (2001). Such work has also begun to trouble the framework of ‘Indian’ cinema, moving from theories of aesthetics and historiography, toward a theory of Indian films that have been part of the processes of globalization, and bear the mark of other cultures in their presentation. While such critique troubles the question of ‘India’, this thesis attempts to move to a mode of critique that troubles both words in the phrase ‘Indian film’. This troubling of the idea of ‘film’ is productive in our current moment because such a critique would take into account changing technologies of consumption, as well as the practices of viewing and experience that constitute the ‘film’ itself. This call to trouble the definition of ‘film’ is one that this thesis addresses directly, using the multiple media that are folded into the process of
watching film, and experiencing them to highlight the porosity of the term, and to begin a film analysis that addresses its multiple emerging forms.

Amit Rai, most recently, suggests the possibility of such redefinitions of ‘film’ in *Untimely Bollywood: Globalization and India’s New Media Assemblage* (2009), which explores the filmic assemblage as temporally contingent and situated within the circuits of body responses (proprioception), the ecology of sensations within which film viewing occurs and the larger socio-economic practices such as multiplex cinemas, new media technologies and corresponding changes in film genres, audience segmentation, and so on. His work also synthesizes the multiple spatial contexts from hyper-local practices in a theatre in Bhopal, India, to digitization and the circulation of *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (Johar, 2001) in the Indian diaspora. Rai’s work serves as the theoretical interstice of the deleuzian post-structuralist theory I outlined in the earlier section, and the Indian film theorists I have discussed here. In this sense, he serves as the direct precedent for this thesis’ intervention in both lineages of theory. However, my focus, as I covered earlier, has been the circulation of the nation within film, rather than just the changing nature of film practices in India, as Rai highlights.

The method of inquiry for this project hinges on Rai’s concept of duration as “both the nested temporalities that are lived through the assemblage, and the duration it has as an entity in its own right” (Rai, 5). I will trace the discourse around the film, and how it circulates, to highlight its temporality as a distinct entity, and explore the temporal moves within the timespace of the film to highlight its nested temporalities, i.e. the two aspects of the ‘duration’ of
the film that Rai puts forth.

Each chapter will follow one specific film and explore a different aspect of its trajectory. The first chapter on *Dostana* (Mansukhani, 2008) will trace emergence of the film, and its circulation within LGBT politics that create an atemporal nation. Then, I highlight the multiple temporal ruptures within the filmic timespace to argue for the possibility of ‘elsewheres and other times’ that Freeman calls for in her work, *Time Binds*. From this, I discuss the way in which the film consists of multiple temporalities where its duration extends far beyond the actual running time of the film or the time of its release. I finally discuss the trace of the ‘nation’ that the film bears, and how the film adheres to an indianness that is in excess of the film’s narrative itself. This excess, I argue, illustrates the nation as an affective construct.

The next chapter undertakes an analysis of *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008) in order to highlight the multiple national discourses it circulated within. Next, I explore the multiple times of the film, and its formal elements that allow us to highlight a deviant chronopolitics. This film is particularly interesting because it was primarily shot in India, by a UK director, and went on to win ‘Best Picture’ at the Academy Awards ceremony in 2009 – an honour that has been limited to mostly US-made films (Only 10 films in the last 82 years have been produced outside the US, and those 10 were British). Taken together, these two films provide interesting insights into notions of nation, and the changing understanding of film as a medium itself.

Both films illustrate a sort of affective nationness that is in excess of their representational
framework. For example, *Dostana* is almost completely set in Miami (with brief interludes in London, and Venice) and follows two men who pretend to be gay, and mostly comfortable with it which is contradictory to the distinctly homophobic, and regressive politics that repeatedly surface in the Indian news media and yet, the film conveys a sense of Indianness. Similarly, the chapter on *Slumdog Millionaire* folds into a discourse of ‘India’ despite being produced and directed by a US firm and UK director respectively, and hence, for most classificatory purposes, a UK film. This dual perspective, of India looking out, and being looked at, is a productive one, and allows us to speak of multiple networks rather than singular entities that the nation functions within. These films also highlight the fact that film, as a medium, exists in multiple times and in disparate locations, and needs to be studied as such, rather than focusing on one aspect of the film alone. For example, as I explore each of these films, other media become folded into the process of watching – YouTube videos, songs from the soundtrack, and even, in the case of *Slumdog Millionaire*, a link to the U.S. presidential elections of 2008, and slum kids.
“This film is a joke; but the last thing we need is India thinking homosexuality's just another gag.” (Sen, “Dostana is Injuriously Entertaining”)

This chapter explores the ways in which the film *Dostana* (2008), directed by Tarun Mansukhani, functions as a media event that both structures and complicates questions of nation and temporality in Indian media. I make two arguments in this chapter. First, I argue that the film can only be understood as consisting of multiple durations. Second, and tied to the first argument, I argue that national time is also multiple, and fragmented. In order to do so, I first illustrate how the film circulates as a form of representation that constructs an atemporal nation. Next I trace the moments of rupture within the timespace of the film that lead to a fracturing of this atemporality. In order to do so, I closely read specific scenes from the film to highlight the temporal ruptures and tensions within them. Finally, I argue that these temporal ruptures both within the film and the nation itself, allow for a ‘deviant choronopolitics’ that Elizabeth Freeman calls for in her essay, “Time Binds, Or, Erotohistoriography” (2005). A deviant politics of time allows us, I argue, to conceive of the nation as affective, i.e. it is the trace or residue that the nation leaves on these objects that is apparent to us. This argument builds on Deleuze, Bergson, Massumi, and other theorists of time. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Massumi makes an argument for the ontology of a thing as based in movement, and change, i.e. its passage through time, rather than only its spatial dimension. This is the underlying concept to my arguments concerning temporality and the nation, i.e. I argue that *Dostana* serves as an example in which we see the nation, in this case India, exist through this residue, i.e. the ‘trace’ of indianness that
this film possesses is the link between the other times and places that invade this film. Studying the time of the film allows us to move in non-linear ways through timespace, to illustrate the multiple contexts and networks in which this film circulates. This circulation and reiteration of the film as fragments and partial objects, allows us to see the way in which the film, and the affective ‘nationness’ it bears, changes across time and space in a stochastic, yet patterned ways.

Using this film’s reception as a ‘gateway’ film (Lovece, “Film Review: Dostana”) and one that “helped homosexuality enter drawing room, dining room and board room discussions” (Our Profile”, Dharma Productions), this chapter furthers the argument that Dostana, as an artifact of the nation, consists of fractured, nonlinear timespaces that function in multiple social contexts.

I consider analogous the atemporal construction of nation and the atemporal construction of the timespace of the film, to argue that both those constructs reiterate each other. My aim is to highlight points at which the process of this construction is made visible. This analysis centers on the moments of temporal rupture within the film - the moments in which we see ‘other times’ and alternate spaces invade the diagesis, allowing for the duration of the film to extend beyond its running time, and the nation to link multiple times and places.

First, a brief synopsis of the film - the narrative of Dostana involves two protagonists – Sam (Abhishek Bachchan) and Kunal (John Abraham) who live in Miami and, through a series of serendipitous meetings, decide to pretend to be a homosexual couple in order to rent an
apartment with Neha (Priyanka Chopra) who works at a fashion magazine for an openly gay boss. The two men fall in love with Neha but need to uphold the farce of being homosexual in order to continue living there, which forms the basis of much of the comedy in the film. In the process, Sam’s mother hears of his homosexuality and is initially resistant to Sam and Kunal’s concocted relationship but comes around to accepting them together. Abhi Singh (Bobby Deol), a young entrepreneur, replaces Neha’s old boss and eventually falls in love with her as well.

Once Sam and Kunal are ‘outed’ as straight, their friendship with Neha appears ruined. The movie ends with Neha in a heterosexual relationship with Abhi while the two men are forced to kiss each other in public in order to win her forgiveness.

1. Disavowing Queerness

In order to understand the timespace of the narrative, and its political implications, this section highlights the way in which Dostana, as a discrete entity was folded into discourses about ‘India’. These moments in which Dostana bears the affective trace of the nation itself, i.e. when Dostana is used to narrate the nation, we can begin to analyse the ways in which it does so, how it constructs the nation, and finally, to speak of the kind of affects the nation has through the film. Hence, this section provides a brief overview of the Dostana as it circulates in relation to the issues of homosexuality and national identity.
Dostana was released at an interesting time in the Indian media landscape. In 2001, the Naz Foundation filed a Public Interest Litigation to repeal article 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which declared any that any voluntary carnal intercourse that was “unnatural” was punishable by law. In 2008, the year of Dostana’s release, the political mobilization around homosexuality received widespread media attention. In September 2008, after several years of silence on the Public Interest Litigation, arguments for the case were heard in the Delhi High Court with LGBT activists around the country drawing attention to the case. (“Chronology”, IBN Live) But it wasn’t till July 2009 that the Delhi High Court finally legalized consensual homosexual intercourse. Bollywood actors stood in strong support of the movement, with Celina Jaitley, an actor, organizing a petition in support of the cause (Jaitley, “Calling for Gay Rights”). In November 2008, when Dostana was released, the High Court had reserved its verdict on the issue with contradictory statements being received from the Ministry of Home Affairs arguing for the article to remain in the Indian Penal Code on grounds that the act would “open the floodgates of delinquent conduct” and the law must remain to police it (Singh, “Indian Court: Gay sex is legal”), while the National AIDS Control Organization (a division of the Ministry of Health) issuing a statement that the law posed health risks to minority populations who could not seek medical help for sexually transmitted diseases due to their criminal status under the law. (Sharma, “MHA justifies retention of Section 377”) The two opposing views from the Central Government highlight the contradictory ways in which homosexuality has been deployed in a national context; on the one hand, sexuality must be policed by the state, specifically linked to concepts of nationality, and on the other, sexuality is medicalized – with gay men identified as a particularly vulnerable population. Within this debate, celebrities mobilized around the argument
of freedom of choice. Karan Johar, the producer of *Dostana*, discussed homosexuality as an expression of love, and one in which we have the right to choose who we love. (Jha, “I’ve made a 50 crore film with homosexual overtones”).

