

Bollywood Shakespeares from Gulzar to Bhardwaj:  
Adapting, Assimilating and Culturalizing the Bard

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PhD Thesis

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I, Koel Chatterjee, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2017



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For Dad, who taught me to reach for the stars and go on every adventure.







## **Bollywood Shakespeares from Gulzar to Bhardwaj: Adapting, Assimilating and Culturalizing the Bard**

While there has been a lot of research on Shakespeare on stage in India, comparatively little research exists on Shakespeare in Indian Cinema. This thesis is the first full length examination of the evolution of Bollywood Shakespeares, a genre which is influencing Shakespearean adaptations on stage and screen globally and leading to renewed interest in interpreting Shakespeare for modern multicultural audiences. It examines the impact that Shakespeare has had on the Hindi film industry by setting Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespeare Trilogy within the broader historical context of adapting, assimilating and culturalizing Shakespeare in northern India through an examination of five Shakespearean adaptations in the Hindi film industry from the 1980s till the current decade – *Angoor* (1984), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), *Maqbool* (2004), *Omkara* (2006) and *Haider* (2014).

The thesis is divided into two parts: the first part focuses on the neglected prehistory of Bollywood Shakespeares, while Part Two focuses on the work of Vishal Bhardwaj. Building on the foundation laid by Poonam Trivedi and Rajiva Verma, this thesis classifies the three stages of Shakespeare adaptations in India broadly as the Imitation Stage (from the 1880s to the 1950s), the Adaptation and Assimilation Stage (1960s to the 1990s) and the Deconstruction Stage (from 2000 to date).<sup>1</sup> Chapter One: *Angoor* (1982): A Hindi *Comedy of Errors*, charts the stages of adaptation of Shakespeare in India by examining two appropriative precursors of this popular adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* and discussing the adaptation decisions made by Gulzar to bring Shakespeare into the Hindi film mainstream. Chapter Two: *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988): *Romeo and Juliet* in Bollywood examines the effects of liberalisation and the exposure to Western Shakespeare adaptations on Hindi cinema through an examination of an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* which had a landmark impact on the Hindi film industry and made the tragic genre commercially successful in an industry known for happy endings. Chapter Three:

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<sup>1</sup> See Poonam Trivedi, "'Filmi' Shakespeare', *Literature-Film Quarterly*, 35.2 (2007), pp 148-158, Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', in *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*, ed. by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (Pearson Education India, 2005), pp 240 – 259 and Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Indian Cinema: Appropriation, Assimilation, and Engagement', in *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Volume 12: Special Section, Shakespeare in India*, ed. by Tom Bishop and others, (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2012), pp 83 – 96.

*Maqbool* (2004): The *Mumbai Macbeth*, analyses an adaptation of *Macbeth* set within the world of the Mumbai mafia and discusses how Bhardwaj uses Shakespeare to express current socio-political concerns by focusing on the Muslim gangster stereotype. In Chapter Four: *Omkara* (2006): The Moor of Meerut, the focus shifts to the Hindu gangster in the Indian heartland, political corruption and the status of women in India through an adaptation of *Othello*. Chapter Five: *Haider* (2014): The Kashmiri Hamlet, looks at the violence of the state by translocating *Hamlet* to the rotten state of Kashmir and depicting Hamlet both as an individual and as the Kashmiri people.

This thesis, through the course of an examination of the work of three directors spanning four decades, demonstrates how Bollywood Shakespeares evolved within the middle-of-the-road sub-genre. These chapters demonstrate how the genre benefited from collaborative tensions and genre subversions as well as experimentation with music and language and the locating of Shakespeare within specific geographical sites that allowed for the indigenisation of the Bard, leading to the establishment of the Bollywood Shakespeare film as global cinema.





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## **Introduction: Shakespeare, India and the Hindi Film Industry**

‘Hindi filmwalas have helped themselves to such humongous doses of Shakespeare — there is no cliché in Hindi cinema that is not borrowed from the man, and I often wonder what popular Hindi cinema would have been like without Shakespeare’s source material’.

Naseeruddin Shah<sup>1</sup>

The first Eastern interpretations of Shakespeare on film to attract global attention were the work of Akira Kurosawa who was a defining figure in the cinematic intercultural exchange between post-war Japan (and indeed eastern cultures more broadly) and the west. His cinematic renditions of *Macbeth* – *Kumonosu-Jo/ Throne of Blood* (1957), *Hamlet – The Bad Sleep Well* (1960) and *King Lear – Ran* (1985) are remarkable in their use of Shakespeare to interrogate modern Japanese culture and society. This Shakespeare ‘trilogy’ has influenced many subsequent Shakespeare adaptations across the world, including the work of Vishal Bhardwaj, which is the focus of Part II of this thesis. In terms of the sheer number of non-Anglophone cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare, however, it is India which leads the way. Andrew Dickson makes this assertion without any statistical proof<sup>2</sup>; the filmography at the end of this thesis, shortly to be published in *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas* edited by Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarty, is the first comprehensive listing of Indian Shakespeare adaptations on film. It undeniably proves that the vast archive of Indian Shakespeare films dating back to the 1920s surpasses cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare in any other

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<sup>1</sup> Naseeruddin Shah, *And then One Day: A Memoir* (Penguin Books Limited, 10 November 2015), p 154.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Dickson, *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys Around Shakespeare's Globe* (Henry Holt and Company, 2016), p xxv.

individual non-Anglophone country. Yet it is only recently that Indian Shakespeare films have begun to attract global attention as a genre with the release of Vishal Bhardwaj's so-called 'Shakespeare Trilogy' (*Maqbool/Macbeth*, 2004; *Omkara/Othello*, 2006; *Haider/Hamlet*, 2014).

Indian postcolonial literary criticism has delved into the relationship between India and Shakespeare quite exhaustively with eminent scholars such as Gauri Viswanathan, Jyotsna Singh, Harish Trivedi and Ania Loomba mapping and analysing the influence and absorption of Shakespeare within indigenous performance traditions across India.<sup>3</sup> In the following section of this chapter, I will briefly review the wealth of scholarship which exists on Shakespeare and India in order to construct a theoretical framework to support the case studies of Bollywood Shakespeare films in the body of this thesis.<sup>4</sup> What is surprising, however, is that despite the presence of Shakespeare adaptations in the Hindi film industry since the era of silent film, and despite the popularity of non-Anglophone Shakespeares across the world, comparatively little international critical attention had been devoted to cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare in India until the global critical and commercial success of Bhardwaj's films. It is important to point out here that Bhardwaj's films came at a time when Bollywood was already gaining global

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<sup>3</sup> Gauri Viswanathan, 'The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9 (1987); Jyotsna Singh, 'The Postcolonial/Postmodern Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare: World Views* ed. by Heather Kerr et al, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996) and 'Shakespeare and the 'Civilizing Mission'', in *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: 'Discoveries' of India in the Language of Colonialism*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1996); Harish Trivedi, 'The Anglophone Shakespeare: The Non-Anglophone Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare without English: The Reception of Shakespeare in Non-Anglophone Countries*, ed. by Chaudhuri, Sukanta and Lim Chee Seng (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2006) and 'Decentering Translation Studies: India and Beyond, ed. by Judy Wakabayashi and Rita Kothari', *The Translator*, 20 (2014); Ania Loomba, 'Local-Manufacture made-in-India Othello Fellows' Issues of Race, Hybridity and Location in Post-Colonial Shakespeares.', *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, (1998) and 'Shakespeare and the Possibilities of Postcolonial Performance', in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed by Hodgdon, Barbara and W.B. Worthen (Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> I borrow the term 'Bollywood Shakespeares' from Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia, *Bollywood Shakespeares* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), the first collection of essays on the subject.



attention as a cultural commodity and was being appropriated in the west as a means of attracting a more multicultural and diasporic consumer base. While 2002 was the year when Bollywood crystallized as a brand aimed at a non-Asian consumer market in the UK, as I will discuss in more detail below, the Bollywood Shakespeare phenomenon has only begun truly to influence theatre in the UK in recent times with Bollywood Shakespeare productions on the western stage such as the RSC *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2012 and the Emma Rice production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Globe in 2016.<sup>5</sup> This in turn has nurtured the interest of academics and students in Bollywood Shakespeares as a hitherto under-explored aspect of the Global Shakespeares phenomenon.

This thesis is the first full length examination of the evolution of Bollywood Shakespeares from their origins in silent film to the work of Vishal Bhardwaj up until 2014; in historical terms, it spans across Colonial India when Shakespeare was first introduced to Indians and then institutionalised in the Indian education system, through the postcolonial re-emergence of Shakespeare in the 1960s, up to the post-postcolonial engagement with Shakespeare through commercial cinema in the last two decades. It examines the impact that Shakespeare has had on the Hindi film industry by setting Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespeare Trilogy within the broader historical context of adapting, assimilating and culturalizing Shakespeare in northern India through an examination of five Shakespearean adaptations in the Hindi film industry from the 1980s until the present decade – *Angoor* (1984), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), *Maqbool* (2004), *Omkara* (2006) and *Haider* (2014).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Lucia Krämer, *Bollywood in Britain: Cinema, Brand, Discursive Complex* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016) for an incisive analysis of the development of the Bollywood brand, particularly in the UK in the present millennium.

<sup>6</sup> I borrow the term culturalization from Erling Bjurström, 'Whose Canon?: Culturalization Versus Democratization', *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 4 (2012), 257-274 as particularly relevant in the context of the Indian assimilation of Shakespeare.

This thesis claims that Shakespeare has thrived within a niche genre of Hindi films which merged the ideology of Parallel Cinema with the commercial aspects of mainstream Bollywood; this niche market was defined in the Middle-Class cinema of the 1980s and continues in the Multiplex cinema of the present time. This thesis adopts the name middle-of-the-road cinema to describe this genre which exists in the space between the competing genres of mainstream Hindi cinema and Parallel cinema.<sup>7</sup> Bhardwaj's adaptations therefore, as I will demonstrate throughout the thesis, evolved out of a relatively unexplored existing cinematic tradition of adapting Shakespeare in India. Adopting a methodology of first-person interviews, archival and field research, and analyses of online resources such as Twitter, Facebook and film blogs, this thesis has sought to overcome the challenges posed in researching a field where archival materials are rare and records of transmission are primarily oral. It therefore, incorporates multiple sources of non-traditional evidence such as Indian and western film reviews, media interviews and commentary from amateur and professional film critics to supplement traditional literary sources and Shakespeare criticism in order to modify and extend existing postcolonial, adaptation and film theory.

The introduction details the assimilation of Shakespeare in India as a foundation for the examination of the assimilation of each of the plays that are considered in each chapter. The Indian film industries work in ways markedly different from Hollywood or European cinema and have narrative strategies that may be unfamiliar to western audiences; Western paradigms are therefore frequently

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<sup>7</sup> The term is used frequently in the Indian media to describe films that combine characteristics of Parallel cinema with mainstream commercial films. See Saibal Chatterjee, Govind Nihalani and Sampooran Singh Gulzar, *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* (New Delhi: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2003), p 89 and Asha Mahadevan, *Bollywood: The Hindi Film Industry*, [https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/ot-getaway-guides/bollywood\\_the\\_hindi\\_film\\_industry/](https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/ot-getaway-guides/bollywood_the_hindi_film_industry/), (10 March, 2017) [accessed 1 September, 2017].

inapplicable when critiquing Indian films. The Introduction, consequently, briefly traces the evolution of cinema in India, in particular, its appropriative nature in order to highlight its key motivations and influences across the years. To acknowledge a Shakespearean source was largely perceived as a liability at the box office until very recently; Shakespeare nonetheless has had a strong presence in Hindi film. To chart the process by which Shakespeare was silently absorbed into the Hindi film industry is thus also to clarify the purposes for which Shakespeare has been used in the broader scheme of marketing Hindi cinema to a global audience in recent years.<sup>8</sup>

I will begin my introduction with a brief overview of the circumstances under which Shakespeare was introduced to India and describe the continuing presence of Shakespeare in Indian pedagogy, performance traditions, and popular culture. It is also imperative to consider the development of the Hindi film industry to situate my chapters within the wider context of the naturalisation and culturalization of Shakespeare in India, the influence of Global Shakespearean adaptations and the ways in which the Hindi film industry has used Shakespeare through its long history. Therefore, I will also briefly describe the evolution of cinema in northern India after movies first came to Mumbai in 1896.<sup>9</sup> What will also become apparent through the course of this description is that the history of Bollywood Shakespeares is a two-city narrative and though present-day Mumbai (previously called Bombay) is considered the home of the Hindi Film Industry, the story of Bollywood Shakespeares begins in Colonial Calcutta. Despite the existence of a thriving Bengali film industry, the

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<sup>8</sup> See Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', p 254.

<sup>9</sup> See Pamela Hutchinson, 'The Birth of India's Film Industry: How the Movies Came to Mumbai', *The Guardian*, (25 July, 2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/jul/25/birth-indias-film-industry-movies-mumbai>> [accessed 26 July, 2013] for a brief account of the beginnings of the film industry. See Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* (Routledge, 2014) and Renu Saran, *History of Indian Cinema* (Diamond Pocket Books Pvt Ltd, 2014) for a more detailed examination of the evolution of Indian Cinema.

Hindi film industry has continuously been populated by Bengali film makers and scriptwriters, which is particularly relevant in a consideration of how Shakespeare in pedagogy transitions into Shakespeare on film, as I will discuss below. This also means that I will frequently use Hindi and Bengali vocabulary throughout my thesis to retain the original meaning in the language of the adaptations; I will translate these throughout the body of the thesis as well as attach a glossary at the end.

A discussion on the stages of Shakespeare adaptation in India also inevitably brings up a discussion on the vocabulary of adaptation. As Julie Sanders asserts, ‘the idiom in which adaptation and appropriation functions is rich and various’ and I will use a variety of terms as listed by Sanders through the course of my thesis.<sup>10</sup> I will clarify my exact meaning when I first use a term and its etymology as I go along; I will use the term ‘adaptation’ broadly in Darwinian terms to evoke adaptation as a means of the evolution and survival of Shakespeare in India. Adaptations can be categorized into groups based on their ‘fidelity’ to the master text - Deborah Cartmell proposes three categories for adaptations based on Geoffrey A. Wagner’s earlier categorization: transposition, commentary and analogy.<sup>11</sup> The first category signifies a direct translation between media with minimal interference, whereas the second pertains to adaptations that comment on the politics of the source text, or of the new cultural context, or both, by means of alterations or additions to the original work. Analogy, or as Cartmell calls it, analogues, is further deviation from the original work to the point where the film can be seen as a separate work of art, though an awareness of the original can enrich and deepen our understanding of the

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<sup>10</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p 3.

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey A. Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Associated Univ Pr, 1975), p 222; Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, *Adaptations, From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p 33.

new product. Using these three categories to assess Shakespeare in India, it is possible to broadly categorise Hindi Shakespeare films as ones that transpose the Shakespearean text to an Indian context, such as *Angeer* (*The Comedy of Errors*, 1982), ones that comment on the original, such as *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1988) and ones that are analogues, such as *Izzat* (1968) and *Saptapadi* (1981) which borrow the theme of racism from *Othello*.

However, examining an adaptation in terms of originality has been problematic since the late twentieth century. Edward Said and Jacques Derrida have suggested that writers are concerned with rewriting rather than originality and Julia Kristeva describes a text as 'a permutation of texts, an intertextuality'.<sup>12</sup> T. S. Eliot rethinks notions of originality and value in his 1919 essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' and suggests that 'the creation of new material upon the surface and foundation of the literary past' is the true measure of talent.<sup>13</sup> In the Indian literary tradition, translation, adaptation, rewriting and transformation are authorised practices of literary creation: 'the words used for literary creation, representation and translation in Sanskrit literary theory ...*anukriti*, *anukaran* and *anuvada* all share the same root *anu* (to come after) underlining ...the view that the very act of literary creation is a rescription, an imitation. Newness in this tradition enters via appropriation and retelling'.<sup>14</sup> In this framework, adaptation is frequently used interchangeably with appropriation; Cartmell argues that an adaptation is also undeniably an appropriation of the text.<sup>15</sup> All adaptations of Shakespeare could be categorised as transpositions *and* commentaries due to the layers of transposition

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<sup>12</sup> Sanders, p 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p 2.

<sup>14</sup> Poonam Trivedi, 'It is the Bloody Business which Informs thus...': Local Politics and Performative Praxis, Macbeth in India.', *World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, (2005), p 47.

<sup>15</sup> Cartmell and Whehelan, p 33.

involved, especially in the context of Indian Shakespeares; similarly, all appropriations could be categorised as analogues, even though the purpose of appropriation could vary from using the word 'Shakespeare' or 'Romeo' as metonymy to using Shakespearean characters and themes within a plot that has nothing to do with the original texts.<sup>16</sup> A further problem is the negative connotations of the term 'appropriation': the Cambridge Dictionary defines the verb 'to appropriate' as 'to take something for your own use, usually without permission'.<sup>17</sup> This definition is frequently applicable to mainstream Hindi films: Tejaswini Ganti describes Bollywood as a 'constantly appropriative industry'.<sup>18</sup> In fact the name Bollywood itself, which I will discuss in more detail below, is particularly offensive to Hindi film actors because of its appropriative implications.<sup>19</sup> Indian Shakespeare appropriations, or 'spin-offs' as Richard Burt calls them, actively distance themselves from the original unlike adaptations such as Bhardwaj's Shakespeare films which clearly signal a relationship with a source text and makes use of the cultural capital of the original for reasons which I will discuss in more detail below.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore, important to maintain clear distinctions between the

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<sup>16</sup> An example of such kind of appropriation is the 2008 Malayali film by Shyju and Shaji, *Shakespeare M. A. Malayalam*. The film is about a stage play writer Pavithran who is also known as Shakespeare due to his profession. Similarly, 'Romeo' is used symbolically to mean a lover, though the name has devolved in recent times in India to mean an Eve-teaser.

<sup>17</sup> "appropriation, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (2017) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9877?redirectedFrom=appropriation#eid> [accessed 12 August 2017].

<sup>18</sup> Tejaswini Ganti, "'And Yet My Heart is Still Indian" the Bombay Film Industry and the (H) Indianization of Hollywood', *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, (2002), p 282.

<sup>19</sup> See for instance, Nosheen Iqbal, 'Irrfan Khan: 'I Object to the Term Bollywood'', *The Guardian*, (25 July, 2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/jul/25/irrfan-khan-bollywood-d-day>> [accessed 25 August, 2013] or AFP, 'Don't Call it Bollywood, Says Top Indian Film Star Amitabh Bachchan', *The Telegraph*, (20 May, 2013), section Culture <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/bollywood/10068018/Dont-call-it-Bollywood-says-top-Indian-film-star-Amitabh-Bachchan.html>> [accessed 20 February, 2015].

<sup>20</sup> Richard Burt, 'Shakespeare and Asia in Postdiasporic Cinemas: Spin-Offs and Citations of the Plays from Bollywood to Hollywood', *Shakespeare the Movie II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, Video and DVD*. London and New York: Routledge, (2002), pp 265-303.

two terms since I will also be examining adaptations of Shakespeare in the Adaptation Stage in terms of transculturations, i.e., selective appropriations of dominant culture forms by subordinate groups to create new cultural forms, involving geographical, linguistic, temporal and cultural shifts as first described by Fernando Ortiz (also described by Homi Bhabha as 'hybridities').<sup>21</sup>

Keeping in mind the varying levels of impact that Shakespeare has had on the Hindi film industry then, it is necessary at this stage to point out my process of evaluating mainstream Hindi films as Shakespeare adaptations in this thesis. Most Shakespearean adaptations are judged by their use of lines from the play and a sustained engagement with the source text. Additionally, Cartmell suggests that the presence of the author [in the film title] privileges 'authority' and sanctions the adaptation as 'authoritative', faithful to the author because of their very presence within it. Bhardwaj's adaptations all contain Shakespeare in the title, thereby explicitly inviting audiences to view the films as adaptations of Shakespeare. *Angoor* makes no mention of Shakespeare in its title or marketing; however, the film is framed by sequences containing an animated portrait of Shakespeare, 'the famous sixteenth century writer'. Furthermore, the Egeon counterpart in *Angoor* clearly states that his sons are the children from *The Comedy of Errors*, not from *The Corsican Brothers*, thereby also explicitly acknowledging the Shakespearean original. One of the problems that critics face when evaluating a Bollywood film as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, however, is the fact that most Bollywood films are romantic musicals about doomed lovers and a Romeo and Juliet story is often based on the legend of Romeo and Juliet, or similar legends of star-

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<sup>21</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint, Tobacco and Sugar* (Duke University Press, 1995); Homi K Bhabha. and Jonathan Rutherford, 'Third Space', *Multitudes*, (2006), pp 95-107.

crossed lovers such as Laila and Majnu, Shirin and Farhad, or Heer and Ranjha, rather than Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. When it came to *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* therefore, I primarily evaluated the film against Courtney Lehmann's criteria that 'what distinguishes a truly Shakespearean version of *Romeo and Juliet* from the hundreds of 'wannabes' that seek access to the play's effective capital...is a profound sense of the tragic inevitability that fuel's Shakespeare's play'.<sup>22</sup> Given the Hindi film industry's predilection for averted tragedies, for any film to be accepted as an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* then, the lovers, must die in the end, and the tragic fate of the lovers must be sealed from the start. Nothing in the dramatic climate should indicate that all will be well in the end. *QSQT* remains a cult film today because of its tragic ending. Moreover, in an interview during the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of *QSQT* in 2013, the director, Mansoor Khan, admitted to using *Romeo and Juliet* as a template for the film, thereby fulfilling the authority criteria in retrospect.

### **Imitating Shakespeare**

From 1772 to 1911, Calcutta was the capital of the British Empire and was regarded as the second city of the British Empire after London.<sup>23</sup> Journals and memoirs of the British rulers indicate that the English traders had built up the city of Calcutta and its society in faithful imitation of London.<sup>24</sup> This re-creation of London society in Calcutta also included the establishment of a robust British theatre for the entertainment of British officers, merchants, clerks, and others associated with the

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<sup>22</sup> Lehmann, p 97.

<sup>23</sup> Steve Turner, 'Colonial Echoes in Old Calcutta', *Independent*, (16 March 2013) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/asia/colonial-echoes-in-old-calcutta-8537339.html>> [accessed 13 Jan 2016].

<sup>24</sup> See William Tayler, *Thirty-Eight Years in India*, Vols I and II (London: WH Allen, 1882) and Emily Eden and Eleanor Eden, *Letters from India*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014).



East India Company and later the British government. Indians however, did not have much opportunity to experience Shakespeare (or other English theatre) at this time. As Jyotsna Singh relates, 'in its early years at least, this was an exclusive theatre determined to insulate itself from the 'natives' so that even the ushers and doorkeepers at the Calcutta playhouse were English'.<sup>25</sup>

This situation began to change when the British East India Company gradually converted into the British *Raj* [ruler/emperor/royalty depending on context]. After a series of military encounters had established British dominion over India by the early 1800s, the English sought to consolidate their political control by taking the responsibility to improve the social, religious, moral, economic and personal lot of its Indian subjects through modern, Western education.<sup>26</sup> Lord Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education in 1835 underlined the practical need for 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect' to act as intermediaries between the British rulers and the masses they ruled.<sup>27</sup> This was achieved by the passing of the English Education Act in 1835 which called for English to be the official language of study and instruction in India leading to the establishment of schools and colleges which imparted Western education in the English medium to students from Indian Royalty and gentry. By introducing English literature and allowing access to Calcutta theatres to elite

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<sup>25</sup> Jyotsna Singh, 'Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India', *Theatre Journal*, 41 (1989), pp 445-458 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3208007>>, [accessed 20 December, 2012].

<sup>26</sup> Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Columbia University Press, 2014). For brevity, I am glossing over the Charter Act of 1813 by which a sum of one lakh (one hundred thousand) rupees was allocated towards education in India by the British rulers and the Orientalist-Anglicist debate which resulted in the Macaulay Minute and the victory of the Anglicists in matters of Indian education. An excellent source for more information on this subject is Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir, *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781-1843* (Psychology Press, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Thomas B. Macaulay, 'Minute on Indian Education', *Archives of Empire*, 1 (2003), pp 227-238.

Indians, the consent of the governed was thus secured through intellectual and moral manipulation rather than through military force.<sup>28</sup> When Lord Hardinge's resolution of 1844 assured preference in selection for government positions to Indians who had distinguished themselves in European literature, it led to a growing middle class who sought to master English literature and language not just for social mobility but also for professional gain; as Geoffrey Kendal writes, 'At one time English plays meant everything. Unless you could quote Shakespeare, you would not get a job'.<sup>29</sup>

In eighteenth-century England, Shakespeare had become increasingly popular due to David Garrick's efforts and was seen by many of the British colonisers 'as a supreme achievement of the race, as a measure of England's general world-wide superiority, and as an emblem of that English heritage whose propagation could properly be regarded as part of the white man's civilising burden'.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, when English literary texts promoting Christian values, humanism and liberalism were selected for the Indian curriculum in the 1800s, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth* were prescribed alongside John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Francis Bacon's *Moral and Civil Essays*.<sup>31</sup> Though, as Ania Loomba points out, Shakespeare (and English Literature) was frequently regarded as beyond the comprehension of the lower orders, it was also considered necessary for their schooling.<sup>32</sup> This is seen frequently in the works of educators at the time: for example, in the works and

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<sup>28</sup> Jyotsna Singh, 'Shakespeare and the 'Civilizing Mission'', *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: 'Discoveries' of India in the Language of Colonialism*, (1996), p 123.

<sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Kendal and Clare Colvin, *The Shakespeare Wallah: The Autobiography of Geoffrey Kendal* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986) p 161. Being educated in the English medium and having a background in English literature is still an important part of the social and professional lives of Indians.

<sup>30</sup> Harish Trivedi, 'Shakespeare in India: Colonial Contexts', in *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1993, 1995), p 13.

<sup>31</sup> Tamara M. Valentine, 'Nativizing Shakespeare: Shakespearean Speech and Indian Vernaculars', *The Upstart Crow*, XXI (2001), pp 117-126.

<sup>32</sup> Ania Loomba, 'Shakespearean Transformations', *Shakespeare and National Culture*, (1997), p 113.

teachings of William Miller (1838-1923) who taught Shakespeare to college students in South India and used it as a moral yardstick for the reformation of the 'native character' as can be gleaned from the title of his book *Shakespeare's Chart of Life* (1905).<sup>33</sup> Britain's rising interest in biographical, historical and psychological studies of Shakespeare's plays also found expression in the Indian curriculum at the time: Rangana Banerji asserts that in the early stages of canon formation, it was the textbooks written or selected by the English teachers in India, such as D. L. Richardson and Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, and their teaching methods which stressed close reading of the text, as well as the importance of understanding the texts as plays in performance that has led to an in-depth study of Shakespeare among students of Indian literature that is continued till today.<sup>34</sup> Students were tested on their knowledge of Shakespearean sources, evidence for dating the play, on characterisation and comprehension, as well as their ability to recite passages from the prescribed text.<sup>35</sup> Shakespeare was moreover used to study grammar, prosody, intonation and pronunciation: 'students were supposed to learn about prepositions, the past perfect tense, and the niceties of modern English usage by devoting their nights and days to *Othello* or *The Merchant of Venice*', consequently ensuring a mastery over Shakespeare by generations of Indian students even when they were not scholars of English Literature.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, to cite Sukanta Chaudhuri, 'From the beginning, the pedagogic projection of Shakespeare in India was arguably more extensive than the

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<sup>33</sup> Trivedi, p 14.

<sup>34</sup> Rangana Banerji, "Every College Student Knows by Heart": The Uses of Shakespeare in Colonial Bengal', in *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Volume 12: Special Section, Shakespeare in India.*, ed. by Graham Bradshaw and others (Ashgate, 2012), p 30. Banerji's essay is a detailed study of the importance of Shakespeare in the pedagogic practices and social impact of Shakespeare studies in India.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p 32.

<sup>36</sup> Trivedi, p 23.

theatrical... Far more people encountered Shakespeare in print than on stage; and the greater number did so in the original English texts.<sup>37</sup> Shakespeare, imposed on India as part of the colonising agenda of the British, continues to be a big part of the English medium education system today. Being educated in English is as important in India today as it was under the British rule; it is of primary importance, for example, in terms of social status, in getting a well-paying job and in being considered a suitable candidate for marriage.<sup>38</sup> English is one of the two official languages in India; Hindi is mainly spoken in Northern India and shunned by many South Indians who prefer to communicate in English or their regional languages.<sup>39</sup> To go by Harish Trivedi's calculations, about 5 per cent of the total Indian population, (estimated at over fifty million) have read Shakespeare in English. In fact, 'a good proportion of this elite minority has through accumulative (post)colonial deracination...lost the ability to read any Indian language with literary competence.'<sup>40</sup> School children are first introduced to Shakespeare through Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales From Shakespeare* which is a set text prescribed by most English medium schools in India.<sup>41</sup> Those who have not read Shakespeare in English

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<sup>37</sup> Sukanta Chaudhuri, 'Introduction: Shakespeare in India', in *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Volume 12: Special Section, Shakespeare in India*, ed. by Graham Bradshaw and others (Ashgate, 2012), p 5.

<sup>38</sup> See Harish Trivedi's 'Shakespeare in India: Colonial Contexts', in *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1993, 1995), p 20 for a detailed description about the social importance of English in India today and how much Shakespeare figures in not only University curriculums but also entrance exams for jobs such as the Indian Civil Service.

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix I for a map of India demarcating the primary state language and accompanying table *Scheduled Languages in descending order of speaker's strength – 2001*.

<sup>40</sup> Harish Trivedi, 'The Anglophone Shakespeare: The Non-Anglophone Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare without English: The Reception of Shakespeare in Non-Anglophone Countries*, ed. by Sukanta Chaudhuri and Lim Chee Seng (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> Vishal Bhardwaj described coming across *Macbeth* upon reading his godson Aalap Majgavkar's textbook in *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys Around Shakespeare's Globe* (Henry Holt and Company, 2016), p 355. Jatindra K. Nayak similarly recounts his first encounter with Shakespeare in a small village in Odisha as a young boy via *Tales From Shakespeare* in Shormishtha Panja and Babli Moitra Saraf, *Performing Shakespeare in India: Exploring Indianness, Literatures and Cultures* (SAGE Publications India, 2016), p 165. Poonam Trivedi also describes her introduction to Shakespeare

have encountered the Bard in translated form due to the many translations and adaptations of Shakespeare in vernacular Indian languages that are studied and read today. The Shakespearean influence can even be seen in advertising: *The Indian Literature* journal volume published in 1964 by the Sahitya Akademi, for instance, uses Shakespeare's image and the oft-quoted line from *Romeo and Juliet* 'what's in a name?' to advertise aluminium.<sup>42</sup> Douglas Lanier refers to a dating service advertisement using Shakespeare as recently as in 2003 in India in his essay "'Retail'd to Posterity": Shakespeare and Marketing.<sup>43</sup> Deepa Mehta's Canadian film *Bollywood Hollywood* (2002) aimed at Indian and non-Indian audiences has a Shakespeare quoting grandmother and a balcony scene which will not be unfamiliar to modern audiences who may not have had the benefit of an English medium education. The Indian familiarity with Shakespeare can further be illustrated by the fact that lines from Shakespeare can be heard in popular culture films that have no link to Shakespeare; *Deewar* [The wall] (1975) is one such case in point - where the mother disapproves of her son's nefarious doings and tells him that 'all the water in the world cannot wash your hands clean of your sins'.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, recitations from Shakespeare and production of Shakespearean plays had become an indispensable part of English education and a popular element in all cultural functions. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in his 1876 essay entitled *Shakuntala, Miranda and Desdemona* writes that 'Everyone has Shakespeare at home; everyone may open the original text

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through an illustrated edition of Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare (1807) in Poonam Trivedi, 'Why Shakespeare is ... Indian', *The Guardian*, (4 May, 2012) [accessed 12 December, 2012].

<sup>42</sup> An illustration of the advertisement can be found in Rosa M. García-Periago, 'The Re-Birth of Shakespeare in India: Celebrating and Indianizing the Bard in 19641', *Sederi 22 2012*, (2012), p 53.

<sup>43</sup> Douglas Lanier, "'Retail'd to Posterity": Shakespeare and Marketing', <[https://www.academia.edu/12170687/Marketing\\_Shakespeare](https://www.academia.edu/12170687/Marketing_Shakespeare)> [accessed 18 February, 2017], p 33.

and read it'. This extraordinary statement speaks to the social and cultural impact that Shakespeare had in nineteenth century Bengal. This is further explicated by S. K. Bhattacharya's description of how Shakespeare had become ingrained in the lives of elite Bengalis at the time:

While the English Play houses, by their production of English, especially Shakespeare's plays created an appetite for theatrical performances, the foundation of the Hindu College in 1816 and the teaching of Shakespeare by eminent teachers like Richardson (who also founded the Chowringhee theatre) created in the minds of the students – the intelligentsia of modern Bengal - a literary taste for drama as such, and taught them not only how to appreciate Shakespeare critically but also to recite and act scenes from his play. This fashion gradually spread to every academic institution.<sup>44</sup>

Classical Sanskrit theatre had almost disappeared by the eleventh century and theatre activity in India was sustained by meagre folk and traditional performances, which too were on the decline by the eighteenth century due to the lack of patronage. There was a void in India as far as theatre activity was concerned. At this point in time, the decline of folk and traditional performances and the rise of the English theatre paved the way for 'modern' Indian theatre. This was furthered by the quest of the enlightened Indian middle class for a distinct cultural identity, which the English theatre seemed to offer.<sup>45</sup> Access to English education coincided with the growing feelings of rebellion against conservative Hinduism and its practices such as *Sati* [the Hindu practice of a widow throwing herself on to her husband's funeral pyre], child marriage, the dowry system and untouchability. Western critical and historical thinking and European knowledge - especially philosophy, history, science and

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<sup>44</sup> S. K. Bhattacharya, 'Shakespeare and Bengali Theatre', *Indian Literature*, 7 (1964), p 29. Hindu College, the earliest institution of higher learning in the modern sense in Asia, known as Presidency College since 1855, is still one of the foremost institutes of Higher Learning in India: *Brief History of Presidency*, [https://www.presiuniv.ac.in/web/presidency\\_history.php](https://www.presiuniv.ac.in/web/presidency_history.php) [accessed 12 December, 2012].

<sup>45</sup> Vikram S. Thakur, 'Parsi Shakespeare: The Precursor to "Bollywood Shakespeare"', in *Bollywood Shakespeares*, ed. by, Craig Dionne, Parmita Kapadia (New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp 21-44.

literature - affected an important segment of Bengali Hindu society and led to the Bengal Renaissance which began in undivided India's Bengal province but spread to the whole of India.

The first Indian productions of Shakespeare were thus by the students of English schools in Calcutta and led to the association of Shakespeare with the educated middle class. These performances created a taste for stage plays amongst the English educated classes in the city and led to translations of Shakespeare in several vernacular languages. During the 1850s, Shakespeare became the most widely translated European author in Indian Languages. Writers who were inspired by Shakespeare read him in the original, as stated by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, but those who were not familiar with English or were not English educated turned to translations and adaptations which Indianised the Shakespearean characters and situations at the cultural level and Shakespeare's language at the linguistic level.<sup>46</sup> As works of literature, these translations were unremarkable, meant as they were, to be read rather than performed. The popularity of Shakespeare productions and the reading of Shakespeare as an intellectual exercise did not lead to the creation of a dramatic literature modelled on Shakespeare. However, playwrights in Bengal learnt their dramaturgy from Shakespeare and Shakespeare became a standard of value. 'Every critic used a Shakespearean yardstick to judge another drama, and every dramatist cited Shakespeare in self-justification.'<sup>47</sup>

In Colonial Bombay, meanwhile, the general discourses on cultural philanthropy and social reform that nineteenth-century Bombay was witnessing led

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<sup>46</sup> Sisir K. Das, *History of Indian Literature: 1911-1956, Struggle for Freedom: Triumph and Tragedy*, (Sahitya Akademi, 1991), p 180.

<sup>47</sup> Bhattacharyya, p 27.

to the emergence of Parsi theatre.<sup>48</sup> The Parsis are descendants of Zoroastrians from Greater Iran who immigrated to the western borders of the Indian subcontinent during the 10th century and are traditionally associated with wealth and culture.<sup>49</sup> Parsi theatre during this time was seen ‘as the public manifestation of the respectable, ‘gentlemanly’ civic culture of the mercantile and administrative elite in that city, and not merely as a source of popular entertainment for the masses.’<sup>50</sup> These elite beginnings of Parsi theatre are often ignored by theatre scholars who argue that Parsi theatre had profit as its sole motive from its inception. I would therefore like to emphasize that the initial audience base of the Parsi theatre too was the educated elite of Bombay who were familiar with Shakespeare in pedagogy and that it is only in the 1870s that the Parsi theatre became professional and commercial. This explains, I would argue, the inherent association of Shakespeare with the erudite and the avoidance of explicit acknowledgement of Shakespeare in the many Shakespearean appropriations in mainstream Hindi films particularly from the 1960s to the 1990s which I will identify and analyse through the course of this thesis.

The location of the first Parsi theatre on Grant Road in Bombay was an important factor in the commercialisation of Parsi theatre. As Vikram Singh Thakur points out, the neighbourhood of the Grant road area had become an important commercial centre for Indians.<sup>51</sup> Proximity to Hindu and Muslim working classes gradually helped to broaden the audience base of what essentially began as an elite

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<sup>48</sup> See Somanātha Gupta, *The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and development; Translated and Edited by Kathryn Hansen* (Seagull Books, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Aakar Patel, *Why Parsis are India's Finest Citizens*, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/486370/why-parsis-are-indias-finest-citizens/>, (29 December, 2012) [accessed 19 January, 2014].

<sup>50</sup> David Willmer, 'Theatricality, Mediation and Public Space: The Legacy of Parsi Theatre in South Asian Cultural History' (PhD, University of Melbourne, 1999).

<sup>51</sup> Thakur, p 24.



theatre. The wider audience determined the change of subject matter from high culture literary topics for culturally superior entertainment to popular culture melodrama and farces with folk theatre influences like song and dance such as in *nautanki* and *jatra*. There was a simultaneous change of language from English to Gujrati and then to Urdu due to economic necessity. Urdu, with its rich tradition of poetry and lyric, imparted respectability to Parsi theatre, thereby ensuring the continued support of the educated middle class, and had a wider appeal in India than Gujrati did, which enabled the plays to be taken to other parts of India. In time, Shakespeare became one of the many sources from which isolated scenes, themes, characters or plots were borrowed and merged with European, Persian and Sanskrit sources and Shakespeare in Bombay began to lose some its erudite associations. The *Natya Shastra* - a treatise on the performing arts of music, dance and theatre – originating around 200 BC continues to inform contemporary storytelling along with the seminal Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; at this stage, audiences began to respond to Shakespeare as an archetype, removed from the pedagogical origins of the Bard popularised in Colonial Calcutta. It was Parsi theatre, therefore, that can be credited with beginning the process of indigenizing Shakespeare – first by appropriating the Western plays in Indian languages and then by turning to Shakespeare for source material, not with the intention of mimicking a great author and a symbol of high culture as the Bengalis did, but because Shakespeare catered to the audience tastes of the time.

### **Adapting and Assimilating Shakespeare**

The Indian Independence movement in the early twentieth century naturally saw a rise in nationalist sentiment in India; this led to a corresponding rejection of all

things British, including Shakespeare. Rosa M. Garcia-Periago observes that the period 1910-1950 saw a marked decline in Shakespeare productions and performances in India: 'The pre-existing framework in which Shakespeare was tied to the presence of British colonialism...accounts for his absence in Indian culture in this period.'<sup>52</sup> According to Poonam Trivedi, Dennis Bartholomeusz, S. K. Bhattacharya and Charles Sisson, the strengthening of the nationalist movement brought about a natural decline in Shakespeare productions in this period.<sup>53</sup> Harish Trivedi argues that the decline of Shakespeare was a direct consequence of the spread of 'Gandhian' nationalism and the *Swadeshi* [self-sufficiency] Movement.<sup>54</sup> Jyotsna Singh, opines that Shakespeare plays began to be substituted by original Bengali plays in 1920 as part of the nationalist project.<sup>55</sup> The conclusion of the 1965 Merchant Ivory film *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) implies that Shakespeare had lost its appeal in postcolonial India and had been replaced by the fledgling Hindi film industry. However, Shakespeare did not completely disappear from the scene: brought to India as a foreigner, it is in this period of Indian history that Shakespeare started to become a naturalized citizen and began to be assimilated and absorbed into the Hindi film industry. This thesis identifies the 1960s as the decade when Shakespeare experienced a resurgence of interest both on stage and on film as will be demonstrated in more detail in Chapter One: *Angoor* (1982): A Hindi *Comedy of Errors* and in Chapter Four: *Omkara* (2006) The Moor of Meerut.

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<sup>52</sup> García-Periago, p 54.

<sup>53</sup> See Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz, *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance* (Pearson Education India, 2005), S. K. Bhattacharyya, 'Shakespeare and Bengali Theatre', *Indian Literature*, 7 (1964), 27-40 and Charles J. Sisson, *Shakespeare in India: Popular Adaptations on the Bombay Stage* (R. West, 1977).

<sup>54</sup> Harish Trivedi, *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (Manchester University Press, 1995), p 14.

<sup>55</sup> See Jyotsna Singh, 'Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India', *Theatre Journal*, 41 (1989), p 453.

After India's independence, there was a revival of Shakespeare though it was still considered 'a western import of artistic exotica' creatively depicted in *Shakespeare Wallah*.<sup>56</sup> Critical engagement with Shakespeare in literature had suffered a setback; the nationalist movement had inhibited the fascination that the Indian intellectuals had for Shakespeare in the previous century. Shakespeare players in this postcolonial period such as the Kendals' Shakespeareana were mainly English actors performing for an educated English audience or an audience of Indian royalty.<sup>57</sup> Attempts to 'Englishize' Indian theatre, such as Girish Ghosh's *Macbeth* in 1926 failed with audiences. Shakespeare was being adapted for the screen but even the Shakespeare on screen operated on the assumption of western superiority with the imagery, settings and ambiance mimicking western productions and failing to adapt the text into a local setting. The 1948 *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Akhtar Hussain for instance, was based on the 1936 MGM *Romeo and Juliet* and made no reference to Indian politics at the time. Kishore Sahu's 1954 *Hamlet* was similarly almost a shot by shot copy of Lawrence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948). This frequently led to the rejection of Shakespeare as high-culture, foreign and dated in the face of the modern popular culture Hindi film industry as portrayed in *Shakespeare Wallah*.

I would call attention, however, to Nagendra Nath Chaudhuri's *Hariraja* (1897) based on *Hamlet* which conversely followed the typical Parsi theatre style of performance and ran for almost three years. Similarly, the 1954 Tamil *Manohara*

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<sup>56</sup> García-Periago, p 56. *Shakespeare Wallah* illustrates a bleak future for Shakespeare in the face of the rising popularity of the Hindi film industry; Lizzie, the female protagonist who represents Shakespeare returns to England at the end of the film. Geoffrey Kendal's autobiography *The Shakespeare Wallah: The Autobiography of Geoffrey Kendal with Claire Colvin*. (New York: Penguin, 1987), however, reflects a less hostile reception of Shakespeare in postcolonial India.

<sup>57</sup> Geoffrey Kendal's theatre company Shakespeareana toured all over India mostly during WWII. They had an extremely diverse audience; they performed in front of royalty and schoolchildren. Their theatrical history is recorded in Kendal's autobiography and, to an extent, in the film *Shakespeare Wallah*, Dir. James Ivory and Ismael Merchant, Merchant Ivory Productions, 1965.

was based on Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar's adaptation of *Hamlet* entitled *Amaladhithan* and was a remake of the 1936 Tamil film of the same name; it was dubbed in Telegu and Hindi gesturing to its pan-Indian popularity. The 1963 *Bhrantibilas* based on Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's prose adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* set in postcolonial Calcutta is a regular film feature on television in Bengal and Bangladesh even today. This leads to the inference that while western interpretations of Shakespeare were on the decline in the twentieth century, audiences were receptive to 'Indianized' Shakespeare.

The 1960s in India was a particularly relevant period when discussing Shakespeare in India; this was the decade that saw the beginning of India's renewed relationship with Shakespeare in a postcolonial world where India found itself staking a claim on Shakespeare as a part of the Indian cultural heritage. 1964, the quarter centenary of Shakespeare's birth, was also marked by the death of Jawaharlal Nehru – the first Prime Minister of postcolonial India and a symbol of India's fight for freedom. The year, therefore, was an important one in the decolonization process as well as a very important year for Shakespeare in India. Further, after a period of relative silence where Shakespeare criticism was practically dormant, 1964 witnessed several publications fraught with ambivalence regarding the role of Shakespeare in modern postcolonial India. I would like to use two volumes to establish these feelings of uncertainty.<sup>58</sup> C. D. Narasimhaiah's compilation of essays titled *Shakespeare Came to India* had the singular purpose of extolling Shakespeare's role within the Indian subcontinent. The tone is set at the very beginning of the collection: 'for the England of trade, commerce, imperialism and

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<sup>58</sup> This argument has also been independently made by Rosa M. García-Periago in her essay, 'The Re-Birth of Shakespeare in India: Celebrating and Indianizing the Bard in 1964', *Sederi* 22 2012, (2012) which deals with the importance of the year 1964 with regard to the Indianization of Shakespeare.

the penal code has not endured but the imperishable Empire of Shakespeare will always be with us. And that is something to be grateful for.<sup>59</sup> The collection adopts a disturbingly colonial attitude of continuing awe towards Shakespeare, claiming that Indians cannot do without their Shakespeare in English and that translations into Indian languages are not ‘true’ Shakespeare at all. On the other hand, a special issue of *Indian Literature* devoted to Shakespeare in India in the same year had quite a different approach. The essays in this collection explore the reception of Shakespeare in different parts of India and in different Indian languages. There is a sustained interest in transforming Shakespeare into a hybrid identity in this publication that supports my theory that the stage was finally set for a widespread decolonization of Shakespeare in India.

The re-emergence of Shakespeare in India in 1964 is further associated with Utpal Dutt’s efforts to take Shakespeare from the westernized intellectuals of Calcutta to the working-class masses. In his later career, Dutt became a recurrent figure in the middle class social comedies that I will discuss in my first chapter. He plays a brief but very important (double) role in *Angoor* (1982), an adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* and is one of the main protagonists in *Golmaal*, the film which *Angoor* is doubled with. A prominent actor and director, Dutt began his career with amateur productions of Shakespeare at St. Xavier’s College in Calcutta. Drama at St. Xavier’s was extremely influential and contributed significantly to the history of Indian theatre and the performance of Shakespeare in India.<sup>60</sup> He then joined

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<sup>59</sup> C. D. Narasimhaiah, *Shakespeare Came to India* (Popular Prakashan, 1964).

<sup>60</sup> St. Xavier’s College, established in 1860, stands on the site of the Sans Souci theatre which was established in 1839 after the destruction of the Chowringhee Theatre. St. Xavier’s housed the Garrison Theatre during the war and actors such as Jack Hawkings and Noel Coward have performed there. Kendal’s Shakespeareana also performed at St. Xavier’s on multiple occasions. See *The St. Xavier’s Stage - A Brief History*, <http://www.sxccal.edu/infrastructure/Auditorium.htm> [accessed 20 September, 2012].

Geoffrey Kendal's Shakespeareana as a professional actor. Soon, inspired by the Indian People's Theatre Association's left-wing ideology, Dutt reacted 'violently' towards his western colonial education: 'the fact that he could recite Virgil and Shakespeare dismayed him.'<sup>61</sup> His Bengali productions of Shakespeare typically alluded to the political situation in India. His motivation, therefore, was not economic like the Parsi theatre; Dutt believed in using theatre 'as a weapon' and taking Shakespeare to the common man as a vehicle to disseminate left wing political ideas.<sup>62</sup> Unlike his predecessors who resorted to appropriations, he chose to stay as close to the Shakespearean originals as possible and his Bengali productions had characters who spoke Indian languages but retained their Shakespearean names and wore Western costumes. The thrust of his argument was to make clear 'to the audience that a foreign dramatist was being domiciled.'<sup>63</sup> His productions, therefore, have a significant contribution to the re-emergence of Shakespeare on the Indian stage and to making Shakespeare Indian.

This thesis starts at this point of the history of Bollywood Shakespeares with an examination of the Shakespearean appropriations in the 1960s of *The Comedy of Errors* in Chapter One: *Angoor* and of *Othello* in Chapter Four: *Omkaara*.

Chronologically, it then proceeds to examine the influences of Shakespeare in the Hindi film industry in the 1980s with the analysis of the two case study films in Part I of this thesis – *Angoor* (1982) and *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988) - to establish the under-explored prehistory of Bollywood Shakespeares which Bhardwaj trades on

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<sup>61</sup>Jyotsna Singh, 'The Postcolonial/Postmodern Shakespeare', *Shakespeare: World Views*. Heather Kerr Et Alii, Eds. Newark: U of Delaware P, (1996), p 29-43.

<sup>62</sup> AJ Gunawardana and Utpal Dutt, 'Theatre as a Weapon. an Interview with Utpal Dutt', *The Drama Review: TDR*, (1971), p 225-237.

<sup>63</sup> Tapati Gupta, *Utpal Dutt's Plays*, <http://www.museindia.com/viewarticle.asp?myr=2005&issid=4&id=124>, (Muse India Archives, 2005) [accessed 25 December, 2013].

when he begins his Shakespearean journey in a post-liberalisation and globalised world of the present millennium with his adaptations of *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*.

## **The Hindi Film Industry**

Movies first came to Mumbai on 7 July 1896 when the Lumière brothers sent Marius Sestier to screen their short films to a mostly British audience at the Watson hotel.<sup>64</sup> This new form of entertainment, however, captured the imaginations of Indian theatre personnel who began to invest in equipment and training.<sup>65</sup> When Hiralal Sen, one of the founders of the Royal Bioscope Company, began showing imported films in theatre intervals, the local paper raved: ‘This is a thousand times better than the live circuses performed by real persons. Moreover, it is not very costly ... Everybody should view this strange phenomenon.’<sup>66</sup> When theatre companies started converting to film companies with the advent of sound film in 1931, successful stage plays in the Parsi Theatre tradition were reproduced for the screen with theatre managers, writers, musicians and actors transitioning to the medium of film in Bombay and Calcutta.<sup>67</sup> This meant a continuation of the Parsi theatre declamatory style, songs and dances, and themes and narrative devices in modern Hindi cinema.

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<sup>64</sup> Pamela Hutchinson, ‘The Birth of India’s Film Industry: How the Movies Came to Mumbai’, *The Guardian*, (25 July, 2013 ) <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/jul/25/birth-indias-film-industry-movies-mumbai>> [accessed 26 July, 2013].

<sup>65</sup> Kaushik Bhoumik’s chapter ‘Lost in Translation: A Few Vagaries of the Alphabet Game Played between Bombay Cinema and Hollywood’, in *World Cinema’s Dialogues with Hollywood*, ed. by Paul Cooke (Springer, 2007) traces the dialogue between the Hindi film industry and Hollywood from the 1950s in detail and is an interesting documentation of how Hollywood influenced the development of the Hindi film industry.

<sup>66</sup> Hutchinson, ‘The Birth of India’s Film Industry: How the Movies Came to Mumbai’

<sup>67</sup> See entries for Madan Theatres, Hiralal Sen, Khoon Ka Khoon and Minerva Movietone in Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* (Routledge, 2014).

The 1950s were an important period of history for a newly independent country, and for Indian film. After the Parsi Theatre films in the immediate aftermath of Indian Independence, film makers in the 1950s began to make socially conscious films portraying the average person's struggles and triumphs in newly independent India. In the mid-1950s art house or parallel cinema began to emerge from Calcutta with Satyajit Ray giving birth to the Neorealist cinema movement in India with *Pather Panchali* (Song of the Little Road, 1955). Tula Goenka observes, until recently, 'Indian art-house film makers were the only ones whose work was lauded at international venues, because their realistic sensibilities hewed most closely to those of Western audiences'.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile in India, the young socialist administration tried to harness cinema's capacity to sway the public imagination for social change by giving the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting jurisdiction over cinema, instead of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which managed the other arts such as music and dance. In 1952, the Cinematograph Act codified the rules of film production and distribution in India and established the International Film Festival of India and the Central Board of Film Certification. The National Film Awards were established in 1954, as were the private Filmfare Awards which recognised excellence in mainstream cinema.<sup>69</sup> In 1960 and 1964, the Film Institute of India and the National Film Archive of India were set up. These important changes in the film industry were thus happening at a time when Shakespeare was also going through its assimilation phase in the 1960s, as I have described above. However, these government institutions sought to promote 'good' cinema as a

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<sup>68</sup> Tula Goenka, *Not just Bollywood: Indian Directors Speak* (Om Books International, 2014), p 14.

<sup>69</sup> The Filmfare Awards is one of the oldest film awarding bodies in India, first introduced in 1954, the same year as the National Film Awards. However, while the National Film Awards is adjudicated by the Indian government, the Filmfare Awards are voted on by both the public and a committee of experts.



progressive art form, not as popular entertainment, ‘which some considered a crass indulgence nearly as bad as smoking, consuming alcohol and gambling.’<sup>70</sup>

Shakespeare began to regain its erudite connotations with this segregation of cinema into low and high art forms as can be seen by the ‘high-art’ associations that Sahu’s *Hamlet*, influenced by Lawrence Olivier’s 1948 adaptation, aspired to in 1954.

However, other than a few direct adaptations, mainstream cinema considered Shakespeare too erudite for its audience and thus chose to appropriate Shakespeare in this period rather than to engage with the texts in a more sustained manner. On the other hand, though Parallel Cinema was considered ‘high-art’ and might have been assumed to be more interested in adapting Shakespeare, it was concerned with pushing the government’s socialist and nationalist agenda and Shakespeare was not considered appropriate material for this.

The period however, helped to establish the Hindi film format. Trade restrictions on imported goods also extended to cinema, which meant the development of a folk style three hour long popular cinema without competition from Hollywood’s more serious storylines compressed into 90 minutes. ‘We are making films for an audience of a billion people,’ emphasises Subhash Ghai.<sup>71</sup> ‘Over 80% of these people don’t have enough food in their bellies.... we make films for them that will let them forget their lives for 3 hours. We create total fantasy, not the polished reality that Hollywood portrays.’ This is the primary motivation behind the escapist, formulaic quality of mainstream Hindi films that is often considered its primary drawback by non-Indian critics who are not familiar with the form. As in the case of musicals and opera, there is a collective awareness of the performance as

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<sup>70</sup> Goenka, p 15.

<sup>71</sup> *Vanity Fair Supplement*, (2002), p 12.

artifice amongst audiences of popular cinema that has its roots in older folk narrative styles. These older performance forms such as *Ram Leela*, *Jatra*, *Tamasha* and *Kathakali* which borrowed heavily from the epics and Indian mythology are also responsible for the formulaic quality, the over-simplification of situations, the stock characters and situations, the self-reflexive humour and the equation of romantic love with love of the divine that permeates mainstream cinema, all of which features I will discuss in more detail through the course of my chapters.<sup>72</sup>

The film making process was also established more firmly in this period. Directors in India operate as auteurs, like the theatre actor-managers, who control every aspect of the film making process. The inception of a film does not start with a script, as is the case in Hollywood, though this is changing somewhat in this century due to changes in the production process.<sup>73</sup> Typically, the director or producer finds plot inspirations from existing stories, novels or films - leading to the general assumption of the Hindi film industry as being one that thrives on plagiarism and appropriation. It is important to note here that film makers in India operate as cultural mediators, evaluating the appropriateness of stories, characterizations and themes from their source material.<sup>74</sup> However, because film makers base their plot lines on mythology and established formula, they are often not in touch with the

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<sup>72</sup> Gregory Booth discusses each of these characteristics of mainstream Hindi cinema in detail in his article 'Traditional Content and Narrative Structure in the Hindi Commercial Cinema', *Asian Folklore Studies*, (1995), pp 169-190 and its development from older Indian performance forms.

<sup>73</sup> The film making process is described in more detail by Anna Morcom in *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007), p 25 and Dipatakirti Chaudhuri in *Written by Salim-Javed: The Story of Hindi Cinema's Greatest Screenwriter* (India: Penguin, 2015), p 270.

<sup>74</sup> Tejaswini Ganti, "'And Yet My Heart is Still Indian" the Bombay Film Industry and the (H) Indianization of Hollywood', p 283. An example of this kind of gatekeeping by film makers can be observed in the controversies surrounding Pahlaj Nihalani, ex-chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification, who was accused of moral policing and unnecessary censorship. See Subhash K. Jha and Monica Rawal Kukreja, *Censor Board Chief Pahlaj Nihalani Calls Lipstick Under My Burkha Director 'a Liar'*, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/censor-board-chief-pahlaj-nihalani-calls-lipstick-under-my-burkha-director-a-liar/story-6ZZCr6dumYelFd5lVwQ9WO.html>, (6 July, 2017) [accessed 3 September, 2017],

changes audiences want as has been proved by box office surprises such as *QSQT*. Nevertheless, 'in a country that is still 50% illiterate, films represent the prime vehicle for the transmission of popular culture and values'.<sup>75</sup> In broad terms, most Indian films are either remakes and adaptations of adaptations, as in the case when a Hindi film is an adaptation of an earlier Telegu or Tamil film or a foreign film as is often the case, or adaptations of a myth - a story developed through multiple sources such as the Romeo and Juliet or Devdas archetype; I will discuss these two broad categories in Chapters One and Two respectively when I look at *Angoor* which is a remake of two adaptations of *The Comedy of Errors* and *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* which is based on the Romeo and Juliet myth as well as global and Indian adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Actors are approached and funding is secured based on the story (which can be described in a few lines) and the people involved in the project, rather than the actual script. The use of certain actors and their star power is an important factor of the paratext of films as they carry with them the baggage of previous roles or their real-life personas as I will discuss in more detail Chapter Four: *Omkara*. A music company is approached to buy the song rights and market the music and the project is announced to the media once all the players are in place. Then a writer, or a team of writers, write a detailed screenplay about how the story will unfold, including the arrangement of the film into scenes and the locations and sets, with input from the director or producer. Songs are written while the screenplay is being developed, and recorded before shooting for the film begins as the music is released several months

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<sup>75</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 'The "Bollywoodisation" of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena', *Occasional Paper*, (2014), p 5.

before a film is completed to market the film.<sup>76</sup> Songs are thus made to be ‘appropriable’ for daily life in India and have an extra-cinematic life on radio, TV, weddings, ringtones, nightclubs and the internet.<sup>77</sup> Songs are intrinsic to all Indian performance traditions: pre-cinema, recordings of songs from Parsi theatre were made and these circulated independently of the plays.<sup>78</sup> In the silent film era, live musical performances including song and dance accompanied screenings, attesting to the importance of song and dance as part of performance.<sup>79</sup> Music from films became socially important with the launch of the Hindi entertainment radio programme *Vividh Bharati* in 1957; the roles of the playback singer, composer and lyricist became significant with films being pre-sold for distribution based on their musical appeal. This meant that the audience expected *paisa vasool* [money’s worth] from multi-talented actors, music directors who could produce a song for every possible storytelling device, and dialogue writers (different from script writers) who specialised in *dialoguebaazi* [the art of penning/delivering dialogues that are memorable and appropriable], writing dialogues full of bombast and rhetoric in an accessible ‘universal’ language for a pan-Indian audience.<sup>80</sup>

In the late 1960s, with the waning of Nehruvian ideals, films became less nationalist and more escapist with light romances dominating mainstream cinema.

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<sup>76</sup> See Heather Tyrell and Rajinder Dudrah, 'Music in the Bollywood Film', in *Film's Musical Moments* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p 196.

<sup>77</sup> Anna Morcom, 'Film Songs and the Cultural Synergies of Bollywood in and Beyond South Asia', *Rachel Dwyer and Jerry Pinto, Edited, Beyond the Boundaries of Bollywood: The Many Forms of Hindi Cinema, Delhi: OUP, (2011), p 166.*

<sup>78</sup> Mishra, p 15.

<sup>79</sup> See Sangita Gopal, 'The Audible Past, Or what Remains of the Song-Sequence in New Bollywood Cinema', *New Literary History*, 46 (2015), pp 805-822 for a more detailed history of the Hindi film song.

<sup>80</sup> For a more detailed description see Diptakirti Chaudhuri’s chapter on the history of Hindi screenwriting in, *Written by Salim-Javed: The Story of Hindi Cinema's Greatest Screenwriter* (India: Penguin, 2015), pp 267-276 and Abbas Tyrewala, 'Dialogues and Screenplay, Separated at Birth', *Hindustan Times*, (12 December, 2014) <<http://www.hindustantimes.com/brunch/dialogues-and-screenplay-separated-at-birth-abbas-tyrewala/story-EfS1ol8YDFZ6dTv6XnyqGJ.html>> [accessed 20 April, 2016].

Plotlines turned to Shakespearean sources for devices such as siblings separated at birth, mistaken identities or love in the face of family opposition. The industry in this period cemented its partiality for romantic musicals with contrived happy endings and escapist fantasies in keeping with the Indian definition of drama which is predicated on a belief that ‘a drama should not end in separation or bereavement’.<sup>81</sup> The primary function of drama is believed to be entertainment; therefore, as Sukumari Bhattacharji states, ‘art should shun the grim, sordid or puzzling aspects of life’.<sup>82</sup> This is one of the reasons for the absence of the tragic genre in Indian drama, literature and mainstream cinema before the twenty-first century, despite the influence of Shakespearean tragedies since Colonial India. Rajiva Verma describes how Agha Hashr Kashmiri, also known as the Indian Shakespeare due to his Shakespearean stage appropriations, ‘was not greatly enamoured of the tragic vision of Shakespeare’ and was frequently quoted as saying that ‘he did not like the idea of the audience going home in tears at the end of a show’.<sup>83</sup> The protagonist of a later popular film echoes this sentiment by summing up the ethos of most mainstream films till the turn of the century:

*Aaj mujhe yakeen ho gaya doston, ki hamari zindagi bhi hamare hindi filmon ke jaisa hi hai.. jaha pe end mein sab kuch theek ho jaata hai.. ‘Happy Endings’.. Lekin agar end mein sab kuch theek na ho to woh the end nahi hain dosto.. Picture abhi baaki hai.*<sup>84</sup>

[Today, friends, I am convinced that our lives are like our Hindi films, where everything ends on a positive note. Happy endings. And if everything does not turn out well in the end my friends, then that is not the end, there is more to the movie.]

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<sup>81</sup> See Philip Simpson, Andrew Utterson and Karen J. Shepherdson, *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, Vol 4 (Taylor & Francis, 2004) p 368 or Rachel Dwyer, *Bollywood's India: Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Contemporary India* (Reaktion Books, 2014).

<sup>82</sup> Sukumari Bhattacharji, 'Sanskrit Drama and the Absence of Tragedy', *Indian Literature*, 21 (1978), p 14.

<sup>83</sup> Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', p 243.

<sup>84</sup> *Om Shanti Om*, Dir. Farah Khan, Red Chillies Entertainment, 2007.

There was, thus, a predominance of tragi-comedies or ‘averted tragedies’, to borrow the phrase used by Bhattacharji, in all forms of Indian art, and in mainstream films particularly, where a threat to the happy ending of the film was introduced, but everything ultimately ended well in most films.<sup>85</sup> To counter this trend of escapist storytelling in mainstream cinema, the government set up the Film Finance Corporation in 1969, which provided funding to Parallel Cinema, thus leading to the golden age of Parallel films in the 1970s and 80s catering to a growing educated middle class. It is however, important to note here that there was no singular ‘Parallel Cinema aesthetic’ or political position – the films associated with this contested label span a wide spectrum that includes social realist portrayals of everyday life (especially that of the marginalized) to avant-garde and modernist experiments with cinematic form and narrative as in the films of Mani Kaul and Kumar Sahani.<sup>86</sup> Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Bhattacharya continued to make ‘sweet romantic comedies’ in the 1970s for the mainstream audience, but political turbulence in this age also led to the anti-hero ‘angry young man’ persona portrayed by Amitabh Bachchan railing against unjust authorities. This anti-hero persona became darker in the 90s when Shahrukh Khan began his film making career and merged with the film noir/gangster film genre which I will describe in Chapter Three: *Maqbool* in more detail.

