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Transnational flows and local identities in Muslim northern Nigerian films

From *Dead Poets Society* through *Mohabbatein* to *So...*

Abdalla Uba Adamu

Introduction

In analysing Muslim Hausa film viewing and preferences for Hindi cinema, Brian Larkin (1977) coins the term ‘parallel modernities’ to refer to the co-existence in space and time of multiple economic, religious and cultural flows that are often subsumed within the term ‘modernity’. Larkin argues that his formulation resonates with the term ‘alternative modernities’ used by Arjun Appadurai (1991) but with a key difference. Appadurai links the emergence of alternative modernities with the increased deterritorialization of the globe and the movement of people, capital and political movements across cultural and national boundaries. I want to contribute to the debate by suggesting ‘concurrent modernities’ to explain the use of Hindi film motifs in northern Nigerian Muslim Hausa video films. In this, I argue that none of these conceptions of modernities – parallel and alternative – as applicable to the cinematic development of young urban Muslim Hausa filmmakers took into consideration the violent intrusion of small media technologies that helped to create *media identities* – rather than *social identities* divorced from the religious, political and economic transnational flows both Larkin and Appadurai alluded to. These small technologies, in fact, enable transnational communities to use filmic templates ‘in their own image’, exploring *similar* contexts as those being copied.

I explore this concurrent modernity by examining how a Hollywood film, *Dead Poets Society* (1989, dir. Peter Weir) was reworked in two different countries; first as *Mohabbatein* (2000, dir. Aditya Chopra) in India, and then as a Muslim Hausa, northern Nigerian video film *So...* (2001, dir. Hafizu Bello). Both Indian and Nigerian titles of the remake mean the same thing: love. In my analysis I want to look at the appropriation styles used and how the Muslim Hausa filmmaker attempted to domesticate Indian social reality as Hausa social identity.

Peter Levine argues that ‘we often think of democracy as a political system in which the people are ultimately in control of their government’s budget, important laws, and relations with foreign nations’ (2007: 34). However, it is at least as important for a people to control its own identity and self-image. In order to be self-governing, a community or a nation must be able to illustrate and memorialize its

values and present its identity to outsiders and future generations of its own people through works of art and literature, rituals and traditions, forms of entertainment, public spaces and prominent buildings. Small media technologies have provided Nigerian filmmakers with an opportunity to create what I see as 'industries of representation' in which each region of the country demonstrates its democratic right to represent its society in its own way. For instance, the southern Nigerian film industry, Nollywood (Onishi 2002), is characterized by the notion of statehood in which plotlines of corruption, crime and governance are interspersed with African ritual beliefs. The northern Nigerian video film industry, Kanywood, is on the other hand characterized by romantic themes of relationships between boys and girls (and occasionally, married couples) in which conflicts are identified and resolved. This focus on the private sphere in Kanywood films, reflecting itself a deeper social focus on gender relationships, is reflected in Hindi films that the most successful Hausa filmmakers directly copy. It is for this reason that I provided 'concurrent modernity' as an alternative to Larkin's 'parallel modernity' because both Hindi and Muslim Hausa societies share an antecedent concurrent common interface of the role of Islam and traditional conservative values in mediating social relationships.

Nigerian media policies became liberalized only in 1992 during one of the episodic periods of military dictatorship (Onwumechili 2007). The liberalization came about because of 'international lenders' pressure and the government's inability to control access to international satellite signals' (Onwumechili 2007: 128).

Eventually, the government issued the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) Decree No. 38 in 1992 to liberalize the broadcast market. This liberalization led to high expectations about the use of media in at least a liberal, if not democratic, Nigerian society. These expectations included diversity of the media, availability of new media technologies, enhanced customer service and others. This accelerated the development of the Hausa video film industry which started with a video film titled *Turmin Danya* in 1990. When in 1999 Nigeria became democratic again, the Hausa video film had developed into a viable industry. The Hausa youth who developed the industry used it as a marker of identity – for their video films were more focused on the self, in contrast with the southern Nigerian video film industry that focuses more on the nation.