In this situation, *Dostana* is positioned as a film that ‘pushes the envelope thematically’ with Dharma Productions, its production house, going so far as to claim that *Dostana* served as a major catalyst in normalizing homosexuality in the Indian household (“Our Profile”, *Dharma Productions*). Karan Johar, the producer of *Dostana* who heads Dharma Productions, had earlier directed films that would qualify as being some of the strongest cultural references in Bollywood recently - *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), his first film is still an audience favorite, and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001) is one of the most successful hindi films in recent times. Johar had also been outspoken against homophobia and saw *Dostana* as a ‘step in the right direction’ for Bollywood (“Dostana tests waters”, *Times of India*).

With about 1/5th of the revenue for *Dostana* generated outside India and a large part of the rest from the urban centers3 we see that, economically, his films appear to cater to specific demographics – the diaspora and urban, middle class audiences. In *Untimely Bollywood*, Rai analyses the rise of the ‘malltiplex’ theatres in India as they signal a shift in viewing practices economically, socially, and affectively. He argues that the malltiplex, through various methods including the integration of specific technologies, increasing the cost of film viewing, and the social capital associated with the consumerist practices in these spaces have effectively inverted the ‘Western’ history of the malltiplex as a mass consumption strategy by “privatizing the classic
dichotomy of audience segmentation […] namely, the masses vs. the classes” (Rai, 152). Rai goes on to note that this shift “territorializes the body in the diasporic-national family through future-oriented nostalgia, a presently lost but always open possibility of return and reintegration” (Rai, 169) He cites, as his example for this, Johar’s film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001). Film critics have described Karan Johar’s films as ‘mushy romantic comedies set in foreign locales’ (“Bollywood’s Muscle Academy”, *Indian Express*) and as “making films for the Indian diaspora” (“Just A Minute: With Karan Johar”, *Reuters*). The narratives of his films have possessed certain tropes – family melodrama, an emphasis on ‘traditional’ societal values, and finally, the image of a transnational Indian family with characters that travel widely and are marked by upper class identities through expensive cars, large houses and the free movement across the globe. An emblematic scene of this is the title song sequence of *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* where we have shots of Rahul (Shah Rukh Khan) descending from a private jet, into a helicopter, which transports him to his family mansion where the rest of the family is in the middle of an opulent Hindu religious function. Here, we’re given images of his mother (Jaya Bachchan) singing about devotional love for both the Gods and her husband (Amitabh Bachchan) as she patiently waits at the door for her son with the traditional Hindu welcome of saffron and a lit lamp (*Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, 14.10-19.55). Given this brief sketch of films from Dharma Productions and Karan Johar, we see that *Dostana* falls neatly into his genre of film. And, while the film was the directorial debut of Tarun Mansukhani, with Karan Johar credited as the Executive Producer, we see some of the same tropes including opulent sets, wealthy characters, foreign locales, and an emphasis on family, that have marked other films from Dharma Productions. Within the frame of ‘representational’ analysis, it is apparent that the
nation that Johar appears to make films about are demarcated socio-economically. This
demarcation occurs within the film through sets that are quite luxurious, films that almost
invariably involve large sequences outside of India, and characters that are extremely well-off
and are granted free movement transnationally, i.e. expanding the space of the Indian beyond the
boundaries of ‘India’. (For example, Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna (Johar, 2006) is set almost entirely
in New York, large parts of Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham (Johar, 2001) is set in London, Kal Ho
Na Ho (Advani, 2003) is New York again, while My Name is Khan (Johar, 2009) traverses large
parts of the USA from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and Georgia).

These films are also some of the highest grossing films abroad⁴, and, as I’d mentioned
earlier, attract a strong diasporic and upper middle class audience. Returning to Rai’s argument
that these films, and their viewing in malltiplex theatres, “‘territorializes the body in the
diasporic-national family through future-oriented nostalgia, a presently lost but always open
possibility of return and reintegration” (Rai, 169), the nation, as represented in these films, is
particularly exclusionary - it is heteronormative, centered around the heterosexual male
protagonist, usually Shah Rukh Khan (one of the most famous Bollywood actors in recent years),
and elitist socio-economically – Johar only makes films about the upper middle-class. However,
I want to highlight the disparity between these observations of the film as exclusionary and
Karan Johar’s own politics that I’d mentioned earlier, when he spoke out against homophobia.
This apparent contradiction emphasizes the multiple ways in which politics are attached to
bodies, whether filmic or individual. However, both observations - Karan Johar’s, and
Bollywood’s politics as ‘progressive’, as well as Karan Johar and his films being exclusionary,
tie the film to the ideas of nation. This repeated link highlights the fact that this contradiction is apparent in the narration of the nation itself, and not these specific bodies alone, i.e. Karan Johar and other Bollywood actors, as part of the media assemblage that is the Indian film industry stand for both sides of the political spectrum with progressive views and ‘regressive’ movies, both of which speak of India as their own. The nation therefore, appears to extend beyond specific ideological stances though ‘nationalism’ as a discourse engages with specific political positions. Once can even speak of nationalisms, as sometimes competing, but multiple discourses.

Returning to this idea of nation as excessive, as beyond specific discourses, it becomes necessary to think of the nation temporally, rather than spatially. The spatial here refers both materially, and abstractly. Materially, we have seen, in Karan Johar’s films alone, though the shift can be seen in most thought about ‘nations’, that the spatial boundaries of a nation-state are crumbling, destroyed, or irrelevant. More abstractly, I use spatiality to refer to thought about identity politics, i.e. that in Karan Johar’s films, the main character is a straight, upper class man. This descriptor conceives of identity as a position in a social grid of identities, i.e. straight+upper class+man being three different intersections of this identity. As I outlined in the earlier chapter, Massumi emphasizes the necessity of this shift from such metaphors as social grids, and identity positions, to the ability to think of movement - movement through time. In the following sections, I attempt to think of an analysis of film in which the time of the film, and the time of the nation, restructure our thought of these stable grids of identity, into questions of time, and the movement of bodies - filmic and individual, through time and space.
2. The Absence of Time

The opening shots of *Dostana* (2008) finds us flying over the ocean toward a city that is quickly established as a ‘foreign’ locale with a rapid montage of white female bodies in bikinis, relaxing on a beach. The camera then follows one of these women, (Shilpa Shetty, who, while Indian, seems almost indistinguishable from the other women on the beach) and we are provided with a shot over her shoulder, as she hits play on an iPod to the opening strains of a song. Immediately after, we’re given a shot of the hero (recognizable as John Abraham – a shot that received much attention for its objectification of his physique) rising out of the water and walking toward the camera that slowly pans over his body before we return to Shilpa Shetty’s character, as she begins to dance, with several white back-up dancers to the film’s ‘item number’. The ‘item number’ has, in recent years, become a staple in Bollywood cinema, where one song in the film is arguably created primarily for circulation independent of the text – in clubs, dance remixes, and on television channels. The song often does very little to further to plot itself, and is often used in film publicity for trailers, increasing visibility, and so on. The item number has evolved over the years from Cuckoo in the 1940’s and 1950’s and her illustrious protégé, Helen, to current Bollywood ‘item girls’, including Mallika Sherawat, and Malaika Arora, the role of the item girl has moved from ‘vamps’ who served as the counterpoint to the demure heroine to current ‘guest appearances’ where stars are invited to perform just the ‘item song’ for the film, adding star value. International celebrities such as Tata Young (for Dhoom, 2004), have been invited to perform these songs. However, Shilpa Shetty’s item song in *Dostana* does serve a purpose beyond just as an ‘item number’; it is used to place the film
outside of India. From the opening montage of white bodies on a beach, the extensive shots of palm trees, and multilane highways, the song ends with a scene where both protagonists – John Abraham and Abhishek Bachchan are dancing on a stage lit up with a huge pulsating sign that says, “Miami” in flashing lights. (Dostana, 00:01:30 – 00:05:40)

In the first five minutes of the film, it is established that the film is set outside India, despite being populated by characters that are Indian, and involving a song sequence sung in Hindi. This move is the first of many through the film that disavow its theme and relevance to its cultural moment within India, i.e. the political mobilization around decriminalization of homosexuality. Through the film, it is the absence of India, as a geographic space, and as a material society that allows the film to construct the atemporal frame within which it functions. The film therefore removes itself from Indian time – i.e., it no longer answers to Indian history – indeed, if it did, the narrative would have to confront actual homosexual Indian bodies – a fact that would derail the irony of the plot, and destroy the timespace of the film. We will shortly examine how some homosexual bodies fracture the filmic timespace at specific instances, making visible the film’s construction of an atemporal present.

While the escape from Indian time is primarily set around the location of the film in Miami, the film disavows US time as well. For instance, in November 2008, when the film was released, Florida voted in ‘Amendment 2’ to the state constitution, which banned same-sex marriages, and civil unions in the state along with similar legislation in California, and Arizona (“California CliffHanger”, 365gay.com). The absence of any mention of this within the film is
notable, especially considering that the Kunal and Sam file their taxes together as a civil union in the film and apply for a residency permit together. (*Dostana*, 00:38:51).

One final absence of note – the film, though it is nominally set in Miami, is primarily set within the protagonists’ luxurious apartment, Neha’s extremely well appointed office, and a few stray scenes at restaurants and night clubs. Any other reference to the city itself is done as a sequence of quick montages, such as the opening sequence on the beach (*Dostana*, 00:01:30-00:02:30) or when Kunal and Sam are trying to find cabs (*Dostana*, 00:09:30 – 00:10:35) – a passing nod to the existence of the rest of the world, before re-entering their atemporal space. Accordingly, *Dostana* can be read as exclusionary and discriminatory from an intersectional identitarian perspective – i.e. it excludes any subject that is not heterosexual, wealthy, and hindi speaking. However, this absence is particularly significant because it is part of the process by which the film creates the atemporal space of the film narrative.