The introduction of national television and video recorders in the 1980s led to a drop in the number of middle class audience members at the movies and movie theatres deteriorated rapidly, reaching an all-time low by the early 1990s. Sooraj

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<sup>85</sup> See R. K. DasGupta, 'Shakespeare in Bengali Literature', *Indian Literature*, 7 (1964), pp 16-26 for a more detailed discussion about the absence of pure tragedy in Indian literature and art.

<sup>86</sup> See Ira Bhaskar, "The Indian New Wave" in *A Handbook of Indian Cinemas*, Edited by K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake. London: Routledge, 2013 and Pradip Kishen, "Knocking at The Doors of Public Culture: India's Parallel Cinema," *Public Culture* (1991) 4 (1): 25-41.

Barjatya's 1994 traditional wedding saga *Hum Aapke Hain Koun!* [Who Am I to You] with its fourteen songs eventually brought audiences back to the theatre in hordes and successfully recaptured the nostalgia of the NRIs (non-resident Indians) or diasporic Indian audiences abroad and cemented the use of the term Bollywood to describe Hindi films. Meanwhile, foreign educated film makers like Nagesh Kukunoor and Kaizad Gustad started experimenting with grassroots film making and replacing the more *filmi* [characteristic of masala films], melodramatic dialogue with its origins in the Parsi Theatre with a more realistic colloquial polyglot style of dialogue. This was the beginning of the 'indie' or multiplex film as described by Goenka, which took shape in the following decades with the evolution of the multiplexes, enabling indie directors like Ram Gopal Verma and Anurag Kashyap to cater to niche audiences with more global tastes in cinema. Rachel Dwyer refers to these films as *hatke* [different] and argues that Vishal Bhardwaj's adaptations are closer to this cinema than to Bollywood as 'these films feature major stars, big-budget production values and Bollywood music, but they have social and political references and often subordinate melodrama to realism in the manner of the multiplex.'<sup>87</sup> Chapter Three will prove this statement through a close reading of certain crucial sequences in *Maqbool* and establish the Multiplex film as the natural descendent of Middle-Class cinema of the 60s.

Bhardwaj was not unique in trying to reach a global audience at the turn of the century. Economic liberalisation in the 90s led to Western influences such as MTV style of production and exposure to mainstream Hollywood Shakespeare films such as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999)

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<sup>87</sup> Rachel Dwyer, 'Zara Hatke ('somewhat Different'): The New Middle Classes and the Changing Forms of Hindi Cinema', *Being Middle-Class in India: A Way of Life*, London, New York: Routledge, (2011), pp 184-208.

and *O* (2001) aimed at young audiences. These popular culture Hollywood films in turn influenced young film makers in India as can be seen from offhand allusions in Bollywood movies such as a scene in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hain* (Something Happens, 1998) which references *Romeo + Juliet* or the boat named *Much Ado* in *Dil Chahta Hain* (What the Heart Wants, 2001). When the Indian government recognised the moviemaking business as an industry in 2001, it made film industries in India part of the organised industrial sector and gave it access to legal financing such as bank loans.<sup>88</sup> This changed the way films were made in Mumbai and made the Indian film making process comparable to the way films were made in the West. Big industrial houses, or ‘corporates’ became involved in the film and television business influencing both the process and content of popular cinema; this made it possible for Indian film makers to conceptualise extending their audience base beyond Indian and diasporic markets.<sup>89</sup> Stable financing also meant access to sophisticated equipment as well as access to film making talent from the West.

### **Bollywood: What’s in a name?**

At this point, it is necessary to clarify the term Bollywood, as the Hindi film industry and Bollywood are not synonymous; the appellation Bollywood needs some exposition. The name Bollywood is a portmanteau derived from Bombay and Hollywood, the centre of the American film industry, originating, according to Madhava Prasad, from Wilford E. Deming’s use of Tollywood in 1932 to describe

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<sup>88</sup> Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* (2004) references a pre-industrial period when film makers had to depend on black or undeclared money frequently supplied by the Mumbai Mafia.

<sup>89</sup> Hollywood studios such as Disney, Paramount, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and Warner Brothers now have a presence in India and there have been several Hollywood-Bollywood co-productions in recent times such as *Chennai Express* in 2013.



the Calcutta studios located in Tollygunj.<sup>90</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha identifies Bollywood as a culture industry rather than a film industry and Vijay Mishra terms it a 'signifier of cultural logic which transcends cinema and is a global marker of Indian modernity'.<sup>91</sup> Both these definitions of Bollywood refer to the globally recognised brand that has become as much an emblem of India as the Taj Mahal as demonstrated by the phenomenal success of what was referred to as the 'Indian Summer of 2002' when Bollywood was celebrated in London departmental stores, museums, film institutes and musicals.<sup>92</sup> As a result, in the west, Bollywood is frequently and erroneously used to denote all Indian film, performance and culture industries. The Gujarati *All's Well That Ends Well* by Sunil Shanbag which was part of the 2012 Globe to Globe festival, for instance, was termed by many Anglophone critics and audience members as a Bollywood Shakespeare production, despite being in the style of the *Bhangwadi* theatre that originally catered for an audience of daily wage labourers in 19th century West India.<sup>93</sup> The Financial Times review on the Globe webpage, for instance, declares: 'It works like the best kind of Bollywood film'.<sup>94</sup>

In India, Ravi Vasudevan tracks the regular usage of the term in the media in the latter part of the 1990s; as I have noted before, many Bollywood celebrities

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<sup>90</sup> See Madhava Prasad, *The Name of a Desire: Why they Call it Bollywood*, Unsettling Cinema. A Symposium on the Place of Cinema in India, (2003).

<sup>91</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 'The "Bollywoodisation" of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena', *Occasional Paper*, (2014), pp 93-112 and Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: A Critical Genealogy*, (2006).

<sup>92</sup> Mishra, p 5.

<sup>93</sup> Preti Taneja, Koel Chatterjee and Sunil Shanbag, *In Conversation with Sunil Shanbag at Shakespeare's Globe*, Interview with Sunil Shanbag at Shakespeare's Globe by Preti Taneja and Koel Chatterjee for 'Shakespeare and Bollywood' conference on 27 June 2014 hosted by Royal Holloway, University of London <[https://youtu.be/UKgDC3w\\_l78](https://youtu.be/UKgDC3w_l78)> The performance is available at <https://globeplayer.tv/videos/all-s-well-that-ends-well-gujarati>.

<sup>94</sup> See <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/theatre/whats-on/globe-theatre/globe-to-globe/all-s-well-that-ends-well> [accessed 10 May 2014].

dislike the name, arguing that it makes the industry look like a derivative of Hollywood.<sup>95</sup> Shah Rukh Khan, one of the superstars of the Hindi film industry says, 'It's a term only foreigners who don't know our films use'.<sup>96</sup> Madhava Prasad suggests that Bollywood referred to films made since the 1990s which were marked by a 'consciousness of the global presence of Indians and Indian cinema'.<sup>97</sup> These films, such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (The Braveheart will win the Bride, 1995), *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (Sometimes Joy, Sometimes Grief, 2001) and *Salaam Namaste* (Greetings, 2005), have NRI [non-resident Indian] protagonists who struggle with Indian values in a global world, speaking to a modern generation of global Indian citizens. The term Bollywood was thus an easy method of branding and marketing at a time when mainstream Indian cinema was beginning to gain recognition as an alternative to Hollywood for diaspora and Anglophone audiences who had previously dismissed Indian cinema as 'lengthy, highly stylised Musicals which still remain to be introduced to the world market'.<sup>98</sup> Prasad, however, points out that this is a genre that is prevalent in 'high-profile regional cinemas' like Tamil as well. Bollywood is also frequently used interchangeably with the *Masala* [mixture of ground spices used in Indian cooking] film (most popular in the 1970s) which freely mixes several genres in one work and uses formulaic characters, themes and episodes based on previous box office successes. The origins of this genre can be traced back to the work of filmmaker Manmohan Desai and screenwriter duo Salim-

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<sup>95</sup> See, for instance, AFP, 'Don't Call it Bollywood, Says Top Indian Film Star Amitabh Bachchan', *The Telegraph*, (20 May, 2013), section Culture  
<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/bollywood/10068018/Dont-call-it-Bollywood-says-top-Indian-film-star-Amitabh-Bachchan.html>> [accessed 20 February, 2015].

<sup>96</sup> Ravi Vasudevan, 'The Meanings of 'Bollywood'', *Beyond the Boundaries of Bollywood: The Many Forms of Hindi Cinema*, (2011), p 11.

<sup>97</sup> Vasudevan, p 7. Anandam P Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar, *Global Bollywood* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), p 44.

<sup>98</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, Movies, Media, and Beyond: Art, Technology, Language, History, Theory, 4th ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Javed in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>99</sup> This style however, like the Bollywood style, is not exclusive to Hindi cinema. This narrative mode of multiple genres is common to all traditional performance styles in India, which are influenced by the Indian epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, ancient Sanskrit drama, with its highly stylized nature and emphasis on spectacle, as well as Parsi Theatre.<sup>100</sup>

Why then is the Bollywood genre and the Masala film usually associated with the Hindi film industry? India's twenty-eight states and seven union territories have their own distinct language, and many of these languages have vibrant film industries with both a mainstream cinema and a more reality based parallel cinema. In terms of actual number of films produced per year, it is the Tamil film industry which leads the way, followed by Telegu and then Hindi as per figures by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in 2012.<sup>101</sup> However, Hindi is spoken most widely in India with more than 41% of the total population having named it as their mother tongue in the 2001 census.<sup>102</sup> As Goenka points out, 'Hindi films have more consistently broken out of the confines of local audience because of greater language comprehension and better availability, and have therefore had a much higher national and global currency in terms of impact and attention'.<sup>103</sup> This is further demonstrated by the fact that Hindi cinema has had an audience across Asia, the United Kingdom, Russia, the Middle East, parts of Africa and the South Asian diaspora for quite some time and Bollywood is celebrated as a cultural entity

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<sup>99</sup> Dipatakirti Chaudhuri's *Written by Salim-Javed: The Story of Hindi Cinema's Greatest Screenwriter* (India: Penguin, 2015) is a good resource for this period in the history of Hindi films.

<sup>100</sup> Wimal Dissanayake and K. Moti Gokulsing, 'Indian Popular Cinema: A Narrative of Cultural Change', (2004).

<sup>101</sup> See *Tamil Leads as India Tops Film Production*, *The Times of India*, (22 August, 2013 ) <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/Tamil-leads-as-India-tops-film-production/articleshow/21967065.cms>> [accessed 23 August, 2013].

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>103</sup> Goenka, *Not just Bollywood: Indian Directors Speak* (Om Books International, 2014), p 11.

in far-flung foreign lands such as Dubai, Romania and Nigeria. Since it is the most diverse and robust section of film production in India, it is the industry which inevitably also has the most number of Indian Shakespeare films made so far.<sup>104</sup> To clarify then, I will use the term Masala film to denote the multi-genre formula-driven mainstream films in the Hindi film industry and Bollywood films as the post 1990s films made for diasporic and global consumption. However, I will refer to all Hindi language Shakespeare films as Bollywood Shakespeares in homage to the first collection on the subject that was published in 2014 by Palgrave Macmillan.<sup>105</sup>

### **Deconstructing Shakespeare**

This thesis is divided into two parts: the first part focuses on the neglected prehistory of Bollywood Shakespeares, while the second part focuses on the work of Vishal Bhardwaj. Building on the foundation laid by Poonam Trivedi and Rajiva Verma, this thesis classifies the three stages of Shakespeare adaptations in India broadly as the Imitation Stage (from the 1880s to the 1950s), the Adaptation and Assimilation Stage (1960s to the 1990s) and the Deconstruction Stage (from 2000 to date).<sup>106</sup> Chapter One: *Anoor* (1982): A Hindi *Comedy of Errors*, examines an adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* which is still screened regularly for TV audiences in India. Made by Sampooran Singh Gulzar, Vishal Bhardwaj's mentor, this is the film which critics now refer to as the first commercially successful sustained engagement with a Shakespeare text in Hindi cinema.<sup>107</sup> The film is also a

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<sup>104</sup> I have included a filmography of all Indian Shakespeare films I have come across in my research as Appendix II; this filmography has been published in Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarty, eds., *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas*, Routledge Studies in Shakespeare (Routledge, 2016).

<sup>105</sup> Dionne and Kapadia, *Bollywood Shakespeares*.

<sup>106</sup> See Poonam Trivedi, "'Filmi' Shakespeare', *Literature-Film Quarterly*, (April 1, 2007) [accessed Jan 2012], Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', pp 240 – 259 and Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Indian Cinema: Appropriation, Assimilation, and Engagement', pp 83 – 96.

<sup>107</sup> Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', p 246.

remake of the 1963 *Bhrantibilas*, a Bengali adaptation of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's prose adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* as well as the 1968 *Do Dooni Char* which was also a remake of the earlier Bengali film. Gulzar was involved in the making of the latter film and this link sets up one of the consistent themes of my thesis - the collaboration between certain Hindi film industry insiders who chose to work within the generic codes of the Hindi film industry only to subvert them and set up the middle-of-the-road genre to rival the Parallel film industry. Both these precursors to *Angoor* were made in the 1960s which was the decade when Shakespeare was re-emerging in importance in both pedagogy and popular culture in India; therefore, the discussion of the film prehistory of *Angoor* allows for a further elucidation of the Adaptation and Assimilation stage as established by literary critics. This chapter also examines the appropriative nature of Hindi cinema in the self-awareness it displays, as described by Madhava Prasad, in reproducing itself for a market that demands its perpetuation as a source of cultural identity.<sup>108</sup>

Chapter Two: *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988): *Romeo and Juliet* in Bollywood takes up a plot centred on a love story that has come to denote all 'Bollywood' films in the west. This chapter concentrates on a cult film in the Hindi film industry which is an adaptation of the 1981 *Ek Dujhe ke Liye* [We Are Made For Each other], which, in turn, was an adaptation of the Telegu *Maro Charitra* (Another History, 1978). Both these adaptations were based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as well as the 1961 American musical *West Side Story*. An examination of the prehistory of *QSQT* enables this chapter to explore two questions: how Shakespeare

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<sup>108</sup> Madhava Prasad, *The Name of a Desire: Why they Call it Bollywood*, Unsettling Cinema. A Symposium on the Place of Cinema in India, (2003), p 50.

operates as a mythic source in the context of source material for Hindi films; and the impact of Hollywood Shakespeares on Indian Shakespeare films in the Adaptation and Assimilation stage. It also facilitates an investigation into the ways in which the genre of tragedy has developed in the Hindi film industry through a brief overview of the number of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations that have emerged since the success of *QSQT*. Finally, and crucially, this chapter highlights the introduction of tragedy to Bollywood Shakespeare through an examination of the collaborative tensions between first-time director Mansoor Khan and his father, *Masala* film veteran Nasir Hussain. The generational conflict here results in one of the best - and certainly the most commercially successful - Shakespearean adaptations in the Hindi film industry to date. It is contrasted with Khan's second attempt at reworking *Romeo and Juliet* through *West Side Story* with *Josh* in 2002 which had modest returns at the box office but did not have the landmark impact that *QSQT* is still celebrated for.

Part II of the thesis moves to the focus of my original research case studies and an exploration of Vishal Bhardwaj's 'trilogy'. It examines the post postcolonial engagement with Shakespeare that is currently taking place in the Hindi film industry, which, in turn, is causing a re-examination of the characteristics of a 'Bollywood' film for local and global audiences. *Maqbool* (2004) and *Omkara* (2006) based on *Macbeth* and *Othello* respectively and Bhardwaj's third Shakespeare film *Haider* (2014) span an important decade of Indian history. This was the first time that any Hindi film maker had adapted Shakespeare three times, and the films as a group, was termed a trilogy by Bhardwaj himself before being picked up by the media: Bhardwaj spoke of wanting to complete his 'trilogy on Shakespeare' in an

interview in *India Today* in 2009.<sup>109</sup> Bhardwaj had, in earlier interviews cited Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Three Colours Trilogy* as an inspiration behind his own film making process: 'For me the world of cinema opened up in 94 when I watched one of Kieslowski's films from the *Trilogy* (Red, White, Blue) at the Mumbai film festival.<sup>110</sup> If Kieslowski was an influence in filmic scope, Kurosawa – himself, of course, also director of three non-Anglophone Shakespeare adaptations - served as a model for deconstructing Shakespeare for a film maker eager to make Hindi films for a global audience; Bhardwaj has cited Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* as the direct inspiration behind adapting *Macbeth* for an Indian audience.<sup>111</sup>

*Macbeth* is one of the four tragedies that students usually encounter at some point of their education in India in original or adapted form; it is nevertheless, a Shakespearean tragedy rarely adapted for cinema in India. Chapter Three: *Maqbool* (2004): the *Mumbai Macbeth*, explores Bhardwaj's motivations behind collaborating with Abbas Tyrewala to adapt a well-known Shakespearean tragedy which had not been adapted for the screen in postcolonial India despite its popularity on stage through the ages. It discusses the influence of Kurosawa on Bhardwaj's adaptation process and Bhardwaj's calculated use of Shakespeare's cultural capital to reach a global audience. This chapter also explores the popular Mumbai Noir and gangster film genres in the Hindi film industry as the backdrop within which Bhardwaj situates his adaptation of *Macbeth*, following a global tradition of recasting *Macbeth* as a gangster. It analyses *Maqbool* as a middle-of-the-road film -

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<sup>109</sup> PTI, 'Vishal Bhardwaj Wants to Complete Trilogy on Shakespeare', *India Today*, (26 October, 2009) <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/Vishal+Bhardwaj+wants+to+complete+trilogy+on+Shakespeare/1/67946.html>>.

<sup>110</sup> *Maqbool, Muslims and Movies*, <http://www.mid-day.com/news/2004/feb/77016.htm> (Feb 22, 2004) [accessed 7 August, 2006].

<sup>111</sup> *Watch Maqbool. it is Class!* <http://in.rediff.com/movies/2004/jan/30maqbool.htm>, (30 January, 2004) [accessed November, 2012].

in terms of market considerations, this was a mainstream film; however, Bhardwaj did not work with the star cast associated with Bollywood films, thereby aligning the film with the middle-of-the-road genre. During the marketing of *Maqbool*, Bhardwaj also repeatedly disavowed high-culture aspirations. While disavowing Shakespeare, however, he did cite Kurosawa and Tarantino as key influences and thus, quite deliberately, not only placed his film within the sphere of Global Shakespeares, but also invited the audience to view his film as world cinema.

Chapter Four: *Omkara* (2006): The Moor of Meerut, begins by tracing the history of *Othello* adaptations within the racially and politically charged contexts of colonial and postcolonial India through a discussion of several landmark adaptations of *Othello* on stage and on screen in India. Beginning with a review of the scholarship surrounding the Sans Souci Production of 1848, this chapter goes on to examine two appropriations of *Othello* on screen in the 1960s – the Bengali *Saptapadi* [The seven steps of marriage] (1961), and the Hindi *Izzat* [Family honour] (1968), which allows for a continuation of the discussion on the Bengali roots of Bollywood Shakespeares which were explored briefly in Chapter One. It then touches upon the Kathakali Shakespeare tradition in Kerala and Jayaraaj's Malayali adaptation of *Othello* – *Kaliyattam* (1997), which directly influenced the script for *Omkara*. *Maqbool*'s critical success had given Bhardwaj the confidence to experiment with both genre and geography in *Omkara*; two years after *Maqbool*, Bhardwaj joined forces with Bollywood veteran scriptwriter Robin Bhatt and Abhishek Chaubey, who went on to become famous for his niche films set in rural India.<sup>112</sup> This chapter examines how Bhardwaj invests in and plays with the Masala

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<sup>112</sup> See Rajiv Vijayakar, *Robin Bhatt: The 'Hit' Man Scores a 25!* <http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/news/features/robin-bhatt-the-hit-man-scores-a-25/>, (27 November, 2014) [accessed 2 September, 2017] and Sankhayan Ghosh, "I Want to make



film genre, the star cast system, and Bollywood clichés such as the ‘item song’ self-reflexively to deconstruct the mainstream formula and prove that ‘Shakespeare can be Masala’.<sup>113</sup> It also continues to chart Bhardwaj’s film making in the context of the middle-of-the-road genre - with *Omkara*, Bhardwaj successfully set up Bollywood Shakespeares as the popular culture rival to Parallel cinema, thereby attracting native and global audiences who were previously inclined to be dismissive of Bollywood films. *Omkara*’s success, no doubt drawing on long standing critical interest in *Othello* as a postcolonial play, thus led to a burgeoning interest in non-Anglophone Shakespeare films; scholarship on Indian Shakespeare films began to be introduced both in classrooms and scholarly Shakespeare publications.

Bhardwaj returned to Shakespeare in 2014, a year after *QSQT* marked its twenty-fifth anniversary and the Hindi film industry marked its centenary. Several mainstream film makers had, since the appearance of *Maqbool* and *Omkara*, begun to experiment with Shakespeare for commercial markets both in India and abroad.<sup>114</sup> By 2014, therefore, Bollywood Shakespeares had established itself as a genre and had garnered enough global scrutiny for international scholars and academics to be aware that the genre had a pre-history before Bhardwaj made *Maqbool* in 2004. Bhardwaj selected *Hamlet* as the third Shakespearean tragedy he would adapt for the

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*Mainstream Movies but Not by Losing Myself in the Process*”, <http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/%E2%80%9CI-want-to-make-mainstream-movies-but-not-by-losing-myself-in-the-process%E2%80%9D/article14395252.ece>, (22 June, 2016) [accessed 2 September, 2017].

<sup>113</sup> Box Office India, “I Proved to the Country that Shakespeare can be Masala...” - Vishal Bhardwaj, [http://www.boxofficeindia.co.in/"i-proved-to-the-country-that-shakespeare-can-be-masala-"/](http://www.boxofficeindia.co.in/), (8 April, 2013) [accessed 14 April, 2013].

<sup>114</sup> See Prashant Singh, *Shakespeare in Bollywood*, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/shakespeare-in-bollywood/story-g3DDWAThAOGy0mSL8k9PyH.html>, (4 December, 2013) [accessed 6 December, 2013] and Priyanka Srivastava, *Shakespeare in Love? no, it's Shakespeare in Bollywood!* <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/influence-of--shakespeare-in-bollywood/1/327165.html>, (30 November, 2013) [accessed 2 December, 2013].

Indian screen and chose to collaborate with Kashmiri journalist Basharat Peer for his script instead of a Bollywood scriptwriter. *Hamlet* is popular both on stage and on screen in India<sup>115</sup>; not only is *Hamlet* frequently produced in English and in vernacular languages especially as a vehicle of political protest, it has also been adapted within the Hindi film industry at least twice – once by Modi in 1935 and once by Sahu in 1954. Chapter Five: *Haider* (2014) A Kashmiri *Hamlet* considers this extensive history that *Hamlet* has in India on stage and on screen before examining Bhardwaj's evolution as a film maker who not only acknowledges his Shakespearean source but also bases his cinematic interpretation of the Shakespearean text on established literary criticism. In *Haider*, Bhardwaj engages with Shakespeare's text within the wider context of Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Nights*; this fusion of a film adaptation with a book adaptation introduces intriguing parallels to the play-within-the-play device in *Hamlet*. Previous action-adventure Bollywood films such as *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Fiza* (2000) have taken up the subject of Kashmir and militancy; *Haider*, however, is unique in that it presents the Kashmir conflict from the perspective of middle-class Kashmiris through the lens of *Hamlet* thus presenting Hamlet both as an individual and as the collective people of Kashmir. In this final case study, *Haider* looks at how far Bhardwaj has stretched the boundaries of mainstream masala films to adapt Shakespeare as political protest in an era just before the rise of the Hindutva movement in India. This chapter also studies the development of Bhardwaj's liberal politics as a film maker working within the dictates of the Hindi film industry and examines his choice to collaborate with a journalist rather than an industry insider scriptwriter. In conclusion to the

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<sup>115</sup> See Poonam Trivedi, "' Play [Ing]'s the Thing": Hamlet on the Indian Stage', *Hamlet Studies*, 24 (2002), 56-80.

Bhardwaj case studies, it asks what these choices might signify for the future of Bollywood Shakespeares.

This admittedly extensive introductory chapter has covered the history of Shakespeare in India, the evolution of film in India and the circumstances under which the middle-of-the-road genre evolved between the two extremes of mainstream *masala* cinema and Parallel cinema. It has traced the ways in which the process of adaptation of Shakespeare converged with changes in the film industry to create an environment which made it possible for Bhardwaj to experiment with Shakespeare, following an existing tradition of experimenting with Shakespearean material within the middle-of-the-road genre. It has delineated the specific moments of history before the turn of the century when Shakespeare became important in India and in cinema – the 1960s and the 1980s – and the reasons for which Shakespeare was adapted, assimilated and culturalized during these periods. This introduction has also defined terminology used throughout the thesis and has outlined my methodology in dealing with a subject that is lacking in traditional literary resources. This sets the stage for my first case study of Bollywood Shakespeares – *Angoor: A Hindi Comedy of Errors*.

***Angoor* (1982): A Hindi *Comedy of Errors***

Post-independence, mainstream film makers in the Hindi film industry generally avoided Shakespeare, or when they did appropriate Shakespeare, they did so silently: they did not signal the film's literary connection in order to protect the mass appeal of their films.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, Parallel cinema, which had begun to set itself up in direct opposition to the 'crass commercialism' of mainstream cinema since the 1950s, concerned itself with indigenous narratives and a Nehruvian agenda; Shakespeare did not fall under its sphere of activity.<sup>117</sup> In the late 1960s and 70s however, a new kind of middle-of-the-road cinema began to take shape between the two extremes of Mainstream cinema and Parallel cinema and this newly emerging genre helped to open up a new space in which Shakespeare began to be mined for his value as an entertainer. This middle-of-the-road cinema (which also comprises the Middle-Class cinema of the 1960s and 70s which Gulzar worked within) is the genre that Gulzar chose for his adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*. In doing so, he set the precedent for full length Shakespeare adaptations in the Hindi film industry. The 1970s Middle-Class cinema set the pattern in terms of both narrative and business model, for the rise of the Multiplex Film since the late 1990s; the Multiplex film

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<sup>116</sup> Lucia Kramer, 'Adaptation in Bollywood', in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. by Thomas Leitch (Oxford University Press, 2017), p 251.

<sup>117</sup> I borrow Mark T. Burnett's term 'crass commercialism' in *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 55, which is frequently used by film makers in Mumbai to describe the hundreds of formulaic *masala* films churned out annually by the industry. As I focus on the middle-of-the-road genre of cinema in this thesis, I do tend to generalise when I speak of Parallel Cinema. It is important to note here that while Parallel Cinema was mostly financed by state institutions and were partly the result of a state-sponsored attempt to promote an alternative to mainstream cinema, this did not result in a complete alignment of the state agenda and the (diverse) agendas of the filmmakers. Several of the films were openly critical of the repressive and corrupt nature and the failures of the state machinery. The irony of a repressive state partly promoting such films on the festival circuit was not lost on contemporary media commentators. Also, the films were not entirely promoting a Nehruvian agenda but responding, in part, to the unravelling of the Nehruvian consensus.

genre is where Vishal Bhardwaj in turn locates his Shakespeare adaptations.

Following Poduval, this leads me to infer that the characteristics of this middle-of-the-road cinema was particularly conducive to the adaptation of Shakespeare and bears scrutiny.<sup>118</sup> In this thesis I argue that there are three ways in which middle-of-the-road cinema assimilates Shakespeare for the mainstream markets: through genre subversion, through indigenisation and localisation, and through its unconventional use of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds. In each of the five chapters of this dissertation therefore, I will close-read the central Hindi film through the prism of these three factors to demonstrate how middle-of-the-road cinema in the Hindi Film industry has been used to engage with Shakespearean texts.

*Angoor* has, in recent years, come to be universally acknowledged as the first commercially successful adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* in the Hindi film industry.<sup>119</sup> Deven Verma (Dromio) won the best comedian award at the thirtieth Filmfare Awards and Sanjeev Kumar (Antipholus) was nominated for the Best Actor category. *Angoor* was, however, preceded by two appropriations of *The Comedy of Errors* in the 1960s: the Bengali film adaptation of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's prose adaptation of the play, *Bhrantibilas* [Pleasure of Errors] (1963), directed by Manu Sen starring Bengali superstar Uttam Kumar, and *Do Dooni Char* [Two Twos are Four] (1968), a remake of the Bengali film which credits Gulzar both as writer and assistant director. While the first film acknowledges its debt only to Vidyasagar, the second film signals the Bengali film as its immediate inspiration but also credits Shakespeare as its primary source. These first film appropriations of Shakespeare's

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<sup>118</sup> Satish Poduval first argues that Middle Class Cinema is a precursor to the Multiplex Film in 'The Affable Young Man: Civility, Desire and the Making of a Middle-Class Cinema in the 1970s', *South Asian Popular Culture*, 10 (2012), p 47 and I will continue his train of thought by locating all five full length adaptations of Shakespeare which I take up in my five chapters within this middle-of-the-road cinema which borrows aspects from Mainstream and Parallel Cinema.

<sup>119</sup> *Angoor*, Dir. Sampooran Singh Gulzar, Jai Singh, 1982.

play, however, were both based on Vidyasagar's vernacular prose translation of *The Comedy of Errors* and centralise the love story between Luciana and Antipholus; for this reason, I refer to them as appropriations rather than adaptations of Shakespeare's play. I will discuss both these films in the context of *Angoor*'s prehistory and the assimilation of Shakespeare in Indian cinema in the 1960s in the first part of this chapter. I will then discuss Middle-Class cinema, (the beginnings of middle-of-the-road cinema) and examine how Gulzar not only embeds *Angoor* within the mainstream Twin Film genre and the Lost-and-Found genre, but also doubles *Angoor* with another commercially successful middle class social comedy of the time, *Golmaal* (1979), in order to integrate Shakespeare fully into the generic dictates of mainstream Hindi cinema in the 1980s. Finally, I will examine *Angoor* as an adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* and further discuss how Gulzar brought Shakespeare into the mainstream. It is worth noting that Gulzar was one of the chief formative influences on Bhardwaj's Shakespeare adaptations of the early 2000s; he both generally advised his mentee Bhardwaj and served as lyricist.

### **The Adaptation and Assimilation Stage**

*The Comedy of Errors* has a strong presence in cinema in India; this is surprising since this is not a play that is common to the syllabus in schools or colleges in India.<sup>120</sup> Given its lack of pedagogical pedigree, it is particularly interesting that to date there have been seven adaptations of *The Comedy of Errors* in Indian cinema. This is particularly noteworthy when compared to the mere handful of other international adaptations of *The Comedy of Errors* that exist – three from

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<sup>120</sup> I refer to the high school syllabuses and undergraduate and post-graduate syllabuses of Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi between 1960-2010 for the purposes of this thesis unless otherwise stated.

Hong Kong, two from the United States and one each from Russia and Mexico.<sup>121</sup> It is unquestionably then the most adapted Shakespearean play in Indian cinema, though *Hamlet* comes a close second. I would argue that the popularity of *The Comedy of Errors* is due to the citational context in which the play has been received and its affinity to themes that were already popular in Indian culture. The theme of doubling, for instance, is not new to Indians as can be deduced from the fact that all primary Gods in the Hindu Pantheon have several *avatars* [incarnations].<sup>122</sup> Indeed, Hindu mythology is also populated with celestial twins such as Luv and Kush, the sons of Ram and Sita; Nara-Narayana, the twin brother avatar of Vishnu; Yami, a sacred river in India, and Yama, the God of death, whose relationship is still honoured in the Rakshabandhan festival that brothers and sisters celebrate in India; and the Aswins, who are the twin sons of Surya, the Sun God.<sup>123</sup> Richard Schechner notes how the idea of doubling finds an echo in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain philosophies of reincarnation, which is a frequent theme in Hindi cinema with the same actors portraying father-son pairs or mother-daughter pairs.<sup>124</sup> In performance traditions, the concept of multiple roles predates the technology of cinema: the nineteenth century Bengali stage actress Binodini, for instance, was famous for

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<sup>121</sup> Most of these are relatively unknown except the Hollywood adaptation *Big Business* (1988) starring Bette Midler. For details of the other adaptations of the play across the world, see *British Universities Film and Video Council*, [http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/search.php/title?q=The+Comedy+Of+Errors+%2B+Film&date\\_start=&date\\_end=2013&title\\_format=2&play=&sort=&page\\_size=10](http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/search.php/title?q=The+Comedy+Of+Errors+%2B+Film&date_start=&date_end=2013&title_format=2&play=&sort=&page_size=10) [accessed 1 Nov, 2013].

<sup>122</sup> Wendy Doniger's book *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India* (University of Chicago Press, 1999) gives an insight in to the numerous stories of doubling and bifurcation that populate Hindu mythology. *Mahadev* is both *Shiva*, the meditating yogi, and *Nataraj*, whose dance of destruction can destroy the earth. *Parvati* is both *Durga*, the Mother Goddess, and *Kaali*, the destroyer of evil. These *avatars* can be seen as the multiple personalities of one God, or indeed identical twins who look alike but are individuals with different and often opposing characteristics. Iconography of *Mahadev* or *Vishnu* often depict the Gods as two halves of the same person.

<sup>123</sup> In an interesting inversion of the Ahalya story which is used in *Bhrantibilas*, the Aswins are horsemen born of a nymph who turned herself into a mare to seduce Surya.

<sup>124</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performative Circumstances, from the Avant Garde to Ramlila* (Seagull Books, 1983).

essaying seven roles in Michael Madhusudan Datta's *Meghnadbodh Kavya*.<sup>125</sup> One of the earliest examples of a double role on film was when Salunke played both Ram and Sita in *Lanka Dahan* (1917), while an early example of multiple roles on film was *Wildcat of Bombay* (1927) which is renowned for the eight roles played by Sulochana.

Since the 1950s, furthermore, the rise of the Star system in the Hindi film industry also resulted in stars playing double or multiple roles; this gave 'a big saleable star more footage' thus ensuring a better popular response for films.<sup>126</sup> Across the decades, all major stars such as Dilip Kumar, Rajesh Khanna, Hema Malini, Amitabh Bachhan, Sanjeev Kumar, Sridevi, Hrithik Roshan and Priyanka Chopra have essayed double or multiple roles. Double roles also, of course, gave actors the chance to exhibit versatility since most twin films (or dual role films) feature Doppelgangers who are opposites of each other; one twin is usually submissive, traditional and gullible while the other (typically the lost twin who finds his/her way back to save the day) is street-smart and modern. Furthermore, stars in India often reach god-like status and have the ability to carry a film by virtue of their starring role in it. There is obvious commercial value, of course, in offering audiences a double measure of a top celebrity actor's presence in a film. *Bhrantibilas*, for instance, gave Bengali superstar Uttam Kumar an opportunity to play both the broody Chiranjib and the romantic Chiranjit, both characterizations for which he had been famous for before *Bhrantibilas*. This trend, I suggest, also

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<sup>125</sup> Neepa Majumdar, 'Doubling, Stardom, and Melodrama in Indian Cinema: The "Impossible" Role of Nargis', *Post Script-Essays in Film and the Humanities*, 22 (2003), pp 89-103.

<sup>126</sup> Sampooran S. Gulzar, Govind Nihalani and Saibal Chatterjee, *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema* (New Delhi: Encyclopaedia Britannica (India), 2003), p 407. See Majumdar's above mentioned essay for a discussion of the ways in which the double role was used in the Hindi film industry as a star vehicle.



explains the abundance of same gender identical twin stories in Indian cinema as opposed to Shakespeare's brother and sister pairing in *Twelfth Night*.

If the twin genre is a powerful presence in Hindi film, then the equally popular 'Lost and Found trope' also bears scrutiny. It is evidenced by films such as *Yaadon Ki Baarat* [Procession of Memories], 1973, and *Amar Akbar Anthony*, 1977); it might further be argued that it can be traced to the trauma of Partition and its effect on the many families who were separated at this time.<sup>127</sup> As with twins, mistaken identity stories also abound in Hindu mythology; the story of Ahalya which is used by Vidyasagar in his prose translation of *The Comedy of Errors* is a well-known one. Echoes of the opening of *The Comedy of Errors* are also found in Rabindranath Tagore's novel *Naukadubi* [Shipwreck] that begins with a storm which wrecks the boats of two wedding parties resulting in one of the wives being paired with the wrong husband in a manner that is known to him but unknown to her. However, another source for the mistaken identities trope in the Hindi film industry (as seen in films such as *Chupke Chupke* [Silently] (1975) and *Golmaal* [Confusion] (1979)) could be the Sanskrit play *Mrcchakatika* [Little Clay Cart] attributed to Shudraka, an ancient playwright generally thought to have lived sometime between the second century BC and the fifth century AD. *Mrcchakatika* shares several plot features with *The Comedy of Errors*: both plays are built around a series of comic confusions based upon mistaken identity, a relationship between the protagonist and a courtesan, as well as the loss and exchange of jewellery.<sup>128</sup> This could be the reason why all three adaptations of *The Comedy of Errors* I will discuss below include these three particular plot points, even when they discard other elements

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<sup>127</sup> Dickson, *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys Around Shakespeare's Globe*, p 201.

<sup>128</sup> For a more detailed study of the commonalities between the two plays see Richard Allen, 'Comedies of Errors: Shakespeare, Indian Cinema, and the Poetics of Mistaken Identity', in *Bollywood Shakespeares*, ed. by Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p 167.

from Shakespeare's play such as the romantic framing device or the exorcism sequence.

There are two further specific plot points in *The Comedy of Errors* that make it especially easy to adapt for an Indian audience. Modern audiences, in India as elsewhere, might find the master-servant relationship in the play particularly controversial and difficult to relate to. Before Indians began migrating for employment purposes, however, it was not uncommon to have servants who became assimilated into the master's family; the servants' family often served the masters' family through several generations. This relationship therefore, still resonates with recent Indian family heritage and is thus very easily translocated into an Indian setting. The second important plot point of the play that translates extremely well into an Indian setting is the culturally specific joking-flirting *Jija-saali* relationship – the relationship between a man and his wife's sister. The wooing of Luciana by Antipholus of Syracuse thus takes on explicit significance and is a source of both laughter and unease. In all three adaptations – *Bhrantibilash*, *Do Dooni Char*, and *Angoor* – someone in the crowd comments on this relationship when Luciana insists on dragging the wrong Antipholus home. Since the first two films heighten the love story between Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse, the comic aspects of this misrecognition are intensified. In *Angoor*, however, the comment made by the person in the crowd is deliberately suggestive, bordering on vulgar, and causes considerable unease despite the comedy of the situation. This discomfort regarding illicit relationships is, a subtext in all five films considered in this thesis; it signals the tensions which arise when assimilating a foreign playwright within traditional narrative structures, when rendering Shakespeare accessible to the masses. Subject matter that involves a strange man staying at the marital house, the possibility of

marital infidelity with a sister-in-law, and the representation of a relationship between a husband and a courtesan remains quite sensitive material for mainstream Hindi cinema of the post-war period, framed as it was by the overarching discourse of civic pride and moral responsibility that placed a premium on virtuous womanhood even as it inevitably sought, as popular entertainment, to represent female desire. It seems no accident, then, that the first of these film adaptations emerged in the 1960s, when the discourse of morality was slowly loosening under the pressure of social change in the post Nehruvian era and the world was experiencing the Second Wave Feminist Movement.<sup>129</sup>

*The Comedy of Errors* was translated in 1869 into Bengali as *Bhrantibilas* by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a leading intellectual and social reformer of nineteenth century Bengal. Vidyasagar is recognised as the person who modernised the Bengali language; his textbooks continue to be used in schools in West Bengal.<sup>130</sup> His purpose in translating the Shakespearean play, as stated in the foreword, however, was entertainment rather than instruction. I would like to unpack the title that Vidyasagar chooses for his translation as it is a weighted one which points to the layered nature of most art forms in India which audiences in India take pleasure in regardless of their educational background. My explication of this title will help me to discuss, throughout my thesis, the multiple layers of meaning that certain words, colours, sounds or codified character types or narrative situations have in the Hindi film industry. These associations have developed across the various indigenous performance traditions in India through the ages and have been co-opted by Shakespearean adaptors in order to integrate Shakespeare seamlessly into indigenous

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<sup>129</sup> Allen, p 172. See Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of Twentieth-Century American Sexual Thought* (Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>130</sup> Ishwar C. Vidyasagar, *Bhrantibilas* (Calcutta: Sanskrit Press, 1876).

narrative traditions; these codified meanings might not always be accessible to Western critics. In *The Comedy of Errors*, ‘error’ means both mistake as well as moving astray or wandering. Similarly, *bhranti* contains in its etymological root the Bengali word *bhram*, which like the etymological root for error, *errare*, means mistakes or misrecognitions. It is also related to the word *bhraman* which means wandering or travel. *Bilaash*, on the other hand, refers to both an attitude of hedonism and indulgence as well as to the *Bilaas* genre, the medieval Vaishnava form centred on the (frequently characterised as illicit) love play of Krishna and Radha. The genre also refers, according to Paromita Chakravarty, to ‘altered manifestation of divine beings when Gods assume human incarnations’ thus intrinsically linking the *Bilaas* genre to the idea of doubling found in Shakespeare’s play.<sup>131</sup> The title *Bhrantibilas* thus sets up multiple resonances between wandering, misrecognition, religion, as well as illicit indulgence.

The 1963 film of the same name begins with images of Vidyasagar and Ramakrishna, a nineteenth century Bengali mystic and admirer of Vidyasagar. ‘As icons of the Bengali Renaissance,’ notes Chakravarti, ‘these figures help to establish the context of Bengali modernity within which the film unfolds’.<sup>132</sup> There is no mention of Shakespeare at all; the film seems to align itself with the Bengali Renaissance inspired domestic melodramas of the 1950s and 60s, or perhaps the film makers made the assumption that mainstream audiences would be more familiar with the Bengali translation than Shakespeare’s original. The 1960s, of course, was also the decade when newly independent Indians were just beginning to renegotiate their

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<sup>131</sup> Paromita Chakravarti goes into much more detail in explaining the connotations of the word *bilaas* and the suggestions of sexual indulgences it evokes in ‘Pleasurable Errors and Erroneous Pleasures: Renegotiating Shakespearean Romance in Three Indian Films’, in *Shakespeare’s Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel*, ed. by Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick and Poonam Trivedi (Routledge, 2016), pp 219-238.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, p 224.

attitudes towards Shakespeare, as I have explained in the introduction. The continuing ambivalence towards Shakespeare could be why Vidyasagar, a potent symbol of the Bengali Renaissance, so entwined with the history of Parallel Cinema, is foregrounded in lieu of Shakespeare.

The realist aesthetic of Parallel cinema shapes both the dramatization and narration of *Bhrantibilas*; the film is set in contemporary India, which is a departure from Vidyasagar's translation. However, the action moves from city to village in order convincingly to locate the interest in magic, possession, the irrational and uncanny derived from Shakespeare within aspects of premodernity such as folk dances, tribal life and rustic locations. Bilaas/Luciana (who represents the spirit of playful indulgence) and her sister embody the tension between new and old, as will their counterparts in *Do Dooni Char*. Another departure from Vidyasagar due to commercial imperatives is the intensification of the love story of Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse through song and dance: these sequences dance on the edge of a knowing enjoyment of erring and accommodate the profound questions of identity and human errors embedded in the play within the narrative requirements of realist, middle-class storytelling.<sup>133</sup> The sound track of both *Bhrantibilash* and *Do Dooni Char* caters to mainstream taste requirements and songs from both films remain popular to date. The focus on the Luciana and Antipholus love story in the two 1960s appropriations however, takes attention away from Adriana's errors and there is a concerted effort to make the courtesan figure respectable, in an extension of Vidyasagar's attempt to sanitize and modernise the text; in *Bhrantibilas*, Chiro refers to his affection for Aparajita as towards a sister. Despite this and apart from the framing story of Aegeon and Emilia, the film is, nonetheless, a fairly faithful

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p 225.

rendering of *The Comedy of Errors* with various key points such as the argument over a necklace, the lock out scene, the Pinch episode and the recognition scene faithfully recreated. Even the plot material that Shakespeare had borrowed from Plautus' *Amphitryon* where Alcmena is seduced by Jupiter, the king of Gods in Roman mythology, who takes the form of her husband Amphitryon is here paralleled in the legend of Ahalya, wife of the sage Gautama Maharishi, who is seduced by Indra, the king of gods in Hindu mythology. In the film, this legend is retold at a fair through a puppet show just before Bilaas/Luciana finds the wrong Chiro/Antipholus at the fair and takes him home to her sister who also mistakes him for her husband. This attempt in *Bhrantibilash* to stay close to Vidyasagar's prose translation and to find local narrative parallels suggests why this film is considered to be the Parallel Cinema companion to the more mainstream Hindi *Do Dooni Char*, despite the Bengali film's commercial success and afterlife on television.

*Do Dooni Char* was meant to be the Hindi remake of *Bhrantibilash*; the screenplay for the Bengali film was written by Bidhayak Bhattacharya and the Hindi film by Gulzar. The film was supposed to be directed by Bimal Roy who was noted for his realistic and social films. However, Bimal Roy passed away before the film was completed and it ended up being directed by Debu Sen. As a result, *Do Dooni Char* flouts all norms of realist cinema and luxuriates in the use of all available theatrical and modern cinematic special effects. It ends up downplaying its literary associations keeping the Bombay audience in mind, though it does acknowledge Shakespeare in the credits. Given Parallel Cinema's aversion to the Bombay style of film making, *Do Dooni Char* can also be seen as Bombay cinema taking an 'art film subject' and consciously making it a Bombay cinema subject in order to commercialise Shakespeare as the Parsi theatre once did. The acknowledgement of

Shakespeare in this film contrasted to the absence of acknowledgement in *Bhrantibilash* seems to further indicate this. Thus, the literary pedigree that Bengali film makers used to disassociate themselves from Bombay cinema was now being claimed by a Hindi film; crucially, it distanced Shakespeare from its elitist associations by erasing from the film any sense of literary loftiness and highlighting the comedy at the centre of the play.

The global vaudevillian tradition of playing *The Comedy of Errors* was adopted for this film and it delights in the physical comedy, visual comedy and double takes that issue from the twin genre that came to be so popular in Bombay. It played to the strengths of Kishore Kumar, the singer/actor playing Antipholus, and not only intensified the love story of Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse but also the farce that lies at the core of the play. The first scene after the credits sets the tone with Sandeep/Antipholus hurrying home after a shopping trip, so loaded down with boxes that he cannot see where he is going. He slips on a banana peel on his way home, bumps into a person who gets turned around and continues walking the way he came, and fumbles with his keys and ends up pressing the doorbell with his nose. The pre-credit prologue is also constructed as a visual witticism in which the two sets of twins are paired with contrasting servants who bear traits that are opposite. The panels are then shuffled like a deck of cards that enacts the comic confusion of identity that the voice-over narration announces as the subject matter of the story. These type contrasts are exaggerated in comparison with Shakespeare's play not only to heighten the comedy but also to ensure and enhance recognition in a medium involving rapid intercutting between scenes and in which the audience relies as much on visual cues as on verbal ones.

There are several things that *Angoor* borrows from both these films. The names may be different but all the Antipholuses wear the same attire and have the same characteristics. The married Antipholus is a snuff taker, for instance, whereas the single one smokes. The married Antipholus has a short temper with the temperament of a businessman, the single Antipholus is milder mannered, with the heart of a poet. Both films mention *gaanja* [hashish] as a possible reason for the confusions and both films play up the themes of food, wealth and time in *The Comedy of Errors*. *Angoor* also retains the opening extra-diegetic address to the audience from *Do Dooni Char*. Most importantly, these films contribute towards the future success of *Angoor* by allowing *The Comedy of Errors* to be absorbed into the idiom of Hindi cinema much in the way Parsi theatre absorbed Shakespeare as set devices, stock characters and stand-alone plot points. Several subsequent films thus show varying degrees of awareness of *Bhrantibilash* and of *Do Dooni Char*, and by extension, of *The Comedy of Errors*. The confusion regarding the jewellery is present, for instance, in *Yeh To Kamal Ho Gaya* (1982), a film about people who are identical but not twins and in *Gustakhi Maaf* (1969) [Pardon the Disrespect], an earlier film which features girls sharing the same name who are separated during a storm at sea.<sup>134</sup> The other plot elements of *The Comedy of Errors* that often found their way into films about mistaken identities is the locking out episode and the character of the exorcist who is sometimes reincarnated as a psychiatrist as in *Gustakhi Maaf*. Not only were films about mistaken identities popular during the latter half of the twentieth century, they also specifically incorporated various important plot points in *The Comedy of Errors*. This play had thus, by the sixties, also already become part of the consciousness of audiences in India. This is

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<sup>134</sup> Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', p 248.



significant since, as noted above, this play is not commonly part of the education system in India and students are not as familiar with it as they are with other comedies of Shakespeare such as *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

### **Middle-Class Cinema and the influence of *Golmaal* (1979)**

India's middle-class was estimated to be about hundred million out of a total population of nine hundred million at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which makes this class of Indians the biggest consumers of films in India as well as 'the opinion class'.<sup>135</sup> Ashis Nandy asserts that 'art films, middle cinema and commercial films in India...depend on the middle classes for legitimacy and critical acclaim'.<sup>136</sup> The middle-class also 'carries the burden of national identity on its shoulders' which makes them the most relevant subject for a film industry which, in a country which is still 50% illiterate, represent the prime vehicle for the transmission of popular culture and values.<sup>137</sup> Pioneered by Hrishikesh Mukherjee who 'carved a middle path between the extravagance of mainstream cinema and the stark realism of art cinema', Middle-Class cinema refers to the group of films by Mukherjee, Basu Chatterjee, Gulzar, Rajendra Singh Bedi and Basu Bhattacharya which became popular in the 1970s.<sup>138</sup> This cinema was characterised by the primacy of story over spectacle, family-centric and linear narratives, unglamorous people-next-door protagonists, realist tendencies, and the espousal of middle class morals. It is also marked by an overwhelming dependence on Bengali culture for its

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<sup>135</sup> This estimate is from Neha Chadha, 'The Middle Class: Consuming and Consumed the Romance of Bombay Cinema', *Journal of Moving Image*, (2006), pp 1-13.

<sup>136</sup> Ashis Nandy, 'An Intelligent Critic's Guide to Indian Cinema', *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*, (1995), pp 196-236.

<sup>137</sup> M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical construction/M. Madhava Prasad* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p 163.

<sup>138</sup> Saibal Chatterjee, Govind. Nihalani, Gulzar., *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, p 592.

narrative and iconographic material as well as its film making talent.<sup>139</sup> Even films such as *Guddi* (1971) and *Anand* (1971) which were not based on Bengali narratives had characters with Bengali names or costumed like the Bengali middle class. These films avoided the melodramatic mode of mainstream cinema and ‘took it almost as a responsibility to educate the film viewing public’ and cultivate their ‘good taste’; this was, of course, a holdover from the Bengali *bhadralok* [gentleman] Renaissance man sensibility which had first led to the embracing of Shakespeare and Western education in colonial times.<sup>140</sup> These characteristics, which melded the ‘good cinema’ imperatives of Parallel Cinema as envisioned by the government and some of the entertainment values of mainstream cinema, appear to have been quite congenial to Shakespearean adaptations for mainstream markets.<sup>141</sup>

The 1970s was a turbulent time in the political history of India; in response, the brooding, thoughtful protagonists played by Amitabh Bachhan in films like *Anand* (1971) and *Namak Haram* (1973) erupted into the ‘Angry Young Man’ *avatar* that was developed through Salim-Javed’s films in the 1970s. At the same time, in the government backed Parallel cinema sector, film makers such as Mrinal Sen and Shyam Benegal were exploring various topical issues such as social exploitation, political and moral corruption by turning their lens on the socially underprivileged world that was underrepresented or ignored by mainstream cinema. It was at this point that film makers such as Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee and others mentioned above started exploring an alternative realist cinema within the mainstream industry at this juncture by depicting the socially privileged

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<sup>139</sup> Prasad, p 164.

<sup>140</sup> Chadha, p 5.

<sup>141</sup> The filmmakers had an equally prominent role in defining the slant of parallel cinema and were not always in agreement with the government. Neither was there a complete consensus amongst filmmakers on what these imperatives should be.

urban middle-class world that the spectator would recognise as his or her own; this is when Amol Palekar's career as the 'Affable Young Man' took shape in direct contrast to Amitabh Bachhan's 'Angry Young Man' Persona.<sup>142</sup> These films confronted social problems, usually in a humourous manner, that the middle-class could relate to in their attempts to negotiate between modernity and middle-class values and their efforts to formulate a national identity.

*Golmaal*, one of the representative films in the comedy genre in Bollywood, and one of the best known Middle-Class films, is still enormously popular with audiences.<sup>143</sup> The primary actors were all noted theatre actors; indeed, Utpal Dutt, whom I have referred to in the introduction, was not only a renowned Shakespearean actor but one who had taken Shakespeare to the masses in the popular Bengali *jatra* style in his early career. *Golmaal* was an immediate critical and commercial success; Amol Palekar, who plays the protagonist, won the Best Actor Award in the 1980 Filmfare Awards beating both Amitabh Bacchan and Rajesh Khanna, the reigning superstars of the action and the romantic genres respectively at the time. This was a remarkable achievement especially since the comedy genre in Bollywood was never as popular as action or romantic films. Utpal Dutt, who plays Bhavani Shankar, also won the Best Comedian Award that year at Filmfare and Gulzar won the Best Lyricist award.

*Golmaal* is about one man pretending to be twins in order to save his job. It quotes directly from Shakespeare twice, though not from *The Comedy of Errors*.<sup>144</sup> It

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<sup>142</sup> See Satish Poduval, 'The Affable Young Man: Civility, Desire and the Making of a Middle-Class Cinema in the 1970s', *South Asian Popular Culture*, 10 (2012), pp 37-50 for a more detailed description of how Palekar's middle class hero was carefully crafted as a foil to Bachhan's more glamorous hero depiction.

<sup>143</sup> Lokapally, Vijay, *Golmaal* (1979), <http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/gol-maal-1979/article4221884.ece>, (The Hindu, 20 Dec, 2012) [accessed 26 December, 2013].

<sup>144</sup> In an early scene one of Ram Prasad's friends draws attention by saying 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears' which is a quote from *Julius Caesar* 3.2. Later when Ram meets

does, however, wittily refer to the *shabdo ki herafeeri* [twisting of words] in *Golmaal* that also abounds in *The Comedy of Errors*. In many ways, the film is a parody of the twin genre. Ram Prasad Sharma, the serious, *kurta pajama* [typical Indian male attire] clad, *shudh* [pure] Hindi speaking accountant invents a twin - the fashionable football-loving unemployed singer Lakshman Prasad Sharma - when his boss, Bhavani Shankar, catches him at a football match when he has supposedly taken a day off work to look after his ailing mother. The idea presents itself because Ram's friend is presently acting in a twin movie in Bollywood. Like other films in the middle-class genre, which frequently comment on the art of film-making, *Golmaal* is then, self-reflexive: it shows us the theatricality of cinema, it demonstrates how props such as clothes and a moustache are used to make the same person look completely different. In this era before Hindi film could access the modern technological advances which are now fully integrated into its repertoire, *Golmaal* trades in, and self-consciously plays with pre-cinema modes of performance. Such self-referential moments recur in *Angoor* for example, when Ashoke is waiting for a bus to take him back to town after viewing the grape farm he has come to purchase, he sees the bus approaching in the distance and impatiently comments: 'it's wasting a lot of footage'. Similarly, when Tanu thinks that the travelling Ashoke is putting on a show because he is angry with his wife she says, 'I never knew you were such a fine actor', to which Ashoke replies, 'If you could recognize this as acting, then what would be so fine about it?' In *Golmaal*, however, the genre-parody quickly escalates; one lie inevitably leads to another and when Bhavani Shankar wants to meet his mother, Ram Prasad is forced to acquire one at short notice. When the woman

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Urmila as Lakshman Prasad Sharma he quotes from *Romeo and Juliet* 2.2 asking 'What's in a name?' Both these quotes are readily recognizable by urban Indian audiences who usually study both plays at some point in their education.

pretending to be his mother runs into Bhavani Shankar at a party looking nothing like the widowed mother he had met, she also invents a twin. When Lakshman Prasad supposedly mistakes Bhavani Shankar for the gardener, he asks him if he too has a twin. Later, when Bhavani Shankar crashes into a police car while giving chase to Ram Prasad who is eloping with his daughter Urmila, the police mistake him for his Doppelganger, Pascal de Costa, the infamous smuggler. The deliberately absurd profusion of supposed twins in the film quite consciously spoofs the genre; this parody is continued and developed further in *Angoor*, especially in the recognition scene, which I will discuss below. The parallels between *Golmaal* and *Angoor* are hard to miss and it almost seems like one story seems naturally to lead to the other. Ram Prasad invents Lakshman Prasad; Kamla invents Bimla; Bhavani Shankar looks uncannily like Pascal deCosta. However, what if there were two Sharma brothers who looked exactly alike? What if one set of twins were paired with yet another set of twins? Coincidentally, Gulzar had already encountered just such a story in *The Comedy of Errors* in 1968 when he had written *Do Dooni Char* and was now perfectly placed, as one of the film makers working within the Middle-Class film genre, to remake a film he had already been involved in before.

Audiences today who are used to spin-offs in literature, radio, film and television may plausibly view *Angoor* as a spin-off of *Golmaal*.<sup>145</sup> The two films not only share a similar theme but also share several actors.<sup>146</sup> *Golmaal* features Utpal Dutt as the father who also plays the father and Shakespeare in *Angoor*. Yunus Parvez, who plays *Bade Babu* [Sir] in *Golmaal*, plays the *shayari*-spouting [Urdu

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<sup>145</sup> A spin-off is a narrative work derived from one or more already existing works that focuses in more detail on one aspect of that original work such as a character or event.

<sup>146</sup> This is in no way unusual in the Hindi film industry where actors tend to get typecast and play the same character or character types through several movies made in the same period. However, *Golmaal* and *Angoor* share overlaps that frequently seem like the characters all inhabit the same space just as characters do in spin-offs.

poetry] jeweler's assistant in *Angoor*. We are also shown a white *kurta* which supposedly belongs to Hari Bhai or Sanjeev Kumar who plays the white-kurta-and-dhoti clad Antipholi/Ashokes in *Angoor*. Most significantly, Ram Prasad's actor friend who helps him with his charade is Deven Verma, the actor who plays Dromio/Bahadur in *Angoor*. In fact, there is a brief scene in *Golmaal* where we see Deven Verma shooting a scene with Aruna Irani, the actress who plays Nell/Prema, Bahadur's wife, in *Angoor*. They are both dressed as servants and the scene is like a glimpse into the parallel twin-film world of *Angoor* where Verma and Irani could well be giving a take for *Angoor*. Since middle-class cinema such as *Chhoti Si Baat* [A Small Matter] (1976) and *Guddi* frequently featured cameos by Stars playing themselves and behind-the-scenes sequences where the glamour of the Hindi film industry is unmasked, it seems probable that *Angoor* deliberately sets up a dialogue about film making by referencing *Golmaal*.<sup>147</sup> These myriad, and I would suggest, calculated associations between the two films direct the audience to view *Angoor* as a companion film or spin-off, indeed a double, of the hugely popular *Golmaal*, thereby guaranteeing its commercial success. This theorisation is borne out in the fact that the two films are considered companion pieces today; Vanilla Presentation Two in One Movies, for instance, has released a DVD in 1995 featuring both movies. There is therefore, a further doubling achieved in a play that delights in doubling at all levels, with setting up *Angoor* as a twin for *Golmaal* just as *Do Dooni*

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<sup>147</sup> *Chhoti Si Baat* is based on *School for Scoundrels*, a 1960 British Comedy which itself was based on the *Gamesmanship* series of books by Stephen Potter. As with other Basu Chatterjee films, movie stars have small cameos playing themselves: Dharmendra and Hema Malini (whose mother Jaya Chakravarty helped produce the film) are in a movie-within-a-movie for the song 'Janneman janneman,' while Amitabh Bachchan plays himself in another scene, where he seeks advice from Ashok Kumar's character. He is dressed in costume from *Zameer* (1974), whose film poster is prominently displayed at the bus stop scenes in *Chhoti Si Baat*. Both films share the same producer, B.R. Chopra. *Guddi*, written by Gulzar, is about a schoolgirl obsessed with the actor Dharmendra, who plays himself. Middle Class cinema thus delighted in intertextuality, representing the national obsession with mainstream cinema, and in self-reflexivity.

*Angoor* (1982): A Hindi *Comedy of Errors*

*Char* was set up as a double of *Bhrantibilas*. Gulzar, having previously adapted *The Comedy of Errors* as a scriptwriter for *Do Dooni Char* and having been involved with *Golmaal* as a lyricist, was uniquely positioned in the early 1980s to attempt *The Comedy of Errors* a second time and to ensure its commercial success.

### ***Angoor* [Grapes]: Engaging with the Shakespeare text**

Visually, *Angoor* adheres to the unglamorous aesthetics of Middle-Class cinema; the cityscape of Bombay, for instance, which is frequently romanticised in films as the ‘city of dreams’, is shot in the realistic manner of a Satyajit Ray film. The plot of *The Comedy of Errors* is particularly suited to the middle class social comedy genre: not only is it a comedy based on confusions, it also has a character who needs to be taught a moral lesson. Sudha/Adriana in *Angoor* is a shrewish middle-class wife who, without reason, suspects her husband of cheating on her and nearly ends up cheating on him by mistake; *Angoor*, unlike its predecessors, dwells on Sudha’s transgressions rather than avoiding them. The crucial difference between *Angoor* and other films in the Middle-Class genre is that the characters themselves do not set the confusions into motion. *Angoor* stays faithful to Shakespeare’s play with certain exceptions. The protagonists from the play are seamlessly transposed on to the middle-class world of 1980s India and all sense of the rural superstition, mystery and illogicity which featured in *Bhrantibilash* and *Do Dooni Char* have been carefully removed. Even when Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse are suspicious of the over-familiar natives of the city where they have just arrived, they resort to conspiracy theories to explain the strange happenings rather than magic and bewitchment. The Pinch subplot has also been removed and the Egeon/Aemilia framing replaced with a rather different framing. Unlike the precursors which

appropriate Shakespeare through Vidyasagar's translation, Gulzar models the film on Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* and the incipient romance between Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse almost erased; indeed, in a move quite uncharacteristic of Hindi films, we do not see Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse paired off in the denouement. The strength of this strategy is that *Angoor* is free to focus more squarely on the comedy for which the film is celebrated.

