



UNIVERSIDAD DE MURCIA
Departamento de Filología Inglesa

Shakespeare, Bollywood and Beyond

Shakespeare Transnacional:
Su presencia en Bollywood y en la Diáspora

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To Manolo

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Introduction

“Why not start with the assumption that other cultures are not just passive receivers of Western ideas and images, but active manipulators of such influences, and that intercultural borrowing is not simply a one-way process, but something far more interestingly dialogic?”¹

The topic of this dissertation emerges out of an interest in the presence of Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema. Despite the enormous repertory of treatises dealing with the reception of Shakespeare’s works in a multicultural context, the production and reception of Shakespearean works in Bollywood cinema has not been analysed in any collection.² In spite of the proliferation of off-shoots of Shakespeare’s texts in Bollywood cinema, such as *Ek Duuye Ke Liye* (dir. K. Balachander, 1981), *Angoor* (dir. Gulzar, 1982), *Betaab* (dir. Rahul Rawail, 1983), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (dir. Mansoor Khan, 1988), *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994), or the straightforward adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Othello* by Vishal Bhardwaj *Maqbool* (2003) and *Omkara* (2006), no full-length monograph on Shakespeare in Bollywood has appeared yet.³ So far, critical analyses of Bollywood cinematic off-shoots and

¹ Craig Latrell, “After Appropriation,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 44. 2 (2000): 44-47.

² The first volume on Bollywood’s Shakespeare is now being edited by Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia. The project is entitled *Bollywood’s Shakespeare: Cultural Dialogues Through World Cinema*, and will be published by Palgrave MacMillan. I have contributed to this volume with a chapter on *Maqbool*.

³ Quite interestingly, no volume on Shakespeare on the Asian screen has been published either. In spite of the numerous adaptations like *Throne of Blood* (dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1957), *Ran* (dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1985) – based on *Macbeth* and *King Lear* respectively – *One Husband Too Many* (dir. Anthony Chan, 1988), *Chicken Rice War* (dir. Cheah Chee Kong, 2000), *A Time to Love* (dir. Huo Jianqi, 2005), *The Banquet: Legend of the Black Scorpion* (dir. Xiaogang Feng, 2006) – a free version of *Hamlet* – The Tibetan Hamlet *Prince of the Himalayas* (dir. Sherwood Hu, 2006) or the Indian adaptations *Maqbool*

adaptations of Shakespearean works have been reduced to sporadic articles and chapters within collections.⁴ In their respective essays, Verma and Trivedi provide a chronological trajectory of the presence of Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema, and go from the early cinematic off-shoots such as *Khoon Ka Khoon* (1935) to more recent ones like *Angoor* (1982). In his chapter entitled “All that Remains of Shakespeare in Indian Film,”⁵ Richard Burt does not offer an outline of Shakespeare in the history of Indian cinema, but draws attention to the tradition of the play-within-the-film in Indian cinematic off-shoots and adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays.⁶ In the following chapters, therefore, I intend to analyse the presence of Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema to contribute significantly to this field.

Although in the past the study of Shakespearean performances was somehow restricted to the Shakespearean metropolis, that is, Europe and North America, productions of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* made by alien cultures in foreign lands have become recently the basis of many volumes.⁷ Appropriation, misappropriation and re-

(dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2003) and *Omkara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006), they have not been compiled in any volume. See Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2009), 12 for a summary of some of these off-shoots and adaptations. See also Alexander Huang and Charles S. Ross (eds.), *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace* (Purdue: Purdue University Press, 2009), 296 for an in-depth analysis of Anthony Chan’s *One Husband Too Many* in relation to its specific location in Hong Kong.

⁴ The articles that explore Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema are: Rajiva Verma, “Shakespeare in Hindi Cinema.” In *India’s Shakespeare*. Ed. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (New Delhi: Pearson Longman), 269-290; Poonam Trivedi, “Filmi Shakespeare,” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 35.2: 148-58.

⁵ Richard Burt, “All That Remains of the Shakespeare Play in Indian Film.” In *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance*. Ed. Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 73-108.

⁶ Richard Burt wrote in 2002 an article which concentrated on Shakespeare in Asian Cinemas, but was not restricted to Indian cinema. See Richard Burt, “Shakespeare and Asia in Post-Disaporic Cinemas: Spinoffs and Citations of the Plays from Bollywood to Hollywood.” In *Shakespeare the Movie, II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, Video, and DVD*. Ed. Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose (New York and London: Routledge Press, 2003), 265-303.

⁷ Japanese Shakespeare began for instance in the 19th century and Indian Shakespeare began with the entry of the British empire in India – 18th century. Shakespeare was also performed off the coast of Sierra Leona in the 17th century, although the players were probably Europeans.

interpretation of his plays provide room for cultural encounters.⁸ Shakespearean plays have travelled abroad and in the process the local mixes with the global, creating a *glo-calisation* that pervades Shakespearean studies.⁹ *Shakespeare, Bollywood and Beyond* emerges as a product of the interest in world-wide Shakespeares. The cultural exchange between Bollywood and Shakespeare, and a surprising dialogue with Western civilization demonstrates the paradoxical nature of Bollywood Shakespeare.

Shakespeare in Asian studies

The past eighteen years have witnessed a number of new and challenging approaches to the interpretation of Shakespeare in non-Anglophone countries in an attempt to understand the inter-links and interrelations between Shakespeare and other cultures. These volumes aimed to show how what we mean by ‘Shakespeare’ is certainly modified or even amplified beyond the Shakespearean metropolis.¹⁰ In 1993, Dennis Kennedy’s pioneering work *Foreign Shakespeare* began this critical trend, though it was still confined to the European world. One of the most ground-breaking twentieth-century collections is *Post-colonial Shakespeares* by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, where the Shakespearean *oeuvre* is read and interpreted from a postcolonial perspective.¹¹ At the same time, a large number of articles shed light upon

⁸ The term “misappropriation” is used by Dennis Kennedy, *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). On cultural encounters, see Geraldo De Sousa, *Shakespeare’s Cross-Cultural Encounters* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002).

⁹ Roland Robertson coins the term “glo-calisation” in “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity.” In *Global Modernities*. Ed. M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 25-44.

¹⁰ See for instance Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹¹ Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (eds.), *Post-colonial Shakespeares* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). See also Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) since the Shakespearean texts are equally approached from a postcolonial perspective.

whether Shakespeare is dislocated, caricatured, distorted, ‘spectralized’ or treated with reverence as a Western icon in societies where he entered through the baggage of empire. Although several post-colonial communities are explored throughout the compendium, Africa is certainly over-present.¹² Sonia Massai’s edited volume *World-Wide Shakespeares* has a wider scope, and includes contributions about post-colonial adaptations of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* with European appropriations like Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Othello* (*Che Cosa Sono Le Nuvole* aka *What Are Clouds Like?*, 1967), next to American ones, such as a new Mexican adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*.¹³ Massai’s volume avoids being confined to a postcolonial segregation mixing post-colonial readings of certain adaptations with readings that have little or nothing to do with empire. Other works of criticism on World Shakespeare are *Shakespeare without English* – with chapters on Shakespeare in Korea, Japan, Romania or Spain – or *Native Shakespeares*, with an interesting focus on local productions and translations of non-Anglophone Shakespeares.¹⁴ All these volumes have a clear global outlook, and aim to evaluate the impact and assimilation of Shakespeare in different communities across the globe. These publications show that there is a sustained interest on the internationalization of Shakespeare.

There has equally been a recent explosion of critical interest in the ways Shakespeare has been accommodated to Asia. One of the most intriguing questions in the dialogue between Shakespeare and Asia is the absence of Shakespeare’s language in

¹² For Shakespeare in South Africa in-depth, see Martin Orkin, *Shakespeare Against Apartheid* (Ad. Donker, 1987) and *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹³ Sonia Massai (ed.), *World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁴ Sukanta Chaudhuri and Chee Seng Lim (eds.), *Shakespeare Without English: The Reception of Shakespeare in Non-Anglophone Countries* (Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2006); Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (eds.), *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2008).

favour of a stronger visual and corporeal presence.¹⁵ The performances of Shakespearean works in different Asian dramatic modes, such as *kabuki*, *kyogen*, *kathakali* or *jatra*¹⁶ have drawn the attention of scholars like Alexander Huang and Charles S. Ross (*Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace*), Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan (*Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance*) or Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta (*Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*).¹⁷ These volumes look closely at how localities contribute to the performance of Shakespearean works and question the loss or gain of Shakespearean language in translation. The focus on edgy and dissident voices outside the English-speaking world paves the way for complex layers of cultural exchange between Shakespeare and Asia. The performances analyzed to a greater or lesser extent hint at interculturality, and contribute to a different understanding of Shakespeare.¹⁸ This is not to suggest that the Anglocentric view of Shakespeare should be substituted or replaced by an Asian view, but the latter is currently acquiring importance in its contribution to the questioning of the hypercanonical presence of the author. It is implied from these collections that the presence of Shakespeare in Asia is characterized by the artistic ‘exotica’ of the performances in the different Asian theatrical modes, and the recent movement towards interculturality.¹⁹ Instead of having westernized performances or enactments of

¹⁵ The lack of Shakespearean language has equally affected the latest appropriations or off-shoots of Shakespearean works. This absence of the typical Shakespearean language has been the cause of heated debates regarding the role of Shakespeare in these appropriations once he is deprived of his language. See for instance Thomas Cartelli, “Doing It Slant: Reconceiving Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Aftermath,” *Shakespeare Studies* 38 (2010): 26-36 or Douglas Lanier, “Recent Shakespeare Adaptation and the Mutations of Cultural Capital,” *Shakespeare Studies* 38 (2010): 106.

¹⁶ While *kabuki* and *kyogen* are Japanese performance modes, *kathakali* and *jatra* are Indian theatrical styles.

¹⁷ Huang and Ross, 2009; Poonam Trivedi and Ryuta Minami (eds.), *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁸ For a discussion on interculturality, see Patrice Pavis (ed.), *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁹ Although all these volumes focus on Shakespeare in Asia, they never coin the category of Asian Shakespeares, and what they have in common.

Shakespeare's plays prioritizing local aesthetic practices as if to prove their 'authenticity,' the representations now move a step forwards, attempting to reach 'universality.'²⁰

The entry of Shakespeare in the vast terrain of Asia has varied in the diverse locations. The history of Shakespeare in China has gone through several stages. The first contact the Chinese people had with Shakespeare was through a curious intermediary, Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), which was even used for the first translations/adaptations.²¹ Alexander Huang precisely observes the lack of an original Shakespearean text for many years in China, but how this "did not stop the Chinese from constructing a hypercanonical presence of Englishness."²² Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan state that the Chinese encounter with Shakespeare is associated with a nationalist agenda.²³ With the Communist Revolution of 1949, China took pride of a purported connection with the Soviet Union through the use and abuse of Shakespeare.²⁴ Although for the 400th century anniversary of Shakespeare's birth a major Shakespeare season was planned, "the sky darkened and the political weather changed considerably."²⁵ With the start of the Cultural Revolution, the Shakespearean influence diluted, and was almost forbidden since it was linked with Capitalism. It finally re-appeared in 1976, and a period of interest on Shakespeare's work followed.

²⁰ This is precisely the case of Ong Ken Sen's works, which expand the boundaries of hybridity. His *Desdemona* (2000) interestingly re-conceptualizes Shakespeare's *Othello*, and approaches the text from a female perspective. He is mostly known by his adaptation of *King Lear* entitled *LEAR* (1997) and his *Search: Hamlet* (2002) at the Kornberg Castle.

²¹ Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* equally made Shakespeare famous in Korea and in Japan. Shakespeare basically entered these countries through Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales*.

²² Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 47.

²³ Kennedy and Lan, 8.

²⁴ For another account of the history of Shakespeare in China, see Ruru Li, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

²⁵ Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare in China* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 40.

For Kennedy and Lan, colonial instigation is another form of appropriating Shakespeare.²⁶ Within the Chinese framework, not all the territories approached Shakespeare in the same way, and Hong Kong and Taiwan's engagement with Shakespeare was through colonialism. As the history of Hong Kong was first marked by the British colonization and the Japanese occupation afterwards, Hong Kong's fascination with Shakespeare has to be first seen as an extension of doing Shakespeare as part of British colonial life. For this reason, the founding of the Shakespearean icon in China may have begun in Hong Kong. The marginal island of Taiwan encountered Shakespeare through Japan.²⁷

Due to their insatiable appetite for things Western, the Japanese developed a taste for Shakespeare. Like in China or even in India, the first period of Shakespeare in Japan was characterized by free adaptation instead of literal translation. To this first stage of Shakespeare in Japan, four more periods can be distinguished according to Anzai, Iwasaki and Milward.²⁸ A second period consists of an absence of Shakespeare. This was put to an end by Tsuneari Fukuda, who rediscovered Shakespeare. The last forty years of the twentieth century were marked by a new theatrical movement (the Underground or Little Theatre Movement), which had a crucial influence on the rebirth of Shakespeare, and the Tokyo Globe Theatre. The latest Japanese Shakespearean appropriations are not a rendition to Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, but are more and more distant from the original text.

²⁶ Kennedy and Lan, 8.

²⁷ In Poonam Trivedi and Ryuta Minami's book (2009), three chapters concentrate on Taiwan.

²⁸ Tetsuo Anzai, Soji Iwasaki, Peter Milward, *Shakespeare in Japan* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1999). For more on Shakespeare in Japan, see Ryuta Minami, Ian Carruthers and John Gillies, *Performing Shakespeare on the Japanese Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare in Japan* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005). Although the book by Kishi and Bradshaw is entitled Shakespeare in Japan, the focus is on Shakespeare on the Japanese stage. The last chapter, the only one which is devoted to Shakespeare on the Japanese screen, discusses Akira Kurosawa's film adaptations.

The recycling or renovation of the Shakespearean works and Shakespeare's status as a western canonical author has equally been reconfigured in India, where he came as colonial baggage.²⁹ Like in Hong Kong's case, Shakespeare was introduced in India for the English diaspora. The Parsi theatre emerged in a period of transition between Western colonial influence and an attempt at Indianness. Labelled as a theatre with a clear commercial motto, the Parsi theatre was an in-between product which had an enormous influence on the way Shakespeare was appropriated in Indian cinema. As the decolonization of India was the result of an indigenous liberation struggle, the presence of Shakespeare in India has been, to say the least, problematic. What is striking is that even before independence India, Shakespeare had a period of absence in India. The year 1964 re-asserted Shakespeare's authority by means of the publication of several volumes to commemorate the quartercentenary of his birth. The presence of Shakespeare in India increased after this date with numerous performances in different Indian theatrical modes – giving Shakespearean works an interesting 'exotic' flavour. Common to Indian Shakespeares and other Asian Shakespeares is the considerable alteration of the source text, the localization of the works via the change of the names and settings, the lack of early literal translations and the stage adaptations on significant Asian theatrical modes. What is basically distinctive of Indian Shakespeares is the inclusion of songs and dances, the considerable shortening of the Shakespearean plays, and the lack of reference to the Shakespearean source in the re-writings and off-shoots.