In *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (2010), Bliss Cua Lim explores the functioning of genre, transnational remakes and intertextuality between Hollywood and Asian horror films. Lim argues that one of the effects of Hollywood’s appropriation of non-US cinemas through genre is the process of ‘deracination’, i.e. to “uproot, efface, and delocalize” (Lim, 199). Lim also explores the functioning of space within the context of the remake, arguing that “space is ontologically possessed of memory” (Lim, 210) and it is this memory that allows the “encounter of non-synchronous temporalities within the haunted place” (Lim, 210). However, the earlier observations on the absence of geographic place in
highlight the corollary to Lim’s observations – i.e. that the lack of geographic place allows the film to create a homogenous time – a ‘deracinating’ narrative of a homogenous timespace that actively works against any link to a national history.

3. Queerness as Interruption

Given that the film as a whole creates such a homogenous timespace, this section explores how queer bodies and moments fracture this apparent unity and create uneven temporalities.

Early in the movie, we have Sam and Kunal who have recently met while trying to rent an apartment in Miami. After having been thrown out by Neha’s aunt as unsuitable for Neha to live with, they walk out together. We are presented with them waiting at a hot dog stand when a man in army fatigues enters the scene, apparently crying. On enquiring if he’s okay, he tells Kunal and Sam that his boyfriend has just been shipped off to Iraq, “we were so happy after Afghanistan… I mean, everything was perfect, we were the perfect family… and, I mean, I just saw the two of you standing there and you look so happy, my God! I mean, you remind me so much of us!” (*Dostana* 00:15:05), implying that he’d understood them to be a couple – the first time that this error is made in the film.

This exchange immediately functions as a marker of time and history – we can locate the narrative as occurring after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Simultaneously, the figure of the
homosexual army officer highlights the fraught politics of homosexuality in the U.S. military. In
the unnamed homosexual’s lament for the loss of his partner to military action, their sexuality
seems to be mobilized against the endless time of war. This exchange ostensibly gives Sam the
idea that Kunal and he could pretend to be in a relationship in order to rent the apartment, but the
particular image of the U.S. army officer as openly gay blasts us out of the seemingly discrete
diagetic time of the film and leads us to question how these two homosexual bodies are
mobilized to highlight the state of exception. More significantly, this fracturing of diagetic time
serves as a moment in which the deracinating narrative of the film becomes apparent – a moment
of slippage into ‘real’ time, i.e. outside the atemporal linear narrative of the film. This moment
seem to alter the time of the film itself because immediately after this exchange, the camera
pauses on Sam’s contemplation of the phallic nature of his hotdog while Kunal stalks away in
anger. In that switch from Sam to Kunal the narrative seems to literally skip ahead as if the
officer had never been, and we seem to lose time in that moment. Kunal says no to a question
that Sam hasn’t asked yet, but from his tone, it appears that Sam has already asked it before – the
question being whether Kunal would be willing to be gay in order to rent the apartment. What
can we make of this loss of time, and the loss of the military officer at the stand? Taken together,
this queer interruption serves as an example of the way in which there occurs a de-
territorialization and reterritorialization of time.

I take these notions deterritorialization and reterritorialization from Deleuze and
Guattari’s work *Anti-Oedipus* that David Martin-Jones in his work, *Deleuze, Cinema, and
National Identity* (2006) uses to analyse film. To recapitulate, reterritorialization involves, “a
constraining of narrative into one linear timeline” (Martin-Jones, 4) while deterritorialization “enables a displacement of narrative into multiple labyrinthine versions”. The latter is how I perceive the queer interruption functioning - as a way in which the many times of the film are apparent. The gay soldier, by specifically bringing with him the time of war, the political climate of the time, and his body marked as queer, not only serves to multiply the ‘times’ of the film, but also to point at another way of being, i.e. while the two straight men are homeless, and alone, the gay soldier shares the existence of his queer life, even though, in this instance, it is tied to a moment of sadness, since he is currently separated from his partner by the State. For Martin-Jones, the deterritorialization of filmic narrative allows for openness of national identity (Martin-Jones, 5) In providing us this ‘other’ way of being, the gay soldier opens up the idea of the nation to encapsulate his existence for the few moments that he is on screen.

4. Elsewheres and Other Times

Freeman, in her essay, “Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography”, calls for an ‘deviant chronopolitics’ that “posits the value of surprise, of pleasurable interruptions, and momentary fulfillments from elsewhere, other times” (Freeman, “Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography”, 59). The interruption of the army officer seems to do just that - conjure up ‘elsewheres’ and ‘other times’.

Another answer to Freeman’s call for pleasurable interruptions occurs when Neha’s gay colleague, “M” (Boman Irani), arrives for dinner. He is shortly followed by the gay immigration
officer, “Javier”, who is there to ensure that Sam and Kunal hadn’t been lying on their tax forms about their relationship status, i.e. he’s there to ensure they’re actually gay. Neha interrupts a potentially awkward situation between “M” and Sam by suggesting that they turn on the music and turns the iPod on to the tune of ‘Beedi’ from the film *Omkara* (2006) by Vishal Bharadwaj. Tracing the circulation of ‘Beedi’ is a map of transnational affect in itself. The film, *Omkara*, is a Bollywood remake of Shakespeare’s *Othello* and travelled to the Cannes Film Festival, as well the Cairo International Film Festival and Kara Film Festival in Karachi ("’Omkara’ Shines in Cairo and Karachi", *Apunkachoice.com*). The song, which functioned as the ‘item number’ for the film, was also co-opted for a “India – A Love Story”, a Brazilian telenovella in 2009 (“India – A Love Story”, *Globo TV International*). To move from a rural town in Uttar Pradesh as the setting in which the song occurs in *Omkara* to the movement of the actual film across the globe, and then to a fictional apartment in Miami – the song signifies more than a background score to *Dostana* – it serves as an interruption within the discrete world of the timespace to allow for the pleasure of familiarity from other times and places. The cause of this interruption – the queer subject “M”, not only embraces this familiarity with the song, but also begins a sequence in the film that can only be read as a queer timespace. “M” begins to dance with Sam while Javier pulls Kunal into a dance that mimics movements from the original ‘Beedi’ video, while Neha dances in a corner with her aunt. (*Dostana* 00:48:11 – 00:49:33) For a few minutes then, the scene is transformed into a queer space – albeit a space that is momentary and fleeting.

One final interruption within the film that highlights multiple temporalities occurs about half way through the film. At the end of the previous scene, we see Sam confessing his love to
Neha while she’s in a changing room at the mall, telling her that ‘kuch kuch hota hai’7 (Dostana 01:24:25)- which appears to be a direct reference to Karan Johar’s first film. Only once he’s done does he realize that it was Kunal behind the curtain and not Neha. When Kunal becomes aware of Sam’s love for Neha, he sabotages Sam’s attempt to woo her by sending him to the wrong location for a fictional dinner while taking Neha out on a date. After cooking Neha dinner outdoors, Kunal leads Neha in front of a screen, which begins to play Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, (Johar, 1998). Kunal then points off screen and lights come on over a blanket and cushions spread out on the grass. As the strains of the title song begin to play, Kunal stands up, and we are provided a mid-length shot of him in front of a video of Shah Rukh Khan (from Kuch Kuch Hota Hai), mimicking the movements from the song, inviting Neha to dance. As she steps up, the music begins to play and the camera follows them as they repeat the steps of the dance to the time of the video on the screen. (see Fig. 1 below)
For the duration of this scene, the multiple timespaces that are hinted at from the earlier scene are made visible. By reconstructing the scene from *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, (KKHH) the filmic whole that is ‘Dostana’ makes apparent how contingent its existence is on other places and other times; it now consists of not just Kunal, Neha, and their story, but the emotive response to Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Shah Rukh, and Kajol, at the least. But, it also extends the duration of Kuch Kuch Hota Hai itself to expand beyond its existence as a singular object to include its fractured reappropriation within Dostana. The background score while they watch the film is the title track for KKHH, creating a moment of cinematic time in which two durations are mapped onto each other, and where the two films are merged into one. Finally, by making apparent the process of constructing the scene – Kunal’s use of an iPod to explain the music, and the recreation of rain with a sprinkler, the audience is made aware of the two parallel timespaces – that of KKHH and that of Dostana. By making apparent the latter, the atemporal construct that the film maintains dissolves for the duration of the song.

The audience itself is quite aware of not only the dual durations of the scene but also that the entire scene possesses a sense of irony because Neha believes Kunal to be gay while Kunal is in love with Neha and the audience is aware of this discrepancy in meaning. Paul de Man, in his essay “The Rhetoric of Temporality” (1986) examines the way allegory and irony function as temporal constructions. While allegory is structured as a linear, backward looking move, irony functions in the time of the present insomuch as it is “the instant at which two selves, the
empirical as well as the ironic, are simultaneously present, juxtaposed within the same moment but as two irreconcilable and disjointed beings” (de Man, 220) His argument about the temporal functioning of irony is particularly important in understanding how this moment in Dostana – the merging of the empirical and ironic, or rather, Kunal’s wooing of Neha and our awareness in the discrepancy of meaning between the two of them, allows the audience to be the point at which the film is whole. i.e. it is only in the act of watching the film, does the audience allow it to exist as a coherent whole. This insight marks a change in the ontology of the film from a discrete subject, into a collection of moments, and durations, that can circulate independently, and in multiple iterations. The dismantling of the film from discrete object to a collection of moments, durations, and interconnected affect serves as an abstract but material depiction of the experience of nation itself as momentary, and fleeting.

In this chapter, I began with a short history of homosexuality in India and the genre of film-making that Dostana falls under in order to illustrate how the film creates a discrete timespace by disavowing the political conditions of Indian and U.S. time. Then I traced the way queer subjects ruptured this discrete time space. Finally, I highlighted moments in which the unity of the film itself dissolved into fractured temporalities, mirroring the function of ‘nation’ as a construct.
CHAPTER II: MULTIPLE SELVES

“The child is special now. This is not an ordinary child, this is an Oscar child”. (Blakely, “Rubina Ali’s Family Brawl”)

In a 2009 *Sunday Times* article, the child actor of the film *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008), Rubina Ali, was purportedly to be illegally sold to pay for her family’s livelihood. Rubina’s uncle described her as an ‘Oscar child’, justifying the increased price they asked, and linking her being to that of the film she acted in a year earlier. This chapter explores the fragmented subjectivities, durations, and lines of flight of *Slumdog Millionaire* as a media event. In doing so, I will further the argument first highlighted in the earlier chapter, that the film cannot be understood as a discrete temporal object, i.e. having a clear beginning and end that is marked by its running time, but rather read as layers or plural durations. In order to do so, I will trace the ways in which the film circulates within the discourse of ‘nation’. Using this link between *Slumdog Millionaire* and the nation, I explore the uneven temporalities of the film itself to examine how the nation functions within the filmic timespace. I argue that the nation becomes a ‘being in relation’, i.e. the affective link between the multiple times and sites that the film circulates within.

