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“Crossing Boundaries: Mobilizing Faith, Diversity and Dialogue”

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**ABSTRACT ONLY – WORK IN PROGRESS**

“Muslims in the Media”

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This discussion draws upon the Bombay Cinema’s blockbuster film *Fanaa*, which was released in 2006, and examines transnational responses to *Fanaa* posted on an internet blog and comments made about the film by South Asian Muslims interviewed in Windsor and Mississauga, Ontario. Although built around a north Indian hetero-normative Hindu male, upper middle class subject, Bombay Cinema (aka Hindi Cinema) projects a national collectivity for the region. Its cinematic narratives however are not screened in a vacuum. They occur in a context of continued communal tensions within South Asia, tensions which inform the perspectives of many of its regional as well as transnational audiences. Moreover, in the diaspora, Hindi cinematic narratives frequently overlap with Hollywood’s patriarchal construction of gender and sexuality and Orientalist views of Muslims. This paper argues that *Fanaa*’s narrative strategies risk reinforcing stereotypes and initiating conversations about escalating tensions among South Asians around the globe. The film emerges as a popular cultural text which allows transnational bloggers to use the anonymity of cyberspace and articulate hugely confrontational views, something they may not do in person. At the same time, the Canadian South Asian Muslim respondents (who were interviewed) rework the limited repertoire of *Fanaa* that involve ways of seeing which ones confirm and challenge the Orientalist gaze. In so doing, they re-imagine community in everyday practices and resistances. Although some of the respondents found the film disorienting, their comments, however, identify the ways in which *Fanaa*’s narrative strategies are harnessed to enable comforting identifications and undeniable pleasures.