The film is famously bookended by an animated portrait of Shakespeare. At the beginning of the film, Shakespeare is introduced to us as 'a famous playwright of the sixteenth century' who is 'still considered to be the greatest'. Thus acknowledged, we see the grim-faced Shakespeare break into a smile. The narrator goes on to inform us that though films about twins are quite common, it took the genius of Shakespeare to invent a story about not one but *two* sets of twins. The framing device used in *Angoor* serves several purposes. The portrait of Shakespeare is not only reminiscent of the frontispiece of Shakespeare's *First Folio*, but also a nod to the centred image of Shakespeare above the stage in the Mousetrap scene in Modi's *Hamlet* (1935). This echo of one of the most iconic Shakespeare films made in Bombay also reminds us of the tendency of previous generations of Hindi Shakespearean film makers to slavishly copy their models; the canonical white English language Shakespeare film which were reproduced almost shot by shot. I would like to call attention to the fact that Shakespeare is consciously *not* referenced as a British playwright but 'a famous playwright of the sixteenth century'. There seems, therefore, to be a claim that Shakespeare belongs to the cultural heritage of India as much as he belongs to Britain. Moreover, the actor playing Shakespeare in this scene is Utpal Dutt, one of the Shakespeareans who had, in his early career, greatly contributed to making Shakespeare Indian. This self-conscious portrait of an



Indian Shakespeare signifies the ‘Indianization’ of the Bard; the new generation have moved on from the desire to mimic British models. This new distance is further highlighted when the portrait of Shakespeare winks and smiles. And yet, this is the only way in which *Angoor* explicitly acknowledges itself as a Shakespearean film; none of the publicity material before the film’s release referred to it as being a Shakespearean adaptation. It might be inferred that the makers wished to escape the ‘stigma’ of elite erudition associated with other popular film adaptations of Shakespeare in India until after the success of Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkara* in 2004 and 2006 respectively. Instead, *Angoor*’s pointed focus on the twins plot firmly categorised it as a comedy within the Bollywood twin genre even as the association with *Golmaal* established it as a middle-class social comedy. Gulzar’s success in assimilating an explicitly acknowledged Shakespeare adaptation in to mainstream Bombay cinema is confirmed by the fact that Filmfare recognised the film’s commercial success that year where in previous years a Shakespearean acknowledgement would have meant a lack of interest from audience audiences.

As an acknowledged adaptation, *Angoor*, at first glance, seems more of a translation than a transposition despite its updated modern setting; several scenes and dialogues are easily identifiable as adapted from *The Comedy of Errors*. As with the play, both sets of twins in *Angoor* share the same names. The unmarried twin visits the city of the married twin along with his servant and gets caught up in a series of confusions arising out of the townspeople mistaking him and his servant for his brother and his brother’s servant. The comedy of the situation is further heightened since the twins in *Angoor* seem not to know of the existence of their brothers, unlike Antipholus of Syracuse who purposely travels abroad to find his brother. Sudha/Adriana and Ashoke/Antipholus of Ephesus fight over a necklace while

Tanu/Luciana tries to keep the peace by counselling her sister to temper her jealousy ('Self-Harming jealousy! Fie, beat it hence.' 2.1.100).<sup>148</sup> The courtesan in the play who inspires Adriana's insecurities also has a parallel in the film - Alka. The resident Bahadur intercepts the visiting Ashoke at the market and entreats him to come home, confusing the latter with denials of any knowledge of the money that was entrusted to his safe-keeping at the hotel and references to wives (both Ashoke's and his own) and a sister-in-law which is almost an exact translation of the scene in 1.2.41 where the resident Dromio meets the visiting Antipholus. There is a jeweller who is told to deliver the necklace to Alka's house when Ashoke is locked out and is forced to spend the night at Alka's with Bahadur. The resident Ashoke sends out his Bahadur to buy a rope to give to Sudha instead of the necklace in a reflection of Antipholus' instruction to Dromio: 'While I go to the goldsmith's house, go thou/ And buy a rope's end; that will I bestow/Among my wife and her confederates...' (4.1.15-18). In an exact translation of 4.1.85-113, the visiting Ashoke tells his Bahadur to get tickets so they can flee this 'city of thugs' but when Bahadur returns with the tickets, he is met by the resident Ashoke who asks him where the rope is and then sends him to his house for his bail money. When all the confusions reach their head, a police inspector (in place of the Duke), who personally knows Ashoke and his household, is asked by the sisters and by the resident Ashoke and the jeweller to arbitrate.

If this faithfulness to the original text suggests straightforward imitation, it is the skilful way in which the themes of *The Comedy Of Errors* have been adapted and transposed on to the modern Indian setting in *Angoor*, however, which identifies it as the film which marks the shift in India's negotiation with Shakespeare. The first

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<sup>148</sup> All references to the play text are from Dorsch, T. S., ed., *The Comedy of Errors*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

sequence after the credits centres on a domestic card game which seems to be a typical activity of the family; this dispels the notion of Ashoke as a straying husband who does not want to spend time with his wife and immediately confirms his wife's jealousy as unfounded.<sup>149</sup> Ashoke attempts to play footsie with his wife but is matter-of-factly told by Tanu that the foot he is nudging is hers and not her sister's. Ashoke asks where *Didi's* [sister's] foot is, to which Tanu retorts: '*Didi woh meri hain, aapki biwi hain*' [She's my sister, not yours; she's your wife]. Confusions will result later from characters being unsure about their relationships with others but for the moment, in the middle-class family home, all confusions are swiftly resolved.

The sequence after the credits also quotes from the play when Ashoke calls Bahadur/Dromio a *gadha* [ass] just as Antipholus of Ephesus tells Dromio: 'I think thou art an ass' (3.1.14). However, unlike the way Dromio is treated by Adriana and Luciana in the play, Bahadur is considered very much a part of the family in *Angoor*, despite his station, and Sudha and Tanu treat him well even if Ashoke does not always do so. When Tanu and Sudha scold Ashoke for treating Bahadur badly and calling him a mere servant, the important theme of the master-servant relationship in keeping with typical Indian households, is introduced. The depiction of the treatment of both Bahadurs is an indirect critique of class prejudices in Indian society; the contrasts in the treatment of both servants are explored in a more detailed manner in *Angoor* than they are in its precursors. For example, while the visiting Ashoke and

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<sup>149</sup> The song sequence that follows a few scenes later and the actual depiction of Alka later in the film, also implies that Sudha's jealousy is groundless. Chakravarti suggests in *Pleasurable Errors and Erroneous Pleasures* that Sudha's jealousy may have some basis as her accusations that her husband gives Alka jewellery are never refuted. However, whenever we see Alka, she is dressed in saffron and rudraksha beads, traditionally worn by *sadhvis* or holy women. She never wears any jewellery at all and she appears completely desexualised. Moreover, Tanu does not refer to Ashoke's relationship with Alka as a salacious one and given the many sly references to the cultural stereotype of the special relationship that Jijas and Saalis share that are vocalised in the film, one would have expected the film to hint at Ashoke's extra-marital affair if he had one.

Bahadur share the same railway carriage and hotel room and sit side by side in the taxi, the resident Ashoke sits in the backseat of the cab and Bahadur sits next to the taxi driver when they travel together and Tanu disapprovingly comments on how Bahadur shamelessly sits next to Ashoke munching popcorn at the concert hall as if he were equal to Ashoke. Furthermore, we are also told that initially Bahadur was mistaken for Ashoke and vice-versa by Gangaprasad, the girls' father, when the pair was rescued from the shipwreck. This succinctly and eloquently echoes the original play's obsession with the random nature of stations in life present in the play as Kiernan Ryan points out: 'The protagonists of *The Comedy of Errors* are trapped in an improbable predicament which reveals the fragility of the identities and relationships they took for rock-solid realities, the arbitrariness of having become this person rather than another, dwelling here rather than elsewhere, married to this individual rather than to someone else or to no one'.<sup>150</sup> The film recognises this feature of the play, and plays upon its interest in the arbitrary, even if the class and caste divisions of Indian society do not quite allow accidents of birth to be a subject of comedy. There is, moreover, the Hindu belief that we are reincarnated into our present lives due to our actions in a previous life; being reincarnated as someone of a lower class/caste may be construed as a form of punishment that the person is seen somehow to deserve. The fact that the abandoned Bahadurs were taken in by Raj Tilak is therefore a sign of his generosity, not one of an egalitarian society; they are not rescued by anyone else because the bystanders are unsure of their caste and even when Raj Tilak takes them, he names them Bahadur, a generic name for Nepali servants. There is no question that these abandoned babies of unknown caste will be

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<sup>150</sup> Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p 15.

brought up as equals to the twin sons of Raj Tilak: they will be family servants. Elsewhere in the film, the arbitrary question of status and birth is further addressed and again unobtrusively acts as a critique of the class system in India. In the sequence when Ashoke storms back to the hotel expecting to find Bahadur gone, he asks the manager if he has seen Bahadur go out or return. A waiter approaches Ashoke and asks him: '*Aap 102 number wale sahib ko pooch rahe hain na?*' [You're asking about the gentleman in room 102, aren't you?] to which Ashoke curtly replies: '*Sahab main hoon, woh mera naukar hain*' [I'm the gentleman, he is my servant]. Later, when the visiting Ashoke imperiously tells Bahadur outside of the police station that he will take the taxi that Bahadur came in and that Bahadur could take his autorickshaw, he reconsiders and decides it would be more prudent for both of them to travel in the taxi since they were going to the same destination. And finally, in the end sequence, the resident Ashoke mistakes the cook for the mother he has never seen and humbly seeks her blessing. All these instances of comedy also therefore act as social critique and question the inherent class prejudice in India which is one of the main themes of *The Comedy of Errors*.

If *Angoor* draws on the 'fragility of reality' which animates Shakespeare's original, it also replicates the slipperiness of its language and the elusiveness of its meanings. The sequence after the credits also has Ashoke telling the sisters: *Pitaji marne se pehle ek din zinda thay* [Father was alive one day before he died]. *Ek din* [one day] could be taken to literally mean a single day, or once upon a time. Sudha takes it to mean the latter, but Ashoke means the former. Misunderstandings are, from the outset, rife in *Angoor*; the double nature of language, very much a preoccupation of the play, is explored in *Angoor* to brilliant comic effect. Indeed, the verbal witticism in the film was a key reason *Angoor* was more successful than its

precursors and why the film remains successful with audiences. This *hera-pheri* of language already present in Gulzar's *Golmaal* also prefigures the witty lyrics of Bhardwaj's songs. In fact, instead of the expected six songs for each side of the audio cassette that music companies demanded of film makers, the audio track for *Angoor* has three dialogue exchanges as there are only three songs in the entire film.

To consider another key example of verbal witticism, the traditional recognition scene at the end of the film also acts as a parody of the twin genre. When the Ashokes finally come face to face, the resident Ashoke asks his counterpart: *Tumhare daye kandhe mein ek til hain?* [Do you have a mole on your left shoulder?] When his twin replies in the negative he laughs, and says '*Mere bhi nahin hain!* *Hahaha! Phir to hum dono bhai huwe!* [Neither do I! Hahaha! That must mean we are brothers!]' This exchange develops further *Golmaal's* earlier parodying of the twin film genre: it points out the absurdities that proliferate in the twin film genre and deftly refers to the mole on Dromio's shoulder that Nell identifies: 'this drudge or diviner laid claim to me...told me what privy marks I had about me, as the mark of my shoulder, the mole in my neck...' (3.2.124). It also refers to the absurdities of the many birthmarks that proliferate Lost and Found and Twin films in Bollywood such as *Nishaani* [Keepsake; to mark an occasion] (1942), *Anhonee* [Impossible] (1973), *Yakeen* [Certainty] (1969) and *Zameer* [Conscience] (1975). *Angoor* is thus an adaptation of the play on many more levels than its precursors; it marks the beginning of a deeper engagement with the text of Shakespeare rather than just individual themes or episodes which were translated or recontextualised in previous decades.

This new engagement with the literary text is also thematised in *Angoor*. In the sequence where we are introduced to the visiting Ashoke and his servant

Bahadur, we find Ashoke, the *jasoosi* [detective] novel enthusiast, on a train, engrossed in Ved Prakash Kamboj's detective novel *Agyaat Apradhi*. The use of a book as prop harks back to the literary pedigree that Bengali cinema claimed, yet this book is a Hindi thriller with a melodramatic storyline and no literary significance. Once again, *Angoor* seems to be taking something that is exclusively the domain of Parallel Cinema to render it thoroughly commercial. This Ashoke, due to his predilection for detective novels, is suspicious to the point of paranoia. This quality of his ingeniously translocates the sense of persecution that Shakespeare's play has at the beginning when Antipholus of Syracuse is advised not to disclose his nationality for fear of forfeiting his wealth ('Therefore give out you are of Epidamnum/Lest that your goods too soon be confiscate.' 1.2.1-2). When Ashoke and Bahadur reach their destination, and are greeted by strangers by name, they jump to the conclusion that a gang has knowledge that they are carrying a lot of money for a business transaction. This leads to Ashoke instructing Bahadur to keep the money safe and not set foot outside of the hotel room as Antipholus entrusts Dromio with his money and sends him to the Centaur ('Go, bear it to the Centaur, where we host, / And stay there Dromio, till I come to thee.' 1.2.9-10).

When the visiting Ashoke first ventures out of the hotel, he warns his Bahadur not to indulge in *bhang* [hashish] in his absence. Consequently, when the resident Bahadur bumps into the visiting Ashoke at the market and speaks seeming nonsense, Ashoke concludes that Bahadur is not in his senses, thereby finding a plausible explanation for an inexplicable event. Further on in the film, when the visiting pair find themselves locked in with women who claim to be their wives, the visiting Bahadur laces *pakodas* [fried vegetable snacks] with *bhang* and instructs Ashoke to feed them to the sisters upstairs while he feeds Prema (Bahadur's wife)

the same so that the pair can escape once the women fall into a cannabis-induced sleep. The sequence develops the melodramatic 'gang' plot further (Ashoke and Bahadur surmise that the women will be easier to escape from before their menfolk come home). It also, of course, has the obvious purpose of adding physical comedy to the farce in a manner of the vaudevillian interpretation of the play in *Do Dooni Char*. However, its most important role, as Richard Allen proposes, is 'to finesse the implication of desire between the visitor and the wife's sister; cannabis smoking at once allows physical proximity and transgressive desire to be both expressed and denied. It is a way for the film to be modern, but within an essentially conservative mindset.'<sup>151</sup> If *The Comedy of Errors* is, as Ryan points out, 'about literally straying into taboo territory' then *Angoor* allows its protagonists to step into the fictive worlds of cheap detective thrillers.<sup>152</sup>

If the Bollywood possibilities of the criminal gang are brought into play in this episode, Gulzar nonetheless resists some other 'taboo' possibilities. Gulzar chooses to stick close to Shakespeare's original and not play up the romance between the visiting Ashoke and the unmarried sister, a subject which had provided a lot of scope for comedy in both *Bhranti Bilash* and *Do Dooni Char*. Periodically, the downplayed romance between Ashoke and Tanu seems to heighten the sense of taboo associated with their mutual attraction; indeed the visiting Ashoke knows that he is unmarried but Tanu reveals at the end of the film that she has been kissed by the person whom she thinks is her brother-in-law apparently without facing any resistance. *Bhang*, and its effects as displayed by Prema downstairs in the company of the visiting Bahadur is the only indication that the visiting Ashoke has perhaps,

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<sup>151</sup> Richard Allen, 'Comedies of Errors: Shakespeare, Indian Cinema, and the Poetics of Mistaken Identity', *NMML Occasional Paper Perspectives in Indian Development New Series 13*, (2013), p 18.

<sup>152</sup> Ryan, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, p 12.



under the excuse of not being totally in his senses crossed a line with Tanu, before Tanu's revelation. This sense of taboo is still further heightened when the film ends without the expected pairing off of Tanu and the visiting Ashoke: Gulzar resists the wholly socially acceptable resolution of their illicit relationship.

Uniquely for commercial Indian cinema, the engagement with the text further manifests itself in its similarity to well-known theatrical interpretations of the play. For instance, Deepti Naval's bespectacled depiction of Tanu is markedly similar to Francesca Annis' portrayal of Luciana in Trevor Nunn's 1976 musical version of *The Comedy of Errors*. Furthermore, several productions, including Trevor Nunn's version, typically represent the courtesan as a Whore of Babylon dressed in red to echo Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse's identification of her as 'Mistress Satan' (4.3.42). Alka in *Angoor* is dressed in red as well, though interestingly enough, she pairs her reddish saffron sari with *rudraksh* beads, typically the attire of yogis and holy men. Indian audiences are directed to assume that her attire reflects her life as a *brahmachari* [a person who has taken a vow of celibacy]. This, taken together with the fact that Alka is never seen wearing any of the jewellery that Sudha insists she has, further cements the conjecture that Sudha's jealousy of her is completely unfounded. Gulzar has thus quite creatively dealt with the tricky subject matter of a married man's relationship with a woman who is not his wife: he draws on Indian costume codes to divest Alka of sexuality while drawing on Western colour codes to ensure that her garments suggest she is the 'other woman'.

Despite Gulzar's profession as a poet and lyricist, which in any other mainstream film would have resulted in several songs to match generic mainstream cinema expectations, *Angoor* – as mentioned above - has only three songs in it and each of these songs, though romantic in tenor, are used in surprising ways. The first

of these is set in Sudha and Ashoke's bedroom where Sudha sings, with vocabulary that is familiar to Hindi cinema audiences, of a past tryst and a pledge made; these romantic numbers are conventionally used to develop the relationship between couples using codified language in lieu of physical intimacy. Ashoke, however, seems resistant, almost disaffected and irritated at first, making us wonder if there's some truth to Sudha's allegations against Alka, till we realise that the formulaic song is Sudha's reminder to her husband about the necklace he has promised her. While the song does bring out the affection between the couple, at the end, when Ashoke plays with the clasp of the chain Sudha is wearing and glances at the camera in a conspiratorial manner, he completely undermines a supposedly intense moment of romance with comedy, thus subverting the traditional ways in which romantic songs are used in the Hindi film industry.

Similarly, Tanu's first meeting with the travelling Ashoke is set within a performance where she mellifluously sings of bees and secrets - *Roz roz dali dali kya likh jaye bhavada banwara* [What does the bewitched bee write out on the branches every day], formulaic language that replaces lovemaking in Hindi cinema. However, Ashoke is not struck by love at first song as his counterparts were in *Bhrantibilas* and *Do Dooni Char*; when the stage manager invites him backstage to meet Tanu, mistaking him for her brother-in-law, Ashoke hands the man money as a gratuity for Tanu's performance with Bahadur protesting that he is giving away too much money. Gulzar, once again, uses an established *filmi* [typically masala film-like] device to focus on the comedy of the situation rather than the romance of the song. However, as Chakravarti points out, the romance of old Hindi film songs is 'most effectively punctured in the *Pritam aan milo* [Beloved, let us embrace] number

which is used as a secret code between the visiting Ashoke and Bahadur'.<sup>153</sup> The song, originally by Geeta Dutt from the film *Mr and Mrs. '55* (1955) directed by Guru Dutt, is one of the definitive romantic songs of the Hindi film industry picturised on Guru Dutt and Madhubala.<sup>154</sup> In *Angoor*, however, it is Bahadur who wanders around Sudha's house where he is trapped, plaintively singing *preetam aan milo* looking for his master. In his drugged state, beset by hallucinations and paranoia, the mismatch between the love song and Bahadur's gruff, exaggerated rendition produces hilarious comedy. The angst laden heteronormative language of the song picturised on Bahadur's nocturnal quest for Ashoke completely undermines the stock romantic sequences in commercial cinema and appears to mock the generic conventions for which romantic songs are deployed. Gulzar therefore, diegetically uses the most important mainstream cinema convention and appropriates it for comic effect.

In *Angoor*, therefore, for the first time we see a thorough engagement with the Shakespearean text where the adaptation is multi-layered and not weighed down by either the effort of reproducing iconic western productions or of responding to and resisting Shakespeare. In fact, there is a conscious Indian ownership of the original; Shakespeare is never referred to as a British dramatist and all signs of elite 'literariness' have been subsumed into the mainstream commercial mode of cinema. This was only possible, however, after the assimilative phase in the 1960s, after the Indian nation had worked through its ambivalence towards Shakespeare in a period when Shakespeare was decolonised and Indianized. Middle-class cinema in the 1970s and 80s spoke to a more sophisticated and literate audience, often English

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<sup>153</sup> Chakravarti, p 234.

<sup>154</sup> Picturisation is a term used in Hindi cinema to describe the screen representation of a song sung by playback singers. See Anna Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007).

language educated, than the general mainstream audiences: this mode of cinema was an apt vehicle for the full-scale adaptation of Shakespeare for commercial markets. Many of the lessons learnt by Gulzar in adapting Shakespearean comedy would later be put to use by Bhardwaj when he sought to recontextualise Shakespeare for a modern, post-liberalisation Indian setting in the new millennium. However, before Gulzar could pass the Shakespeare baton to Bhardwaj, Hindi cinema would have to find a way to appropriate and assimilate Shakespeare's tragedies, a genre that did not exist in Indian performance traditions or literature before the turn of the present century. As the following chapter will explore, in 1988, Mansoor Khan begins this process with his appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet* – *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* [from the end of the world to the Day of Judgment].

### ***Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988): *Romeo and Juliet* in Bollywood**

In this second Shakespeare adaptation considered in this thesis, the collaborative tensions that shape Bhardwaj's work have a distinct precursor in the partnership of Mansoor Khan and his father Nasir Hussain. *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (henceforth *QSQT*) is a classic Hindi film that set the standard for the typical commercial Hindi film in the 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>154</sup>

Mansoor Khan was not a mainstream film maker like his father Nasir Hussain, and located his films within the dictates of the middle-of-the-road cinema I have described in my previous chapter. While Hussain was known for his Lost and Found formula films, macho heroes and glamorous heroines, Khan tended to subvert formula, particularly by reversing the usual gender dynamics portrayed in Hindi films, and had protagonists who were ordinary next-door people situated within realistic locales and contexts. Moreover, as a young, English-speaking Ivy League educated Indian, Khan was representative of a new generation of Indians who considered Hindi cinema 'tacky', a subject of mockery: he found it difficult to connect with the formulaic mainstream cinema produced by his father and others at the time.<sup>155</sup> When Khan took to film making, he approached it neither for commercial reasons, nor because he was passionate about cinema. Instead he was convinced that could make a film for his own aesthetic reasons and that the audience would be willing to 'collaborate in his kind of cinema'.<sup>156</sup> As Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan has observed, 'Mansoor Khan did not belong to the distinguished art-house tradition, or fit into the fiercely commercial scene, yet there was a niche for

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<sup>154</sup> *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, Dir. Mansoor Khan, Nasir Hussain Films, 1988.

<sup>155</sup> Gautam Chintamani, *The Film that Revived Hindi Cinema Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (Harper Collins India, 2016), p 24.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p 34.

him'. Khan only made four films; while *QSQT* made box office history, the rest of his films were also modest commercial successes, thus proving that there was still a market in the 1990s for the middle-of-the-road cinema which had its roots in the 1970s.<sup>157</sup>

Khan certainly found his 'niche' with *QSQT*: it was a runaway commercial success and began to be termed a 'cult film' when it unexpectedly turned into the biggest film of the year with some teenagers having watched it over a hundred times by the end of 1988.<sup>158</sup> Its gross box office takings in India was ₹10 crore (one hundred million).<sup>159</sup> Several articles written to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of *QSQT* in 2013 retrospectively identify it as the first of six films that brought families back to the cinema for the 'wholesome entertainment' it offered.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, the film won the National Film Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment in 1989, along with the Special Jury Award. It also won awards in seven of the main categories at the Filmfare Awards and eclipsed other contenders at Filmfare that year. Thus, Khan's directorial debut received recognition

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<sup>157</sup> Aysha I. Viswamohan, 'Mansoor Khan: Narrative and Aesthetic Impulses of a Director in 'Self-Exile'', in *Behind the Scenes: Contemporary Bollywood Directors and their Cinema*, ed. by Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan and Vimal Mohan John (SAGE Publications India, 2017), p 31.

<sup>158</sup> See, for instance, an article about the unforeseen success of *QSQT* by Simran Bhargava, 'Teenybopper Heart-Throb', *India Today*, (15 December, 1988) <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/bollywood-dreamboat-qayamat-se-qayamat-tak-makes-aamir-khan-a-teenage-sensation/1/330097.html>> [accessed 12 December, 2016].

<sup>159</sup> *Box Office Collections for Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, <http://ibosnetwork.com/asp/filmbodetails.asp?id=Qayamat+Se+Qayamat+Tak> [accessed 22 March, 2015]. To offer some context, *Tezaab* [acid], an action-romance film starring Anil Kapoor, the star who had taken over Amitabh Bachchan's mantle, grossed ₹17 crore (one hundred seventy million) in the same year.<sup>159</sup> *Tezaab* was positioned in the most popular genre of the 80s, featured a bankable star in the lead role and music by Laxmikant-Pyarelal, a very popular Indian composer duo. In contrast, *QSQT* featured an unknown leading man whose looks did not resemble any existing Hindi film 'hero', a leading lady who had made her debut in a film which had failed quite resoundingly, and music by a new music director duo Anand-Milind.

<sup>160</sup> R. M. Vijayakar, *25 Years of 'Qayamat Se Qayamat Taq'*, [http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article\\_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html](http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html), (28 April, 2014) [accessed 15 August, 2014].

both from the official government and the popular film appreciation bodies. *QSQT*, furthermore, marked a shift from the violent revenge dramas that dominated the industry in the 70s and 80s towards the romantic comedies that characterized the 90s and came to represent the ‘typical’ Bollywood film to the world at a time when the West was just beginning to discover ‘Bollywood’.<sup>161</sup> The landmark status of the film and its cult following today makes it the most commercially successful Shakespearean adaptation in the Hindi film industry. Its acknowledged inspiration from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, however, has been curiously ignored, despite the growing contemporary interest in Global/Non-Anglophone Shakespeares in contemporary times; this chapter aims to address the crucial place that *QSQT* holds in the history of Bollywood Shakespeares.

Recently, this *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation has found its way on to several lists of Shakespeare films, such as the British Universities Film and Video council database and compilations put together by universities such as the Slippery Rock University list of feature length films of Shakespeare’s works assembled by Dr. Derrick Pittard.<sup>162</sup> On the other hand, Rajiva Verma, who mentions the 1948 *Romeo and Juliet*, which was an imitation of MGM’s 1936 film, does not refer to the later and much more successful *QSQT*.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, Poonam Trivedi, who has, along with Rajiva Verma, charted the different stages of adaptation and appropriation of

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<sup>161</sup> For evidence of the watershed achievement of *QSQT* see Madhu Jain’s ‘Return to Romance’, *India Today*, (1989), 132 – 139. Ajanta Sircar in her article ‘Love in the Time of Liberalization: Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak’, *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 32 (1999), 35-59, analyses the significance of *QSQT* as a ‘new’ love story of 80s/90s Bombay. She also refers to Sanjukta T. Ghosh’s analysis of the film in *Celluloid Nationalism: Cultural Politics in Popular Indian Cinema* (1992) and Lalitha Gopalan’s study of *QSQT* in *Wogs, Natives, Heroes: Examining Cinema and National Identity*, (1993) as evidence of the importance of *QSQT* as a landmark film.

<sup>162</sup> The full link to the databases I have referred to here are British Universities Film and Video Council, *An International Database of Shakespeare on Film, Television and Radio*, <http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/>, 20 September 2012 (13 June 2014) and Dr D. Pittard, *Shakespeare on Film*, <http://srufaculty.sru.edu/derrick.pitard/shakespearefilms.htm>, 7 October, 2014 [accessed 1 March, 2014].

<sup>163</sup> Rajiva Verma, ‘Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema’, p 241.

Shakespeare in India, particularly in the Hindi film industry, has also made no mention of this acknowledged adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>164</sup> The first time that *QSQT* is evaluated as an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* is in 2010 in Courtney Lehmann's monograph where she devotes one page to this film while recounting a brief history of the play on screen.<sup>165</sup> Mark Thornton Burnett also touches upon the film in *Shakespeare and World Cinema*, but does not give it as much importance in the scheme of his book as he does Bhardwaj's adaptations.<sup>166</sup>

In terms of the narrative of this thesis, however, Mansoor Khan's *QSQT* occupies a crucial place in the development of Shakespearean adaptations in the Hindi film industry, because the film's appropriation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* successfully brings tragedy into mainstream cinema. I will begin this chapter, therefore, by discussing the absence of tragedy as a genre in the Indian arts and the resistance to tragic endings by Indian dramatists, writers and film makers. I will then examine the influence of western popular culture interpretations of *Romeo and Juliet* in India; in particular how Khan appropriated another commercially successful landmark interpretation of the play – *West Side Story* (1961) – first to translocate *Romeo and Juliet* to the prevalent mainstream Hindi romantic musical genre, then to restore the original tragic ending of Shakespeare's play.<sup>167</sup> In tracing the pre-history of *QSQT* in India, I will briefly discuss Utpal Dutt's *Bhuli Nai Priya* (1970), a Bengali *jatra* adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* as well as *Ek Duije Ke Liye* (1981), the first modern Hindi film to quote from *Romeo and Juliet*. I will also explore how

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<sup>164</sup> Poonam Trivedi, "'Filmi' Shakespeare", pp 148-158.

<sup>165</sup> Courtney Lehmann, *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: The Relationship between Text and Film*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), p 97.

<sup>166</sup> Mark T. Burnett, *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p 206.

<sup>167</sup> *West Side Story*, Dir. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, United Artists/The Mirisch Corporation Seven Arts Productions, 1961.



*Romeo and Juliet* was absorbed within an existing body of indigenous stories featuring star-crossed lovers such as Laila-Majnu, Shirin-Farhad, Heer-Ranjha or even Radha-Krishna.<sup>168</sup> I will then move on to a close examination of *QSQT* as an appropriation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and look at some of the ways in which *QSQT*, like *Angeer* in the previous chapter, might also be categorized as a middle-of-the-road film. Finally, I will briefly compare *QSQT* to *Josh* (2000) - Khan's second attempt at adapting *Romeo and Juliet* through the lens of *West Side Story* - which was considered to be only a 'moderate success' as compared to the historical success of *QSQT*.<sup>169</sup> The twenty-fifth anniversary of *QSQT* in 2013 was also marked by three acknowledged adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* – *Ishaqzaade* (2012) by Habib Faisal, *Issaq* (2013) by Manish Tiwary and *Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela* (2013) by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. I will therefore, conclude this chapter by briefly touching upon these three films to discuss the afterlife of both Khan's *QSQT* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in an industry that is dominated by tales of star-crossed lovers.

### **The Absence of Tragedy in Hindi Cinema**

The most striking characteristic of Sanskrit drama is the absence of tragic endings: as Bijoya Goswami declares in the Introduction to *Tragedy in Sanskrit Literature* 'there are no dramas in Sanskrit that conform to the western concept of tragedy.'<sup>170</sup> This is thought to be due to the fact that the *Natya-Sastra*, an ancient encyclopaedic Hindu treatise on the arts dated to between 200 BCE and 200 CE and attributed to the sage Bharata, prescribes strict rules requiring that a drama should

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<sup>168</sup> *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*, Dir. K. Balachander, Prasad Productions Pvt. Ltd, 1981.

<sup>169</sup> Viswamohan, p 17.

<sup>170</sup> Bijoya Goswami, Manabendu Banerjee, *Tragedy in Sanskrit Literature* (Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2004) p 3.

not end in separation or bereavement.<sup>171</sup> Trivedi notes that critics have variously explained this absence by arguing that a purification of existing stage practices had led to the abandonment of tragic endings, or that the Indian notion of tragedy was different from the Greek one, or even that the Hindu belief in rebirth and Karma made the tragic genre difficult to reconcile to existing narrative practices.<sup>172</sup>

However, Lindenau believed that this avoidance of tragedy was most probably due to the dramatists' yielding to popular taste.<sup>173</sup> When considering the absence of tragic endings in Hindi film, this motivation to satisfy the demands of the paying audience seems particularly convincing.

G. K. Bhat writes that, 'although the tragic sentiment is found to dominate Sanskrit poetry and drama, the actual concept of tragedy is alien to this period of literary creation.'<sup>174</sup> This tragic sentiment that Bhat describes is, in my opinion, the closest that Sanskrit drama comes to Tragedy; the *Karuna Rasa* that dominates many Sanskrit plays translates to a feeling of compassion and sorrow and results in pathos rather than the sense of calamity and catharsis associated with western tragedies. The *Natya-Sastra* describes the origin of drama in the legend of the gods approaching Brahma and asking for a form of entertainment which could be enjoyed by people of all castes. Bhattacharji translates that it was requested that this form of entertainment 'be a solace for the distressed, should imitate life, instruct and entertain men, be a luxury to the wealthy', thus leading to what she describes as 'the comparatively facile treatment of life in Sanskrit drama' - a treatment, which I should point out, is

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<sup>171</sup> Sukumari Bhattacharji, 'Sanskrit Drama and the Absence of Tragedy', *Indian Literature*, 21 (1978), p 9.

<sup>172</sup> Poonam Trivedi, 'Shakespearean Tragedy in India', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, p 884.

<sup>173</sup> Max Lindenau, *Bhāsa-Studien; Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Des Altindischen Dramas*. (Leipzig: Druck von G. Kreysing, 1918).

<sup>174</sup> Govind K Bhat, *Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama* (Popular Prakashan, 1974), p 25.

also observable in mainstream formulaic cinema.<sup>175</sup> Intriguingly, the discovery of the manuscripts of thirteen plays attributed to Bhasa prove that this was not always the case.<sup>176</sup> In fact, as Saunders proves in her essay *Some Literary Aspects of the Absence of Tragedy in the Classical Sanskrit Drama*, most of the great Sanskrit dramas which have been reduced to melodramas or ‘averted tragedies’ due to the strict rules about avoiding unhappy endings have in them the potential to be great tragedies and can be changed into tragedies merely by changing the ending. However, as Bhattacharji and Saunders note, the rules about avoiding unhappy endings and the deaths of the hero or principal protagonists of the play are very definite in the *Natya-Sastra* and were strictly adhered to by the classical dramatists.

If Sanskrit drama withheld the possibility of a tragic ending, the introduction of Shakespeare led to an appreciation and emergence of a tragic vision in nineteenth century Indian literature. Stage productions were nevertheless resistant to tragic endings as evidenced by the rampant Tateifications of Shakespeare appropriations in the Parsi theatre: Rajiva Verma describes how Agha Hashr Kashmiri had a distaste for tragic endings and ‘did not like the idea of the audience going home in tears at the end of a show’.<sup>177</sup> The staging of death, moreover, was considered inauspicious – *Ramavarma Lilavati* (1889) by Anandrao, a version of *Romeo and Juliet* in Kannada, ended with Friar Lawrence praying to the gods to restore the young lovers to life whereupon Vishnu descends, revives the lovers and the play ends in a marriage.<sup>178</sup> However, despite the bowdlerisation of Shakespeare adaptations, Shakespearean tragedy did lead to new plays being written on the Shakespearean

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<sup>175</sup> Bhattacharji, p 9.

<sup>176</sup> Virginia Saunders, 'Some Literary Aspects of the Absence of Tragedy in the Classical Sanskrit Drama', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 41 (1921), p 152.

<sup>177</sup> Verma, *Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema*, p 243.

<sup>178</sup> Trivedi, *Shakespearean Tragedy in India*, p 885.

tragic model and the tragic genre began to be gradually accepted and adopted on the Indian stage.<sup>179</sup> Tragedies, though still rare, also began to appear in to mainstream Hindi cinema: the success of domestic and social tragedies such as *Mother India* (1957), *Anand* (1971), *Deewar* (1975) and *Rang De Basanti* (2006) broke the mould and proved very popular with Bollywood audiences. Before *Ek Duije Ke Liye* and *QSQT*, however, it remained very rare for a Hindi film love story to have a tragic ending.<sup>180</sup>

The 1960s period of assimilation outlined above did much to establish tragedy as part of Indian theatre repertoire. Trivedi argues persuasively that it was only in 1964, that ‘a full acceptance and incorporation of Shakespeare tragedy’ was possible and this was exemplified by Harivansha Rai Bachchan’s prose translations of Shakespeare’s four major tragedies between 1957 and 1972.<sup>181</sup> In his preface the translation of *King Lear* (1971), Bachchan recognises that ‘Tragedy does not happen with the destruction of the bad but with the destruction of the good’. Bachchan’s verdict returns us to the sense of tragedy that motivated Mansoor Khan in *QSQT*. It was his view that the film script that his father had written had pushed beyond a sense of the reconcilable, that it could not possibly end happily.<sup>182</sup> In recognising this tragic imperative, Khan ensured *QSQT*’s cult status in the annals of the Hindi film industry. The tragic ending of *QSQT*, disrupting the most important convention of the archetypal romantic musical Hindi film identifies it as a true Shakespeare adaptation: the Romeo and Juliet of *QSQT* must die in the end.

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<sup>179</sup> See Trivedi’s essay ‘Shakespearean Tragedy in India’ for examples of original Indian plays which were based on the Shakespearean tragic model.

<sup>180</sup> *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) is often listed among the great tragedies on the Hindi screen but though Anarkali is banished from the kingdom, this film does not lead to the death of either the courtesan Anarkali or the Prince Salim.

<sup>181</sup> Trivedi, ‘Shakespearean Tragedy in India’, p 890.

<sup>182</sup> Mansoor Khan. Interview by Koel Chatterjee. Tape Recording. London, 21 May, 2017.

In fact, *QSQT* was scripted with a happy ending by the screen-play writer Nasir Hussein, Mansoor Khan's father. However, Khan shot and screened both endings for his father because he was convinced that a formulaic happy ending would not be artistically true to the film.<sup>183</sup> In several interviews during the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of *QSQT* Khan repeats the claim that he was not convinced by his father's finale after filming the scripted ending and thus ended up rewriting the entire scene on set. Khan had always been convinced that the lovers should die, but several people involved in the making of the film had their doubts. The market wisdom was that Hindi film audiences did not support love stories with sad endings. Moreover, Hussain, was primarily known for his 'light-hearted, slice-of-life films'.<sup>184</sup> His only attempt at a tragic ending in the film *Baharon Ke Sapne* (1967) had not been well received. Khan was, however, convinced that the battle for the tragic ending was worth the fight: 'Unlike Dad, I did not want a happy ending to the story, which would have been simplistic and unconvincing. The hatred was so intense that I had to show its futility with the death of the youngsters.... I liked the beginning of my father's script, but thought that I could add my own new take on a storyline inspired by 'Romeo and Juliet' and similar stories even in Hindi films of lovers from warring families'.<sup>185</sup> It is intriguing here that even as he acknowledges Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as a key source for the 'profound sense of the *tragic inevitability* that fuels Shakespeare's play', he also seeks to situate it as acceptable within a Hindi film tradition of 'lovers from warring families'.<sup>186</sup> His conviction that

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Sonil Dedhia, *Why QSQT is Relevant Even After 25 Years*, <http://www.rediff.com/movies/report/why-qsqt-is-relevant-even-after-25-years/20130429.htm>, 15 August, 2014 [accessed April 29, 2013].

<sup>185</sup> Vijayakar, R. M., *25 Years of 'Qayamat Se Qayamat Taq'*, [http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article\\_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html](http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html), 15 August, 2014 (28 April, 2013).

<sup>186</sup> Lehmann, p 97.

audiences will respond to both, is what elevates *QSQT* above all the other films about young star-crossed lovers defying their parents and makes Raj and Rashmi's love story legendary. Even as he trades on Shakespeare's original tragic vision, he also draws on the audience's knowledge of and familiarity with adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* in traditional theatrical modes such as *jatra*. Khan also, as I explore below, incorporated and carefully manipulated specific references to two other appropriations of *Romeo and Juliet* on film which were hugely popular in India: one from Hollywood – *West Side Story* (1961) and one indigenous *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* (1981).

### ***West Side Story* (1961)**

Though Khan acknowledged *Josh* as an adaptation of *West Side Story*, the influence of the American musical was not acknowledged at the time of *QSQT*'s release. *West Side Story* reimagines the characters of *Romeo and Juliet* in upper West Side New York City and the feud as between two street gangs - the Jets, comprised of white immigrants (Tony is Polish-American) and the Puerto Rican Sharks. I would like to highlight the parallels between *West Side Story* and *QSQT* by drawing attention to two specific sequences in both films. The first is when Tony in *West Side Story* sings 'Something's coming'.

I got a feeling there's a miracle due  
Gonna come true  
Coming to me  
Could it be?

This is the sequence when the audience is first introduced to Tony and we see him as the boy next door with innocent dreams of a simple life and humble ambitions of falling in love. The feelings of expectancy and exhilaration in Tony's song as well

the audience's fatalism towards the fate of this naive boy and his hopes are replicated in the song that Raj sings when we see him for the first time.

Papa kehte hain bada naam karega  
Beta hamara aisa kaam karega  
Magar yeh to koi na jaane ke meri manzil hain kahan...  
Banda yeh khoobsurat kaam karega  
Dil ki duniya mein apna naam karega

[Dad says my son will be famous,  
But no one knows what my destination is...  
This fellow will do something beautiful  
He will be known for love]

The lyrics in each of these songs, however, highlight essential differences in character between Tony and Raj. Where Tony is a dreamer with an unshakeable belief that 'everything will be all right' right up till his last breath, like a traditional Hindi film romantic hero, Raj is aware of, though not governed by, family expectations and is more of a realist. An example of this is when he does not argue with his father when he is told to stay away from Rashmi, but simply defies him by actively seeking her out. He, in fact, takes on shades of Maria's role when he goes against his father and says: '*Main aur Rashmi aap dono ki nafrat ke waris banne ko taiyyar nahin!*' [Rashmi and I refuse to inherit your feelings of hate for each other!] QSQT was initially titled *Nafrat ke Waris* [Heirs of Hate] because Khan felt this was the key sentiment that underlined the sense of irreconcilability which he found crucial to the film.<sup>187</sup> Raj in this song seems to echo some of Tony's ambitions but the lyrics of the song are also a reference to Shakespeare's Romeo who, when we first see him, desperately desires to undertake the role of lover. Further, it is a reference to Romeo's deliberate pursuit of love instead of hate and foreshadows the

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<sup>187</sup> Mansoor Khan. Interview by Koel Chatterjee. Tape Recording. London, 21 May, 2017.

sacrifice of the lovers in the face of their family's enmity which ultimately leads to the 'glooming peace' (5.3.305) at the end of Shakespeare's play.

The second sequence that *QSQT* has borrowed from *West Side Story* is when Tony and Maria pledge their troth before God. Their song 'One hand, one heart' is echoed in Raj and Rashmi's song '*Akele hain to kya gham hain*' [Alone but not sad] as they go on to sing '*Chahen to hamare bas mein kya nahin/ Bas ek zara saath ho tera/Tere to hain hum, kab se sanam*' [We can achieve anything/ As long as you are with me/ I have always been yours]. Raj and Rashmi actually succeed in doing what Tony and Maria could not; they run away from home on the night of Rashmi's engagement to Roop Singh/Paris and there is a charming sequence in the film where the two lovers 'marry' in an abandoned temple and set up house next to it. Indeed, the ending of *QSQT* shocks the audience even more because Raj and Rashmi seem to have finally outrun the hate surrounding them. However, Rashmi's eventual death fuses both of Khan's source influences: it is reminiscent of Tony's when she smiles at Raj and says '*Ab humein tumse koi nahin juda kar sakta*' [Now no one can separate me from you]. It is, of course, simultaneously a reference to Juliet's death and her refusal to be led away by Friar Lawrence when she wakes and finds her husband dead.

Khan, however, ultimately chose to return to the ending of *Romeo and Juliet* rather than of *West Side Story* or indeed, *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*. The tragic ending of this latter film had had an unprecedented social impact on audiences a few years earlier, but Khan had to avoid a death by suicide ending as his father's banner was traditionally associated with wholesome films.<sup>188</sup> By ensuring that fate played a hand

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<sup>188</sup> R. M. Vijayakar, *25 Years of 'Qayamat Se Qayamat Taq'*, [http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article\\_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html](http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html), 15 August, 2013 [accessed 28 April, 2014].



in the death of the lovers, Khan stayed close to the ending of *West Side Story* as well as to the original play text. Therefore, Rashmi gets shot in *QSQT* in an echo of Tony's death in *West Side Story*; however, whereas Maria does not die, Raj chooses to use the dagger that Rashmi had gifted him to kill himself, just as Juliet stabs herself with Romeo's dagger 'O happy dagger, / This is thy sheath;/ there rust, and let me die' (5.3. 168).<sup>189</sup> This ending scene is therefore, a conflation of Shakespeare's text with *West Side Story* and justifies Khan's argument that the death of the lovers can be the only logical and acceptable ending to this story.

### ***Bhuli Nai Priya* [I have not forgotten, my love] (1970)**

If *West Side Story* can be read as a direct influence on *QSQT*, it is also necessary to explore indigenous appropriations of *Romeo and Juliet* in a country which abounds in stories about star-crossed lovers. Most Hindi films are romantic musicals about doomed lovers and a *Romeo and Juliet* story is often based on the legend of *Romeo and Juliet*, or similar legends of star-crossed lovers rather than Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. For example, in *Josh* (2000), Mansoor Khan's adaptation of *West Side Story*, the lyrics of the song '*Apun bola tu meri Laila*' [I said you are my Laila] are subtitled in English as 'I said you are my Juliet', thereby indicating that the *Romeo and Juliet* fable is interchangeable with the *Laila Majnu* fable of star-crossed lovers to many Indians.<sup>190</sup> Films based on the legends are therefore, not to be confused with actual adaptations and translations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in the Hindi film industry. The star-crossed-lovers trope is used in one way or another in most Indian films and there are several

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<sup>189</sup> All references to the text are from William Shakespeare, David M. Bevington and David Scott Kastan, *Romeo and Juliet* (Toronto; New York: Bantam Books, 1988).

<sup>190</sup> *Josh* (2000), Dir. Mansoor Khan, Eros, 2003.

variations of it in the Hindi film industry, and indeed, in all the other film industries in India. For instance, one popular situation is when a rich girl falls in love with a poor boy such as in *Raja Hindustani* (1996) or *Kaho Na Pyaar Hain* (2000) [Tell me You Love Me] or when a rich boy falls in love with a poor girl as in *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) or *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001) and the matter of class and social status becomes the obstacle to true love. The other most common variation of the trope is the forbidden love between a Hindu and a Muslim against the backdrop of historical or present day communal tensions as in *Bombay* (1995), *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001) [Revolt: A Love Story] or *Veer Zaara* (2004). There is a third variant made famous with films such as *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) [I Have Loved] and *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995) which foregrounds the unfairness of a patriarchal society where the father's word is law even though he opposes the marriage of the lovers for reasons that lack moral authority.<sup>191</sup> However, all these films conform to Bhattacharji's definition of 'averted tragedies' with happy endings: other than the main plot of star-crossed lovers, they share very little with Shakespeare's play. Even so, well before the recent spate of acknowledged adaptations which I shall return to in conclusion to this chapter, there are a handful of films such as *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*, *Saudagar* (1991) and *1942: A Love Story* (1994) which are based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This can be traced to the influence of successful popular culture theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare's play such as Utpal Dutt's Bengali *jatra* adaptation, *Bhuli Nai Priya* (1970).<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Read Sheena Malhotra and Tavishi Alagh, 'Dreaming the Nation: Domestic Dramas in Hindi Films Post-1990', *South Asian Popular Culture*, 2 (2004), pp 28-31 for a more detailed analysis of what the authors term 'benevolent patriarchy' in Hindi films and television.

<sup>192</sup> See Tapati Gupta, 'From Proscenium to Paddy Fields: Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare Jatra', in *Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia*, ed. by Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta (Routledge, 2009), pp. 157-180 for a description about how Dutt used this production to comment on the issue of communal tensions in the wake of the partition of the country into India and Pakistan by making Romeo Hindu

There thus exists in India, two parallel versions of *Romeo and Juliet* – the legend which belongs to the corpus of folk tales about star-crossed lovers from various sources, and Shakespeare’s version of *Romeo and Juliet* which came to be translated, transplanted, adapted and studied by Indians. The play has been translated several times in India, especially in the mid-1800s when translating Shakespeare was a popular literary pursuit among the newly English-educated elite in India.<sup>193</sup> *Romeo and Juliet* was the second play to be translated into most Indian languages after *The Comedy of Errors*, and the most performed play after *Othello*.<sup>194</sup> It is also a text that students usually come across at some point of their education, either at school or in their undergraduate studies and is frequently referenced in popular culture and mass media in India.<sup>195</sup> The renewed interest in Shakespeare among Indians in the 60s due to the quarter centenary celebrations of Shakespeare’s birth in 1964 coincided with the youth culture movement in Britain and America in the 60s; echoes of this movement was heard in India as well and eventually found expression in literature, art, film and mass media in India, particularly after liberalisation. I have also previously discussed Utpal Dutt’s role in the adaptation and absorption of Shakespeare within Indian popular culture theatre in postcolonial India and the effects of his body of work as an adaptor, dramatist, and actor in the Hindi film industry, particularly in middle-of-the-road films where he played to his comic

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and Juliet Muslim. This interpretation of Shakespeare’s play has been taken up by the Hindi film industry in films such as *Heena* (1991), *Veer-Zaara* (2004) and *Ishaqzadein* (2013).

<sup>193</sup> Several essays in *Indian Literature*, Vol 7, No 1 (1964) list translations of Shakespeare plays for textbooks as well as adaptations as play texts on the Indian stage in different parts of India.

<sup>194</sup> Trivedi, *Shakespearean Tragedy in India*, p 885 and p 891.

<sup>195</sup> It is presently a part of the CBSE syllabus as evidenced by study resources that can be found at SA: *Romeo and Juliet Sample Paper*, <http://www.tesindia.com/teaching-resource/Romeo-and-Juliet-End-of-unit-test-6121071/>, 14 September 2014 [accessed 18 July 2013] and at *Oxymoron and Paradox*, <http://www.cbsenext.com/learners-portal/oxymoron-and-paradox>, 31 January 2013, [accessed 14 September, 2014]. It is also a part of the Third Year Bachelor of Arts Syllabus at Mumbai University *Mumbai University Third Year Bachelor of Arts Revised Syllabus*, [http://stxaviers.net/noticeboard/sites/default/files/Tyba%20english%5B1%5D\\_2.pdf](http://stxaviers.net/noticeboard/sites/default/files/Tyba%20english%5B1%5D_2.pdf), 14 September, 2011 [accessed 14 September, 2013].

strength. Here, I would like to draw attention to *Bhuli Nai Priya* (first performed on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1970), a translocated reworking of *Romeo and Juliet* by Utpal Dutt in the indigenous Bengali *jatra* style. I believe that with this performance, we can pinpoint a period in theatre and performance history when the two parallel versions of *Romeo and Juliet* that came to be used by film makers in the Hindi film industry (and other popular culture art forms and mass media) were made distinct. The text of the play has never been printed and there is no available documentation of the actual performances. Most of the people involved in the production are deceased. My observations are therefore, of necessity, primarily based on Tapati Gupta's research which in turn are a collation of oral accounts given to her by Kanaklata Chatterjee who acted as Gulrukh (Juliet's nurse), a manuscript lent to her by Utpal Dutt's wife, Sova Sen, and photographs of the production that survive.<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, I would argue that *Bhuli Nai Priya* is significant in the history of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations in India.

This Bengali stage adaptation stayed true to the tragic ending which proved successful with the *jatra* audiences.<sup>197</sup> In addition to popularising the tragic ending, I would argue that Dutt's adaptive decisions have also affected the retelling of the Shakespearean *Romeo and Juliet* story in The Hindi film industry. For instance, his decision to insert a backstory and to relocate the story within a specific historical context in India has been mirrored in adaptations and appropriations in the Hindi film industry such as *QSQT*, *Saudagar* (1991), *1942: A Love Story* (1994) and *Josh*, following the Indian tradition of explaining characters and situations in the first part

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<sup>196</sup> See Gupta, 'From Proscenium to Paddy Fields: Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare Jatra', pp 157-180 and Tapati Gupta, *Utpal Dutt's Plays*, <http://www.museindia.com/viewarticle.asp?myr=2005&issid=4&id=124>, (Muse India Archives, 2005) [accessed 25 December, 2013].

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

of a film. In *Bhuli Nai Priya*, 'distant Verona metamorphoses into Murshidabad; Mantua is Calcutta'. Further, 'by relocating Shakespeare in the streets of Murshidabad and transforming Escalus, Prince of Verona, into the Nawab Sirajuddaula, Dutt was using a legendary historical figure whose struggle with the British, and pathetic defeat, were etched in public memory'.<sup>198</sup> This serves a very important function, especially in the Hindi film narrative tradition, as Burnett observes: 'Often, the 'grudge' is positioned in such a way that the action that ensues might be illuminated. Elsewhere, the moment of rupture that substitutes for the 'grudge' takes the form of a violent familial argument.'<sup>199</sup> To go on a slight tangent away from *Romeo and Juliet*, Bhardwaj similarly references a moment in the history of India by using the name Jehangir for Duncan's counterpart in *Maqbool* (2004), the Hindi film adaptation of *Macbeth*, thereby alluding to the bloody Mughal history of India where regicide and parricide were a norm. In the same way, Dutt's adaptation of *Macbeth* in Jatra from several decades ago had also reminded his uneducated audience, unfamiliar with Shakespeare, of the Mughal era in India.<sup>200</sup> As a method of making Shakespeare more accessible to the masses, allusions to a specific historical period in India has therefore proved quite successful for Indian adaptors of Shakespeare both on stage and screen.

*Bhuli Nai Priya* has been overshadowed by Dutt's political jatras and has been largely forgotten by Indian theatre history. This is, however, a key play, I would contend, that marks the point in India where adaptations of Shakespeare stopped being imitations and became assimilations of Shakespeare. With *Bhuli Nai Priya*, Dutt made drastic changes to Shakespeare's play keeping in mind the

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, p 169.

<sup>199</sup> Burnett, p 205.

<sup>200</sup> Gupta, 'From Proscenium to Paddy Fields: Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare Jatra', p 166.

requirements of a traditional jatra performance – a familiar, relatable story, larger than life characters and song-and-dance sequences and these were the very changes that made the adaptation more suitable for a Hindi film narrative. Gupta argues that Dutt's Shakespeare jatra demystified Shakespeare for non-elite audiences and made this folk form sensitive to 'more subtle localized social nuances' and his re-playing of *Romeo and Juliet* is the best example of this. I would moreover argue that this largely forgotten play is an example of how Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is well known even to audiences who have not encountered *Romeo and Juliet* during their education or through western popular culture and mass media in the wake of *West Side Story*, and why Hindi cinema uses this story so frequently.

### ***Ek Duije Ke Liye* [We Are Made For Each Other] (1981)**

The first reworking of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* on screen in The Hindi film industry was undertaken in the form of *Ek Duije Ke Liye*, which was the Hindi remake of the Telegu *Maro Charitra* (1978).<sup>201</sup> Both films had south Indian superstar Kamal Hasan playing the lead role. This was the first Hindi film post-independence in a modern setting to reference Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as well as the popular *West Side Story*. *Ek Duije Ke Liye* avoids the usual dichotomies that are available within the Indian context such as religion or financial and/or social status and locates *Romeo and Juliet* within an issue of contention that is rarely addressed on film - the differences between North Indian and South Indian language and culture. The film was a box office success and won a National Film Award and three Filmfare awards.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> *Maro Charitra* [Another History], Dir. K. Balachander, Andal Productions, 1978. *Ek Duije Ke Liye*, Dir. K. Balachander, Prasad Productions Pvt. Ltd, 1981.

<sup>202</sup> IMDb, *Highest Grossing Hindi Movies of 1981*, <http://www.imdb.com/list/ls000028872/>, [accessed 20 December, 2014].

Nasir Hussain used *Romeo and Juliet* as a template for an epic love story when he wrote the script of *QSQT* and advised his son, who knew nothing about Thakurs and was uncomfortable with the Hindi language and the idiom of commercial Hindi film, to think of *Romeo and Juliet* when he started directing the film.<sup>203</sup> I would argue, however, that the commercially successful *Ek Duije Ke Liye* influenced Hussein to reference Shakespeare's play: not only did *Ek Duije Ke Liye* tell an epic love story at a time when action films dominated the market, it also directly referenced *Romeo and Juliet* several times. The play is first referenced when Sapna asks for Professor Munshiram's notes on *Romeo and Juliet* at a bookstore she frequently visits. Then, just after the sequence where we see Sapna and Vasu falling in love intercut with scenes of their parents fighting, Sapna reads out: 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other word would smell as sweet' (2.2.43). This is a theme central to this film which deals with barriers of language and culture and about personal identity. The repetitive scenes where we see the names of the lovers inscribed on walls, in the sand, and in letters, highlights the preoccupation that this film has with the concept of names as being part of a person's identity. The sequence that any audience familiar with the play would find most faithfully reflected in the film, however, is the one after Vasu is banished. His anguished cry: 'Why should I be banished from this place?...*Is sheher mein tumhe janne wale, nahin janne wale, janwar, panchhi, peddh, paude, yahan tak ki choti si choti chinti bhi dekh sakegi. Sirf main nahin dekh sakta?*' (Everyone in this town, people who know you, people who don't know you, animals, birds, trees, plants, even the tiniest of ants will be able to see you. Why should I be the only one not able to see you?) is a literal

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<sup>203</sup> Mansoor Khan. Interview by Koel Chatterjee. Tape Recording. London, 21 May, 2017. See also Gautam Chintamani, *The Film that Revived Hindi Cinema Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*.

translation of Romeo's protest in the third act of the play: 'Heaven is here/Where Juliet lives, and every cat and dog/ And little mouse, every unworthy thing, / Live here in heaven and may look on her, / But Romeo may not.' (3.3.29). This is also, conversely, the point in the film where the screenplay deviates from the play text and other locally relevant issues begin to inform the film, such as cultural prejudices that prevail in India. Nevertheless, there are several moments in the film even after this point, when other themes of the play are briefly cited, for instance, the eternal fight between age and youth: '*Budhape aur jawani ki sangram*' or the equation of love with madness: 'Love is...a madness most discreet'. (1.1.190).

*Ek Duuje Ke Liye* also visually aligns itself with *West Side Story* without verbally referencing the American musical. The opening sequence of the film depicts waves crashing against rocks and the empty spaces in a dilapidated temple on top of a mountain. The camera focuses on the graffitied walls, reminiscent of *West Side Story*, where Sapna and Vasu's names have been inscribed repeatedly, while we hear the lovers talk off-screen about how their unfulfilled love will become legend for future generations. The sense of tragic inevitability is subtly woven into the fabric of a seemingly familiar love story. The setting of the lovers' meeting place in Dona Paola beach, for instance, hints at the tragic fate of the lovers. The place is named after Dona Paula de Menezes, the daughter of a viceroy, who committed suicide when her father refused to marry her to a local fisherman, Gaspar Dias, whom she loved, and the location is a well-known suicide point for lovers.<sup>204</sup> This suggestion of a tragic ending is also seen in *QSQT* when Rashmi/Juliet exclaims that her lifeline matches the one on Raj/Romeo's hand. There is a reference to a well-known

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<sup>204</sup> *Dona Paula Beach Goa*, <http://www.indianholiday.com/best-of-india/beaches/dona-paula-beach.html>, [accessed 14 October, 2014].



celluloid tragic lover - Jai from *Sholay* (1975) - when Vasu is depicted playing the mouth organ and riding a bike in the scenes where he is wooing Sapna. The lurking presence of a sexual aggressor who has his sights set on Sapna, evoking Samson's threat of violence towards Montague women ('women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall' 1.1.15) and Maria's assault by the Jets in *West Side Story*, adds a further sense of disquiet to what would otherwise be a traditional *filmi* love story. This threat of violence against women is incorporated in *QSQT* too when Rashmi is stalked by a group of would-be aggressors. Towards the end of *Ek Duije Ke Liye*, when it seems that the lovers may achieve their happy ending despite all odds, Chakravarty/Paris reminds Sapna that God is always unfair to true lovers (which goes against the usual Hindi film belief that true love always finds a way) and the audience is once again cautioned against believing in a traditional happy ending for the lovers who have suffered so much in trying to be with each other.

*Ek Duije Ke Liye* begins as a tragi-comedy but devolves into a melodramatic social drama because of the several digressions from the play text and the inclusion of prevalent Hindi film formulaic episodes, which, as I will establish towards the end of the chapter, is something that will also hamper the reception of *Josh*. These digressions dilute the intensity of the love story and the lovers lose their way as protagonists of a legendary story of love. The plot twist in the end that results in their death also seems somewhat contrived and complicates a reading of this film as being an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. When Vasu and Sapna fulfil the terms of their contract and finally prepare to meet each other, Sapna is raped by her stalker and Vasu is attacked by assassins on the behest of Sandhya's brother at the abandoned temple which used to be their meeting place; they ultimately find their happy ending by jumping into the sea together. Their suicide somewhat obfuscates the sense of

tragedy that is associated with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet as they essentially become agents of their own destiny. Moreover, neither do their deaths bring about a reconciliation between the families, nor any change in society at large. In the end, we are not left with a sense of the futility of hate so much as the impetuosity of love. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* we find the first attempt at adapting and translocating Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in mainstream film in Bombay. When we assess certain directorial decisions of Mansoor Khan - such as the setting of the lovers' union and death at an abandoned temple, Raj's bike, Rashmi's stalkers, and the assassins sent after Raj by Rashmi's father - it can reasonably be concluded that the film was an exemplar for Nasir Hussain and Mansoor Khan when they scripted a story about star-crossed lovers using Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as their template.

***Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* [From the end of the world to the Day of Judgment]**

Three characteristics of *QSQT* are of key interest to my explorations of Hindi Shakespeare adaptations in this thesis and ensured the success of the film as a reinvention of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: the realist Parallel Film aesthetics of Satyajit Ray (including the realistic locales of Delhi, Mount Abu and Dhanakpur), the lack of any stars and the use of Everyman protagonists, and finally, the reintroduction of soft, romantic melody which was a fusion of western and eastern sounds. These are also the factors that place the film within the middle-of-the-road genre that Gulzar worked within when he adapted *The Comedy of Errors* for the mainstream market as explored in chapter 4 above; they also prefigure Bhardwaj's *Maqbool*, which works in the same middle-of-the-road genre which proves particularly conducive to Shakespearean adaptations for commercial markets.

For many critics, the 1980s are usually associated with everything that was wrong with Hindi Cinema.<sup>205</sup> This was a time when the old guard was giving way to the new in the industry and the audience comprised of people moving in great numbers from the rural areas to the urban centres. Moreover, cinema was competing with video and television and frequently losing the battle. The older generations found it difficult to cater to new audience profiles and tastes and younger generations turned to formulaic, safe, assembly-line productions. Amid this state of flux that the industry was going through, Nasir Hussain maintained his position as one of the most successful film makers in popular Hindi cinema - eight of the twelve films he directed were blockbuster hits. After a few unsuccessful films in the 80s, however, Hussain decided to revisit the classic love story and decided to collaborate with the younger generation of the Hussain family - Aamir, Nuzhat and Farhat - to reinvent a successful formula for more liberalized times. It was only when his son, Mansoor Khan was persuaded to direct the film however, that the change of guard could occur.

Marjorie Garber declares that 'Shakespeare's play has become the normative love story of our time' and has, through the ages, become 'the unquestioned modern cultural shorthand for romantic love'.<sup>206</sup> Garber notes that 'theories of youth culture and subculture were emerging in Britain and the United States during the period of the 1950s and '60s – just as *West Side Story* and then the Zeffirelli *Romeo and Juliet* moved to make connections between Shakespeare's play and modern youth, as performers and as audiences'.<sup>207</sup> It was *West Side Story*, compounded by Zeffirelli's highlighting of the generational conflict in his 1968 adaptation of the play (also

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<sup>205</sup> Chintamani, p 2.