First, I look at the fragmented subject of the protagonists within the film. Next, I highlight the fractured timespace of the film on and itself – analyzing the moments at which the narrative is woven in and out of ‘indian’ time. Finally, I trace some lines of flight of the fragmented film. These layers of duration highlight the incoherence of the filmic whole. In
keeping with Bhabha’s understanding of the nation as narrated, and my argument that these films serve as a material link to the nation, I argue that these temporal disjunctures highlight the ways in which nation is constructed – with jumps forward, and backward in time, that make apparent the narration of national time.

The main storyline of the film follows the character of Jamal K. Malik (Ayush Khedekar, Tanay Chheda, Dev Patel), and his brother Salim (Azharuddin Ismail, Ashutosh Gajiwala, Madhur Mittal) who grow up in the slums of Mumbai. At a very young age, Jamal watches his mother being killed in a Hindu-Muslim riot and the two children are forced to fend for themselves. They run into Latika (Rubina Ali, Ranvi Lonkar, Freida Pinto), another orphan from the slums that Jamal grows attached to. They are picked up by a local gangster, Maman (Ankur Vikal), who runs a begging racket involving slum children. Salim learns of Maman’s plans for them and runs away with Jamal, leaving Latika behind. In the following years, the two brothers travel through northern India, earning their way through stints in various jobs that border on illegal, including guiding tours of the Taj Mahal, selling novelties on trains, and so on. Jamal however insists on coming back to Mumbai for Latika. On their return to the city, they learn that Latika is still owned by Maman. When they go to save her, they run into Maman and Salim kills him in order to escape. The three of them run away to a hotel with Maman’s money. Salim’s growing jealousy of Latika and Jamal becomes apparent when he comes back home from visiting Maman’s rival gangster, and returns drunk. He threatens Jamal with a gun, and proceeds to lock himself in a room with Latika. Jamal is forced to leave and doesn’t see them for several years. A few years later, we see an older Jamal working at a call center as an assistant when he gets the
chance to find Salim’s number. He looks him up, and meets Salim who now works for Javed (Mahesh Manjrekar), Maman’s biggest rival and a man who controls a large part of the Mumbai underworld. Jamal learns that Latika now lives with Javed and is unable to leave him for fear of her life. The rest of the story involves Jamal’s attempts to reach Latika, including appearing on ‘Kaun Banega Crorepati?’, the Indian version of ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire?’ because he knows that Latika would be watching that show. Meanwhile, the show’s anchor, Prem Kapur (Anil Kapoor) is deeply suspicious of Jamal’s success on the show and has him arrested before the final question on suspicion of cheating. The Police Inspector (Irrfan Khan) interrogates Jamal about his unusual success on the show. Jamal then narrates each incident in his life that led to him to the different answers on the show. Eventually, he is let off and gets to answer the final question. Meanwhile, Salim decides to help Latika escape from Javed, asks for her forgiveness, and commits suicide, just as Jamal gets through to Latika on the phone, from the show, and eventually wins the money. The movie ends with Jamal and Latika together, walking off screen.

1. “You want to see the ‘real’ India?”

As a film that was primarily shot in the slums of India, by a director from the UK, with actors of Indian origin, distributed by a US-based production company and won 8 Academy Awards, *Slumdog Millionaire* sparked off intense debates about national belonging, Bollywood cinema as a genre, and globalized film in general. Given this scattered national geneology, this section traces the mobilization of nation around the film to highlight the multiple, often contradictory narrations of nation that the film circulated within.
In many respects, *Slumdog Millionaire* could only be British. It is technically adept in a manner that still eludes India's Bollywood cinema; Boyle is at the top of his form. Its subject matter is too foreign and remote to have been initiated by Hollywood; we British are not quite so insular in our world-view. And would any US studio bigwig approve a film with a Muslim hero? (Gritten, “*Slumdog Millionaire*: The First Film of the Obama Era”)

one look at ‘Slumdog Millionaire’, and you know that its spirit and soul is flagrantly, proudly Indian: the Empire has been finally, overwhelmingly trounced. (Gupta, “Movie Review: *Slumdog Millionaire*”)

Just days after Barack Obama, a self-described "mutt" because of his mixed racial heritage, took office as our new president, the motion picture academy honored its own cinematic mutt, "Slumdog Millionaire," giving the film 10 Oscar nominations, including one for best picture. (Goldstein and Rainey, “Oscar Special: *Slumdog* Still Hollywood’s Sweetheart”)

The common thread that runs through the articles from which these quotes are cited, is the ease with which the film is folded into a national media assemblage – British, Indian, or American, as the case may be. Each of these articles insists on tying the film down to a specific national idea through its appropriation into a linear history in line with the present. For David Gritten of *The Guardian*, *Slumdog* falls within the British nation because Danny Boyle makes
films that are still out of the technical grasp of Bollywood cinema, (Gritten, “Slumdog Millionaire: The First Film of the Obama Era”). For Amitava Kumar, *Slumdog* falls within a long lineage of Bollywood films from *Shri 420* (Raj Kapoor, 1955) to *Bandit Queen* (Shekhar Kapur, 1994), and *Black Friday* (Anurag Kashyap, 2004) (Kumar, “*Slumdog Millionaire’s* Bollywood Ancestors”). For Patrick Goldstein and James Rainey of the *LA Times*, *Slumdog Millionaire* is linked to Obama’s campaign for the US presidency and American politics (Goldstein and Rainey, “Oscar Special: *Slumdog* Still Hollywood’s Sweetheart”). Each attempt at narrating Slumdog’s origins highlight a moment in which the film is attached to larger historical narratives of a nation. What is ultimately interesting about this movie is the particular way in which it allows for national appropriation – for narrating the nation. In this sense, *Slumdog Millionaire* serves as an example of ‘globalized’ cultural production, not because it is a ‘multicultural’ film, but because it highlights the tenuous nature of creating national narratives.

This narration is both a movement through time, as much as a spatial and material drawing of boundaries. For example, its appropriation into ‘Indianness’ functions through the emphasis on the location of the film – “The story is universal, but it could have only been made in Mumbai” (Shubra Gupta, “Hamara Slumdog”), and the authentic materiality of the bodies, “Ms. Tandan ended up hiring real kids, some of them from the Mumbai slums, to play the three lead child characters.” (Somini Sengupta, “Extreme Mumbai, Without Bollywood’s Filtered Lens”, emphasis mine) Ostensibly, the ‘real’ here refers to their authenticity as residents of the slums. This narration is also contingent on moving back through time to build a filmic genealogy that serves as the precedent for the present film, as Amitava Kumar builds in his
article for *Vanity Fair*. This backward movement – the rearranging of the past to make the present the teleological end of the genealogy is a move that makes apparent the malleability of time. We have a narration of the film as British cinema - a part of Danny Boyle oeuvre as a film maker, with an *NPR* correspondent describing the film as almost a remake of *Trainspotting* (Boyle, 1996) “only with lots more romance and a plot hopped up on subcontinental steroids.” (Bob Mondello, “*Slumdog Millionaire*: Mumbai Jackpot”). These narrations of the film exist only through the elision of all other possible national narratives, i.e. these different narrations of nations require a forgetting or more materially, an elision of other the others, in order to survive. Hence, they fall within the “syntax of forgetting – or being obliged to forget” (Bhabha, 230) that Bhabha highlights as the process of producing the national subject. These multiple narrations of *Slumdog Millionaire*’s genealogy are undertaken through a narration of national history. For example, the assumptions within the descriptions of the film cited above are that Indian film has always possessed the narratives and the talent that have produced *Slumdog Millionaire*, in Amitava Kumar’s telling, with Shubra Gupta locating the film’s success on its link to Mumbai as a city, and India as a nation. While in David Gritten’s narration, ‘India’ doesn’t yet possess the technical capability to produce such a film.

In the following sections, I explore the effects of this narrating of *Slumdog Millionaire* as a narration of nation by exploring the temporal moves that the film makes, and its uneven durations. While I specifically trace the indianness of *Slumdog Millionaire*, I believe that similar traces can be made of its multiple national origins, and that these traces don’t exist as mutually
exclusive – particularly illustrated by the fact that national identity is constantly deconstructed and reconstructed rather than an essential characteristic of certain bodies.

2. “The Present is not enough”: Narrating the Self/Nation

“Only as a generality can there be said to be a continuity between states… guaranteed by a unity of the observer”

-Massumi, 50

Massumi, in his work, *Parables for the Virtual* (2002), argues for an understanding of being, and bodies that is constantly in movement – a process. This process is how Massumi sees the body existing in the world, with the subject positions that the bodies occupy being only a residue or a retrospective ordering of the body. This analysis emphasizes the coherence of the body through time, as the way in which to understand being. In *Slumdog Millionaire*, we see an illustration of this being in process, where each of the main characters in the film literally change into different people with the passing of time, while still held together under a single character. What becomes apparent in the multiple casting of the same role is the way in which the passage of time lends coherence to an otherwise disparate group of bodies, i.e. it is because we know that at least a decade has passed between the first actor to play Jamal and the last one, that we know they are ostensibly the same ‘person’. I argue that this makes apparent the way in which the body is a temporal construct as much as a material one.
In this section, I also argue that this passage of time makes coherent the changes in the nation as well, where the character of Jamal and the multiple actors who play him grow and change as the city and country around them does so too. From a street kid in the slums of Mumbai, Jamal moves across the country, earning his way with small jobs and petty theft to becoming a tour guide at the Taj Mahal, where he speaks English, and earns in U.S. dollars (a dubious honor). Eventually, he moves on to serving tea at call centers and even ‘passes’ for one of the call center employees. Through the film, we are also provided with views of his slums as they change, from the tightly packed rows of huts of his childhood, we see the area finally becoming a high-rise office building. This passage of time, and change that the film documents makes apparent the ways in which both Jamal and the city that he lives progress through time – or how time passes through them, making these different sites, and bodies coherent in a linear narrative.

