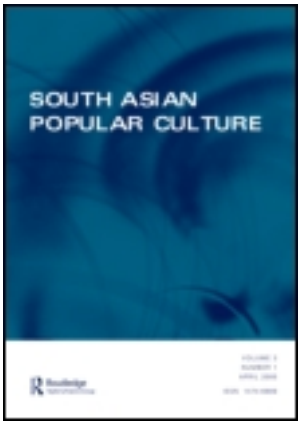

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Queer resolutions: 9/11 and Muslim masculinities in *New York*

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This article examines how the Bollywood film *New York* interrupts some of the dominant gendered and sexualized fictions about 9/11 in US public discourse and by extension, in Indian cinematic and popular discourse about Muslims and citizenship. As several transnational feminist scholars have observed, the monstrously deviant Muslim terrorist, and the heterosexual drama of nationalist domesticity were two key tropes circulated in media discourse following 9/11. My reading explores how *New York* takes on both these tropes as it works to reintegrate Muslim male subjectivities into the national imaginary. In *New York*, these dominant 9/11 fictions are worked into the central heterosexual love triangle, which is cinematically consolidated in the shadows of the twin towers, and then swiftly undone by 9/11. I focus on this erotic triangle in order to examine how, why, and to what effect the film provides an unusually 'queer' resolution to the love triangle, going against the anticipated heterosexual resolution most conventional to the formula. Can this be read a resolution that resists the incitement to heteronormativity that followed 9/11?

'India's 9/11'

This article is about 'India's 9/11', but not in the sense in which that meme has been all too frequently produced in Indian and global media discourse.[1] Following the tragic terrorist attacks of November 2008 in the city of Mumbai, the term 'India's 9/11' was activated in both Indian and Euro-American media discourses to underscore the tragedy of these events. This 'hyper-mnemonic' usage has been widely problematized: Amitav Ghosh (2008) for instance remarked how the metaphor functioned as an exhortation to the Indian government to match the Bush administration's military and judicial response to the attack on the twin towers; and Arundhati Roy (2008) noted how the moniker subordinated Mumbai's tragedy to a western historical frame.[2] Less frequently remarked has been the possibility that the meme 'India's 9/11' also functions as an Indian colonial strategy, one that seeks a geopolitical alliance between India and the US, an alliance that is repeatedly consolidated against a common Muslim terrorist threat within national borders in both countries.

Rather than carrying forward this troubling colonialist meme, I propose in this article to redirect the signifier 'India's 9/11', away from the events of November 2008 in Mumbai, and back to September 2001 in New York City. In this article then, 'India's 9/11' names the way in which 'India' perceives and constructs the events of 11 September 2001, through a field of cultural production that is marked by contiguities and disjunctures with Indian and American state discourses on 9/11. It is in this light that I wish to consider *New York* (d. Kabir Khan, 2009), a Bollywood thriller centring broadly on a Muslim-led terror plot to bomb a federal building in New York City.

Released and reviewed in India as well as the US, *New York* is one of a handful of recent films from South Asia that explore the aftermath of 9/11 from the minority perspective of South Asian Muslim men in the US, who after 9/11 were subject to large-

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scale illegal detentions under the Patriot Act. Like the later film *My Name is Khan*, and to some extent earlier Pakistani film *Khuda Ke Liye*, *New York* sets out to problematize the criminalization of Muslim masculinities in post-9/11 US discourse while seeking to reintegrate these subjectivities through the production of 'good Muslims'. In the course of this attempt, *New York* speaks to some key tropes through which cultural anxieties about Muslims in general and Muslim men in particular have been managed in both the US and Indian nationalist discourse, often in remarkably similar ways.