<sup>206</sup> Marjorie Garber, 'Romeo and Juliet: The Untimeliness of Youth', in *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* (Anchor, 2008), p 33.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, p 53.

influenced by *West Side Story*), which confirmed the source play's status as a 'youth culture' text. In this context, it is particularly relevant that the low key pre-release publicity for *QSQT* focused on foregrounding the melodious music of the film, the young music composer team Anand-Milind, and the youth and intellectual credentials of the director, Mansoor Khan, as well as the young team of technicians, led by cinematographer Kiran Deohans, editors Zafar Sultan and Dilip Kotalgi, and art director Shib Shankar and the fresh young faces of the actors playing the romantic leads - Amir Khan and Juhi Chawla.<sup>208</sup> It is important to note that while the young team were experienced in the ways of the Hindi film industry, Khan was not an admirer of the conventional commercial film format and Deohans, who was brought up on European cinema, shared Khan's cynicism towards popular Hindi films.<sup>209</sup> It was the vision of Khan and Deohans that shaped the aesthetics of *QSQT*.<sup>210</sup> The film went on to redefine the youth culture genre in post-liberalised India by appealing to the new generation of English speaking, western educated Indians who were recently exposed to foreign goods and western cable TV and admitted to finding Hindi films 'tacky'. Furthermore, this 'young' energy not only motivated the look and feel of the film, but the way the story was told. Essentially, it was the decision of the young crew that led to the retention of the tragic ending of the film: 'My father was very sceptical and insisted that I shoot a happy ending too.... Both the endings were screened. Aamir (who played Romeo/Raj), Nuzhat

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<sup>208</sup> See Ajanta Sircar, 'Love in the Time of Liberalization: *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*', *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 32 (1999), p 43.

<sup>209</sup> Mansoor Khan, 'Foreword', in *The Film that Revived Hindi Cinema Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (Harper Collins India, 2016).

<sup>210</sup> See Chintamani, *The Film that Revived Hindi Cinema Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* for a description of the making of *QSQT* and the impact it had on the Hindi film industry.

(Khan's sister) and Farhat (Aamir's sister) rooted for the tragic ending whereas the elderly audience liked the happy one. Finally, the younger generation won.'<sup>211</sup>

The music of *QSQT* contributed to the success of the film as much as the music of *West Side Story* and Nino Rota's score for Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* contributed to the success of those productions.<sup>212</sup> The characters of the young lovers have undergone revision through the ages, particularly via musical interpretations; Stephen M. Buhler maintains that 'Juliet and Romeo became emblematic of youth during the second half of the twentieth century; their depiction responds to cultural norms, cross-currents, and conflicts as understood by young people themselves'.<sup>213</sup> Citing such examples as Peggy Lee's 1958 cover of 'Fever', Bruce Springsteen's allusions to Romeo and Juliet in 'Incident on 57<sup>th</sup> Street' (1973), 'Fire' (1979) and 'Point Blank' (1980) as well as the classic rock song by Dire Straits in 1980 named 'Romeo and Juliet', Buhler argues that pop music, in particular, led to new understandings of the characters of Romeo and Juliet and this, in turn, influenced representations of the play on stage and on screen. Moreover, it can be inferred that Shakespeare's constant presence in twentieth century popular music and mass media was directly attributable to the incredible appeal of *West Side Story* and its music. According to Chintamani, it was the music of *QSQT* which motivated Khan more than any other part of the project.<sup>214</sup> As a pianist and drummer, Khan was most

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<sup>211</sup> Shreerupa Mitra-Jha, 'Mansoor Khan, the Accidental Farmer', *Governancenow*, (4 August, 2014) <<http://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/mansoor-khan-the-accidental-farmer>> [accessed 10 April, 2017].

<sup>212</sup> Vijayakar in *25 Years of 'Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak'*, [http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article\\_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html](http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html), (28 April, 2014) [accessed 15 August, 2014] and Sukanya Verma in *Getting Nostalgic about Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, <http://www.sukanyaverma.com/columns-and-reviews/2013/getting-nostalgic-about-qayamat-se-qayamat-tak>, (29 April, 2013) [accessed 15 August, 2014] comment on the popularity of the music of *QSQT*.

<sup>213</sup> Buhler, 'Reviving Juliet, Repackaging Romeo', p 245.

<sup>214</sup> Chintamani, p 64.

conversant with this crucial aspect of film making and was allowed to experiment with the music and sound of the film by his musically attuned father: 'I fancy myself as someone who can play instruments but I don't have that sense of a perfect tune which my dad had.'<sup>215</sup> Khan's ability to understand music and his certainty about how he wanted to use music in the film was the most important factor towards the eventual success of the film's score, the details of which I will discuss below.<sup>216</sup>

The plot of *QSQT* closely follows the play text in that Raj/Romeo secretly attends Rashmi's birthday party just as Romeo infiltrates the masquerade at the Capulets' house with his friends. Where in the text, Romeo's motivation was to catch a glimpse of Rosalind, in *QSQT* Raj has already seen Rashmi and is drawn to the party at her house to see her again. However, it is Rashmi who, like Juliet, actively pursues the man she loves, defying her family despite her fear of her father. Khan credits his father for creating Rashmi as 'a very credible modern girl residing in 1980s Delhi'.<sup>217</sup> She contrives ways to spend time with Raj and eventually it is she who first declares her love, which in Hindi cinema, was hitherto unheard of: '*Agar hum kisike liye deewane ho gaye toh yeh koi zaroori toh nahi ke woh bhi humare liye deewana ho jaye*' [If I have fallen madly in love with someone, it is not necessary that they too have fallen madly in love with me]. This rather brazen behaviour goes against the usual depiction of the 'good woman' as represented by female protagonists of the previous generations. This sequence in the film, in fact, is reminiscent of Juliet's forthright lines to Romeo in the balcony scene:

Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face,  
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek  
For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight.  
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid, p 68.

<sup>216</sup> See Chintamani, Chapter 5 for a discussion on the departure of Anand-Milind's score from traditional Hindi film music.

<sup>217</sup> Chintamani, p 41.

What I have spoke, but farewell compliment. (2.2.85)

The characterisation of Rashmi/Juliet is a marked departure from female protagonists in Hindi cinema of the time; although less frequently singled out for comment than *QSQT*'s tragic ending, this innovation is also a remarkable departure from generic convention.<sup>218</sup>

The 1950s, 60s and early 70s saw actresses being cast as the *Sati Savitri* [Hindi equivalent of the Madonna role] or the *vamp* [the whore]. Films such as *Mother India* (1957), *Madhumati* (1958) and *Kagaz Ke Phool* (1959) are illustrations of how film dictated the characteristics of a 'good' woman on an impressionable society and most actresses chose to depict these roles, rather than being typecast as a *vamp* which could potentially end their careers as leading ladies.<sup>219</sup> The late 70s and 80s led to a change in the characterisation of female protagonists: they were now cast as damsels in distress and often ended up as part of the *mis-en-scene* while the male actors took centre stage, thereby reducing their status from actresses to heroines. Rashmi coming at the end of the 80s, therefore, was quite a change from the female protagonists that audiences had come to expect in this period. Moreover, after the two-dimensional protagonists who played out their love stories per convention in the last three decades, in *QSQT* an attempt to flesh out the lead protagonists is evident and the audience is taken on a journey where they observe the lead pair fall in love in

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<sup>218</sup> Read Sukanya Verma, *Getting Nostalgic about Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, <http://www.sukanyaverma.com/columns-and-reviews/2013/getting-nostalgic-about-qayamat-se-qayamat-tak>, (29 April, 2013) [accessed 15 August, 2014] and Premankur Biswas, *25 Years of Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak: Why it's One of Bollywood's*

*Best*, <http://www.firstpost.com/bollywood/why-aamir-juhis-qayamat-se-qayamat-tak-is-one-of-bollywoods-best-736751.html>, (29 April, 2013) [accessed 15 August, 2014] written on the twenty fifth anniversary of *QSQT* for an understanding of how the film changed the idiom of Hindi cinema.

<sup>219</sup> Actresses such as Helen and Bindu are better known for their character actor roles, usually as *vamps*, than for the few leading lady roles they each played. The exception was Zeenat Aman who frequently played skimpily clad, anglicized leading lady roles which few Hindi film actresses of the time attempted.

a realistic manner through a series of artfully designed episodes that skirt away from formulaic scenarios. For instance, when Rashmi finds herself in trouble after her bus breaks down, she extricates herself from a situation that in most other Hindi movies would be a cue for the hero to show off his fighting skills and machismo while the female protagonist would play the helpless damsel. The hero does get to confront the bullies who were teasing Rashmi, but this happens the next day and Raj is joined by his friends, instead of single-handedly disposing of the gang as action heroes, such as Amitabh Bachhan, would usually do.

Critics of Khan's films have also commented on how he subtly reverses the gender dynamics that Hindi cinema tends to perpetuate; in *QSQT* for instance, while Raj/Romeo is introduced strumming a guitar and singing in what could be viewed as the 'item number' of the film and is presented as an object of desire throughout the film, Rashmi/Juliet is first seen on screen astride a horse and is the active wooer.<sup>220</sup> Rashmi's character is, of course, based on Sapna's character, the spirited North Indian female protagonist of *Ek Duije Ke Liye*, equally comfortable in a sari or a dress and more than capable of fighting her own battles. Sapna, in fact, first meets Vasu while trying to lose her stalker at the beginning of the film; like Rashmi, she is no damsel in distress, and therefore, quite a different heroine from what Hindi film audiences had become used to. However, where Sapna sometimes lapsed into a Hindi cinema character type, Rashmi continues to subvert traditional expectations of heroines throughout the film by being innocent and flirtatious instead of the coy Madonna type or the blatantly sexual vamp type as was the fashion of the time.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> See Aysha I. Viswamohan, 'Mansoor Khan: Narrative and Aesthetic Impulses of a Director in 'Self-Exile'', in *Behind the Scenes: Contemporary Bollywood Directors and their Cinema*, ed. by Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan and Vimal Mohan John (SAGE Publications India, 2017) p 32 for a discussion on how Nasir Hussain's school of cinema anticipates the progressive representation of women in mainstream Hindi films.

<sup>221</sup> Viswamohan, p 21.



*QSQT*, therefore, surreptitiously changed the idiom of Hindi cinema, inspiring later film makers to humanise their protagonists as evidenced by the central characters in the 90s with more complex depictions such as in *Beta* (1992) [Son], *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995), *Raja Hindustani* (1996) and *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1999) [I Have Already Given My Heart Away, My Love]. The films of this decade are also notable for giving equal importance to the male and female protagonists in terms of screen time and action and I would argue that *QSQT* had a large part to play in this development.

Though *Romeo and Juliet* is never directly quoted, there are echoes of specific scenes from the play that can easily be identified in the film by audiences who are familiar with the Shakespearean text. There is a discreet homage in *QSQT* to the balcony scene and Romeo's departure after being exiled as well, though the contexts have been changed and the scenes conflated. When the lovers run away and set up house in an abandoned temple, Raj has to go to get food. As he tries to leave, Rashmi says, '*Kal chale jaana, abhi mat jao*' [Go tomorrow, don't go now] in a poignant echo of Juliet's 'Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day' (3.5.3). A similar sense of danger and foreboding characterising the lark and nightingale exchange between Romeo and Juliet at the beginning of Act 3.5 colours this scene despite Rashmi's playful comment because by now the audience is aware that the families are in pursuit of the lovers and that Rashmi's father has sent a contract killer after Raj. The scene plays out with Rashmi repeatedly calling Raj back, forgetting why she called for him, and Raj patiently turning back every time, waiting for Rashmi to remember:

Juliet: I have forgot why I did call thee back.

Romeo: Let me stand here till thou remember it. (2.2.170)

In *QSQT* hate is foregrounded in the backstory that we are given in the prologue. Honour feuds are a social reality in India to date and therefore, a context that Indian audiences are uniquely familiar with. When Ratan (Juliet's uncle) compromises Madhumati and refuses to marry her after she tells him that she is pregnant, she is forced to kill herself to save her family from disgrace. Her devastated brother, Dhanraj (Romeo's father), carries her corpse to Ratan's wedding and then shoots him. There is thus ample reason for the feud; this is, by no means, unreasonable hate. Further, by interpreting the feud as taking place between individuals of the same Rajput Thakur caste, the film makers have purposefully done away with all forms of otherness that may potentially make the hate seem unreasonable or impersonal; this feud is not a matter of race, colour or religion. Consequently, as Burnett argues, 'the film makes for a particularly intense and even introspective reading of the central players'.<sup>222</sup> Casting the two battling clans as Rajputs [Hindu warriors with noble blood] is of course a reference to the 'Two households, both alike in dignity, / In fair Verona' (The Prologue, 1) where Shakespeare lays his scene. The context also closely echoes Michael Madhusudan's 1861 play *Krishna-kumari*, which was the first play in the Bengali language with a tragic ending.<sup>223</sup> Though not an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, this was the earliest known historical play in the Bengali language and dealt with Krishnakumari, the daughter of the King of Udaipur, Bhimsingh, and her two suitors, Jaisingh and Mansingh. There are, thus, obvious parallels that this play with Rajput protagonists has with that of the story of Shakespeare's Juliet and her two suitors, Romeo and Paris.

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<sup>222</sup> Burnett, p 206.

<sup>223</sup> Sujit Mukherjee, *A Dictionary of Indian Literature* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1999), p 190.

Another stroke of genius is the depiction of Dhanraj as the impetuous Tybalt figure. In the Prologue, we find Jaswant Singh trying to tame Dhanraj when together they go to confront Ratan much like Capulet does at the ball when Tybalt tries to pick a fight with Romeo for daring to come to the Capulet masquerade. Since, as T. J. Cribb notes, 'Tybalt is hate', in recasting Romeo/Raj as Tybalt/Dhanraj's son, the vicious cycle of hate is amplified.<sup>224</sup> As Raj, unlike Romeo, is not a murderer and has in no way contributed to the feud, we ultimately find Raj and Rashmi paying for the sins of their fathers, (a frequent theme in Hindi films), which underscores the futility and destructive nature of hate that is such an essential message of Shakespeare's play.

Hussain and Khan have also consistently used Hindi film themes and tropes to smuggle in the themes of Shakespeare's play throughout *QSQT*. One such instance is the reference to destiny, chance and the stars that mark both play and film. The Prologue refers to Romeo and Juliet as 'star-cross'd lovers'. At the beginning of the action when Romeo starts for the Capulet feast he says: '...my mind misgives/ Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars, / Shall bitterly begin its dearful date/ With this night's revels, and expire the term/ Of a despised life closed in my breast, / By some vile forfeit of untimely death.' When Capulet forces Juliet to marry Paris, she cries: 'is there no pity sitting in the clouds...' and later, 'Alack, that heaven should practice stratagems' against her. In Act V, when Romeo learns of Juliet's supposed death he cries aloud: 'then I defy you, stars!' and when he decides to kill himself he says that death will 'shake the yoke of inauspicious stars/ From this world-wearied flesh'. Furthermore, critics such as J.W. Draper have convincingly argued how Shakespeare seems to indicate that 'astral influence actually governs the

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<sup>224</sup> Timothy J. Cribb, 'The Unity of *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Survey London*, (1981), p 99.

lives of these ‘star-cross’s lovers’”.<sup>225</sup> Similarly, at the beginning of the film after their first meeting, Rashmi takes Raj’s hand on the pretext of reading his palm and exclaims that their life lines are exactly the same. This is simultaneously a reference to the exchange between Juliet and Romeo at their first meeting and their touching ‘palm to palm’ (1.5.99). Later in the film when Dhanraj, Raj’s father, spots Rashmi at the hotel where both families happen to be staying, he tells Shyam/Benvolio that Rashmi is the kind of bride he wants for Raj underlining the fact that it is the feud that will separate the lovers. It is at this same hotel that Rashmi buys a decorative dagger as a present for Raj, which he first uses to build her a ‘house’ and then uses to kill himself. After learning Raj’s identity almost halfway into the film, Rashmi remarks, ‘*Hone wali baat to hoke hi rehti hain*’ [What is destined to happened, will happen]. The calm, almost philosophical acceptance of a tragic fate by the protagonists is very different from the previous decades where love always saves the day.

By the same token, the ‘death-marked love’ that is referred to in the prologue of the play is also echoed in the ‘setting sun’ motif that characterises Raj and Rashmi’s love story. This motif has been borrowed from *Ek Duije Ke Liye* but used to greater effect as a recurrent theme underlining the doomed love of Raj and Rashmi. Rashmi first sees Raj through a camera while she is taking pictures of the sunset. When she uses the excuse of giving Raj copies of the pictures she has taken, he reminds her that Indian superstition holds that ‘*Doobte huyi suraj ke saath khichi huwe tasveerein paas rakhne se aadmi mar jaata hain*’ [Keeping pictures of oneself taken against the background of a setting sun leads to the death of a person]. Rashmi

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<sup>225</sup> John W. Draper, ‘Shakespeare’s “Star-Crossed Lovers”’, *The Review of English Studies*, 15 (1939), pp 16-34.

dismisses the superstition and Raj accepts the pictures as a gift from her. Later, when acknowledging their feelings for one another Raj tells Rashmi, '*Iss hi doobte hue suraj ne hum mein pehli baar milaya tha ... dekh lena, yahi doobta hua suraj hum mein ek din hamesha ke liye mila dega*' [The same sunset that first brought us together will one day bring us back together forever]. Rashmi refers to this sentiment again while she lies dying in Raj's arms. Ironically, the setting sun is usually a harbinger of darkness in cinematic code, which is representative of a loss of hope. The last tragic scene of the film, which has achieved iconic status in the history of Hindi films, is of Raj, after having stabbed himself, falling across Rashmi in a parody of a loving embrace sharing one last kiss with her in imitation of Romeo's last embrace of Juliet ('thus with a kiss I die', 5.3.120), against the backdrop of the setting sun. Equally, the theme of time which dominates the language and plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is translocated visually to a sequence in the film where Rashmi counts the days before Raj comes for her against the backdrop of a song that goes '*Ay mere humsafar ek zaara intezaar, sun sadaye de rahi hain manzil pyaar ki*' [This is just a short wait, listen to love beckoning us to our destiny], which is further punctuated by the sounds of the ticking of a clock, and visuals of Rashmi physically crossing the days out on a calendar together with her friend and confidante Kavita (who takes over the role of the Nurse). The entire sequence is reminiscent of Juliet's eager anticipation for Romeo and her wedding night at the beginning of Act 3.2: 'Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds, / Towards Phoebus' lodging...' and, in turn, a reference to the setting sun motif in the film.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> This is a sequence that is not by any means unique in Hindi cinema. *Sharaabi* [Drunkard] (1984), for instance, had a song sequence '*Intehaan ho gayi intezaar ki*' [limits of waiting]. Similarly, *Tezaab* [Acid] (1988) had the celebrated song sequence '*Ek, do, teen...tera karu din gin gin ke intezaar ajaa piya aayi bahar*' [One, two, three, I count the days till we meet, come soon spring is here] and *Maine Pyaar Kiya* (1989), another cult film, had a similar sequence against the backdrop of the famous song '*Aaja shaam hone aayi*' [Come quickly, it will be evening soon].

The dramaturgical function of language in *Romeo and Juliet* has frequently been discussed by critics. Harry Levin, for instance, has claimed that the naturalness of the diction of the lovers is ‘artfully gained through a running critique of artificiality’, stylized expressions and attitudes.<sup>227</sup> In this context, I would like to highlight the use of language in *QSQT*, particularly the consistent use of Urdu in the dialogues and lyrics in the film. It is noteworthy that the film begins with a *sher* [short four lined Urdu poem] that has several purposes:

Kya ishq ne samjha hain,  
Kya husn ne jaana hain,  
Hum khaaq nasheeno ki  
Thhokar mein zamaana hain.

The poem can be loosely translated to mean ‘the world does not understand love, but that never stops lovers from falling in love’. The most obvious role of the poem is to set the tone for the film and act as a prelude to the pre-credits sequence, an adaptation of the Prologue in *Romeo and Juliet*; it sets up love in opposition to hate and introduces the sense of inevitability that is characteristic of an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*.

The specific use of an Urdu poem, and the extensive use of Urdu poetry throughout the film is firstly a reference to Paris/Chakravarti in *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*, the aspiring poet who speaks in formal Urdu throughout the film. It is moreover evocative of the Muslim social film and endows an aura of aristocracy to the characters that harks back to the Mughal era in India. This, in turn, has the further purpose of subtly bringing in the high culture associations that Shakespeare has in India and thereby a method by which the director alludes to his Shakespearean source. As a film about two battling clans of Rajputs, however, the use of Urdu,

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<sup>227</sup> Harry Levin, 'Form and Formality in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, (1960), pp 3-11.

usually associated with Muslim culture, has specific relevance. Urdu is the language of love poetry in India; the extensive use of Urdu dialogues and lyrics in this film is meant, therefore, to make the whole film appear to be one long ode to love. This, I would argue, is an obvious reference to Shakespeare's use of the sonnet and the Petrarchan model of love in *Romeo and Juliet* that has been discussed at length by critics such as Levin, Black and Whittier.<sup>228</sup>

Language is manipulated in further ways in the film to reference the Shakespearean play. Rashmi/Juliet consistently speaks in a very formal and stylised manner; she always refers to herself as *hum*, which is the Urdu equivalent to the 'Royal We' in English. This contributes further to the poetry implicit in the dialogues of the film but has the additional purpose of referencing a theatrical tradition that Lynnette Hunter and Peter Lichtensfel refer to where the Montagues are represented as aristocracy and the Capulets as merchants.<sup>229</sup> In this instance, however, Rashmi's family are portrayed as aristocrats, whereas Raj's family, though once on equal terms with Rashmi's family, have been reduced to the role of merchants as a consequence of the feud. The difference is portrayed in understated ways. For example, Raj is usually seen using a motorbike as his chosen form of transportation; when we see Rashmi first, she is riding a horse. This difference in status is a subtle way to reference the rich girl/poor boy trope of forbidden love in India as well, given that both families are Rajputs and there cannot be obstructions to their love based on caste, religion or language. It lends added incentive to the feud as

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<sup>228</sup> See Levin, 'Form and Formality in *Romeo and Juliet*', Gayle Whittier, 'The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in "Romeo and Juliet"', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, (1989), pp 27-41, and James Black, 'The Visual Artistry of *Romeo and Juliet*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, (1975), pp 245-256 for a more detailed description of Shakespeare's use of the sonnet and the Petrarchan model of love in *Romeo and Juliet*.

<sup>229</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (Ashgate Publishers, 2007).

well since the fall of status in the case of Raj's family can be directly attributed to the misdeeds of Rashmi's family.

As I have discussed earlier, it was Khan's musical sensibilities that impacted and transformed Hindi cinema the most.<sup>230</sup> Unlike most films of the time, *QSQT* had only four full length songs and a short song fragment. The film uses songs for practical dramaturgical purposes throughout the film in a way that was unusual to film making in the Hindi film industry in the 70s and early 80s, but typical of the middle-of-the-road cinematic genre. The songs are all unconventionally diegetic; audiences had become used to spectacular non-diegetic song and dance sequences in the 60s and 70s with the sole purpose of showcasing the dancing talents of actors like Helen or Shammi Kapoor. Each of the songs in *QSQT*, however, have a purpose in moving the plot forward, and the lyrics are conversations between the lovers; in fact, it has been commented on by critics that lyrics and dialogue are interchangeably used during the course of the film.<sup>231</sup> While Khan was confident about composing music, he was not familiar with Urdu poetry and believed that he lacked the sensibilities to manage the appropriate music. Thus, the credit for the lyrics goes to Majrooh Sultanpuri and Nasir Hussain as there were times when Khan, with his inability to relate to mainstream sensibilities, frequently 'hated the lyrics'.<sup>232</sup> However, it was the experience of the older guard combined with the vision of the younger generation that led to the creation of a soundtrack that changed the music scene in the Hindi film industry.

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<sup>230</sup> This section is based on discussions of the music of *QSQT* in Gautam Chintamani's book and conversations with Mansoor Khan.

<sup>231</sup> Read R. M. Vijayakar, *25 Years of 'Qayamat Se Qayamat Taq'*, [http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article\\_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html](http://www.indiawest.com/entertainment/bollywood/years-of-qayamat-se-qayamat-taq/article_09e701b8-816d-5285-988f-27888c8e0302.html), 28 April, 2013, [accessed 15 August, 2014] for a more detailed discussion of the music of *QSQT* and how it changed the way music was used in films in The Hindi film industry.

<sup>232</sup> Mansoor Khan. Interview by Koel Chatterjee. Tape Recording. London, 21 May, 2017.



This was a time when the format of recording was transitioning from mono to stereo and *QSQT* was one of the first few films with stereophonic sound. In the beginning, distributors had a lukewarm response to the film's music but during the trial shows, audiences were appreciative of Khan's experimentation with sound. Retrospectively, critics acknowledge that *QSQT* signalled a clear transition from one era of music to the next.<sup>233</sup> This is best exemplified by Anand and Milind's description of how *Papa Kehte Hain*, the song that would go on to become the anthem of the nation, was composed; Khan had visually described how the orchestra and its sections would appear on scene, so the brothers composed the song piece by piece. During the recording, Khan advised the drummer and contributed to the arrangement of the song. Similarly, *Ghazab Ka Hain Din* [what a wonderful day], with its mix of country and rock ballad reminiscent of Neil Diamond's *Play me* introduced an arrangement that was new to Hindi music and *Ae Mere Humsafar* [Oh my love] had a fusion feel to it with its mix of western elements such as the violins and electric guitar which blended into Indian percussion such as the dholak and table in a departure from recognisable and established pattern. In *Akele Hain to Kya Gham Hain*, which is reminiscent of The Shadows' *Return to Alamo*, Khan also added elements such as the horns that come over images where Rashmi's cousin is following the trail of the lovers which end up being 'aural portents' of the finale.<sup>234</sup> Such musical detailing is a precursor to Bhardwaj's use of music in his layered adaptations of Shakespeare at the turn of the century as I will demonstrate in the following chapters.

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<sup>233</sup> Chintamani, p 83.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, p 80.

Khan therefore, uses his position as an industry insider and his global exposure as an English educated Indian to challenge Hindi film conventions and the tendency of Hindi film-makers to act as cultural mediators. In his disdain for formulaic Hindi films, his progressive ideology and his musical expertise, Khan anticipates Bhardwaj by positioning *QSQT* as a middle-of-the-road film which straddles the narrative imperatives of Parallel Cinema and of Mainstream Cinema. His most important contribution to Bollywood Shakespeares however, was the introduction of Tragedy within the mainstream, which paved the way for Bhardwaj to position his Shakespearean adaptations within the tradition of experimenting with Shakespeare in the middle-of-the-road genre.

**Khan's return to *Romeo and Juliet* in *Josh* [Frenzy] (2000)**

As a transposition of *West Side Story* on to a modern Indian landscape, *Josh* is a skilful reinterpretation of the American musical, and the only example of a film maker making a second attempt at adapting *Romeo and Juliet* using the medium of film. The film is set in the fictionalised city of Vasco, in Goa, thereby referencing the colonial history of that region of India with its lasting Portuguese influence. The choice of Goa is both a homage to Baz Luhrmann's setting of his *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) in the fictional Verona Beach as well as an attempt to reach a global audience given Goa's profile as an international destination. The feud in *Josh* is between the Anglo-Indian/Christian Eagles and the Hindu *Bichchhoos* [Scorpions]. The film won awards for its art direction, which was heavily influenced by that of *West Side Story*. The parallels between the two films are obvious: not only do the characters and plot echo the Hollywood film, but there are also resonances in the songs of *Josh* that would be familiar to audiences who have seen the American film and visual parallels

such as graffitied walls, the finger clicking of the gangs, the recurring image of a football being used as a prop, and camera pans during the skirmishes that are unmistakably taken straight from *West Side Story*. There are also references to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* with Rahul/Tony being labelled a Romeo by both Max/Bernardo and Shirley/Maria at different points in the film and the various references to light and shadow in Shakespeare's text specifically used to frame Rahul and Shirley.<sup>235</sup> The film is set in the fictional town of Vasco, in Goa, with the main protagonists of the film, Max/Bernardo and Shirley/Maria being depicted as the illegitimate children of the Portuguese nobleman Alberto Vasco, after whom the town is named. Khan therefore alludes to colonial India and adds religion to the binaries of race that underscores *West Side Story*.

This framework could have led to several interesting interpretations of the main themes of *Romeo and Juliet* and of *West Side Story* and could have thus extended the critical discussions surrounding the Shakespearean text. It could, for example, have extended the discussion of a national identity in postcolonial India that *Ek Duije Ke Liye* takes up against the backdrop of *Romeo and Juliet* or even investigated communal tensions between groups belonging to different races and religions in the world's largest democracy, as Dutt attempts in *Bhuli Nai Priya*. However, Khan gave precedence to Bollywood formula instead and complicated the story with several interpolations which impeded the progress of the plot. Film critic Taran Adarsh predicted in his review that the 'Goan ambience', 'average second half' and 'weak climax' would negatively affect the reception of the film.<sup>236</sup> Khan

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<sup>235</sup> Shirley is seen in candlelight when she begins to realise her feelings for Rahul, and when the two kiss for the first time, the sky beyond them is lit with fireworks, which, in another stroke of intertextuality, is reminiscent of Baz Lurhmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996).

<sup>236</sup> Taran Adarsh, *Josh*, <http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/moviemicro/criticreview/id/538516>, 20 November, 2000 [accessed 15 December, 2014].

also undermines the successful intervention of *QSQT* by choosing to return to a conventional happy ending; *Josh* reverts to an averted tragedy in the manner in which *QSQT* had been initially scripted. The earlier film was to have ended with the death of Thakur Randhir Singh, who sends an assassin to murder Raj; the later film ends with the death of Prakash/Riff who tries to engineer the death of Max/Bernardo, thus restricting itself to a moralistic good being victorious over evil conclusion. The result is a curiously flattened reinterpretation of *West Side Story* and of *Romeo and Juliet* that is unexceptional both as a Bollywood film and as a Shakespearean adaptation. In essence, it proves the wisdom of Khan's first instinct: the choice to make *QSQT* a true tragedy.

### **The Afterlife of *QSQT***

The twenty-fifth anniversary of *QSQT* in 2013 coincided with the release of a cluster of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations - *Ishaqzaade* (2012) by Habib Faisal, *Issaq* (2013) by Manish Tiwary and *Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela* (2013) by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. All three of these films end in the death of the lovers – while in *Ishaqzaade* and *Ram-Leela* the lovers shoot each other, *Issaq* is a faithful rendition of Shakespeare's play that follows the logic of Shakespeare's contrived ending. It was, however, *Ishaqzaade* and *Ram-Leela*, which were more commercially successful: in both these films the lovers consciously choose to kill each other, making the lovers deaths seem less a tragedy of fate and more a 'consummation devoutly to be wished'. As such they follow *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*, not *QSQT*, thus robbing the films of the sense of calamity and catharsis that *QSQT* undoubtedly achieves. What is noteworthy of all three films is that 'the protagonists emerge as agents desiring change in a claustrophobic, patriarchal society locked in meaningless

strife'.<sup>237</sup> Following Bhardwaj's example of setting *Omkara* in Meerut, all three *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations are set in small north Indian towns that depict a premodern India which is feudal, orthodox and entangled in caste and community conflicts, a representation of India that is in direct opposition to the global and secular India depicted in mainstream 'Bollywood'. Thus, as Chakravarti points out, while Shakespearean plays once provided a template of modernity to colonial readers, the small-town Hindi films, which form a part of the evolving middle-of-the-road genre, now find in Shakespeare resonances of the pre-modern. All three adaptations seem to follow Bhardwaj's choice to set *Omkara* in Meerut, a choice which I will explore in more detail in Chapter Four below.<sup>238</sup>

In his essay on Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema, Verma deliberated upon the commercial failure of most films based directly or indirectly upon Shakespeare in Bollywood and the 'high-brow associations' that Shakespearean adaptations had for mainstream audiences which kept them away from Shakespearean adaptations.<sup>239</sup> Khan, in directing *QSQT*, adopted established narrative strategies in Bollywood, as well as intertextual and extra-textual references to mainstream films and popular literature and legends, to disguise the detailed translocation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to a modern Indian setting. He did this while merging the realistic aesthetic of parallel cinema with the escapist cinematography of mainstream films. Furthermore, by drawing upon the social reality of honour feuds and challenging the gender stereotypes of the day, Khan gained the attention of the younger demographic, which, as Paterson points out, is crucial in the success of many

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<sup>237</sup> Paromita Chakravarti, 'Ishaqzaade Dir. by Habib Faisal, and: Issaq Dir. by Manish Tiwary, and: Goliyon Ki Raasleela: Ram-Leela Dir. by Sanjay Leela Bhansali (Review)', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33 (2015), p 668.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, p 669

<sup>239</sup> Verma, p 254.

profitable films.<sup>240</sup> *QSQT* with its innovative marketing of the music of the film and the fresh faces of the actors playing the male and female leads succeeded, therefore, as a teen musical first, and a Shakespeare adaptation second. What sets it apart as the definitive adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, however, was Khan's determination to follow through on Shakespeare's tragic ending, brought about by fate. As the most commercially successful mainstream Bollywood Shakespeare adaptation *QSQT*, thus, paved the way for adaptors such as Bhardwaj to experiment with Shakespearean tragedy in succeeding years within the confines of the mainstream film industry and to achieve global recognition for Bollywood Shakespeare films.

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<sup>240</sup> Ronan Paterson, 'Additional Dialogue by... Versions of Shakespeare in the World's Multiplexes', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 10 (2013), p 57.

*Maqbool* (2004): The Mumbai *Macbeth*<sup>241</sup>

*Macbeth* is one of the four tragedies that students usually encounter at some point of their education in India in original or adapted form; it is nevertheless, a Shakespearean tragedy rarely adapted for cinema in India. *Jwala* (1938) [Flame], directed by Master Vinayak for Huns Pictures, is listed as the first Hindi language adaptation of *Macbeth* in The British Universities Film and Council website.<sup>242</sup>

As was common in the Assimilative phase of Shakespearean adaptations in India, this film appears to be an appropriation rather than a sustained engagement with the Shakespearean text.<sup>243</sup> *Jwala*, an ambitious bilingual project, was a long and costly film and suffered a box office failure so profound that the production company never recovered from it. *Maqbool*, on the other hand, has come to be considered a landmark in Indian film history. In India, it began with a slow start at the box office which led to Rediff.com declaring it a box office flop and labelling it as ‘Critically sound, commercially sorry’.<sup>244</sup> This is due to the film straddling the Parallel cinema and Commercial cinema divide through the middle-of-the-road genre which I will discuss in more detail below and the aversion mainstream Hindi film

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<sup>241</sup> Bhardwaj relocated *Macbeth* to the *bhai* culture of urban Bombay – the Mumbai Mafia – following in the footsteps of Ram Gopal Verma, the founder of the Mumbai Noir genre.

<sup>242</sup> The British Universities Film and Council website <http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/index.php/title/av67839>, [accessed 20 November, 2012]. Eddie Sammons also mentions the film in his book, *Shakespeare: A Hundred years on Film*; however, there are no other references to the film in books, articles or websites. The film is about Angar, a good general, who is told by the witch Kuntala that his king will die and he will succeed to the throne. The once loyal general, driven by ambition, kills the king to seize power. At this point, the story deviates from Shakespeare’s original plot: Angar’s wife Mangala and his friend Taranga protest his seizing of power and join forces with the people against him leading to his death.

<sup>243</sup> The British Universities Film and Council website reports that there are no archive copies to be found.

<sup>244</sup> Rediff.com, *Box Office, Hits and Misses this Week*, <http://www.rediff.com/movies/2004/feb/04box.htm> (4 Feb, 2004) [accessed 28 March, 2013]. Rediff.com is one of India’s leading portals which covers the news in India, Hindi movies, live cricket scores and live stock updates from BSE and NSE.

audiences have towards subjects traditionally perceived as erudite and elite. *Macbeth* is one of the commonly prescribed plays in higher education in India; Calcutta University, for instance, currently has *Macbeth* on its syllabus.<sup>245</sup> In fact, it is only recently that the play has been acknowledged as too complex for school children; in a recent newspaper article, Tirtha Prasad Mukherjee, who heads the English department at Calcutta University, backed The Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations' decision to replace *Macbeth* with a comedy: '*Macbeth* is a more serious play, informed by such tragic themes as murder, parricide, depression and even schizophrenia...perhaps more conducive to understanding at a more matured level'.<sup>246</sup> This leads to the inference that it used to be prescribed even in school syllabi before 2013.

Bhardwaj had, at first, tried to distance himself from the pedagogic associations of the play by describing the film as merely 'a loose adaptation' of *Macbeth* and 'not meant for Shakespearean scholars'.<sup>247</sup> Nevertheless, the film caught and held the attention of academics and Shakespeare scholars such as Poonam Trivedi and Mark Thornton Burnett and has sparked a global appreciation of Indian Shakespeare films, as well as a new scrutiny of 'Bollywood' and what the genre represents. The spring/summer 2009 special issue of *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, for instance, was partially devoted

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<sup>245</sup> See the University of Calcutta B.A. Honours and General Syllabus at <http://www.caluniv.ac.in/Syllabus/English.pdf>, (2010) [accessed 19 April, 2013]

<sup>246</sup> Mita Mukherjee, *Bard Buckles Under Science, ICSE & ISC 'lighten' English Syllabi*, [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130202/jsp/calcutta/story\\_16510891.jsp#.UXGMCaKG0kM](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130202/jsp/calcutta/story_16510891.jsp#.UXGMCaKG0kM), (2 Feb, 2013) [accessed 19 Apr, 2013]. ICSE and ICS are school certification exams corresponding to the O levels and A levels in the UK.

<sup>247</sup> See Poonam Trivedi, "'Filmi' Shakespeare", *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 35.2 (2007), 148-158. and Mark T. Burnett, *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) for a discussion of *Maqbool* from an academic perspective.



to the film.<sup>248</sup> It has been extensively analysed in classrooms, talked about at seminars and written about in monographs and articles by film and Shakespeare scholars and is now considered one of the best non-Anglophone adaptations of Shakespeare on film worldwide.<sup>249</sup> In terms of its critical reception, *Maqbool* began to gain a cult following in India and abroad within months of its release; film critic Anupama Chopra hailed *Maqbool* as the best film of 2003 in the January, 2004 issue of *India Today*.<sup>250</sup> Two thousand, one hundred and seventy-eight IMDb users gave the film an average vote of 7.9 on ten and reviewed the film as ‘a masterpiece’, ‘one of the best adaptations of Shakespeare’ and ‘a milestone in Indian cinema’.<sup>251</sup> The film won awards for best dialogue and best screenplay at the International Indian Film Academy Awards and the Zee Cine Awards in 2005. Pankaj Kapoor, who played Jehangir Khan/Duncan in the film, won the Silver Lotus Award for Best Supporting Actor at the National Film Awards, India in 2004 as well as the Critics’ Choice Award for Best Actor at the Filmfare Awards and the Zee Cine Awards in 2005.<sup>252</sup> More importantly, in terms of tracing Bhardwaj’s beginnings as a Shakespearean adaptor, the film was also lauded by critics outside of India; after its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, *Hollywood Reporter* wrote: ‘Maqbool should collect plaudits at other festivals and could become one of the few Mumbai-produced films to appeal to those non-Indian audiences that are not

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<sup>248</sup> *Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective. Special Issue, Edited by Alexander C. Y. Huang. Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation 4.2*, (Spring/Summer 2009) [accessed 14 April, 2013].

<sup>249</sup> Jennifer Hopfinger declares it ‘one of the finest adaptations of *Macbeth* ever produced’ in *Maqbool - Movie Review*, <http://www.thebollywoodticket.com/Reviews09/maqbool027.html>, (27 October, 2009) [accessed 20 September, 2013].

<sup>250</sup> Anupama Chopra, ‘Anupama Chopra’s Top Ten Movies of the Year’, *India Today*, (5 January, 2004)

<sup>251</sup> IMDb, *Maqbool* (2003), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0379370> [accessed 28 March, 2013]. IMDb is one of the most popular sources for movie, TV, and celebrity content online.

<sup>252</sup> IMDb, *Awards for Maqbool* (2003), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0379370/awards> [accessed 28 March, 2013].

necessarily fans of standard-issue Bollywood movies.<sup>253</sup> This sentiment refers to the predisposition of Anglophone audiences before the turn of the century to dismiss all Indian cinema as ‘lengthy, highly stylised Musicals’.<sup>254</sup> In recent times, however, Multiplex films from India are marketed as ‘art’ films in the West and, as one American critic describes, ‘Vishal Bhardwaj’s movies are tailor-made for American fans of arthouse cinema. Westerners could consider Bhardwaj an Indian Kenneth Branagh.’<sup>255</sup> In 2016, when *Maqbool* was screened at the British Film Institute, Southbank, as part of the Shakespeare on Film project, the film screenings proved so popular that the BFI digitised *Maqbool* for distribution in the UK, thereby making ‘Bollywood’ films part of the diversity programming in the UK.<sup>256</sup>

Within the genre of Indian Shakespeares on film, *Maqbool* was the first post-postcolonial full-length adaptation to shed the burden of the book and co-opt Shakespeare to voice local concerns. In pedagogical terms, *Macbeth* has been the most popular tragedy after *Othello* in India and has been performed in a variety of modes on stage.<sup>257</sup> On screen, however, there is a marked absence of adaptations of *Macbeth* despite its morality play structure which would ordinarily lend itself to the overarching narrative modes of Indian cinema. I would argue that this absence of a

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<sup>253</sup> Chandrima S. Bhattacharya, *Bollywood Discovers Macbeth- Shakespeare's Tragic Hero Lands in Mumbai's Underworld*, [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040111/asp/frontpage/story\\_2774803.asp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040111/asp/frontpage/story_2774803.asp), (Sunday, January 11, 2004) [accessed 15 October, 2012].

<sup>254</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film, Movies, Media, and Beyond: Art, Technology, Language, History, Theory*, 4th ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p 257.

<sup>255</sup> Kathy Gibson, *Marketing Hindi Movies as Art Films*, <https://accessbollywood.net/2010/07/14/marketing-hindi-movies-as-art-films/> [accessed 20 August, 2015].

<sup>256</sup> See <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/announcements/bfi-launches-biggest-ever-programme-shakespeare-film> [accessed 5 May, 2016] for details of the Shakespeare on Film project. The digitisation of *Maqbool* was announced at the end of the Bhardwaj film screenings at the BFI on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 in the presence of Vishal Bhardwaj and his collaborators.

<sup>257</sup> Poonam Trivedi, 'It is the Bloody Business which Informs thus...': Local Politics and Performative Praxis, *Macbeth in India.*, *World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, (2005), p 48.

Shakespearean prehistory on screen in India is what allowed Bhardwaj, a film maker with a predilection for literary adaptations, to attempt an adaptation of *Macbeth* by placing the Shakespearean story within a Mumbai Noir prehistory instead.<sup>258</sup> The *Macbeth*-as-gangster tradition in the Shakespeare film genre is a popular one and like many other postmodern film makers, Bhardwaj draws inspiration from Hollywood gangster films such as Coppola's *Godfather* (1972), Scorsese's *GoodFellas* (1990) and Brian De Palma's *Scarface* (1983). In his early career as a music director, Bhardwaj worked on *Satya* (1998) [Truth], the film which is retrospectively considered the first Mumbai Noir film; like other film makers in Mumbai at the time, when he began his film making career Bhardwaj wanted to make a Gangster film.<sup>259</sup> Thus his starting point was a wish to make a violent film and he chose to use Shakespeare to do this because, in his view, 'Shakespeare's tragedies have an inherent aggression about them'.<sup>260</sup> However, it was Akira Kurosawa's 1957 *Kumonosu Jo/Throne of Blood* which Bhardwaj claims as the direct inspiration behind *Maqbool*:

For a long time, I wanted to make a violent film so that I could deal with themes of great conflict. But I did not find interesting material. It did not compel me. I wanted a story that focused on the human condition. A few years ago, I saw Akira Kurosawa's 1957 classic *Throne of Blood* (*Kumonosu Jo*) inspired by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. That film was my immediate inspiration. I read *Macbeth* many times and then started working with Abbas Tyrewala to adapt the play.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Bhardwaj has adapted Ruskin Bond's *The Blue Umbrella* in 2005 and *Susannah's Seven Husbands* in 2011 (*Saat Khoon Maaf/Seven Sins Forgiven*). He was also one of the scriptwriters for *Ek Thi Daayan* [Once there was a Witch] adapted from the short story *Mobius Trips* by Mukul Sharma.

<sup>259</sup> Kaveree Bamzai, *Bollywood Today* (New Delhi: Lustre Press, Roli Books, 2007) p 131.

<sup>260</sup> Subhash K. Jha, *A Class*

*Act*, <http://archive.deccanherald.com/Deccanherald/feb152004/enter4.asp> (15 February, 2004) [accessed 20 February, 2006].

<sup>261</sup> Arthur J. Pais, *Maqbool is Not Meant for Shakespearean Scholars, The Rediff Interview*, <http://www.rediff.com/movies/2003/nov/06vishal.htm>, (6 November, 2003) [accessed 7 October, 2012].

In this chapter, I will therefore begin by charting the influence of *Throne of Blood* on *Maqbool* and discuss how *Maqbool*, like *Throne of Blood*, is ‘an interrupted work of mourning’ and a study of the nature of law-breaking violence as opposed to law-making violence.<sup>262</sup> I will then go on to briefly examine the Macbeth-as-gangster tradition in the wider Shakespeare film genre and the Hollywood Gangster film influences on *Maqbool*, and then discuss the Mumbai Noir genre in more detail; I will argue that Bhardwaj consciously places *Maqbool* within these subgenres to claim the urban crime film prehistory for *Maqbool*. An examination of the Multiplex film as the afterlife of the Middle-class film of the 1960s and 70s and the evolution of the middle-of-the-road genre will then demonstrate how Bhardwaj was part of the Multiplex movement and helped establish a Hindi film genre that deviated from the escapist fantasies that was favoured by Hindi film makers in the past. I will also demonstrate how Bhardwaj, extending on the work of Mansoor Khan, secured a place for tragedy as a genre in the Hindi film industry. In conclusion, I will analyse the complexity with which Bhardwaj has adapted *Macbeth* and the cinematic citations which replace textual citations in *Maqbool* to disprove Bhardwaj’s account of *Maqbool* as a free adaptation of *Macbeth* rather than a sustained post-postcolonial engagement with the text.

### ***Throne of Blood* and *Maqbool*’s post-postcolonial engagement with Shakespeare**

In terms of plot, influences from *Throne of Blood* can be identified in *Maqbool*. Fate in the form of the corrupt policemen meddle in the happenings in *Maqbool* much as the spirit of the forest actively traps Washizu and Miki in

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<sup>262</sup> Supriya Chaudhuri, "What Bloody Man is that?" *Macbeth*, *Maqbool*, and Shakespeare in India', in *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Volume 12: Special Section, Shakespeare in India* (Ashgate, 2012), p 102.

Cobwebb Forest at the beginning of *Throne of Blood*. Kurosawa indicates that the evil spirit of the forest has some control over fate: Washizu and Miki encounter the spirit spinning a wheel (recalling the three fates of Greek mythology) and singing a song which talks about the futility of man's ambitions before it greets the two warriors with predictions about the future. Bhardwaj has similarly shown us how the two policemen manipulate events as I will discuss in more detail below. However, where the supernatural has a mystical quality in *Throne of Blood*, it has a more unassuming everyday appearance in modern day Mumbai, which serves to update the text for a modern retelling. The meddling of the witches in *Maqbool* is more pronounced as well, as I will demonstrate in my analysis of *Maqbool* below. In a similar vein, *Maqbool* like *Throne of Blood*, is also preoccupied with the notion of *karma* [a person's actions in this and previous states of existence deciding their fate]. There is a reiterated statement in both movies that all our actions have consequences. The evil spirit in *Throne of Blood* speaks of *karma*; the choral chanting bookending the film also speaks of *karma*.<sup>263</sup> The cause and effect structure of actions is illustrated throughout the film. Lord Tsuzuki had killed his predecessor and was in turn murdered by his successor; Washizu is killed by his own men for his treachery against his Lord and master; Miki, in hopes of fulfilling his own destiny for his descendants, chooses to side with Washizu despite knowing that he has murdered Lord Tsuzuki. It is thus inevitable that Miki is killed by the same friend he protects. *Maqbool* advocates the same philosophy through the film as well: Maqbool's murders of Mughal (Boti's father), Jehangir and Kaka leads to his own murder at the hands of Boti; Nimmi's instigation of the murder of Jehangir leads to her madness; Jehangir's alleged murder of his predecessor results in his murder in almost exactly

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<sup>263</sup> The Japanese word for *karma* is *karuma*.

the same circumstances. On the other hand, Jehangir's decision to trust Boti and give him sanctuary and Guddu's decision not to murder Boti, leads to Boti's unflinching support of Guddu and loyalty to Jehangir. Devsere, the only honest policeman in the film who had been transferred for doing his duty, is the agent of Maqbool's destiny in the form of a customs officer who brings the river to Maqbool's home.

One of the plot deviations in *Throne of Blood* which sets it apart from other adaptations is turning Lady Macbeth's allusion to a hypothetical child into a real child for Washizu and Asaji, giving them thus, the very real and seemingly achievable hope for a future dynasty. Washizu's frustration at not being able to circumvent destiny is heightened at the loss of this child. This child, carried and subsequently lost by Asaji, also appears in *Maqbool*; Nimmi's child, however, survives. *Maqbool* deviates from *Throne of Blood* in that Nimmi's descent into madness is triggered by her pregnancy; Asaji's madness is triggered by miscarrying. I suggest here that the child is not Maqbool's, but Jehangir's and therefore Sameera and Guddu adopt him in the end as the rightful heir to Jehangir's empire.<sup>264</sup> I would further argue that Bhardwaj chooses to let Nimmi's child live in keeping with the Bollywood tradition of sons avenging the deaths of their father: Nimmi is driven to madness because the child crying inside her does not let her sleep in a poignant echo of Macbeth's distress after murdering Duncan: 'Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor/Shall sleep no more – Macbeth shall sleep no more' (2.2, 41). The murder of Jehangir was instigated by Nimmi; Maqbool was merely her weapon of choice. Therefore, it is Nimmi who has forsaken sleep, which soon leads to her madness. Moreover, it is important to note here that the choice to imitate and build

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<sup>264</sup> I use the pronoun 'he' referencing the Hindi film trope of a son avenging his father's murder as in *Baiju Bawra* (1952), *Zanjeer* (1973), *Baazigar* (1993) or *Agneepath* (1990), though the film does not reveal the gender of the child.

upon the possibility of a child to the childless Macbeths, a feature not present in any other *Macbeth* adaptation, connects the two films closely, and makes *Maqbool* a distinctive *Macbeth* adaptation. The reference links the two directors and places Bhardwaj, by association (an association he repeatedly draws attention to), into both the international art film canon and the Shakespeare-on-film canon. This repeated acknowledgement of *Throne of Blood* as his ‘immediate inspiration’, I propose, also serves to differentiate *Maqbool* from ‘standard-issue Bollywood movies’ and position the film within the middle-of-the-road genre.<sup>265</sup>

The other important plot deviation in *Throne of Blood* is also perpetuated in *Maqbool*. In *Throne of Blood*, Asaji convinces Washizu to murder Lord Tsuzuki by first arguing that killing him is necessary for self-preservation and then reminding Washizu that Tsuzuki too had murdered his predecessor. Washizu is persuaded by his wife’s conspiracy theories but suffers from self-doubt after the deed is done. Nimmi also frames her request to Maqbool to kill Jehangir as a matter of self-preservation; Maqbool is finally swayed from his loyalty to the crime lord when Pandit and Purohit tell him that Jehangir had murdered his predecessor Laljibhai. By constructing Jehangir as a Machiavellian gangster, however, Bhardwaj suppresses the motivation for Maqbool to experience a genuine moral conflict such as that of Macbeth or Washizu for whom killing in battle is about duty and honour. Consequently, where *Throne of Blood* is closer to *Macbeth* as a story about a man with ambition in his heart spurred on to murder by a favourable prediction and by his wife’s goading, *Maqbool* is more about a man goaded into murder to win a woman.

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<sup>265</sup> See Pais, *Maqbool is Not Meant for Shakespearean Scholars* for Bhardwaj’s quote on the immediate inspiration of Kurosawa on Maqbool. See Bhattacharya, *Bollywood Discovers Macbeth- Shakespeare’s Tragic Hero Lands in Mumbai’s Underworld*, for the description of Maqbool as different from the usual Bollywood film.

Once he commits the crime, however, he loses control and becomes a mere pawn in the games played by a corrupt bunch of people.

There is third very distinct parallel between the two films in terms of plot. The character of Asaji in *Throne of Blood* acts like a blue print for Nimmi's character. The sequence where Asaji disappears into the darkness only to 'magically' reappear when fetching sake for the guards implies that she has some affinity to the witch in the forest. Nimmi too is called a *dayan* and a *chudail* (both words loosely mean 'witch') by Sameera when Guddu comes to fetch her. The difference is that Kurosawa chooses to use visual cues to align Asaji with the evil spirit. In the sequence where Nimmi peers out of the doorway when Guddu comes to rescue Sameera, she too looks like a witch, but the comparison is underscored by Bhardwaj having Sameera call Nimmi a witch. There is another obvious referencing of Asaji through Nimmi: Bhardwaj has Nimmi echo Asaji almost verbatim when she asks: 'So, have you decided?' when she is trying to push him into killing Jehangir. Asaji makes it seem that Washizu has no choice but to kill Tsuzuki; so too does Nimmi by making Maqbool's decision a choice between her life and Jehangir's. Asaji and Lady Macbeth are women who coldly and deliberately manipulate their husbands by planting insecurities in their heads and forcing them to 'take the nearest way' in order to fulfil their destiny. They are seemingly impervious to the consequences of doing away with people who obstruct their way. Asaji is more manipulative: she makes Washizu believe that Miki will tell Lord Tsuzuki about the witch's predictions and use it to his own advantage by making him think that Washizu is a traitor. When Washizu decides to name Miki's son his heir to keep Miki loyal, she chooses that moment to announce her pregnancy. Lady Macbeth desires to 'unsex' herself so she can push her husband into doing what she thinks



needs to be done but after Duncan's murder we see her vulnerable side. Kurosawa, however, never shows us a softer side of Asaji. She seems complicit in Miki's murder: indeed, she is the one who planted seeds of doubt in Washizu's head about him. Her madness upon miscarrying is more to do with her frustration at not having been able to outwit destiny than guilt over her actions. Nimmi similarly uses Guddu to make Maqbool insecure. She uses every chance she gets to manipulate situations so that Maqbool must face his feelings for her. Most of her manipulations, such as when she steps on a sharp object so that Maqbool is forced to hold her hand in order to support her on the way to the *dargah*, or when she pulls his own gun on him and tells him to call her 'Meri Jaan' [my love] or even when she manipulates Jehangir with as much dexterity as she does Maqbool in the *dargah* sequence, seem reminiscent of another Kurosawa female protagonist who is dispassionately manipulative and unafraid to use her sexuality to get what she wants - Lady Kaede from *Ran* (1985).<sup>266</sup> We are reminded of the scene where Lady Kaede in her quest for revenge deliberately seduces Jiro and then persuades him to have his wife Lady Sue killed. There are times when Nimmi seems equally unscrupulous - such as when she holds the jug of water out of reach when Maqbool comes to fetch it for Jehangir who is choking on his food, or when she rubs her relationship with Jehangir in Maqbool's face; She ruthlessly uses Maqbool as a pawn to get what she wants.

The aesthetics of the two films are naturally different due to the setting of the transpositions. *Throne of Blood* is a black and white film set in the *Sengoku Jidai* period of Japan – a period marked by internecine wars among rival clans and the absence of a national political power. *Maqbool* is set in modern day Mumbai and uses the *Mumbai Noir* cinematography I will discuss in detail below.

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<sup>266</sup> *Ran*, Dir. Akira Kurosawa. (Toho, 1985).

Both films have an evocative background score, however. *Throne of Blood* has a distinctly Japanese score and prominently features the *shakuhachi*, a type of Japanese bamboo flute that dates back to the sixth century. The music in *Maqbool* is by Bhardwaj and like all Bollywood films features both diegetic and non-diegetic music and songs. Bhardwaj, nevertheless, manages to capture the eeriness of the shrill flute music of *Throne of Blood* in the murder scene in *Maqbool*. Visually, the theme of darkness that is so successfully played out in *Throne of Blood*, translates well into the dark shadows and fragmented shots characteristic of *Noir* cinematography in *Maqbool*. In the same way, the theme of blood so impressively embodied in the bloody wall in *Throne of Blood* despite the black and white picture is successfully used in *Maqbool* as well. The first scene where blood covers the horoscope of Mumbai on the frosted glass captures the essence of the action in *Maqbool*; the invisible blood that Nimmi tries to remove from the bed sheets and the walls make an even greater impact because of the setting of the movie - a world where spilling blood is an everyday occurrence.

There is a further debt that *Maqbool* owes its Japanese predecessor in paving the way to engage thoroughly with the Shakespeare text to voice an immediate local concern. '*Throne of Blood* stages a historically specific negotiation between traditional Japanese and imported Western culture which allows Kurosawa to interrogate both Japanese and Western cultural traditions through his manipulation of *Macbeth*, Japanese theatre, and contemporary film conventions.'<sup>267</sup> In the context of Kurosawa's position as a film maker in post-war, post-occupation Japan, *Macbeth* – with its depiction of a weakened society open to attack by the forces of chaos and

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<sup>267</sup> Erin Suzuki, 'Lost in Translation: Reconsidering Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 34.2 (2006), pp 93-103.

change – had a distinct resonance with the historical moment. The Islamification of *Maqbool*, reminiscent of the classic Muslim social films such as *Chaudhvin Ka Chand* (1960) and *Pakeezah* (1972), serves a similar purpose and thus allows *Maqbool* to shed the postcolonial baggage of Shakespeare.<sup>268</sup> Ram Gopal Verma's mobsters preceding *Maqbool*, who established the gangster film genre in the Hindi film industry, are primarily Hindu, specifically Marathi; they replicate the recent militant endeavours of the Marathi to claim Mumbai for themselves and hold up a mirror to present day tensions in Maharashtra, especially in the capital city of Mumbai. Celebrating the death of his long-time rival, Bhiku Mhatre in *Satya*, for example, proclaims: '*Mumbai ka raja kaun? Bhiku Mhatre!*' [Who is the king of Mumbai? Bhiku Mhatre!] Bhiku's exclamation embodies the dream of the Maharashtrian: hegemony over Mumbai, and reclaiming what rightfully belongs to the Marathi culture. However, in *Maqbool*, both the rival gangs are Muslims while the politicians, the policemen and the inheritor of the criminal dynasty, Guddu, are Hindu.<sup>269</sup> Bhardwaj admits to being more Muslim than Abbas (Tyrewala, co-scriptwriter): he had a lot of Muslims friends while growing up in Meerut, despite belonging to a strict Hindu Brahmin family. He claims a fascination for the Muslim culture and thinks that the community is caricatured in Hindi film.<sup>270</sup> This would

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<sup>268</sup> *Chaudhvin Ka Chand*, Dir. Mohammed Sadiq. (1960). *Pakeezah*, Dir. Kamal Amrohi. (1972). For references to the Islamification of *Maqbool* by critics and academics see *Maqbool - Muslims and Movies*, Anthony R. Guneratne, *Shakespeare, Film Studies, and the Visual Cultures of Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p 71, Blair Orfall, 'From Ethnographic Impulses to Apocalyptic Endings: Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* in Comparative Context', *Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective. Special Issue, Edited by Alexander C. Y. Huang. Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 4.2, (Spring/summer 2009) [accessed 20 January, 2013] and Moinak Biswas, *Mourning and Blood-Ties: Macbeth in Mumbai*, [http://www.jmionline.org/film\\_journal/jmi\\_05/article\\_04.php](http://www.jmionline.org/film_journal/jmi_05/article_04.php) [accessed 25 December, 2012].

<sup>269</sup> David Mason, 'Dharma and Violence in Mumbai', *Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective, Special Issue, Edited by Alexander C. Y. Huang, Borrowers and Lenders* 4.2, (Spring/Summer 2009) [accessed 14 April, 2013].

<sup>270</sup> *Maqbool, Muslims and Movies*.

explain why, as Blair Orfall suggests, *Maqbool* ‘channels *Macbeth* via *Throne of Blood* to stage a specific historic negotiation and representation of minority Islamic culture within India, as Hindu fundamentalism threatens to overrun the once diverse city of Mumbai.’<sup>271</sup> Bhardwaj’s attention to not only the costume, accent, food, architecture but also to the *tehzeeb* [culture and etiquette] typical of this culture suggests a nostalgic ethnography of a waning Muslim milieu that is comparable to Kurosawa’s post-war chronicling of *Noh* theatre traditions specifically and a period of Japanese Samurai history generally. ‘Bhardwaj, through Kurosawa’s mixed genres of tragedy and ethnography, creates a tragic ethnography to memorialize Mumbai as a city with threatened shores.’<sup>272</sup>

Alternately, these Muslim signifiers could be read, as Mason thinks, as a demonizing of the Muslim gang lord as the root of Mumbai’s troubles.<sup>273</sup> Film scholar Moinak Biswas hypothesizes that the genre of the Shakespearean tragedy, unlike other contemporary media, including the realist film, provides the structure and distance to mourn the loss of the recent past due to the homogenizing effects of globalization.<sup>274</sup> Biswas suggests that the urban crime film records a loss – familial, social, or religious – which mainstream Bombay film fails to acknowledge.

Protagonists such as Jehangir in *Maqbool* or Sultan Mirza in *Once Upon a Time in Mumbaa* (2010) represents a gangland ethic of the past, an ethic of ruthlessness combined with benevolence, and business being carried out mindful of

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<sup>271</sup> Orfall.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> David Mason, 'Dharma and Violence in Mumbai', *Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective, Special Issue, Edited by Alexander C. Y. Huang, Borrowers and Lenders* 4.2, (Spring/Summer 2009) [accessed 14 April, 2013].

<sup>274</sup> Moinak Biswas, *Mourning and Blood-Ties: Macbeth in Mumbai*, [http://www.jmionline.org/film\\_journal/jmi\\_05/article\\_04.php](http://www.jmionline.org/film_journal/jmi_05/article_04.php) [accessed 25 December, 2012].

consequences.<sup>275</sup> Both Jehangir and Mirza refuse to smuggle contraband, for instance, and thus display scruples and foresightedness that the new generation of Gangsters represented by Maqbool and Shoaib (*in Once Upon a Time in Mumbai*) lack. Mirza's kindness and charity towards the needy and poor earn him the nickname *Sultan* [a Muslim sovereign] just as Jehangir is referred to as the 'messiah of the minorities'. These gangster films 'represent an older patriarchal order being hollowed out by the ruthless pursuit, impelled by forces within that very same order, of money and power'.<sup>276</sup> This body of films therefore, reflects the degeneration of a society, which seemingly only finds expression in this genre of Hindi films. In *Maqbool*, there is an implication that the smuggled goods are arms and explosives and Jehangir's refusal to risk having to live in Dubai or Karachi recalls Dawood Ibrahim's escape after the Mumbai riots of 1992-93, followed by the Stock Exchange blasts of early 1993. *Maqbool*'s somewhat weak ending, when the sea comes to his house in the form of customs officer Devsere, is uncannily strengthened by subsequent history, a trail of events that Bhardwaj could not have foreseen, but which greatly impact the film nonetheless. Not only does Maqbool's involvement in the smuggling of explosives evoke D-Company's involvement in the Mumbai Stock Exchange explosions but also the terrorist strike on 26 November 2008 (referred to as 26/11) when armed terrorists landed by boat on Mumbai's sea-coast, held hostages in public buildings, shot passengers in a railway station and occupied the Taj Mahal and Trident hotels, killing guests and staff. Thus, by adding the history of Mumbai to this adaptation of *Macbeth*, Bhardwaj comments on a play about violence: violence by and for the state, as a means of state power.<sup>277</sup> This is a theme

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<sup>275</sup> *Once upon a Time in Mumbai*, Dir. Milan Luthria, Ekta Kapoor, Shobha Kapoor, 2010.

<sup>276</sup> Chaudhuri, "'What Bloody Man is that?'" *Macbeth, Maqbool, and Shakespeare in India*, p 102.

<sup>277</sup> Choudhuri's essay examines the urban crime film, and *Maqbool*, in particular, as a 'sorrow-play' rather than a tragedy.

that will be considered in both *Omkaara* and in *Haider* from different perspectives, as I will examine in my subsequent chapters.