Democracy therefore provides an element of control. Thus the argument for the continuing role of national identity in cementing a sense of common citizenship is that 'it provides the political cohesion necessary for a democratic community' (Schwarzmantel 2003: 86). Within this context, popular culture therefore becomes a forum for the negotiation of race, gender, nation and other identities, and for struggles for power within a society (Dolby 2006).

In this chapter I specifically look at the transcultural intertextuality of the three films, not only within the notions of identity, but also within the larger context of media liberalization in Nigeria brought about by democratic opportunities for choices of what to adapt or appropriate. In this transcultural intertextuality, the same message goes through different cultural climates and negotiates its acceptance. There are two processes involved in this: vertical intertextuality, which

looks at textual migrations of the message from the West to the East to Africa; and horizontal intertextuality, which looks at the migration of text from the East to Africa. As Brian Larkin (2003: 172) notes,

Indian film offers Hausa viewers a way of being modern that does not necessarily mean being Western ... For Nigerian Hausa, Indian film offers a space that is alter to the West against which a cultural politics (but not necessarily a political one) can be waged. The popularity of Indian film with Hausa audiences is so great that, in the north of Nigeria at least where Hausa are based, they are used by both Hausa and their others as means of defining identity and locating the temporal and political nature of that identity.

It is these commonalities in identity that makes Hindi films ready templates for remakes and appropriation by Hausa filmmakers, even if the Hindi film itself is based on another film from another culture. It is this commonality that I refer to as 'concurrent modernity'. Having been first rendered into a more traditional setting of Indian audiences, Hollywood films therefore become more palatable to conservative Hausa via Hindi cinema. This reveals a unique channel of transnational flow of media identities little explored in media and cultural studies. For while studies of the itineraries of Bollywood cinema tended to focus on consumption (e.g. Banaji 2006; Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti 2008), there is little by way of actual cinematic transfers, especially between Hindi films and communities that do not have any form of Indian presence, as in northern Nigeria. In this way, therefore, Hausa filmmakers with their adherence to Hindi films as templates of either direct reproduction or artistic inspiration provide the significant locus for understanding how deep transnational media flows to other communities in Africa. This should reveal how their influences goes beyond intertextuality and international border crossings to emerge as authentic local texts capable of telling a local story – even if started transnationally.

Textual migrations and transnational entertainment

In his discussion of the remake, Thomas Leitch identifies 'four possible stances a remake can adopt, each with its own characteristic means of resolving its contradictory intertextual claims' (1990: 142). These are the 'readaptation', the 'update', the 'homage' and the 'true remake'. These stances actually refer to intertextual relationship between the remake and the source text – rather than the general approach (model) that motivates the *need* for the remake. Thus Leitch's 'stances' gives us another perspective on the specific strategies adopted when a decision to remake is taken.

In analysing transnational media flows in popular culture, it becomes inevitable to discuss the issues of adaptation and appropriation. While adaptation is clearly intermedial – shifting from source text to another, usually more visual medium, appropriation is seen as 'a more decisive journey away from the informing source

into a wholly new cultural product and domain' (Sanders 2006: 26). Thus appropriation is often intramedial – circulating within the same media. In remaking *Mohabbatein* as *So...*, the Hausa filmmaker clearly adopts appropriation as a strategy, evidenced in his attempt to move away from the original source material and create a whole new focus. It becomes intramedial because the core messages of the two films did not shift media – they both shared the same small-technology video media, rather than if shifts were made from celluloid to video film.

These perceptions of the narrative as an intertextual form would seem to fit in with visual theoretical precepts of the remake as 'a special pattern which represents and explains at a different time and through varying perceptions, previous narratives and experiences' (Horton and McDougal 1998: 2). Yet a series of subtleties are introduced when actually dissecting the juxtaposed texts and narratives between the source and the remake, especially when crossing cultural borders. This is illustrated by the way popular commercial Hindi cinema appropriates films from Hollywood. As pointed out by Paul Cooke (2007: 4):

it could be argued that Hollywood is so powerful economically because it is the best at providing the world with the most appealing film aesthetics and narrative structures as well as the most attractive message, setting the norm for mainstream film-making, against which all other cinemas must be judged.