Until Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz's volume entitled *India's Shakespeare* was published in 2005, the common trend concerning Shakespearean

²⁹ Other Asian locations such as Korea or Malaya encountered Shakespeare under colonial rule. For Shakespeare in Korea, see Trivedi and Minami, 181-221. For Shakespeare in Malaya see Nurul Farhana Low bt Abdullah, "Bangsawan Shakespeare in Colonial Malaya." In Huang and Ross, 139-149.

studies in India had simply been to provide an Indian response to the works.³⁰ *India's Shakespeare* is in fact an innovative and illuminating work which delves into the different appropriations of Shakespeare in India.³¹ This book ranges from the early translations/adaptations to the latest Bollywood off-shoots. *India's Shakespeare* highlights how the Indians imposed their aesthetic and intellectual ideas on their performance of Shakespeare. The proliferation of volumes on the presence of Shakespeare in the different Asian locations emphasizes the growing importance of Shakespeare in Asia studies, and how they contribute to his global understanding.

The Constant Dialogue between Shakespeare, Bollywood and Diaspora

Before continuing any further, I should clarify the reasons why I have decided to use the term “Bollywood” and what I exactly mean by it. Although the term “Bollywood” has been at the centre of heated debates and has been considered by some critics a derogatory term because it derives from Hollywood, I have decided to use it throughout this dissertation because the concept is now widely deployed, and refers to films which follow specific formulas.³² In the early stages of critical discussion, the concept still deserved further academic scrutiny, and could easily collude and be conflated with the term Indian cinema. But, over the years, it acquired its current meaning and displaced earlier descriptors, namely Bombay Cinema, Indian Popular Cinema or Hindi Cinema. In the words of Vijay Mishra: “the triumph of the term (over

³⁰ See for instance Sankalapuram Nagarajan and S. Viswanathan (eds.), *Shakespeare in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987) or Basavaraj Naikar (ed.), *Indian Response to Shakespeare* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2002).

³¹ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 2006.

³² See Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films* (London: British Film Institute, 2005) and N. R. Bradley, *Bollywood: Behind the Scenes, Beyond the Stars* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007) for some criticism on the term Bollywood.

the others) is nothing less than spectacular and indicates, furthermore, the growing global sweep of this cinema not just as cinema qua cinema but as cinema qua social effects and national cultural coding.”³³ Vijay Mishra, Tejaswini Ganti, Rajinder Dudrah or Jigna Desai, amongst others, use the concept Bollywood to refer to those films that articulate an exceptionally rich set of aesthetic meanings, such as the over-presence of songs and dances, extreme melodrama and ‘masala,’ which refers to the combination of different genres, namely action, comedy or romance.³⁴ The movies are infused with “Hindu epic plots, Orientalist exoticism, and the visual and aural overload of Indian culture to create a new aesthetic style.”³⁵ As Jyotsna Kapur states, weddings became core attractions in Bollywood cinema, and they tend to be essential in the majority of my film corpora.³⁶ For the sake of clarity, I use the descriptor Bollywood to refer to those films with the set of characteristics mentioned above, in Hindi language and made by the Mumbai industry. Obviously, Bollywood ought not to be mistaken for the larger category of Indian cinema, for there is a considerable cinematic production in India beyond Bollywood movies. In her most recent book co-edited with Jerry Pinto *Beyond the Boundaries of Bollywood: The Many Forms of Hindi Cinema*, Rachel Dwyer in fact accounts for the films that lie beyond Bollywood; the volume focuses on the cinema made after Bollywood emerged and which is not part of it.³⁷ Yet, the films under study in the first section of this dissertation are Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots and

³³ Vijay Mishra, “Bollywood Cinema: A Critical Genealogy,” *Asian Studies Institute* (Victoria: Victoria University of Wellington), 1.

³⁴ Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002); Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Rajinder Dudrah, *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006); Rajinder Dudrah and Jigna Desai (eds.) *The Bollywood Reader* (Maidenhead: McGraw Hill, 2008).

³⁵ Jenny Sharpe, “Gender, Nation, and Globalization in *Monsoon Wedding* and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 6.1. (2005): 58-81.

³⁶ Jyotsna Kapur, “An ‘Arranged Love’ Marriage: India’s Neoliberal Turn and the Bollywood Wedding Culture Industry,” *Communication, Culture & Critique* 2.2 (2009): 221-233.

³⁷ Rachel Dwyer and Jerry Pinto (eds.), *Beyond the Boundaries of Bollywood: The Many Forms of Hindi Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

adaptations made in Mumbai: *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994), *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995), *Dil Chahta Hai* (dir. Farhan Akhtar, 2002), *Maqbool* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2003) and *Omkaara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006). A film such as *In Othello* (dir. Roysten Abel, 2002), despite being indebted to Shakespeare's *Othello*, was not included in the film corpora, for it can be considered part of the parallel movie industry in India.

The impact of Bollywood cinema on the diaspora – those Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) living in Britain, the US, Australia, among other host countries – and of the diaspora on Bollywood cinema is rather remarkable; their mutual interaction has been well established with a considerable intensity. The economic liberalization of India in the 1990s remains pivotal to this new conception of cinema. Diaspora became a theme and condition in Bollywood movies, and charged Bollywood with new meanings and connotations. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995), *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (dir. Karan Johar, 1998), *Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham* (dir. Karan Johar, 2001), *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (dir. Nikhil Advani, 2003) or *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (dir. Karan Johar, 2006) are some instances of movies which centre around diasporic audiences.³⁸ At the same time that diaspora was a topic in films, the diasporic overseas market was also in the ascendance, and a considerable number of filmmakers chose this market as their favourite.

However, the interactions between Bollywood and diaspora do not only show and intervene in the films made in Mumbai. Given that Bollywood cinema became “an

³⁸ For more on Karan Johar's films and how they interact with diasporic audiences, see Sangita Gopal, “Sentimental Symptoms: The Films of Karan Johar and Bombay Cinema.” In *Bollywood and Globalization: Indian Popular Cinema, Nation, and Diaspora*. Ed. Rini Bhattacharya Mehta and Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande (London, New York and Delhi: Anthem South Asian Studies, 2011), 15-34.

indispensable cultural form in the lives of the Indian diaspora,” through which these NRIs feed their long-distance nationalism for a Mother India that exists more in their imagination than in reality, British cultural productions made by diasporic directors began to imitate the Bollywood form and distinctive artistic traditions, and Bollywood became the favourite intertextual genre.³⁹ Mira Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* (1990) and *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002) or Gurinder Chadha’s projects like *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) – aka *Balle Balle/ Amritsar to L.A.* in its counterpart Hindi version – imitate, parody, rewrite and refresh the genre. But the Bollywood hype transcends the diaspora, and is having an influence in the Western world. The year 2002 for instance witnessed the celebration of Bollywood in Selfridges Department stores, in the Victoria and Albert Museum with the exhibition “Cinema India: The Art of Bollywood,” and at the British Film Institute (BFI).⁴⁰ The release of the musical *Bombay Dreams* by Andrew Lloyd Webber equally contributed to the phenomenal success of Bollywood in the West. Like diasporic filmmakers, Western directors also manifest their interest in imitating and/or parodying Bollywood in filmic projects, such as *Bollywood Queen* (dir. Jeremy Wooding, 2002) or *My Bollywood Bride* (dir. Rajeev Virani, 2006). The interesting inter-connections and interactions between Bollywood, diaspora, and its global appeal are now the object of analysis of a large number of volumes – *Global Bollywood*, *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, *Bollywood and Globalization: Indian Popular Cinema*,

³⁹ Mishra, “Bollywood Cinema: A Critical Genealogy,” 10.

⁴⁰ The homage the BFI paid to Bollywood was paid back in *Bride and Prejudice* when the characters go to the Southbank and enter the BFI and there is a classical Bollywood film on the screen.

Nation, and Diaspora are but just some examples.⁴¹ The ongoing mobility, cultural flows and traffic of ideas are patent then in the latent tensions concerning Bollywood.

Just as Bollywood cinema is in a constant circulation, so is Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema. This study *Shakespeare, Bollywood and Beyond* takes then as its main hypothesis the idea that diaspora plays a crucial role not only in understanding Bollywood Shakespeares, but also in realising how diaspora influences the global understanding of Shakespeare via Bollywood. A crucial aim of this doctoral thesis is to demonstrate that Bollywood and pseudo-bollywood Shakespearean adaptations and off-shoots from 1990s onwards are targeted at the diaspora or focus on it.⁴² Taking as a premise the importance of diaspora in the Indian society as well as the interest in adapting Shakespeare, this dissertation aims to show how postmillennial Bollywood films appropriating Shakespeare's plays reveal themselves responsive for the promotion of diaspora. Whether set in India or abroad, Bollywood or pseudo-Bollywood, these adaptations of Shakespeare's works are very much influenced by the diasporic phenomenon, being moulded according to the dictates that govern this transnational experience. Aware of the complexity of cross-cultural entanglements, this dissertation is not limited to the reception and appropriation of Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema, but seeks to cross borders by demonstrating the influence of Bollywood's interpretation of Shakespeare's plays in Shakespearean off-shoots made in the West. There is a considerable negotiation and dialogue between Shakespeare and Bollywood, Bollywood

⁴¹ Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar (eds.) *Global Bollywood* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti (eds.) *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Mehta and Pandharipande (2011) and Rajinder Dudrah, *Bollywood Travels: Culture, Diaspora and Border Crossings in Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York: Routledge Contemporary South Asia series, 2012).

⁴² The term "pseudo-Bollywood" refers to those films which imitate the formulas used in Bollywood cinema, such as the constant presence of songs and dances, the overuse of melodrama or happy endings, but are produced and directed in the West.

and the West which is veering towards an in-between tradition, neither properly belonging to the East nor to the West. These pseudo-Bollywood adaptations of Shakespearean works follow in the footsteps of Shakespeare in Bollywood – characterised by ‘cannibalization’ and ‘spectralization’ – and basically create a middle ground terrain. The simplification of the plots, the lack of acknowledgement of the Shakespearean works, and the transformation of the endings in pseudo-Bollywood off-shoots of Shakespeare’s works simply confirm this influence. Therefore, they activate a dialogue with the interpretation of Shakespeare in Bollywood thanks to transnationalism. In tracing the interaction between Shakespeare, Bollywood and the pathway West-East-West, some of the concepts provided by Arjun Appadurai, Homi K. Bhabha, García Canclini or Dipesh Chakrabarty are followed in this study.⁴³ In the search for a new form of Shakespeare in the West – defined to a great extent by its relationship with Bollywood – the notions of ‘ideoscapes’ and ‘mediascapes’ inform the discussion of Shakespearean adaptations in India contained in this study.

As the year 1990 marked the beginning of a new trend within Bollywood studies characterised by the presence of diaspora or transnationalism, the films under scrutiny in this dissertation were made in 1990 or after. Aiming to explore the presence of Shakespeare in Bollywood and its influence in the West, the film corpora consist of five Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations or off-shoots (*1942: A Love Story*, *Bombay*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Maqbool* y *Omkara*), and four Western projects which use Bollywood as its main intertextual genre (*Mississippi Masala*, *Bollywood/Hollywood*, *Bollywood*

⁴³ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias Para Salir y Entrar en la Modernidad* (México: Grijalbo, 1989); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Queen, Second Generation). The reason behind the selection of these movies to select these movies is the necessity to choose the films in which the re-creation of Shakespeare is more prominent. With the analysis of Bollywood adaptations and off-shoots of Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, I intend to highlight the shared features regarding the representation of Shakespeare in Bollywood. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an in-depth analysis of the Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations or off-shoots made in other periods, although a summary is provided in chapter 2 and a comprehensive list is included in the appendix at the end of this study. The films chosen constitute a wide range of cultural products, both high-brow and low-brow, and are either Shakespearean adaptations or off-shoots. While the Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations explored are considered art-house movies (*1942: A Love Story, Bombay, Dil Chahta Hai, Maqbool* and *Omkaara*), the pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots (*Bollywood/Hollywood, Mississippi Masala, Bollywood Queen* and *Second Generation*) may sometimes be considered Western 'McNuggets.'⁴⁴ The films investigated in this dissertation perform more than one task, looking outwards and inwards, restoring the local within the grammar of the global, and authenticating or demythologizing Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, Bollywood and Beyond

This study is structured into three different sections. While the first section contains an exposition of the theoretical approach, the second and third sections analyze the film corpora. The second section sheds light upon the interplay between Shakespeare, Bollywood and diaspora in well-known, prototypical Bollywood

⁴⁴ The term "cinematic McNugget" refers to those films which are considered apolitical, popcorn movies to while away the time. See Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (eds.) *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 6.

adaptations or off-shoots of Shakespearean works, whereas the third section goes beyond the Bollywood paradigm by analyzing pseudo-Bollywood movies by diasporic or British filmmakers in order to understand the dialogic relationship between Bollywood, Shakespeare and diaspora in the West.

Chapter 1 examines the initial appropriation and interpretation of Shakespeare in India in the colonial period, and the subsequent mode of reading and adapting Shakespeare in the post-colonial period. This opening chapter highlights the complexities of India's cultural 'ownership' of Shakespeare, and how the author and his works have to be reduced in order to be 'Indianized.' The Parsis' mode of reading of the Shakespearean plays as a hybrid product has influenced the Bollywood Shakespeare tradition. If this opening chapter reveals that Shakespeare in India is not precisely characterized by a fidelity-derived discourse, chapter 2 confirms it. This second chapter investigates the presence of Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema, where three modes coexist after the independence of India: the early 'westernized' film adaptations, the pre-millennium off-shoots with the 'spectralization' of Shakespeare as the main feature and the post-millennial works which incorporate new idioms and styles of representation. Chapter 3 focuses on various arguments by the most important critics who have explored the field of diaspora. The chapter also aims to intertwine theory and practice by hinting at the application of the paradigms mentioned.