### ***Macbeth* and the Gangster Tradition**

It was Robert Warshow who first proposed the idea of the gangster film as a modern tragedy and the gangster as a tragic hero because the narrative structure of the classical gangster film presents ‘a steady upward progress’ of the protagonist ‘followed by a very precipitate fall’.<sup>278</sup> The gangster protagonist, like the tragic hero, demonstrates certain admirable character traits like individualism, confidence, brash courage, self-belief and the drive to succeed. His tragedy arises, to extend Warshow’s comparison, not from overreaching and trying to go against fate, but from the fact that he steps outside the honour system codes of his world. Tony Howard also observes that, ‘Gang wars [provide] a modern context for the play’s tribal codes of violence’<sup>279</sup>. The tragedy of *Macbeth*, thus, can be transposed seamlessly into the setting of the gangster movie; the feudal nature of gang hierarchies and the ongoing tensions between opposing gangs making them structurally comparable to the battling clans of medieval Scotland where manhood was equated to the ability to kill in battle. It is, therefore, conceivable to re-imagine ‘brave Macbeth’ (1.2, 16) as a gangster who lives in a quasi-feudalistic modern world where bloodshed is not only a normal occurrence but a means of survival.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Robert Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', in *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre & Other Aspects of Popular Culture*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), p 97.

<sup>279</sup> Tony Howard, 'Shakespeare's Cinematic Offshoots', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p 302.

<sup>280</sup> All references to the text are from Nicholas Brooke, Stanley Wells and William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare. the Tragedy of Macbeth* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

Ken Hughes' *Joe Macbeth* (1955) initiated the tradition of transposing the *Macbeth* story to a gangland setting. The film is, however, simplified Shakespeare, and often veers towards the laughable despite its deliberately ironic overtones for 'sophisticated' viewers: when his best friend Banky's ghost shows up at a banquet later that night, Joe dispenses with Shakespeare's iambic pentameter by shouting 'What is this? A gag?' However, in the cinematic tradition of providing a foil for the anti-hero, Lennie (a conflation of Fleance and Macduff) is portrayed as fair and good despite belonging within a corrupt world and is comparable to Guddu in *Maqbool*. William Reilly's *Men Of Respect* (1990) transplants Shakespeare's *Macbeth* into a 90s New York gangland setting. More sophisticated than *Joe Macbeth*, this film is in the style of *The Godfather* series in terms of atmosphere and staging. The protagonists, as in *Joe Macbeth*, run a restaurant as a front, but are a young charismatic couple analogous to the protagonists in Roman Polanski's 1971 *Macbeth*, vulnerable as well as ambitious. Geoffrey Wright's *Macbeth* (2006) which came after *Maqbool*, was similarly set in the Melbourne underworld. The most imaginative production of this subgenre, however, is BBC2's *Macbeth on the Estate* (TV 1997), where the main roles were played by professionals but a large supporting cast was drawn from the area and the Shakespearean language sounds conversational, in an approximation of Baz Luhrmann's naturalisation of Shakespeare's language in *Romeo + Juliet* (1996).<sup>281</sup> Leonardo Henriquez's 2000 *Sangrador (Bleeder)*, Venezuela's 2003 nomination for an Academy Award for Foreign Language Film, is a shockingly visualised horror version of the play. A 'bizarre and epic twist of *Macbeth*', the story is transposed onto the context of

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<sup>281</sup> IMBd, *Macbeth on the Estate*, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0289295/reviews?ref=tt\\_ov\\_rt](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0289295/reviews?ref=tt_ov_rt) [accessed 6 April, 2013].

Venezuelan bandits and pushes the envelope on how creatively *Macbeth* can be transposed on to the crime film genre<sup>282</sup> Most of these films were experiments in updating and transposing Shakespeare into modern contexts for modern audiences and form a sub-genre within the Gangster film genre as well as within filmed adaptations of *Macbeth* due to the ease with which the Macbeth story can be recontextualised in a gangster setting. Bhardwaj works within this sub-genre with his adaptation of *Macbeth* and further positions *Maqbool* within the Mumbai Noir genre which had become popular in the late 1990s in the Hindi film industry to furnish *Maqbool* with a cinematic prehistory that it lacked as a Shakespeare adaptation in the Hindi film industry.

Bhardwaj entered the Hindi film industry as a music composer. His growing disillusionment with the way music is used in Bollywood films led to a simultaneously growing insecurity about his career as a music director. Interacting with directors churning out formulaic films, however, led to his rising belief that he could make better movies than them.<sup>283</sup> By his own admission, his fascination for Shakespeare was motivated by commercial considerations and a need to touch a chord with international audiences.<sup>284</sup> Bhardwaj, like Kurosawa who is often referred to as ‘Japan’s most Western director’, is also a filmmaker drawn to global high art and literature as well as to popular art. Moreover, his films, like Kurosawa’s, developed from a feeling of dissatisfaction for ‘things as they are’.<sup>285</sup> Of course, Kurosawa was referring to the wider context of Japanese society and Bhardwaj to the

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<sup>282</sup> IMDb, *Bleeder*, *Macbeth*-Sangrador, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0219152/reviews?ref=tt\\_ov\\_rt\\_edn](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0219152/reviews?ref=tt_ov_rt_edn), (15 March, 2001) [accessed 7 March, 2013].

<sup>283</sup> See *Maqbool - Muslims and Movies*.

<sup>284</sup> See *Today Othello, Tomorrow Hamlet?*

<sup>285</sup> David Desser, *The Samurai Films of Akira Kurosawa* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1983), p 8.



business of film making in Bollywood. Kurosawa acknowledged a deliberate choice in seeking Western influences when making films: 'Perhaps it is because I am making films for today's young Japanese that I should find a Western-looking format the most practical.'<sup>286</sup> Bhardwaj similarly makes it a point to talk about the influences of world cinema (by implication, 'high art' as compared to the run-of-the-mill Bollywood fare) on his decision to take up film making. 'For me the world of cinema opened up in 94 when I watched one of Kieslowski's films from the *Trilogy* (Red, White, Blue) at the Mumbai film festival. Then Amol Palekar once took me to see Kieslowski's *Dekalog* at the Trivandrum festival and I was blown. I began to see Ray's movies to realise how he had been doing stuff that became contemporary European cinema later.'<sup>287</sup> Through Ray, who was also a genius at adapting literature for film, Bhardwaj began to recognise the work of Indian directors in relation European cinema and recognised the gap in the Hindi film industry. In another interview Bhardwaj shares: 'I love all kinds of cinema, but my favourite remains Kieslowski. I have seen all his films and love them. Also, Kurosawa. My favourite director is Quentin Tarantino though -- I love *Kill Bill*. I can live on it. I love *Pulp Fiction*. And Takeshi Kitano is a madman - I love all his films. My fascination for Tarantino and Kitano, plus the poetic cinema of Kieslowski and Kurosawa - *the combination makes me a little different* [italics mine]. Mine aren't just hi-fi arty poetic films, they have guns and blood and humour.'<sup>288</sup> In him there is thus the self-conscious wish to be different from other film makers in Mumbai. Taking on Shakespeare and Kurosawa helped him fulfil that need to set himself apart from the rest and to reach a more global audience.

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid, p 59.

<sup>287</sup> *Maqbool, Muslims and Movies*.

<sup>288</sup> *Today Othello, Tomorrow Hamlet?*

While talking about his Shakespearean source, Bhardwaj claimed that *Macbeth* can be adapted to fit any period or setting - the corporate world, politics, the educational system, the army, the bank or even the world of journalism.<sup>289</sup> Yet it is the underworld that is featured time and again in modernised interpretations of *Macbeth*. Bhardwaj set out to make a gangster film and co-opted Shakespeare for a 'good story', as I have discussed earlier and, in this first attempt at a mainstream Hindi film (his first film *Makdee* being a children's film), Bhardwaj references several representative films in the gangster movie genre in Hollywood. The final sequence of *Maqbool*, for instance, replicates, shot-by-shot, the final sequence of *Léon: The Professional*. Similarly, Kaka/Banquo is modelled on Scorsese's short rotund enforcers and Jehangir/Duncan is reminiscent of Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*.<sup>290</sup> The most noticeable allusions, however, are to *Pulp Fiction*, a movie that has become a cult classic and has a huge following in India.<sup>291</sup> Bhardwaj claimed that he encountered 'the power of cinema' when he heard an entire audience shriek in unison at the syringe-poking scene in *Pulp Fiction*.<sup>292</sup> The film obviously

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<sup>289</sup> See the interviews by Arthur J. Pais, *Maqbool is Not Meant for Shakespearean Scholars*, The Rediff Interview, <http://www.rediff.com/movies/2003/nov/06vishal.htm>, (6 November, 2003) [accessed 7 October, 2012] and Alex Perry, *Lights! Sound! Fury!* <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,591352,00.html>, (16 February, 2004) [accessed 7 February, 2013].

<sup>290</sup> Anthony R. Guneratne, in his book *Shakespeare, Film Studies, and the Visual Cultures of Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p 72 mentions the physical similarity between Scorsese's enforcers and Kaka/Banquo. The similarity between Jehangir Khan and Corleone is inevitable given that they are both heads of crime families. Several critics and interviewers have noticed the physical similarities between Corleone and Jehangir too. See Alex Perry, *Lights! Sound! Fury!* <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,591352,00.html>, (16 February, 2004) [accessed 7 Feb, 2013] and *Maqbool - Muslims and Movies*, <http://www.mid-day.com/news/2004/feb/77016.htm>, (22 February, 2004) [accessed 7 August, 2006].

<sup>291</sup> Several blogs are dedicated to Tarantino and Indian film. See for instance, *Tarantino and Indian Cinema*, The Quentin Tarantino Archives Community, (20 May, 2003) <<http://forum.tarantino.info/viewtopic.php?t=349>> [accessed 25 September, 2012]. See also Neelam Wright's illuminating article 'Tom Cruise? Tarantino? ET?... Indian!': Innovation through Imitation in the Cross-Cultural Bollywood Remake', *Cultural Borrowings: Appropriation, Reworking, Transformation*, (2009), pp 194-210.

<sup>292</sup> *Maqbool - Muslims and Movies*.

had a lasting effect on him; there are several distinct echoes of *Pulp Fiction* in *Maqbool*. The Vincent-Mia chemistry in *Pulp Fiction* (which itself has roots in the relationship between Tony Montana and Elvira Hancock in *Scarface*) is taken a step further in the illicit romance between Maqbool and Nimmi. Further, where Mia is a failed actress, Nimmi once aspired to be an actress. The postmodern self-reflexive references to Bollywood in *Maqbool* are comparable to the references to Hollywood cinema in *Pulp Fiction*. Even Jehangir's two cop/hitmen are comparable to Vincent and Jules. In the opening scene in *Maqbool* when Pandit and Purohit are waiting to kill the member of the opposing gang after getting information out of him, they crack a few jokes about homosexuality calling him 'Mughal's princess' and assure him that 'neither Abbaji nor Miyan are into men...and guess what? Neither are we!' This sequence resembles the post-credits sequence in *Pulp Fiction* when Vincent and Jules converse casually with Brett and his friends and then, just before shooting him, Jules tells Brett: 'Marcellus Wallace don't like to be fucked by anybody but Mrs Wallace'. All these allusions in *Maqbool* not only characterises the film as a homage to the Hollywood Gangster film genre, but also gives critics a sense of the kind of global film making that Bhardwaj is influenced by. Bhardwaj attributes his attempts at film making to the sense of frustration about the lack of good stories in the Hindi film industry and the adherence to the factory style of film making and the Masala formula in the early 2000s; *Maqbool*, thus, represents the frustration of a cinema wanting to escape from itself as well as provide a platform where previously non-Indian filmic forms, styles and characters can flourish and fuse with the familiar, which was the essence of the Multiplex film genre.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> See, for instance, *Maqbool - Muslims and Movies*.

## The Mumbai Noir Genre

Film Noir is both a genre and a style. The term, in its most narrow application, describes a series of American films made during the Second World War and in the years following. Punctuated by violence, these films are permeated by a sense of dread and moral uncertainty; the heroes tend to be cynical, tough and overwhelmed by sinister forces beyond their control. Stylistically, film noir is identified particularly by its stark chiaroscuro cinematography influenced by German Expressionism. These films are lit for night, favour oblique angles and obsessive use of shadows and most importantly, take place in a city. They explore ‘the rotten underside of the American city, the place where the American dream goes to die.’<sup>294</sup> Consequently, *Mumbai Noir* was the term given to a group of films which had the underbelly of Mumbai as its subject and had stylistic similarities to *Film Noir*, though these films were in colour as opposed to the black and white films of the American Noir genre. The urban crime film has its roots in films such as *Ankush* (1986), *Nayakan* (1987), *Parinda* (1989), *Angaar* (1992) and *Gardish* (1993) – a set of violent, moral, melodramatic fables which provide something like a history of the underworld. This line of films culminate in Ram Gopal Verma’s *Satya* (1998), commonly referred to as the first of the *Mumbai Noir* films, and *Company* (2002), based on the real-life criminal organization D-Company; these two films cemented the genre and established Verma as the ‘Master of the Mumbai Noir’.<sup>295</sup> The critical and commercial success of *Satya* led to an increased emphasis on ‘realism’ in later Mumbai underworld films as opposed to the melodramatic plots and characters of

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<sup>294</sup> William Park, *What is Film Noir?* (Lewisburg [Pa.]; Lanham, Md.: Bucknell University Press; Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p 1.

<sup>295</sup> Kaveree Bamzai, *Bollywood Today* (New Delhi: Lustre Press, Roli Books, 2007) p 131.

Bollywood films portraying the underworld previous to the 1990s.<sup>296</sup>

*Satya* and *Company* both gave slick, often mesmerizing portrayals of the Mumbai underworld, and displayed realistic brutality and urban violence. *Satya* won six Filmfare Awards, including the Critics Award for Best Film, while *Company* won seven Filmfare Awards. A prequel to *Company* was released in 2005, entitled *D* (2005), produced by Varma and directed by Vishram Sawant. Varma's three films *Satya*, *Company* and *D*, are together considered an 'Indian Gangster Trilogy', which may also have been an inspiration behind Bhardwaj's intention of making a Shakespeare Trilogy.<sup>297</sup> Varma also directed an Indian transposition of *The Godfather* novel in a Mumbai underworld setting based on the Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena leader based in Mumbai, called *Sarkar* (2005), and two original sequels called *Sarkar Raj* (2008) and *Sarkar 3* (2017).

With the coming of the *Mumbai Noir* genre, for the first time, Hindi cinema had protagonists who were fully etched anti-heroes. They did not have justification for a life of crime or the sympathetic back stories that the protagonists in Raj Kapoor classics such as *Awaara* (1951) and *Shree 420* (1955) had; nor were they the 'angry young man' played by Amitabh Bachhan in films such as *Deewar* (1975) and *Agneepath* (1990). These were grey characters, neither obviously good nor bad - people with principles and honour, who killed without remorse and guilt yet still retained the audience's sympathies. The protagonists of these new Mumbai narratives were not involved in a battle against the corrupt, bureaucratic system but instead saw the underworld as simply another means of sustenance and livelihood. In

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<sup>296</sup> Criminals such as Mogambo in *Mr. India* (1987), Loin in *Kalicharan* (1976) or Kancha Cheena in *Agneepath* (1990) were caricatured in Hindi films and given memorable dialogues that frequently became catch phrases in popular culture.

<sup>297</sup>Charlie Prince, *D: Final Film in Indian Gangster Trilogy a must* See, <http://www.cinemastrikesback.com/index.php?p=562>, (24 August, 2005) [accessed 20 March, 2013].

*Company*, the title song proclaims: ‘*sab ganda hain par dhandla hain yeh*’ [It’s dirty but it’s business]. Chandu’s mother in *Company* is overjoyed that her son is working with the mafia boss Malik; his girlfriend wants to marry him because he is a *bhai* - a term carrying all the glamour of ‘good fella’ from the film *Goodfellas*. This is certainly at odds with films such as *Deewar* where the mother disowns her son for his connections to the underworld. This burgeoning genre thus, gave Bhardwaj the basis for an anti-hero protagonist that the audience could sympathise with. *Maqbool* belongs in this dirty, glamorous, corrupt world; he does not need to justify his actions to the audience. He does whatever needs to be done to get ahead in this ‘business’. He is just another gangster ready ‘To catch the nearest way’. (1.5, 17)

Verma not only introduced a new subject and character to Hindi cinema, but also borrowed from *Film Noir* to introduce a new visual aesthetic unfamiliar to Bollywood. The predominance of night scenes, the compulsive use of shadows and oblique angles, and the chiaroscuro cinematography all found their way into Bollywood through Verma’s films. The low light photography reminiscent of *Film Noir* that Verma used, focusing exclusively on the shadows, dark corners and squalour of the city of Mumbai was directly in opposition to the aerial photography, shots of tourist attractions and the Mumbai skyline so commonly used in films which characterised Mumbai as the ‘city of dreams’ in films of previous decades.<sup>298</sup> The

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<sup>298</sup> ‘Bombay, or Mumbai as it was rechristened in 1995, has always enjoyed a unique place in Hindi film lore. In the popular Hindi film tradition, ‘going to the city’ meant going to Bombay. Scenes of urban life were invariably represented through stock shots of Bombay, underlining both the city’s cosmopolitan urban ethos and its expanse of space. Devoid of any regional character, Bombay functioned as the urban archetype in early Hindi cinema. However, in recent years there has been a significant change in the city’s cinematic image. The city is no longer conceived primarily as a cosmopolitan urban space but is now imagined as a localized milieu inscribed with a regional flavour.’ See Sreya Mitra’s *Localizing the Global: Bombay’s Sojourn from the Cosmopolitan Urbane to Amchi Mumbai* [http://www.academia.edu/1786668/Localizing\\_the\\_Global\\_Bombays\\_Sojourn\\_from\\_the\\_Cosmopolitan\\_Urbane\\_to\\_Aamchi\\_Mumbai](http://www.academia.edu/1786668/Localizing_the_Global_Bombays_Sojourn_from_the_Cosmopolitan_Urbane_to_Aamchi_Mumbai) [accessed 7 February, 2013] for a more detailed discussion on the changing image of Mumbai.

montage of claustrophobic spaces, dark shadowed rooms, *chawls* [shanties], crowded streets and traffic was in the manner of documentary films. This was coupled with the dramatic use of the steadicam and the spectacular editing strategies that provide *Satya* with a remarkably different aesthetic which led to the film being lauded for being ‘realistic’ and sparked off a new genre in Bollywood of which *Maqbool* is a part. Verma’s box office successes quickly led to a rash of similar gritty and realistic portrayals of the Mumbai underworld like *Vaastav* (1999), *Shootout at Lokhandwala* (2007), *Kaminey* (2009), *Once Upon a Time In Mumbai* (2010) and *Gangs of Wasseypur Parts 1 and 2* (2012). Usually based on real gangsters and events, these films were inspired by and sometimes adapted from Hollywood gangster films in terms of both content and style, often going so far as to be named in a similar manner.<sup>299</sup>

As music director for *Satya*, Bhardwaj was part of the inception of this new genre and was influenced by the film in relation to both content and style. He is known for his predilection for ‘serious, dark films’ and his dark humour.<sup>300</sup> Like most directors working within the *Mumbai Noir* genre, he is a self-confessed fan of gangster movies and *Maqbool* is peppered with allusions to Hollywood Gangster films which I have traced above. *Film Noir* cinematography made fashionable by Verma as a visual style is most noticeable in *Maqbool* in Jehangir’s murder sequence which begins with the old servant washing away the goats’ blood on the roof and ends with the murder of Jehangir and his guard Usman. The dark shadows and fragmented shots in Verma’s movies are here used by Bhardwaj most effectively to

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<sup>299</sup> The title of Milan Luthria’s *Once Upon a time in Mumbai* (2010) echoes Sergio Leone’s *Once upon a time in America* (1984) for example. Martin Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York* (2002) is similarly imitated in the titling of Anurag Kashyap’s *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012).

<sup>300</sup> Box Office India, “I Proved to the Country that Shakespeare can be Masala...” - Vishal Bhardwaj, [http://www.boxofficeindia.co.in/"i-proved-to-the-country-that-shakespeare-can-be-masala"](http://www.boxofficeindia.co.in/) (8 April, 2013) [accessed 14 April, 2013].

create a murder sequence that has an almost dreamlike quality because of the flickering light - the audience is uncertain about whether the murder is actually happening or whether Maqbool is imagining it. The mis-en-scene and atmosphere in the rest of the movie is also similar to *Satya* in terms of being filled with cramped spaces, dark shadows and crowded streets.

### **Vishal Bhardwaj's *Macbeth***

As a cultural transposition, *Maqbool* is largely faithful to Shakespeare's plot and characters. Mumbai functions as a kingdom in miniature, with Bollywood itself as one its holdings. The central players- Jehangir (Abbaji)/Duncan and his henchman Maqbool/Macbeth - are the local manifestations of royalty; Abbaji [father] is described as the 'Messiah of the minorities', a title which establishes the Mumbai mobster as a type of quasi-divine leader, a trope which I will discuss in more detail below.<sup>301</sup> Instead of Donaldbain and Malcolm, however, Jehangir here has a daughter, Sameera who is in love with Guddu/Fleance. Guddu is not a hard-hearted killer like Maqbool, as is made apparent by the fact that he saves Boti/Macduff's life early in the film.<sup>302</sup> Nor is he the shadowy figure of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: it is clear from the beginning of the movie that he will be the antidote to Maqbool as is customary in Hindi films with an anti-hero protagonist.<sup>303</sup> Boti/Macduff is largely

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<sup>301</sup> This kind of characterization of the mobster as a 'Messiah of the minorities' is a popular one in several films such as *Company* (2002) and *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* (2010) which acknowledge their source as gangsters such as Haji Mastan and Dawood Ibrahim. The predominance of Muslim gang lords has led to the popular perception that gangs are overwhelmingly Muslim. Ranjani Mazumdar speculates in *Bombay Cinema, An Archive of the City* (Bristol: University Presses Marketing [distributor], 2007), p 153, that this is mainly due to Dawood Ibrahim's stature as the main figure in the underworld and because of his connections with the Gulf and Pakistan. His suspected role in the 1993 Bombay bomb blasts linked the underworld to international terrorism, thus furthering the myth of the underworld as predominantly Muslim.

<sup>302</sup> This move is reminiscent of Tony Montana giving Ernie a job after wiping out Frank Lopez's gang in *Scarface*.

<sup>303</sup> In *Baazigar* (Gambler, 1993) for instance, one of the most commercially successful films with an anti-hero protagonist in the Hindi film industry, Inspector Karan is used as a foil for the anti-hero



faithful to Shakespeare's script, but emerges as a weaker character: later in the film he flees to Guddu leaving his wife and child behind. However, as in the play, it is Boti in the final sequence of the film who kills Maqbool and avenges the death of his wife and child, as well as his father.

If we are to examine how Bhardwaj manages to embed his Shakespeare source in the Mumbai underworld, however, we must turn to the character of Nimmi/Lady Macbeth. The most critical change that has been made to the play script for the purposes of relocating it to the Mumbai gang land is the portrayal of Nimmi as Jehangir's beautiful young mistress and the object of Maqbool's desires and ambitions. 'Macbeth killed for the crown,' says Abbas Tyrewala, co-writer of *Maqbool*. 'A position in the underworld is not as big as the crown. So we make Lady Macbeth the crown.'<sup>304</sup> *Macbeth* has been interpreted as a Christian tragedy by many critics; French novelist Victor Hugo, for instance, compares the murder of Duncan to the Fall: 'Macbeth has a wife whom the chronicle calls Gruoch. This Eve tempts this Adam. Once Macbeth has taken the first bite, he is lost. The first thing that Adam produces with Eve is Cain; the first thing that Macbeth accomplishes with Gruoch is murder'.<sup>305</sup> Georgianna Ziegler traces the association of the Macbeth story to the Temptation and Fall to the line drawings of Kenny Meadows that were used to illustrate several editions of Shakespeare's plays from the 1840s onward. Ziegler draws attention to the illustration on the half title page to *Macbeth* which depicts two snakes completely entwined in a circle around the blood-dripping word 'Macbeth',

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protagonist Ajay Sharma. *Khalnayak* (Villain, 1993) similarly contrasts the anti-hero protagonist Ballu with Inspector Ram.

<sup>304</sup> Chandrima S. Bhattacharya, *Bollywood Discovers Macbeth- Shakespeare's Tragic Hero Lands in Mumbai's Underworld*, [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040111/asp/frontpage/story\\_2774803.asp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040111/asp/frontpage/story_2774803.asp) edn, (Sunday, January 11, 2004).

<sup>305</sup> Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, trans. Melville B. Anderson (Chicago: McClurg, 1887).

‘their fierce heads crowned and made to look like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’.<sup>306</sup>

This depiction of Lady Macbeth as a serpentine temptress was a popular one in the nineteenth century and was reproduced in art and stage craft over the years. The most famous of these reproductions was perhaps the blue-green dress Alice Comyns-Carr designed for Ellen Terry in Henry Irving’s 1888 production where beetle wings were sown over the fabric to give it a scale-like appearance meant to convey the impression of ‘soft chain armour’. In *Maqbool*, thus, it is not ambition alone that drives Maqbool to kill Jehangir, therefore, but the added incentive of a seductive woman - the Eve-serpent figure Ziegler examines - an interpretation of Lady Macbeth that is highlighted in Nimmi.<sup>307</sup>

Nimmi is a departure from Lady Macbeth’s character, role and motivation in *Macbeth*. Like Lady Macbeth, her ambition is centred on the man she loves; she does not want the ‘crown’ for herself. She wants the man she loves to achieve all that he is capable of, by catching ‘the nearest way’ (1.5, 17). Lady Macbeth, however, was married to Macbeth; Nimmi is not. If Lady Macbeth was Macbeth’s ‘dearest partner’ (1.5, 10) and thus knew her position would also rise with that of her husband’s, then Nimmi, mistress to Jehangir on the verge of being replaced by a younger woman, sees Maqbool as the means to secure her own position. Her desperation is reminiscent of Gruach’s need to escape her confinement to Conan (with the aid of the King’s messenger Macbeth) in Gordon Bottomley’s play *Gruach* (1918, published 1921) where Bottomley observes that her escape from the claustrophobic life Conan stands for ‘represents a commitment to nothing less than life itself’.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Georgianna Ziegler, ‘Accommodating the Virago: Nineteenth-Century Representation of Lady Macbeth’, in *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, ed. by Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (Routledge, 1999), p 127.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, p 128.

<sup>308</sup> William Carroll, ‘The Fiendlike Queen: Recuperating Lady Macbeth in Contemporary Adaptations of *Macbeth*’, *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, 8 (2013), p 4.

Unlike the female leads of popular Indian gangster films, Nimmi is not a common prostitute; however, she shares their desperation and marginalization. For Nimmi, getting Jehangir out of the way translates into survival with the added advantage of a life with the man she loves - Maqbool. In a departure from the Hindi film convention for primary female protagonists who are fallen women in films such as *Chandni Bar* (2001) or *Chameli* (2004), Nimmi, appears to have chosen to become Jehangir's mistress out of free will.<sup>309</sup> This is implied in the scene when she wants to visit the *dargah* [mosque] towards the beginning of the movie, and later when she forces Maqbool to choose between her and Abbaji. She had used Jehangir as a means to an end too once - of becoming a heroine in Bollywood - as is brought to our attention early on in the film.<sup>310</sup> This kind of a starkly manipulative female lead is rare in mainstream Hindi films and the heavy influence of Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985) and *Throne of Blood* is apparent through the characterisation of Nimmi as I have discussed above.

The changed dynamic between the Macbeths is important to understand Maqbool's motivations as well. Tony Howard asserts: 'Adaptations of *Macbeth* in recent years which choose to depict Macbeth as a gangster take away all sense of sanctity that is a big part of the play'.<sup>311</sup> There is no king in these gangster films, only a kingpin; no one 'rules' by birth right and everyone is equally corrupt.

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<sup>309</sup> Tabu's role in *Maqbool* is an extension of her role in *Chandni Bar* (2001) directed by Madhur Bhandarkar, in which she also plays a victim of the underworld. She is forced to work as a dancer in a bar by her uncle, who later rapes her. In a plot development similar to *Maqbool*, she is saved by a gangster Potiya Sawant, who kills her uncle in revenge and marries her.

<sup>310</sup> This is an example of art imitating life. Several starlets and well-known Hindi film actresses such as Mandakini and Monica Bedi have close connections to the underworld. For further details on the relationship between Hindi film actresses and the underworld see The Times of India, *Gangster Girlfriends Walk the Edge*, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2005-11-13/india/27832094\\_1\\_gangster-girlfriends-dawood](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2005-11-13/india/27832094_1_gangster-girlfriends-dawood), (13 November, 2005) [accessed 28 March, 2013].

<sup>311</sup> Tony Howard, *Filming Shakespeare's Magic: Macbeth on Six Continents and Prospero in England*, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2012, British Museum.

Regicide, one of the biggest themes of the play, has no place in such adaptations. I would argue that Bhardwaj finds a creative opportunity in this failure by replacing the notion of regicide with that of patricide. There are repeated references to Maqbool having been brought up like a son by ‘Abbaji’ (Urdu for father); Jehangir is universally addressed as Abbaji in the film, including by the policemen and politicians. In a resonant echo of Lady Macbeth’s ‘Had he not resembled/ My father as he slept, I had done’t’ (2.2, 13-14), Nimmi expresses disgust at having to sleep with a man old enough to be her father in a sequence when she is trying to persuade Maqbool to betray Jehangir. In response Maqbool points out that Jehangir *is* his father. When he hands over the ‘fiefdom’ of Bollywood to Maqbool, Jehangir tells him to go and make his father proud. Murdering Jehangir becomes, for Maqbool therefore, not about taking out obstacles in his path but about killing his father to achieve his goals and it is Bhardwaj’s creativity as an adaptor, as I will argue in the next few paragraphs, that he manages not to alienate the audience with Maqbool’s apparent lack of scruples and incestuous motivations.

There is a further cultural resonance for Abbaji’s full name; Jehangir Khan-conjures up a very specific feudal history of sons rebelling against fathers from the Mughal period. Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir (30 August 1569 – 28 October 1627) was the fourth Mughal Emperor of India from 1605 until his death in 1627. Despite being declared successor to his father at an early age, he revolted in 1599 while Emperor Akbar was engaged in the Deccan. Jahangir was defeated, but ultimately succeeded his father as Emperor in 1605. The first year of Jahangir’s reign saw a rebellion organized by his eldest son Khusraw. The rebellion was soon put down; Khusraw was brought before his father in chains and blinded as a punishment. In 1622, he was killed on the orders of Prince Khurram, later known as

Emperor Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan, in turn, was confined in 1658 by his son Emperor Aurangzeb in Agra Fort until his death in 1666.<sup>312</sup> In the very name of the central character therefore, Bhardwaj has brought to mind this cycle of violence against fathers and kings to secure the inheritance of the throne. When we find out that Jehangir too had engineered the murder of his predecessor, there is a sense of inevitability to the murders of both Jehangir and Maqbool which is more cynical and more menacing than the cyclicity of violence suggested at the end of Polanski's *Macbeth*.

Maqbool is also, consequently, a deviation from *Macbeth*; his ambition is not so much securing his place as leader of the gang, but 'rescuing' Nimmi, which is another common trope of Hindi films. He is increasingly haunted by his 'cursed thoughts' (2.1, 8) of Jehangir and Nimmi in the first part of the film when he imagines them in bed together. Events conspire to make him realise that his only way to obtain her is to kill Jehangir and take his place within the gang. There is a brief flash of regret over his actions reminiscent of the lines 'This even-handed justice/ Commends th'ingredience of our poisoned chalice/ To our own lips' (1.7, 10-12) in the scene when he brings Nimmi home from the hospital towards the end of the film and sees a vision of all the people he has murdered as they were in happier times. This scene is comparable to Richard's haunting before the Battle of Bosworth Field, by the ghosts of those he has killed.<sup>313</sup> Indeed, the appearance of the ghosts from the past foreshadows Maqbool's death, as it had Richard's. Maqbool recognises at this point that it is all unravelling; his sense of hopelessness and defeat is reinforced when he realises that Nimmi has gone mad as he watches her frantically

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<sup>312</sup> Vidya D. Mahajan, *The Muslim Rule in India* (Delhi: Ghand, 1962).

<sup>313</sup> Act 5, scene 3, Jowett, John and William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, New ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

scrub the walls to rid them of Jehangir's blood, while slowly dying a painful death from a child 'untimely ripped' (5.8) from her womb. As a gangster, it can be assumed that he is immune to killing in order to get his way and he cannot suffer from the pangs of conscience. Maqbool, thus, unlike Macbeth, does not suffer in his conscience for murdering his foster father or his best friend; he has already reasoned with himself that Nimmi is worth killing his foster family for. This is what sets Maqbool apart from other gangster protagonists of his time: few Hindi film anti-heroes have been so single-mindedly ruthless without the justification of revenge. Gangster protagonists with principles and scruples are not uncommon in Hindi films, be it Daya from *Gangster* (2006), Vijay Deenanath Chauhan of *Agneepath* (1990), Satya from *Satya*, or Sultan Mirza from *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* (2010). Maqbool, however, fails to come across as a gangster with integrity, except in his love for Nimmi. In this one respect, he is completely unlike gangsters portrayed both in Hollywood and the Hindi film industry who have wives and mistresses and are incapable of being faithful and monogamous. It is only in this respect, I would argue, that he is very much like Shakespeare's Macbeth, devoted to his wife. In fact, unlike in the play where the Macbeths gradually drift apart, in the film, while the entire business is falling apart, Maqbool's sole focus is on Nimmi, and this is what leads to his downfall in the end. Bhardwaj, therefore, uses Shakespeare's depiction of Macbeth to create a new kind of Hindi film hero with Maqbool. Maqbool retains our sympathy till the end despite us hearing about and witnessing his many cruelties; his death at the end is tragic - there is no sense of victory or satisfaction when he dies.

Another way in which Bhardwaj's *Macbeth* is distinct from other adaptations is the director's decision to show Maqbool killing Jehangir. In mainstream Hindi films, all important deaths which move the narrative forward are usually shown on

screen. Indeed, it is a generic convention that if the audience is told that a character is dead and is not shown a dead body, the character may return later in the narrative.<sup>314</sup> Bhardwaj, therefore, had to show the murder of Jehangir on screen. He had to show the hero rescuing the heroine in order to justify him killing his foster father. This necessity also helps Bhardwaj to heighten the tension of the scene. The dramatic tension of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* relies in the suspense of planning, on the linguistic game-playing between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. As Crowl remarks: 'Shakespeare wrote for an audience that was intoxicated by language. The crowds who flowed over the London Bridge and into the Rose and the Globe theatres on an Elizabethan summer's afternoon came to hear even more than to see: they were more audience than spectators, in the root sense of the words'. The tension is strung out over the rapid-fire dialogue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Act 2 scene 2 (15):

MACBETH

I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH

I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
Did not you speak?

MACBETH

When?

LADY MACBETH

Now.

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<sup>314</sup> This convention is exploited in *Bol Radha Bol* (1992) where the protagonist Kishen comes home to find that his mother's funeral is in process and that his double has stolen his identity. Later, the mother, who is not dead but hidden away by the imposter as insurance is able to identify the real Kishen. Films such as *Deewana* (1992), *Imtihaan* (1994), *Mohabbat* (1997) and *Pyar Koi Khel Nahin* (1999) also use this convention: the heroine's first husband/love is presumed dead but later reappears to cause complications and bring about the ultimate resolution either by dying for real (as in *Deewana* and *Imtihaan*) or reuniting with their loves. It was also used in *Krrish* (2006), where the movie begins with the audience being informed about the death of the protagonist's father which is why Krrish must keep his secret powers hidden to avoid unscrupulous people from misusing them. Towards the end we realise that Krrish's father is not dead after all.

MACBETH  
As I descended?

LADY MACBETH  
Ay.

MACBETH  
Hark!

Bhardwaj found a creative way to transpose this tension on to the medium of film using the cinematography techniques of Noir film. Kurosawa achieves dramatic tension in this scene, for instance, by using the contrast of stillness and movement and the shrill sounds of flute music. The murder in *Throne of Blood* is nevertheless committed off-stage. In *Maqbool*, suspense is built up in the murder scene by the non-diegetic sounds of festival drums and the faint bleating of the goats being led to sacrifice from a previous scene. The flickering light makes it difficult for the audience to decipher whether the murder is happening or whether Maqbool is thinking about it, planning it in his mind while he agonises over thoughts of Nimmi in bed with Jehangir. Nimmi and Maqbool behave in the same way as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in this scene. Nimmi is cold hearted, rational and a careful planner; Maqbool is pulled in two directions but chooses to follow Nimmi's lead. They do not finalise a plan verbally on screen but seem to work harmoniously together, complementing each other's movements effortlessly, almost like a choreographed dance. When Jehangir's blood spurts onto Nimmi's face and the bright red blood suddenly breaks through the mist-like flickering black and white frame, the audience realises that the murder is happening. Then the murdered man opens his eyes and reaches out, bringing to life the horror that Macbeth feels: 'I am afraid to think what I have done/ Look on't again, I dare not' (2.2, 50-51). Nimmi's takes over after Maqbool leaves the room like Lady Macbeth returning to the dead man's chamber to 'gild the faces of the grooms' (2.2, 56) and her posture when we see her through the



mosquito net sitting in bed holding the gun out at the end of the scene, reminds us of her steely determination and courage when Lady Macbeth refuses to let Macbeth surrender to his feelings of guilt and shame. Bhardwaj, therefore, manages to successfully draw out the tension through the length of the scene despite the complete lack of dialogue.

The supernatural element in *Macbeth* has been deemphasized in *Maqbool*, without completely demystifying the events. Fate and prophesy still have a part to play in this modern world as I will discuss below. Banquo's death, however, is a very short scene in *Maqbool*. When Kaka's body is brought in during the funeral rites of Abbaji, Maqbool leans in to stroke the dead man's head in a show of sadness. In a deliberate echo of Jehangir's murder scene, suddenly, Kaka's eyes open, like Jehangir's, but this time Maqbool is imagining it. It is left to Nimmi to soothe the agitated Maqbool and reassure him that Kaka is indeed dead, but – despite apparent agreement that Guddu's flight means that he is responsible for his father's death - Maqbool's 'flaws and starts' (3.4, 63) leads to suspicion among the troops. Notwithstanding the short length of the scene, the impact is enormous. This is the only time we see Maqbool's feelings of guilt manifested as fear. He is reliving the horror of Abbaji opening his eyes and seeing him with the gun in his hand. He is beginning to lose control. We see Maqbool unravelling just as Macbeth does in the banquet scene. Shortly we will hear of Nimmi being pregnant, which is the beginning of the end for Maqbool.

The witches in *Macbeth* have been dealt with imaginatively in adaptations. In *Throne of Blood*, the witch is an 'evil spirit' with the ability to foretell the future, change shape and obstruct people in their journey. In *Joe Macbeth*, they are turned into a fortune-telling hot chestnut seller and in *Men of Respect* they are turned into

occultist groupies. Trivedi argues that the most brilliant stroke in the transposition of a medieval Scottish *Macbeth* to present day Mumbai, however, is the recasting of the witches as a pair of fortune-telling, manipulative cops.<sup>315</sup> This is also the first time that the witches have been imagined as unquestionably male; in the many adaptations of *Macbeth* in gangland situations the witches have remained female. Finding a plausible parallel for the supernatural in the contemporary world was a challenge for Bhardwaj.<sup>316</sup> There was a risk of modernizing the witches too much and losing their mystery and menace. The prophesying astrologer, though, is a familiar figure in India. The University Grants Commission and the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government decided to introduce '*Jyotir Vigyan*' [Vedic astrology] as a discipline of study in Indian universities, saying that 'vedic astrology is not only one of the main subjects of our traditional and classical knowledge but this is the discipline, which lets us know the events happening in human life and in universe on time scale.'<sup>317</sup> Though astrology is usually considered a part of Hindu mysticism, many Indians believe in astrology and do not conflate it religious beliefs; indeed, it is frequently referred to as a 'science' in India.<sup>318</sup> Astrological charts are drawn up at birth and consulted for important life events such as marriages and job interviews. In relocating the witches as two corrupt policemen (a common feature of Hindi film dealing with crime) - Inspectors Pandit and Purohit who compulsively draw horoscopes and foretell the future using everyday materials on any available surface - Bhardwaj and Tyrewala, the scriptwriters, naturalize and

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<sup>315</sup> Trivedi, "'Filmi' Shakespeare", p 148-158.

<sup>316</sup> *Today Othello, Tomorrow Hamlet?*.

<sup>317</sup> TNN, 'Supreme Court Questions 'Jyotir Vigyan'', *The Times of India*, (3 September, 2001)

<<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Supreme-Court-questions-Jyotir-Vigyan/articleshow/1843762777.cms?referral=PM>> [accessed 2 March, 2016].

<sup>318</sup> Priya Shetty, *Indian Court Considers Astrology a Science*, *Newscientist*, (4 February, 2011)

<<https://www.newscientist.com/blogs/shortsharpscience/2011/02/astrology-is-science---in-indi.html>> [accessed 15 January, 2016].

make believable the unnatural and the supernatural.<sup>319</sup> As the corrupt, inept, manipulative cops, they are akin to cops in every Hindi film. As cunning collaborators of the mobsters and simultaneous upholders of the law they reflect the police in India and refer to their real involvement in arranging encounters or helping criminals as evidenced by newspaper reports every day. In the most creative act of transposition, though, 'they acquire shades of the Shakespearean wise fools and take on some of the critiquing and ribald function of the Porter when they are caught by the camera urinating in unison into the night rain off the first-floor balcony!'<sup>320</sup> It is important to remember, however, that the 'wise fool' character is not uncommon to Indian film. Actors like Raj Kapoor, Mehmood, Kader Khan and Johnny Lever have played that role over the years to great effect. Character actors like Johnny Walker (a.k.a. Badruddin Jamaluddin Kazi) and Johnny Lever have made their careers out of playing the 'wise fool'. Bhardwaj's creativity was in taking that existing popular character and integrating it to the character of the witch in *Macbeth* to create a modern-day equivalent.

The 'equivocation' of the witches is also cleverly depicted in the film. Shakespeare offers us compelling ambiguity in the 'weird sisters' of *Macbeth*. They 'look not like th'inhabitants o'th' earth' - women with beards who 'vanish' like bubbles (1.3). Different interpretations have been made about the role of the witches in the play. Do they actively try to manipulate destinies as suggested in Welles' *Macbeth* (1948) and *Throne of Blood*? Or are they like Polanski's witches who do not seem to have any active supernatural abilities other than to see into the future?

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<sup>319</sup> 'Pandit' and 'Purohit' mean 'wise man' and 'priest' in Hindi. Priests sometimes double as astrologers in Indian society and astrologers are usually known as holy men or wise men. Thus, there is an intermixing of religion and witchcraft indicated here which is an accepted facet of Indian society and culture.

<sup>320</sup> Trivedi, "'Filmi' Shakespeare", p 151.

Do they stir up the evil in Macbeth or do they merely encourage him to act on the evil that is already within him? The pair in *Maqbool* promise much but deliver little. Like the ‘juggling fiends’ (5.7, 49) they are accused by Macbeth of being, they try to chase, encounter and question, but actually let off prisoners and fail to make them speak. They are co-conspirators with Jehangir’s gang, aiding and abetting the gang members, and manipulating events. Moreover, they justify all their actions by reiterating their philosophy throughout the film: ‘*Shakti ka santulan bahut zaroori hai sansaar mein, aag ke liye paani ka darr bane rehna chahiye.*’ [Cosmic balance is imperative. Fire must always fear water.] As they explain to their superior officer Devsere, they are letting the gangs do their jobs and fight it out among themselves and taking advantage of the situation for their own benefit.

Trivedi suggests that the ambiguities of the text are extended in the film, that we are not certain whether the witches are manipulating fate or merely benefiting from it.<sup>321</sup> Yet to me it is obvious that Bhardwaj deliberately shows the witches playing an active role in *Maqbool*. For instance, it is when Pandit tells Maqbool that Jehangir had killed his predecessor that Maqbool is finally convinced into killing Jehangir. It is also Pandit and Purohit who subtly and individually imply to the other gang members that Maqbool has killed Jehangir for Nimmi. The duo continues to show support to Maqbool after Jehangir’s murder and yet help Guddu and Boti in their plot to defeat Maqbool. They even help Maqbool escape Devsere in the last sequence of the film and drive him to the hospital where Boti kills him. Furthermore, their reiterated emphasis on ‘cosmic balance’ has a special significance. Maqbool is compared to fire in the scene where Jehangir rebukes him for wanting to kill Devsere despite him being removed from office already: ‘*Le maar mujhe! Maar! Teri Aag to*

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<sup>321</sup> Trivedi, *Filmi Shakespeare*, p 149.

*bujhe Miyan. Warna is aaj mein hum sab jalke raakh ho jayenge!* [Come hit me! Hit me! Maybe that will cool your fire. Otherwise we'll all be turned to ashes in this fire!] It is the *dariya* [sea] coming to his home thereafter that is his downfall, like Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane was *Macbeth*'s – the sea that Pandit predicts will cause *Maqbool*'s downfall. Another telling scene is the one where after the chain of murder has been set off, Pandit warns Purohit not to eat Saturn when he finds him picking over an astrological chart constructed of sweets since Saturn eats people. 'Who does Saturn want to eat?' asks Purohit, chewing on a piece of the chart. Pandit replies, smiling, 'Who do you want eaten?' implying, therefore, a certain amount of control over the destinies of the other players.<sup>322</sup> There is thus sufficient evidence, I think, to suggest that Bhardwaj intends for the policemen to be agents of fate; they are consciously manipulating events to maintain cosmic balance.

What further delights the academics and the audience members familiar with the text of *Macbeth* are the several intelligent and sometimes understated cinematic visualizations of the poetic images of the play that occur frequently in the film which I will now identify for a closer examination. Bhardwaj has tried to underplay the influence of *Macbeth* on *Maqbool* as I have mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. He clearly states that *Maqbool* 'is not meant for Shakespeare scholars'.<sup>323</sup> It is a 'loose adaptation'.<sup>324</sup> 'My interpretation of Shakespeare is not text-bookish', he says. 'I have tried to be true to the play's spirit rather than the original text'.<sup>325</sup> Mark

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<sup>322</sup> In *Omkaara*, Langda/Iago manipulates his victims more actively and invites more explicit comparison to Shani/Saturn, as I will discuss in my next chapter.

<sup>323</sup> Pais, *Maqbool is Not Meant for Shakespearean Scholars*.

<sup>324</sup> See interviews: Vijay Singh, *Maqbool is Not an Underworld Story*, <http://www.rediff.com/movies/2004/jan/29vishal.htm>, (29 January, 2004) [accessed 15 December, 2012].

<sup>325</sup> Subhash K. Jha, *A Class Act*, <http://archive.deccanherald.com/Deccanherald/feb152004/enter4.asp>, (15 February, 2004) [accessed 20 February, 2006].

Thornton Burnett observed, nevertheless, that ‘throughout his pursuit of filmic conceits, Bhardwaj shows himself as both sensitive to his Shakespearean sources and delighting in the adaptation process’.<sup>326</sup> Some of these references to the text are obvious and noticeable such as the dagger scene in *Macbeth* which has been translated into the goats’ blood scene in keeping with the plot and situation in *Maqbool*. The goats’ blood could also be read as a reference to the ancient Greek root of the word ‘tragedy’ itself; goat song referring to the sacrifices which took place at Drama festivals. Bhardwaj was preoccupied with making a film about great human conflict and tragedies (a rare form of cinema in The Hindi film industry) are defined as a form of drama based on human suffering that invokes in its audience an accompanying catharsis or pleasure in the viewing.<sup>327</sup>

Nimmi’s resemblance to Lady Macbeth is also built up through several allusions to Shakespeare’s text. The sequence that ends with Nimmi’s ultimatum to Maqbool: ‘*Kisi ek ko to marna hoga tumhe – hum, ya Jehangir*’ [You have to kill one of us – me, or Jehangir] begins with her trying to play on his sympathies and use the knowledge of his desire for her. Jehangir is consorting with a new mistress and Nimmi has nowhere to go when he leaves her. Her family will not accept her, she claims, as they know her to be the mistress of Jehangir Khan, infamous underworld don and a man old enough to be her father. Her only option is to die. The mastery with which she manipulates Maqbool is reminiscent of 1.7 where Lady Macbeth

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<sup>326</sup> Mark T. Burnett, *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p 58.

<sup>327</sup> See Bhardwaj’s comments on how he came to choose *Macbeth* for adaptation in the interview Arthur J. Pais, *Maqbool is Not Meant for Shakespearean Scholars*, and Chandrima S. Bhattacharya, *Bollywood Discovers Macbeth- Shakespeare’s Tragic Hero Lands in Mumbai’s Underworld*, [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040111/asp/frontpage/story\\_2774803.asp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040111/asp/frontpage/story_2774803.asp), (11 January, 2004) [accessed 15 Oct, 2012]. Hindi films with tragic endings are generally not well received by audiences, especially love stories. See Mansoor Khan’s interview where he talks about the risk he took when he decided to change the happy ending of *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988) to a tragic ending.

berates Macbeth for not taking what he desires like a man and gives him an ultimatum: 'From this time, / Such I account thy love' (1.7, 38-39).

The restlessness in nature described in Shakespeare's text on the night of Duncan's murder is important in building the tension before and during the murder. I have already described how Bhardwaj translates the tension evoked by the verbal exchange between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth before and after the murder on to film. There are other textual references to the disturbance in nature on the night of Duncan's murder – there is unseasonal rain on the night Jehangir is murdered. Pandit predicts the rain despite clear skies and it is just when Maqbool tells Nimmi that he has decided to take up her ultimatum and kill Jehangir that the downpour begins. Lennox's ruminations on the 'unruly night' (2.3, 55) and his declaration: 'My young remembrance cannot parallel/ A fellow to it' (2.3, 64) is almost exactly echoed by Badi Bi who comments on the odd weather and says: '*Kaisi ajeeb raat hain sasuri! Yeh baarish, yeh mausam. Sattar saal mein pehli baar!*' [What a strange night it is! This unseasonal rain, this stormy weather. The first time in my seventy years!]

The metaphor of blood is repeated enough times in *Macbeth* for the imagery to be very vivid – 'What bloody man is that?' (1.2, 1), '...make thick my blood' (1.5, 42), '...on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,/ Which was not so before' (2.1, 47), 'It is the bloody business which informs/ Thus to mine eyes' (2.1, 49), 'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/ Clean from my hand?' (2.2, 59), 'There's blood on thy face' (3.4, 13), 'It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood' (3.4, 125), 'I am in blood/Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,/Returning were as tedious as go o'er' (3.4, 137), 'Be bloody, bold and resolute' (4.1, 93), 'Yet who would have thought the old man/to have had so much blood in him' (5.1, 36), 'Here's the smell of the blood still- all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little

hand' (5.1, 48), 'my soul is too much charged/ With blood of thine already' (5.7, 33). This blood metaphor is used repeatedly in *Maqbool* as well, not only in the ways one would expect in a film about the underworld, but also in ways similar to Shakespeare's use of it. *Maqbool* hallucinates of blood on the floor on the night of Jehangir's murder; Nimmi is splashed with Jehangir's blood when *Maqbool* shoots him. Later she desperately tries to wash the blood off her face, and off the walls and sheets like Lady *Macbeth* trying to get the smell of blood out of her hands as her madness reaches its peak. The blood metaphor is used most tellingly in the opening sequence of the film: the movie begins with Purohit executing a gang member and the splashing of blood all over the horoscope of Mumbai that Pandit has drawn on the window of the police van. Pandit rebukes him saying: '*Dekh ke mara kar. Saari Mumbai khoon se bhar di*' [Watch where you shoot! You've covered the whole of Mumbai in blood.] This dialogue is especially significant in terms of the role of the supernatural in the film I have discussed previously, when we realise in this first scene that Pandit and Purohit are the modern day Indian parallels of the witches- they are the ones manipulating the bloodshed that occurs throughout the film.

The clothing imagery in *Macbeth* first discussed by Caroline Spurgeon was extended by critics like Cleanth Brooks and Kenneth Muir.<sup>328</sup> In *Maqbool*, this imagery finds expression in one scene only - when *Maqbool* has taken over the gang and tries to approach Kaka who has broken away from the gang due to his suspicions about *Maqbool*'s role in Jehangir's murder. In a departure from his usual shirt and trousers, *Maqbool* emerges from the car dressed in a stylish suit wearing sunglasses,

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<sup>328</sup> See Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, 'Shakespeare's Imagery, and what it Tells Us,' in (Cambridge [Eng.: Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 324-327, Cleanth Brooks, 'The Well Wrought Urn', in *Macbeth: Critical Essays*, ed. by S. Schoenbaum, 1135 vols (New York: Garland Pub, 1991), pp. 17-19 and Kenneth Muir, 'Image and Symbol in *Macbeth*', in *Shakespeare the Professional, and Related Studies*. (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 137-151.



signifying a change of circumstances that is a common trope in Hindi cinema. Bhardwaj, therefore, acknowledges this reference, but chooses not to expand on it. *Macbeth*'s reference to Fleance as a snake, however, has been translated almost verbatim in *Maqbool*, though the dialogue is given to Nimmi. *Macbeth* speaks of Fleance: 'There the grown serpent lies, the worm that's fled/ Hath nature that in time will venom breed' (3.4, 29-30). This is echoed by Nimmi in the scene when she warns *Maqbool* against encouraging Sameera's engagement to Guddu after Jehangir's death: '*Sapole ko dudh mat pila Miyan. Daant nikalthehi Tujhe dasega sabse pehle.*' [Don't feed the hatchling milk, Miyan. When his teeth come out you'll be the first one he bites.]

According to film critic Jerry Blumenthal, Kurosawa's powerful manipulation of visual cues in *Throne of Blood* proved that the film, instead of being a pale imitation of *Macbeth*, was most of all an 'autonomous work of art'. 'Where Shakespeare comes into the film at all,' he says, 'his presence is only that of a scenarist whose vision is consonant with Kurosawa's own as the original poetic language is replaced by the rich visual imagery so central to the experience of cinema.'<sup>329</sup> Bhardwaj does something similar with *Maqbool* and succeeds in creating an equally autonomous work of art by translating Shakespeare's words into Indian images and Shakespeare's lords into Indian gangsters. There are several subtle and easily missed references to the text throughout the film which for me cemented the idea that Bhardwaj had engaged with the text in much more depth than many Anglophone adaptors in the post-postcolonial period – these demonstrate how cinematic citations can replace textual and performance citations in modern filmed

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<sup>329</sup> Erin Suzuki, 'Lost in Translation: Reconsidering Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 34 (2006), pp 93.

adaptations of Shakespeare. *Macbeth* begins with the setting of the scene: 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' (1.1, 11) and the introduction of the witches. *Maqbool* similarly begins with showing how Mumbai is being ruled by gangsters and how the policemen who should be upholding the law are the ones perpetuating this state of disorder. Moreover, in the scene when Nimmi and Maqbool are on their way to the *dargah* and she is first seen planting the seeds of treachery in his mind, we hear a raucous chattering of crows and other birds echoing Lady Macbeth's comment: 'The raven himself is hoarse/ That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan/ Under my battlements.' (1.5, 38) As Trivedi notes: 'The cawing of crows, in fact, becomes a choric comment on any talk of murder: it accompanies the new ACP Devsare's questioning of the inspectors on his first day; it forms the background of Abbuji's questioning of the dead Mughal's son Boti; it chimes in with Nimmi's aggressive stroking of the fires of ambition and eroticism in *Maqbool*'.<sup>330</sup> The atmosphere of fear and terror unleashed by *Macbeth* reflected in the line: 'each new morn,/ New widows howl, new orphans cry' (4.3, 5-6) finds a poignant echo in Sameera's wild scream of anguish when Maqbool pretends to mourn the death of their father and console her about Guddu, and promises to find her a better husband. The shriek spills into the next scene, when we see Nimmi get out of bed to try to wipe the phantom blood off her face, thereby linking Nimmi's manifestations of guilt with Lady Macbeth's in her sleep walking scene.

In the play, the witches' cauldron appears twice, reminding us both times of the line: 'Double, double, toil and trouble, / Fire burn and cauldron bubble' (4.1, 10-11) as well as the theme of feasting and murder in *Macbeth*. When Duncan is a guest at Macbeth's house, the Macbeths plot his murder while the guests are feasting. The

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<sup>330</sup>Trivedi, "'Filmi' Shakespeare", p 152.

banquet scene (3.4) is interrupted by the ghost of Banquo and Macbeth disrupts the festive atmosphere 'with most admired disorder' (3.4, 110). We first see the cauldron in *Maqbool* as one of the vessels in which Maqbool is preparing the *biryani* for Sameera's engagement celebrations. When Jehangir says: '*Kitni mohabbat se paka raha hain yaar. Jee karta hain apna gosht pakwa doon teri biryani mein*' [You are cooking with such love that I wish I could add my meat to your biryani] and embraces Maqbool the first note of disharmony is struck. Jehangir is expecting a feast; Maqbool and Nimmi are plotting his murder. The second time we see the cauldron in the film, it is in a shadowy corner inside the kebab house where Guddu and Boti are plotting Maqbool's downfall, with the help of Pandit and Purohit.

There are several references to horses in *Macbeth*, in keeping with the feudal setting: 'pity, like a naked new-born babe,/Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed/Upon the sightless couriers of the air'(1.7, 21), 'Duncan's horses - a thing most strange and certain -/Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,/Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,/Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would/ Make war with mankind' (2.4,12), 'I wish your horses swift and sure of foot -/And so I do commend you to their backs'(3.1,38). Kurosawa too uses horses in keeping with the period setting of his film. Horses would be out of place in modern day Mumbai, but here too Bhardwaj finds a plausible equivalent. A recurring image in *Maqbool* is of guns. A natural prop in a gangster setting, it acquires a special significance when Nimmi threateningly uses Maqbool's own gun to get him to confess his love for her like she uses his own dark desires to achieve what she wants. It is also used in the following sequence when their relationship is developed through a song, (a common narrative technique in Hindi films), where he wipes her tears with the barrel of his gun; he is preparing to kill for her. The next time Nimmi suggests

murdering Jehangir, he does not ignore her suggestion. A gun is not only an instrument of death in *Maqbool*: guns are used as symbols of power and of surrender throughout the film and acquire an almost human presence during the course of the movie. The gun is called a 'ghoda' in Hindi gangster colloquialism, which also means horse. I would argue, therefore, with the consistent image of guns in the film, Bhardwaj has successfully and quite inventively translated the horse imagery from *Macbeth* to *Maqbool*, proving that Bhardwaj (and Abbas Tyrewala) have engaged with both the source text and *Throne of Blood* to the point of recreating even the nuances from both sources.

Macbeth's beheading by Macduff is translated quite creatively in *Maqbool* as well. Having already lost Nimmi, Maqbool comes to the hospital to take his son and flee the country. When he arrives there, he sees that the child is cradled in Sameera's arms in a clear cinematic rendition of the line 'pity, like a naked new-born babe' (1.7, 21). Suddenly we see the exhaustion on Maqbool's face, and the fact that he has given up - either because he recognises that the child is not his, or because he realises that at least his child will be safe now. He drops his gun and walks out, as the camera lingers on a tear staining the glass through which Maqbool was looking at the child. As he is walking out of the hospital in a daze, Boti notices him and shoots. The camera pans, then tilts its line of vision to ground level, cuts to a view of the sky above, and then cuts back to a close-up framing Maqbool's head, as if fallen and rolling on the ground. As the viewer looks from the point of view of Maqbool, the camera swivels up to show a clear blue sky, rare in the film, heralding the closing mood of 'the time is free' (5.7, 86).<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> This scene closely replicates the scene at the end of *Léon: The Professional*, Dir. Luc Besson. (Columbia Pictures, 1994), giving us an idea of the kinds of western influences Bhardwaj was experimenting with in this nascent stage of his career as a film maker.

## Conclusion

Before *Maqbool*, not much was written on Shakespeare's influence in the Hindi film industry. In fact, as I have discussed in Chapters One and Two, mainstream Hindi films rarely acknowledged their Shakespearean sources for fear of alienating their audience. Bhardwaj himself was advised to not acknowledge his Shakespearean source at all.<sup>332</sup> He even had to direct the film for free when the producer had doubts about the commercial feasibility of the project.<sup>333</sup> Since *Maqbool*, though, India's relationship with Shakespeare has come a long way as evidenced by the success of *Omkara* in 2006, a film that attracted popular commercial Bollywood stars and gave Bhardwaj access to a big budget before production; post-production, he used his Shakespeare source to market the film as I will discuss in my next chapter. The international careers of the lead actors in *Maqbool* also took off after 2003: Tabu (Nimmi) and Irfan Khan (Maqbool) have even worked on the same international projects such as *The Namesake* (2007) and *Life of Pi* (2012) since then. What began as a risky venture for Bhardwaj, therefore, changed the course of the Hindi film industry as well as the future of Indian Shakespeares on screen.

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<sup>332</sup> Box Office India, "I Proved to the Country that Shakespeare can be Masala..." - Vishal Bhardwaj, (8 April, 2013) [accessed 14 April, 2013].

<sup>333</sup> Subhash K. Jha, *A Class Act*, <http://archive.deccanherald.com/Deccanherald/feb152004/enter4.asp>, (15 February, 2004) [accessed 20 Feb, 2006].

*Omkara* (2006): The Moor of Meerut<sup>334</sup>

*Omkara* (2006) was the first big-budget, full-fledged commercial adaptation of Shakespeare in India, with 'song and dance', as announced in its promos. The film owes its box-office success partially to the runaway popularity of its songs, as well as to its star cast and innovative marketing, as I will demonstrate below.<sup>335</sup> It was an undisputed commercial success abroad, grossing £91,294 in its opening week in the UK and \$789,694 in USA within the first week of release.<sup>336</sup> Grossing over \$16,466,144 worldwide in its total run at the box office, it earned ten times more than its making costs and proved popular in the UK, Australia, South Africa and the United States.<sup>337</sup> Despite its initial lack of commercial success in India, it was an immediate and greater critical success than *Maqbool*, as is demonstrated by the film winning three National Film Awards and seven Filmfare awards.<sup>338</sup> It was also a critical success abroad; it was showcased in the Marché du Film section at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival and was selected to be screened at the Cairo International Film Festival, where Bhardwaj was awarded for Best Artistic Contribution in Cinema of a

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<sup>334</sup>Namrata Joshi, *OMKARA Moor of Meerut*, A Shakespearean Epic Set in Western UP Pushes the Frontiers of Bollywood, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/Moor-Of-Meerut/232205>, (14 August, 2006) [accessed 4 February, 2015].

<sup>335</sup>Susan Gruss in 'Shakespeare in Bollywood? Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkara*', *Semiotic Encounters: Text, Image and Trans-Nation*, (2009), pp 223-238, claims it was a commercial failure, despite being a critical success; her incorrect conclusion is possibly due to reports about the crude language which initially kept away Indian audiences.

<sup>336</sup>IMDb, *Box Office/ Business for Omkara (2006)*, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0488414/business> [accessed 4 February, 2015].

<sup>337</sup>John Milton, '5 Theorising *Omkara*', *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*, 30 (2013), pp 83-98.

<sup>338</sup>IMDb, *Omkara (2006) Awards*, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0488414/awards?ref =tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0488414/awards?ref =tt_awd) [accessed 4 February, 2015].