The link between Hollywood and Indian cinema was well established right from the inception of the cinema industry in India. As observed by Kaushik Bhaumik (2007: 201):

The dialogue between Hollywood and Bombay cinema is a long-standing one that can be dated back to the earliest years of film history. Imported films were seen in Bombay from 1896 onwards creating a film culture that was to define the shape of Bombay cinema in crucial ways.

As a result of this, charges of being mere clones of Hollywood films have followed films, especially from the popular Bombay cinema. It is not mere blind copying, however, for as Tejaswini Ganti (2002) pointed out, Hollywood films that are considered adaptable to the Indian context are those with more universal appeal, rather than the more esoteric, and often intellectually demanding, regional cinema of directors such as Satyajit Ray. Consequently

Films that have been adapted in the recent past – *Sabrina*, *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *The Hard Way*, *Sleeping with the Enemy*, *French Kiss*, and *An Affair to Remember* – are all centered on relationships – romantic, marital, parental, filial, or friendship – allowing Hindi filmmakers to add new twists to narratives that are predominantly about romantic love, kinship, or the myriad levels of duty.

(Ganti 2002: 287)

The Americanization of global cinema, of course, sees the reproduction of the same Hollywood films across cultures, or what Andrew Horton (1998: 173) calls 'the cross-cultural makeover'. In Horton's original conception, he looks at how minority cultures appropriate Hollywood because such strategies can prove 'instructive for both narrative film studies and cultural studies' (Horton 1998: 173). In his particular example, he analysed how Bosnian-born Yugoslav director Emir Kusturica remade Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* and *Godfather II* as *Time of the Gypsies*.

Other cinemas, such as Turkish cinema, borrow from Indian cinema. For instance, according to Ahmet Gurata (2009: 2), in Turkey

Indian films were modified and adapted into the local context by the local distributors, exhibitors or censorship bodies. These modifications took the form of various programming and translation methods from trimming to dubbing. Furthermore, certain scenes were removed or in some cases performances or acts featuring local stars were inserted into the original prints.

This is similar to the Hausa cinema in northern Nigeria which draws its main inspiration from Hindi cinema, such that over 130 Hindi films were appropriated in one form or the other as Hausa video films (see Adamu 2009).

Thus what is of further significance is the way media is used to construct identities and share these constructs with communities sharing these identities. Obviously, then, the usage of identity-construct kits from different communities may communicate different conceptions of the communities and consequently lead to misrepresentation of identities. This is the scenario that creates issues of the role of entertainment in such communities. I will illustrate this by analysing the three films and later discussing their intertextual and cultural linkages that focus on identities of their individual societies.

I will first present a brief plot summary of each, and then later discuss how the core elements of *Dead Poets Society* are reworked by each filmmaker to domesticate the elements to the recipient audiences by looking at the fidelity of the narrative structures of the remakes.

Source text I: *Dead Poets Society* (United States)

Dead Poets Society is about the discovery of identity and reaffirmation of identity. It focuses on the discovery of an inner core of personal beliefs and uses these beliefs as a central engine to social engagement and reaffirmation – the alternative to denial of these inner personal beliefs is, often, tragic. It seeks to show the dangers of conformity.

The plot revolves around seven boys who attend a prestigious preparatory school, the Welton Academy, in Vermont, the United States, which is run on four principles: *tradition*, *honour*, *discipline* and *excellence*, as explained by the dour principal, Gale Nolan.

The school recruits a much more cheerful and adventurous English teacher, John Keating, whose extremely unorthodox (to the school) teaching methods included ripping out whole pages from a poetry book, and encouraging the students to stand on their classroom desks as new ways of looking at the world. While not openly encouraging rebellion against constituted authority, the new teacher nevertheless encourages the students to engage on a process of self-discovery – including egging them to revive an old school club, the Dead Poets Society. His whole teaching methods revolve around showing the students the ‘dangers of conformity’.