As several transnational feminists have observed, two dominant tropes in US media discourse following 9/11 were the 'drama of nationalist domesticity', in which US national community was repeatedly cast in the image of the white heterosexual family; and the figuring of the Muslim terrorist as a primitive, monstrous and sexually deviant 'monster-terrorist-fag' (Bacchetta et al. 2002, 302; Puar and Rai 2002).[3] These tropes resonate in significant ways with the depiction of the Muslim terrorist in Indian media and cinematic discourse. The Hindu family has of course long served to model the nation in Bombay cinema, also emblematizing what is under threat from Islamist terrorism. In *Aamir* for example, as the suit-wearing, educated 'good Muslim' protagonist considers whether to follow the terrorist's orders to place a bomb on a bus, the camera focuses repeatedly on a bindi-wearing mother and her son – the iconic image of what is at stake.[4] While the second trope, that of sexual deviance, has not always characterized the Muslim terrorist in Hindi cinema, it appears to have travelled. In Khan's earlier film *Kabul Express* for example we hear a joke about the homosexual proclivities of the Taliban within minutes of the opening frames. In *Khuda Ke Liye* (a Pakistani film but sharing the same audience in India as Bombay cinema) the innocent Mansoor, when asked yet again in interrogation 'what is your relation with Osama bin Laden?' replies in frustration: 'I don't know. Maybe he's gay and he likes me?' Such moments evince a knowingness in South Asian cinematic discourse about this particular American trope of Afghan/Muslim/terrorist (these being frequently conflated categories) sexual deviance.

In what follows, I wish to explore how *New York* recasts these twin tropes by focusing closely on two formal aspects of the film. The first is the film's narration of the main terror plot through a device familiar from the Bollywood buddy film genre: the heterosexual love triangle featuring an intense male friendship (*dosti*). The second is the film's participation in and reworking of what some critics have called the 'cinepatriotic genre' in Hindi cinema. Much like the post-9/11 counter-terrorism discourses in the US, Hindi cinema's cinepatriotic genre sorts good Muslims from bad Muslims via the figure of the Muslim terrorist, while using the heterosexual family as a template for citizenship (Rai 2003, 17). What interests me here is the manner in which *New York* fuses and adapts these genres in order to rescript the figure of the Muslim terrorist, through a particular management of Muslim male sexualities. This attempt, I find, brings the film to an unusual resolution, both to the erotic triangle and to the film itself – an imperfectly 'queer' resolution which I connect to the film's project of reintegrating alienated Muslim masculinities into US national space, and by implication into Indian national space.

Love, *dosti* and 9/11

Ten minutes into *New York*, we are introduced to the buff John Abraham, one of Hindi cinema's best-known stars and its only Christian male star, playing the role of an Indian-born, all-American college student named (of course) Sam. Sam is first shown embarking on an 'annual challenge', a furious footrace with another student who is white, blonde, and male. The two men set off, bounding across hallways, lunchrooms and terraces, clearing

hurdles on their way to the finish. Even when held back physically by his white opponent, Sam pushes forward smilingly. Cheered on by a largely white college crowd, as well as the Indian-American Maya (the film's female lead), and the fresh-off-the-boat Indian student Omar, the two men finally disappear into a tower, out of sight. As we look on at the empty tower, a brown hand emerges into sight, takes hold of a rope, and gradually raises the American flag. The crowd cheers wildly as Sam steps into the tower, pounds his heart, points to the flag, and raises both arms in victory.

It is revealed soon enough that 'Sam' is an American-born Indian Muslim, but indeed this spectacular display of patriotism already cues us to Sam's multiple minority status. The scene draws on a tradition of sentimental representations of the Indian Muslim in Hindi cinema where that otherwise 'undecidable' figure is called upon to ritually perform national and communal loyalties that cannot simply be taken for granted (Chakravarty 2005, 238). This idyllic moment of Sam's patriotic triumph is situated firmly within a flashback narrative, recounted by Sam's one-time friend Omar in a police lockup. Arrested under false charges at the very beginning of the film under the Patriot Act, Omar (a distinctly Muslim name) is being interrogated by Roushan, another South Asian Muslim man working with the Federal bureau of Investigation (FBI). It is as Omar reconstructs his memories of Sam for Roushan that we learn that 'Sam' is short for Samir Shaikh, a Muslim terror suspect sought by the FBI. The moment this is revealed, the significance of the flag race comes more fully into focus: could this uber-integrated South Asian man possibly be a terrorist, or is he an innocent patriot, scapegoated by the FBI like his friend Omar?