Director.<sup>339</sup> It went on to receive awards at the Asian Festival of First Films and the Kara Film Festival.<sup>340</sup>

Sir Francis Younghusband, chiefly remembered for his role in the British invasion of Tibet in 1903, ranks *Othello* the most popular play in India: there is a larger number of translations of this play in India than any other. 'Othello is an Oriental figure; he is heroic, and he is a lover. Hence the popularity of the play among Indians.'<sup>341</sup> '*Othello* has consistently been among the most popular of Shakespeare plays in India for students and audiences since the nineteenth century: 'More students probably read *Othello* in the University of Delhi every year than in all British Universities combined', Ania Loomba had written at the end of the 1980s.<sup>342</sup> Students in arts courses have all compulsorily studied Shakespeare during their education, in English or a vernacular language and *Othello* remains popular in colleges and universities. This is true of Delhi University, as well as of other universities in India, such as University of Mumbai, University of Gauhati and Karnataka State Open University, as a survey of current B.A. English syllabi across the various universities of India will prove.<sup>343</sup> *Othello* is also the earliest recorded

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<sup>339</sup> Santa Banta News Network, *Omkara Arrives at Cannes Too*, <http://www.santabanta.com/bollywood/10657/omkara-arrives-at-cannes-too/> (20 May, 2006) [accessed 4 February, 2015].

<sup>340</sup> *Omkara* 'Shines in Cairo and Karachi', <http://www.apunkachoice.com/happenings/20061226-0.html> (26 December 2006) [accessed 4 February, 2015].

<sup>341</sup> Hedley Sutton and Karen Waddel, *Shakespeare in India*, Untold Lives Blog, (2016) <<http://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2016/05/shakespeare-in-india.html>> [accessed 1 May, 2017].

<sup>342</sup> Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester University Press, 1989).

<sup>343</sup> A cursory glance through the Bachelor of Arts English syllabi of various national universities in India revealed *Othello* as either a compulsory or optional part of the curriculum. See, for instance, the course content and syllabus of *Delhi University Department of English B.A. (Hons) English Syllabus*, [http://www.du.ac.in/du/uploads/old-ug-courses/14711\\_BA\\_H\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.du.ac.in/du/uploads/old-ug-courses/14711_BA_H_ENGLISH.pdf) [accessed 4 February, 2015], *University of Mumbai, Syllabus for B.A. English*, <http://www.standrewscollege.ac.in/syllabus/TYBA%20English%20Paper%20IV%2075-25%20pattern.pdf>, [accessed 4 February, 2015], *English Syllabus, University of Gauhati*, [http://gauhati.ac.in/files/download\\_syllabus/form34.pdf](http://gauhati.ac.in/files/download_syllabus/form34.pdf) [accessed 4 February, 2015] and *Karnataka State Open University B.A. English Syllabus*, [http://www.ksoukarnataka.com/uploads/ksou1/02-B\\_A.pdf](http://www.ksoukarnataka.com/uploads/ksou1/02-B_A.pdf) [accessed 4 February, 2015].

Shakespeare play performed in Calcutta, in the week of December 23–30, 1780, at the Calcutta Theatre.<sup>344</sup> The play, therefore, has a long performance history in India, in English medium higher education institutions, as well as in professional theatre, and is familiar to theatre audiences both in the original and in the form of vernacular translations and adaptations.

Though there are no direct influences on *Omkara*, *Othello* has been appropriated at least three times in the 1960s – *Saptapadi* [The seven steps of marriage] (1961), *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) and *Izzat* [Family honour] (1968).<sup>345</sup> *Omkara*, therefore, has a popular film prehistory in India which *Maqbool* lacked. In the coffee table book that the producers published at Cannes, however, Bhardwaj only acknowledges Jayaraj's Malayali *Kaliyattam* (1997) and Royston Abel's English language *In Othello* (2003), both Parallel Cinema interpretations of *Othello* in India, within a global list of adaptations including the 1922 German silent feature film by Dimitri Buchowetzki, Orson Welle's 1952 adaptation, Sergei Yutkevich's 1955 film, Laurence Olivier's 1965 adaptation, Olivier Parker's 1995 interpretation, and Tim Blake Nelson's 2001 updating of the play.<sup>346</sup> The book also includes Cuckor's 1947 'film noir piece' *A Double Life*, Michael Ralph's 1961 'chamber piece' *All Night Long* and the 1974 'Rock Musical adaptation' *Catch My Soul*, thus calculatedly claiming a global lineage for Bhardwaj's adaptation rather than an Indian one. This observation of mine is reinforced by the fact that the marketing of *Omkara* was carefully planned; a marketing consultant, Rahul Nanda, was hired

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<sup>344</sup> Ananda Lal and Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Shakespeare on the Calcutta Stage: A Checklist* (Papyrus, 2001).

<sup>345</sup> *Saptapadi*, Dir. Ajoy Kar, Alochaya Productions, 1961; *Shakespeare Wallah*, Dir. James Ivory, Merchant Ivory Productions, 1965; *Izzat*, Dir. Tatineni Prakash Rao, Pushpa Pictures, 1968.

<sup>346</sup> Kumar Mangat, *Omkara, A Vishal Bhardwaj Adaptation of Shakespeare's Othello* (2006).



before shooting began.<sup>347</sup> In Bollywood, this is an unusual move as, unlike in Hollywood, very little money is usually allocated towards marketing a film. However, in this instance, the producers of the film were reasonably certain that an adaptation of *Othello* 'would have a broad appeal, attracting viewers outside of India'.<sup>348</sup> In previous decades, film makers such as Gulzar and Mansoor Khan had omitted any mention of Shakespeare in their marketing because 'his name could be perceived as a liability at the box office rather than an asset'.<sup>349</sup> Bhardwaj, however, undoubtedly banks on the 'symbolic capital' of the Bard to distinguish his films from other Indian cinema but is unapologetic about their status as 'popular' and 'mainstream', as Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani argue. In a 2013 interview Bhardwaj claims, 'I proved to the country that Shakespeare can be masala...'.<sup>350</sup> Indeed, Shakespeare was, by the time *Omkara* was released in 2006, 'simply a means, a convenient vocabulary, a branded commodity, to proclaim its own self-confidence' and remaking Shakespeare had become a sign of the cosmopolitanism of the Hindi film industry.<sup>351</sup>

*Othello* is a play which 'remains haunted by its own cultural history'; the racially and politically charged subtexts of the play find particular resonance in postcolonial India.<sup>352</sup> In this chapter, therefore, it is necessary to look at the evolution

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<sup>347</sup> Stephen Alter, *Fantasies of a Bollywood Love Thief: Inside the World of Indian Moviemaking* (Harcourt, 2007), p 128. See also, Kaveree Bamzai, *The Persuaders*, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/marketing-bollywood-movie-producers-generate-pre-release-hype/1/180655.html>, (4 September, 2006) [accessed 20 August, 2017].

<sup>348</sup> Alter, p 129.

<sup>349</sup> Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', in *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*, ed. by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (Pearson Longman, 2005), p 285.

<sup>350</sup> Box Office India, "I Proved to the Country that Shakespeare can be Masala..." - Vishal Bhardwaj, <http://boxofficeindia.co.in/i-proved-to-the-country-that-shakespeare-can-be-masala/>, (8 Apr, 2013) [accessed 14 Apr, 2013].

<sup>351</sup> Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani, 'The Global as Local / Othello as Omkara', in *Bollywood Shakespeares*, ed. by Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp 107-123.

<sup>352</sup> Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Polity, 2007), p 123.

of *Othello* adaptations within the framework of the historical periods in which Shakespeare played a role in the progress of Shakespeare adaptations in India and the development of Hindi cinema. I will thus begin by briefly surveying the postcolonial scholarship on one of the earliest productions of *Othello* in India in the Imitation stage - the 1848 production at the Sans Souci Theatre in Calcutta – historically significant for casting ‘a real unpainted nigger Othello’.<sup>353</sup> I will then examine *Saptapadi*, *Shakespeare Wallah* and *Izzat* in the Adaptation and Appropriation stage, focusing specifically on their settings and the issues they espouse through the appropriation of *Othello* in the 1960s. *Saptapadi* is set in colonial Bengal, whereas *Shakespeare Wallah* and *Izzat* are set in post-colonial small towns near Mumbai; this is relevant to my overall narration about the shift from academic Shakespeare for elite Indians to an indigenous popular culture Shakespeare for Indian mass audiences that eventually evolves into a re-creation of Shakespeare for global consumption as practiced by Bhardwaj. The third period I will discuss is the 1990s, another important decade for India due to liberalisation as discussed in Chapter Two and the beginning of postcolonial deconstruction of Shakespeare in India. Poonam Trivedi discusses the ‘decolonization’ of Shakespeare in this period through its performance via traditional Indian folk forms (a tradition begun by Utpal Dutt in the 1960s with his amalgamation of Shakespeare with *jatra*) and draws attention to the development of a minor tradition of adapting Shakespeare in Kathakali in particular.<sup>354</sup> In light of this, I will examine the 1996 *Kathakali Othello* on stage and *Kaliyattam* (1997), the first full length adaptation of *Othello* for the Indian screen. Both these productions were the subject of national and international

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<sup>353</sup> Kironmoy Raha, *Bengali Theatre* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1978), p 13.

<sup>354</sup> Poonam Trivedi, 'Interculturalism Or Indigenisation: Modes of Exchange, Shakespeare East and West', *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in Performance*. (London: Ashgate, 2000), p 83.

scholarship and debate and undoubtedly paved the way for *Omkara* at the turn of the century. Finally, I will demonstrate how Bhardwaj uses the small-town setting, reminiscent of curry Westerns such as *Sholay* (1975), which have become quite popular with multiplex film makers, to continue his discussion of ‘a law-breaking violence that claims for itself the sovereign privilege of law-making violence – the violence of the state’ in *Omkara*.<sup>355</sup> I will examine how the skilful incorporation of generic Bollywood visual codes and narrative devices like the ‘item number’, as well as the extended use of Hindu mythology in character development and references to the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to discuss social issues, helped ease the way for a film that is distinctly atypical of the usual Bollywood escapist fare. As Saif Ali Khan, the actor playing Iago/Langda justifiably observes: ‘It’s not exactly a feel good movie’.<sup>356</sup> I will conclude this chapter by arguing that, if *Maqbool*, still self-conscious about the marginal position of Bollywood in the global cinema space sought validation on the world stage through Shakespeare, *Omkara* is Bollywood’s assertion of its newfound stature at the beginning of the present century.

### **The Imitation Stage: The Sans Souci Production of 1848**

The colonial production that has attracted most attention, was when, in 1848, the racially segregated English theatre, Sans Souci, decided to present Shakespeare’s *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, with the part of Othello being played by a ‘Native Gentleman’, the Bengali actor Baishnab Charan Adhya.<sup>357</sup> Parmita Kapadia

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<sup>355</sup> Supriya Chaudhuri, ‘“What Bloody Man is that?” Macbeth, Maqbool, and Shakespeare in India’, in *The Shakespearean International Yearbook: Volume 12: Special Section, Shakespeare in India* (Ashgate, 2012), p 103.

<sup>356</sup> Lehren TV, *Ajay Devgan Talks about His Film*

*Omkara*, [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9ythp\\_ajay-devgan-talks-about-his-film-om\\_shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9ythp_ajay-devgan-talks-about-his-film-om_shortfilms), (01 September, 2015) [accessed 25 July, 2009].

<sup>357</sup> Raha, p 10.

identifies Adhya's performance as a resistance to colonial supremacy which sought to disrupt power structures.<sup>358</sup> English theatres were an important aspect of English social life as well as an instrument of empire and Sushil Mukherjee, in his history of the theatres of Calcutta, remarks, 'A Bengali youth in an English play in an English theatre catering to a [largely] English audience in...the nineteenth century, is certainly a memorable event in the history of Calcutta's theatres'.<sup>359</sup> James Barry's production and recruitment of a Bengali actor had the support of the English and the Bengali elite and was 'part of a movement in English theatres in Calcutta at the beginning of the nineteenth century toward 'ethnic correctness' of representation'.<sup>360</sup> Sudipto Chatterjee and Jyotsna Singh describe the reviews of the performance as 'a mixture of praise and condescension' but draw attention to the curious lack of comment on the enactment of potential miscegenation on the stage. One explanation for this could be the nineteenth century race theories, which frequently traced the origin of Hindus and Europeans to a common Aryan stock. This made having an Indian play *Othello* less of a transgression from the perspective of the colonisers, than an African playing the part.<sup>361</sup> Similarly, the Indian subjects identified more readily with the Europeans than the black character and *Othello*'s alienation and otherness was not seen as providing a parallel to the situation of the Indian colonised subject, as pointed out by Chatterjee and Singh. Certainly, the complexities governing the conflicting and competing racial discourses within colonial India

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<sup>358</sup> Parmita Kapadia, 'Jatra Shakespeare: Indigenous Indian Theater and the Postcolonial Stage', Eds. Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia. *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*. Aldershot: Ashgate, (2008), p 95.

<sup>359</sup> Sushil K Mukherjee, *The Story of the Calcutta Theatres, 1753-1980* (KP Bagchi, 1982), p 7

<sup>360</sup> Sudipto Chatterjee and Jyotsna G. Singh, *Moor Or Less? the Surveillance of Othello, Calcutta 1848* (1999), p 70.

<sup>361</sup> Peter Robb, *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Oxford University Press, 1995). See also Chatterjee and Singh's summarisation of prevailing debates about racial cranium differentiation in *Moor Or Less? The Surveillance of Othello*.

render Adhya's portrayal of Othello as neither a mimicry of whiteness, nor a clear-cut portrayal of blackness.<sup>362</sup>

The opening performance of Barry's *Othello* on 12<sup>th</sup> August was abruptly aborted due to the opposition of a local military commanding officer 'who refused permission for his men to play extras in the production'.<sup>363</sup> The police were also sent, 'having received military notice to arrest the well-known amateurs should they have attempted to make their appearance'.<sup>364</sup> When the production reopened on 17<sup>th</sup> August, the reviews were, at best, ambivalent ('his delivery was somewhat cramped but... his pronunciation of English was for a Native remarkably good'), providing evidence of the underlying anxiety on the part of the colonisers about the possible cultural and racial contamination of the English stage and society in Calcutta. The *Hurkaru* reviewer points out that in the 'It is the cause, my soul' soliloquy (a scene that is a focal point in two of the three films in the 1960s), the actor had his back turned upon the audience.<sup>365</sup> I interpret this positioning of the Bengali actor as an attempt to ensure that the native Adhya was not seen to publicly hold and kiss Desdemona, played by the English Mrs. Anderson, despite the licence of drama. This conclusion, is substantiated by the fact that when an attempt at a reprisal of the production was made in September 1848, it was immediately 'shot down by the English reviewers' despite the 'thunderous applause' that the production apparently received in August the same year.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Kapadia, 'Jatra Shakespeare: Indigenous Indian Theater and the Postcolonial Stage', p 95.

<sup>363</sup> Chatterjee and Singh, pg 75 referencing Amal Mitra's *Kalkataye Bidesi Rangalay* [Foreign Theatres in Calcutta].

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid*, p 76.

<sup>365</sup> Citations from *The Calcutta Star* and other contemporary English language newspapers such as *The Englishman* and *The Bengal Hurkaru* are from Amal Mitra's *Kolkatay Bidesi Rangalay* [Foreign Theatres in Calcutta].

<sup>366</sup> Chatterjee and Singh, p 78.

Adhya was a contemporary of Ira Aldridge, but unlike the celebrated American African thespian who succeeded in crossing the racial divide, Adhya's short career on the Calcutta stage was fraught with controversies and ambiguities.<sup>367</sup> Nevertheless, as Nandi Bhatia points out, his entry into British theatre enabled the native's entry into the world of colonial theatre which, I would argue, was also the inevitable next step after the 'creation' of a taste for Shakespeare among elite Indian students and the entry of aristocratic Indians to the Calcutta theatres in the wake of the colonial policy of promoting English language and literature in India.<sup>368</sup> Adhya's entry in the colonial theatre, together with the gradual absorption and integration of Shakespearean drama into the local ethos and the social and material structuring of the local theatre companies, which included *Othello* in their repertoire, became moments of transferring the English text to the native context. In future adaptations and appropriations in India, *Othello* became the means of a performance of resistance, whether to colonial supremacy, as in the Sans Souci production, *Saptapadi* and *Shakespeare Wallah*, the supremacy of the colonial elite as in *Izzat*, or the westernised urban elite, as in *Omkara*.

### **The Appropriative Stage: *Saptapadi*, *Shakespeare Wallah* and *Izzat***

Due to the comic structure of *Othello*, and its themes of love and marriage, colonial adaptations of the play frequently focused on gender issues at the cost of issues of race. In *Saptapadi*, playing Othello was not a means of finding a way to articulate the alienation and exploitation of an oppressed people (as it will be in *Izzat*), but of imitating the highest achievements of European civilisation.

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid, p 68.

<sup>368</sup> Nandi Bhatia, 'Different Othello (s) and Contentious Spectators: Changing Responses in India', *Gramma: Journal of Theory and Criticism*, 15 (2007), pp 155-174.

Consequently, the film repeatedly draws upon the pedagogical associations that Shakespeare had both in colonial and postcolonial Bengal, despite being a commercial film. This has been done, as I will discuss, by referencing not only the play text familiar to English medium students, but also international traditions of playing *Othello*, specifically referencing Orson Welles' 1954 film. There is thus already an attempt in this decade to transact with a global Shakespeare, rather than just a colonial Shakespeare. Furthermore, a recent sociological study suggests that Bengal is second only to Punjab in the incidence of mixed-race/mixed-caste marriages.<sup>369</sup> *Othello*'s concerns about racial miscegenation seem particularly appropriate in this part of India and this film, as I will argue, is an important site for the staging of the anxiety and ambivalence this issue was causing to a modern India caught between a love of Shakespeare and a need to assert a national identity removed from her coloniser. Situated as it was at the beginning of the 1960s, a decade which witnessed historic international movements for racial and gender equality, in *Saptapadi* marriage thus becomes a site for interrogating issues of race, nationalism and Indian identity.

*Saptapadi* is a commercial Bengali postcolonial film set in colonial times and is structured around a performance of *Othello* which is used as an exemplar to validate an inter-racial romance between a Hindu Bengali boy and a Christian Anglo-Indian girl.<sup>370</sup> Given the possible apprehensions about inter-caste/inter-faith alliances during the time in India, the female protagonist is half-caste and is thus culturally considered inferior to the Hindu Brahmin male protagonist. Rina is also

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<sup>369</sup> Dipti Singh and Srinivas Goli, *Exploring the Concept of Mixed Marriages in Indian and Selected States: First Time Evidences from Large Scale Survey*, <http://paa2011.princeton.edu/papers/111966>, (2011) [accessed 20 September, 2015].

<sup>370</sup> See Paromita Chakravarti, 'Modernity, Postcoloniality and Othello: The Case of *Saptapadi*', *Remaking Shakespeare: Performance Across Media, Genres, and Cultures*, (2003), pp 39-55 for a more detailed description of the film.

revealed as the illegitimate child of an Indian servant who was raped by her British father, thus making plausible her attraction to Krishnendu and diffusing the tensions of a mixed-race/mixed faith alliance in order to achieve the romantic ending that is essential in popular cinema.<sup>371</sup> The male protagonist, Krishnendu, is depicted as a modern Indian, proud of his culture but not held back by its orthodoxy. The question of race is given prominence at the beginning of the film: Krishnendu literally means 'black moon' in Bengali; it is also one of the names of the dark-skinned Lord Krishna (which will become a recurring motif in all the *Othello* appropriations and adaptations I will take up). When the female protagonist, Rina, calls him a 'darkie', he retorts by saying that all Indians are the sons of Kali, the dark mother goddess of the Hindus. Questions of racism and of colour prejudice are thus problematised as the straightforward dichotomy of black and white cannot be applied in a uniform manner in India, a country which suffers from multiple prejudices of colour, caste, religion as well as race. Racial concerns soon give way to the more pertinent question of religion - when Rina's father asks Krishnendu to convert to Christianity and when Krishnendu's father implores Rina not to make Krishnendu an outcast within his community for marrying a Christian.

Moreover, Krishnendu, has also been deliberately juxtaposed against the Englishman Clayton to highlight his superiority as a character. Krishnendu is a better student, a better sportsman and a better actor, and is frequently shown as not only being confident within his own cultural identity, but also equally able to inhabit the English culture. There are moments in the film when the English characters seem threatened by the superiority of their Bengali counterparts (harking back perhaps to

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<sup>371</sup> This parentage appears to parallel Omi's parentage, though the relationship between his inter-caste parents was apparently consensual.



the anxiety of the colonisers who were to some extent threatened by Adhya's performance as Othello in 1848) and, importantly, some of the angst of the colonised subject is perceptible in these sequences. One example is the football match sequence: Clayton deliberately kicks one of Krishnendu's teammates and takes the ball away from him; Krishnendu notes this, grins, and then goes on to score. When Clayton kicks him a few minutes later, however, Krishnendu responds by elbowing Clayton in the ribs and then uses his superior skills as a player to win the match. Ultimately, however, as Chakravarti points out, 'the asymmetries of race and gender which characterise the play are too disturbing for *Saptapadi*'.<sup>372</sup>

*Saptapadi* cites *Othello* by using cinematic visual and auditory echoes rather than by having characters speak lines from the text. There are repeated references to Welles' film: the enactment of the murder scene is closely based on the American film, for instance, as well as the whistling wind sound played during the performance.<sup>373</sup> This sound is repeated at other key moments of *Saptapadi* as when Krishnendu learns of his mother's death and Rina tries to comfort him. Another quotation can be seen in the shot of Othello's face reflected in profile in a mirror in Welles' film. Krishnendu is similarly reflected in a mirror, sporting a beard very like the one he wore when playing Othello. *Saptapadi* also uses a framing device at the beginning and end of the film like the one in Welles' film. Richard Burt contends that the film 'narrates a transition from postcolonial performance, in which Shakespeare serves as a kind of mimicry, to Shakespeare as international cinema'.<sup>374</sup> This, he argues, is achieved by the performance of the murder scene in *Othello* in

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<sup>372</sup> Chakravarti, p 50.

<sup>373</sup> The direction for the enacted murder sequence has been credited to Utpal Dutt in the title sequence, who also voices Othello's part in the sequence.

<sup>374</sup> Richard Burt, 'All that Remains of Shakespeare in Indian Film', in *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance*, ed. by Dennis Kennedy and Li Lan Yong (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

two separate instances in the film. In the first occasion, Rina is depicted as rehearsing the scene with her English classmate, John Clayton. When she encourages John to put more feeling into it, we hear Krishnendu reciting the lines off-camera, and then see him delivering the lines on his balcony. The second performance of the scene is shot like a film clip within a film, based closely on Orson Welles *Othello* (1954). Most importantly, while Suchitra Sen and Uttam Kumar, the actors playing the protagonists in *Saptapadi*, voice the Shakespearean lines the first time the murder scene is enacted, in this sequence the Shakespearean lines are voiced by actors from the Shakespeareana troupe: Krishnendu's *Othello*, in fact, is voiced by Utpal Dutt. This performance, therefore, as Richard Burt emphasises, introduces a transnational cinematic supplement which 'decentres Shakespeare: instead of an Indian character citing an English Shakespeare, the voice of an Indian actor trained in Shakespeare (Dutt) by an English actor (Kendal) imitates an American film maker and actor (Welles).

My discussion of *Shakespeare Wallah* is necessarily brief as it is not in any way focused on *Othello*. However, in this film too, *Othello* is used to stage the tensions between traditional and modern India and the enacting of the murder scene from *Othello* is in many ways the climax of the film. *Shakespeare Wallah* is a sustained metaphor for the end of the British Raj and tells the somewhat fictionalised story of the Buckingham Players (based on Geoffrey Kendall's acting troupe Shakespeareana), a travelling troupe of Shakespearean actors in post-colonial India. The sub-plot of the love triangle between Lizzie Buckingham, Sanju, the Indian playboy and Manjula, the Bollywood diva has also been argued as representative of the larger issues at work in the film such as the decline of Shakespeare and the rise of Bollywood, Sanju's duality as a colonial elite, or the rejection of Shakespeare as a

British icon in favour of a national identity. Scholars such as Nandi Bhatia, Valerie Wayne and Dan Venning have discussed at length the ambivalent attitude to postcolonialism and the role of Shakespeare in India as depicted in the film; however, these discussions are not immediately relevant to my argument in this chapter.<sup>375</sup> The film contains scenes from *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as Sheridan's *The Critic*. What is pertinent to my discussion of *Othello* in India is, however, the function of the murder scene in *Othello* within the narrative of the film. There are several important things happening in this scene; the Buckingham Players are beginning to recognise a decline in interest in Shakespeare, and this performance of *Othello* is meant to assert the authority of Shakespeare over other forms of entertainment that have taken over in the newly independent country, such as Bollywood and cricket (prophetically, the two forms of entertainment that still hold absolute sway over Indians). However, Manjula's entry during the most climactic scene of the play and the ease with which she steals the focus of the audience, and the camera, effectively challenges this authority. *Saptapadi* had similarly used the murder scene in *Othello* as a focal point; in fact, it had staged the murder scene twice, using it as a shorthand to discuss the larger issues staged within the film as well as to identify itself with other global adaptations. Every critic discussing *Shakespeare Wallah* has similarly emphasised the subtexts underlying this scene to extend their argument. Thus, whether the film depicts imperialism, hybridity or a postcolonial rejection of all things British, *Othello* is still being used as the site of ideological struggles. Interestingly,

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<sup>375</sup> See Nandi Bhatia, 'Imperialistic Representations and Spectatorial Reception in Shakespeare Wallah', *Modern Drama*, 45 (2002), pp 61-75, Valerie Wayne, 'Shakespeare Wallah and Colonial Specularity', in *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV and Video*, ed. by Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt (2005), pp. 97-105, Dan Venning, 'Cultural Imperialism and Intercultural Encounter in Merchant Ivory's "Shakespeare Wallah"', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 28 (2011), pp 149-167.

*Shakespeare Wallah* ends with Sanju berating Lizzie for tarnishing his *izzat*, his honour, and this ultimately leads to his rejection of her. This neatly transitions to my discussion of the second sustained appropriation of *Othello* at the end of this decade, and the absorption of *Othello* into mainstream Bollywood.

*Izzat* was the first mainstream Hindi film to reference *Othello* and has so far escaped the attention of academics who have begun researching the under-explored field of Bollywood Shakespeares. It does not aspire to the pedagogical cultural capital of Shakespeare that *Saptapadi* does, nor does it reference the performance traditions of *Othello* on stage or film. However, references to *Othello* which seem superficial at first glance, are embedded throughout the film. The only direct reference to the play is when Deepa meets Shekhar (who is pretending to be his twin Dilip) for the first time and he sees she has been reading *Othello*. This sparks off a conversation about appearances and colour prejudices that is quite alien to an industry which traditionally favours light skinned protagonists but rarely acknowledges it.<sup>376</sup>

In the 1940s, the typical Bollywood villain was the zamindar, jagirdar or Thakur and in the following two decades it was the capitalist, the industrialist, the rich man. The Zamindari system was formally introduced by Lord Cornwallis in Bengal in 1793 but the system existed even before the Mughal era.<sup>377</sup> *Zamindars* were aristocrats or royalty who owned land and collected taxes from the peasants; the system was similar to the feudal system in the middle ages in England. It was

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<sup>376</sup> See, for instance, Gaurav Dubay and Bharti Dubay, *Dark Side of Bollywood: Racism Exists in Hindi Film Industry*, <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/dark-side-of-bollywood-racism-exists-in-hindi-film-industry/15180078>, (25 March, 2014) [accessed 20 July, 2015] or the online discussion about Racism in Bollywood films and music led by Deepak Mehta, *What are some Examples of Racism in Bollywood and Bollywood Songs?* Quora, (25 March, 2015) <<https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-examples-of-racism-in-Bollywood-and-Bollywood-songs>> [accessed 1 July, 2015].

<sup>377</sup> TR Jain and others, *Indian Economy* (FK Publications, 2013), p 123.

abolished in India after independence, but peasants were still economically dependent on noblemen and aristocrats due to the disparity of wealth between the noblemen and the peasants in postcolonial India. In *Izzat* for example, the Thakur is depicted as being in trade; he owns the saw mill which employs most of the *adivasi* villagers in the area. His status, however, also allows him to take advantage of the villagers as is shown in his rape of Sawli (which translates to dark-skinned), Shekhar's *Adivasi* mother, and this is shown as symbolic of an exploitation of the *Adivasis* that has been happening for generations. This indirectly references the oppression of the 'natives' by the colonisers, by the foreign Mughals before that, and the Aryans before them. It is equally significant that in all these instances of history, the oppressors were fair of skin as compared to the natives. By locating the *Othello* text within this context, the obvious marginalization of the backward classes in India has been highlighted as a social problem within the film. The Thakur's servants are also *adivasis*, and only the wealthy are fair in this film. When Deepa's father comments on the unusual darkness of Shekhar's skin (who he thinks is Dilip), her mother chooses to deliberately ignore his skin colour and says: '*Aamir aadmi ke beetein kabhi kaalen hotein hain kya?*' [Can the sons of rich people ever be dark?]. There is thus another layer of meaning that fairness gains in this context: lightness of skin not only indicates virtue and higher caste in India, but also higher class and economic superiority.

Like other films of its time, such as *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953) and *Nishant* (1975), *Izzat* chooses to focus on the marginalization and exploitation of the *adivasis* [tribal people] by the rich *zamindars* [landlords] and, notably, uses *Othello* to comment on the othering prevalent in postcolonial India based on colour, caste and class. The male protagonist of the film, the tribal and, therefore, dark skinned

Shekhar finds out that his mother had been raped and abandoned by his *zamindar* father and decides to seek revenge. In a peculiar mimicry of British actors playing *Othello*, the fair skinned Dharmendra (the actor playing Shekhar and Dilip) here blackens his face to portray his *adivasi* role, thereby effectively replacing the coloniser rather than mimicking him. There is also the suggestion that the colonisers have been replaced in Indian society by the urban elite who value superficial white masks and practice a racism that is much more insidious by discriminating against other Indians based on colour, caste and class. Shekhar travels to his father's house intending to confront him only to discover that he has a brother who looks exactly like him except for the colour of his skin. Wrongs are righted when history repeats itself and Dilip, the fair brother, falls in love with a tribal girl and the fair Deepa, who was betrothed to Dilip, falls in love with Shekhar. The film ends with two inter-racial marriages and with the *zamindar* finally choosing his abandoned son over his *izzat*.

While most stage and film interpretations of *Othello* choose to gloss over the racial issues that lie at the heart of *Othello*, *Izzat* uses these issues to highlight the exploitation of the backward classes by the rich landed gentry. These issues in the play are appropriated deftly for the purposes of this film: for instance, when Shekhar is mistaken for Dilip and is asked to sing at his sister's birthday party, he sings of people who hide behind masks, '*Kya miliye aise logon se jinke fitrat chupi rahe, nakli chehra saamne aaye, asli chehra chhupi rahe*' [How does one interact with people whose real natures are hidden, their real faces lie hidden behind pretty masks]. The lyrics of this song seem to echo two sentiments from the play. The first sentiment is the deceit that may lie behind a fair face that Brabantio refers to when he warns Othello: 'Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: She has deceived her

father, and may thee' (1.3.293).<sup>378</sup> The second, and related, reference is to the natural association of fairness with virtue that is prevalent in many cultures, as when the Duke says: 'If virtue no delighted beauty lack/ Your son-in-law is far more fair than black' (1.3.290). G. K. Hunter refers to the Elizabethans' long held belief that 'black is the colour of sin and death'. He goes on further to add that 'This supposition is found all over the world (even in the darkest Africa) from the earliest to the latest times; and in the West there is a continuous and documented tradition of it'.<sup>379</sup> These references, in turn, highlight the complexity behind the othering based on colour prejudice that occurs in India, both among Indians and with foreigners of darker skin colour than Indians.<sup>380</sup>

'Her name, that was as fresh/ As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black/ As mine own face' says Othello in 3.3; Indians use the term '*muh kala karna*' [to blacken one's face] as a reference to lost virtue in women. The association of fairness with virtue can easily be traced today in India by a quick perusal through the matrimonial advertisements in any paper which stress on fairness as a requirement for prospective brides. The consumer market is another indicator, with the overabundance of 'fairness creams' for men and women by different national and international companies. Social and family customs are further proof: pregnant mothers are traditionally bathed in milk, turmeric and saffron to ensure the birth of fair children, to cite but one example.<sup>381</sup> Milk, turmeric and saffron are applied

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<sup>378</sup> All quotations from the text are from William Shakespeare, E.A.J., Honigmann, *Othello* (London: Thomson Learning, 1997).

<sup>379</sup> George K. Hunter, *Othello and Colour Prejudice* (Oxford University Press, 1967), p 140

<sup>380</sup> Gautam Bhatia, *The Dark Side of Fairness: As India Shifts Towards Greater Equality, Old Prejudices about Skin Colour Persist*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2288675/The-dark-fairness-As-India-shifts-greater-equality-old-prejudices-skin-colour-persist.html>, (6 March, 2013) [accessed 14 February, 2015].

<sup>381</sup> Durairaj, Lydia, *Colour Prejudice has Deeper Meanings and Unwarranted Consequences*, <http://www.theweekendleader.com/Causes/1098/be-yourself.html>, (20 February, 2015) [accessed 23 February, 2015].

externally in order to lighten the skin; they are also applied during weddings and religious ceremonies as part of purification rituals, thereby further conflating notions of fairness with virtue and purity in the minds of Indians. Colour prejudice in Northern India is moreover complicated by the association of darker skin tones with people of lower caste and class. Traditionally backward classes such as the *adivasis*, *dalits* and other scheduled castes and tribes (SCs and STs) are dark skinned and there is, therefore, an automatic assumption of social and financial backwardness with Indians of darker skin colour.<sup>382</sup>

*Izzat* also underlines other tensions within *Othello* in its subtext; '*Mard hamesha roop dekhta hain, aurat gun*' [Men only see beauty, women see virtue], says Deepa when Shekhar asks her how she can agree to marry a dark man like him despite being so fair herself. This is a sequence that is echoed in *Omkaara*, when Omi playfully accuses Dolly of being either a fool or a witch for loving him. The exchange in this sequence in *Izzat* (and later in *Omkaara*) sums up Othello's own feelings of insecurity relating to the colour of his skin as demonstrated when he voices sentiments like: 'For she had eyes and chose me' (3.3.192), and later 'Haply for I am black...' (3.3. 267). The conversation between the two protagonists of *Izzat*, in this sequence, centres on a discussion of *Othello* and the prevalent colour prejudices in India. The exchange, however, is a multi-layered one with the discussion of colour being expanded to caste and class, as I have explained earlier, which is usually the case especially in northern India.

### **Adapting and Assimilating Shakespeare: Kathakali *Othellos***

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<sup>382</sup> For a more detailed examination of the social inequalities faced by *Dalits* and *Adivasis* and affirmative action undertaken by the postcolonial Indian government to uplift their position, read Chad M. Bauman, 'Identity, Conversion, and Violence: Dalits, Adivasis, and the 2007-08 Riots in Orissa', (2010) and Sonalde Desai, and Veena Kulkarni, 'Changing Educational Inequalities in India in the Context of Affirmative Action', *Demography*, 45 (2008), 245-270.



Bhardwaj has listed *Kaliyattam* (1997) in his coffee table book as a precursor to *Omkaara*; Robin Bhatt viewed the film as part of his research before writing the script for *Omkaara*.<sup>383</sup> *Kaliyattam* is therefore, a direct inspiration for *Omkaara* and needs to be analysed as a South Indian adaptation of *Othello* which also received critical acclaim on a global stage. Consequently, in this section, I will digress from my analysis of north Indian adaptations of Shakespeare to briefly touch upon a minor tradition of adapting Shakespeare in Kathakali which exists within a larger agenda of reinvigorating national performance traditions in India.<sup>384</sup> This tradition of assimilating Shakespeare within the Kathakali performance tradition has existed at least since the 1970s. In the mid-70s for instance, Kalamandalam Kesavan's adaptation of *The Tempest* was so successful that it continued to be performed alongside the classical repertoire. The Kathakali *King Lear*, first performed at the Edinburgh festival in 1990, is one of the best known global Shakespearean adaptations today. Thea Buckley claims that the Kathakali productions which have received most global attention are the ones which are 'located in international cities and Anglophone locations' such as Tim Supple's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the RSC in 2006 or the Annette Leday and David McRuvie's Kathakali *King Lear* of 1989.<sup>385</sup> Filmic intercultural Shakespeares with Keralan elements, such as *Dancing Othello* (2002) or *In Othello* (2003), however, have received comparatively little critical exposure.<sup>386</sup>

One of the best known Kathakali adaptations of *Othello* however, and one which has been exhaustively written about in the context of postcolonial

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<sup>383</sup> Robin Bhatt. Interview by Koel Chatterjee. Tape Recording. London, 27 April, 2016.

<sup>384</sup> A fuller exploration of South Indian Shakespeares can be found in Thea Buckley, "'In the Spiced Indian Air by Night'": Performing Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in Postmillennial Kerala' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Birmingham University, 2017).

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid*, p 58.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid*, p 58.

appropriation, is by Sadanand Balakrishnan in 1996.<sup>387</sup> Ania Loomba maintained that, in this particular production, the fusing of opposites was merely for the sake of exoticism or flamboyance: ‘Balakrishnan’s *Othello* was not interested in Shakespeare at all, except as a suitably weighty means through which it could experiment with its own performative lineage’.<sup>388</sup> This is in keeping with the Indian tradition of completely nativizing Shakespeare as in the Parsi Theatre tradition: Buckley quotes a humorous anecdote by writer R. K. Narayan as illustrative of how Shakespeare has been completely subsumed by Indian popular culture – the playwright ‘will always be known [here] even if it should be in some unimaginably garbled manner, just as a cook in our house once asked for the evening off as he wished to see a film called “Omlette,” [*Hamlet*] which he heard talked about everywhere’.<sup>389</sup>

Poonam Trivedi points out that ‘directors have perceived areas of congruence between Shakespeare and Kathakali, particularly in their narratives of the struggle between good and evil, in the heightened emotionality of the characters and their rhetorical rhythmic rendering’.<sup>390</sup> Loomba, nevertheless, asserts that the erasure of the racial politics in this production flattens it into a ‘disturbingly misogynist text’.<sup>391</sup> It has been argued that *Othello*’s blackness is problematic among a predominantly dark-skinned people whose major deities and demons are also dark-skinned. A

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<sup>387</sup> See Supriya Chaudhuri, ‘Remembering Shakespeare in India: Colonial and Postcolonial Memory’, in *Celebrating Shakespeare: Commemoration and Cultural Memory*, ed. by Clara Calvo and Coppélia Kahn (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Ania Loomba, ‘Shakespeare and the Possibilities of Postcolonial Performance’, *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, (2008), pp 121-137.

<sup>388</sup> Loomba, p 129.

<sup>389</sup> Buckley, p 35.

<sup>390</sup> Poonam Trivedi, ‘Interculturalism Or Indigenisation: Modes of Exchange, Shakespeare East and West’, *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in Performance*. London: Ashgate, (2000), p 83. Ania Loomba, ‘Local-Manufacture made-in-India *Othello* Fellows” Issues of Race, Hybridity and Location in Post-Colonial Shakespeares.’, *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, (1998), pp 143-163.

<sup>391</sup> Loomba, p 162.

reconfiguration of the issue is thus usually attempted in terms of class and caste, as was done in *Saptapadi* and *Izzat*. R. Sahai's Hindi translation in 1980 also substituted 'Moor' with 'Kaluta', literally blackie (as Rina had termed Krishnendu in *Saptapadi*) but the word also carries derogatory connotations of a low-caste country bumpkin arising out of the common prejudice against socially backward dark-skinned *adivasis*, *dalits* and people from scheduled castes and tribes in India. Consequently, in Balakrishnan's production, though Othello's green makeup identifies him as a *pacca* figure, which in the tradition of Kathakali includes divine figures, kings and heroic characters, his hands are painted black, and even as Loomba observes, this, and the narration that accompanies the dancing, identifies him as a *malechh*, or an outcaste. The problem of caste, rather than colour, is thus underlined for Indian audiences as Indians are much more rigid about the caste system as compared to colour prejudices. A further complication to the reading of Othello's dark skin is his identification, in Indian contexts, with the Hindu god Krishna. *Saptapadi*'s male protagonist is named Krishnendu and *Omkara* is referred to as Krishna when he first brings Dolly home, and then as Ram when he begins to doubt Dolly. Krishna and Ram are, according to Hindu mythology, avatars of the dark-skinned Vishnu, the *Swayam Bhagavan* [Supreme God] and the Protector or Preserver of mankind. In Balakrishnan's production, Othello's blue dress is clearly a reference to Lord Krishna's dark skin. Othello and Desdemona's love therefore, is overlaid with the love of Krishna and Radha and enacted in an interpolated *raas* sequence [the erotic love dance of Krishna and the milkmaids], 'a duet in which the two lovers moved in tandem, slowly, languorously, hands barely linked in a feather-

light embrace'.<sup>392</sup> I will discuss Desdemona's indigenisation in more detail in the next section, as Bhardwaj has drawn upon the Indian tradition of identifying Desdemona with the *pati-vrata nari* [husband-worshipping wife], which is also a well-known Bollywood trope, but can be traced back to the epical heroine Sita, the consort of Ram, in the *Ramayana*.

Kerala's rare cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare cater to an extremely local audience: they demonstrate a preoccupation with local religions, politics, and arts.<sup>393</sup> Jayaraj's *Kannaki* (2001), an adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, is set against the background of Keralan cockfighting and ritual snake-worship; his adaptation of *Macbeth*, *Veeram* (2014), showcases the martial culture of North Kerala. Similarly, V. K. Prakash's 2012 adaptation *Karmayogi* [The Sacrificer] features traditional Keralan arts; Prakash sets the adaptation among the feudal martial tribes of North Kerala, where Prince Rudran/Hamlet is a kalarippayattu warrior and Hindu *kelipathram* ritual practitioner. Working within this tradition of Kathakali *Othellos*, Jayaraj finds a compelling context for *Othello* within the local dictates of the Malayali film industry by casting the male protagonists of *Kaliyattam* (1997) as *Theyyam* dancers. *Theyyam* translates to mean God's Dance and *Kaliyattam* refers both to the annual festival at which *Theyyam* is performed as well as to the tribal dance form from which *Theyyam* evolved. The brilliance of this recontextualisation is in, as Ania Loomba describes, the juxtaposition of 'the contradiction that lies at the heart of *Theyyam* with that which lies at the heart of *Othello*.'<sup>394</sup> In the *Theyyam* tradition, the main dancer who plays and personifies the

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<sup>392</sup> Poonam Trivedi, 'Re-locating Shakespeare, Acting and Re-Acting to *Othello* in India', *Shakespeare in China: Perspectives and Performances: A Collection of Theses*, p 72.

<sup>393</sup> Buckley, p. 54.

<sup>394</sup> Loomba, p 130.

deity being worshipped, is drawn from one of the lower castes of Kerala, but during the dance, he becomes 'possessed' by the divine spirit and becomes a manifestation of divinity. Thus, for the space of the performance, he is worshipped by the upper castes, who would normally not even allow his shadow to cross their paths. Casting Othello as the lead dancer of the troupe therefore captures his double status as outsider and insider, and comments on the contradictions of caste politics and theatre in Kerala. Just as Othello is both necessary for white Venetian security and a threat to its identity, the *kolam* [lead dancer] is simultaneously central to and marginalized by upper caste society.

This casting also helps to translocate the motivations of the other characters in the play. As in *Saptapadi* and later in *Omkara*, issues of race and colour prejudice have been explored at the beginning of the film. Perumalayan has been portrayed as a social climber hailing from an inferior caste. This lower-class designation is further emphasized by the fact that he bears the physical scars of smallpox, a disease which, we are told, has wiped out his family. Desdemona/Thamara is an upper-caste lady who is captivated by Perumalayan's/Othello's performances, which, for her father, are the equivalent of 'black magic'. Similarly, Iago's/Paniyan's jealousy lies in the fact that he, as the clown of the company, is not allowed to perform the heroic deeds that Perumalayan performs in his ritual roles. Cassio, Perumalayan's assistant, is punished for his drunken brawl by being forbidden to perform *Theyyam*. However, as Loomba points out, *Theyyam* is not the medium of the performance itself but provides the vocabulary for Jayaraj to narrate the *Othello* story. For instance, Thamara and Perumalayan make love by playing with the make-up that Perumalayan uses in his profession. Thus 'their transgressive love appropriates the rules and tools

of the sacred dance'.<sup>395</sup> Perumalayan's jealous rages are embodied by the dancing spirits of *Theyyam* who emerge from the Kerala landscape and give expression to his inner turmoil. Further, just as Othello impales himself on the sword which has been his means of performance, in the end, Perumalayan runs in to the ritual fire of *Theyyam*, which is his medium of performance.

Through the course of the film, the question of caste difference gives way to the emphasized theme of jealousy, as will be the case in *Omkaara*, which is necessary to justify the tragic ending of the films in light of the traditional genre conventions of Indian literature and cinema which avoid tragic endings. Balakrishnan's production has Othello rise at the end, after his death, to perform a 'mangalam', a prayer cum soliloquy in which he recounts his errors and begs the forgiveness of the gods. Similarly, *Kaliyattam* and *Omkaara* tend to evoke sympathy and horror as well as a sense of catharsis, given the social evils that have been emphasized in these adaptations. This, in my opinion, belies the misogynistic readings that Loomba had perceived in Balakrishnan's production.

### ***Omkaara: Othello* translocated to the Indian badlands of Uttar Pradesh**

*Omkaara* is a more faithful adaptation of *Othello* than *Maqbool* was of *Macbeth* in that Bhardwaj has not taken too many liberties with the plot line of the original play this time, despite its translocation to the 'lawless Wild West setting' of Uttar Pradesh, India.<sup>396</sup> Thus, *Omkaara* 'Omi' Shukla /Othello is the dark-skinned enforcer of powerful politician *Bhaisaab* [Elder brother] and Ishwar 'Langda' Tyagi/ Iago and Keshav 'Firangi' Upadhyay/ Cassio are *Omkaara*'s lieutenants. The film is

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<sup>395</sup> Loomba, p 131.

<sup>396</sup> Alter, p 35.

set within the context of Bhaisaab's election campaign, with his rival political leader, Indore Singh, being depicted as 'the Turks' from *Othello*. It is against this backdrop of gang wars and political corruption that the love story between Desdemona/Dolly Mishra and Omkara is played out. Dolly is the daughter of *Bhaisaab's* lawyer Raghunath Mishra, who, though obviously aware of his employer's corrupt and illegal activities, is not directly a part of the gang and is, therefore, outraged when Omi kidnaps Dolly on the day of her wedding to Rajan 'Rajju' Tiwari, son of a wealthy liquor distributor and campaign donor, with her consent, and takes her home to Emilia/Indu, Langda's wife.

The film seamlessly melds the Shakespearean text with Bollywood narrative and visual codes, and in doing so, replaces Shakespeare's language with rich visual metaphors. For instance, Dolly almost always wears white which emphasises 'that whiter skin of hers than snow' (5.2.133), and Omi always dresses in black, thereby underscoring the main theme of racial difference at various points of the film in unobtrusive ways. Similarly, Langda wears green throughout the film and is almost always shot through a green filter (as was Paniyan in *Kaliyattam*) to emphasise his role as the 'green-eyed monster' of jealousy (3.3.168). The film recognisably quotes episodes and lines from the play, as for instance, when Rajju threatens to 'incontinently drown (him)self' (1.3.306) or when Raghunath warns Omi about trusting a deceitful woman: '*Jo ladki apni baap ko thag sakti hain who kisi aur ki sagi kya hogi*' [A girl who can deceive her father cannot be loyal to anyone] which echoes Brabantio's warning to Othello. Even the profanity and vulgarity in the language, which has been reported to have kept families away from screenings of the

film, is an allusion to the coarseness of Iago's language.<sup>397</sup> The casual swearing and profanity in *Omkara* is an allusion to Iago's use of such language as 'an old black ram tugging your white ewe' or 'making the beast with two backs' (1.1) The famous 'Beedi [cigarette] Song', too, picks up on Shakespeare's metaphors of bedding: 'twixt my sheets he has done my office' thus assimilating Shakespeare within the stock 'item number' device of masala films. The lyrics talk about borrowing a neighbour's quilt to ward off the cold which suggests an illicit affair, as does the suggestion to borrow fire from a neighbour's hearth. Similarly, the refrain from the 'Naina' song: '*Naino ki mat maaniyo re, naino ki mat suniyo, naina thhag lenge thhag lenge, naina thhag lenge*' [Do not believe your eyes, do not judge based on what you see, your eyes may deceive you] is both a warning to Omkara who will be deceived by what he thinks he sees and a nod to the deceitful nature of Langda, or indeed, a commentary on the social and political milieu of India reflected in the film.

One of the best examples of translocation is the handkerchief that Rymer thought to be too flimsy a cause for rage and jealousy, which is changed by Bhardwaj to an ornate *kardhani* [waist ornament].<sup>398</sup> Omi hands Dolly the ornament and tells her that it is a family heirloom worn by generations of brides in his family: '*Hamare purkho ki izzat ka poonji hain yeh*'. The *kardhani* is, as Hogan explains, 'an ornament associated with eroticism and sexual desire in marriage'; however, it also a mark of ownership of the body of the wife and 'signifies the new roles of the bride as the daughter-in-law and future mistress of the home'.<sup>399</sup> Langda's

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<sup>397</sup> *Families Stay Away from*

*Omkara*, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/news-interviews/Families-stay-away-from-Omkara-/articleshow/1833494.cms?referral=PM>, (1 August, 2006) [accessed 4 February, 2015].

<sup>398</sup> Thomas Rymer, 'From *A Short View of Tragedy (1693)*', in *Shakespeare, Othello: A Case-Book*, ed. by John Wain, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1971), pp 37-48.

<sup>399</sup> Lalita P. Hogan, 'The Sacred and the Profane in *Omkara*: Vishal Bhardwaj's Hindi Adaptation of *Othello*', *Image & Narrative*, 11 (2010), p 59.



possession of the *kardhani* signifies his possession of Dolly's virtue. When he places the ornament on his forehead like a bridal *maang-tika* [head ornament], the gesture is a disturbingly prurient one, as his face is now in the same place as the private parts of the women who have worn and will wear this piece of jewellery. Langda's desire to subvert, and become involved in, the marriage, status and sexual life of Omi is evoked in this one image in the same way that Shakespeare uses language to suggest similar motives for Iago:

Now, I do love her too;  
Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure  
I stand accountant for as great a sin,  
But partly led to diet my revenge,  
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor  
Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof  
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;  
And nothing can or shall content my soul  
Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife. (2.1.289)

Bhardwaj's dexterity at introducing several layers of meaning by inserting minor changes or adding extratextual details in his adaptations extends critical discussions of the plays, as I have pointed out in my previous chapter. One example of this in the context of *Omkara* is Bhardwaj's juxtaposition of good and evil: Bhaisaab, a corrupt politician who casually orders trains to turn around at his convenience, bears a striking physical resemblance to Mahatma Gandhi; Iago, the articulate embodiment of all evil, is here, in an echo of Shakespeare's 'honest Iago', named Ishwar [God].<sup>400</sup> The naming of the characters in the film is particularly relevant. If *Maqbool* focused on the identity of Muslim Indians, *Omkara* is clearly about the Hindu identity and its caste systems. The sepia palette of the film is not only reminiscent of the curry westerns of the 70s in India and Hollywood Westerns,

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<sup>400</sup> Raja Sen, *Why Omkara Blew My Mind*, Sen City, (5 June, 2009) [accessed 14 February, 2015].

but also of the saffron tones distinctive to Hinduism.<sup>401</sup> The *Bhakti* song 'Naina' [Eyes] against which we see the love story between Dolly and Omkara unfold, is as distinctive of Hinduism as the *Sufi* song, evocative of Islam, that marked the developing relationship between the protagonists in *Maqbool*. It is noteworthy that all the characters in *Omkara* have distinctively high-caste Hindu last names. The caste identities of the principal characters are further emphasized by repeated shots of their sacred threads through the course of the film. Caste, though mentioned in the adaptations in the 60s, was not emphasised in keeping with the generic move towards an eventual happy ending. Issues of race in *Othello* have however, not only been replaced with issues of caste in *Omkara* but heightened in a manner similar to *Kaliyattam*; Omi, despite wearing the sacred thread that identifies people from the Brahmin caste, is actually half Brahmin as his mother was from a lower caste. This is part of the attempt of the scriptwriters to 'make *Othello* understandable to an Indian audience'.<sup>402</sup> Bhardwaj, speaking about the racism in the play points out that in the film, 'It's there, but not in the foreground'.<sup>403</sup> This half-caste identity, in turn, diminishes Omkara's authority over Ishwar Tyagi, whose last name designates him as the uppermost sub-caste among Uttar Pradesh Brahmins. In the film, however, Ishwar is usually referred to as Langda [lame] because of his limp. Other than the obvious mythological allusion which I will discuss subsequently, there is an echo of another Shakespearean character in Langda's physical deformity – Richard III, who is 'Cheated of feature by dissembling nature/Deform'd'(1.1.19). It is, more importantly, a direct reflection of one of the reasons for Iago's dislike of Cassio: 'If

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<sup>401</sup> See, for instance, Thomas B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>402</sup> Randeep Ramesh, *A Matter of Caste as Bollywood Embraces the Bard*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jul/29/books.filmnews>, (The Guardian, 28 July 2006) [accessed 15 February, 2015].

<sup>403</sup> Alter, p 44.

Cassio do remain/He hath a daily beauty in his life/ That makes me ugly'. Langda's, limp juxtaposed against the physical perfection of Kesu, and, indeed, of Omkara, makes him 'ugly' in comparison. Further, throughout the film, Keshav is known as Kesu *Firangi*. *Firang* is a derogatory name given to *videsis* or foreigners, but it also refers to Indians who have become westernized or modernized, as modernity in India is primarily associated with foreign influence, especially by the fundamentalist advocates of Hindutva.<sup>404</sup> However, this moniker, combined with Kesu's relative inexperience and his educated background, is in keeping with Iago's disgust of the 'great arithmetician...a Florentine (among Venetians)...That never set a squadron in the field/ Nor the division of a battle knows' (1.1.18). When Langda is thus overlooked by the half-caste Omkara to be his successor, despite being more obviously qualified for the role and despite their closer relationship (Omi refers to Langda as his *bhai* or brother who will understand his decision), in favour of Kesu *Firangi*, his jealousy and hate towards both Omi and Kesu is inevitable and thus a powerful motivation for the chain of destruction that he initiates as opposed to the 'motiveless malignity' that Coleridge had observed in Shakespeare's Iago.

Critics, reviewers and Shakespeare loyalists have variously commented on the faithfulness of the adaptation. Mike Heidenberg calls *Omkara* 'a largely scene-by-scene translation of *Othello* into a new setting, time, and language.'<sup>405</sup> Raja Sen has applauded Bhardwaj for 'hardly waver[ing] from the script' in *Omkara*, as opposed to the liberties he takes with *Maqbool*.<sup>406</sup> I suggest that Bhardwaj, by once

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<sup>404</sup> Read Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (Penguin Books India, 2003) for a more detailed description of Hindu nationalism and the relationship of Hindutva to Muslims in India.

<sup>405</sup> Mike Heidenberg, 'No Country for Young Women: Empowering Emilia in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkara*', in *Bollywood Shakespeares*, ed. by Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (New York, United States: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p 87.

<sup>406</sup> Raja Sen, *Why Omkara Blew My Mind*.

again changing the dynamics of the various relationships between the characters, has recontextualised the *Othello* story in order to retell Shakespeare's story using the narrative traditions of the Hindi film industry. Shakespeare's Othello is clearly an outsider, 'both necessary for white Venetian security and a threat to its identity.'<sup>407</sup> He has no family, thereby making him dependent on Iago and, consequently, more vulnerable to the latter's insidious suggestions about Desdemona's possible infidelity. In *Omkara*, however, the characters who are outsiders are Kesu and Dolly, as indicated by their *firangi* names and the fact that they are both college educated and literally do not speak the dialect of the other characters in the film. Their common background and their mutual feelings of insecurity in their new situation naturally bring them closer, thereby making Langda's insinuations plausible to Omkara. This is a comment on the social milieu depicted in the film itself, a reality in many parts of India, where despite social advances such as technology and education of women, there is a sense of resentment against modernity and 'Englishness', which in this case is a reference to the corrupting influence of the urban elite in India on old fashioned values such as *izzat* and *tehzeeb*.<sup>408</sup> Omi is quite secure in his position within the gang and is also the head of the 'family' in the fictional village of Cypra: his *haveli* [palatial house] is the largest house in the village and the villagers variously treat him as son or brother. This includes Indu, who takes on the maternal role in this family and who treats Omi as her brother.<sup>409</sup> In fact, Indu (and Langda) also take over as Dolly's family in their absence during the

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<sup>407</sup> Loomba, p 130.

<sup>408</sup> These concepts have been previously discussed in my chapter on *QSQT/Romeo and Juliet* as well as *Maqbool/Macbeth*.

<sup>409</sup> I would like to point out here that the English subtitles seem to suggest that Omi is Indu's brother, and several Western critics have based their arguments regarding the film on this. However, the Hindi dialogues clearly convey that Omi is not kin to either Indu or Langda. Any sense of relationship comes from them being part of the same village and the same political gang which Omi leads.

wedding preparations. Kesu looks up to Langda and Omi as elder brothers. The celebration scene, for instance, when Langda manipulates Kesu to get drunk and then start a brawl, can be read as an elder brother goading a younger one to mischief, in fact, in keeping with W. H. Auden's visualisation of Iago as a 'peculiarly appalling kind of practical joker'.<sup>410</sup> In fact, Khan is said to have 'taken hold of (Iago's) character and made Langda into a personality of his own' by improvising on the script and adding interpretations that the writers had not anticipated; Khan has, therefore, channelled Auden's Iago and added an unpredictable, twisted humour to the role'.<sup>411</sup> In the same way, Kesu's avoidance of Omi after begging Dolly to plead his case for him can be read as a typical scenario in Indian films of a younger brother trying to escape the wrath of an elder brother who is a father figure. These familial connections, necessary additions in keeping with narrative strategies of Indian cinema, explain the motivations of the various characters, and heighten the tragic conclusion that results from the destruction of the entire family unit.

Bhardwaj also uses extratextual codes to underscore these relationships within the world of *Omkara* by co-opting the actors as parallel texts, to use the words of Vijay Mishra.<sup>412</sup> The cast of *Maqbool* was made up of predominantly theatre or art film actors who did not have 'star' personas; the cast of *Omkara*, in contrast, is made up of stars who bring with them the associations of not only other roles they have played, but their real-life star personas. Kareena Kapoor, playing Dolly, is for instance, a fourth-generation Bollywood star and hails from Bollywood royalty, the Kapoor family. Saif Ali Khan, who plays Langda, is not only one of the

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<sup>410</sup> John Wain, *Shakespeare, Othello: A Case-Book* (London: London: Macmillan, 1971), p 205.

<sup>411</sup> Alter, p 173.

<sup>412</sup> Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (New York: New York: Routledge, 2002), p 125.

famous Khans of Bollywood who dominate the industry and the son of well-known actress Sharmila Tagore, but is also the Nawab of Pataudi and thus literally of royal lineage. Viveik Oberoi too, who plays Kesu, is the son of veteran character actor Suresh Oberoi. Ajay Devgan, on the other hand, is an award-winning actor whose father Veeru Devgan, is a stunt and action choreographer in Bollywood; unlike Kapoor and Khan who were the children of stars, Devgan was a relative outsider as an actor and had to make his way up the ranks in Bollywood, much like Othello proves himself a capable General as an outsider in Venice. The overtones brought to the roles by the actors then are meant to speak to an audience who may not be perfectly familiar with Shakespeare, but who are more than cognisant of the significance of what the actors bring to each of their roles and relationships within the film.

One of the other strategies that have been employed in retelling *Othello* using the extratextual codes familiar to Hindi film audiences is the extended and complex reference to Hindu mythology. This, of course, is a continuation and development of the tradition of associating Othello with Krishna and Desdemona with Sita or Radha. Dolly's abduction on the day of her wedding by Omkara, who is hailed as 'the greatest of warriors' in the title song, is a deliberate allusion to Arjuna, for instance, the great warrior in the *Mahabharatha*, who similarly abducts a willing Subhadra, with Krishna's help. Keeping in mind that Cassio 'came a-wooing' with Othello, Keshav's name gains further significance in this context, as the name Keshava refers to Vishnu in his *avatar* [incarnation] as Krishna. Similarly, Ishwar is most usually called Langda throughout the film, and is an allusion to Shani, or Saturn, one of the *Navagraha* [the nine primary celestial beings in Hindu astrology]. His name means 'the slow moving one', as Saturn takes about thirty years to revolve around the Sun,

and he is usually associated with bad luck unless appeased by prayer and sacrifice according to Hindu mythology.<sup>413</sup> This association is highlighted when Langda's manipulations are accompanied by the bad omens, interpolated by Bhardwaj, that foreshadow the wedding preparations, such as when the crow (a bird that Shani is associated with) drops a snake in the milk. Omi's failure to appease Langda therefore, in astrological terms, can be interpreted as a direct cause of the destruction that befalls him.

To persist with the mythological associations, Shani was also cursed by his wife, Savarna, a detail which aligns with Bhardwaj's expansion of Emilia's role in *Omkara*. It is one of Bhardwaj's auteurial signatures to develop the female protagonists' role by making them more sensitive and complex.<sup>414</sup> Critics have noted that Indu embodies Durga in both her nurturing, protective form, and in her avatar as Kali, the demon slaying goddess. Indu, who is not only the mother of Langda's son, but also the mother surrogate for Dolly and Kesu, is metamorphosed through grief and guilt (as she had stolen the *kardhani* that Omi had gifted Dolly) into the avenging Kali. The sequence where she slays Langda is shot as a battle between good and evil, and is, as Hogan argues, 'carefully modelled on the Kali iconography found in art, story, and legend.'<sup>415</sup> However, Indu's act of vengeance also places her within the Bollywood tradition of female avengers, such as Radha in *Mother India* (1957).<sup>416</sup> Though Radha is perhaps the best-known protagonist of the genre, it was

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<sup>413</sup> For a more detailed history of the mythological background of Shani read Robert Svoboda, *The Greatness of Saturn: A Therapeutic Myth* (Lotus Press (WI), 1997). A more detailed explanation of Shani's inauspicious associations, read Xenia Zeiler, 'Dark Shades of Power: The Crow in Hindu and Tantric Religious Traditions', *Religions of South Asia*, 7 (2012), pp 212-229.

<sup>414</sup> Alter, p 161.

<sup>415</sup> Hogan, p 58.

<sup>416</sup> Radha, the archetypal Indian woman capable of great love and great sacrifice, shoots her soon, Birju. A detailed description of the genre can be found in Lalitha Gopalan, 'Avenging Women in Indian Cinema', *Screen*, 38 (1997), pp 42-59.

the 1980s that was better known for the consolidation of the female avenger 'formula'. These 'aggressive woman films' followed in the footsteps of the 'angry young man films' of the 70s but featured 'victim-heroines' meting out vigilante revenge for rape. Prior to the 1980s, rape or the threat of rape hovered on the margins of narratives of several films; it was in the 1980s, in the wake of the Mathura rape trial and the Anti Rape Act of 1986, that the act of rape was seized upon and made central to the narrative of this genre of films.<sup>417</sup> Keeping in mind my reading of Langda's donning of the *kardhani* as a symbolic rape of Dolly, and the physical abuse that Dolly suffers at Omi's hands, Indu's role as the female avenger begins to emerge and crystallize. Bhardwaj has thus picked up on the theme of violence against women that is present in *Othello*, and that had been interpolated into both *Saptapadi* and *Izzat* and brought it to the forefront as a social issue that India still faces.