Bollywood adaptations of Shakespeare's texts transform the original works and clearly interact with diasporic audiences. Chapter 4 starts the analysis of the movies and addresses the interplay between post-colonialism and Shakespeare through the comparative analysis of two films *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) and *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995). If these two works bear the traces of

Shakespeare in the first half – through the enactment of *Romeo and Juliet* in *1942: A Love Story* and the appropriation of the plot by the main characters in both movies – the second half of the movies clearly departs from Shakespeare and its association with colonialism in India in order to direct the gaze at the diaspora, which is characterized by long-distance nationalism and the financial support of the right-wing political party ‘Hindutva.’ Chapter 5 examines the ways a Bollywood film entitled *Dil Chahta Hai* (dir. Farhan Akhtar, 2002) locates Shakespeare in the diaspora. The allusions to *Much Ado About Nothing* and to *Troilus and Cressida* occur when the main characters are in Australia rather than when they are in India. The defamiliarization of Shakespeare and India is evident in this chapter. In the absence of a proper diasporic community, Chapter 6 explores how *Maqbool* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2003) and *Omkara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006) are targeted at a transnational audience. Via the categories of migration and displacement, this chapter always touches chord with transnationalism. In the subsection of reception, the films’ dual identities as Shakespearean and Bollywood movies are seen to raise complex issues. Are *Maqbool* and *Omkara* Shakespearean enough? Are they Bollywood-like enough? Part of the answer to these questions can actually be found in the first section of this chapter which discusses to what extent the films broaden the Bollywood genre. Just like Shakespeare’s texts acquire new meanings in this new realm, the genre itself seems to be somehow affected by the presence of Shakespeare, and is expanded as a result. *Maqbool* and *Omkara* show the complexities of appropriating Shakespeare in a specific genre.⁴⁵ Although the conclusion regarding more Asian cinematic Shakespeares is open-ended, it seems that whenever we have an acknowledged Asian Shakespearean film adaptation, either the form or Shakespeare is

⁴⁵ According to Alexander Huang, *The Banquet: The Legend of the Black Scorpion* (dir. Xiaogang Feng, 2006) has undergone a similar criticism. Reviews either claimed that it was not Chinese enough or Shakespearean enough. See Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 233.

transformed. It is one of the central aims of this section to observe if the association between Shakespeare and colonialism in India is still present in any adaptation or offshoot of the film corpora, and how it influences the interpretation of Shakespeare to reflect on the complicated place Shakespeare has in the Indian postcolonial society.

The last section in this dissertation takes stock of the rapidly stretching ripples of the recent encounters between East and West regarding the appropriation of Shakespeare. Chapter 7 analyzes the role of the Shakespearean-spouting grandmother in Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002). The chapter delineates the political consequences of misquoting and misappropriating the Shakespearean body of works on the part of a first generation diasporic individual, for the grandmother appears as an in-between subject mimicking the colonizers while (re)interpreting the Western canon at the same time. Given that *Bollywood/Hollywood* was conceived as a fusion project combining Bollywood and Hollywood cinematography, the chapter equally signals that the mixture of traditions regarding the interpretation of Shakespeare is present in the film. East and West meet, and Shakespeare is the author chosen for the cross-cultural encounter. Chapter 8 takes as a premise the idea that Shakespearean off-shoots by diasporic or Western movies such as *Mississippi Masala* (dir. Mira Nair, 1990) or *Bollywood Queen* (dir. Jeremy Wooding, 2003) follow in the steps of Bollywood appropriation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The reduction of the plot to the minimum – the obstacles in the path of true love relationships, love at first sight and fate – the replacement of a tragic *dénouement* by a happy ending and the lack of acknowledgement of the Shakespearean influence are some of the features imitated from Bollywood. The two films are in-between projects which appropriate the Bollywood tradition in the Western world and free Shakespeare from the baggage of

previous readings and interpretations in the West, and engage the public in a reinvention of Shakespeare's ideological instrumentality. In *Bollywood Queen* and *Mississippi Masala*'s parodic process, the film directors Jeremy Wooding and Mira Nair unconsciously imitate Bollywood's interpretation of Shakespeare. However, the marketing campaign, reception and criticism of the movies always bring Shakespeare to the fore. This last section suggests the impossibility of mixing two traditions regarding the appropriation of Shakespeare. The films are characteristic of a cultural flux in which Shakespeare is not approached directly, but through Bollywood, but the product does not work in the West, as the box-office figures and reviews show. Chapter 9 traces the transformations that are effected by the re-playing of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in the West with a Bollywood touch. It examines the movie *Second Generation* (dir. Jon Sen, 2003), which influenced by the new wave of experimentation with Bollywood, reinterprets *King Lear* in the Bollywood fashion. The director for instance explores in *Second Generation* a happy ending instead of a tragic *dénouement*. Although marketed as a Shakespearean adaptation, the film is finally more interested in Bollywood than in Shakespeare; it is in fact indebted to Bollywood interpretation of Shakespeare, in which the transformation of the finale is very common. While the Bollywood genre and Shakespeare are both expanding their meanings in Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations or off-shoots, the pseudo-Bollywood off-shoots are anchored in the previous Bollywood appropriation of Shakespeare. The appropriation of Shakespeare through Bollywood takes part in the unpredictable postmodern experience and necessarily promotes a new reading of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* in the West. The movies analyzed in this section demonstrate the continuing value of Shakespeare together with the circulation of its cultural capital, in constant negotiation between the East and the West.

Introduction

It is my hope then that *Shakespeare, Bollywood and Beyond* crosses borders by analyzing two perspectives. The strategy of this work is not to offer readers a linear narrative of the history of Shakespeare's performance in Bollywood cinema, but to examine how meanings metamorphose when the Western canon is appropriated by Bollywood, and, through the travelling of these products, how Shakespeare's texts are equally metamorphosed in the West. Bollywood Shakespeare expands the range of reference for Shakespeare. As these films amply demonstrate, Shakespeare is in a continually shifting variety of images and icons. The movies suggest that new Shakespeares can be produced – even in the West – thanks to the dialogue and negotiation with the East. This form of appropriating Shakespeare also acknowledges the importance of diaspora in Bollywood and in pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations and off-shoots. The early travelling of the Shakespearean texts to entertain the English diaspora, the reception of Shakespeare's works by Anglo-Indians and now by the Indian diaspora and by a transnational audience suggest the movement and circulation of the works in the field of global Shakespeares. If Shakespearean texts were imported cultural packages in India, the vision of Bollywood Shakespeare is now being exported to the West. The cultural exchange, negotiation and dialogue between different forms of Shakespearean knowledge are necessary bridges that have to be open for the introduction of new Shakespeares produced in a transnational space. The global understanding of Shakespeare is certainly determined and facilitated by these other Shakespeares.

Chapter 1: Shakespeare in Colonial and Post-colonial India

I. SHAKESPEARE IN INDIA

Chapter 1: Shakespeare in Colonial and Post-colonial India

“We are forced to drink deep at the fountain-head of a foreign literature, while our own is given a curt go by. The cold shouldering it receives is enough to make it virtually a ‘forbidden fruit.’ Thus we come out of the tedious tuition of a university on a thoroughly alien basis, like full-fledged parrots, carefully taught to belaud to the sky Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, whose thoughts have very little ‘enriched the blood of the world’ – of the East, at least... We are nationally and morally degraded”¹

“For the England of trade, commerce, imperialism and 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”²

The diverse perspectives regarding Shakespeare in India – moving from abhorrence to complete adoration and acclamation shown in the epigraphs – spotlight the vicissitudes, complexities and paradoxes enfolding the Shakespearean industry in a country marked by its past as British colony. The beginnings of Shakespeare studies in India are linked with colonialism, especially after the 1835 Education Act was passed.³ With this act, Lord Macaulay reinforced the notion of English literature as a colonising tool by

¹ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 21.

² C.D. Naramsihaiah, *Shakespeare Came to India* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1964), V.

³ Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay was a Governor who spent several years in Calcutta writing the Indian Penal Code. His ‘Minute on Education’ talk in 1835 became famous.

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imposing its study to the colonized subjects. However, as if trespassing into a territory outside colonial rules, Shakespeare was at the same time being translated and adapted into vernacular languages. The transportable property of Shakespeare began to inhabit a new rehearsal and production space that had no connection whatsoever with the theatres built in India in imitation of the English ones. This juxtaposition shows that from its very outset, the relationship between Shakespeare and the Indian sub-continent has been complex, alternating between two different scales. The transition to independence – from 1916 onwards – offers a considerable decline in Shakespearean productions, perhaps caused by the rise of nationalism.⁴ It is significant that the Shakespeare revival begins to take place in the 60s, reaching its heyday in 1964 – the year of the quadricentennial of Shakespeare’s birth.⁵ Yet, Shakespeare was not invulnerable to criticism in this period, which is characterised by the ambivalent attitude towards him. Although Shakespeare still had a considerable reputation in India, especially encouraged by those educated Indians who regarded him as “the true and vital link between India and England”, his iconic image was defaced in some Indian theatres, namely the Marathi and Gujarati theatres where his plays were hardly ever produced again.⁶ Thus, Shakespeare was pulled in antithetical directions in India.

The aim of this first chapter is to offer an overview of translations/adaptations and performances to show to what an extent Shakespeare has been present in India.

⁴ Charles Sisson, *Shakespeare in India: Popular Adaptations on the Bombay Stage* (London: The Shakespeare Association, 1926), 20 and Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 17, where the authors state the rise of nationalism as the main reason that promoted the decline of Shakespearean productions.

⁵ While in 1916 – the year of the Tercentenary of Shakespeare’s death – hardly any performance of a Shakespeare’s play was actually produced, 1964 saw numerous celebrations/acts of commemoration and festivals paying homage to Shakespeare. In an article entitled “The Re-birth of Shakespeare in India: Celebrating and Indianizing the Bard in 1964,” *SEDERI* 22 (2012): 51-68 I explore the presence and interpretation of Shakespeare in India in 1964. The article is part of the project FFI2011-24347 (Culturas de la Conmemoración II: Recordando a Shakespeare), financed by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación.

⁶ C. D. Naramsihaiah qtd. in Jyotsna Singh, *Colonial Narratives: Discoveries of India in the Language of Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 134.

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Shakespeare's plays have proved amenable to reinterpretation in India, where a multiplicity of responses towards Shakespeare is the norm. This chapter aims to shed light upon those emblematic operating forces in the appropriation of Shakespeare in India such as the Parsi Theatre, which has shaped directly or indirectly the interpretation of Shakespearean plays by Bollywood filmmakers. Two different sections can be distinguished in this chapter: the appropriation of Shakespeare in the colonial period and the reception in the transition and post-colonial period. Shakespeare in English, the Parsi theatre as an in-between case and Indianised Shakespeare are the different sections of this first part (appropriation of Shakespeare in the colonial period).⁷ In the wake of Shakespeare's appropriation into the local Indian context, the tendency is basically oriented towards the indigenisation/indianisation of his plays. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to mention all the translations/adaptations of Shakespeare's plays done in the vernacular languages. The last section in this first chapter prioritizes the study of Shakespeare in the transition and post-colonial period, with a special emphasis on the Shakespeare revival of the 60s. The subsequent sections attempt to reveal how the adaptation of Shakespeare by Bollywood directors has actually followed in the footsteps of his interpretation on the Indian stage; its intriguing influence abounds the Indian filmic medium.

⁷ As will be shown throughout this chapter, translators follow the tendency of adapting, even rewriting the plays to suit the Indian audience rather than that of translating faithfully and literally the original text. Thus, no distinction can be made regarding these two terms.

Chapter 1: Shakespeare in Colonial and Post-colonial India

1. The Colonial Period

1.1. Shakespeare in English

Shakespeare is associated with the entry of colonialism in India; the two consort in an unbreakable partnership. At this moment of the relationship between India and Shakespeare, he is welcome as part of the “entertainment programme for English residents of Bombay and Calcutta from about 1775.”⁸ Apart from the amusement provided to the British rulers and citizens of India, Shakespearean plays trigger certain fascination, especially in élite Indians, giving thus a tremendous boost to the myth of Shakespeare as the figure of cultural refinement *par excellence*.⁹ The study of his works was compulsory for educated Indians if they aimed to gain recognition, superiority, status and better job opportunities. They “offered a programme of building a new man who would feel himself a citizen of the world while the very face of the world was being constructed in the mirror of the dominant culture of the West.”¹⁰ The Indian intelligentsia, mostly the bhadralok, a new class of Bengalis, began to identify with Western literature, imitating and copying it, neglecting their own literature. Consequently, the transmission of information about Shakespeare and his works in the curriculum as well as the performance of his plays in colonial India are integral to understanding the pervasive influence English literature was exerting in the minds of the colonized subjects.

⁸ John Gillies, Ryuta Minami, Ruru Li and Poonam Trivedi, “Shakespeare on the Stages of Asia.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*. Eds. Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 272.

⁹ Christine Mangala Frost, “30 Rupees for Shakespeare: A Consideration of Imperial Theatre in India,” *Modern Drama* 35 (1992): 91.

¹⁰ Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 21.

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The long-standing relationship between the British dramatist and education in India has its roots in 1817 and 1818, the years in which the Hindu College at Calcutta and the School Society were established respectively. These two institutions “took a leading part in teaching Shakespeare and printing and publishing books on him.”¹¹ Shakespeare found its niche in these institutions and was enshrined in the classroom. There were two people who managed to stimulate students with Shakespearean plays: Henry Louis Derozio and D.L. Richardson. While the gifted teacher Derozio – an Anglo-Indian of Portuguese-Indian ancestry – inculcated a strong sense of patriotism into his students’ minds through the reading and study of Shakespearean works, Captain Richardson’s emphasis was on the performance of the works, which he achieved via recitations and amateur performances of chosen scenes.¹² Being a theatre enthusiast, he openly encouraged his students to attend theatre performances enticing them with free tickets.¹³ Had the Hindu College not existed, the Shakespearean influence would not have had this manifestation at such an early stage.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare’s “status” is indebted to Lord Macaulay’s 1835 English Education Act, according to which all educated Indians were summoned to study English literature; it became a compulsory part of the education curricula.¹⁴ Although at the beginning the erasure of Oriental studies was not one of the principles since the study of English was combined with Oriental studies, the different status was

¹¹ Dodderi Aswathanarayanarao Shankar, *Shakespeare in Indian Languages* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1999), 89.

¹² Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1969), 434 and S. K. Bhattacharya, “Shakespeare and the Bengali Theatre,” *Indian Literature* 7 (1964), 29.