The scene ends with the first triangulation between the main players in the love triangle: the uber-masculine, all-assimilated Indian American Sam; the shy, newly arrived Indian Muslim student Omar; and semi-assimilated Indian American woman Maya (whose unmarked communal status betrays an easy elision of the effects of racial profiling for South Asian women). Descending from the flag tower, Sam flirtatiously solicits a hug from Maya; rebuffed, he turns to Omar, lifting the smaller man off the ground in a bear-hug. When the fresh-off-the-boat Omar introduces himself with the words 'I've just come', Sam replies with cosmopolitan wit: 'what, with just a hug?' The joke 'outs' the multidirectional libidinal energies that sustain the first half of the film. Just as Maya flirts playfully with both men, I would suggest that the latter also arguably romance each other in ways both secret and open – if not ostensibly at the level of the narrative, then through the many other codes that cinema employs to disguise and reveal the 'secret politics of our desires' (Nandy 1999).

At the same time, the explicit reference to homosexuality also serves to mark Sam as a modern Muslim subject, running against popular attributions of Muslim conservatism (and particularly homophobia) in both the US and India. In this sense the embarrassed Indian Muslim Omar functions somewhat like the working-class Kantabehn in *Kal Ho Na Ho* (that other famous Bollywood buddy film set in New York City), whose scandalized misinterpretation of the two male heroes' intimacy 'allows the men to be read as modern, transnational, cosmopolitan, and mobile subjects' (Gopinath 2005a, 163). Indeed, one of the narrative arcs of *New York* concerns the transformation of Omar into a properly cosmopolitan modern Muslim subject who can be assimilated into the nation.

In the erotic triangle that quickly forms, although Maya is ostensibly the common object of male desire, it is Sam who occupies the apex of that triangle: a dynamic figured so evocatively in that early scene where Sam stands heroically atop the flag-tower, as Omar and Maya watch admiringly from the lawns below. In representing the evolving friendship and romance between Sam, Omar and Maya, *New York* replays several conventions well familiar from the buddy film, which critics have often identified as a

genre that has always simmered with homoerotic potential (Waugh 2001; S. Ghosh 2007). In both Bollywood and Hollywood cinema, this genre typically entails an idealization of male homosocial bonds or *dosti*, combined with marginal heterosexual pursuit and palpable misogyny. What distinguishes the Bollywood buddy genre however is its situatedness in conventions that historically have never distinguished too sharply between romantic love and friendship. As Shohini Ghosh (2007, 421) reminds us, 'Bombay cinema rarely represents romance through sexual explicitness. Therefore, the cinematic devices used to represent love are similar, even identical, to those depicting friendship'. As a result, friendship becomes readable as romantic love. This is the light in which we might consider the frequent embraces between Omar and Sam on the football field; Omar, the smaller man, at one point leaping jubilantly into the tall and well-built Sam's arms after scoring a touchdown, as the song *Hai Junoon* (there's a passion in the heart) plays in the background.

But notably, the queer dynamic between Sam and Omar becomes visible as a function not only of resistant spectatorial practices – whereby queer audiences pick out the sexual subtext of queer images, reading against the manifest narrative of a film – but also of what Thomas Waugh (2001, 292) calls 'winking semiotic play'. Waugh points to a growing sexual playfulness in the Bollywood buddy film in the nineties, in films like *Main Khiladi Tu Anari*, which while adhering to heterosexual romance at the level of plot, 'winked' at queer spectators in the domains of visual image, choreography and song lyrics. *New York* similarly 'winks' rather more openly today, repeatedly constructing the muscular Sam as 'top' to Omar's 'bottom' masculinity.[5] In one scene, a woozy Omar runs out of a bar following his bravado in drinking games, and returns in a limp faint, borne in the manly arms of Sam. Thus the homoerotic vibes between Sam and Omar exist not merely in the queer eye but are being signalled actively on screen. On the football field, in the bar, and in Sam's sweeping embraces, the smaller Omar is humorously constructed as a feminized partner to the hyper-masculine Sam, as Maya watches on smilingly.