Their contact with the new teacher and his unorthodox approach to life and personal freedom enables each of the seven boys to embark on a personal journey of discovery – which leads to the conclusion that authority acts only as a guide, but the true identity of a person is inside – thus confirming Keating’s teaching about the dangers of conformity.

One of the boys, Charlie Dalton, takes his new personal freedom too far and publishes a profane and unauthorized article in the school’s newsletter. In this article, Charlie states that he wants to have girls allowed at Welton. Another student, Neil Perry, opposes his father by appearing in a stage play, an obsession his father thinks will only derail the boy from pursuing a more rewarding career in medicine, which the boy does not want. On being told that he must quit the play, Neil commits suicide by shooting himself – committing the ultimate defiance of authority. An investigation is conducted by the college, and John Keating is blamed as being the causative factor that leads to Neil’s death. Subsequently, John Keating is dismissed as a teacher from the school – although he leaves thanking the students for standing up – literally in the last scene – to their own identity in the end.

Target-source text (T-ST) I: *Mohabbatein*

As far as I could tell, the director of *Mohabbatein*, Adrit Chopra, did not seem to have made any explicit recorded statement about the cinematic relationships between his film and *Dead Poets Society*. Nevertheless, numerous websites alluded to the seemingly obvious fact that *Mohabbatein* is a direct intertextual reading of *Dead Poets Society*. Further, María Seijo-Richart (2008) has covered the issue of the relationship between the two films in a more structured manner.

In *Mohabbatein* the plot revolves around three boys admitted to the Gurukul, a preparatory college in India run by Narayan Shankar, a strict disciplinarian, who runs the college on the basis of three principles: *tradition, honour and discipline*. He has been running the Gurukul on these principles for 25 years, and sees no reason to change.

The regime at the Gurukul includes banning any romantic liaisons between the students and any females outside the college – a difficult task, as right next door to the Gurukul is a girl’s hostel. One of the three students recites the story he heard of a former student of the Gurukul who fell in love with a girl and had his love denied – leading to the girl committing suicide. The student was expelled from the Gurukul. It happened that the girl was Principal Narayan’s daughter.

Soon a music teacher, Raj Aryan Malhotra, applies to teach music at the Gurukul. He is given the job reluctantly on the condition that he finds students who like music enough to be taught. He comes across as footloose and fancy-free. He sets out to prove the power of love (*mohabbatein*) over the fear of the principal that permeates the school. His idea of teaching music is to liven things up a bit. Thus he is as unconventional as could be, in an institution that prides itself on its conventions.

It is clear he is different because his main thematic message is for his wards to follow their hearts and fall in love. Further, his main mission is to bring about change to fill the school with love and sunshine. His strategy includes arranging a party for the students, which allowed almost all the girls from the nearby hostel to join in a frenzy of singing and dancing typical of commercial Hindi cinema. The principal catches them in the act and in a disciplinary administrative session demands to know if they were made to defy the school authorities by 'someone'. They replied that they did everything on their volition because they were 'following their hearts' – literally, 'seizing the day', as John Keating would put it. The teacher, however, goes to the principal, goes down on his knees and pleads for the students not to be dismissed because they were made to do what they did by the teacher. He pleads, however, because he does not want another student to be expelled from the Gurukul for simply following their heart's desires – as he was; and reveals himself to Narayan as the student who was expelled for falling in love with the principal's daughter, who killed herself.

The principal agrees to forgive the students on the condition that the teacher confess at the school assembly that whatever he has been teaching – love – is wrong; and then he must leave the Gurukul 'and never come back'. He tells the teacher, 'in the battle of love and fear, fear will always win'. The teacher retorts that is not fear (i.e. Narayan) that has won, but fear that has lost – for the teacher has returned to the Gurukul to break the hard barrier that Narayan surrounds his heart with and in time be accepted as a son. Now Narayan has lost both a daughter and a son.

At the morning assembly Narayan addresses the students and, in a surprise move, renounces his hard stance on life and accepts that 'life is about giving and receiving love, nothing else, nothing else'. Consequently, 'the old generation will have to change their old traditions, so that a new generation can create a new tradition'. With this, he requests the new teacher to take over from him as principal of the Gurukul, to provide a better, happier, future for the students, one filled with love.