¹³ The teaching of Shakespeare’s plays had the capacity to promote amateur productions among students. In 1837 Bengali students staged scenes from *The Merchant of Venice* in the Governor’s house, the students of the Metropolitan academy and David Hare academy staged Shakespeare’s plays in 1852 and 1853. In 1853, there was a production of *Othello* by the old and new students of the Oriental Academy. In 1854, they performed *The Merchant of Venice* and, in 1855, they did *Henry IV*. See Singh, *Colonial Narratives*, 34.

¹⁴ Narasimhaiah, 5.

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already proclaimed since the promotion of Sanskrit or Arabic texts played second fiddle in the process. The initial focus on the English language and the Bible gave way to the promotion of English literature with a clear Christian morality and faith.¹⁵ Lord Macaulay's Act was especially privileged at the Universities' arena after the establishment of the Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in 1857, which became another turning point in the study of Shakespeare in India.¹⁶ India's expertise with Shakespeare was the passport to the assurance of his continuity in the syllabus and on the stage.

British India invested in a sustained use of theatre where Shakespearean productions were abundant; his dramas filled the early English theatres in India. Given the background, the targeted audience consisted of the English diaspora, such as officers and merchants.¹⁷ The origins of these English theatres in Calcutta can be established in 1753 when the first theatre – the Playhouse – was founded. Unfortunately, this first theatre had a very short life being closed in 1756. The emergence of the second English theatre – the New Playhouse, also called Calcutta Theatre – took place in 1775, and was closed in 1808. David Garrick, the well-known English actor-manager, assisted in the

¹⁵ Gauri Viswanathan, "The Beginnings of English Literary Studies in India," *Oxford Literary Review* 9 (1987): 2-26 develops in depth the beginnings of English literary study in colonial India. His close study of the Charter Act of 1813, the East Indian company, and, above all, the English Education Act in 1835 make his work a necessary source for those who aim to investigate about the outset of British Imperialism in India and the role of English literature in the process.

¹⁶ Crucial in underscoring the mission of an educational Shakespeare are the current universities where Shakespeare is still part and parcel of the syllabus. While B.A. students are required to read between two and three plays, B.A. (Hons.) students are compelled to read either four to five plays or four plays and some sonnets. Concerning students in English literature, they are supposed to be familiar with four to five plays. See J. P. Mishra, *Shakespeare's Impact on Hindi Literature* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970), 1. A financial argument for the long-enduring presence of Shakespeare in the Indian syllabus is provided by Jyotsna Singh, "Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial and Postcolonial India," *Theatre Journal* 41 (1989): 455. The foreign publishing firms such as Oxford University Press, Macmillan, Penguin and Longman have had the monopoly over the publication of English texts in India. Moreover, the presence of the British Council is always under the surface. Its financial importance in India is linked with the system of funding, patronage, publications...Consequently, Singh claims that if 140000 students must study English literature in present-day society and 20000 have to read Shakespeare, it is due to these lobbies whose immortality seems to be as assured as Shakespeare's.

¹⁷ Rustom Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 7.

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process of building this second theatre, which was modelled after London's Drury Lane. Shakespeare's essence was especially present in this dramatic venue, where *Richard III*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, *Hamlet* and other Shakespearean plays were staged. These two theatres were characterised by amateur performances and by the well-known Elizabethan practice of having men performing female roles. Perhaps a clear departure from these two theatres was Mrs. Emma Bristow's Theatre, which was established at her own residence at Chowringhee Road.¹⁸ According to the Calcutta Gazette, the theatre was cosily decorated with a large number of objects so that it could be glimpsed as a theatre with the only drawback of the dimensions.¹⁹ Unlike the New Playhouse and the Calcutta Theatre, Mrs. Bristow hired actresses to perform both female and male roles. The performance of *Julius Caesar* in this theatre is richly responsive for showing an all female cast where Mrs. Emma Bristow performed the role of Lucius. At the beginning, then, Shakespeare in British India was accommodated in private residences and was staged by amateurs.

Two theatres are responsible for the boost to Shakespearean works: the Chowringhee Theatre (1813-39) and the Sans Souci Theatre (1839-49), acknowledged as the most famous and successful playhouses.²⁰ The Chowringhee Theatre was founded by famous people. It is here that Shakespearean performance reaches its peak

¹⁸ The name "Chowringhee" gestures towards the Shakespearean presence in British India. If Mrs. Emma Bristow's Theatre was located at Chowringhee Road, a subsequent more famous theatre well-known for its Shakespearean productions was called Chowringhee Theatre. Moreover, Aparna Sen also played with this connection between Shakespeare and colonialism titling his 1981 movie *36 Chowringhee Lane*. The film revolves around a lonely Anglo-Indian woman who teaches Shakespeare. Seeing perils in her environment, she lives an uneventful life until visited by a former student of hers and her boyfriend. Although her life changes considerably upon meeting them, the movie has a circular structure and ends with the protagonist as lonely as she was at the beginning. The numerous references to Shakespeare, the cast consisting of Geoffrey and Jennifer Kendal – whose Anglo performances in the late 40s revived Shakespeare – and the hybridity of the protagonists situate the movie as one of those structured around ambiguity and ambivalence as far Shakespeare's role is concerned.

¹⁹ Calcutta Gazette in Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, *The Story of the Calcutta Theatres: 1753-1980* (Calcutta & New Delhi: K. P. Bagchi & Company, 1982), 3.

²⁰ There were other theatres at the time like the Wheeler Place theatre, Athenaeum Theatre, the Dum Dum theatre... however, neither were they famous nor they produced Shakespearean plays.

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via the staging of *Macbeth* (1814), *Henry IV* (1814), *Coriolanus*, *Richard III* (1815), *Catherine and Petruchio* – Garrick’s adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* – and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1818). The Sans Souci Theatre produced Shakespearean drama continuously. A renowned production was that of *The Merchant of Venice* with Mrs. Esther Leach performing the role of Jessica. This theatre’s life culminates in a performance of *Othello* on 17 August 1848, where the main role was played by an Indian, Baishnab Charan Auddy, for the first time. Before this date, all non-white characters in English plays had been performed by white actors. Despite being censured on the day of the premiere – it seems that due to the presence of this native Othello – the production later had two short runs. Although the English reviewers parodied Addy’s acting, it went beyond the previous Shakespearean performances in its emphasis on the native perspective, which “was part of a movement in English theatres of Calcutta at the beginning of the nineteenth century toward ‘ethnic correctness’ of representation.”²¹ The 1848 Sans Souci production of *Othello* consistently favoured an example of hybridity since the English text was being transferred to the ‘native’ context. At a time where there were clear dichotomies such as the ruler and the ruled, black and white, the audience was invited to reflect on themes of salient impact, i.e. the possibility of mimicking the colonisers by producing something different whose origin may be in the colonial world, but, at the end, is distorted and shows that the borderland is easily crossed. Addy’s acting of Othello can actually be placed in this liminal or gray area which already moved beyond colonialism. Instead of simply absorbing the sahib’s

²¹ Sudipto Chatterjee and Jyotsna Singh, “Moor or Less? The Surveillance of *Othello*, Calcutta 1848.” In *Shakespeare and Appropriation*. Eds. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (London: Routledge, 1999), 70.

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playtext, the Indian actor pinpointed at the ambivalence of his situation by using “camouflage, mimicry.”²²

1.2. Free adaptations of Shakespeare: The Parsi Theatre, An In-Between Case

If in 1848 a production of *Othello* with a native in the leading role came as a forceful reminder of the possibilities of hybridity even in colonial India, the Parsi Theatre Shakespearean productions have always been deemed a clearer instance of in-betweenness troubling the dichotomy East-West. Parsis are Zoroastrian émigrés from Persia who dwelled in India for a long period of time. They are culturally constructed as a community in terms of race, wealth and a certain Westernisation, which distinguish them from the Indian community. The origins of the Parsi companies have to be traced back to the Bombay Theatre in 1849. However, the Parsi theatre as such did not really begin until 1860 and approximately finished in 1930.²³ Within the Parsi Theatre, two different forms can be distinguished: a) those performing in and around the Bombay area, travelling abroad at times and b) those travelling companies which were located in other provinces, and toured with their troupes. The stunning costumes, verbose speeches and gorgeous music that filled every production were crucial for the extraordinary success of these adaptations. Although their repertory lent Shakespeare the leading role, other European plays were also performed. Their productions covered a wide array of languages, moving from a first play in Marathi to Gujarati and Urdu plays. Their

²² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 85.

²³ There are disagreements regarding the year which showed the end of the Parsis. Although Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 17 advocate for 1930, Javed Malick in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 93 prefers the 20s as a more reliable date.

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performance style reflected heterogeneity, “deriving from Eastern and Western forms.”²⁴

According to Malick, at least 75 texts were direct translations/adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays. These 75 texts adapted twenty-three different Shakespearean plays, which obviously included comedies, tragedies, histories, romances and roman plays.²⁵ Their versions of Shakespearean plays have been called “experimental localising adaptations” since they involved not only a change of names and locations, but also a rewriting of plots and characters, additions of other *dramatis personae* and the inclusion of songs and dances, which were necessary to suit the Indian taste. To achieve a localised Shakespeare is the aim of these productions. For that reason, they also included references to gods and goddesses and made use of strangely hybrid dresses, sometimes more Indian than Victorian. Moved by a commercial motto, the translations/adaptations never acknowledged the Shakespearean source, in case audiences were discouraged by texts usually regarded as instances of highbrow culture. In the words of Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, “it would not be an exaggeration to assert that Shakespeare was popularized, commercialized, and insinuated into the psyche of these audiences – without them knowing that it was Shakespeare – through the transformations effected by the Parsi theatre.”²⁶ By making Shakespeare popular, these companies explicitly drew on plebeian audiences rather than on the Anglo-Indians or the Indian intelligentsia. Such was the degree of popularization these versions achieved that audiences very often demanded repetitions of certain scenes. These free constructions of Shakespeare’s plays where one can find Portia singing songs, Viola and Sebastian running away in a train and *King Lear* having a happy ending also function to

²⁴ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 16.

²⁵ Javed Malick in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 93.

²⁶ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 16.

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evoke a clear case of cultural resistance to the oppressive, imperial system governing in India at the time. The Parsi theatre was both “the product and the producer of a hybridity that was the hallmark of urban colonial India.”²⁷

A whole generation of Parsi dramatists greeted Shakespeare and were influenced by him. The pioneers were Thoothi, Dadabhai Patel, Kooverji Nazer, K. Khatau, Kabraji, Baliwala, Nanabhai Ranina and Edulji Kori. The Parsi playwright Ranina Nanabhai Rustamji (1832-1900) aspired to offer a paean to Shakespeare by translating one act of *The Comedy of Errors* and of *Othello* into Gujarati and the full play-text of *Romeo and Juliet*. Urdu dramatists of the Parsi stage also took many liberties with Shakespearean plots. Narayan Prasad Betab wrote *Gorakhdhandha (Labyrinth)*, based on *The Comedy of Errors* (1909). Agha Hashr Kashmiri – considered by Trivedi and Bartholomeusz the most important figure of the Parsi theatre – also put into circulation several translations of Shakespearean plays.²⁸ He made his debut with the adaptation of *The Winter’s Tale Murid-a-shak* in 1899, staged *King Lear (Safed Khoon)* in 1907, *King John (Said-e-Havas)* in 1908 and *Macbeth (Khwab-e-Hasti)* in 1909. His method of translation aimed to elaborate on the comic subplot of the plays in order to combine these comic interludes with music. Gupt centres on Mehdi Hasan Ahsan as the most crucial Urdu agent in the transmission and translation/adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays.²⁹ His drama *Bhul Bhulaiyan* (1905) was supposed to be based on *The Comedy of Errors*, but according to Gupt it was actually based on *Twelfth Night*, the twins being a boy and a girl. Although this Shakespearean play is undoubtedly the source text, the argument, in accordance with other translations/adaptations, departed considerably from

²⁷ Ania Loomba, “Shakespearean Transformations.” In *Shakespeare and National Culture*. Ed. John J. Joughin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 122.

²⁸ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 56.

²⁹ Somanatha Gupta translated by Kathryn Hansen, *The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development* (Calcutta: Seagull books, 2005), 87.

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the original text, for the play was set in a Muslim cultural context. Ahsan located the play in the Tatar country and all his characters were given Muslim names. He also appropriated *The Merchant of Venice* as *Dilfarosh* (Merchant of Hearts) in 1900 and *Hamlet* as *Khun-e Nahaq* (Unjust Murder) in 1898.³⁰ Like in his reworking of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (*Bhul Bhulaiyan*) *Khun-e Nahaq* also undergoes a "Muslimization" since his *dramatis personae* are Muslim and the story is set in the city of Damascus. This Urdu dramatist of the Parsi stage also casts *Romeo and Juliet* (*Bazm-e Fani*, also known as *Gulnar Firoz*) in a Muslim light in 1890. This appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet* turns the tragic grandeur, sublime status of the tragic ending into a happy one, "completely running the original upside down."³¹ This work should not be regarded as a polemical project, because it simply follows a tradition of rewritings which altered the original to tone with the Indian way of thinking. Consequently, all the translations/adaptations by the Parsi and Urdu dramatists are identified by the extreme liberties taken by the playwrights in relation to the original, although their engagement with Shakespeare is also present.³²

These Urdu Shakespearean appropriations were staged by Parsi theatrical companies. The Empress Victoria Theatrical Company was founded by Jahangir Pestanji Khambatta, who performed *Zul-e Narvan*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The Alfred Theatrical Company was established in 1871 by Framji Joshi. Although the shadow of Shakespeare was always there, this company only staged a single performance of a Shakespeare's play, a Gujarati translation of *The Taming of the*

³⁰ Gupta translated by Hansen, 87.

³¹ Gupt translated by Hansen, 92.

³² More adaptations of Shakespeare's plays done in Urdu for the Parsi theatrical companies: *Meetha Zahar* (*Cymbeline*, 1895), *Shahide-naz* (*Measure for Measure*, 1900), *Shahide-Vafa* (*Othello*, 1898) and *Kali Nagin* (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 1906). See Nagarajan and Viswanathan, 55; Mishra, 84; Ananda Lal, *Theatres of India: A Concise Companion* (New Delhi: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 103-108 and Shankar, 114 for a full list of the productions in Parsi theatrical companies.