This multidirectional tapestry of desires is consolidated in the shadows of the twin towers, and swiftly undone by 9/11. Visually and libidinally in the longish song sequence *Hai Junoon*, the towers literally bind the trio together in an improbably idealized pre-9/11 past of perfect racial integration, youthful sexual energy, and hope for the future. Through the course of the song, Sam, Maya and Omar play with their (white) American friends on the football field as the twin towers glisten in the backdrop, walk amidst the city's bright lights and tall skyscrapers, and finally end up at the song's conclusion sitting by the Hudson, the threesome framed against the city skyline at night facing the World Trade Centre. If it seems surprising that the phallic pillars of capitalist patriarchy anchor the *mis-en-scene* for any kind of non-heteronormative bonding between three brown protagonists in America, it soon becomes clear that this can be the case only so long as that symbol of phallic power is fully erect. As long as the towers stand, the threesome holds together. As soon as the towers fall, however, the trio too disintegrates.

In the film, 9/11 comes about exactly as Omar begins to realize that Maya and Sam are in love with each other. It is as he questions Maya about this that a shriek is heard, and they both rush into a room, to hear the breaking news of 9/11 on television. The scene registers a dawning separation between the immigrant Omar, who remains standing at the liminal space of the doorway, and the other students in the room, most of all Sam and Maya. As the television anchors detail the events, and the image of the first plane crashing into the World Trade Centre are seen, the shocked Maya, tearing up, leaves Omar's side, moving closer to the television but also towards Sam, seen standing by.

As the second plane crashes into the second tower, the camera gives us a close-up of a white, blonde couple, the distressed but composed man supporting the openly weeping woman – before cutting back to Sam and Maya, establishing them as the mirror image of the white couple, at least in the way they respond to the event. Omar stands back, looking alternately at the explosions on TV, and then at Sam and Maya, locked in embrace with their backs to Omar. The scene emphasizes the simultaneity of the fall of the towers and their heterosexual convergence. If their grief draws Sam and Maya closer and also bonds them in identity to the collective grief of the students around them, Omar's separates him absolutely, from his closest friends as well as the community of mourners in the room. In some confusion, Omar watches people around him breaking down in tears of disbelief.

For South Asian viewers, his incomprehension quietly recalls his origins, mirroring that of so many South Asian witnesses of 9/11 who were perplexed at the monumentality being assigned to a tragedy the sort of which had been seen over and over in South Asia, where political terror has long preceded 9/11. No one notices when Omar leaves the room. As Omar leaves the building he too is crying – not because of fall of the towers, but because of how that event solidifies his exclusion from the charmed triangle that had once folded him almost seamlessly into American life as a student – or so at least it seemed in his rose-tinted revisiting of the past.

Nowhere is Omar's status as an outsider more explicitly marked than in this moment of national and heterosexual bonding. Cast outside the newly bonded American heterosexual dyad as they experience a moment of national crisis, Omar leaves the city for Philadelphia that very evening, breaking off all contact with them. As one suitor exits the scene and the trio falls apart, it seems that the love triangle has been brought to the predictable heterosexual resolution in a moment of national mourning. But even that does not survive in the aftermath of 9/11.