While the title credits of the film list Dev Patel as the actor who portrays Jamal, over the course of the film, we are introduced to two other bodies – Ayush Mahesh Khedekar (“Youngest Jamal”) and Tanay Hemant Chheda (“Middle Jamal”) that create the coherent subject of “Jamal Malik”. Through the film narrative, we see them embody the growth of the subject into different people as they move through the timespace of the film. Starting from 00:38:30, we are provided with a short sequence of the film in which the youngest protagonists – Ayush Khedekar as ‘Jamal’, and Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail as ‘Salim’, work and travel on various trains through the north Indian countryside by selling assorted goods such as whistles, and fruit, in order to pay for food. Along with breathtaking imagery of the two children on top of the train
traveling through the desert, we have MIA’s hit single “Paper Planes” as the soundtrack to the montage. The song is off her second album *Kala*, which was released in 2007, and a line of flight for the film that we shall briefly trace in the next section. However, during the sequence, we see the two kids stealing food from passengers through the window and illegally climbing to the roof of the trains in order to travel for free. The lyrics to the song are, “all I want to do is” followed by four gunshots, and “and take your money” are transposed with images of Jamal and Salim asleep. The sequence clearly highlights the dramatic irony between their illegal activity and their childlike innocence (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 00:39:45). During one such theft, Jamal (Ayush Khedekar) is hanging off the side of a train with rope held by Salim, and reaching into a train compartment to steal some bread from a family that appears to be enjoying its meal. (see fig. 2 below)

![Fig. 2. Jamal and Salim stealing food from the train compartment at 00:40:53. From Slumdog Millionaire, dir. Danny Boyle, perf. Dev Patel, Freida Pinto, Anil Kapoor. Celador Films. 2008. Film.](image)

Unfortunately, they are caught in the act, and Jamal is tugged off the train by one of the family members, closely followed by Salim. As a result, they fall away to the side of the track
and tumble down a slope. The duration of their fall (about 18 seconds in the film) lasts longer than most of the earlier montage, and, once the dust from their fall clears, both characters appear to have grown into Tanay Chheda as ‘Middle Jamal’ and Ashutosh Lobo Gajiwala as ‘Middle Salim’. In those 18 seconds then, time is concentrated - the passing of years into the moments of a fall, arriving at the present. This temporal jump – the absence of time, makes apparent the abrupt shift in both the time of the film and the time of the individual itself. This sequence, by almost erasing the process of ‘becoming’, in the dual sense of becoming ‘Middle Jamal’ from ‘Youngest Jamal’, and in the Deleuzian sense of becoming beyond or without being (Puar, “Terrorist Assemblages”, 217) in fact highlights this absence, drawing attention to the passage of time, and linking these two bodies under the same character.

This multiplicitous self runs parallel to the character’s narration of the nation itself. As Jamal (Dev Patel) narrates his reason for knowing the answer to the question, “Which American President is on the $100 bill?” (Slumdog Millionaire, 00:50:10), as the scene changes from his seat in the police station to ‘Middle Jamal’ (Tanay Chheda) and ‘Middle Salim’ (Ashutosh Gajiwala) walking through the outskirts of Mumbai. This rather unremarkable linguistic change – ‘Bombay’ to ‘Mumbai’ – involved, in its becoming, a national push by major political parties in various metropolitan cities to move away from the anglicized names that marked colonial rule. While the Shiv Sena had pushed for the change in Mumbai when they came to power in 1995, similar changes occurred in Chennai (formerly Madras), Bengaluru (Bangalore), and Kolkata (Calcutta) that began in the late 90’s and continued into the new century. The politics of this renaming involved the restructuring
of Indian urban spaces by a newly globalized culture, rising fundamentalism, and rapid economic growth. Noting this change not only illustrates the political changes occurring in the region but also highlights the affective response to that change, particularly in reference to the ways the change in name noted a semantic change within the changing nation itself.

Jamal (Tanay Chheda) makes another observation linking himself to the nation during his stint as a tour guide at the Taj Mahal. In a short sequence about half way through the film, ‘Middle Jamal’ is guiding an American couple on the outskirts of Agra, as the refrain “All I want to do is”, followed by four gunshots, “and take your money” from MIA’s song wears away. (Slumdog Millionaire, 00:45:03) We have an interesting moment where the immanent future seems to be hinted at, where Jamal is taking the couple through a ‘dhobi ghat’ – an area, usually on the banks of a river, which is used to wash clothes by the washermen from the area. The camera pans over a large area filled with people washing clothes and drying them out, as the Jamal describes the function of the dhobi ghat, apparently selling the spectacle of poverty to the tourists. In that moment, we see an addressing of the film’s future dissidents who accuse Slumdog Millionaire of trafficking in ‘poverty porn’ (Miles, “Shocked by Slumdog’s Poverty Porn”). As the scene continues, we see Salim strip the car of its movable parts along with a few of his friends, leaving it standing on bricks when the couple returns from ‘taking a good look’ at the dhobi ghat. (00:45:52). When the driver begins to beat up Jamal, accusing him of cheating the couple, Jamal remarks, “You wanted to see a bit of the real India? Well, here it is” (Slumdog Millionaire, 00:46:10). The tourist responds, “Well, here is a bit of the real America, son!” and gives him some money (Slumdog Millionaire, 00:46:16). This repeated linking of the ‘real India’
with Jamal’s narrative and through his character highlight the allegorical frame of reference in which the film appears to narrate the story of Jamal as the story of a ‘real’ Indian – a fact that Prem Kapur, the host of ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire’, observes by pointing out that he’s a chaiwalla from ‘amchi’ Mumbai (a tea-seller from our own Mumbai) while introducing him to the audience in the opening sequence of the film (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 00:03:35). We see this allegorical link travel through each Jamal (Ayush Khedekar, Tanay Chheda, and eventually Dev Patel) when Salim (Madhur Mittal) tells Jamal (Dev Patel) as they look over the area that used to be their slum, from a high rise building, “We used to live right there man, and now its all business! India is at the center of the world now, bhai… and I, I’m at the center of the center” (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 01:14:42) This moment serves to mark the passage of time - the past and the future of this site and these individuals as they have changed and will change, with the passage of time being the only coherent link between them.

In each of these instances, we see the fractured subject that is Jamal, repeatedly linked to the changing times of the nation itself, and the interplay between his temporally split narrative and that of the nation itself is brought to stark relief in these moments when the two are aligned through the film. In the following section, I explore how the formal aspects of the film reflect the fracturing of national timespace.

3. Ontology as Duration

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These multiple times express the potential for multiple ungroundings of time’s actualized form. Their power is to ‘falsify’ the singular form of the true. Thus in the time-image the virtual and actual are not considered separate, but rather to coexist in an interactive relationship. In the time-image, time becomes actual along multiple, divergent paths with each fork in the labyrinth of time. (Martin-Jones, 25)

“Queerness’s time is a stepping out of the linearity of straight time. Straight time is a self-naturalizing temporality”
(Muñoz, “Cruising Utopia”, 25)

Martin-Jones calls on Deleuze’s concept of the ‘time-image’ as it deterritorializes the narrative of the film. Deterritorialization entails the, “displacement of narrative into multiple labyrinthine versions”(Martin-Jones, 4). It’s opposite, ‘reterritorialization’, entails the “constraining of a narrative into one linear timeline” (Martin-Jones, 4) Martin-Jones highlights ways in which specific films formally illustrate the deterritorialization/reterritorialization of national identity through the filmic narrative. He also emphasizes the allegorical function of the characters as they are fragmented through the narrative to highlight the fracturing of nation.

The opening sequence to Slumdog Millionaire begins with, “Mumbai, 2006 Jamal Malik is one question away from winning 20 million rupees. How did he do it?” (Slumdog Millionaire, 00:01:22), followed by dissipating smoke, revealing a close-up shot of a young man’s face. In
the following rapid series of cuts, we are taken to an overhead shot of falling money into a bathtub, the set of the Indian version of “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”, and back to the smoke-filled screen. The sequence provides no clues about the temporal order of these spaces, with the transitions occurring through dialogue rather than linear shot editing. The first transition occurs when the young man is seated opposite an older, rotund gentleman, who appears to be interrogating him. His only utterance is the word, “Name” as he slaps the young man, and the scene cuts to a shot of falling money, and then to a darkened scene as a voice-over begins, welcoming the audience to “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” while backstage we notice the same young man, as he steps into the center of the set. He is introduced as ‘Jamal Malik” (Dev Patel) from Mumbai, thus answering the question posed in the earlier shot. Next, on the set of the game show, the host (Anil Kapoor) asks Jamal to tell us a bit about himself, when the scene cuts to Jamal being dunked into a bucket of water by Sgt. Srinivas (Saurabh Shukla) where he states that he works at a call center in Juhu. In the first few minutes, the linearity of the filmic narrative is questioned by the lack of temporal grounding. The audience isn’t aware of which sequence – either the one in the police station, or the one on the sets of the game show, is the one currently occurring. There occurs, then, a folding in of time where both narratives, for the sequence of these shots, appear to be happening simultaneously with the same character – Jamal, being present in both. This multiplicitous self makes apparent an understanding of time as labyrinthine. By labyrinthine, I refer to a Deleuzian argument about time where we see a deterritorialization of the narrative. The importance of this deterritorialization lies in its ability to cause a crisis of truth as a single entity. By giving the present no causal relation to the past (since a past isn’t apparent
yet), this sequence, as a functioning of the ‘time-image’, essentially makes apparent the multiple potential presents that are contained in any moment.

In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze argues that “The past does not follow the present it is no longer, it coexists with the present it was” (Deleuze, “Cinema 2”, 79). This sequence makes apparent this coexistence.

In the previous chapter, we saw how *Dostana’s* intertextuality answered Elizabeth Freeman’s call to a ‘deviant chronopolitics’ through “pleasurable interruptions, and momentary fulfillments from elsewhere, other times” (Freeman, “Time Binds, or, Erotohistoriography”,59). In *Slumdog Millionaire*, we see intertextuality functioning toward a deviant chronopolitics as well. While the intertextuality of *Dostana* served to place it within Karan Johar’s oeuvre and call upon the excess of affect for his earlier film together with *Dostana*, *Slumdog Millionaire* serves to build an affective history within which to read the film itself.