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Shrew. Shakespeare's cultural cachet was encouraged by the Elphinstone Dramatic Club. This company was founded by Parsi youths and amateur artists from respectable and wealthy families. Given the background of the founders, the theatre never had financial problems. The Shakespearean plays which were performed by the Elphinstone Dramatic Club included *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Othello* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The other company which was also responsible for enlivening the Shakespearean presence was the Shakespeare Theatrical Company, founded in 1876. Their objective was "to have Shakespeare's plays translated into Gujarati and perform them in costumes of Shakespeare's era."³³ Two minor companies – Gentlemen Amateurs and the New Parsi Victoria Theatrical Company – were also inspired by Shakespeare, and performed *The Comedy of Errors* and *Har Jit (Win or Lose)* – an Urdu translation of *King Lear* by Murad Ali – respectively.³⁴ Thus, in all these Parsi theatrical companies, a Shakespearean force was always powerfully at work.

The Parsi theatre finds an easy niche in the Bollywood rewriting of Shakespeare's plays.³⁵ If the Parsi theatre engages with localisations of the play-texts, replacement of Shakespearean names for Indian names, lack of acknowledgement of the Shakespearean source text and changes as far as the endings are concerned, Indian popular cinema honours its source – the Parsi theatre – by imitating its procedure of Shakespearean appropriation; i.e. it follows the path already opened by the Parsi drama. The films which are part of the corpus of this dissertation clearly show the influence of the Parsi theatre. For instance, the rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* in Gulzar's *Angoor* (1981) is advertised with no references to Shakespeare whatsoever.

³³ Gupta translated by Hansen, 143.

³⁴ More on the Parsi Theatrical Companies in Gupta translated by Hansen, 136-143.

³⁵ Esha Niyogi De, "Modern Shakespeare in Popular Bombay Cinema," *Screen* 43.1 (2002): 27 for a well developed connection between Parsi theatre and Bollywood. She focuses on the Parsi dramatists' interest on Victorian melodrama as well.

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Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2002) locates Shakespeare's famous tragedy in Mumbai, as part of a gangland and the names of characters are replaced with Indian names. Macbeth is Maqbool, Lady Macbeth is Nimmi, Banquo is Kaka, Duncan is Abba-ji. Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkaara* (2006) replicates this localisation and alteration of names. Thus, Othello is Omkara, Desdemona is Dolly, Cassio is Kesu, Iago is Langda and Emilia is Indu. Both film adaptations embrace new identities with the inclusion of new characters or the development of others in order to achieve psychic wholeness. Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots such as *Bombay* (dir. Mani Rathnam, 1995) and *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) ravage the tragic end to create a new work close to the Indian mind. Such parallelisms between the Parsi theatre and Bollywood can be seen as legitimate in the process of mutating Shakespeare.

1.3. Indianising Shakespeare

*"Shakespeare is here, not translated formally, nor imitated, but transplanted as a living organism"*³⁶

Like in the case of the Parsi theatre, translations/adaptations of Shakespeare during the colonial period also remould Shakespeare according to national demands, distancing themselves from the defamiliarised Shakespeare promoted by the colonial enterprise in the Indian curricula.³⁷ Several scholars articulate the reflection that the appropriation of Shakespeare in the Indian context departs from the traditional and faithful translations

³⁶ Sisson, 8.

³⁷ In her article "Shakespeare and the 'Civilizing Mission'" in *Colonial Narratives*, Jyotsna Singh contributes significantly to the distinction between Shakespeare in the Indian syllabus and Shakespeare on the Indian stage. While the former is still representative of British colonialism, the latter reinforces subversiveness via native performances of the plays where the Indian folk traditions usually play a part.

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practised in other countries to pave the way to a Shakespeare tuned to suit the Indian psyche.³⁸ The various translators/adaptors pursued the alteration of the plays so that they could actually capture the Indian spirit. The ‘tradaptation’ of Shakespearean works is an exposure of the process of Indianization to which the plays have always been subjected.³⁹ Shankar advocates the use of the term translation since its frontiers have to be extended. In his opinion, the transformation and metamorphosis of a story should be considered as an act of translation.⁴⁰ As with the Parsi theatre appropriations, these ‘tradaptations’ localise the names of characters and places, Indianise situations, may relocate the play in a specific period of Indian history, delete and add scenes and characters at ease, tend to bring the comic subplot into the spotlight and the performance is always interpolated with songs and dances. Thus, the representation of Shakespeare in India is basically characterised by the attempt to transplant his plays to the Indian ethos, adaptations being consolidated.

The decision to embrace Shakespeare as an Indian property unmistakably favoured the translation/adaptation of the comedies and the romances at the beginning, whereas the great tragedies gained recognition in a later stage. When they were actually adapted, tragic endings were usually modified, echoing the similar method used in the Restoration period by Colley Cibber in *Richard III*, George Granville in *The Jew of Venice*, Nahum Tate in *King Lear* and Otway in *Caius Marius* – based on *Romeo and*

³⁸ See Narasimhaiah, 10; Poonam Trivedi, “Interculturalism or Indigenisation: Modes of Exchange, Shakespeare East and West.” In *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in Performance*. Ed. Edward J. Esche (London: Ashgate, 2000), 73-89; Amitava Roy, Krishna Sen and Debnarayan Bandopadhyay, *Colonial and Postcolonial Shakespeares: Papers and Proceedings of the World Shakespeare Conference Calcutta 2004* (Kolkata: Avantgarde Press for Shakespeare Society of Eastern India, 2004) and Trivedi and Bartholomeusz.

³⁹ The term ‘tradaptation’ was coined by Pavis, 19.

⁴⁰ Shankar, 28.

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Juliet.⁴¹ The turn of tragic endings into happy endings was unavoidably promoted by the shortage of pure dramatic tradition in India. Based on a fundamental religious basis where death was equated with rebirth and renewal – in contrast with the West where it overshadows everything, the tragic *dénouement* was completely out of the question. In the words of Yajnik: “the Hindu playwrights admit that death is a terrible thing to witness on the stage and they agree that the great mythological heroes should rather inspire in the minds of the audience feelings of reverence than of agony by an undignified spectacle of their death, which would resemble that of ordinary mortals. If they swoon, they always recover.”⁴² In order to maintain an idealistic and utopian atmosphere where good characters are rewarded and evil characters are punished for their sins, tragic endings were completely forbidden. The “comediation” of Shakespeare’s tragedies during the colonial period offered a denser reading of the Indian society, which clearly absorbed Shakespeare into its own particularities and peculiarities. It was part of the cultural resistance process of the colonized culture since Shakespeare was “bolstered and undone, refreshed and relegated.”⁴³

The rewriting procedures of Shakespeare in British India show the desirability of certain plays while others seem to be forgotten as if they were dusty relics on a shelf whose translation is otiose. By the same token, not all Indian vernacular languages have the same number of translations. According to Chakravorty, it seems the Bengali language gave in to Shakespeare the most having the greatest number of translations.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Sailendra Kumar Sen, “Adaptations of Shakespeare and His Critics, 1660-1790” in Narasimhaiah focuses on the rewritings of the Shakespearean plays during the Restoration period, 90-104.

⁴² R.K. Yajnik, *The Indian Theatre, its Origins and its Later Developments under European Influence* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1934), 23.

⁴³ Mark Thornton Burnett, *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Shakespeare Studies, 2007), 156. In his penultimate chapter ‘Post-Millennial Parody’, Burnett deals with the free circulation of Shakespeare in three film adaptations: *In Othello*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *The Street King*.

⁴⁴ Sudeshna Chakravorty in Roy, Sen and Bandopadhyay, 199.

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For translation purposes, the favourite plays were *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Comedy of Errors* among the comedies and *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* among the tragedies.⁴⁵ *The Merchant of Venice* proved to be the most popular comedy, especially in the wake of the amateur Indian stage where it was performed in parts or in its entirety in English, although native performances were soon to come. Keen to show the complexities of the process of Indianisation, Kumar Das focused on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* where the Jewish-Christian conflict finds no parallel in the Indian society.⁴⁶ Given the play's vicissitudes, translators usually preferred to maintain the Jewish-Christian conflict, although Bharantendu substituted the Christian by Arya – Hindu – and the Jew by Jain – a person belonging to the Jaina religion.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this parallelism did not qualify because the hostility between these groups had long been over. The allure for *The Comedy of Errors* can be glimpsed in the twelve adaptations which were made into Hindi. The tragic ending of *Romeo and Juliet* never prevented its endless recreations, and, when it did, the climax was simply altered. According to Das, the play “provided a much closer approximation to the Indian experience of love and passion, social authority, and individual frustration within the rigidities of caste and marriage rules.”⁴⁸ Far from being removed from the Indian environs, the story simply seems to replicate the experiences of Indian love legends such as Radha and Krishna and Laila and Majnu.⁴⁹ The fashion for particular plays namely *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Romeo and Juliet* basically shaped the interpretation of Shakespeare in India.

⁴⁵ For C.R. Shah, “Shakespearean Plays in Indian Language Part I,” *The Aryan Path*, November (1955): 485 the favourite Shakespearean plays to be adapted were *The Merchant of Venice*, *Cymbeline*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*.

⁴⁶ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 60.

⁴⁷ Bharantendu translated *The Merchant of Venice* in 1880, entitling it *Durlabh Bandhu* (Rare Friends).

⁴⁸ Sisir Kumar Das, “Shakespeare in Indian Languages.” In Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 62.

⁴⁹ Despite the success of *Romeo and Juliet* in the Marathi and Parsi theatres, it was a complete flop on the Bengali stage. See R. K. Yajnik qtd. in J. P. Mishra, 73.

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The Bengali translations were generally oriented towards their subsequent performance in Bengali public theatres, such as the National Theatre (the first Bengali playhouse set up in 1872), the Bengal Theatre (built in 1873), the Star Theatre (founded in 1883) and the Minerva theatre in 1893. The icebreaker in the translation of Shakespeare into Bengali was C. Monckton, an English student of Fort William College, who translated *The Tempest* into Bengali in 1809, although it was never performed.⁵⁰ In his communion with Shakespeare, Tarini Pal translated *Othello* (*Bhim Singha*) in 1875, which was staged on 27th February 1875 in the Bengal theatre. The early 20th century Bengal theatre still saw Shakespeare as the quintessential ‘Indian icon’ with abundant performances of his plays in translation, namely *Cleopatra* – a translation of *Antony and Cleopatra* – by Pramatha Nath Bhattacharya staged in the Minerva Theatre in September 1914; *Saudagar* – based on *The Merchant of Venice* – by Bhupendra Bandyopadhyaya performed in the Star Theatre in December 1915; and *Othello* translated by Debendra Nath Basu and performed in March 1919 in the Minerva Theatre.⁵¹ All these translations attempted to remodel Shakespeare’s plays for the Indian stage with more or less success.⁵²

Macbeth and *Hamlet* might be said to be the plays to which most Bengal translators aimed to pay tribute at the end of the 19th century. Girish Chandra Ghosh’s *Macbeth* shared common ground with Amarendra Dutta’s *Hariraj* – loosely and freely based on *Hamlet* – in their drive for Indianisation, although there were significant differences in the procedure as well as in the success. “Opening Night/ The Minerva

⁵⁰ A. Podder, ‘The Impact of Shakespeare on Bengali Literature,’ *The Indian Journal of English*.

⁵¹ See Ananda Lal and Sukanta Chaudhuri (eds.) *Shakespeare on the Calcutta Stage: A Checklist* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 2001) and Surendra Chandra Gupta (1924, unpublished Ph.D., University of London) for a full account of Bengali translations of Shakespeare’s plays.

⁵² According to Sengupta in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 255, *Othello* adapted by Debendranath Basu with Tarasundari – a famous actress – in the leading role as Desdemona did not do well in the box office.

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Theatre/ 6 Beadon Street Saturday, the 28th January, 9 pm/ Shakespeare in Bengal” said the advertisement of Girish Chandra Ghosh’s *Macbeth*, emphasizing the fact that it was done in Bengali, which seemed to be considered as a revolution in the appropriation of Shakespeare. Starring such legends as Tinkari Dasi – Lady Macbeth – and the comedian Ardhendu Sekhar Mustafi, the performance was a complete failure.⁵³ Despite the promising advertisement, Girish Chandra Ghosh’s technique in Indianising Shakespeare simply consisted of translating the play into Bengali and of adding five songs for the witches and one for the soldier. The mise-en-scène was extremely shocking since there was no relocation and, despite the use of Bengali, the play was located in Scotland. Utpal Dutt says that confronting Shakespeare with Bengali “is an experiment in itself. One should not venture anything beyond that,” yet, one cannot but relate the scant public attendance with the lack of proper Indianisation.⁵⁴ While in his first translation of a Shakespearean play – *Bhanumati Cittavilas*, 1853, based on *The Merchant of Venice* – Ghose added a volte-face in the plot concentrating on the love relationship between Bhanumati – Portia – and Chittavilas – Bassanio – and changed the names of the characters, his *Macbeth* was more traditional in its scope. In contrast, Nagendranath Choudhury boldly developed a process of Indianisation – consisting of songs, dances and local costumes – in his free adaptation of *Hamlet* – *Hariraj* – directed by Amarendra Dutta on 21 June 1897 when the Classic Theatre opened. Aware of the impossibility of faithful translations in India, Dutta’s version had reminiscence or an echo of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and interpolated the dialogue with eleven songs in the

⁵³ Although the play was very much acclaimed and celebrated by critics, it was a flop among the audience and, after ten performances, it was withdrawn. It was performed again in 1899 at the Classic Theatre. See K. Raha, *Bengali Theatre* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1978).

⁵⁴ Utpal Dutt directed and performed in the post-colonial period numerous Shakespearean plays. See Roy, Sen and Bandopadhyay, 2004 and Samik Bandyopadhyay, “Utpal Dutt.” In *Contemporary Indian Theatre: Interviews with Playwrights and Directors*. Ed. Rajinder Paul (New Delhi: Hope India, 2006), 15-18.

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performance. The outcome was a great success, Shakespeare's presence mushrooming among Indians.⁵⁵ The different responses by the public towards these two approaches to Shakespeare unfold the remarkable interpretation of Shakespeare in India since the freer and more Indianized the version is, the more successful it will be.