Terrorism, Muslim masculinities and cinepatriotism

With Omar's departure from the city, we are now returned to the present, seven years after 9/11, back to the prison cell where Omar is pressured to spy on Sam. *New York* now takes a darker turn, drawing increasingly on conventions from the cinepatriotic genre delineated by Rai (2003). Under Roushan's close watch, Omar reunites with Sam and Maya (now married with a son named Danyal). Soon he learns, after some false leads, that the exemplary American Sam is after all the terrorist the FBI had thought him to be. Here, the sudden revelation of the seemingly integrated Sam as Muslim terrorist certainly risks reinforcing the troubling narrative of what Tunku Varadarajan (2009) contentiously called 'going Muslim'.[6]

This is complicated, however, soon after the film's intermission, when the narrative provides a detailed back-story for Sam's evolution from model citizen into 'Muslim terrorist'. This is a departure, it should be noted, from many other representations of terrorism in Bollywood cinema, which give barely a nod (if at all) to the historical production of 'radicalized Muslims' as heartless or misguided terrorists.

For instance, in the thriller *Kurbaan*, as the film critic Gaurav Malani approvingly notes,

> though *Kurbaan* is sensitive towards the victimization of innocent Muslims (that might have provoked them towards terrorism), it doesn't focus on their detailed background accounts through extended flashbacks [as *New York* does]. *That saves the ordeal and it only makes sense to avoid the obvious*. (Malani 2009, emphasis mine)

Malani counts *Kurbaan* among recent films on terror that take a 'neutral stance on global terrorism' – indeed, films like *Fanaa, Aamir* and *Kurbaan* do acknowledge in passing the undeniable horrors suffered by Muslims in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq and within India. *Kurbaan* itself permits a brief acknowledgment of the destructive effects of the Afghan war on an otherwise monstrous Muslim terrorist family hatching a terrorist plot in a New York suburb; and even features a debate where the 'good Muslim' American journalist Riyaz expresses a harsh critique of US foreign policy in Afghanistan. Certainly even *Kurbaan* is more commendable in this regard than an openly vigilantist film like *A Wednesday*, where terrorists are simply produced as 'cockroaches' who must be crushed. But it is also worth considering how such moments may paradoxically contain the very critique they articulate, whereby the US invasions are acknowledged precisely in order to be neutralized by an overall vision of monstrous, essentially violent Muslim others. Thus in *Kurbaan*, the acknowledgment of Afghan suffering is balanced out primarily through the device of burqa-clad women subjugated by their controlling and abusive terrorist menfolk, as they call out to the Hindu woman Avantika for rescue. Indeed the 'balanced' picture of 'American excesses' for which reviewers commended *Kurbaan* also lends credibility to the caricature of the misogynist, domestic violence-prone Muslim terrorist family in that film.

Compared to films like *Fanaa*, *Kurbaan* and *A Wednesday*, *New York* presents the Muslim terrorist rather differently – by depicting rather than simply glossing the impact of state atrocities on Muslim men, and tracing the figure of the Muslim terrorist through the abuses of an authoritarian US state in the aftermath of 9/11. In this it departs clearly from Varadarajan's (2009) framing of Muslim-Americans as terrorists-in-waiting, ready to 'discard … integration'. *New York* puts on display (albeit not in unproblematic ways) the process of dis-integration through which once-integrated Muslim citizens become unhitched from the national imaginary through the profiling practices of the US state. The film traces the terrorist's subjectivity to a moment of gendered racialization following 9/11: the criminalization of Muslim men, their disappearance and illegal incarceration, and their torture and humiliation in custody based on perceptions of Muslim masculine subjectivities.

In this representation of the Muslim terrorist, *New York* both draws on and reworks what Amit Rai (2003), following Manisha Sethi, identifies as the cinepatriotic genre in Hindi cinema – a genre that 'seeks to represent, visualize and narrativize the sovereignty of the supposedly secular, but in practice upper caste, Hindu Indian nation' (Rai 2003, 3). The particular adaptability of this genre to contemporary US national consternation about Muslims is clear: it is true of national discourse in the US today as it has always been in post-independence India that Muslims cannot simply be wished away but must be integrated, being indispensable to the secular claims of the nation-state. As Rai (2003, 13) observes, this genre works 'to position India geo-politically with the West and the ongoing War on Terrorism' through the construction of a common enemy.