The film opens with the familiar ticking of the clock that Indian audiences recognize as originating from ‘Kaun Banega Crorepati’, produced by STAR Television in India, based on the UK show, ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire?’ . The show aired in 2000, 2005, 2007, and 2010, with most of the seasons hosted by Amitabh Bachchan, one of India’s most recognizable faces. The success of the show has been largely attributed to Amitabh Bachchan himself, and his superstardom within the country. (BBC News, “India Scraps Millionaire TV Show”). While Amitabh Bachchan, the actor, himself serves as a line of flight for ‘Kaun Banega Crorepati’, we
see him intersect with *Slumdog Millionaire* again when the protagonist, Jamal (Ayush Khedekar), goes to great lengths to get his autograph in the film. We see Young Jamal locked in a toilet by his brother, when he hears the shouts about Amitabh Bachchan’s helicopter landing in the fields nearby. (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 00:11:57) We are then provided a quick montage of Bachchan’s earlier films in order to orient the viewer to his popularity, before returning to Jamal who opens up a folded photograph of the actor that he carries with him everywhere (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 00:12:36). Forced to jump into the feces in order to escape the toilet, we see Jamal hold up Bachchan’s photo to keep it clean, as the film cuts to a silhouette of Amitabh Bachchan (Feroze Khan) getting out of the helicopter (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 00:12:50) as Jamal runs through the crows to get his autograph. This reference to Amitabh Bachchan and his significance to Indians works to reiterate the film’s setting in Mumbai, and the relevance of film to indianness. However, it is the very montage that illustrates Bachchan’s relevance that makes apparent the film’s attempt at constructing its signification as ‘indian’ or ‘real’. In fact, an appearance by Amitabh Bachchan in a Hindi film would hardly require a montage of his work to explain his importance to the film. In that instance, the film both makes apparent its audience, i.e. not Indian, and also highlights its insertion into ‘indian’ timespace to the extent that Amitabh Bachchan’s popularity – something that’s quite familiar to Hindi-speaking India, is used as a plot point in the narrative to highlight its indianness. It is particularly resonant because the audience is acutely aware of the contrast between their own decision given Young Jamal’s choice – to jump into the feces or miss Amitabh Bachchan, as well as the contrast between Bachchan himself, stepping out of a helicopter as Jamal steps out of the feces. (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 00:12:50).
A similar double movement – of both insertion and removal from ‘indian’ness occurs at the end of the film when Jamal (Dev Patel) and Latika (Freida Pinto) finally meet on the tracks of Victoria terminus and share their first kiss. (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 01:53:15). The film segues into a dance sequence to the tune of ‘Jai Ho’, with the cast and crew lined up behind the actors. Shots of their dance is interspersed with the end credits, at the end of which, we have what is ostensibly the movie’s actual end, with Jamal and Latika walking off into the distance. (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 01:56:25) This song and dance sequence appears to have little connection with the movie itself, and while this should qualify it to be in line with mainstream Indian cinema and the functioning of the song-sequence outside of the diagetic space of the film itself, we instead see this song again make apparent the film’s attempt at inserting itself into the genre of ‘bollywood’ cinema. More importantly, this song sequence splits the duration of the film itself into two endings – the first where Jamal and Latika kiss on screen before the end credits, and the second when they walk away in to the distance. This destabilizes the discreteness of the film’s duration, allowing at least two, if not more possible ‘ends’, much like the multiple beginnings that the film opens with, as we saw in the earlier section. This destabilizing duration is also highlighted in another line of flight—the audio, particularly MIA’s ‘Paper Planes’. As a song that was featured on the trailer to *Pineapple Express* (2008), and sampled on the track ‘Swagga Like Us’ by rappers T.I, Jay-Z, Kanye West, and Lil’ Wayne, while also being on the soundtrack for the film and eventually remixed several times. The song does continue to carry with it the affective signification of *Slumdog Millionaire* itself. With so many branching lines of flight, the duration of the film comes into question. Returning to the opening of this chapter, to the attempted sale of Rubina Ali (Young Latika), I contend that the duration of the film cannot be understood as
limited purely by the duration of the actual film but ensconces various lines of flight that can only be read as layers of duration or the uneven times of *Slumdog Millionaire* as a collection of events. In this frame of reference, *Slumdog Millionaire* remains a node in the media assemblage. Amit Rai argues for a conception of ontology as duration (Rai, 5), where duration is both the “nested temporalities that are lived through the assemblage, and the duration it has as an entity in its own right” (Rai, 5). In this case, the film’s duration appears to be signify beyond the duration of the film’s running time. As in the earlier chapter on *Dostana*, the film can only be understood as a ‘whole’ over a span of years, and cultural moments, rather than the two hours that it takes to watch it. Following the audio track, we begin to see multiple networks of capital that link the distinct spaces of a UK production company (Celador Films) along with a US production company (Fox Searchlight) produces a film that is materially set within the Indian economy, employ actors from disparate regions of the world including the slums of Mumbai, the Indian diasporic milieu of London, and the glitzy corridors of Bollywood. Similarly, its affective flows – from the 2009 Grammy’s stage where MIA performs ‘Paper Planes’, to the slums that Rubina Ali, (Latika) lives in, to the Oscars mainstage, and the multiple sites of viewing through illegal downloads of the songs, the movie theatres in India, and so on, that allow for changing diagrams of relations to occur. Each of these sites are intimately linked to the film as a singular entity – one that is constantly changing with each new event, and, through the film, bear the trace of the nation that *Slumdog Millionaire* circulates.

In this chapter, I first outlined the narration of *Slumdog Millionaire*’s antecedents as it fell into the narrating of nation itself. Next, I outlined the temporal disjunctures within the film as
they were reflected in the character of Jamal and linked to the changing nation. Finally, I explored the multiple durations of the film, to argue for an understanding of the film as layers of duration rather than a discrete object. This final argument resonates with the previous chapter’s discussion of Dostana and dismantling of film into moments, and durations, which reflect the telling of nation itself.

As we saw in the case of Slumdog Millionaire, the film is repeatedly re-aligned toward different goals, and carries with it meanings that change with every movement of its multiple fragments. These movements illustrate the building of nationness within the object, and, in so doing, highlight the contingency of ‘nation’ itself. i.e., if nationness builds over time and in multiple, fragmented moments, then the nation itself changes with each of these fragments, and the only coherence that the nation may possess is these very traces or excess that is contained within these fragments, rather than any singular formal aspect or identity that bodies may possess. The nation becomes the thing that links multiple sites and disparate bodies, i.e. it becomes a ‘being of relation’ – the affective link along these networks that allow us to speak of change in a coherent manner, for example, the phrase “Bombay had become Mumbai”, as I mentioned earlier, links the city to all the changes that those four words encapsulate, for the city and India, more generally. And this phrase also links two moments in time that may otherwise be disparate, India changed dramatically in those few years, as I highlighted earlier, and these changes became part of ‘India’ itself – hence the only commonality between these disparate states of existence, in this case, the india before and after the cultural shift of the late 90’s, is the nation itself – its endurance through time, just as the film becomes the link between the disparate
bodies of ‘Paper Planes’, the audio track, Jamal Malik, the actors who play them, Danny Boyle, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that award the Oscars.
CONCLUSION: ONTOLOGY AS DURATION

all the predicates that can be stated of a thing – all the “accidents” that might befall it (even those remaining in potential) – are of its nature. If so, “nature” changes at the slightest move. The concept of nature concerns modification not essence (Massumi, 7)

My initial question that spurred this thesis was to conceive of a way in which we could understand the nation as contradictory but unified, as multiple but singular, particularly in relation to subjectivity, i.e. is there a theoretical space to think of ‘Indian’ as not limited to straight, Hindu, hindi-speaking men? The problem I was directly addressing seemed to be a place in thought for ‘minority’ or ‘marginalized’ populations as central to the idea of nation, rather than in opposition to the structure. The tension here, and I believe it is a productive one, is in being able to think of the margin both as a site of resistance and as an integral part of the ‘whole’ itself. My primary focus, however, is the possibility of thinking these tensions as they change, as the boundaries of the nation shift, but still signify as meaningful. The question of change immediately implies the noting of time, and its effects on the ‘being’ in question, whether this is the nation, its subjects, or its cultural objects. In this thesis, I have traced the multiple times of various bodies – filmic, subjective, and national, to highlight the ways in which change is the only constant to the nation. In this chapter, I will first revisit the primary arguments I have made so far and then elaborate on the necessity of understanding the nation through the dimension of temporality.
My interest in the idea of nation brought me to these two films as examples of the sort of affective nationness that I have tried to highlight in the chapters. Both films speak of this in different ways. *Dostana* (Mansukhani, 2008) constructs an indianness removed from India as a spatio-temporal entity, while *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008) speaks of an indianness that, while squarely located within India, is still distanced by its involvement in multiple national discourses.

An intersectional critique of such films seems limited, to me, since we would be left arguing about whether these films are actual ‘Indian’, or if they are ‘real’ representations of India. I have found neither tack useful in understanding this ‘excess’ or ‘affect’ that I have been trying to characterize in these films. Instead, I have tried to explore the various networks of meaning and that they have moved within both spatially and temporally.

These movements in time are important because they allow for an understanding of ‘nationness’ – a sense of the affective trace of nation that these films seem to carry, that lies outside of the realm of identitarian critique. As I have argued in the preceding chapters, these films create the concept of indianness as they circulate, and they gather meaning and politics that are often in excess of the characters or identities they represent. This excess of meaning is apparent over time, and collects around/within these fragmented objects. The excess I am referring to in this particular instance is ‘nationness’, and hence, nationness becomes a collection of modifications, accidents, and, contradictory meanings that, as Massumi points out, are still the
‘nature of the thing’. Indeed, if the ‘thing’ in question is nationness itself, then it can only be considered as consisting of these modifications, and multiple meanings.

