

What Lies Beneath: Kanti Shah's Children of Midnight

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Abstract : B-movies are almost always 'glanced over', 'swept beneath', 'hidden from' and 'locked away' to live a secret life; a life that exists but enjoys only a mummified existence behind layers of protective covering. They are more often than not discarded as 'trash', 'sleaze', 'porn' and put down for their 'bad taste' or at least that has been the case in India. With the art film entering the realm of high art, the popular and the mainstream has been increasingly equated with the A grade Bollywood film. This leaves the B-movie to survive as a degraded cultural artifact on the fringes of the mainstream. Kanti Shah's films are part of a secret, traversing the libidinal circuits of the B and C grade through history. His films still circulate like a corporeal reminder of the forbidden and that which is taboo, like a hidden fracture that threatens to split open bourgeois respectability. Seeking to find answers to an aesthetic that has been rejected and hidden, this paper looks at three films of Kanti Shah to see how the notion of taboo, censorship and the unseen coincide, how they operate in the domain of his cinema and try and understand a form that draws our attention to the subterranean forces at work.

Keywords : B-movies, trash, taboo, censorship

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