The integrity of Shakespeare was thrown into question in the majority of Indian vernacular languages via its subsequent Indianisation.⁵⁶ Gujarati and Urdu adaptations step off the stage for this process in their versions for the Parsi theatre.⁵⁷ In fact, *The Taming of the Shrew* was the first Shakespearean play to be staged in an Indian vernacular language, Gujarati. The play, entitled *Nathari Firangiz Thekani Avi* (A Bad Firangi – European – Woman Brought to Sense), was staged in 1852. The translator altered some scenes, but preferred to leave the shrew as a foreigner because the refusal to wedlock on the part of an Indian woman was practically inconceivable.⁵⁸ In Hindi, Shakespeare was also significantly transmuted into the Indian culture. Harish Trivedi confirmed this fact by not making a distinction between translations and adaptations of Shakespearean plays into Hindi language, which seem to exceed 70 since 1879.⁵⁹ According to Mishra, the *raison d'être* of adaptations is connected with the difficulties encountered in the process of translating allusions, specific expressions and the rhyme.

⁵⁵ Dutta directed later *Macbeth* (1899), *The Comedy of Errors* (*Konta Ke*, 1905) and *The Merchant of Venice* (*Saudagar*, 1915). However, he never achieved the same degree of popularity he received with *Hariraj*. See Lal and Chaudhuri, 31.

⁵⁶ As there is no such thing as Indian theatre because there is no communication among the different theatres which would constitute the more abstract notion of Indian theatre, it is worth developing the interaction of the different regional dramas with Shakespeare. See Bharucha, xi.

⁵⁷ The majority of the Urdu adaptations for the Parsi theatre have already been mentioned.

⁵⁸ See Shah, 485 to see a full account of Gujarati 'tradaptations' of Shakespearean plays performed on the Indian stage. Some of them are: *Rama-Ratan* (*The Comedy of Errors*) by N. K. Vaidya (1903); *Jagat-Sinh* (1904) and *Vibudh-Vijaya* (based on *The Merchant of Venice*), *Chandrasah* (*The Winter's Tale*, 1894) and *Champraj Hando* (*Cymbeline*, 1900), both by V. A. Oza, *Saubhag-Sundari* (*Othello*) and *Vasundhara or Bedhari Talwar* (*Macbeth*) by N. V. Thakur (1910).

⁵⁹ Harish Trivedi, *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 14.

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Thus, all these problems clearly encouraged adaptations rather than translations.⁶⁰ Such an emphasis on adaptations was also followed in the Sindhi language. The trajectory of plays appropriating Shakespeare in the Sindhi language freely reached its heyday with Mirza Kalich Beg – the most famous translator of Shakespeare’s plays in Sindhi. His version of *The Merchant of Venice* – *Hasna Dildar*, 1897 – modified the names of characters and relocated the play in an Indian setting. His *Gulzar and Gulnar* – based on *Romeo and Juliet*, 1900 – transformed the tragedy into a happy ending under popular pressure. Moreover, the adaptation of Shakespeare’s tragedy became an *agitprop* in a society where love marriage was not conceived and premarital love was out of the question. *Shahzado Bahram* – his particular interpretation of *Hamlet* – was acclimatized to Muslim life, the characters also being given Muslim names. Shakespeare then clearly operated as a force for cultural realignment in these vernacular languages.

Indianisation of Shakespeare’s plays does not recede in importance in Southern Indian vernacular languages such as Tamil, Kannada and Telugu. Although the pioneers in the ‘Tamilisation’ of Shakespeare’s plays were V. Viswanatha Pillai with his *Merchant of Venice* as *Venice Vartakan* (1870), Venugopala Charyar with his *Merchant of Venice* as *Venice Viyapuri* (1874), and S. Narayanaswamy Iyer with a version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* entitled *Nadu Venir Kanavu* (1883), who introduced a third person narrative to make the stories more interesting, the crucial figure in this process was Paammal Sambanda Mudaliyar, who substituted the original names for proper Tamil names and myths in his adaptations. Clearly apparent in the Kannada language is the construction of Indianisation, even in the titles of some ‘tradaptations’, such as *Chandi Mardan Natakam* (K. Laxamana Rao, 1910) and *Tratika Nataka* (H. H.

⁶⁰ See Shankar, 114 for a whole list of Hindi translations.

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Gadigeyya, 1920), which allude to violent forms of the Goddess Durga.⁶¹ The popularity of *The Taming of the Shrew* was connected with “the pleasure the strongly male chauvinistic society of the time took in the humiliation of any assertive female.”⁶² Shakespearean drama was again adapted into the Kannada language in Ananda Rao’s *Ramavarma-Lilavati* – based on *Romeo and Juliet*, 1889 – in which the tragic ending was wiped away and in Srikantesha Gowda’s translations of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. *Ramavarma-Lilavati*’s finale elaborated a surrealistic Disney-like context in which Friar Laurence prayed to God that the lovers may be saved, they were revived from the dead and lived happily ever after. In a country where rebirth goes hand in hand with death, such ending simply reveals the desire to familiarize Shakespeare with the colonized culture. Crucial to the understanding of the localisation of Shakespeare in the Kannada language are Srikantesha Gowda’s translations. His *Macbeth – Prataparudradeva*, 1856 – renders to the practice of Indianisation even in the title. Instead of being named after the central character *Macbeth*, the translation owes its title to a very minor figure. The underlying premise for this change is the implausibility of naming a play after the Prati-nayaka or antihero instead of after the Nayaka or hero-virtuous.⁶³ Furthermore, the Christian connotation was completely deleted so as to include Indian myths and gods. Relocated in an imaginary country like Odhra, the change of locale dispossesses the play of its political connotation. Gowda’s adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream – Pramilarjuniyam* – is channelled to India with significant transformations. Apart from the change of venue, Kerala being preferred to Greece, the story of Theseus and Hyppolita is substituted by that of Arjuna and Pramila, and Oberon and Titania are replaced by Manmatha and

⁶¹ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 54.

⁶² Vijaya Guttal in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 108.

⁶³ Shankar, 21.

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Rati.⁶⁴ In Telugu, twelve out of thirty-seven Shakespearean plays were ‘Telugised,’ but the adaptations were not celebrated by the public on the stage.⁶⁵ Then, real acts of appropriation or expropriation also take place in Southern Indian vernacular languages.

An exception to the rule of extremely free adaptations of the Shakespearean plays in the Indian context is offered by the Marathi translations because they seemed to be targeted at a more cultured audience.⁶⁶ Unlike Gujarati and Urdu adaptations for the Parsi theatre, they are characterised by the fidelity to the Shakespearean source text.⁶⁷ Marathi drama has always commemorated some Shakespearean plays over others, namely *The Comedy of Errors*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tempest*.⁶⁸ Characteristic adaptations are *The Taming of the Shrew* under the title *Tratika* by Professor Vasudeo Balkrishna Kelkar of the Fergusson College of Poona, Deval’s *Zunjarrao* – a Marathi adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Othello* – and, above all, the Marathi *Hamlet* interpreted by Ganapatrao Joshi from 1882-1883 to his death in 1922.⁶⁹ Marathi drama’s only elaboration of Indianisation was the addition of songs to the plays. As Bartholomeusz endeavours to explain, only *Manajirava* – a Marathi version of *Macbeth* – underwent a method of Indianisation which basically affected the

⁶⁴ Shankar, 118.

⁶⁵ Yajnik, 101. While the Telugu stage was attended by middle-class playgoers, the Tamil theatre was patronized by a low-class audience.

⁶⁶ See Nagarajan and Viswanathan, 84; Sisson, 11 and Yajnik, 15.

⁶⁷ However, Sukanta Chaudhuri, “Shakespeare in India”

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/Criticism/shakespearein/india6.html> (2007) builds her argument on the free adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays in Marathi.

⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the Marathi *Merchant of Venice* was not very successful in relation to the Urdu version due to the fidelity to the text.

⁶⁹ *The Taming of the Shrew*’s critical reception in Marathi drama simply showed that it was perhaps the favourite Shakespearean play to be translated into this language. Three successful translations support this argument: *Tratika* by V. B. Kelkar in Poona (1892), *Chaudaven Ratna* with several songs interspersed in the text and *Karkasha Damana*. As for the Marathi *Hamlet*, according to Yajnik, it was the most acclaimed adaptation in India.

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names of characters and places. Marathi drama centred then on imitative transactions of Shakespeare's plays, but did not transplant Shakespeare as a living organism.

The engagement with Shakespeare in Malayalam and Orissa languages is rather poor, which is both curious and puzzling. Only ten plays were translated into Malayalam: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* among the tragedies and *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* among the comedies. In line with the trajectory of the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays in other vernacular languages, the few translations in Malayalam feature Indianisation with the exception of Govinda Pillai's translations of *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*, which provide an almost literal translation. Hardly were these translations visualised on stage and, when they were, box-office success was never the outcome. A similar claim can be made for the appropriation of Shakespeare in Orissa. Interestingly, the depth and scale the Western literature canon seems to have in Orissa has not reached the Shakespearean canon. Yet, according to Shankar, the credit and reverence for Shakespeare in this language clearly motivated the disinclination to translate his works since that would imply a devaluation of the original works.⁷⁰

The free appropriation of Shakespeare prevails in India, not only in the Parsi theatre, but also in the different Indian vernacular languages. Indianisation has crossed the frontiers of Bollywood cinema to reach other regional film industries. Whether influenced directly or indirectly by the Parsi theatre and/or Indianized translations/adaptations, the Telugu adaptation of Shakespeare's play *Yellamma* (dir. Mohan Koda, 1999) inspired in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* experienced relocations and

⁷⁰ Shankar, 146.

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transformations. *Yellamma* substitutes the 10th century Scotland for 19th century Telengana, also featured by its political upheavals and turbulent times. The Shakespearean translation/adaptation in Southern Indian vernacular languages also serves as an absolute point of reference for the analysis of the film off-shoots in these languages. In its encounter with poetics, *Yellamma* cannot be named after the anti-hero, the title reading “the prophecy.” In a period marked by British colonialism, there was still room for native, indigenous Shakespeare as the prompt for reinvention of Indian culture, to the extent that “the parodic repetition of ‘the original’...reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of...the original.”⁷¹

2. Transition and post-colonial period: Ambivalence towards Shakespeare

*“The withdrawal of Britain from India in 1947 as a political force hasn’t seriously affected the study of Shakespeare (and of English literature) in our colleges and universities. The ‘Shakespeare industry’ is a flourishing concern – even in India”*⁷²

Iyengar’s testimony seems somewhat inaccurate, and even naïve. That the Shakespearean industry experienced a considerable decline from the 1920s to the late 1950s in India is a *prima facie* fact. The colonial antecedents of the Shakespearean performance in India had the inevitable result of a waning of the productions in the

⁷¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 41.

⁷² Iyengar in the special Number of *Indian Literature* (1964: 1) to commemorate Shakespeare’s birthday.

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transition period to postcolonialism and its aftermath. According to Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, Bhattacharya and Sisson, the intensification of the nationalist movement in the 1920s was the political event that paralyzed the ascendance of the Shakespearean industry.⁷³ In contrast, Awasthi and Rajamannar claimed that the impact of Ibsen and Shaw drama actually originated the sudden lack of interest in the dramatic pieces of Shakespeare.⁷⁴ Sunita Paul agrees with Bartholomeusz and Bhattacharya on the hostility to colonial rule as a direct cause of the oblivion of Shakespeare.⁷⁵ Listing a total of four hundred and thirty-four translations from the nineteenth century onwards, Sunita Paul mentions only fifty adaptations belonging to the period 1920-1947.⁷⁶

The continuance of the Shakespearean empire stopped for some years. However, scholars do not agree on the date of the start of the decline and subsequent revival of Shakespeare in India. Sisson establishes the point of departure from Shakespeare after the 1912 as a clear reaction against English literature and culture.⁷⁷ For Harish Trivedi, the debunking of Shakespeare began in the political climate in the aftermath of World War I, as a direct consequence of the spread of Gandhian nationalism. Similarly, for Singh, the repertoire of Shakespearean plays began to be substituted by Bengali plays in 1920 as part of the nationalistic endeavour. Shakespeare re-emerged for Singh in 1940, just as for Trivedi and Bartholomeusz the real turning point was the year in which India got the independence – 1947.⁷⁸

⁷³ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 17; Bhattacharya, 34 and Sisson, 16.

⁷⁴ In the special number of *Indian Literature* (1964).

⁷⁵ Sunita Paul, *A Tribute to Shakespeare* (New Delhi: Theatre and Television Associates, 1989), 20.

⁷⁶ Concerning performances, only a selection of scenes from *Othello* translated by Debendranath Basu and from *Macbeth* translated by Girish Chandra Ghose performed on 22 September 1926 and 29 September 1926 respectively are worth being mentioned.

⁷⁷ Sisson, 20.

⁷⁸ Singh, *Colonial Narratives*, 141 and Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 17.

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Although Shakespeare's revival started in the post-colonial period, it was still considered a Western import of artistic exotica, and the link with colonialism was reinforced. Norman Marshall toured India in 1948 with a company of actors staging Shakespeare's plays in an attempt to gesture towards an imperial past in which Shakespearean plays were subordinated to the colonial power, being performed by English actors for an Indian audience. The spectre of British imperialism also haunted the performances by Geoffrey and Laura Kendal. Their connection with Shakespeare comes under scrutiny in their second (1947-1948) and third (1953-6) trips to India when they toured the country with their 'Shakespeareana' company with a total of eight hundred and seventy nine performances of Shakespeare's plays and other English classics. This company of Anglo-Indians did not extend its boundaries beyond Western culture, for the performances were in English for the educated Indians. Even on screen, the Shakespearean industry and notions of Bardolatry operated on the assumptions of Western superiority. Kishore Sahu's *Hamlet* (1954) was shot-by-shot visualised as Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948), and the imagery, setting and ambiance imitated, or rather mimicked the Western production. Although the re-emergence of Shakespeare in India already started just after their independence from the British, the re-birth of a vernacular Indian Shakespeare – in the tradition of the Parsi theatre – was in fact materialized in 1964.⁷⁹

While in China the commemorations for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth were cancelled since the "sky darkened and the political weather changed

⁷⁹ The Parsi theatre can be considered the first modern commercial theatre, highly influential between the 1850s and 1930s. The Parsi theatre was an in-between, hybrid project, for it was subsidized by the Parsis – the Zoroastrian community – but added European techniques to its performances. See for instance Lal, *Theatres of India*, 102-108.

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considerably”⁸⁰ – Shakespeare was synonymous of capitalism – in India, an interesting discourse on and about Shakespeare emerged.⁸¹ Several publications came to light in 1964, and they are all fraught with ambivalence regarding the role of Shakespeare. On the one hand, some volumes follow the path of colonial publications flattering and praising Shakespeare in English. On the other hand, other publications are interestingly concerned with the appropriation of the plays in Indian languages.