In trying to describe this ‘excess’ or ‘affect’ that I have attributed to these films, I have primarily used these terms in reference to the ‘affective turn’ in cultural theory from both queer theory, and technoscience criticism, building on the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Jasbir Puar, in her essay, “Prognosis Time: Towards a geopolitics of affect, debility, and capacity” builds on Massumi’s work to describe affect as “something of a residual phenomenon that escapes emotion: the trace effect, as it were, of a recognizable commodity” (Puar, “Prognosis Time”, 161) It is this ‘trace’ that I have tried to highlight in each of these films. Trying to explain affect is the irony of the project itself, since it is an exercise in creating an epistemology of ontology – a fact that Puar also notes in her conclusion to Terrorist Assemblages (2007). However, as Patricia Clough points out in her introduction to The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social (2007), such a project is productive in discussing the vast changes in socio-political ordering of societies, the states of exception, trauma, war, and technologies, that are being employed in the service of control in society in recent times. The affective turn marks a shift in thought and theory about society.

Through my work, I have repeatedly stated that this affect must be traced through time. To briefly address why this is important, we return to Massumi and Rai, as interpreters of Deleuze and Guattari’s arguments on time as ontology. For Massumi, building on Bergson and Deleuze, “Position no longer comes first, with movement a problematic second. It is secondary
to movement and derived from it. It is retro movement, movement residue” (Massumi, 7). This argument inverts the understanding of the body from matter to movement – a similar notion to his earlier claim that nature is modification, not essence. Building on the same bodies of theory, Rai argues for ‘ontology as duration’, where duration is “both the nested temporalities that are lived through the assemblage, and the duration it has as an entity in its own right” (Rai, 5). These related arguments on time and ontology call for an understanding of time as the basis of the being, rather than matter or position in space. This important shift marks the way in which I have made two ontological arguments in this thesis. First, that we cannot understand the film as a single entity but as a collection of various temporalities or durations, for example, through the soundtrack which circulates independent of the film and collects its own ‘accidents’ and ‘predicates’ (to use Massumi’s terms), i.e. that the film’s ontology is dependent on is duration. The second leads from the first, where I’ve highlighted the way in which nationness, as connected to the temporality of the films, is constituted by uneven durations, and multiple significations.

While both arguments are tied to the film as a medium, the larger argument for an understanding of ‘nationness’, as the residue or ‘trace’ is one that can be highlighted in any cultural artifact that is tied to the narration of the nation. And, as we progress, one begins to question how the ‘film’ can be thought of as a discrete subject at all. I will now attempt an elaboration of the significance of these two arguments, and the stakes of their conclusions.
1. Filmic bodies

Another vein of argument that the ‘Affective turn’ in theory has pursued is the restructuring of the ‘body’ toward a more expansive understanding of the term. Underlying this move is the recognition that particular socio-technical advances – DNA coding, stem-cell research, digitization of information, regenerative medical sciences and so on, have challenged the notions of a discrete body consisting purely of flesh and bone. Rai furthers this argument to understand how bodily perception meets changes in technology to reconfigure the idea of bodies. He highlights the connections between the narrative of the film, the particular qualities of the site of that viewing, in his case, a theatre in Bhopal, India, along with the audio technology, the representations of the characters on screen, and the audiences’ sensory reactions to these multiple sensory stimuli to illustrate the fact that the body cannot be conceived of as a discrete whole and the boundaries between living and non-living are blurrier than we may think. This blurring of boundaries, for Rai, is the ‘media assemblage’. An important understanding of the assemblage is that it is not constituted from the linking of different elements such that theatre+audience+narrative gives us an assemblage, but that these concepts themselves are multiple, i.e. that the audience consists of sensing organisms, as well as individual memories, and emotions, while the theatre could just as easily be a computer screen, the medium could be a video on the internet, a pirated DVD or the film reel in a theatre. Each of these multiplicities combine and re-combine to form a coherent whole. So, for example, in referring to the ‘Dostana’ as a singular text, we brush over the multiplicites of the event that combines differently each time, for example as a clip from the movie streamed on Youtube by an individual, versus the person who waits in line to watch the film in the theatre on the day of its release for a ‘First Day
First Show’. These recombinations allow for the assemblage to constantly be changing and multiplying. Therefore, the object, in this case, the film, consists of the duration of all its multiple recombinations. For example, with *Slumdog Millionaire*, the film’s collaboration with MIA and A.R. Rahman shaped the duration of the ‘Paper Planes’ as an artifact, which also affected the duration of the film itself, as does the actual body of the actor who plays Young Latika (Rubina Ali) and is forever linked to the film as part of her being.

This re-working of the body to the idea of an assemblage is productive in explaining the ways in which the film signifies more than just the narrative of the plot, but instead, comes to assume an ‘excess’ or residue of meaning from each event linked to it. An affective notion of the body allows for the experience of the film as an event, i.e. a moment in time in space, which is qualitatively different from the notion of the film as a text that represents certain things – ideas, subjects, people, identities, and spaces. By allowing the ‘body’ to emerge within the moment of the film viewing, we can speak of the emotions, the bodily perceptions, and the multiple significations of the objects in question.

A critical film analysis following this line of thought can then attempt to speak of the body’s feelings, sensory perception, and reactions just as it speaks of the film’s narrative and plot. Such an analysis can also account for the film’s circulation and change through time to account for the ways in which perceptions, meanings, and reactions of audiences can and do change.
My work in this thesis has been to explore some of the residual meaning attached to these films to highlight how the film must be understood as part of a media assemblage, and how this assemblage is contingent on time, since it is the duration of the assemblage that gives it coherency, not only its position in space.

2. The nation is the being of a relation

What would it mean to give a logical consistency to the in-between? It would mean realigning with a logic of relation. For the in-between as such, is not a middling being but rather the being of the middle – the being of a relation.

(Massumi, 70)

In *Parables for the Virtual*, Massumi attempts to outline an ontological framework to think through the binaries within cultural and social theories that involve ‘individuals’ and ‘societies’ as discrete objects that require mediation or ‘representation’. Massumi, based on Deleuzian arguments about assemblage and affect, highlights the problems within a ‘representational’ or ‘intersectional’ framework. An intersectional model of analysis would construct the individual as a sum of discrete identities – race, class, gender, nation, and so on. These identities could ostensibly be understood independent of each other and would constitute units that add to the sum of the subject, i.e. individuals would be represented as white+straight+middle class+man, each unit being linked to a specific, identified population. As Puar explains in her work,
Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times (2007), there are several problems with the ‘intersectional’ model of identity creation.

As a tool of diversity management, and a mantra of liberal multiculturalism, intersectionality colludes with the disciplinary apparatus of the state – census, demography, racial profiling, surveillance – in that “difference” is encased within a structural container that simply wishes the messiness of identity into a formulaic grid (Puar, “Terrorist Assemblages”, 212)

For Massumi, these grids are ‘secondary’ or ‘derived’ from movement. Massumi, building on Bergson’s arguments on time and nature, these positions or intersections of identity that the subject occupies are only snapshots of the body’s movement through time, and hence, the grids formed from intersectional identities are only one dimension of the individual. The other dimension that Massumi urges theory to move toward is ‘movement’ or ‘change’, i.e. to studying, the interval between two positions on the grid. For Massumi, each object is qualitatively altered through time, and indeterminate in its ontology because it is constantly in movement. To return to the opening quote, Massumi’s aim is to think of the being of relation as a discrete entity, i.e. to think of movement, and change as being in itself. At stake in such thinking is the possibility for theorizing the society as change, rather than stasis, hence moving beyond the model of the intersectional grid in understanding the networks of social relations. When change or movement is the topic of study, then the process of study also changes. Hence, my primary aim in this thesis has been to trace the movement of the filmic elements as they make actual certain networks of potential. By this, I mean that the film makes apparent
certain networks of relation, both affective and economic, that highlight the way the ‘nation’ has been circulating in our current globalized timespace. This is particularly apparent in *Slumdog Millionaire* whose capital flows allow for emerging networks of interaction that link these distinct spaces where a UK production company (Celador Films) along with a US production company (Fox Searchlight) produces a film that is materially set within the Indian economy, employ actors from disparate regions of the world including the slums of Mumbai, the Indian diasporic milieu of London, and the glitzy corridors of Bollywood. Similarly, its affective flows – from the 2009 Grammy’s stage where MIA performs ‘Paper Planes’, to the slums that Rubina lives in, to the Oscars mainstage, and the multiple sites of viewing through illegal downloads of the songs, the movie theatres in India, and so on, that allow for changing diagrams of relations to occur. Each of these sites are intimately linked to the film as a singular entity. However, we see that the idea of ‘nation’ itself changes in its circulation among these emerging networks to include multiple sites and bodies. Or, rather, the nation becomes the relation between all these objects – the being of relation.

These two arguments – that the film is an assembling of durations, and that the nation is a being in relation, have multiple implications for the theoretical problems I had first outlined in the Introduction. First, these arguments directly address the clear distinctions that theorists have made between the nation and marginalized populations, specifically in limiting the ‘nation’ to the nation-state and the structures of power. While this remapping of the ontology of nation doesn’t elide the material reality of discrimination – LGBT bodies are still marginalized in every structure of power, as are women, religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities – this approach
allows us to understand the nation as more than the structures of social power, as a relation between bodies and populations that allows for the hope \(^{12}\) that the nation can signify more than discrimination – that it can signify change.

Another intervention that this thesis has attempted is to provide a language with which to understand ‘indian film’ which acknowledges the link that is made between the nation and its cultural products but allows them both to function equally, neither reading film as a furthering of ‘India’ as a whole, i.e. as part of a larger nationalist ideology, nor reading the film as it represents a specific India, i.e. outlining the inadequate representations of Indians in film. This attempt follows Rai’s work *Untimely Bollywood* in following a kind of theory about film that doesn’t privilege the cinema as an original apparatus or industry, but explores the ‘ecologies of sensation’ that “modulate and potentialize the body’s pleasures and distribute them as contagions across segmented populations not as master scripts that normalize but self-organizing codes that modulate and tinker” (Rai, 9). These ecologies of sensation that Rai discusses, can otherwise be described as the the network of affective and capital flows that I have earlier described which neither privilege specific sites nor bodies but thinks through their constant reassembling. Hence, ‘film’ expands to include the multiple media that constitute the filmic body, the multiple sites of viewing, and the multiple bodies of populations that have access to these different sites and media.