Target-target text (TT): So... (northern Nigeria)

So..., like *Dead Poets Society* and *Mohabbatein*, but most particularly the latter – which it remakes in many shot-by-shot scenes, is about identity – this time, social identity. In Hausa societies the individual's pedigree ('usuli') is one of the markers of identity and acceptance in any social grouping. A person with no traceable pedigree is considered unworthy of either being married or having his daughter married – unless of course it is to the social layer of those without pedigree.

So . . . is based in an orphanage, not a college. The settings of Welton Academy in *Dead Poets Society*, as well as the Gurukul in *Mohabbatein* – both stern, sober and extremely establishment – provide a perfect setting for a conservative schooling environment in the Hausa remake.

Early in the film, the principal of the orphanage, Kabiru Nakwango, orients the residents to the four fundamental principles of the orphanage. These are: *ladabi* (good manners), *biyayya* (obedience), *addini* (Islam) and *kyawawan dabi'u da al'adu* (good cultural deportment). He has run the orphanage for 30 years – suffering only a tragic personal loss – on these principles, is deeply set in his ways, and does not accept any form of change.

Soon a new teacher, Mansur Abdulkarim, joins the faculty to teach choreography. The new teacher believes that the orphanage lacks love, and sets out to change this. He tells the boys the story of a former resident of the orphanage who fell in love with the principal's daughter. She was banned from seeing him and he was expelled from the orphanage. Distracted, the principal's daughter killed herself.

Naturally the boys are wildly enthusiastic about the subject of choreography in such a sober establishment, and therefore welcome the idea of radical change. To embellish the choreography lessons, the new teacher involves the girls from a nearby orphanage for girls. The principal is against this move as he believes that such co-educational configuration is likely to lead to undesirable consequences, particularly among young teens. Despite this, the new teacher goes ahead and organizes more choreography competitions (along the same song and dance patterns in *Mohabbatein*).

When the students break the school rules for the first time, the principal chides them. When they do it the second time, he asks them to write a letter of apology in which they should indicate that they were forced into breaking the orphanage's rules. The students insist that they did everything on their own volition. He then asks them to leave the school within 24 hours. On learning this, Mansur Abdulkarim goes to the principal's house, bends on his knees and begs him to forgive the students, as it was he, not they, who was responsible for their behaviour, also revealing himself as the former resident who had fallen in love with the principal's daughter. The principal agrees to reinstate the boys but only if Mansur will appear in the assembly the following morning and renounce all he has been teaching them as illusion.

In the morning assembly of the orphanage, the principal reiterates that Mansur is deceiving them about love. He then asks Mansur to explain what he means by love. After a long explanation of the virtues of love, and his acceptance that Kabiru will never change, Mansur produces a letter of resignation from the orphanage as a teacher. The students protest loudly. This suddenly makes the principal accept that since they protested so vigorously, his time is over, he belongs to an older generation. He then asks Mansur, the choreography teacher, to take over the leadership of the school and to fill it with love.

Intermedial transitions of identities across borders

A single commonality that binds all the three films is desire for change from the status quo. Yet this declared desire for change is constructed through narrative styles typical of the audiences for each film. While the change desired in the *Dead Poets Society* is in tandem with American liberal social philosophy, the conservatism of Welton Academy's authorities is institutional, not personal. Nolan is merely acting out a script written over 100 years ago. John Keating's influence on the students deals with them as individual units, rather than as institutional appendages. This is consistent with notions of personal freedom – an entrenched American social philosophy (see, for instance, Smith 1983).

In *Mohabbatein* the impetus is not to change a group, but an individual, and his stern ways that led to tragic personal consequences. Yet it was the tragedy that drove him further into his isolated cold world of conformity to his own beliefs. This personal tragedy was domesticated from the institutional tragedy of *Dead Poets Society* where Neil Perry commits suicide. Yet in both cases, the tragedy served as a catalyst to bringing about change – though not necessarily in the direction anticipated.