C. D. Narasimhaiah, a well-known member of the Indian Academy, precisely compiled a volume of essays which had the purpose of extolling Shakespeare’s role within the Indian subcontinent. The lasting association between Shakespeare and colonialism makes its star appearance at the very outset of the collection: “For the England of trade, commerce, imperialism and 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.”⁸² Including articles with provoking titles such as ‘has Shakespeare fallen on evil tongues?’ or ‘why Shakespeare for us?’ the collection has a very old-fashioned approach, since it highlights that the Indians cannot do without, cannot give up their Shakespeare in English, and criticizes the translation in Indian languages. With a constantly disturbing and condescending tone, the volume asserts that “even the average Indian student is responsive to poetry.”⁸³ The intellectuals’ admiration for Shakespeare is linked with their apparent acquisition of a status symbol. Sixteen years after independence, elite Indians still believed that the loss of Britain would be compensated

⁸⁰ Levith, 40.

⁸¹ Chen Jia was actually one of the few who dared to perform Shakespeare. He and his Nanjing University students acted several scenes from *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet* or *King Lear* in English. The main consequence of such a bold act was public humiliation. See Levith, 40 or Li, 50.

⁸² Narasimhaiah, v.

⁸³ Narasimhaiah, 5.

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by the ongoing presence of Shakespeare. This book is not confronted by political crises, and still sails in comfortable colonial waters.

A special issue of the journal *Indian Literature* devoted to Shakespeare's Quartercentenary was published moving significantly from the previous approach. The editors' main aim and purpose was to explore the experience of doing Shakespeare on the Indian stage to English readers. They wanted to enhance the possibility of having a proper encounter between India and Shakespeare.⁸⁴ For instance, S. K. Bhattacharya explained the intricacies of Shakespeare and the Bengali Theatre and Chandravadan C. Mehta explored the reception of Shakespeare on the Gujarati stage. Apart from the presence of Shakespeare in some Indian theatres, the special collection equally includes Shakespeare's presence in other Indian languages (Assamese, Hindi, Karnataka, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu). This special journal published for Shakespeare's Quartercentenary is remarkable for its scale and variety – including a significant range of Shakespearean manifestations in Indian theatres and in Indian languages – and also for being unique in its purpose. There was a sustained interest in the publication in the priority to transform Shakespeare into a hybrid identity. This special issue of *Indian Literature* takes a step forward regarding the hitherto forgotten possibilities of Shakespeare in new Indian sites and languages. These two very different treatises – C. D. Narasimhaiah's book and the *Indian Literature* journal – are symptomatic of the ambivalence towards Shakespeare in literary manifestations published in India in 1964. Although the journal is a pioneer in

⁸⁴ There were other publications in 1964. *Oxygen News* dedicated a special number to Shakespeare (Kolkata, 1964). There was also an exhibition catalogue entitled *Shakespeare in India* at the National Library, Kolkata. See <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/Criticism/shakespearein/india7.html> In her chapter "Multiple Mediations of 'Shakespeare,'" Nandi Bhatia also mentions the exhibition of Shakespeare in India at the National Library at Calcutta. In *Acts of Authority, Acts of Resistance: Theatre and Politics in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 59.

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being the first in-print attempt to ‘vernacularize’ Shakespeare, as Jyotsna Singh has endlessly claimed, “the grip of the colonial ‘civilizing mission’ has been (more) considerably loosened” on the Indian stage.⁸⁵ The creation of the horizon of expectations re-emerges with Utpal Dutt.

In the scenario of post-colonial India, the year 1964 saw the re-emergence of the ‘vernacularization’ of Shakespeare on the Indian stage, and the decolonization of Shakespeare started to brew. Decolonization in India affected “every domain of public life, from language and the arts to ideas about political representation and economic justice.”⁸⁶ Arjun Appadurai for instance concentrates on the decolonization of cricket in India.⁸⁷ The ‘indigenization’ of cricket has a wide range of dimensions, such as the publicity, management and patronisation of the sport, the capacity of Indians to imitate and mimic Victorian elite values, as well as the necessity to deprive cricket of the corrosive bonds of England – amongst many others. As cricket ought to be liberated from its Englishness, the English terminology had to be substituted by the correspondent jargon in Marathi, Tamil, Hindi or Bengali, for instance. Superimposing the ‘vernacularization’ of cricket to that of Shakespeare, many similarities emerge.⁸⁸ Although both entered the Indian subcontinent in the English language, they were translated into the diverse Indian languages. Both have always beckoned a certain elitist flavour. Yet, cricket “dictated an openness to talent and vocation in those of humble origin,” just as Shakespearean performances attracted audiences from poor

⁸⁵ Singh, *Colonial Narratives*, 136.

⁸⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 89.

⁸⁷ In *Modernity At Large*, Arjun Appadurai devotes a whole chapter to the decolonization of cricket. The chapter is entitled “Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket.”

⁸⁸ The main difference between the ‘vernacularization’ of cricket and that of Shakespeare is that while the former has been completely deprived of its English *habitus* and has become a national sport, the latter’s decolonization is still an ongoing process.

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backgrounds.⁸⁹ Interestingly, this approach to Indian audiences was possible in both cases thanks to the Parsis, who acted as a liaison between the English and the Indian cultural tastes. In the specific case of Parsi Shakespearean adaptations, crucial attempts at crossing cultural borders were made in order to address Indian audiences. The Parsi adaptations were then the first theatrical experiments to contain a very different dimension of Shakespeare. The Parsis mimicked and imitated the Western canon provided by the English colonizers, but, at the same time, contributed to a new and challenging way of understanding Shakespeare. They certainly implied a double articulation or ambivalence of conflicting ideologies. Yet, after the dark period of Shakespeare in absentia in India and the independence of the country, the ‘resurrection’ and re-emergence of Shakespeare and his real decolonization or indigenization is immediately connected with Utpal Dutt and Shakespeare’s Quartercentenary.⁹⁰

Utpal Dutt began his theatrical career with amateur productions of Shakespeare’s plays at St. Xavier’s College, such as *Hamlet* (1943).⁹¹ At St. Xavier’s, he was discovered by Geoffrey and Jennifer Kendal and joined them in their Shakespeareana Company touring India and Pakistan in 1947-48 and 1953-54 on a professional basis. The temporal gap between the first and second tours was related to the Kendals’ departure to England. Utpal Dutt performed the role of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*, acted as Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, performed the role of Ross in *Macbeth* or was Decius Brutus in *Julius Caesar*.⁹² While the lure of the British Empire looms large in these productions, Tapati Gupta suggests that their construction

⁸⁹ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 92.

⁹⁰ Kennedy and Lan (2010) also emphasize the revolutionary character of Utpal Dutt’s productions in their introduction.

⁹¹ The school dramatics at St Xavier’s College in Calcutta were extremely influential, and contributed significantly to the performance of Shakespeare in India.

⁹² For a well-developed list of Utpal Dutt’s performances and roles in different languages (English, Bengali) or in other theatrical traditions (jatra, for instance), see Paul, 20-21.

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is actually based on mimicry.⁹³ The verisimilitudes of the productions with the English performances were apparent, but they still had a quality in them and theatrical sensibilities which differed considerably from the Shakespearean adaptations acted in the Anglophone world. Utpal Dutt later founded the troupe Amateur Shakespeareans, which was later renamed Little Theatre Group in which they were rendered to the productions of plays in English, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* or *Macbeth*. In all these theatrical representations, Dutt always performed the leading roles: he played Richard in *Richard III*, Othello in *Othello* or Brutus in *Julius Caesar*. Inspired by the IPTA (the People's Theatre Association), The Little Theatre Group had a left-wing ideology, which put into jeopardy their strong commitment with Shakespearean plays. For instance, when the Communist Party of India was forbidden, they penned a political article protesting against this action which was accompanied by a fragment of *Romeo and Juliet*. Miriam Stark, the leading actress, asked the following question: "If we really believe what we've written, then why are we staging the classics and for whom really?" The main dissatisfaction inherent in the group was related to their target audience, the Westernised intellectuals of Calcutta instead of addressing the Indian proletariat. If they wished to stage plays for working-class audiences, the masses, the enactment of the plays ought to be in Bengali since they realised the impossibility of defending their left-wing political ideas and radicalization if they only did productions for a minority audience.⁹⁴ Mass audiences were unable to follow what was happening on

⁹³ Tapati Gupta, "From Proscenium to Paddy Fields: Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare *Jatra*." In Trivedi and Minami, 159.

⁹⁴ Obviously, the non-Bengali members of the group abandoned the company, and were replaced by other Bengali members. Many of the non-Bengali members came from Westernized Jewish families. Their background and education was British, whereas their status was Indian. Due to their loyalty to the English

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the stage due to the language used. Obsessively concerned with the masses, Utpal Dutt detached from a theatre full of nuances of characterization, and projected a theatre with action to the full, and with an emphasis on expressions, entrances and exits. The beginning of his experiment was on the move and there was no comeback.

For Shakespeare's Quartercentenary, Utpal Dutt directed *Julius Caesar* (April 1964, Minerva Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (24 April 1964, Minerva Theatre) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (24 April 1964, Minerva Theatre) in Bengali.⁹⁵ The re-playing of Shakespeare in Bengali for the common man was categorized by Tapati Gupta as the phase of translation and localization.⁹⁶ In spite of the fact that Dutt's predecessors believed strongly in 'tradaptations,' i.e. extremely free translations with a considerably number of alterations and changes, Dutt made an effort not to make many changes. Nevertheless, some localization was compulsory. The constant paradox and irony of Utpal Dutt's Bengali productions was that the characters spoke an Indian language, while they still retained the original Shakespearean names and wore Western costumes. In the words of Tapati Gupta: "Dutt's Bengali Shakespeares' might be seen as contextualizing the global in the local and reversing the process of subjugating the local to the global."⁹⁷ Therefore, instead of locality being eclipsed by globalisation, these Bengali Shakespeares emerge solely as an instance of 'glocalisation.'

Utpal Dutt's Bengali *Romeo and Juliet* (1964) was interestingly based on his own translation of the Shakespearean play. Like in the rest of Dutt's Bengali Shakespeares, this production preserved the original place names as well as the names

language, their departure was compulsory. Some of them went to Australia, while some others went to Israel.

⁹⁵ There is no available information regarding Dutt's Bengali *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The reason for that may be that the performance was not successful. It is also worth noticing that Utpal Dutt's 'Bengali Shakespeares' have not received the same positive reviews than his English adaptations of the Shakespearean plays.

⁹⁶ Gupta, "From Proscenium to Paddy Fields: Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare *Jatra*," 158.

⁹⁷ Gupta, 161.

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of the *dramatis personae*. Utpal Dutt's main aim was to recreate the Elizabethan playhouse within the proscenium. One of the notable changes in Dutt's production concerns Friar Laurence. The Friar's ordinariness – he escapes, he does not confess, and “lacks the confidence of his Shakespearean counterpart” – rather than his good purposes is highlighted.⁹⁸ Other consistent differences include the considerable reduction of slang – basically in the nurse's speeches – the transposition of Verona and Mantua to a small Bengali town with a middle-class system, and the abuse of everyday language in practically all the speeches. Characteristic of Utpal Dutt's *Romeo and Juliet* – as perhaps the clearest Western influence – is the music used in the performance. Throughout the production, Tchaikovsky's music is constantly heard and overheard. Utpal Dutt is still reluctant to deprive the Shakespearean work of one of its best known cultural manifestations; Western music is imbued in this revolutionary project. But Tchaikovsky's music is interestingly mixed with Dutt's troupe's own compositions – which were heard in the interludes. The thrust of Utpal Dutt's argument was to make clear “to the audience that a foreign dramatist was being domiciled.”⁹⁹ Moving from the global to the local, from the unknown to the known world, Utpal Dutt in his Bengali *Romeo and Juliet* started to conceive his plan of the decolonization of Shakespeare.

Even if Utpal Dutt placed a great emphasis on the fact that when Shakespearean plays were translated into Bengali no other change should be produced, a newer dimension was suggested in his production of *Julius Caesar*, staged in modern costume in a Bengali translation by Jyotirindranath Tagore in 1964 with a fascist Italy backdrop. Dutt and his company “interpreted Julius Caesar somewhat predictably as a study of fascism, with Caesar appearing as a timeless dictator, Antony a Fascist orator, and

⁹⁸ Gupta, 162.

⁹⁹ Gupta, “From Proscenium to Paddy Fields: Utpal Dutt's Shakespeare *Jatra*,” 163.

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Cassius an extremist revolutionary.”¹⁰⁰ Immediately revealed by Utpal Dutt was the disturbance on the part of the audience when they were exposed to Shakespeare in Bengali mixed with costumes of today and military uniforms. Apparently, this representation of Julius Caesar with no togas followed the path of the well-known Orson Welles’ 1937 production (*Death of a Dictator*), which “would influence performances of the play on both sides of the Atlantic for a long time.”¹⁰¹ However, in an interview with Samik Bandyopadhyay, he denied Orson Welles’ influence arguing his lack of knowledge of Orson Welles at the time.¹⁰² Consequently, as in *Romeo and Juliet*’s production, Utpal Dutt’s *Julius Caesar* underwent a process of ‘glocalisation’ by bringing together the Bengali language with a Western *ambiance*. At this stage in Utpal Dutt’s professional career, his 1964 *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* are in-between, hybrid projects which would become extremely more radical over the years. Yet, taken into account the considerable degradation and decline of Shakespearean performances in his *étage terrible* in India, Utpal Dutt’s productions of Shakespeare’s plays are simply a great welcome and contribution to the re-emergence of Shakespeare as well as to the beginning of his indigenization.

Veneration to Shakespeare on the part of Dutt was quite discrete for some time until 1975, when he and other members of the Little Theatre Group performed *Macbeth* in the folk tradition of jatra theatre where the mythological world gained control.¹⁰³ Being immersed in the Emergency period clearly characterised by autocracy in which the Congress mafia was gaining control attacking and killing people who were a threat

¹⁰⁰ Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution*, 57.

¹⁰¹ Clara Calvo, “Commemorating Shakespeare and Wartime Europe: Julius Caesar in 1916.” In *Julio César, Textos, Contextos y Recepción: de la Roma Clásica al Mundo Actual*. Ed. Antonio Moreno Hernández (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2010), 505.

¹⁰² Bandyopadhyay in Paul, 10.

¹⁰³ Jatra is the traditional folk theatre of Bengal, which became certainly political during the last years of the British Raj. Its conventions, melodramatic gestures and songs are the main characteristics of this folk theatre. See Bharucha, 91.