I have tried to illustrate how these shifts in theory are contingent upon temporality as a central focus of study, of the thought of temporality as the necessary intervention in these
theories that allow for an understanding of how these objects function, and exist in the world. The possible futures for such an argument seem, to me, manifold, and not easily mapped out. However, one definite implication of this thesis is that the nation isn’t as easily dismissed; in fact, the nation appears to still be a useful placeholder of identity and control. As we see in *Slumdog Millionaire*’s contradictory national origins, such narrations still signify and are used to police specific bodies – whether filmic or human. In thinking about the nation as a being in relation, as the link between multiple spaces and times, we also come to the understanding that the nation becomes more than any single view of itself. In moving toward a conception of the nation as inclusive of the multiple discourses and objects around it, I argue that we see the hope of possible queer futures, since the nation as much as it includes discriminatory and regressive epistemes, it also includes the possibility for inclusive politics, for recognizing non-normative identities as part of the nation. This system of understanding also unseats the necessity for a center in the concept of the nation, i.e. by no longer linking the nation to a single entity, non-normative identities need no longer exist in opposition, at least in discourse.

However, as I have repeatedly mentioned, such an understanding also involves a folding in multiple subjectivities and the politics that comes with them. To that extent, we see control being dispersed along the same lines as the hopeful or futural aspects that I’ve outlined, i.e. which objects are reassembled in nation discourse is still a political question, and in that sense, control is still distributed along the same networks that the objects themselves circulate in. While all the implications of this idea, of the nation as the affective link are still not fully borne out, we see this shift not only in theories of nation, but also in the changing relations between nations.
themselves. As power moves more dispersedly among global networks of capital, we need an understanding of systems of control that move with them, and a language with which to speak of these changes. This thesis is merely a beginning in this project.

This thesis itself bears the mark of time as well as materiality as limitation. One definite avenue of exploration for further research would involve exploring the connections between multiple media, or media synaesthesia (Rai, 19) that occurs in the changing media assemblage. A particular area of interest, and one that I could not address in these pages, is the question of piracy – its aesthetics, and its place within the affective and capital flows I have outlined earlier. It is a question that has haunted me through my writing but has not materialized as a site of analysis. To make apparent the networks that the pirated object reveals would be a useful attempt in addressing the changing nature of the Indian media assemblage as well, especially with the recent focus from directors, actors, and the industry in general on the fears of piracy, and its detrimental effects. Pirated prints of these films also change the durations and networks of the film itself. An article in *The Daily Mail* reported that *Slumdog Millionaire* would be one of the most counterfeited films of all time, particularly linking it to its unique global appeal (Singh, “Flood of £1 *Slumdog Millionaire* Fakes”). A similar article on piracy from the *Indian Express* highlights the way in which these pirated prints reveal different networks of capital and affect, where the Vice President of a digital mastering studio sells the print to a local computer expert in Mumbai, who saves a digital copy of it on his computer, and sells it to a ‘kingpin’ in Karachi, who disseminates prints across the subcontinent. (“Cops crackdown on movie piracy”, *Indian Express*) This network both speeds up, and lengthens the duration of a film, with pirated copies
released before the films reach the theatres, while also making them available to populations that may not have access to the film in a theatre. Continuing in this vein, we see a marked shift in consumption practices linked to changing technologies, processes of digitalization, that require a more detailed exploration of the technologies themselves as they change the nature of sociality around these objects – one that I have not entered into in this thesis. Interestingly, such modes of critique also need a more interdisciplinary approach to theory itself, when discrete constructions such as the ‘humanities’ and ‘sciences’ break down at the point where bodies and technologies meet.

My entry into this thesis and my focus throughout has attempted to stick to the idea of ‘indianness’ as a trace, even as I question the necessity of that construction as a singular entity. However, another line of research would be to look at the intersections of multiple national traces as they weave through the media assemblage, and the changing networks those reveal. One of the primary ways in which this needs to be addressed, even within India, is the multiple regional affiliations, ethno-linguistic media industries, and alternative spatialities that India contains, particularly with media from industries that are outside of the predominantly hindi cinema of ‘Bollywood’ per se. One interesting example of this can be seen in the films Yuva (Ratnam, 2004), and Ayutha Ezhuthu (Ratnam, 2004). Both films contain the same narrative and some of the same actors, they were shot simultaneously in Hindi (Yuva) and Tamil (Ayutha Ezhuthu). Not only does this in itself provide interesting ways of multiplying the idea of a ‘film’, (where the film is neither a remake nor a sequel, but literally exists in two languages at the same time) the differences between them in terms of narrative are interesting as well. The film
involves a lot of discussions on politics, class identities, and agency. However, it is the slight variations between the two films that highlight multiple spatialities. For example, in the Tamil film, a character rails against in the Central government in Delhi for marginalizing the south, while the Hindi film addresses the politics in Calcutta and communism. While only present for a fleeting moment, this mapping of regional networks make apparent the multiple ‘indias’ that exist in tension, simultaneously. Jose Estaban Muñoz, in his essay, “Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho’s The Sweetest Hangover (and other STDs)” (2000) highlights exactly such a fracturing of ‘national affect’. In the essay, Muñoz addresses the difference between ‘official national affect’, especially in the United States, which is primarily associated with white middle-class subjectivity. In contrast, he provides an analysis of Latinidad as an affect that provides another way of “being in the world, a path that does not conform to the ways of the majoritarian public sphere and the national affect it sponsors” (Muñoz, “Feeling Brown”, 79). Such a nuanced reading of national affects, especially in light of the multiple spatialities and regional identities I have briefly discussed would allow us to speak of the multiple ‘india’s’ that exist in together.

Finally, while my thesis has remained mostly true to its attempt at film analysis, the argument for nation as a being in relation, that imbues objects with a trace or residue of nationness can benefit from an analysis of other cultural artifacts and bodies, to explore the way that such an argument would change to accommodate the changing media and durations of those bodies, and provide a constantly evolving archive of the nation as it is in a constant process of emergence.
NOTES


2 - Another film theorist that uses a deleuzian framework but focuses on temporality rather than assemblage and affect is the work of David Martin-Jones in his book Deleuze, Cinema, and National Identity (2006) where he argues that films serve as a “process of national self-reflection” (Martin-Jones, 1). He notes that the narrative structure of the film, and its temporal effects such as non-linearity, cross-cutting, and fragmented times serve to address the times of the nation itself. This argument is one that also guides the specific filmic events that I’ve chosen to examine, specifically with Slumdog Millionaire where the narrative shifts not only between the past, and the present but provides multiple times following different characters across the same duration of time to provide multiple narratives that are contingent on socio-economic, gendered factors rather than a universalizing linear time. I address his work in greater detail in the relevant chapter.

3 – Figures collected from:
http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=dostana.htm
http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/2008/DOSTA.php
4- Figures collected from

http://boxofficeindia.com/showProd.php?itemCat=308&catName=TGlmd2VydC==


6 – I use the term ‘state of exception’ as Agamben explores it in his book of the same name. He defines it as, “on the one hand […] the extension of the military authority’s wartime powers into the civil sphere, and on the other, a suspension of the constitution (or of the constitutional norms that protect individual liberties)” (Agamben, 5). Extending this understanding to the current state of permanent war, the paranoia of the control society, and the literal deployment of bodies – homosexual or otherwise, to further this existence.

7 – The phrase, while translated as ‘sometimes, things happen’, or, ‘something is happening’, is used in the film to imply that the characters develop romantic feelings for one another. This is the context in which Sam uses the phrase to Neha – a context that doesn’t quite have an equivalent idiomatic expression in English. However, the use of the phrase also launches functions as a call of other times for those in the audience that are familiar with Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (Johar, 1998) a film that in itself is filled with hauntings and continues to haunt Karan Johar as a director.
8 – By ‘duration’ I refer to Rai’s reworking of the Deleuzian term. Rai explains duration as “both the nested temporalities that are lived through the assemblage, and the duration it has as an entity in its own right.” (Rai, 5). In the case of film, it would involve both the duration as the ‘running time’ of the film itself, shot lengths and sequence lengths as well as the duration of its circulation, through audio, its actors, and so on.

9 – Deleuze forwarded two types of images within cinema in his books Cinema 1, and Cinema 2. As Martin-Jones explains, the movement-image generally consists of “an unbroken, linear narrative, based upon the continuity editing rules established by the Hollywood studie system” (Martin-Jones, 2) while the time-image generally consisted of films that experimented with non-linear time, often providing multiple, labyrinthine views on time.

10 – Actual: Massumi draws on Deleuze and Bergson to explain ‘actual’ in contrast to the ‘virtual’. The virtual, for Massumi, is within the realm of potential, it is both the present which hasn’t happened yet and is happening too quickly for us to be aware of it, for example, the passing of the smallest fraction of a second, or the sensory impulses that occur too soon to note. The actual, in contrast, is that which actually enter the sociolinguistic structures of meaning, and the sensory-motor circuits of perception – that which we are able to see, and comprehend. (Massumi, 31). These two concepts are constantly interacting in reality, with objects moving between these two states.

11 – Potential: José Estaban Muñoz elaborates on Agamben’s idea of the potential as, “a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing at the present time” (Muñoz, 9)
12 – ‘Hope’ has been a term that has been theorized in conjunction with affect, and possesses a certain critical value. For Massumi hope is a capacity that is “emblematic of futurity” (cited in Puar, “Prognosis Time” 162) while Muñoz discusses hope through its link to potential, as an “enduring indeterminacy” (Muñoz, 3), i.e. that it is futural, and anticipatory, but remains in the field of potential since it hope’s place is within the ‘not-yet-being’. It is with this same sense of indeterminacy that I employ hope for a conception of nation as a being in relation. While the control over specific bodies’ right to life is still exercised through identitarian paradigms, the hope that an understanding of the affective, and bodies as constantly re-assembling, allows us to speak of the possible moment in which the ‘subject’ in the sense of a policed population ceases to exist as a coherent whole and instead becomes a collection of uneven durations and sensations, that will, ostensibly, be harder to de-limit within identitarian paradigms.


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