Within the cinepatriotic genre, the figure of the 'bad' Muslim terrorist becomes crucial for the production of 'good' Muslim citizens by serving as a foil. Moreover in this genre, the trope of the heterosexual family is mobilized to integrate the Muslim other into an ostensibly secular but really Hinduized India. On the surface, *New York* appears to replay stock cinepatriotic tropes, by producing Sam as the misguided terrorist; positioning Omar and Maya as foils to the 'bad Muslim'; and drawing upon the minority woman (Maya) to anchor the misguided terrorist via the normalizing dream of the heterosexual family unit via marriage and childbearing. Despite these cinepatriotic impulses, however, *New York* cannot but also register the repeated failure of the heterosexual family to anchor the

misguided Muslim terrorist – a failure that it traces explicitly to the interruptions of the state.

For instance, Sam traces his own path to terrorism back to the state's interruption of the just-begun romance with Maya. Ten days after 9/11, Sam recounts, he was picked up by the FBI at Union Station, on his way to visit Maya in Washington DC. In a sequence of scenes visually referencing the abuses of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, we see a naked and bound Sam with a bag over his head, interrogated, falsely implicated, incarcerated, tortured and humiliated in prison.[7] Finally he is released for lack of evidence, but he emerges from prison a broken man. The film mourns over his wounded masculinity as he fails to find a job, and is plagued by the persistent trauma of his torture. Maya's efforts to reintegrate him into 'normal' family life via marriage and child bear little reward; Sam is able to enter a state of normalcy only in the brotherhood of men, when he joins a sleeper cell in Brooklyn.

While women and family may offer the possibility of redemption to the misguided terrorist in a film like *Mission Kashmir* – where, as Rai (2003, 15) observes, 'secure heterosexuality [in the form of the terrorist's love interest Sufi] calls the liminal Muslim back from the edge of ruinous, monstrous violence into the folds of domesticity' – in *New York*, that attempt fails. Towards the film's ending, as Sam gets ready to detonate the FBI building, Maya arrives on the scene and attempts to dissuade him by reminding him of home and family. Although Sam drops the trigger, the FBI, breaking its promise to Maya, shoots at him, and Maya falls in the line of fire as well. Both die, as the state once again interrupts the heterosexual resolution that Sam and Maya had, like model citizens, attempted after 9/11.

Queering the love triangle

It is in its final moments that *New York* completes its unusual resolution to the heterosexual love triangle, as well as to the drama of the film at large. The final scene of the film is set on a baseball field, and it establishes Omar as adoptive parent to Danyal, the son of the dead Sam and Maya. As Omar watches Danyal play and acknowledges the compliments of another parent in the bleachers, Roushan enters the picture and seats himself next to Omar, seeking a reconciliation. The exchange that follows is the last debate between the two characters, where, in the tradition of cinepatriotic films, the violence of the state is weighed against the violence of the terrorist. When Omar bitterly demands what had been accomplished by the killing not only of Sam but also of the innocent Maya, the indignant Roushan replies: 'A Muslim child whose father was a terrorist is playing on an American team! *That* is what was achieved!' In addition to producing a fiction of seamless Muslim integration that seems almost impossible to believe, Roushan's response also seems to suggest that for Danyal to 'play on the American team', Sam's death alone would not have been sufficient; Maya's removal was necessary too.

And so it happens that Roushan and Omar are the last couple standing (in nearly identical beige jackets), marked as Danyal's new parents by their joint attendance at the baseball match in the company of other parents. The scene recalls an earlier moment in the film that also takes place on a baseball field, explicitly positioning Omar, Maya and Danyal as the family that might have been. Indulging the young boy, Omar drops the ball after catching Danyal's pop fly – a paternal concession that is noted by the beaming Maya, who has just been interrogating Omar about his still-single status. Omar jokingly reminds Maya of that 'Hindi film scene' from years ago when Sam had run after a thief to retrieve Maya's bag and so won the girl, leaving Omar as the 'side hero'. Had Omar run after the

thief, he would have been in Sam's place in this idyllic family. Omar's invocation of the Hindi film love formula here primes the viewer to anticipate how the situation might end once the main hero steps out of the picture: will Maya be handed over to Omar, in the tradition of films like *Sangam*, *Dostana*, *Qurbani* and *Kal Ho Na Ho*? The moment is cut short by Sam. Omar's interrupted family fantasy can only now be completed in the film's concluding scene, once again on the baseball field – via a necessary reconfiguration wherein it is Roushan, the state-allied Muslim, who steps in to complete the family circle.