Dolly, on the other hand, falls into the category of the 'suffering woman held up as a model of womanhood, idealized, honoured and decorated', according to Jyotika Viridi's analysis of the genre.<sup>418</sup> Her chastity and fidelity is questioned and tested, as other suffering women in the genre such as Vandana in *Aradhana* [Prayer] 1969, and proved only after the ultimate sacrifice of her death. The 'suffering woman' stereotype of course, has its roots in the trials of Sita in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. Dolly is first referenced as Sita by Omi himself, when he tells Langda 'be sure thou prove my love a whore/ Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof' (3.3.362) In this violent sequence, Omi and Langda have just killed Indore Singh and

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<sup>417</sup> Read Jyotika Viridi, 'Reverence, rape—and then Revenge: Popular Hindi Cinema's 'woman's Film'', *Screen*, 40 (1999), pp 17-37 and Lalitha Gopalan, 'Avenging Women in Indian Cinema', *Screen*, 38 (1997), pp 42-59 for a more detailed discussion of the genre.

<sup>418</sup> Viridi, p 21.



now Omi turns his wrath on Langda. When Langda relates Kesu's dream to Omi, he points out that all the 'evidence' that Langda has presented so far has never been witnessed by anyone else: '*Dolly ke aankhon mein dekhu toh teri saari Ramayan kapat laagey mujhe*' [When I look into Dolly's eyes then your Ramayan seems false]. A few scenes later when Omi tells Indu that he cannot stop thinking about Raghunath's warning about Dolly, Indu despairs over the fate of Indian women who leave their father's house, leave everything they had held dear, and enter their husband's home empty handed only for their loyalties to be questioned: '*Agni se bhi nikal jaave na, toh bhi sagi nahin thhagi hi kehlaave*' [Even if we come out of the fire successfully, our chastity and loyalty will still be suspect]. This is, of course, a reference to the *Agnipariksha* [trial by fire] that Sita had to undertake to prove her chastity after being held captive for eleven months by Ravana, the Demon King. Despite crossing the fire safely and proving her chastity, a washer man expresses doubts about her character and Ram is forced to banish Sita, who leaves without complaint. However, 'Indian mythical stories allow their women, when beleaguered, to voice their protests.'<sup>419</sup> Thus in *Kathakali Othello* and in *Kaliyattam*, Desdemona, far from being passive and defenceless, protests her innocence till the end. Dolly, modelled on Sita however, does not beg for mercy, or argue against Omi's assumption of her guilt. She had previously told Omi that she had no one because she had left everyone else for him. When he accuses her of having slept with Kesu she does not protest her innocence. When he tells her to confess the truth in exchange for his mercy, she weeps and tells him that she has nothing left to live for. Desdemona had begged for her life, but Dolly willingly embraces her death, though

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<sup>419</sup> Trivedi, 'Re-locating Shakespeare: Acting and Re-Acting to Othello in India', p 72.

her instinct for survival leaves her thrashing and fighting for her life when Omi suffocates her in an echo of the murder scene in *Kaliyattam*.

In India, Bhardwaj had achieved critical success with *Maqbool* in 2004, a film ‘packaged as combining popular and arthouse elements’, and this prepared the way for *Omkara*, a commercial film with a lavish budget and a star cast.<sup>420</sup> The choice of actors was particularly significant for the marketing of the film in India and abroad as well: Ajay Devgan/*Omkara*, Viveik Oberoi/*Kesu*, and Bipasha Basu/*Billo Chamanbahar*, had previously worked in *Company* (2002), one of the best-known films in the Gangster genre in Bollywood, and a film I have discussed in my previous chapter. Casting these actors in *Omkara* immediately placed the Shakespearean adaptation within a popular Hindi film genre and signalled it as such to Bollywood audiences, despite the marketing of the film as ‘A Vishal Bhardwaj Adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Othello*’. The film therefore, targets both the urbanite Indians who take a knowledge of Shakespeare for granted and well as the small-town Indians who have not been introduced to Shakespeare through a colonial curriculum, nor encountered Shakespeare in any other cultural arena except in transmuted form. In fact, *Omkara* was one of the first films that was set in a small town in India: ‘We need to create new world in our cinema’, says Bhardwaj.<sup>421</sup> Film makers such as Prakash Jha had begun telling stories about small town characters and this trend has continued to be popular.<sup>422</sup> Further, the DVD describes *Omkara* as ‘one of those rare

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<sup>420</sup> Burnett, *Shakespeare and World Cinema*, p 56.

<sup>421</sup> Namrata Joshi, *OMKARA Moor of Meerut, A Shakespearean Epic Set in Western UP Pushes the Frontiers of Bollywood*, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/Moor-Of-Meerut/232205> edn, (14 August, 2006) [accessed 4 February, 2015].

<sup>422</sup> See, for instance, Shakti Shetty, *Recent Spate of Bollywood Films being Set in Small-Town India*, <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/recent-spate-of-bollywood-films-being-set-in-small-town-india/228549>, (25 August, 2013) [accessed 12 February, 2015] and Prashant Singh, *Here’s Why Bollywood’s Big Stories are in Small Towns*, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/how-mufassil-india-is-taking-the-spotlight-in-bollywood/article1-1323660.aspx>, (7 March, 2015)

instances of Shakespearean cinema that anyone can tune into and enjoy'. The implication seems to be that it takes the absorption of Shakespeare into the narrative codes of Bollywood for a filmed interpretation of 'high-culture' Shakespeare to be enjoyable. This is borne out by the diegetic use of Bollywood 'masala' formula in the Shakespearean adaptation such as the choreographed fight scenes and the 'item numbers'. The unusual setting of the film and the difficult Khariboli dialect 'soiled with heartland grime' initially discouraged Indian audiences. The television broadcast of the film for a general audience, however, had sanitized dialogues: 'anticipating problems, Vishal had already re-dubbed potentially offensive lines, particularly Saif's dialogue, replacing obscenities with innocuous expressions'.<sup>423</sup> The toned-down language for TV audiences and Khan's unusual performance, which garnered a lot of debate and discussion, allowed for a slow gathering appreciation for the film. There was also a simultaneous rise of anti-heroes in Bollywood with the Gangster genre, and a growing acceptance of tragic endings with the success of films such as *Tere Naam* [In Your Name] (2003) and *Rang De Basanti* [Colour it Saffron] (2006) which dealt with topics that also excluded them from being 'feel good movies' just like *Omkara*. These films took up social causes relevant to the day and were greatly appreciated, being commercial and critical successes, despite their tragic endings. Ultimately, the national and international awards that *Omkara* received and the many milestones that it set made this one of the most successful Bollywood adaptations of Shakespeare to date.

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[accessed 12 February, 2015] for a description of the recent trend of Bollywood films shifting away from Urban and foreign locales to small town rural settings.

<sup>423</sup> Alter, p 239.

*Haider* (2014): the Kashmiri Hamlet<sup>424</sup>

Bhardwaj positions all three of his Shakespeare adaptations in specific cultures of violence; if *Maqbool* was a commentary on urban violence and *Omkara* on rural violence, then *Haider* speaks to the violence of the state. Moreover, if *Maqbool* was presented as a low-budget niche film sans stars, and *Omkara* had all the elements of a typical mainstream *masala* film including star power and two chart-topping item numbers, *Haider* displays Bhardwaj's ability to inhabit a space within the mainstream and the Parallel Cinema market by using Bollywood stars to make a film with a pointed political message with cinematography that has a distinctly global aesthetic. In terms of genre, not only does *Haider* entrench Shakespearean tragedy in the Hindi film mainstream, it also represents a culmination of the process by which the middle-of-the-road genre has evolved from speaking to a specific class of Indians in the 1970s, to appealing to modern liberalised Indians both at home and abroad in the 1990s, to establishing a dialogue with global audiences in the twenty-first century.

After *Omkara*, Bhardwaj decided to explore some 'original story ideas'.<sup>425</sup> During the time Bhardwaj was working on adapting *Hamlet* as an espionage thriller with Steve Alter in 2013, several other Indian film makers began to discuss their *Hamlet* projects in the media.<sup>426</sup> Gay rights activist and film maker Onir's *Veda* had been in the news for a while after shooting sequences in Jaisalmer and in Stratford-

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<sup>424</sup> *Haider*, Dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, UTV Motion Pictures, 2014.

<sup>425</sup> Vishal Bharadwaj and Basharat Peer, *Haider: The Original Screenplay (with English Translation)* (Harper Collins India, 2014), Preface.

<sup>426</sup> Bhardwaj and Peer, Preface.

Upon-Avon.<sup>427</sup> Tigmangshu Dhulia's *Hamlet* garnered interest both for casting Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan in the lead and for Dhulia's claim to be the most 'qualified to make a film on that play than anyone else'.<sup>428</sup> Both these film makers are known as *auteur* directors working within Bollywood; this is relevant in a discussion of Bhardwaj's own attempts to establish his signature style of filmmaking which challenges Bollywood norms and I will return to this in my discussion of *Haider* later in this chapter. These reports of rival *Hamlets* pushed Bhardwaj to focus on getting his adaptation made by 2014 before the release of any of the other announced projects.<sup>429</sup> However, when Bhardwaj approached Gulzar with a thirty-page synopsis, he liked it, but asked Bhardwaj, 'Where is the tragedy of *Hamlet* in this thriller?'<sup>430</sup> Serendipitously, one night Bhardwaj woke up to find his wife crying over Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Nights*, a memoir recording a brutal conflict responsible for the deaths of thousands of people. 'Kashmir has been the biggest tragedy of modern Indian history and no film has been made to capture the real tragedy of what has been going on there for the last twenty-five years', recounts Bhardwaj in the introduction to the screenplay of *Haider*. He began reading *Curfewed Nights* with *Hamlet* in mind; 'The stories in the book gripped me,' he

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<sup>427</sup> Onir is very active on Facebook and Twitter where he discusses his projects in detail. The Jaisalmer shoot was shared with followers on twitter and Facebook. See for instance, <https://twitter.com/iamonir/status/542319822982234112>, (9 December 2014) [accessed 13 June 2016]) His shoot in Stratford-Upon-Avon capitalised on the media attention already surrounding Shakespeare's birth anniversary. See Subhash K. Jha, *Onir Shoots at Shakespeare's Birthplace for 'Veda'*, <http://www.dnaindia.com/entertainment/report-onir-shoots-at-shakespeare-s-birthplace-for-veda-2082034>, (DNA e-paper, 30 April 2015) [accessed 13 June 2016].

<sup>428</sup> See, for instance, Subhash K. Jha, *Onir, Tigmanshu Dhulia to make Hamlet*, <http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/news/1812364/Onir-Tigmanshu-Dhulia-to-make-Hamlet>, (14 May 2013) [accessed 1 September 2014].

<sup>429</sup> Bhardwaj, Interview with Koel Chatterjee, (London, April 25, 2016).

<sup>430</sup> See Harneet Singh, 'Kashmir is the Hamlet of My Film,' Says Vishal Bhardwaj on *Haider*', *The Indian Express*, (5 October 2014) <http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/kashmir-is-the-hamlet-of-my-film/> [accessed 17 October 2014].

said.<sup>431</sup> A few weeks later, Bhardwaj met Peer in New Delhi and began a collaboration combining Bhardwaj's knowledge of Shakespeare with Peer's journalistic realism to create a screenplay that was an adaptation of *Hamlet* within the world of *Curfewed Nights*.<sup>432</sup>

Vishal Bhardwaj's wife and the popular singer Rekha Bhardwaj has said that '*Haider* is the best film of Vishal's career'.<sup>433</sup> Many critics in mainstream Indian media have agreed with this assessment.<sup>434</sup> The film was screened at the 19th Busan International Film Festival and released worldwide on 2 October 2014 to wide critical acclaim. *Haider*, going against the convention of depicting Kashmir as Paradise or as a haven for terrorists, choosing to position itself instead as an 'unflinching commentary' about the controversial political history of Kashmir, connected strongly with both Indian and Global audiences.<sup>435</sup> The praise that *Haider* received upon release was matched, as expected in the emerging far right political climate of India, by an equal amount of outrage in nationalist-minded moviegoers. Surprisingly, in light of the fact that a film about Kashmir highlighting

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<sup>431</sup> Bhardwaj and Peer, Preface.

<sup>432</sup> Singh, '*Kashmir is the Hamlet of My Film*'.

<sup>433</sup> 'Decoding Success of '*Haider*': Reasons Why Shahid's Film Became a hit', *The Indian Express*, (16 October 2014) <<http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/decoding-success-of-haider-reasons-why-shahids-film-became-a-hit/>> [accessed 26 October 2015].

<sup>434</sup> See NDTV, *Filmy Gupshup: Here's Why Haider is Vishal Bhardwaj's Best Film*, (3 October 2014) <<http://www.ndtv.com/video/entertainment/making-of-the-movie/filmy-gupshup-here-s-why-haider-is-vishal-bhardwaj-s-best-film-340400>> [accessed 13 June 2016] or Raja Sen, *Review: Haider may be Vishal Bhardwaj's Best Film*, <http://m.rediff.com/movies/report/review-haider-may-be-vishal-bhardwajs-best-film/20141001.htm>, (1 October 2014) [accessed 13 June 2016].

<sup>435</sup> I use the word 'unflinching' deliberate as it recurs in several reviews of the film both in India and Pakistan. See for instance, Sanjukta Sharma, *Film Review Haider*, <http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/NLNfyiXDL31Dq9zF0NZU8N/Film-review--Haider.html>, (Live Mint, 3 October, 2014) [accessed 16 June 2015], Reema Omer, '*Haider*', *The Friday Times*, (17 October 2014) <<http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/haider/>> [accessed 17 November 2015], Sudhish, *Haider: Beyond the Line of Control*, <http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/cinema-reviews/haider-review/article6469064.ece>, (The Hindu, 3 October, 2013) [accessed 16 June 2015] or Raja Sen, *Review: Haider may be Vishal Bhardwaj's Best Film*, <http://m.rediff.com/movies/report/review-haider-may-be-vishal-bhardwajs-best-film/20141001.htm>, (1 October 2014) [accessed 13 June 2016].

the Indian army's human rights abuses would usually be welcome in Pakistan, the film was also banned there, with the local censor objecting to the film's allegedly 'controversial and propagandist nature.'<sup>436</sup> Globally, the controversial nature of the film led to twitter being divided in two hashtags #BoycottHaider and #HaiderTrueCinema within days of the film's release, and this helped with the box office performance of the film; made with a budget of ₹240 million (US\$3.6 million) with Bhardwaj and Kapoor foregoing their fees in an attempt to keep down costs, the film went on to earn ₹690 million (US\$10 million).<sup>437</sup> It also won five National Film Awards and was the first Indian film ever to win the People's Choice Award at the Rome Film Festival.

Bhardwaj was the first Indian director to make full length adaptations of both *Macbeth* and of *Othello* in the mainstream Hindi film industry and chose to focus on placing both these films within a global cinema tradition of Shakespeare adaptations. *Hamlet*, however, has a long history on the Hindi screen, with one silent version which is lost, as well as two popular full length adaptations by renowned actor-directors Modi and Sahu in 1935 and 1954 respectively. More importantly, *Hamlet* also has a long and established stage history in India; for the first time, Bhardwaj places his adaptation quite distinctly within that tradition. Usually produced as part of the English theatre tradition in India, in Kolkata, Hamlet is frequently represented as a 'revolutionary who dies a martyr's death in an often-doomed political

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<sup>436</sup> Omar Waraich, *Hamlet in Kashmir*, (2014) <<http://roadsandkingdoms.com/2014/hamlet-in-kashmir/>> [accessed 26 October 2015].

<sup>437</sup> Bhardwaj discusses the budget of the film in *Why Bang Bang Vs Haider is Not a 'Clash of the Titans'*, <http://movies.ndtv.com/bollywood/why-bang-bang-vs-haider-is-not-a-clash-of-the-titans-672374>, (29 September 2014) [accessed 17 October 2014]. Box office collections were announced by Bollywood Hungama News Network, *Worldwide Collections of Haider*, <http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/box-office/special-features/id/391>, (3 October 2014) [accessed 17 October 2014].

struggle'.<sup>438</sup> In *Haider* then, for the first time we see Bhardwaj openly bringing together the indigenous assimilative strategies of adapting Shakespeare for local Indian contexts with his experiments with Indian and global cinematography.

I will begin this chapter, therefore, by examining a selection of collegiate and commercial stage *Hamlets* to document and evaluate the pedagogic tradition of playing *Hamlet* as well as the Bengali tradition of politicising *Hamlet*. I will then move on to discuss Modi's *Hamlet* (1935) which was based on a popular adaptation for the Parsi theatre and Sahu's *Hamlet* (1954), which was a shot-by-shot imitation of Lawrence Olivier's adaptation. I will then briefly comment upon the Revenge genre in Bollywood and the *Devdas* subgenre, a literary hero who is frequently called the *Hamlet* of India, created by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. I will suggest some recognisable echoes of *Hamlet* which can be traced in mainstream Bollywood cinema to demonstrate the pervasive influence of this play in popular culture in India. I will conclude by analysing *Haider* as an adaptation of *Hamlet* and chart the development of Bhardwaj's brand of *auteur* cinema. *Haider* will be considered as another important step in his journey to ensure that Indian Shakespeare films are considered as part of a global body of Shakespeare adaptations: the final art of the trilogy has thus made it imperative to recognise Hindi film as world cinema.

### ***Hamlet on the Indian Stage***

*Hamlet* was one of the earliest plays to be performed after Shakespeare was introduced to India: Poonam Trivedi notes that it was first performed in 1775 in

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<sup>438</sup> Paromita Chakravarti, 'Urban Histories and Vernacular Shakespeares in Bengal', in *Performing Shakespeare in India: Exploring Indianness, Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Shormishtha Panja and Babli Moitra Saraf (SAGE Publications, 2016), p 42.



Calcutta, in English, by the English traders.<sup>439</sup> The earliest recorded instance of recitation of soliloquies from *Hamlet* was in 1829 at Hindu College, Calcutta.<sup>440</sup> It was also one of the first plays to be translated into several Indian languages.<sup>441</sup> What is intriguing, however, is that though several translations of *Hamlet* exist, performances of this play have been distinctly fewer than those of the other major tragedies. When it has been performed, it has usually been in English with Hamlet dressed in the customary Tudor-style clothes, even in post-independence productions. Trivedi ascribes this to the political significance of the play in colonial and post-colonial contexts in India; ‘rarely is it seen in terms of a domestic revenge tragedy of familial aberrations or of Freudian resonances’.<sup>442</sup> I concur with Trivedi’s assessment of the political significance of *Hamlet* in India, and will demonstrate how Bhardwaj’s political agenda in *Haider* is part of a larger tradition of using *Hamlet* to comment on politics at various significant moments in the history of India. However, I will also argue that *Hamlet* has resisted widespread indigenisation precisely because of the fascination it has held for educators and students: it has remained the subject matter for ‘high-brow’ audiences and Shakespeare traditionalists whenever it has been performed. Moreover, I suggest that the main theme of *Hamlet* - inner conflict and painful choice - has been broken down and reconceptualised in the mainstream Hindi film industry in two distinct genres: a domestic tragedy in *Devdas* (1917) and all its adaptations over the years, and as revenge tragedy, for example, in *Sholay* (1975), *Agneepath* (1990) and *Baazigar* (1993).

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<sup>439</sup> Poonam Trivedi, ‘“ Play [Ing]’s the Thing”: Hamlet on the Indian Stage’, *Hamlet Studies*, 24 (2002), pp 56-80.

<sup>440</sup> Trivedi, p 59.

<sup>441</sup> Trivedi lists Marathi, Bengali, Kannada and Gujrati translations in the list she has compiled at the end of the article I have quoted from above going back to the early 1880s.

<sup>442</sup> Trivedi, p 59.

The Shakespearean text that has most frequently been encountered by Indian students is, then, *Hamlet*; the play is a set text for several universities in India in English undergraduate or postgraduate studies in recent times.<sup>443</sup> It is S.G. Dunn's 1914 edition of *Hamlet* which first encourages performance as an accessory to study and advises students to 'put yourself in the place of the actor...the play will then become real to you.'<sup>444</sup> In the colonial era, touring theatre companies frequently targeted students of English literature as represented in *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) with soliloquies from *Hamlet* as one of the recurring attractions. Fairclough's reading of *Hamlet* at Elphinstone College on February 13, 1878, for instance, was regarded an 'intellectual treat' by the *Bombay Gazette* and in 1882, the Bandmann Company presented *Hamlet* assisted by Parsi students of Grant Medical College, Poona. In fact, several famous actors and directors – in India as in England – began their careers in college productions of *Hamlet*.<sup>445</sup> More importantly, not only was *Hamlet* particularly used by educators as a set text to discuss English Humanism and Drama but also to teach English speech and phonology. George C. Miln for instance, as Trivedi writes, frequently gave readings from *Hamlet* to provide an example of the best 'elocution' of Shakespeare for students and educated Indians.<sup>446</sup> Elocution is

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<sup>443</sup> It is a set text at the undergraduate level for instance, for Jadavpur University [http://www.jaduniv.edu.in/upload\\_files/dept\\_file/1313490111-1.pdf](http://www.jaduniv.edu.in/upload_files/dept_file/1313490111-1.pdf) [accessed 15 June, 2017], Benaras University <http://www.bhu.ac.in/arts/english/downloads/BA-syllabus-%202010%20approved.pdf> [accessed 15 June, 2017] and Gujrat University [http://www.gujaratuniversity.org.in/web/NWD/Downloads/Syllabus/List%20of%20Syllabus/20%20-%20UG-CBCS%20Syllabus%20\(wef%20Jun-2011\)/Arts/Syllabus Arts English Core & Elective Sem 1-to-6 wef 2014.pdf](http://www.gujaratuniversity.org.in/web/NWD/Downloads/Syllabus/List%20of%20Syllabus/20%20-%20UG-CBCS%20Syllabus%20(wef%20Jun-2011)/Arts/Syllabus Arts English Core & Elective Sem 1-to-6 wef 2014.pdf) [accessed 15 June, 2017] and at the Masters level for University of Kerala <http://exams.keralauniversity.ac.in/application/pgeng2013.pdf>, [accessed 15 June, 2017] Delhi University [http://www.du.ac.in/du/uploads/pg-courses/19912\\_MA\\_English.pdf](http://www.du.ac.in/du/uploads/pg-courses/19912_MA_English.pdf) [accessed 15 June, 2017] and Calcutta University [http://www.caluniv.ac.in/academic/English/eng\\_syllabus\\_I.pdf](http://www.caluniv.ac.in/academic/English/eng_syllabus_I.pdf) [accessed 15 June, 2017].

<sup>444</sup> 'A Note on the Study of Shakespeare in India', in *Hamlet*, ed. by S. G. Dunn (London: Hunphrey Milford: OUP), pp. xlix. Dunn was a fellow of Muir Central College, University of Allahabad.

<sup>445</sup> Trivedi, p 60.

<sup>446</sup> Trivedi, p 61.

still taught in schools today as Indians, especially in the metropolitan cities of India – Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai – take pride in being able to master English phonology from a young age, taught usually by nuns and priests.<sup>447</sup> *Hamlet*, in particular, therefore, has traditionally been associated with elite literary pursuits and has thereby become the Shakespeare text most beloved of the erudite middle-class niche audiences of Shakespeare in India, an audience which typically avoids mainstream cinema in favour of Parallel cinema and films such as Rituparno Ghosh's *The Last Lear* (2007) which won the National Award of India for Best Feature Film in English.

It is therefore, not surprising that the longest running popular production of *Hamlet*, *Khoone Nahaq* (Unjust Murder, 1889), was by The New Elphinstone Theatrical Company which had its roots in the amateur club at Elphinstone College. Written by Mehdi Hasan Ahsan with actor-manager Kawasji Khatau in the title role, this play is representative of the appropriative Parsi theatre which drew on the Shakespearean canon to create the hybrid plots that exist in Hindi cinema till today.<sup>448</sup> The popularity of this play can be attested by the multiplicity of versions that exist as a result of piracy.<sup>449</sup> Rajiv Verma writes: 'even the Europeans in Bombay and elsewhere liked his play greatly and it was said that [Khatau] played Hamlet exactly like Henry Irving.'<sup>450</sup> Khatau's mimicry of a white actor even in an indigenised appropriation is characteristic of the colonial Indian Shakespearean

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<sup>447</sup> The top rung schools in Kolkata, for instance, are still the missionary schools led by Roman Catholic nuns as in the case of Loreto House (for girls) or Jesuit priests as in the case of St. Xaviers (for boys).

<sup>448</sup> Rajiva Verma, 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', in *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*, ed. by Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (Pearson Longman, 2005), pp 240 – 259.

<sup>449</sup> Ramanlal K. Yajnik, *The Indian Theatre: Its Origins and its Later Development Under European Influence, with Special Reference to Western India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1933), p 160.

<sup>450</sup> Rajiva Verma, 'Hamlet on the Hindi Screen', *Hamlet Studies*, 24 (2002), p 82.

appropriations as I have discussed in previous chapters. *Khoone Nahaq* interpreted *Hamlet* as a revenge play and interpolated characters, scenes, songs and dances as was the Parsi theatre tradition. Mainstream Bollywood films such as the commercially successful *Sholay* (1975), *Zanjeer* (1973), *Akhri Rasta* (1986), *Agneepath* (1990) and *Baazigar* (1993) typify this tradition of incorporating comic scenes, melodramatic sub plots, and songs and dance within the main revenge plot. Yajnik writes that *Khoone Nahaq* was seen by critics as a ‘travesty of Shakespearean characterisation’ which resulted in ‘the utter ruin of the great tragedy’.<sup>451</sup> This reaction is characteristic of the traditionalists to whom *Hamlet* is the most sacred of texts. Yet, the play was successful on the popular stage and was performed all over the sub-continent by various companies; C. J. Sisson, for instance, cited it as an example of ‘living’ Shakespeare in ‘gorgeous feudal vestments’.<sup>452</sup> Later, in the 1930s, Sohrab Modi played Hamlet to Naseem Banu’s Ophelia for the same production, and then adapted his successful stage version for the first film of the Stage Film Company founded by Modi and his brother Rustam in 1935, which I will discuss subsequently.

Moving on to other stage adaptations of *Hamlet*, I would specifically like to draw attention to two Bengali adaptations as pertinent to my examination of *Haider* in the latter part of this chapter. The first of these was the 1897 adaptation of *Hamlet*, or *Hariraja* (King of Kings) in the Parsi theatre style by Nagendra Chaudhuri, with Amarendra Nath Datta in the title role and Tarasundari as Ophelia which ran for almost three years. Advertised both as a ‘historical drama’ and as a ‘popular and evergreen tragedy’, this production is important as the first commercially successful

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<sup>451</sup> Yajnik, p 162.

<sup>452</sup> Charles J. Sisson, *Shakespeare in India: Popular Adaptations on the Bombay Stage* (R. West, 1977), p 7, 19.

performance of Parsi-style Shakespeare in Bengali.<sup>453</sup> This kind of marketing foreshadows the two audiences of *Hamlet*-centric performances in later years – those who were interested in the revenge action of the play, and others who were interested in the social tragedy aspects of it. In Chaudhuri's production, Claudius was given a devoted wife and was made the commander-in-chief to eliminate incestuous implications and Gertrude was depicted as a virago sacrificing her son for ambition, possibility in imitation of *Khoone Nahaq*'s earlier depiction of the queen. This shifted the murder of Hamlet's father squarely on to the shoulders of Hamlet's mother; indeed, this appears to be the case in most interpretations of the play in India. Moreover, Hamlet was given a sister who is paired off with Horatio and inherits the kingdom at the end, amending the tragic form to an acceptable positive ending as is the custom of tragic melodramas in Indian art forms.<sup>454</sup> What is worthy of note, however, was that the play was set in Kashmir anticipating Bhardwaj's translocation of the play into a Kashmir that would, in postcolonial India, come closer to the 'rotten Denmark' that Hamlet describes. Vikram Thakur ascribes the success of the production to the thorough indigenisation of the plot and lack of explicit acknowledgement of the source play.<sup>455</sup> However, it is also Datta's incorporation of song and dance in the Parsi style I would argue, that took this Bengali adaptation away from the purview of the *Babus* and closer to a mass audience.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> Quotes from *The Statesman*, 19 June, 1887 and *Hindu Patriot*, 20 June, 1899.

<sup>454</sup> In a particularly interesting form of intertextuality, there are echoes, in places, to Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003) where Maqbool/Macbeth is the gangster 'commander-in-chief' to Duncan/Abbaji, is declared 'King of Kings' by the witch-cop Pandit at the beginning of the film, and Sameera/Donalbain and Guddu/Fleance adopt Nimmi/Lady Macbeth's child and 'inherit the kingdom'.

<sup>455</sup> Vikram S. Thakur, 'From 'Imitation' to 'Indigenization': A Study of Shakespeare Performances in Colonial Calcutta', *Alicante Journal of English Studies* 25 (2012), pp 193-208 [https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/27456/1/RAEI\\_25\\_15.pdf](https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/27456/1/RAEI_25_15.pdf) [accessed 26 May, 2016].

<sup>456</sup> Bengali *Babus* were educated middle class gentlemen with a taste for Shakespeare as high-brow art.

The final stage adaptation which I would like to draw attention to is Asit Bose's *Kolkatar Hamlet* (1973), a relatively unknown production and largely forgotten. Located in the adaptive phase where Indians had broken free of colonial anxieties and had begun to deconstruct and 'play with the text of Shakespeare' as described by Trivedi, Shakespeare was most usually being deployed to retaliate against political trauma. Chakravarti describes how the Soviet tradition of presenting Hamlet as 'a questioning and resistant figure' motivates the locating of *Hamlet* within political contexts such as the Indian National Army (INA) uprising of the mid-1940s against the British as well as the Naxal uprisings in the 1970s in, for instance, Utpal Dutt's essay *Dharmotollar Hamlet* (1971).<sup>457</sup> *Kolkatar Hamlet* falls within this vernacular theatrical tradition of Calcutta Hamlets – within a context of violent clashes between the police and youth on Kolkata streets that is an intrinsic part of the urban history of Kolkata. Bose's play was written in response to the killing of Satyen Mitra, playwright-actor, on the streets of Calcutta during the police dispersal of a crowd which had assembled to watch a street play. The larger context was the Naxalite movement, the revolutionary urban-guerilla movement which had captivated the urban young and a political situation in the 1970s that had, of course, distinct parallels with the situation in Kashmir in the 1990s. Bose has written that he wrote the play to prick at the conscience of a deadened middle class:

I was provoked by the cowardice of a theatre – inheritors of a tradition that had once shaken up the colonial rulers – that did not have the guts in the late sixties or early seventies to take stock of a political situation in which young men were being gunned down in the streets of Calcutta...I conceived a situation where someone I had met and talked to in the evening before, is killed at midnight, and when I discover and stand before the dead body the following morning, Satyen-da stands up and challenges me, 'So nobody did a thing, nobody said a word!'<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> See Chakravarti, 'Urban Histories and Vernacular Shakespeares in Bengal', pp. 41-59 for a discussion of this subgenre of Hamlet on stage that continues to be popular in Bengal.

<sup>458</sup> The quote is cited in Nimai Ghosh, *Dramatic Moments: Photographs and Memories of Calcutta Theatre From the Sixties to the Nineties* (Seagull Books, 2000), p 109.

Bose's world is very like Haider's world of the 'disappeared': it invokes stark empathy for a situation that intensely affected only a section of the vast country of India thereby causing an isolation and disenfranchisement that is felt by many Kashmiris in India today. This production had Hamlet on the streets among the urban guerrillas clashing with the police and members of the parliamentary left, a revolutionary much like Haider; he is described as one who found 'a personal consummation in the violence with which they challenged State and Society'. Bose managed to convey the state of terror that held the city in thrall, and pulled off, as Samik Bandhopadhyay recalls, 'unexpected transitions from the farcical to the melodramatic to the discursive to the fantastic to the grimly naturalistic, allowing Death itself a presence in a political scenario'.<sup>459</sup> The production did not run beyond five or six shows but the context of the play finds profound resonance in Bhardwaj's political intentions behind amalgamating *Curfewed Nights* with *Hamlet* in *Haider* to draw attention to a geographical and political location within India that was alien even to Indians.

These three productions chart the stages of adaptation of Shakespeare in India as described by Trivedi and Verma in their work.<sup>460</sup> They describe, moreover, the transformation of a text previously monopolised by the elite as a tool to perpetuate colonialism and traditionalism into one deployed for social and political commentary to speak directly to the masses. Previous action-adventure Bollywood films such as *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Fiza* (2000) have taken up the subject of Kashmir and militancy; *Haider*, however, is unique in that it presents the Kashmir

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<sup>459</sup> Samik Bandhopadhyay in the Notes to the photographs in *Dramatic Moments: Photographs and Memories of Calcutta Theatre From the Sixties to the Nineties* (Seagull Books, 2000), p 90.

<sup>460</sup> See, Trivedi 'Filmi' Shakespeare', p 63, Verma. 'Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema', pp 240-259 and Verma, 'Shakespeare in Indian Cinema: Appropriation, Assimilation, and Engagement', pp 83 - 96.

conflict from the perspective of middle-class Kashmiris through the lens of *Hamlet* thus presenting Hamlet both as an individual and as the collective people of Kashmir. In his third Shakespearean adaptation, Bhardwaj thus stretches the boundaries of mainstream *masala* films to adapt Shakespeare as political protest in an era just before the rise of the Hindutva movement in India.

### ***Hamlet on the Hindi Screen: Haider's Predecessors***

The revenge genre was most popular in the 70s, 80s and 90s with films such as *Sholay* (1975), *Zanjeer* (1973) and *Agneepath* (1990) which gave rise to the anti-hero figure epitomised by Amitabh Bachhan. These films equated vengeance with justice and it was considered the protagonist's duty to avenge the wrongful murder of a father (or wife or son in certain cases) based on the Hindu concepts of *karma* [fate] and *dharma* [duty].<sup>461</sup> Any delay in the enactment of vengeance was never because of any philosophical dithering about the morality of murder; rather it was purely due to circumstances or advance planning, such as the need to verify a murderer's guilt with the use of a Mousetrap device as in *Karz* (1980). There have been a few revenge dramas in Bollywood that deliberately reference *Hamlet*.

*Eklavya: The Royal Guard* (2007), for instance, is a revenge tragedy featuring the murder of a king and a mentally challenged princess and has distant, if convoluted, similarities with Shakespeare's play. Similarly, *Karz* and *Om Shanti Om* (2007) both

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<sup>461</sup> When, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna finds himself being forced to take up arms against his brother, cousins, uncles and teachers, he is counselled by Krishna that it is both his *karma* and *dharma* that has brought him to this pivotal point in life. Karma is the fate we have written for ourselves through our past actions; dharma is the duty and obligations that arise from our karma. 'If, having recourse to self-conceit, thou thinkest - I will not fight, - that resolution of thine would be vain, (for) Nature will constrain thee. That which, from delusion, thou dost not wish to do, thou wilt do involuntarily, bound by thy own duty springing from (thy own) nature.' (*Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 18, verses 59–60).



use the mousetrap device as sensationally choreographed pieces of theatre in order for the protagonist to ‘catch the conscience’ of the murderer.

Hamlet’s irresolution, on the other hand, has been the subject of another subgenre of films – the tragic melodramas inspired by *Devdas*, the protagonist of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s novel *Debdas* in which a young man of noble birth, thwarted from marrying his childhood sweetheart, turns to alcohol and dies an ignominious death on his beloved’s doorstep. First published in Bengali in 1917, the novel was soon translated into other major Indian languages. Moreover, as observed by Creekmur, ‘the early adaptation of the story into a film by Naresh Chandra Mitra in 1928 and repeatedly thereafter by other film makers in both official and unofficial remakes, has ensured a deep familiarity more approvingly associated with ancient, sacred and mythic rather than modern, secular and popular texts’.<sup>462</sup> As one of the ‘central myths of modern India’, the incarnations of *Devdas* in both male and female form across various artistic mediums over the years have been frequently described as an Indian Hamlets.<sup>463</sup> Sudhir Mishra’s upcoming adaptation of *Devdas*, for instance, is inspired both by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and by Shakespeare.<sup>464</sup> In fact, in Bhardwaj’s film, when Haider first lashes out at Ghazala after finding her with his uncle, he storms out of the house with Ghazala pleading with him and trailing behind; the scene is keenly reminiscent of the iconic final sequence of Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Devdas* (2002) where Paro desperately runs towards the main doors as they close on a dying *Devdas* crying out his name. The two central themes of

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<sup>462</sup> Corey Creekmur, ‘Remembering, Repeating, and Working through *Devdas*’, in *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*, ed. by Heidi R. M. Pauwels (NY: Routledge, 2007), p 173.

<sup>463</sup> See, for instance, Girish Karnad, *Hamlet of the East*, <http://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/hamlet-of-the-east/225723>, (22 November, 2004) [accessed 20 November, 2015].

<sup>464</sup> See Sudhir Mishra’s ‘*Aur Devdas*’ a Tribute to Shakespeare, <http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/sudhir-mishras-aur-devdas-a-tribute-to-shakespeare/>, (11 August, 2015) [accessed 15 August, 2015].

*Hamlet* therefore – revenge and indecision – have frequently been split into two separate film genres in India to appeal to different audiences.

All three known Hindi/Urdu full length film adaptations of *Hamlet*, derive from the Parsi theatre tradition. Raja Athavale's silent film adaptation in 1928 is lost and little is known about it. Verma writes that though it was advertised as *Hamlet*, it also had the alternate title of *Khoone Nahak* which leads to the conjecture that it too was based on Mehdi Hasan's play. *The Bombay Chronicle* of 27 October 1928 announced the screening 'tonight and during this week' of 'Excelsior Film Company's Masterpiece production *Hamlet*, featuring Miss Yakbal, Miss Rampyari and Mr. K.C. Roy'.<sup>465</sup> Verma, however, reports that the film was withdrawn before the week was over, indicating that it was probably not a commercial success.<sup>466</sup>

Sohrab Modi's *Hamlet alias Khoon ka Khoon* [Blood for Blood] was essentially a reproduction of the popular play that also starred Modi as Hamlet and Naseem Banu as Ophelia. When Modi founded the Stage Film Company with his brother Rustam, he chose to reprise his role as Hamlet, (with Banu reprising her role as Ophelia) for their first film. 'As the play had proved popular', says Modi in an interview, 'it was decided to film it the way it was presented on the stage – in the same chronological order of scenes, with the movie camera replacing the audience'.<sup>467</sup> This film is also lost, but pictures and interviews survive at the National Film Archives at Pune and books on Indian film histories describe Modi's film as an adaptation of *Hamlet*.<sup>468</sup> The film is said to have had seventeen songs and several additional characters and the costumes and sets appear to be a mixture of

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<sup>465</sup> From digitised copies at the National Film Archive of India.

<sup>466</sup> Verma, *Hamlet on the Hindi Screen*, p 83.

<sup>467</sup> *Filmfare* 17 (25 October 1968), p 15.

<sup>468</sup> For descriptions of the films in film histories, see, for instance, Firoze, Rangoonwalla *75 Years of Indian Cinema* (Indian Book Co., 1975), p 92 and Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemsen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* (Routledge, 2014), p 246.

Muslim-Indian and Elizabethan as was the tradition in Parsi theatre. According to Verma, 'the production showed evidence of familiarity with the tradition of English stage productions of the play, not only in the portrayal of Hamlet but also in various details of staging.'<sup>469</sup> This of course speaks to the pedagogical importance of the play for Indians and the awareness of western scholarly critical tradition regarding the play that actors and producers have always had of *Hamlet*. Pictures that survive depict Modi imitating the canonical pensive pose of Hamlet, possibly delivering a soliloquy in a manner similar to English performers such as Garrick, Olivier and Gielgud. In the closet scene, however, Modi had large portraits of King Hamlet and Claudius mounted on stands rather than the miniatures in lockets as in Olivier and Kishore Sahu's versions. And, in a self-reflexive manner acknowledging the Shakespearean source of the film reminiscent of Gulzar's *Angoor*, in the Mousetrap scene at the top of the Western proscenium stage, amidst the usual decorative figures of nymphs and cupids, is the Chandos portrait of Shakespeare himself overseeing the action on the outer stage.

Sahu explicitly stated his intent of reproducing a famous western Shakespeare on the Hindi/Urdu screen.<sup>470</sup> Esha Niyogi De conjectures that 'he sought to rival the original and accrue symbolic capital in domestic and international elite cinema culture', a comment which might well be applied to Bhardwaj's later Shakespeare trilogy.<sup>471</sup> Sahu was a minor film star with a BA in English Literature acquired in the colonial period and an interest in the European classics. In several interviews, he has commented that '*intelligent picturegoers* (italics mine) remark that all heroes (and villains) of Hindi pictures are stereotyped'. Stressing that films in

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<sup>469</sup> Verma, *Hamlet on the Hindi Screen*, p 85.

<sup>470</sup> Kishore Sahu, 'My Memorable Roles', *Filmfare* (December 1967) p 23.

<sup>471</sup> Esha N. De, 'Modern Shakespeares in Popular Bombay Cinema: Translation, Subjectivity and Community', *Screen*, 43 (2002), pp 19-40.

which characters unaccountably broke into lusty songs were infantile, he proclaimed that an artist such as he found ‘small pleasure in filling the conventional roles allotted in a Hindi picture’.<sup>472</sup> Bhardwaj has shown a similar dissatisfaction with his own early role in the Hindi film industry; he too has repeatedly quipped that he began directing films in order to be able to hire himself as a music director as the films he was being offered did not appeal to his artistic taste.<sup>473</sup> However, where Bhardwaj set about transposing and translocating Shakespeare to a modern Indian context in order to make a global Shakespeare film for the masses, Sahu decided to recreate Lawrence Olivier’s 1948 adaptation as a more academic pursuit, thereby positioning his film as high-art within the commercial Hindi film industry. He recruited a professor of English literature, B. D. Verma, as one of the scriptwriters along with Urdu writer Amant Hilal and John Regan, an English choreographer who had worked with Olivier as consultant.<sup>474</sup> The result was a scholarly exercise in imitation; it chimed with the academic pursuits of the Bengali intelligentsia who valued any translation or adaptation of *Hamlet* as a pure and intellectual pursuit rather than a commercial entertainment for the masses.

## **Haider**

Bhardwaj’s *Haider*, then, as identified above, has a long and established tradition of Indian Hamlets on which to draw upon. It makes use of the Soviet-Bengali theatrical tradition of Hamlet as a figure of political resistance; in terms of film genre, in *Haider*, Bhardwaj relocates Shakespeare in a specific geographic and political landscape which is culturally significant for Indians: he uses the blood and

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<sup>472</sup> Kishore Sahu, ‘Complex Character Roles’, *Filmfare* (11 July 1952) p 23, Sahu, ‘My Memorable Roles’, *Filmfare* (December 1967) p 23.

<sup>473</sup> Vishal Bhardwaj, Interview with Koel Chatterjee, (London, 26 April, 2016).

<sup>474</sup> Information collated from De and Verma.

snow aesthetics of American films such as *Dr. Zhivago* (1965) and *Fargo* (1996) while his soundtrack highlights the Urdu antecedents of Hindi language film and pays homage to Kashmiri musical traditions. This is in keeping with how, in the key Shakespeare adaptations studied so far in this thesis, Gulzar, Khan and later Bhardwaj himself orchestrate geography, visual aesthetics and music to locate their Shakespeare adaptations firmly within the generic realm of middle-of-the-road cinema. However, as *The Hindu* notes of Bhardwaj's decision to adapt Hamlet and set it in 1990s Kashmir: 'It takes some amount of guts, ambition and skill to ride two wild horses — at the same time' and this observation perhaps best explains the dilemma of *Haider*.<sup>475</sup> Bhardwaj had previously kept politics in the background in his films, now the Kashmir conflict struggles to dominate. This lends a a curious schizophrenic quality to a film that is, essentially, about a young man on the edge of madness and a young woman pushed over that edge.

As mentioned above, Bhardwaj is no longer the only Shakespeare director in Bollywood. Several mainstream film makers have recently been pushing the boundaries of commercial cinema within Bollywood and many have also begun to claim expertise in Shakespearean material because of their education and training. Dhulia, for instance, claimed: 'I think I am more qualified to make a film on [*Hamlet*] than anyone else. I've not only studied that play minutely I also studied *Hamlet* at drama school under a very famous Shakespearean drama teacher.'<sup>476</sup> Suddenly, therefore, we begin to see a new awareness of Shakespeare scholarship in *Haider*; Bhardwaj discusses Freudian interpretations of *Hamlet* in his interview with Professor James Shapiro in 2015 and references 'Horwendil' in the introduction to

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<sup>475</sup> Sudhish Kamath, *Haider: Beyond the Line of Control*, <http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/cinema-reviews/haider-review/article6469064.ece>, (The Hindu, 3 October, 2013) [accessed 16 June 2015].

<sup>476</sup> Subhash K. Jha, *Onir, Tigmanshu Dhulia to make Hamlet*.

the script of *Haider*, Hamlet senior's counterpart in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, one of Shakespeare's sources for *Hamlet*.<sup>477</sup> This is quite a distance travelled by the film maker who, on the release of *Maqbool* a decade earlier, had claimed very little knowledge of Shakespeare and Shakespearean criticism.

*Haider*, as a result, is, quite 'footnote-heavy' and is dense with metaphor, as has been noted by several film critics, pointing to Bhardwaj's increased self-consciousness about his work with Shakespeare and the global attention it receives today.<sup>478</sup> The deliberate choice of making Hilaal/Hamlet senior a doctor, for instance, is unmistakable; once he is taken away, the images of rot, decay and corruption that pervades *Hamlet* begins to infiltrate and contaminate *Haider* as well.<sup>479</sup> Further, when Haider is being sent away, Hilal protests '*is marz ki dawa nahin*' [that isn't the cure for this illness]. Hilal is a doctor who is trying to restore his sick hometown to health and does not differentiate between civilian and militants while dispensing cures. When he ends up treating a militant, however, it is for appendicitis – something has got to be excised for health to be restored. Haider too has a burden to bear: when we first see him, he is carrying a backpack, perhaps a metaphor for the baggage he carries as a representative of Peer's Kashmir, or as an actor entrusted with playing a literary character with so much historical and cultural baggage. The sheer level of metaphorical detail renders this film as dense as a novel

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<sup>477</sup> See a transcript of selected portions of Bhardwaj's talk with James Shapiro at *Decoding Shakespeare: Vishal Bhardwaj on Haider at NYIFF*, (The Review Monk, May 17, 2015) <<http://thereviewmonk.com/article/decoding-shakespeare-vishal-bhardwaj-haider-nyiff/>> [accessed 14 May 2016].

<sup>478</sup> Baradwaj Rangan, "*Haider*"... very Well made, if a Tad Too Footnote-Heavy – but Why 'Hamlet'? (4 October, 2014) <<https://baradwajrangan.wordpress.com/2014/10/04/haider-very-well-made-if-a-tad-too-footnote-heavy-but-why-hamlet/>> [accessed 2 October, 2015].

<sup>479</sup> Caroline F. Spurgeon has detailed these references in *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it Tells Us* (Cambridge University Press, 1935), p 316.

at certain moments: the words of both Shakespeare and of co-writer Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* weigh heavy on the script.

Peer's memoir records a brutal conflict responsible for the deaths of thousands of people in 1990s Kashmir. John F. Burns of the *New York Times* wrote in 1995: 'For India, ruling Kashmir has come down to something like an occupation: an army and police force of at least 300,000, bunkers everywhere, search operations that paralyze daily life and shoot-to-kill orders. Kashmiri human rights groups say two-thirds of the 30,000 people killed in the five-year conflict have been civilians.'<sup>480</sup> Bhardwaj uses the first hour of *Haider*, the pre-interval section, to paint a picture about this world within modern India that is as alien to Indians as it is to global audiences. '*Poora Kashmir qaidkhana hain* [All of Kashmir is a prison],' Haider observes; it is this fraught territory of Kashmir at the peak of militancy in the mid-nineties that is the 'rotten state' in which Bhardwaj sets his adaptation of *Hamlet*.<sup>481</sup> And it is in this first hour of the film that we begin to realise that Kashmir is the Hamlet of Bhardwaj's adaptation as much as Haider: 'It's all part of an overwhelming complexity of what has happened in Kashmir,' says Peer, 'where the personal is always mixed up with the political.'<sup>482</sup> In perhaps the most chilling sequence of the movie, a truck full of bodies arrives at a morgue, and a boy jumps up from the bloodstained pile, dazed to discover he is still alive. 'I was taking material from stories I had reported on and grafting them onto Shakespeare,' Peer said in an interview.<sup>483</sup> This is the chief cause for the density of detail in the film; autobiographical elements from Peer's own life and experiences have inevitably

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<sup>480</sup> Omar Waraich, *Hamlet in Kashmir*.

<sup>481</sup> Bhardwaj and Peer, p 64.

<sup>482</sup> Basharat Peer. Interview with Koel Chatterjee. Email. 14 February, 2016.

<sup>483</sup> Vaibhav Vats, '*Bollywood Takes on the Agony of Kashmir, through Shakespeare*', *The New York Times*, (27 October 2014) <<http://mobile.nytimes.com/2014/10/28/arts/international/in-haider-vishal-bhardwaj-draws-from-hamlet.html>> [accessed 1 November 2014].

seeped into the Shakespearean narrative. When Ghazala/Gertrude begins to fear that a young Haider is getting influenced by militants at school her father-in-law advises her to send him away, outside of Kashmir: 'Let him see the other side of India', he says, '*Jahaan na din pe pehre hain na raat pe taalein* [where days are not guarded, nor nights in curfew].' He is sent to Aligarh, a university town in north India, to shelter him from the violence overtaking Kashmir. Peer, like Haider in the film, was born in the district of Anantnag in Kashmir and studied at Aligarh Muslim University.

However, Haider's rebellion continues as he studies the revolutionary poets of British India at university and returns after learning that the Indian army has bombed his old family home, and his father is missing after he was caught giving sanctuary to a militant. Bhardwaj deliberately chooses middle class professions for all the protagonists to call on the empathy of his middle-class audiences: 'I wanted to observe the human tragedy that a regular middle-class family went through. What happened to the families that didn't move away? What happened to the mother who was a teacher, the father who was a doctor, the uncle who was a lawyer?'<sup>484</sup> The characters in *Haider* parallel the lives of Kashmiris, precariously caught in the political impasse between India and Pakistan and heavily militarised under the controversial colonial-era Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, or the AFSPA. Witnessing that his mother, a teacher, has found protection in the arms of her brother-in-law is the last straw for Haider and he resolves to respond with 'chutzpa' which he pronounces as 'chootz-pah' (with the 'ch' sound as in 'Charlie'). Ryan Gilbey of *The New Statesman* expresses confusion about all the actors' inability to

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<sup>484</sup> Harneet Singh, '*Kashmir is the Hamlet of My Film, Says Vishal Bhardwaj on Haider*', *The Indian Express*, (5 October 2014) <<http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/kashmir-is-the-hamlet-of-my-film/>> [accessed 17 October 2014].



pronounce chutzpah ‘properly’, thereby missing one of the most enjoyable word-plays in the film.<sup>485</sup> The first syllable of ‘Chutzpah’, pronounced ‘chootz-pah’ sounds like a commonly used profanity in India. ‘The joke was Vishal’s’ said Peer when questioned about its origins at a seminar at Ashoka University.<sup>486</sup> Although it is used as a profanity, it is typically employed to denote a perverse audaciousness that echoes Hamlet’s ‘antic disposition’.<sup>487</sup> It also rhymes with AFSPA, thereby drawing attention to the arbitrariness of the Act, even as it escapes the censors. Pushing the ‘chootz-pah’ even further, Haider, in fact, deploys the actual language of the Act in his Lal Chowk [Red Square] scene to ‘counterfeit the madman’.<sup>488</sup>

This fooling with language to critique power is an important part of *Hamlet* and is also amply employed in *Haider*, as is the dark humour and the obsession with death that Bhardwaj readily confesses is one of his obsessions.<sup>489</sup> Bhardwaj’s playing with language is also evidenced in the sequence where Khurram/Claudius accuses Roohdaar (Hilaal/Hamlet Senior’s messenger, *rooh* literally means spirit) of murdering his brother Hilaal just after Haider has been told by Roohdaar that his uncle had betrayed his father in order to win his mother. One of Polonius’ first commands to Hamlet is ‘Give thy thoughts no tongue’ (1.3.59) and Hamlet feels constrained to keep his counsel in soliloquy.<sup>490</sup> Therefore, he disguises his

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<sup>485</sup> Ryan Gilbey, *To Pout Or Not to Pout: Hamlet Goes Bollywood*, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/10/pout-or-not-pout-hamlet-goes-bollywood>, (New Statesman, 14 October 2014) [accessed 14 June 2015].

<sup>486</sup> Umang Aggarwal, *Haider Screenplay Writer Basharat Peer Speaks at Ashoka University in Sonapat*, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/events/others/Haider-screenplay-writer-Basharat-Peer-speaks-at-Ashoka-University-in-Sonapat/articleshow/46876828.cms>, (11 April, 2015) [accessed 20 September, 2015].

<sup>487</sup> Bhardwaj credits the source of this joke to the Osho lectures and frequently uses the word himself in conversation in Koel Chatterjee, *Interview with Vishal Bhardwaj*, (26 April, 2016).

<sup>488</sup> Harry Levin, 'The Antic Disposition', *Shakespeare: Hamlet, Casebook Series*, (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp 122-136.

<sup>489</sup> Vishal Bhardwaj, Interview by Preti Taneja at BFI for Indian Shakespeares on Screen), (London, 30 April, 2016).

<sup>490</sup> All references to the text are from William Shakespeare, ‘Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Ed. Philip Edwards’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

personality with a mask like everyone else in the play (except Horatio) who is at some time or the other playing a part. While Khurram speaks, Haider pulls on a red woollen cap over his freshly shaven head physically putting on his motley that will enable him to speak his thoughts freely as an ‘allowed Fool’ (Twelfth Night 1.5).<sup>491</sup> In fact, [Hamlet’s] name derives from the Old Norse Amloði, which means ‘a fool, a ninny, an idiot’ – and, more especially, a Jutish trickster who feigns stupidity.<sup>492</sup> In conversation with James Shapiro at the New York Indian Film Festival, 2015, Bhardwaj displays an awareness of scholarly research including an awareness of Shakespeare’s source, the medieval Scandinavian story of Amleth.<sup>493</sup> This particular sequence, in my opinion, proves that Bhardwaj plays into Levin’s reading of Hamlet as someone who adopts the persona of a Shakespearean Fool in order to verbally attack the court of Denmark. Moreover, to further underline this reading, the action of pulling on the cap also brings to mind the English phrase ‘to pull wool over someone’s eyes’ which has a similar meaning to the Hindi idiom ‘*kisiki ko topi pehnana*’ [to put a cap on someone] and Haider’s expression makes it clear to the audience that he is humouring his uncle at this point.

*Haider*’s intertextual references are not limited to Shakespeare and *Curfewed Nights*. In a profoundly affecting sequence in *Haider*, a man stands at the threshold of his own home, deaf to his mother’s attempts to urge him inside. The passing Roohdaar realizes what is paralysing this man so he frisks him and demands his identity papers. Once the man has been subjected to this search, he proceeds to enter his house. This particular scene comes from a short-story by Akhtar Mohiuddin and

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<sup>491</sup> Levin, in *The Antic Disposition*, details Hamlet’s role as a jester in detail.

<sup>492</sup> J. V. Jensen, ‘Hamlet’, *London Mercury*, XI 65 (March 1925), pp 510-511.

<sup>493</sup> TRM Editors, *Decoding Shakespeare: Vishal Bhardwaj on Haider at NYIFF*, (The Review Monk, May 17, 2015) <<http://thereviewmonk.com/article/decoding-shakespeare-vishal-bhardwaj-haider-nyiff/>> [accessed 14 May 2016].

the actor in the sequence is Basharat Peer; this story-within-a-story has one Kashmiri writer enact the words of another. The vignette crystalizes the effect that terrorism and militarisation has had on the psyche of the people of Kashmir who are continually terrified of falling foul of the military even when entering their own houses; the gross violation of human rights and privacy on a daily basis is brought home to middle-class audiences. Mohiuddin's original story features a young boy, rather than the fully-grown man played by Peer. This is not the first time that Bhardwaj has included his co-writer in the film, of course. What is interesting here though, is that in a film essentially about Peer's own life, his only scene has no dialogue. Although *Haider* is crammed with scenes and dialogue straight out of Peer's *Curfewed Nights*, the dialogue credits only list Bhardwaj. Is Bhardwaj taking ownership of this Shakespearean adaptation just as Peer lays claim to Mohiuddin's story? And is this because Bhardwaj now, after having steeped himself in Shakespeare criticism and proved himself a globally successful Shakespearean adaptor, considers himself The Shakespeare Expert, at least within the Hindi film industry? The answer to this lies in the fact that Bhardwaj inhabits the characters he creates through the dialogues he writes for them; despite collaborating with veteran Bollywood dialogue writers such as Abbas Tyrewala, in all his films Bhardwaj is the sole person credited for dialogues. It is thus, through his experimentation with the language of Bollywood cinema that Bhardwaj has established himself as a 'different kind of film-maker' in the Hindi film industry.<sup>494</sup>

Critics have long debated the character of Hamlet's mother, who, according to Freud and Jones, is central to the motivation of *Hamlet*.<sup>495</sup> Gertrude has very few

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<sup>494</sup> Vishal Bhardwaj. Interview by Koel Chatterjee. Tape Recording. London, 26 April, 2016.

<sup>495</sup> William Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, with a psycho-analytical study by Ernest Jones, M.D. (London: Vision Press, 1947), pp 7-42.

lines in the play and is often overshadowed by Hamlet or Claudius.<sup>496</sup> Ghazala, however, becomes a protagonist of equal importance to Haider in this adaptation. The wives of the ‘disappeared’ (a four-syllabic word in the Kashmiri accent which means people who have been taken away by the government) in Kashmir are called *adhi-beva* or ‘half-widows’ and Haider’s mother, after the disappearance of her husband, is now one of them. Uncertain of whether their husbands are alive or dead, they occupy a limbo that denies them the status of a wife or the dignity of a widow. In this version, then, Gertrude is as caught up between two worlds as Hamlet senior in a purgatory. The first words spoken in the film are ‘*Aatte maujje!* [Oh Mother]’ as the diseased militant screams out in pain. Before the words are uttered, the motherland of Kashmir, with all its fear and suffering, is slowly and silently laid out for the audience. The script has this scene on page 10, indicating that the film makers have consciously centred the action on the mother (and the motherland) and not the backstory of militancy as is the case in the script. Peer was not consciously thinking of Ghazala as a symbol for the ‘motherland’, but in writing the character, and in trying to make this Gertrude a more active participant, he had in mind the many stories involving unsung heroines from the Kashmir struggle: women who are often forgotten in official and unofficial records, and who defy the stereotype of the submissive Muslim woman who stays at home with eyes lowered.<sup>497</sup>

Ghazala, like Gertrude, ‘lives almost by [Hamlet’s] looks’ (4.7.12) and is aware that her son loves his father more than he loves her. Haider has both revolutionary and oedipal tendencies. Intensely worshipful of his father, he is clearly

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<sup>496</sup> See Carolyn Heilbrun, ‘The Character of Hamlet’s Mother’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 8 (1957), pp 201-206, Baldwin Maxwell, ‘Hamlet’s Mother’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (1964), pp 235-246 or John Draper, ‘Queen Gertrude’, in *Hamlet of Shakespeare’s Audience* (Psychology Press, 1967), pp 109-126.

<sup>497</sup> Basharat Peer, Email to Koel Chatterjee, (14 February, 2016).

resentful of his mother but the chemistry between Haider and Ghazala is as electrifying as it is uncomfortable to watch; Haider's psychological angst erupts in a scene where he smashes everything in sight in his burnt down house when Ghazala admits to harbouring feelings for his uncle. Tabu (Ghazala), who is less than a decade older than Shahid Kapoor (Haider), was cast with the intention of underlining this Oedipal tension reminiscent of Lawrence Olivier's *Hamlet* and Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*.<sup>498</sup> These Freudian overtones also somehow seem perfectly at home in the world of some South Asian loveless marriages where frustrated wives devote themselves to their sons.<sup>499</sup> There are also, of course, potent echoes to be found within Bhardwaj's trilogy: Tabu had also portrayed Nimmi/Lady Macbeth in Bhardwaj's *Maqbool (Macbeth)* where she was the mistress of Duncan and desired by Maqbool. Nimmi and Ghazala frequently resemble each other in their sexual prowess; in one scene in *Maqbool* Nimmi and Maqbool are reflected in a mirror; this is replicated by Ghazala and Haider in *Haider* leaving the audience with a sense of discomfort about these inappropriate relationships.

Marilyn French and Patrick Cruttwell, however, have suggested that Hamlet's disgust of Gertrude stems, not from an oedipal complex, but from the disgust he feels for Gertrude's sexuality, there being something almost indecent in an older woman having sexual desires at all.<sup>500</sup> In Muslim tradition, it is not considered incestuous to marry the brother of a dead husband, especially for protection.

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<sup>498</sup> Harmeet Singh, *Tabu: My Role in Haider is to Die for*, <http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/play/my-role-in-haider-is-to-die-for/>, (26 September, 2014) [accessed 01 June, 2016]. The Olivier *Hamlet* had several scenes where mother and son exchange kisses almost like lovers while the Zeffirelli film cast Glen Close, who was just a decade older than Mel Gibson, as Gertrude. At the end of *Haider*, Ghazala kisses Haider on the lips in farewell more like a lover than a mother.

<sup>499</sup> Waraich, <http://roadsandkingdoms.com/2014/hamlet-in-kashmir/>

<sup>500</sup> Marilyn French, 'Chaste Constancy in Hamlet', *New Casebooks: Hamlet*, (1992), pp 96-112, Patrick Cruttwell 'The Morality of Hamlet—'Sweet Prince' or 'Arrant Knave'?', *Hamlet, Stratford upon Avon Studies (London: Edward Arnold, 1963)*, pp 110-128.

However, in Kashmir, ‘half-widows’ customarily wait for four years before remarrying. Haider’s disgust for his mother, therefore, stems not only from incestuous feelings for her but also from the ‘unseemly haste’ with which she married Khurram: *‘Bahut khush lag rahe hain aap log babuji ki jaane ke baad?’* [You both seem very happy after the departure of Father?] Caught between her idealistic husband and opportunistic brother-in-law, Ghazala also is symbolic of Kashmir caught between India and Pakistan. In this aspect too she reminds us of Nimmi/Lady Macbeth, a consummate manipulator desperately trying to achieve love, a home, and security. And once again, as Nimmi was the crown that Maqbool was trying to obtain, Ghazala becomes the prize that both Khurram and Haider want to claim. A woman constantly trying to control an environment that is beyond her control, she finally wrests control by turning into a suicide bomber and killing herself in an attempt to save her son, thereby dramatically changing the ending of this modern-day adaptation of *Hamlet*.

The Hindu philosophy of *dharma* makes it imperative for Haider to avenge his father’s death. Haider’s hesitation therefore arises out of not knowing whom to trust just like Hamlet cannot decide if the Ghost is ‘a spirit of health or goblin damned’ (1.4). Is Khurram the traitor or is Roohdaar a murderer? Roohdaar recounts Khurram’s betrayal and delivers Hilaal’s message to Haider: *‘Use kehna ke who mera inteqaam le mere bhai se. Uski dono aankhon mein mein goliyaan daage, jin aankhon ne uske ma par fareb daalein the, who aankhen joh use yateem bana gaye’* [Tell him to avenge me of my brother. Tell him to put a bullet in each of the eyes which bewitched his mother and cheated her, those eyes that made him an orphan]. However, Roohdaar is an ISI agent who has legitimate reasons to want Khurram dead and may be merely using his incarceration with Hilaal as a means to motivate

Haider to become a militant. And the way the film is shot, the audience only knows of Khurram's betrayal from the point of view of Roohdaar. Further, Roohdaar's recounting of the circumstances of Hilaal's demise cannot be corroborated by Haider in any way. On the other hand, Khurram tells Haider that Rohdaar is an ISI agent responsible for Hilaal's death, which is equally plausible as Roohdaar has somehow escaped Hilaal's fateful end despite being thrown in with him in the cold waters of the Jhelum. In such an impasse, The Mousetrap becomes crucial: this scene only can lay Haider's doubts to rest and determine his actions in seeking revenge.