So... would seem to have greater impact on the desire for change, and with it a reconstructed identity. This is indicated in the way the filmmakers chose an orphanage, rather than a prestigious school, as the setting for their secondary remake of *Dead Poets Society*. Elitist preparatory schools such as the Welton Academy or the Gurukul do not exist in northern Nigeria. The producers therefore shifted away from elitism to non-identity, and there is no place where the residents lack identity as much as in an orphanage. In northern Nigeria children in orphanages are mainly abandoned, lost children or those whose mothers (rarely fathers) do not have any means of sustaining them. Being taken into an orphanage is considered 'amana' (trust) by the Islamic public authorities (Kirk-Greene 1974: 5).

Consequently, the social regime in such establishments tended to be extremely orthodox to Islamic teachings – to ensure that the orphanage becomes truly *in loco parentis*. It is against this background that we come to understand Principal Nakwango's adherence to the orphanage's principles.

Even the choice of the curriculum at the heart of the contention between the new teacher and the principal reveals another shift in identity focus. The new teacher is recruited to teach them choreography, not music or poetry. It is significant that the producers of *So...* did not choose music (as done in *Mohabbatein*), because it is not a taught subject in the curricula of Muslim Hausa public educational establishments of northern Nigeria, due in part to the low status of musicians (Podstavsky 2004) – unlike in India where music is part of religious life. Further, according to Smith (1959: 249), the Hausa system of social status has

three or four 'classes'. Sometimes the higher officials and chiefs are regarded as constituting upper 'class' by themselves, sometimes they are grouped with the Mallams and wealthier merchants into a larger upper class. The lowest

'class' generally distinguished includes the musicians, butchers, house-servants and menial clients, potters, and the poorer farmers who mostly live in rural hamlets. The great majority of the farmers, traders and other craftsmen would, therefore, belong to the Hausa 'middle-class'.

However relevant their roles are, Hausa entertainers are among the lowest groups in the status scale. Their condition is reflective of their generic dependence on the largesse of others, and their arts are, in essence, instruments of mendicancy, their walk of life. The Hausa word *roko*, begging, denotes this condition.

Even the choreography the producers chose is associated with low status in a conservative society. Dancing is, however, a popular urban pastime, particularly in the era of transnational musical genres such as electro/techno, disco and hip-hop. In my interviews with the director of *So...* Hafizu Bello, he explains his awareness of the lack of career focus of choreography for Muslim Hausa orphans; but in fact choreography was introduced to brighten the dark and sober atmosphere of the orphanage and make life more fun and lively (personal communication, 1 June 2009). Being in an orphanage is depressing enough, without the severity of the principal's philosophy of life that seems to be anti-fun.

In its construction of individual identity, *So...* bases its plot on the social acceptance of a person without identity – for orphanage children in northern Nigeria are considered precisely that; no established pedigree ('asali, asalan'). Consequently, for marriage purposes, a suitor is not sure of the good training and behaviour of children from such care homes. It is therefore necessary for *So...* to establish the principle tenets of *in loco parentis* as the entrenchment of parental responsibility – in the absence of biological parents.

At the same time, *So...* reveals contradictions in the acceptance of constructed identity. Although the principal insists on his principles being implemented in the school, he also seems to have little faith in the impact of those principles on his students. This is reflected in the way he refuses to allow his own daughter (with a good pedigree) to marry one of the orphans, Mansur Abdulkarim (later to return as a choreography teacher in the school), a refusal that leads to her committing suicide. It would have been obvious from his strict disciplinarian disposition which he imparts not only to his students, but also his family, that marrying his daughter to one of his students – as Islamic teachers in northern Nigerian often do – would have been a perfect test of the results of his principles. However, since the suitor is an orphan, and thus has no pedigree, the principal refused to allow such a liaison. In a way, *So...* critiques the Hausa society that insists on the pedigree of an individual, despite having all the proper traits of a 'perfect gentleman'.

In departing from the ideological veneer of *Dead Poets Society*, and accepting the more flexible adaptations of popular culture as in *Mohabbatein*, *So...* uses the Muslim Hausa Islamic social universe and cultural realities to entrench an established tradition of the Muslim Hausa in researching the pedigree of suitors before marriage commitment. At the same time, it applauds the institutional basis for identity construction, which enables residents from orphanages to acquire an Islamic upbringing.