And so at the film's conclusion, in the exact moment typically reserved for the happy ending of heterosexual pairing, *New York* leaves the viewer with an all-male Muslim family comprising of Roushan, Omar, and Danyal. This resolution queers the heterosexual Hindi film love formula that Omar had invoked with Maya in the previous baseball scene. Instead of one of the male rivals expectedly exiting the love triangle to make way for the other's successful heterosexual union, *New York* 'kills off' both Samir and Maya, and introduces Roushan where Maya should have been slotted, by genre conventions and by heterosexual mandate. Rather than Maya being passed on to Omar, it is Omar who is passed on to Roushan.

The resolution reveals that the more significant triangle has all along been that between Sam, Omar and Roushan, with Omar being the bone of contention between the hyper-masculine, disenchanted Muslim American citizen Sam, and the state-allied 'good Muslim' Roushan, who seeks Omar's compliance with the crushing protective and conditional embrace of the sometimes Machiavellian but essentially recuperable American state.

Conclusion

Why does the film end up in this queer place – both in its abjuring of the heterosexual resolution to the love triangle, and in its presentation of the Muslim male characters through the codes of the global gayness?[8] It is tempting to read the film's resolution as a radical resistance to the incitement to heteronormativity following 9/11. But I see it rather as an outcome of the film's perhaps unwitting exposure of the *impossibility* of certain kinds of patriotic participation on the part of Muslim Americans. Although Sam and Maya like good American citizens willingly take up their parts in the heterosexual drama that was supposed to cohere Americans after 9/11, *New York* cannot but reveal the inevitable failure, indeed the impossibility, of that idealized union for Muslim Americans. Their deaths are the result of a fatal innocence about the differential interpellation of racialized citizen-subjects by the post-9/11 scripts of American patriotism. That day, watching the drama of 9/11 unfold on television in the company of fellow-Americans who seemed to mirror their own grief, Sam and Maya fail to realize that the heteronormative mandate relayed in post-9/11 public discourse was never meant for them. *New York* registers how that mandate extends largely to white citizen-subjects even as it fears heterosexual – and significantly, reproductive – bonds among Muslims.

It is the unattached Omar who is allowed to survive and who, along with the state-allied Muslim Roushan (the taller man frequently positioned behind Omar in the film),[9] will oversee the upbringing of the terrorist's son. Marked explicitly as 'bottom' masculinity, it is Omar who represents the possibility of integration into the nation. It is worth noting too that the well-heeled gay-coded Muslim male protagonists of this drama are a far cry from the primitivized sexual deviants of the post-9/11 visual landscape (Puar and Rai 2002).

On a global landscape where a tolerance for homosexuality functions as a kind of Muslim 'immigration test' in the West (sometimes literally, as in the Netherlands), *New York*'s verbal and visual citations of homosexuality around Muslim male bodies perhaps function to qualify these subjects for 'western' citizenship through a disavowal of homophobia (while never openly embracing homosexuality).[10] In this way the film participates in the 'simultaneous engendering and disavowal of populations of sexual and racial others who need not apply' – Muslims, queer or otherwise, who do not fall into the neoliberal frameworks within which a particular model of gayness has lately come to be marked as cosmopolitan, modern, worthy of (selective) assimilation into the nation (Puar 2007, 2). *New York* thus risks creating space for the Muslim citizen only by 'narrow[ing] the space of dissent that such minority subjects can occupy' (Rai 2003, 16).