The Mousetrap scene has been used to great visual effect in several Bollywood films in the past; Shahid Kapoor (*Haider*) found the sequence reminiscent of the sequence in *Karz* in the way song and dance is used to narrate a murder.<sup>501</sup> *Bismil* [wounded] finds acute resonance in the Mousetrap songs of *Karz* and *Om Shanti Om* particularly in the line '*Zinda hain woh zinda hoga* [He lives, he will live]. This line from *Bismil* is also a reiteration of Roohdaar's words in the jail cell: '*Main tha, main hoon, aur mein hi rahoonga*' [I was, I am, and I will always be] and an answer to Haider's question '*Hum hain ki hum nahin?*' [Are we, or are we not?] at Lal Chowk, in one of the many instances of the translation and translocation of the 'To be or not to be' speech from *Hamlet*. Whatever injustices reign upon Kashmir, Kashmir will always be.

As a music composer, Bhardwaj 'knew the mousetrap has to be a big big song number'.<sup>502</sup> He uses the sequence as a musical centrepiece and draws heavily upon his experience of working in Broadway with Sudesh Adhana of Norway by blending Kashmiri folk music with western opera music; in doing so Bhardwaj

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<sup>501</sup> Pankhuri Mulasi, *Shahid Kapoor: 'Haider's Song Bismil Reminds Me of Karz's Ek Haseena Thi'*, [http://www.movietalkies.com/news/24433/shahid-kapoor-'haider's-song-bismil-reminds-me-of-karz's-ek-haseena-thi'](http://www.movietalkies.com/news/24433/shahid-kapoor-'haider's-song-bismil-reminds-me-of-karz's-ek-haseena-thi) edn, (22 August, 2014) [accessed 20 August 2015].

<sup>502</sup> *Decoding Shakespeare: Vishal Bhardwaj on Haider at NYIFF*.

highlights the extraordinary cultural inheritance of Kashmir in particular the fast-disappearing indigenous theatre traditions such as *Bhand Pather*.<sup>503</sup> The song comes at a point in the film when Haider is emotionally upset; Adhana was brought in to choreograph the sequence 'as his dance style is driven more by performance than choreography'.<sup>504</sup> Kapoor is well-known for his dancing skills, and the choreography is designed to depict Haider's anguish and rage, directed at his uncle, and peripherally, at his mother, as the song is set immediately after Ghazala's *nikah* [wedding] to Khurram. The masks and the puppets are reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's ritual scene in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) and the paint on Haider's face and his Shaolin Kung Fu dance moves remind the audience of the war like demeanour of Hamlet senior when we are first introduced to the Ghost and of Prince Hamlet. The Play Scene moves from indoors to outdoors and is set in the ruins of the Hindu temple of Martand (built in 370 AD); the use of the temple as a backdrop also caused a media furore as the temple is portrayed as the 'den of the devil' from which an enormous puppet emerges.<sup>505</sup> Intriguingly, the setting brings to mind Daniel Maclise's painting, *The Play Scene in 'Hamlet'*, exhibited first in 1842. The display caption at Tate begins: 'The 'play within a play' in *Hamlet* was just the sort of dramatic caprice that attracted the Romantics to Shakespeare'. William Makepeace Thackeray who wrote a review of the painting for Ainsworth's Magazine in 1842, describes the sinister shadow on the back wall of the stage in the centre as 'some

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<sup>503</sup> Bhardwaj hired local musicians to play the sarangi and the rabab during the studio recordings and invited the same musicians to join Kapoor during the shoot.

<sup>504</sup> Pankhuri Mulasi, *Shahid Kapoor: 'Haider's Song Bismil Reminds Me of Karz's Ek Haseena Thi'*, <http://www.movietalkies.com/news/24433/shahid-kapoor-'haider's-song-bismil-reminds-me-of-karz's-ek-haseena-thi'>, (22 August, 2014) [accessed 20 August 2015].

<sup>505</sup> Press Trust of India, *Kashmiri Pandits Seek Ban on Film Haider for Misrepresenting Ancient Temple*, <http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/kashmiri-pandits-seek-ban-on-film-haider-for-misrepresenting-ancient-temple/> (7 October, 2014) [accessed 20 August, 2015].



kind of gloating, evil demon'.<sup>506</sup> This conception of Claudius as a devil looming over Hamlet's family so vividly captured by Maclise, in my opinion, suggests what Bhardwaj sought to capture by using the giant puppet that enthralled and upset so many viewers. The Mousetrap sequence in *Haider* thus draws on global interpretations of the sequence across mediums such as art and Broadway theatre to feed into the existing spectacle format in Indian performance traditions to create a piece of theatre that is both indigenous and global in aesthetics.

If the Mousetrap seeks to give potent voice to the lost performance traditions of Kashmir, the final set piece involving the gravediggers were inspired by figures from the more recent Kashmiri past: the old men Peer knew who were trying to save, or avenge, their children. 'When we talk of violence, we usually think of young, able-bodied men,' says Peer, 'but there are so many older people too who picked up guns after losing everything. And people like that don't do this for big ideological reasons, it is purely personal: you lose your child, and all you want to do is destroy the world.'<sup>507</sup> The Gravediggers' song is called for by the original text and the dark humour of the play is translocated quite brilliantly through the songs as well as the dialogue. Bhardwaj, the music director, is much subtler in *Haider* than he was in *Maqbool* or *Omkara*; there is frequent use of silence in the soundtrack demonstrating Bhardwaj's maturity as a director. The three songs that underline and haunt the film – '*Gulon mein rang bharein*' [The flowers blossom their hue] and '*Hum dekhenge*' [We shall witness] which are sung by the imprisoned doctor and the song at the end which is called '*Aaj ke naam*' [A dedication to today] - are taken from Faiz' poetry and thus strike a chord among Kashmiris, Indians and Pakistanis. A critic from

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<sup>506</sup> Daniel Maclise. *the Play Scene in "Hamlet,"* 1842, [http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/PlayScene.html](http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/PlayScene.html) [accessed 20 December, 2012].

<sup>507</sup> Basharat Peer, Email to Koel Chatterjee, (14 February, 2016).

Pakistan where *Haider* was banned writes: ‘Bhardwaj uses Faiz’s poetry in a way never done before on celluloid. When *Gulon mein rang bhare* reverberates through prison cells of tortured detainees at night, it will give you goose bumps. And when *aaj ke naam* plays during the closing credits, you will stay glued to your seats.’<sup>508</sup> In an interesting case of intertextuality, Bhardwaj’s use of Faiz’s poetry references what Verma cites as a peculiar feature of the language of Sahu’s *Hamlet* – its frequent use of quotations from the works of earlier Urdu poets. Thus, Ophelia in her madness sings lines from Bahadur Shah Zafar’s famous poem ‘*Na kisi ka ankh ka noor hoon...*’ [I am not the twinkle in anyone’s eye], Hamlet and Ophelia quote Ghalib’s couplets in one of the romantic scenes, and Polonius’s maxims are well-known Urdu proverbs and couplets. In fact, in a curious case of a quotation functioning as quotation, by which I mean the citing of passages from the classics of one culture to comment on a passage in a classic from another culture, Hamlet with his dying breath quotes the nineteenth century Urdu poet Zauk: ‘*Lae hayaat aaye, kaza le chali, chale/Apni khushi na aaye na apni khushi chale*’ [We came when Life brought us here. When Death asks us to go with her, we shall go. It is not at our pleasure that we either come or go]. Working within such a film tradition then, it is no surprise when Bhardwaj uses Faiz to similarly comment on the situation in Kashmir, or indeed in Hamlet’s Denmark.

Despite the revenge genre roots of the play text and the film, the message of the film is Gandhian: ‘*Inteqaam se sirf inteqaam paida hota hain*’ [Revenge only begets revenge]. This is what Haider’s grandfather tells the Commander of the insurgents, this is what Ghazala tells Haider. The film was released on 2<sup>nd</sup> October,

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<sup>508</sup> Reema Omer, ‘*Haider*’, *The Friday Times*, (17 October 2014) <<http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/haider/>> [accessed 17 November 2015].

on Gandhi's birthday, further leading to the conclusion that Bhardwaj wanted to underline the message of *ahimsa* and non-violence. In the first draft of the film, Bhardwaj recounted at the New York Indian Film Festival, Haider kills Khurram and dies himself, staying true to the original tragedy of the play text.<sup>509</sup> Peer wanted to end the film on a dark note, 'He said that so much has happened we have to show the darkest end possible'. It was Sabrina Dhawan's suggestion after having read the first draft that a future of violence and death would leave the Kashmiris without hope and this observation nagged at Bhardwaj. Haider was intended to be a film about Kashmiris, through the eyes of 'insiders'; it was supposed to be dedicated to them. Leaving them with a message of revenge did not sit well with Bhardwaj and so, despite Peer's protests, Bhardwaj changed the ending of the film to show Haider ultimately overcoming his need of revenge after his mother's sacrifice. And yet, when Haider chooses not to shoot Khurram, the last words we hear are from a bloodied, sobbing Khurram who has lost his legs in the blast as well as the love of his life, desperately begging Haider to end his life for him. Is the fact that Haider walks away really as merciful as Bhardwaj intended? When the screen goes dark on a frame where the white snow is destroyed by fire and blood, the audience is left with Khurram's weeping ringing in their ears, immersed in the darkness that Peer wished to leave the audience, a darkness perhaps intensified in the message of hope that Bhardwaj sought to convey with Haider's abdication of violence at the end of the film.

Meta-theatrically, however, Bhardwaj's ending takes *inteqaam* on Bollywood, in particular on Salman Khan's brand of mindless entertainment purely driven by profit. In this bold statement, *Haider* sets itself apart from *Maqbool* and

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<sup>509</sup> *Decoding Shakespeare: Vishal Bhardwaj on Haider at NYIFF.*

*Omkara* even as it underlines Bhardwaj's confidence as a middle-of-the-road film maker. Salman Khan is hugely popular with the mass audiences of both the rest of India and in Kashmir; however, his films are exactly the kind of formulaic Bollywood films that Bhardwaj protests through his work as a film maker. There are two sequences where we see Indian army personnel enjoying Salman Khan films in theatres they have taken over. In the scene where Hilaal discovers his brother's betrayal, he is standing against a screen on which a Salman Khan song is being projected. This song sequence is from a 1994 film *Sangdil Sanam* which is about a bank manager, falsely accused of robbery and sent to jail for twelve years, who, upon release, realises that he had been framed by his friend who is now the mayor of the town. Elsewhere, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are transformed into the two Salman's, childhood friends of Haider who mimic Salman Khan in looks, speech and gestures. These 'excellent good friends' wear the black cap embossed with 'Friend' that became a national rage after Salman Khan's debut film *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989); the film showed a pre-internet and pre-F.R.I.E.N.D.S. India which made fashionable the notion that the basis of all relationships was friendship. Salman and Salman spy on Haider on the orders of Khurram and Pervez/Polonius for profit as a chilling commentary of our Facebook lives today full of stalker-friends.<sup>510</sup> After the Mousetrap episode, the Salmans attempt to murder Haider on Pervez' orders, but are instead, quite viciously stoned to death by Haider.<sup>511</sup>

Bhardwaj launched his directorial career in reaction to the lack of 'good scripts' in Bollywood; most of his films, in fact, are literary adaptations. Until *Omkara* however, Bhardwaj's motivations as a film maker and auteur had been

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<sup>510</sup> The duo channels the evil clown trope in popular culture which has its origins in literature such as Edgar Allan Poe's *Hop-Frog* (1849) and Stephen King's novel *It* (1986).

<sup>511</sup> This is of course a reference to the intifada-style protests that have erupted in Kashmir since 2008.

focused on entertainment despite his straddling of parallel and commercial cinema mores in India. With *Haider*, we begin to see Bhardwaj the entertainer and social commentator become Bhardwaj the social activist; within the industry, he is known to be anti-extremism, (primarily due to the media attention *Haider* received) a fact which makes him unfavourable to the present Indian government.<sup>512</sup> What is more noteworthy, however, is his almost complete abandonment of commercial Bollywood practice with *Haider*. This is a film clearly meant to connect with a more politically minded and socially aware audience, as well as an audience thoroughly informed in film tradition and in Shakespeare. With *Haider*, Bhardwaj has set himself up as a global Shakespeare authority; the enthusiasm with which the film has been greeted by the global Shakespeare community is proof that he is justified in doing so. Bhardwaj has been invited to screenings and events in New York, Canada, India and London since the release of *Haider* and where the once reticent director shunned the academic spotlight, he has, since *Haider*, engaged in discussion with academics and Shakespeareans across the world. His conversation with Shakespearean scholar and award-winning author, Professor James Shapiro mentioned above was one of the highlights of the New York Indian Film Festival in 2015 for instance, and his appearances for the screening of his trilogy at the British Film Institute in London in 2016 were sold out months in advance.

However, *Haider* also clearly marks a powerful moment where the legacy of Indian Shakespeare films from Parsi Theatre style entertainment for the masses meets with the intellectual cultural concerns of a niche middle-of-the road audience. As I have demonstrated in the chapters above, Shakespeare adaptations always inhabited the world of commercial cinema in India. It seems appropriate that, at a

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<sup>512</sup> Paakhi Tyrewala, Conversation with Koel Chatterjee. Mumbai, 5 July, 2016.

time when school syllabuses are taking Shakespeare off the required reading list, and instead adding contemporary international children's literature such as *Harry Potter*, *Tintin* and *Asterix*, it seems fitting that it is left to the film-makers to carve out a place for Shakespeare somewhere between commercial Bollywood entertainment and the world of Parallel Cinema. It is perhaps, in such hybrid adaptations, Indian and other, that the future of Shakespeare lies.

## Conclusion: Shakespeare Reframed

‘The roots may look lost but every big story in the Hindi film industry is from Shakespeare.’

Naseeruddin Shah<sup>513</sup>

This thesis has demonstrated how film makers in the Hindi film industry have engaged with Shakespearean texts within a niche genre of Hindi films – the middle-of-the-road genre - beginning with the Middle-class cinema of the 1960s and 70s through to the Multiplex films of the current generation. It has explored a hitherto under-examined relationship between Bengali adaptations of Shakespeare and their influence on the evolution of Bollywood Shakespeares. It has also investigated the impact that Shakespeare has had on the Hindi film industry by setting Vishal Bhardwaj’s recent Shakespeare Trilogy within the broader historical context of adapting, assimilating and culturalizing Shakespeare in the Hindi film industry. In doing so it has drawn particular attention to several appropriations of Shakespeare from the 1960s onwards which use Shakespeare to draw attention to indigenous concerns. This narrow focus on the middle-of-the-road genre has not only explored the evolution of Shakespearean adaptations on film in India, it has also identified how collaborative tensions and genre subversions that preceded Bhardwaj did much to create a receptive audience for his work in the post-postcolonial era of Shakespearean adaptations in India. This evolution of Bollywood Shakespeares has also been contextualised in terms of global events which brought Bhardwaj to the attention of the international community, which in turn led to the inclusion of his

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<sup>513</sup> Mandvi Sharma, *Bard in Bollywood*, (8 August, 2006) <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/delhi-times/Bard-in-Bollywood/articleshow/1869205.cms>> [accessed 7 July, 2017].

work in syllabi across the world and discussions at international film and Shakespeare events in the past decade.

This is a field which is in the process of evolving; world events such as the 2012 Globe Shakespeare project and the 2016 anniversary events are continuing to have an impact on the field. The last few years have also witnessed the death of several important personalities in the Hindi film industry which has led to an interest in archiving Hindi cinema and in mining the living archives that may still be available to us. In researching this thesis, therefore, I adopted a methodology of first-person interviews, archival and field research, and analyses of online resources such as Twitter, Facebook and film blogs to supplement traditional literary sources and Shakespeare criticism to overcome the challenges posed in researching a field where archival material are uncatalogued, if available, and records of transmission are still primarily oral. This methodology also overcomes the gaps in current methods of film and literature criticism, which continues to be Hollywood-centric and does not consider the historical narrative traditions which influence writers, film makers and practitioners in the East; it draws attention to the need to supplement traditional western critical practices with an understanding of the motives and purposes of non-Anglophone narrative cultures.<sup>515</sup> My thesis has demonstrated a different approach to examining Bollywood Shakespeares; this methodology is however, equally applicable to other disciplines such as media studies, theatre and global literatures.

The thesis examined the work of Gulzar, Mansoor Khan and Vishal Bhardwaj as separate but connected film-making journeys. The five films which

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<sup>515</sup> Through the course of this thesis I have identified and contradicted western and Indian critics who take a purely western critical approach; this gap in critical methodology is not just a problem with Anglophone critics. Equally, I developed a global critical methodology using existing theory developed by both Indian and Anglophone critics such as Poonam Trivedi, Rajiva Verma and Mark Thornton Burnett.



have been central to the five chapters in this thesis, have all used Shakespeare to investigate tensions between old and new, tradition and modernity, fidelity and nonconformity at particular moments across the last fifty-seven years of Indian history. All five films also share a common thread: the exploration of illicit relationships. As such they give potent voice to the postcolonial baggage that lovers of Shakespeare in India still carry. Torn between the drive towards national independence and the nostalgic pull of Shakespeare, they marry Shakespeare with indigenous performance traditions to legitimise the plays and reinvigorate them for popular consumption in India and beyond. These shared aims in the work of the three directors at different moments of time in the history of Hindi cinema demonstrate that the story of Bollywood Shakespeares is an important part of the evolution of the Hindi film industry itself. Furthermore, by focusing on the middle-of-the-road genre, this thesis has sought to focus on popular aesthetic aspects of both Mainstream cinema and Parallel Cinema such as cinematography and the use of music. It has, then, focused on the work of three directors who have independently used music, regional language, and geography to subvert generic expectations in their innovative interpretations of Shakespeare. As such they have demonstrated what Trivedi terms the ‘third-generation post-colonial...confidence’; they have adapted and culturalized Shakespeare in a manner that is ‘not in awe of Shakespeare, neither plagiarizing him...nor genuflecting to his canonical authority like the faithful imitations’ before 1980.<sup>516</sup>

The bulk of scholarly articles on Bollywood Shakespeares which do exist focus on Bhardwaj’s Trilogy and largely ignore the prehistory of Bollywood Shakespeares, particularly the several mainstream appropriations of Shakespeare in

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<sup>516</sup> Trivedi, *“Filmi Shakespeares”*.

the 1960s which I have identified and analysed in my research. These are included in the Filmography in Appendix iii of this thesis. Part I of this thesis thus addressed the prehistory of the current post colonial engagement with Shakespeare in the Hindi film industry led by Bhardwaj, through an examination of *Angoor* (1984) and *QSQT* (1988). The 1980s was an important decade for the Hindi film industry, poised as it was between the contrasting post-colonial Angry Young Man/Affable Young Man phase of the 1970s, and the post- liberalisation creation of the export product ‘Bollywood’ in the 1990s. Both *Angoor* and *QSQT* surreptitiously acknowledged Shakespeare – while *Angoor* did it in a tongue-in-cheek manner in keeping with the comic genre, Mansoor Khan only openly acknowledged *Romeo and Juliet* as the template for his directorial debut much later, at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of *QSQT* in 2013, by which time Bhardwaj had already brought Shakespeare into the mainstream and made it commercially successful. However, while Bhardwaj was directly influenced by Gulzar’s adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*, it was *QSQT* which popularised the Shakespearean tragic ending and made it commercially successful. An exploration of these two films is thus an exploration of the prehistory of the Bollywood Shakespeare genre.

The thesis began with an analysis of Gulzar’s *Angoor* in Chapter One, a film acknowledged by Bhardwaj as an inspiration in attempting to adapt Shakespeare for a mainstream audience.<sup>517</sup> The scrutiny of *Angoor* enabled me to pinpoint the beginning of experimentations with Shakespeare in the middle-of-the-road genre to discuss how Gulzar located *The Comedy of Errors* within the existing *Judwa* film genre and twinned his Shakespearean adaptation with the commercially successful

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<sup>517</sup> *Today Othello, Tomorrow Hamlet?* The Rediff Interview, Director Vishal Bhardwaj, <http://www.rediff.com/movies/2006/jul/27vishal.htm>, (27 July, 2006) [accessed 7 Feb, 2013].

*Gomaal*, thereby successfully smuggling in Shakespeare into the mainstream. More importantly, in terms of Bhardwaj's later work with Shakespearean adaptations, *Angoor* marked a separation of Shakespeare from its pedagogic baggage: 'In Gulzar sahib's *Angoor*,' says Bhardwaj, 'we get to know that the film is based on *Comedy of Errors* only when Shakespeare winks from a photograph. In fact, it made me realise that Shakespeare was not all that boring as I used to think. That he wrote such comic double roles. Even after that I didn't go to a bookshop to buy *Comedy of Errors*.'<sup>518</sup> The investigation of *Angoor* led to further exploration of the Indian engagement with Shakespeare in the 1960s, a period when the postcolonial reaction to Shakespeare can clearly be seen as divided between those 'in awe of Shakespeare... genuflecting to his canonical authority' and those 'plagiarizing' and 'deconstructing' Shakespeare for their own needs.<sup>519</sup> The analysis of *Angoor*'s precursors, the Bengali *Bhrantibilas* (1963) and the Hindi *Do Dooni Char* (1968) based on the 1869 Bengali prose adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* by Vidyasagar – *Bhrantibilas*, led, in turn, to an examination of the early Imitation Phase and helped ground the thesis in existing literary and archival research on the earliest stages of Shakespeare adaptation in India.

Chapter Two identified and discussed a Shakespeare adaptation that has been neglected by most Shakespeare scholars – *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, a youth film that began by using *Romeo and Juliet* as a prototype for an eternal love story, and ended up appropriating themes and issues central to the Shakespearean play to hold up a mirror to social issues of 1980s India. The chapter began with an investigation into the absence of tragedy in Indian art forms and the importance of Khan's

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<sup>518</sup> Anuj Kumar, 'If I Am Not a Leftist, I Am Not an Artist', *The Hindu*, (5 October, 2014) <<http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/if-i-am-not-a-leftist-i-am-not-an-artist-vishal-bhardwaj/article6471437.ece>> [accessed 12 October, 2014].

<sup>519</sup> Trivedi, p 153

treatment of the tragic ending in *QSQT* before briefly expanding upon Utpal Dutt's contribution towards the assimilation of Shakespeare into popular culture in the 1960s. This chapter also examined the impact of western adaptations of Shakespeare on Hindi films by analysing the influence of *West Side Story* (1961) on *QSQT*, and on *Ek Duije Ke Liye* (1981), an immediate precursor of *QSQT* which dilutes the tragic ending by allowing the lovers to be agents of their own destiny. This chapter, therefore, examined the ways in which Hollywood adaptations of Shakespeare have influenced Indian adaptations. It also further explored my method of categorisation which identifies films as either Shakespeare adaptations versus Shakespeare appropriations films in Indian cinema. In spite of the fact that Bhardwaj does not acknowledge any Hindi film precursors, *QSQT*'s relevance to a consideration of Bhardwaj's trilogy is clear: the film challenges gender stereotypes and the relevance of social practices such as honour feuds within a modern westernised society paving the way for Bhardwaj's more assertive interrogation of socio-political issues facing India today.

Part II of the thesis focused on Bhardwaj's adaptations of three Shakespearean tragedies which have traditionally been popular on stage and in pedagogy in India. While Harold Bloom attributes Shakespeare's adaptability to the 'global and multicultural' universalism of his works, Bhardwaj, as this thesis demonstrates in Chapters Three, Four and Five, values Shakespeare for the way in which the classic tales negotiate historical difference.<sup>520</sup> Bhardwaj's tragic heroes are embedded in their socio-political contexts; unlike their European counterparts, individuality does not require a break from the group. The psychic illness of

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<sup>520</sup> Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Riverhead Books New York, 1998), p 320.

Bhardwaj's tragic heroes is not contained in character alone but functions metonymically as a function of social corruption; eventually, the hero is scapegoated for the regeneration of the group. Bhardwaj, as I have established through this section of the thesis, also indigenises *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Hamlet* further by locating these plays within specific Indian geo-political contexts; he uses locally inspired music and dialects to make his adaptations both global and local. He expands the female protagonists' roles in the context of the narrative and gives these characters a voice that is frequently lacking in previous global adaptations of the play. His Shakespeare Trilogy is then female-centric despite the films being named after the male protagonists. The films are furthermore thematically linked by the man-woman relationship at the core of each film; their exploration of illicit relationships and incestuous love triangles that make these films unusual in an industry which frequently oversimplifies heteronormative romantic love for the requisite happy endings.

Chapter Three: *Maqbool*, began by reiterating how experimentations with Shakespeare have thrived within the middle-of-the-road genre of film making. This chapter underlined how directors who have attempted to subvert or reinvent genres have turned to Shakespeare time and again and how collaborative tensions have resulted in the evolution of Bollywood Shakespeares as a sub-genre within the middle-of-the-road genre. *Maqbool* was conceived as a Multiplex film aimed at a niche audience by marrying commercial cinema aesthetics with a parallel cinema narration. Hailed as a crossover film, *Maqbool* was identified by Trivedi as an 'outstanding example' of the current postcolonial confidence to 'play around' with and deconstruct Shakespeare for our own needs'.<sup>521</sup> My close reading of sequences

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<sup>521</sup> Trivedi, "Filmi" Shakespeare, p 153.

from the film disproved Bhardwaj's initial claims that 'Maqbool is not meant for Shakespearean scholars' and demonstrated how Shakespeare's language had been deconstructed and translated into cinematic language with careful deliberation.<sup>522</sup>

This chapter also explored the impact of non-Anglophone Shakespeares on Indian Shakespeare adaptations through an examination of the ways in which Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) inspired Bhardwaj to use Shakespeare to reach global audiences.<sup>523</sup> Bhardwaj's predilection towards using cinema to comment on socio-political issues was also identifiable in this first Shakespeare adaptation where he used the relationship between Duncan and Macbeth to draw attention to the social reality of 'an older patriarchal order being hollowed out by the ruthless pursuit, impelled by forces within that very same order, of money and power'.<sup>524</sup>

If *Maqbool* was conceived as a niche film, *Omkara* was a glittering mainstream Bollywood film featuring Bollywood Stars, allusions to Hindu mythology, and item numbers: 'I proved to the country that Shakespeare can be masala'.<sup>525</sup> Chapter Four: *Omkara*, considered how Shakespeare was embedded into a mainstream Shakespeare film and culturalized for popular consumption in a manner hitherto unseen in the Hindi film industry. This chapter also analysed a well-known Bengali appropriation of *Othello* – *Saptapadi* (1961) and a previously unidentified Hindi appropriation – *Izzat* (1968) – to discuss how both these appropriations use the play to question race and national identity in 1960s India. This sets the stage for these same questions to be explored in light of gender roles and tensions between tradition and modernity in post-postcolonial India. As a

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<sup>522</sup> Arthur J. Pais, *Maqbool is Not Meant for Shakespearean Scholars*.

<sup>523</sup> See *Today Othello, Tomorrow Hamlet?* and *'If I Am Not a Leftist, I Am Not an Artist'*.

<sup>524</sup> Supriya Chaudhuri, "'What Bloody Man is that?'" Macbeth, Maqbool, and Shakespeare in India', p 102.

<sup>525</sup> Box Office India, *"I Proved to the Country that Shakespeare can be Masala..."* - Vishal Bhardwaj.

mainstream Bollywood film, an analysis of the marketing of *Omkara* as an adaptation of Shakespeare in this chapter also led to an examination of how Bollywood Shakespeares taps into the present international interest in Bollywood as a culture industry and the Hindi film industry's attempts to market itself as global cinema to the West.

Chapter Five: *Haider* is a commentary on the violence of the state. This third film in Bhardwaj's Shakespeare Trilogy builds, as part II of the thesis demonstrates, on *Maqbool*'s depiction of urban violence and *Omkara*'s review of rural violence to position itself as an 'unflinching commentary' about the controversial political history of Kashmir.<sup>526</sup> The provocative subject of the film sparked a twitter war with #BoycottHaider and #HaiderTrueCinema trending on social media within days of the film's release, leading to Bhardwaj being labelled as leftist and even an anti-national by some critics.<sup>527</sup> This film uses Bollywood stars to craft an international film which adapts Shakespeare's play and sets it within the context of Basharat Peer's memoir *Curfewed Nights*. This chapter examines the development of Bhardwaj's adaptation skills in his deconstruction of the 'to be or not to be' soliloquy which is used several times in the film to depict Hamlet both as an individual Kashmiri imprisoned in a 'rotten' (1.4) Kashmir and as the state of Kashmir itself caught up in a fight between India and Pakistan. It also examined the development of his skills as a film maker who transcends Bollywood conventions and formulae to tap into his

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<sup>526</sup> . See Sanjukta Sharma, *Film Review Haider*, <http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/NLNfyiXDL31Dq9zF0NZU8N/Film-review--Haider.html>, (Live Mint, 3 October, 2014) [accessed 16 June 2015], Reema Omer, 'Haider', *The Friday Times*, (17 October 2014) <<http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/haider/>> [accessed 17 November 2015], Sudhish, *Haider: Beyond the Line of Control*, <http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/cinema-reviews/haider-review/article6469064.ece>, (The Hindu, 3 October, 2013) [accessed 16 June 2015] or Raja Sen, *Review: Haider may be Vishal Bhardwaj's Best Film*, <http://m.rediff.com/movies/report/review-haider-may-be-vishal-bhardwajs-best-film/20141001.htm> edn, (1 October 2014) [accessed 13 June 2016].

<sup>527</sup> See 'If I Am Not a Leftist, I Am Not an Artist'.

experiences on Broadway and thus create a Hindi film that is global in its presentation and in its reach. *Haider*, thus, as this chapter establishes, is the culmination of a decade of the evolution of Bhardwaj's Bollywood Shakespeares.

I want in conclusion to give a sense, post-Bhardwaj's trilogy, of the possible afterlives of Shakespeare in India. After the success of Bhardwaj's Shakespeare films, several Indian film makers began experimenting with Shakespeare adaptations across the different regional and national film industries. If this thesis began by tracing a narrative of two film cities – Kolkata and Mumbai – it seems that this narrative will continue to the future evolution of Bollywood Shakespeares. *Haider* prompted a Bengali adaptation of *Hamlet* set within the context of the Bengali film industry in 2016 – *Hemanta* – which foregrounds the role of Horatio. It also encouraged Aparna Sen to experiment quite radically with cinematic genres by reimagining *Romeo and Juliet* as a musical in the style of *Chicago* (2002) with *Arshinagar* (2016); the film had a strong political message for present day India torn apart by communalism. Srijit Mukherjee's *Zulfiqar* also in 2016, is based on not one but two of William Shakespeare's tragedies: *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. All three films fall into the middle-of-the-road genre and demonstrate how Bhardwaj's films, in turn, are inspiring a new generation of Bengali directors to experiment with cinematic genres through Shakespeare. These films complement Jayaraj's three Malayali Parallel Cinema adaptations of Shakespeare – *Kaliyattam* (1997), *Kannaki* (2002), and *Veeram* (2017) – which showcase local indigenous performance through Shakespeare in order to foreground south Indian politics and culture.

The parameters of this thesis made it necessary to ignore other recent experimentations with Shakespeare within the Hindi film industry itself such as



Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela* (2013) which also deconstructs and plays with Shakespeare and film genre. Neither does this thesis examine in detail successful Shakespearean off-shoots such as *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965), *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981) or *The Last Lear* (2007); it has also omitted diasporic work on Shakespeare adaptation such as *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002) or *Life Goes On* (2009). None of these films have had the global impact of Bhardwaj's Trilogy; nor do they fall within the immediate remit of the investigations of this thesis. They do however demonstrate that engagement with Shakespeare continues to play a role in India's on-going quest for national self-definition.

A recent YouGov poll conducted to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Bard in 2016 for the British Council asked 18,000 people across 15 countries about their understanding of Shakespeare: 83 per cent of Indians said they understood Shakespeare, compared to just 58 per cent of Britons.<sup>528</sup> This extraordinary Indian familiarity with Shakespeare is, as this thesis demonstrates, as much due to its assimilation into the idiom of the Hindi film industry, as it is due to Shakespeare being prescribed in school, college and university curricula across India. The epigraph to this chapter above is accepted fact to most Hindi film makers; even when plots and story lines are not directly inspired from Shakespeare, they are measured by a Shakespearean yard stick.<sup>529</sup> While much research exists on Shakespeare in the Indian curriculum and Shakespearean adaptations on the Indian stage, little academic enquiry had been directed towards Shakespeare and Hindi cinema despite the fact that Hindi/Urdu Shakespeare films have been produced since

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<sup>528</sup> Navtej Sarna, *India's Shakespearean Love Affair*, <http://www.rediff.com/news/special/indias-shakespearean-love-affair/20160427.htm>, (27 April, 2016) [accessed 06 August, 2017]

<sup>529</sup> At a recent BAFTA event dedicated to K. Asif's *Mughal-E-Azam* on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2017 – Indian Cinema: Yesterday and Today, Javed Akhtar described *Mughal-E-Azam* as Shakespearean while quoting dialogues from the film.

the 1920s. This thesis has addressed this lack. It was Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespearean Trilogy which attracted international academic attention to the canon of Indian Shakespeare films in recent years. This thesis has aimed to give the contexts and prehistory for his success. By plotting the auteurial arc of Bhardwaj's Trilogy, it has clarified how and why he was able to push the boundaries within Bollywood to use Shakespeare as a gateway to global recognition.

Finally, then, it is worth noting that the Bhardwaj Shakespeare Trilogy may well expand in the future. As a film maker, Bhardwaj continues to be heavily influenced by Shakespeare and has plans to return to Shakespeare adaptations on screen.<sup>530</sup> In the meantime, he has branched out into working on Broadway shows and producing films. However, as a globally recognised Shakespeare film maker, Bhardwaj has directly contributed towards encouraging a new generation of experimental film makers to work with Shakespearean sources: he has recently co-mentored a team comprising a producer, director and script-writer for a joint initiative between UK-based Film London and Cinestaan Film Company based in India which resulted in *The Hungry* – an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* set in Mumbai.<sup>531</sup> Cinestaan has also produced an appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2016 written by Gulzar. This suggests that there is a dynamic group of people working on Bollywood Shakespeare films and inspiring future Shakespeare adaptations within the Hindi film industry. Moreover, international collaborations such as *The Hungry* and the upcoming *The Merry Wives of Munnar* by Flickering Ltd also point the way not only towards the ever-expanding global interest in Bollywood Shakespeare, but also towards the increase in collaborative

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<sup>530</sup> Vishal Bhardwaj. Interview by Koel Chatterjee. Tape Recording. London, 26 April, 2016.

<sup>531</sup> See <http://www.cinestaanfilmcompany.com/news.html>, [accessed 9 September, 2017]

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film making that is perhaps the most exciting possibility for the future of Global Shakespeares.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> See *The Merry Wives of Munna*, <http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/projects?ref=ST%2FN002008%2F1> [accessed 22 September, 2016].



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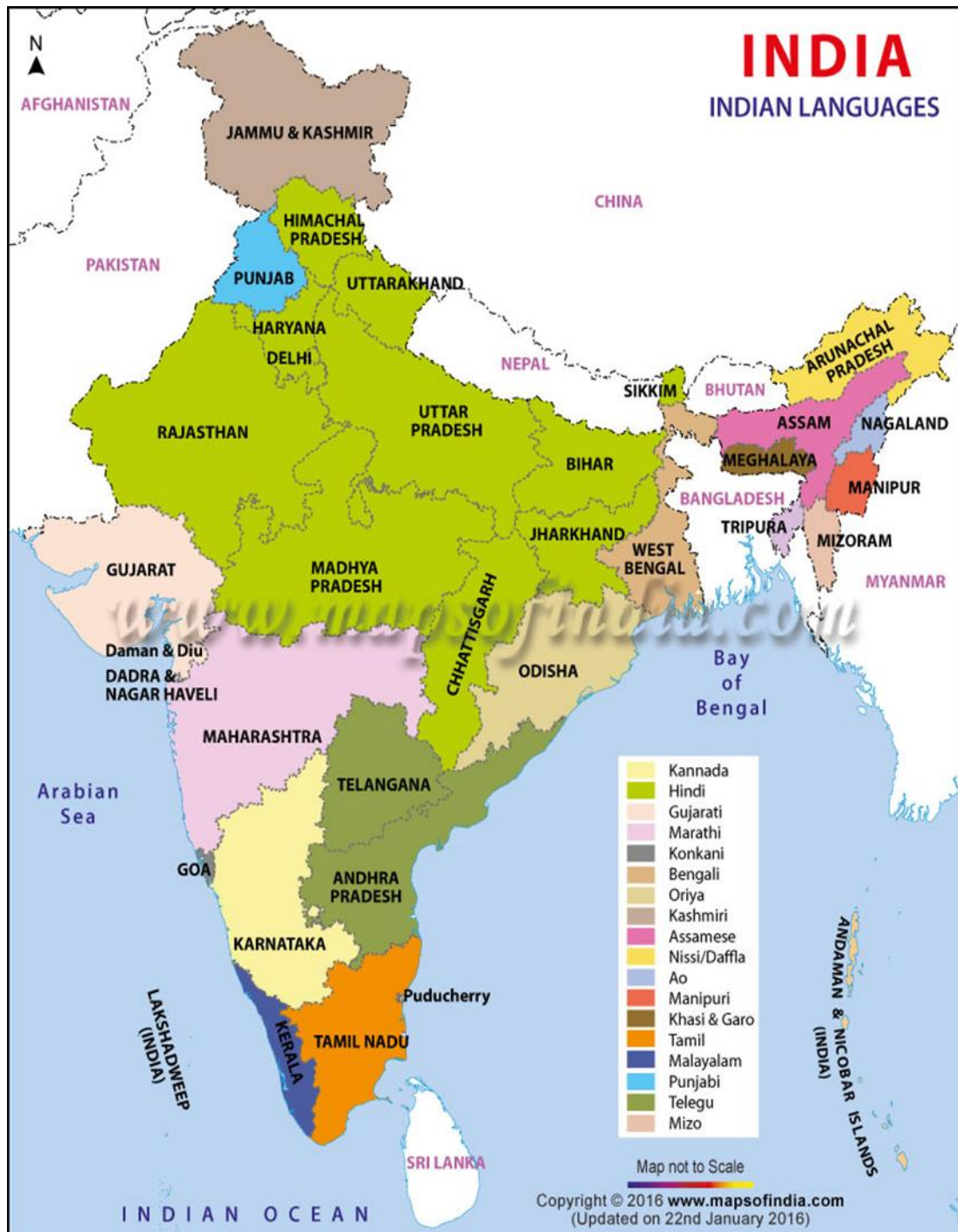
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## Map of Indian Languages



### Scheduled Languages in India in descending order of speakers' strength - 2001<sup>1</sup>

	Language	Persons who returned the language as their mother tongue	Percentage to total population
1	Hindi	422,048,642	41.03
2	Bengali	83,369,769	8.11
3	Telugu	74,002,856	7.19
4	Marathi	71,936,894	6.99
5	Tamil	60,793,814	5.91
6	Urdu	51,536,111	5.01
7	Gujarati	46,091,617	4.48
8	Kannada	37,924,011	3.69
9	Malayalam	33,066,392	3.21
10	Oriya	33,017,446	3.21
11	Punjabi	29,102,477	2.83
12	Assamese	13,168,484	1.28
13	Maithili	12,179,122	1.18
14	Santali	6,469,600	0.63
15	Kashmiri	5,527,698	0.54
16	Nepali	2,871,749	0.28
17	Sindhi	2,535,485	0.25
18	Konkani	2,489,015	0.24
19	Dogri	2,282,589	0.22
20	Manipuri *	1,466,705	0.14
21	Bodo	1,350,478	0.13
22	Sanskrit	14,135	N

<sup>1</sup> 50th Report of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India, (July 2012 - June 2013)  
<<http://nclm.nic.in/shared/linkimages/NCLM50thReport.pdf>> [accessed 16 February 2017]



## Indian Shakespeares on Screen: a comprehensive listing<sup>1</sup>

### **Antony and Cleopatra**

1936, *Zan Mureed* (also listed as *Kafir-E-Ishq* in Urdu and *Nastik Prem* in Hindi), dir. A. H. Essa, Urdu/Hindi – possibly based on the stage adaptation by Anwaruddin Makhliis titled *Kali Nagan* which had a moralistic happy ending.

1950, *Cleopatra*, dir. Raja Nawathe, Hindi – based on Cecil B. De Mille's *Cleopatra* (1934), with a moralistic view of the love affair.

2001, *Kannaki*, dir. Jayaraj, Malayalam – based loosely on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

### **As You Like It**

1959, *Sollu Thambi Sollu*, dir. TV Sundaram, Tamil – loosely based on Shakespeare's *As You Like it*

### **Cymbeline**

1930, *Mitha Zahar*, dir. unknown, silent – Possibly based on Naraian Prasad Betab's adaptation of *Cymbeline* first performed in 1900 as *Mitha Zahr*

1947, *Katakam*, dir. T. G. Raghavachari, Tamil – based on Sankaradas Swamigal's adaptation of *Cymbeline*, the film is primarily remembered as the only Tamil film featuring Suryakumari as heroine and its twelve songs, most of which were sung by Suryakumari.

### **Hamlet**

1928, *Khoon-E-Nahak*, dir. Dada Athawale, Silent – based on the popular stage adaptation by Mehdi Hassan Ahsan.

1935, *Khoon Ka Khoon*, dir. Sohrab Modi, Hindi/Urdu – credited as the first Hindi/Urdu sound film adaptation of a Shakespeare play in India.

1936, *Manohara*, dir. unknown, Tamil – Based on Pammal Sambandha Mudaliar's adaptation of *Hamlet* entitled *Amaladhithan* with Mudaliar playing a minor role.

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<sup>1</sup> This Filmography was prepared for publication in Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarty, eds., *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas.*, Routledge Studies in Shakespeare (Routledge, 2016) in Chicago format and is represented here in original form.

1954, *Hamlet*, dir. Kishore Sahu, Hindi – a free adaptation of *Hamlet* heavily influenced by Lawrence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948) with Sahu playing the title character.

1954, *Manohara*, dir. L. V. Prasad, Tamil (dubbed in Telegu and Hindi as well) – a remake of the 1936 *Manohara* based on Mudaliar's adaptation of *Hamlet* and inspired by the legend of Samson and Delilah.

1957, *Aasha*, dir. M.V. Raman, Hindi – a comedy/crime film which uses the Mousetrap device and claims inspiration from *Hamlet*.

2009, *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark*, dir. S. Nathan, English - feature film with Kabir Ahamed as *Hamlet*

2012, *Karmayogi*, dir. V. K. Prakash, Malayalam – advertised as an adaptation of *Hamlet*, the film tells the story of Rudran Gurukkal, the lone male descendant of the Chathothu family of the Yogi community, in which Lord Shiva is believed to have been born.

2014, *Haider*, dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, Hindi - a modern-day adaptation of *Hamlet* and of *Curfewed Night* by Basharat Peer set amidst the insurgency-hit Kashmir conflicts of 1995.

## **King John**

1936, *Said-E-Havas*, dir. Sohrab Modi, Hindi/Urdu – based on Agha Hashr Kashmiri's adaptation of *Richard III* and *King John*.

## **King Lear**

1949, *Gunasundari Katha*, dir. Kadiri Venkata Reddy, Telugu – based loosely on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the film has supernatural and religious elements as well as a happy ending.

1997, *Rui Ka Bojh*, dir. Subhash Agarwal, Hindi - based on Chandra Kishore Jaiswal's novel *Gawah Ghair Hazir* and *King Lear*.

2003, *Baghbaan*, dir. Ravi Chopra, Hindi – thematically based on *King Lear* and marketed as an adaptation, the film is also inspired by *Make Way for Tomorrow* (1937) the Marathi *Oon Paoos* (1954) and the Kannada *School Master* (1958).

## **Macbeth**

1938, *Jwala*, dir. Vinayek, Hindi – loosely based on *Macbeth*, the film ends with Lady Macbeth and Banquo joining forces with the people against Macbeth.

1951, *Marmayogi*, dir. K. Ramnoth, Telugu - based on the novel *Vengeance* by Marie Corelli and *Macbeth*, this fantasy film was shot simultaneously in Hindi as *Ek Tha Raja*.

2001, *Yellamma*, dir. Mohan Koda, Telugu – set in 1850s India during the Sepoy Mutiny.

2003, *Maqbool*, dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, Urdu/Hindi – a crime drama set in the Mumbai underworld with the witches recast as corrupt police officers.

## **Measure For Measure**

1940, *Pak Daman* (aka *Shaheed-e-Naaz*), dir. Rustom Modi, Urdu/Hindi – based on Agha Hashr Kashmiri's stage adaptation of *Measure for Measure*.

## **Midsummer Night's Dream**

2010, *10 ml Love*, dir. Sharat Katariya, Hinglish (Hindi + English) – set in contemporary India concerning three couples and with the Mechanicals reimagined as a group of amateur *Ramlila* actors.

## **Othello**

1961, *Saptapadi*, dir. Ajoy Kar, Bengali – a romantic drama set in colonial and post-colonial Calcutta based on a novel by Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, the film is loosely based on *Othello* and heavily influenced by the 1951 adaptation of *Othello* by Orson Welles.

1963, *Raththath Thilagam* (aka *Ratha Thilagam*), dir. Dada Mirasi, Tamil – a romantic war film based loosely on *Othello*, featuring Othello as an Indian army officer during the Sino-Indian war and Desdemona as a spy.

1997, *Kaliyattam* (aka *The Play of God*), dir. Jayaraj, Malayalam – an adaptation of *Othello* set in the context of the Hindu Theyyam performance tradition and the caste politics of Kerala.

2006, *Omkara*, dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, Hindi/Khariboli – a crime drama set in the rural underworld of contemporary India.

2014, *Hrid Majharey*, dir. Ranjan Ghosh, Bengali – based on *Othello*, the film also incorporates elements from *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*.

## **Pericles**

1935, *Khudadad*, dir. Fram Sethna, Hindi/Urdu – possibly based on Jahagir Pestonjee Khambatta's *Khudadad*, first performed in 1898.

### **Richard III**

1936, *Said-E-Havas*, dir. Sohrab Modi, Hindi/Urdu – based on Agha Hashr Kashmiri's adaptation of *Richard III* and *King John*.

### **Romeo and Juliet**

1937, *Ambikapathi*, dir. Ellis R. Dungan, Tamil – the film is about the poet Ambikapathi and his love for Amravathi, daughter of the Chola king in 1083 A.D. but the director, who did not know Tamil, used *Romeo and Juliet* for his inspiration and incorporated several scenes from the play in the script.

1948, *Romeo and Juliet*, dir. Akhtar Hussain, Hindi – based on the 1936 MGM *Romeo and Juliet* and influenced by the Parsi theatre tradition.

1957, *Ambikapathy*, dir. P. Neelakantan, Tamil – a remake of the popular 1937 film of the same name.

1970, *HeerRaanji* (aka *Rhanjha and Juliet*), dir. Chetan Anand, Hindi – based on the legend of Ranjha and Heer of Punjab and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

1973, *Bobby*, dir. Raj Kapoor, Hindi – first Bollywood teen film based on *Romeo and Juliet* exploring caste, class and religious divides but with a happy ending.

1978, *Maro Charitra*, dir. K. Balachander, Telegu – with verbal quotations from *Romeo and Juliet*, the film features a cross-cultural romance between a Tamil boy and a Telugu girl.

1981, *Ek Duije Ke Liye*, dir. K. Balachander, Hindi - a remake of *Maro Charitra*, the film features a cross-cultural romance between a Tamil boy and a Marathi girl, with the lead actor of *Maro Charitra*, Kamal Hasan, reprising his role as Romeo.

1982, *Sanam Teri Kasam*, dir. Narendra Bedi, Hindi – cited as a *Romeo and Juliet* appropriation starring Kamal Hasan, the film also has references to *Hamlet*.

1988, *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, dir. Mansoor Khan, Urdu – a Bollywood cult film based on *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* (1961).

1991, *Saudagar*, dir. Subhash Ghai, Hindi – the only Indian film based on *Romeo and Juliet* which has a character parallel to Friar Laurence.

2000, *Josh*, dir. Mansoor Khan, Hindi – an adaptation of *West Side Story* (1961) and *Romeo and Juliet* with a happy ending against the backdrop of gang wars in Goa, and the only example of an Indian director adapting *Romeo and Juliet* twice.

2012, *Ishaqzaade*, dir. Habib Faisal, Hindi – based on *Romeo and Juliet* and the first acknowledged Hindi adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* featuring a murder-suicide.

2013, *Issaq*, dir. Manish Tiwari, Hindi – set in Banaras against the backdrop of the feuding sand mafia controlled by urban elite and the Naxalite armies.

2013, *Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela*, dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Hindi – set in the fictional village of Ranjaar, infamous for its uninhibited manufacture and sale of arms and ammunition and the feud between two clans, Rajadi and Sanera.

2015, *Arshinagar*, dir. Aparna Sen, Bengali – an experiment with the musical genre in the style of *Chicago* (2002) with the dialogues entirely set in rhyme.

2016, *Sairat*, dir. Nagraj Manjule, Marathi – featuring an inter-caste romance, the film's success has led to remakes being planned in Kannada, Telugu, Punjabi, Malayalam and Tamil.

## **The Comedy of Errors**

1963, *Bhrantibilas*, dir. Manu Sen, Bengali – based on Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* set in postcolonial Calcutta, this was the first full length adaptation of the play on film in the world.

1968, *Do Dooni Chaar*, dir. Debu Sen, Hindi – a loose remake of *Bhrantibilas* set in postcolonial Bombay.

1982, *Angoor*, dir. Sampooran Singh Gulzar, Hindi – a remake of *Bhrantibilas* and *Do Dooni Chaar*, this adaptation is frequently broadcast on Indian television.

1997, *Ulta Palta*, dir. N.S. Shankar, Kannada – the script credits Shakespeare as the sole writer.

1998, *Ulta Palta*, dir. Relangi Narasimha Rao, Telegu – a remake of the Kannada *Ulta Palta*.

2012, *Aamait Asal Eemait Kusal*, dir. Ranjan Raghu Shetty, Tulu – a modern Indian adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* in a language spoken mainly in the south west part of the Indian state of Karnataka and in the Kasaragod district of Kerala.

2014, *Double Di Trouble*, dir. Smeep Kang, Punjabi – an adaptation of the play based loosely on *Angoor* where the master-servant pairing is replaced with a father-son pairing.

## **The Merchant Of Venice**

1927, *Dil Farosh* (aka *Merchant of Hearts*), dir. M. Udvardia, Silent – based on Mehdi Hasan Ahsan's popular stage adaptation, this film is considered to be the first Indian adaptation of Shakespeare on film.

1940, *Shylock*, dir. S. Sarma, Tamil – based on *The Merchant of Venice*, the film was unsuccessful despite its authentic costumes and locale.

1941, *Zalim Saudagar*, dir. J.J. Madan, Hindi – the film is said to have enjoyed critical and commercial success in its time but is difficult to obtain now.

## **The Taming of the Shrew**

1932, *Hathili Dulhan*, dir. J.J. Madan, Hindi – based on the popular Parsi theatre stage adaptation of the play, writer unknown.

1953, *Aan* (aka *The Savage Princess*), dir. Mehboob Khan, Hindi – based loosely on *Taming of the Shrew*, this was India's first technicolour film and one of the first Indian films to have a worldwide release.

1958, *Mane Thumbida Henu*, dir. B. Vittalacharya, Kannada – partially inspired by *Taming of the Shrew*.

1962, *Gundamma Katha*, dir. Kamalakara Kameswara Rao, Telegu – a critically and commercially successful remake of *Mane Thumbida Henu*, the film is regarded as the last film of Vijaya Vauhini Studios' 'Golden Age'.

1963, *Arivaali*, dir. A. T. Krishnaswami, Tamil – one of the most popular Shakespeare adaptations in Tamil.

1972, *Pattikaadaa Pattanama*, dir. P. Madhavan, Tamil – one of the most successful films of the year earning commercial and critical acclaim.

1973, *Manchali*, dir. Raja Nawathe, Hindi – based loosely on *Taming of the Shrew*, the film is an adaptation of Satyendra Sharat's novel *Swayamber*.

1989, *Nanjundi Kalyana*, dir. M. S. Rajashekar, Kannada – a commercially successful romantic comedy drawing upon the Hindu mythology of goddess Durga, the goddess of power and strength.

1990, *Mahajanani Maradalu Pilla*, dir. Vallabhaneni Janardhan and Vijaya Bapineedu, Telegu – a remake of *Nanjundi Kalyana*.

2001, *Srimati Bhayankari*, dir. Anjan Banerjee, Bengali – based on the successful 1970s Bengali stage adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* of the same name.

2010, *Isi Life Mein*, dir. Vidhi Kasliwal, Hindi – the film was marketed as *The Taming of the Shrew - Reborn*, with 'Reborn' added to underscore that the original play had been modified to remove the alleged misogyny.

## **Twelfth Night**

1949, *Kanniyin Kaadhali* dir. K. Ramnoth and A. K. Sekhar, Tamil – the first adaptation of *Twelfth Night* on the Indian screen, the film stars Madhuri Devi as the twins Adithan and Chandrika.

2009, *Dil Bole Hadippa*, dir. Anurag Singh, Hindi – a loose adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, the film tells the story about a young woman who pretends to be a man to join an all-male cricket team.

**Other films with Shakespearean scenes, references and characters:**

1925, *Savkari Pash*, dir. Baburao Painter, Silent – adapted from Hari Narayan Apte's novel *Savkari Haak* [Call of the Moneylender], the film is also called *The Indian Shylock* where Shylock is used to generally represent moneylenders.

1965, *Shakespeare Wallah*, dir. James Ivory, English - loosely based on actor-manager Geoffrey Kendal's family and his travelling theatre company Shakespeareana, which earned Kendal the sobriquet Shakespearewallah.

1968, *Izzat*, dir. T.Prakash Rao, Hindi – the film features Dharmendra playing the fair son of a Zamindar and his black-faced illegitimate tribal son and references *Othello*.

1980, *Karz*, dir. Subhash Ghai, Hindi – a revenge drama, the film makes sensational use of the Mousetrap device from *Hamlet*.

1981, *36 Chowringhee Lane*, dir. Aparna Sen, Bengali – the film tells the story of an Anglo-Indian teacher, Violet Stoneham, in postcolonial India.

1990, *When Hamlet Went to Mizoram*, dir. Pankaj Butalia, English – a documentary about performing Shakespeare in Mizoram.

1994, *1942: A Love Story*, dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Hindi – set during the decline of the British Raj in India, the film visually quotes *Romeo and Juliet* through the forbidden love of Naren and Rajeshwari and references the iconic balcony scene.

1998, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, dir. Karan Johar, Hindi – a coming-of-age romantic comedy which visually quotes Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996).

2001, *Dil Chahta Hain*, dir. Farhan Akhtar, Hindi – the film references *Much Ado About Nothing* through the relationship between Akash and Shalini.

2003, *In Othello*, dir. Roysten Abel, English - the film is about an Indian theatre group attempting to stage *Othello*.

2007, *The Last Lear*, dir. Rituparno Ghosh, English – based on Utpal Dutt's semiautobiographical play *Aajker Shahjahan*.

2007, *Om Shanti Om*, dir. Farah Khan, Hindi – a tribute to and spoof of 1970s Bollywood, the film is a revenge drama/comedy that uses the Mousetrap device from *Hamlet* in imitation of *Karz*.

2008, *Shakespeare M. A. Malayalam*, dir. Shyju and Shaji, Malayalam – the film is about a stage play writer Pavithran who is also known as Shakespeare.

2009, *Life Goes On*, dir. Sangeeta Datta, English – the film is about a Hindu family in Britain coping with the death of the wife and mother, Manju.

2013, *Fandry*, dir. Nagraj Manjule, Marathi – the film locates the sentiments of the wronged Shylock within the setting of the Maharashtrian Deccan through the story of the untouchable Jabya.

## Glossary

**Aag:** fire

**Abbaji:** father

**Adhi-beva:** half-widow

**Adhura:** incomplete/interrupted

**Adivasi:** a member of any of the aboriginal tribal peoples living in India before the arrival of the Aryans in the second millennium BC

**Agnipariksha:** trial by fire – referring to Sita’s public trial to prove her chastity after being kidnapped by Ravan in the *Ramayan*

**Angoor:** grapes

**Anukaran:** simulation; imitation

**Anukriti:** echo; copy; imitate

**Anuvada:** translate

**Aurat:** female

**Avatars:** incarnations

**Bade Babu:** Chief Officer

**Beedi:** cigarette

**Bhaang:** hashish

**Bhadralok:** gentleman

**Bhai:** Originally meaning ‘brother’ the term is now used also for gangsters

**Bhaisaab:** term of respect meaning elder brother

**Bhrantibilas:** pleasure of errors

**Bichchhoo:** scorpion

**Biryani:** a rice-based dish made with spices and chicken, mutton, fish, eggs or vegetables. Biryani was believed to have been invented in the kitchen of Mughal Emperors.

**Bismil:** wounded

**Biwi:** wife

**Brahmachari:** a person who has taken a vow of celibacy

**Budhape aur jawani ki sangram:** the fight between age and youth

**Chawl:** shanty

**Chootpah:** perverse audacity; an appropriation of chutzpah, pronounced to resemble a Hindi profanity



## Appendix iv: Glossary

**Chudail:** Witch

**Daayan:** Witch

**Dargah:** mosque

**Dariya:** sea

**Darr:** fear

**Deewana:** mad lover

**Dhanda:** business

**Dharma:** duty

**Dialoguebaazi:** the art of penning/delivering dialogues that are memorable and appropriable

**Didi:** elder sister

**Disappear-ed:** a four-syllabic word in the Kashmiri accent which means people who have been taken away by the government

**Do Dooni Char:** Two twos are four

**Ek din:** one day; once upon a time

**Filmi:** characteristic of or related to the Mumbai film industry

**Filmwalas:** people involved in the making of films

**Firang:** Anglo-Indian; colloquially used derogatorily to describe westernised Indians

**Gaanja:** hashish

**Gadha:** Ass

**Ganda:** dirty

**Ghoda:** horse; gun (in Mumbai colloquialism)

**Golmaal:** confusion

**Haider:** lion

**Hariraja:** King of lions; brave

**Hatke:** different

**Haveli:** palatial house

**Hera-pheri:** chicanery; trickery

**Hum hain ki hum nahin:** are we, or are we not

**Hum:** we

**Humsafar:** fellow traveller in life; soul mate; life partner

**Inteqaam se sirf inteqaam paida hota hain:** Revenge only begets revenge

**Inteqaam:** revenge

**Intezaar:** anxious wait; expectation filled wait

## Appendix iv: Glossary

**Ishq:** love; passion

**Ishwar:** God

**Item song:** a catchy, upbeat, often sexually provocative dance performance in Indian cinema that is often unimportant to the plot of the movie but is used to market the film

**Izzat:** honour

**Jasoosi:** detective

**Jatra:** procession or journey; a popular folk-theatre form of Bengali theatre, spread throughout most of Bengali speaking areas of the Indian subcontinent, including Bangladesh and Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa and Tripura

**Jija:** sister's husband

**Josh:** frenzy

**Judwaa:** twin; double

**Jwala:** fire; light

**Jyotir Vigyan:** Vedic astrology

**Kal:** yesterday; tomorrow

**Kaliyattam:** the play of God

**Kapat:** pretence

**Kardhani:** waist ornament

**Karma:** fate

**Karuna Rasa:** one of the seven rasas or dominant emotions of literary works as prescribed by the *Natya Shashtra* - a feeling of sorrow or compassion

**Khoon:** blood; murder

**Kolam:** lead dancer in the Theyyam tradition

**Krishnendu:** black moon

**Kurta pajama:** Indian male attire of long shirt and loose trousers

**Langda:** lame

**Maang-tika:** head ornament

**Mahabharata:** ascribed to Vyasa, the *Mahabharata* is an ancient Sanskrit epic narrative of the Kuruksetra War and the fates of the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava princes

**Main tha, main hoon, aur mein hi rahoonga:** I was, I am, and I will always be

**Manzil:** destination

**Maqbool:** accepted; popular

## Appendix iv: Glossary

**Mard:** men; person with machismo

**Masala:** mixture of ground spices used in Indian cooking

**Maujje:** mother

**Meri jaan:** my love

**Middle-of-the-road cinema:** Cinema that combines elements of Parallel cinema and of mainstream cinema in India starting with the Middle-Class cinema of the 1970s and evolving into the Multiplex cinema of the 2000s.

**Miyan:** Urdu title of respect

**Multiplex Film:** films made for niche, urban audiences in the wake of multiplexes overtaking smaller independent theatres

**Mumbai Noir:** crime dramas set in the Mumbai underworld inspired by German Expressionist cinematography

**Nafrat ke waris:** heirs of hate

**Naina:** eyes

**Natya Shashtra:** a Sanskrit Hindu text on the performing arts dated to between 200 BCE and 200 CE attributed to sage Bharata Muni

**Naukar:** servant

**Nautanki:** a form of Indian popular theatre, incorporating both dialogue and song, and taking themes from Indian myth and from contemporary social issues

**Navagraha:** the nine primary celestial beings in Hindu astrology

**Nikah:** Muslim wedding

**NRI:** Non-resident Indian

**Om kara:** the sound of the sacred syllable Om

**Paani:** water

**Paisa vasool:** money's worth

**Pakodas:** fried vegetable snacks

**Pandit:** a wise man; a Hindu scholar

**Papa:** father

**Parsi** (also spelled Parsee): are descended from Persian Zoroastrians who emigrated to India to avoid religious persecution by the Muslims

**Pati-vrata nari:** husband-worshipping wife

**Prem:** love; often used to define spiritual love; common male romantic protagonist name especially those portrayed by Salman Khan

**Pritam:** beloved

## Appendix iv: Glossary

**Purkho:** ancestors

**Purohit:** Hindu family priest

**Qaidkhana:** prison

**Qayamat:** doomsday; Day of Judgement; apocalypse; resurrection

**Raas:** the erotic love dance of Krishna and the milkmaids

**Raj:** ruler/emperor/royalty

**Ramayana:** originally titled *Kaavyam Ramayanam Kritsnam Sitaayaas Charitham Mahat*, ascribed to the Hindu sage Valmiki, the *Ramayana* is an ancient Indian epic poem which narrates the struggle of the divine prince Rama to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana

**Romeo:** lover; westernised/modern lover; in India, also used derogatively to refer to someone who stalks or harasses women

**Rooh:** spirit

**Saali:** wife's sister

**Sahib:** gentleman

**Sahitya Akademi:** a body set up by the Government of India for cultivating literature in Indian languages and in English

**Sahitya:** literature

**Saptapadi:** the seven steps of marriage

**Sati:** the Hindu practice of a widow throwing herself on to her husband's funeral pyre

**Sawli:** dark skinned; commonly used as female name in India

**Shabdo ki heraferi:** twisting of words

**Shakti ka santulan:** Cosmic balance; balance of power

**Shakuhachi:** Japanese bamboo flute

**Shani:** the slow-moving one; Saturn

**Shayari:** Urdu poetry

**Shudh:** pure

**Sooraj:** sun

**Swadeshi:** a political movement in British India that encouraged domestic production and the boycott of foreign, especially British, goods as a step toward home rule

**Swayam Bhagavan:** Supreme God

**Tehzeeb:** culture; etiquette

## Appendix iv: Glossary

**Thag:** to deceive - from the English word ‘thug’

**Thakur:** a respectful title for a nobleman and landowner

**Wallah:** a person concerned or involved with a specified thing or business

**Zamindars:** *zamin* meaning land, the title directly translates to mean landowners; a class of aristocrats or royalty introduced by Lord Cornwallis in Bengal in 1793 who owned land and collected taxes from the peasants