Conclusion

In analysing appropriation and dialogue in Japanese cinema, Rachel Hutchinson (2007: 172) points out that:

There are many ways to read the relationship between a film and its remake: in terms of fidelity, imitation, plagiarism, appropriation, or other enactments of power. For the most part, such models rely on a binary system to analyse the relationship between two films in isolation from their surroundings.

This binary system includes appropriator versus appropriated, subject versus object. However, it is clear that not all the elements of the relationship identified by Hutchinson could apply wholly to understanding the intertextual relationship between the three films discussed in this chapter. Thus, in my conclusion, I focus mainly on fidelity discourse as a means of understanding why Hausa filmmakers chose to appropriate *Mohabbatein*, rather than its source text, *Dead Poets Society*.

In choosing Hutchinson's fidelity discourse, I accept her distinction between the fidelity discourse and the remake theory, where she sees the latter as an attempt to explain what is going on when one director remakes the film of another. My use of the fidelity discourse is not so much on its structuralist core, but as a tool for extracting shared commonalities in identity formation between three divergent cinemas and audiences – from the United States, India and Nigeria.

The reason for this choice is practical enough: in my interviews with the director of *So...*, Hafizu Bello, he stated his unawareness of *Dead Poets Society*, and insists that his template for *So...* was *Mohabbatein*. This is not surprising because mainstream Hollywood films are not shown in Nigeria – except via pirated copies available on DVDs containing as many as 20 full features and sold for about a dollar or less from wheelbarrows. Thus in the case of the Hausa remake of *Mohabbatein*, there is no attempt on the part of Hafizu Bello as a director to, as it were, enter Aditya Chopra's mind as the director of *Mohabbatein* to understand his technique in the remake. Hafizu Bello's technique was rooted in the social reality of Hausa societies and their treatment of individuals without identified parental pedigree. In his remake, he uses the majority of ideas from *Mohabbatein*, but rejects quite a few that he felt were not applicable to his audience (e.g. the concept of elitist preparatory school, confrontations between the daughter who committed suicide and her father), while at the same time incorporating what I call supra-realistic icons to the Hausa society – such as teaching young orphans choreography in a society that does not accept dancing as a religiously acceptable occupation.

The second reason for using the fidelity framework is the closer 'emotional grammar' between the messaging and social contexts of *Mohabbatein* and *So...* than between *So...* and *Dead Poets Society*. For in the latter the principal's stern visage is readily identifiable as institutional – something in fact which parents

would approve of as entrenching responsibility. In the remakes in *Mohabbatein* and *So...*, however, the principals cut an authority figure that is in line with the didactic nature of the environment that expects total submission to authority – complete with the white beard of an elder. Conformity to traditional authority therefore becomes expected fare of conservative behaviour as, for instance, exemplified by the refusal to allow inter-gender mixing in the two settings. In *Mohabbatein* the reason for this was because it might introduce an element of diversion to the male students. In *So...* it is because teen co-educational institutions are on a collision course with Islamic tenets – ‘addini’ (religion and, in this case, Islam), being one of the four pillars of the orphanage.

Thus in using fidelity discourse as an analytical framework, I compare *So...* with *Mohabbatein* by beginning with the former and looking back to the latter in order to analyse what was included or omitted in the remake. For as Sanders (2006: 17) pointed out, ‘the interleaving of different texts and textual traditions, which is manifest in the intertextual impulse’, has also been linked to the post-colonial notion of ‘hybridity’ by, for instance, writers such as Homi Bhabha, whose account of hybridity suggests how things and ideas are ‘repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition’ (1995: 207).

Yet this hybridity must essentially respect differences because, as Homi Bhabha suggests, synthesis or homogenization of multiculturalism ‘proves stifling’ (Sanders 2006: 17). Consequently the choices between hybrid intertextuality and homogenization of multiculturalism based on the notion of sharing common interfaces between translocating and receptive media climates will have to be made at the altar of cultural negotiation.

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