If the film provides multiple audiences in India and abroad with the solace of the integrated minority subject who knows his place, it nevertheless also hints at the costs of integration on such terms. Roushan's patriotic speech, with its exhortations to forgive and forget, are met with a silence that casts a pall upon the seeming harmony of the final scene of the two men walking together with Danyal across the park. Omar is not convinced, and underlying Roushan's offer of friendship and the façade of reconciliation palpably lurks the warning of continued surveillance and the suppressed dissent of the disgruntled minority subject, underlining the ongoing contemporary realities of the state's relationship to Muslims in both the United States and India.

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Notes

1. For a critical overview of how this meme has been deployed, see Lakshmi Chaudhury's 'Mumbai's 9/11 Meme' and Amitav Ghosh's 'India's 9/11? Not Exactly' (Chaudhry 2008; A. Ghosh 2008).
2. Previous monikers for terror attacks in India had been somewhat more descriptive: 'Bombay bomb blasts' (1993, sometimes known as 'Black Friday'); 'Attack on the Indian Parliament' (2005); 'Mumbai train blasts' (2007). In contrast, the name-date '26/11' installs 9/11 as 'hyper-mnemonic, recalling the singularity of the events in New York with such insistence that all other dates, times and places vanish [as] each renewed appeal to the memory of the attacks inaugurates a hyperbolic *forgetting*' (Roy 2009, 316).
3. In a joint statement against the war in 2002, a group of transnational feminists observed how '[m]ost media representations in the U.S. have focused exclusively on losses suffered by white, middle-class, heterosexual families even though those who died or were injured include many people of different races, classes, sexualities, and religions and of at least ninety different nationalities' (Bacchetta et al., 2002, 302). Puar and Rai (2002, 125) add to this 'the problems gay survivors are having accessing relief and disaster funds; "sexually active" gay men being banned from donating blood'. The representations of the terrorist as monstrous 'fag' included posters in mid-town Manhattan showing bin Laden being anally penetrated by the Empire State Building and online photomontages and games offering the option of torturing bin Laden to death by a range of means (including sodomy).
4. The bindi serves as a visual code for 'Hindu' as much as beards and caps do for Muslims in Bombay cinema. Aamir decides to sacrifice himself and save those on the bus, confirming Shahnaz Khan's claim in another context that 'the only acceptable Muslim man in the increasingly nationalist India is a dead one' (2009, 92).
5. The star body of John Abraham is far from incidental to such winking, of course – particularly following his 2008 hit *Dostana*, a tongue-in-cheek buddy film that treats its own heterosexual

triangle like the pretext it is, while providing an abundance of purple-hued, naked-male-torsoed pleasures to spectators, and sealing John Abraham in the public imagination as a 'gay' icon with polysexual appeal.

6. In a hotly debated *Forbes* magazine article in 2009, NYU Business professor Tunku Varadarajan used the term 'going Muslim' to describe how 'a seemingly integrated Muslim-American – a friendly donut vendor in New York, say, or an officer in the U.S. Army at Fort Hood – discards his apparent integration into American society and elects to vindicate his religion in an act of messianic violence against his fellow Americans'. The suggestion therefore, is that every Muslim-American is a terrorist in the making. For a full critique of this article see Dar 2012.
7. Conspicuously absent from this repertoire of abuse is the sexual torture of brown men so explicitly documented in the photographs from Abu Ghraib.
8. In what may be seen as another visual citation of global gayness, Roushan supervises Omar's execution of the FBI's plan concealed behind a copy of *Men's Health*, a magazine with a significant gay readership in the US.
9. The film calls upon the visual vocabulary of homoeroticism to signal a relationship of domination very akin to the hyperpatriotic post-9/11 discourses of homosexual rape.
10. Gopinath (2005b) notes how such citations comprise Bollywood's way of managing nationalist anxieties around male queerness, typically by containing them within diaspora, while at the same time marking the rising cosmopolitanism of Bollywood cineama as it adapts its codes to the international market.

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