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for the Government, they decided to use *Macbeth* as a revolutionary weapon against Indira Gandhi's regime. In fact, the demonic portrait of Lady Macbeth stands for Indira Gandhi. Aware of the censorship, Shakespeare became the only legitimate possibility to go against the political regime.¹⁰⁴ *Macbeth*'s impulses and vacillations were mixed with the *jatra* theatrical form. This transformed the version into a clear success for the Bengali working-class audience, who actually understood the mood of the Elizabethan classic for the first time. Dutt closed his linkage with Shakespeare with an Indianised version of *Macbeth*.

The Kendals and Utpal Dutt updated Shakespeare in post-colonial India differently, but their influence in Bollywood cinema was equally pervasive since they helped in the process of a revival of Shakespeare. In terms of the representation of Shakespeare in the Indian cinema, the Kendals are highly responsible for exercising the first clear and direct Shakespearean based cinematic project, *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965). Characteristic of the film procedure is the disintegration of the troupe of people who used to perform Shakespeare's plays. Thus, instead of yoking together Shakespeare and the Bombay film as the Parsi theatre did, the movie places Bollywood as an external intruder which actually broke the bond between Shakespeare and their company, leading to their ostracization.¹⁰⁵ The documentary opening of *36 Chowringhee Lane* (dir. Aparna Sen, 1981 starring Geoffrey and Jennifer Kendal) in which close-ups of graves of people belonging to the East India Company gain importance evokes consistently the British Raj period in India. The onset is imbued with certain nostalgia for this period where there is a clear idealisation of Shakespeare, for

¹⁰⁴ See Bandhyopadhyay in Paul, 18 for a full interview with Utpal Dutt where he mentions all his productions of Shakespeare's plays.

¹⁰⁵ Loomba, "Shakespearean Transformations," 129.

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the world the Anglo-Indian teacher inhabits is full of references to Shakespearean works.

The revolutionary work of Dutt did not gain global proportion in the treatment of Shakespeare in Bollywood, but still somehow influenced it. As an actor, he took part in *Mr. Romeo* (dir. Subhash Mukherjee, 1974) – an off-shoot of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* – and, more importantly, in Gulzar’s adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* – *Angeer* (dir. Gulzar, 1981). Dutt’s influence is mostly felt in *The Last Lear*. Using as main intertexts Utpal Dutt’s play *Aajker Shahjahan* and Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, the movie underpins the connection between Shakespeare and Dutt. Just as Utpal Dutt’s *Macbeth* was reliant on Shakespeare to go against the 70s regime, Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkara* work inside historically critical representations of Indian politics in which corruption is severely censured. Despite the differences, Dutt and Bhardwaj elaborated on the idea of appropriating Shakespeare as a political weapon via ideologically loaded images. Thus, the Shakespearean revival with Utpal Dutt indirectly occupied a privileged place in Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations.¹⁰⁶

After the Shakespearean revival initiated by the Kendals and Utpal Dutt, the post-colonial period is indebted to native performances of Shakespeare’s plays. A political alliance with Shakespeare is only possible over the course of conjuring a presence that is and is not Shakespeare; the productions are in this terrain about to cross the Shakespearean boundaries. The mediatisation of Shakespeare with the folk tradition is dominant in this post-colonial period. B. V. Karanth produced *Macbeth* as *Barnam*

¹⁰⁶For modern native productions, see Trivedi, “Interculturalism or Indigenisation,” 77-81; C. Sandten, “The Empire of Shakespeare in India: Deglamourised, Transformed, Greatly Shrunk.” In *Shakespeare’s Legacy: The Appropriation of the Plays in Post-Colonial Drama*. Ed. N. Schaffeld (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2005), 105-25; Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 18, 177-188, 204; and Shormishtha Panja, “Not Black and White but Shades of Grey: Shakespeare in India.” In Chaudhuri and Seng Lim, 102-116.

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Vana in 1979 in the *yakshagana* form, thus substituting the theatrical codes for those of the Indian culture. At the same time, the production kept intact Shakespearean language and psychological depth. The *yakshagana* form basically consisted of an innovative use of the handheld curtain. The final effect of the play is changed completely in this adaptation since, instead of ending with Macbeth's story dying in battle, it finishes with Macbeth's ghost in order to emphasize the idea of rebirth. Habib Tanveer's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, retitled *Kaam Dev Ka Apna Basant Ritu Ka Sapna* was revived in 1995. The originality of this adaptation resides in its combined use of North Indian folk traditions with episodic structures and the cast, exclusively rural folk cast. The 1999 trilingual *Othello* by the Italian Roysten Abel – *Othello, a Play in Black and White* – was produced by the United Players Guild, a Delhi-based theatre company set up in 1995 and was actually engaged with the *kathakali* tradition. Despite winning the Fringe Award at the Edinburgh Theatre Festival in 1999, this production was criticised for not providing a good recreation of the *kathakali* tradition in the Shakespearean play.

Conclusion

The multiple responses to Shakespeare in India simply question notions about his cultural niche, timelessness and universality. According to Shormishtha Panja, “far from being the timeless work of a universal genius who cuts across cultural borders, the Shakespearean play becomes an alienated and alienating site that incites strong responses against racism, colonialism and women's rights.”¹⁰⁷ The journey throughout “Shakespeare's land” in India has shown how he can be represented as reproducing colonialist, nationalist, hybrid/in-between and commercial ideas. The interpretation of

¹⁰⁷ Shormishtha Panja, “An Indian (Mid)summer: *Bagro Basant Hai*.” In Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 204.

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Shakespeare by the British colonizers differs significantly from the Parsi theatre appropriation and from the native Indian performances. Similarly, the post-colonial period does not mark a straightforward trajectory of attitudes towards Shakespeare. While the Kendals found in Shakespeare a convenient vehicle for a nostalgic past, Utpal Dutt's works manoeuvre with the Shakespearean text to turn it into a transformative political zone. Native performances negotiate with Shakespeare's *oeuvre* for alternative uses. Performances traditionally regarded as hybrid, such as the first production of a Shakespearean play with a Bengali actor, Parsi theatre performances and the Kendals' versions articulate different by-products of hybridity. As Singh and Bhatia have acknowledged, homogeneity is not the rule as far as Shakespeare in India is concerned; there is no historical stability, but permanent fixtures. All these forms of Shakespearean cultural practice in India implicitly protest against the typical and traditional binary opposition colonial/nationalist productions, since they actually develop a wider spectrum. Hence, Shakespeare can be elevated, but also demythologised.

The history of Shakespeare's reception in Indian vernacular languages presupposes an Indianisation. To a greater or lesser extent, most of the productions revivify Shakespeare in local performance modes. Shakespearean traditions and conventions are incorporated into India, and Shakespeare becomes the mirror where the Indians look at themselves. These versions are embedded with constructions of the local where myths, gods and goddesses and changes in the locales and names are powerfully manifest. Although aesthetically and ideologically compromised with Shakespeare, most of these versions dispose him of his language, basically borrowing the plots. If Walter Benjamin writes that any translation contains "the life of the originals," this is precisely what Indian versions of Shakespeare do. He becomes a spectre whose essence

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pervades India, to the extent that sometimes Indians are not fully aware of his presence. In the words of Verma: “an audience brought up on a diet of Bombay films would find Shakespeare’s plays, if it could read them, full of echoes from the films.”¹⁰⁸ This parodic instance of Verma regarding the Shakespearean presence in Bollywood in fact summarises the Parsi theatre and the postmodern Bollywood approach to Shakespeare where he is everywhere, but hardly acknowledged. He is sometimes no more than a sign or an echo. The different tendencies in India demonstrate how new Shakespeares can actually be produced and how his authority continues in India, even if he is refreshed and undone, parodied and relocated with the ultimate effect of embracing the Indian culture with its multiple constructions and ambiguities.

¹⁰⁸ Verma in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 287.

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*“In at least 50 Bollywood films, the heroine’s brother kills the hero and in at least 500 films, the hero and the heroine are star-crossed mates. It is ironic then that nobody has actually made a legitimate ‘Romeo and Juliet’”*¹

*Bollywood films have “got themes and treatments Shakespeare would recognize and appreciate, and he’d be green with envy over their financial success”*²

During an episode in H. R. F. Keating’s 1976 novel *Filmi Filmi*, *Inspector Ghote* the origin of the term ‘Bollywood’ is connected with Shakespeare. Curiously enough, this novel which coins the term ‘Bollywood’ concerns an Indian film adaptation of *Macbeth* whose main intertext is Akira Kurosawa’s 1957 film *Kumonosu-jo – Throne of Blood*, itself a remake of *Macbeth*.³ Such an anecdote espouses a link between Shakespeare and Bollywood, which is usually ostracized by the well-known idea that the popularity of Shakespearean plays has been reduced to a minimum in Hindi cinema in comparison with the Indian theatre.⁴ However, rather than receding in importance, Shakespeare’s presence pervades Bollywood cinema. Whether acknowledged adaptations, loose rewritings, extrapolations of the plots or themes or mere citations from Shakespeare’s

¹ Saif Ali Khan in Priyanka Khanna, “Shakespeare Gets His Due in Bollywood” (2006: 1) http://movies.monstersandcritics.com/indiancinema/features/article_1183279.php/Shakespeare_gets_his_due_in_Bollywood

² Patrice Kyger, *Shakespeare Loves Bollywood: a Novel* (Great Britain: Lulu, 2009), 236.

³ Nitin Govil, “Bollywood and the Frictions of Global Mobility.” In Dudrah and Desai, 203.

⁴ Dwyer, *One Hundred Bollywood Films: BFI Screen Guides*, 22.

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plays, "his presence can be detected, even if at times it is as fleeting as Hitchcock's appearances in his own films."⁵ The status of Shakespeare in Indian popular cinema is characterised by a unique appropriation, where negotiation, exchange and transmutation conjugate to shape Shakespeare's field of operation in India.

Although the Shakespearean text is a vital force circulating in India, "the Indian Shakespearean film still remains a virtually unknown entity."⁶ The lack of research in this area is due to the fact that Indian popular films based on Shakespeare's plays hardly ever claim to own their lineage and identity to Shakespeare, they are off-shoots and derivations so that Shakespeare is kept at a remove. This chapter aims to explore the processes of Shakespearean appropriation in Bollywood cinema to argue that the historically rooted status of Shakespeare in India is that of essence, rather than an acknowledged presence. This chapter divides the Bollywood Shakespearean production into three different parts, which correspond to three distinguished periods: 1) the origins of Shakespeare in Bollywood when the Parsi theatre and Hollywood Shakespearean film adaptations were the main influence, 2) the period before the Millennium in which the allusions to Shakespearean plays and themes were minimal, and the plays were significantly and freely rewritten and, finally, 3) the post-Millennial period, where there is a 'collage' of Shakespearean interpretations. Clearly targeted at the diaspora in which Shakespeare is a market force, these productions range from quite faithful adaptations to simply isolated references to his plays. Thus, Shakespeare is revived and undone in the post-millennial period. The interpretation of the playwright changes with time in India, and follows a trajectory which varies depending on the period. Bollywood cinema then does not offer a nostalgic construction of Shakespeare, but a new and unique

⁵ Verma in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 281.

⁶ Verma in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 269.

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appropriation, a transmutation to the Indian framework; he is not a marginal commodity, but an obscure spectre, “a rich source to be mined but not revealed.”⁷

1. The origins

Shakespeare's entry into the world of Bombay cinema is marked by impulses back and forth to the Parsi theatre. Shakespeare is the ultimate source of Bombay cinema, since his plots, characters, scenes, situations, themes and, sometimes, dialogues were commonly exploited by the Parsi theatre. However, the productions did not usually give explicit credit to the Shakespearean source not to discourage the audience.⁸ “The early films were broad adaptations, which borrowed freely, changed liberally, and interpolated songs and dances without qualms and usually without acknowledgements.”⁹ The first Shakespearean loose film adaptations, such as *Dil Farosh* and *Zalim Saudagar* (1937 and 1942, both based on *The Merchant of Venice*), *Hathili Dulhan* (1932, *The Taming of the Shrew*), *Zan Mureed* (1936, *Antony and Cleopatra*) and *Pak Daman* (1940, *Measure for Measure*) take as precursors the Parsi theatre productions, generally with the same name, and are often mere replicas of the stage productions.¹⁰ They then reinforce the same ideas of the Parsi theatre versions of Shakespeare's plays, namely to absorb the Indian culture where songs and dances are mixed with the dialogues, to favour a narrative of writing emphasizing the importance of good women and the promotion of the happy ending over the tragic *dénouement* to

⁷ Verma in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 285.

⁸ Niyogi De, 22.

⁹ Trivedi, “Filmi' Shakespeare,” 148.

¹⁰ For a whole list of Shakespearean films which showed the continuing influence of the Parsi theatre, see Verma in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 270, 271.

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reaffirm the dichotomy of good vs. evil. Thus, the Parsi theatre was the threshold of Shakespeare in Bombay cinema.

Sohrab Modi – “the man who brought Shakespeare to the Indian screen” – appealed to the Shakespearean presence in his film *Hamlet* alias *Khoon Ka Khoon* (*Blood for Blood*, 1935), which was entirely adapted from his successful Parsi stage version of the same name.¹¹ The film marked the directorial and acting debut of Sohrab Modi, and had the principle cast of the stage version as well, starring Modi as Hamlet, Banu as Ophelia, and Shamshadbhai as Gertrude. It follows the tradition of the Parsi theatre in the Indianisation of the characters' names, costumes and sets, as well as in the inclusion of songs, containing seventeen. The movie displays a range of other methods used by the Parsi theatre, such as the formal approach, the utilization of a “frontal composition and staging the narrative in spatial layers.”¹² Unlike other films deeply inserted into the Parsi theatre tradition, this movie gave credits to Shakespeare along with Mehdi Ahsan. The elaboration of the play-within-the-play and the black and “pensive stances were visualized in the English theatrical manner.”¹³ This shows that the movie articulates a desire for hybridity in its mixture of two theatrical traditions.

Another example of hybrid filmmaking is Kishore Sahu's *Hamlet* (1954), which attempted to reconcile the Indian flavour of the Parsi theatre with Hollywood Shakespearean adaptations; an already existing aesthetic form with new principles of production and consumption.¹⁴ The film, starring Hindi and Bengali star Mala Sinha as Ophelia, was produced by Sahu's own company Hindustan Chitra. While the dialogues

¹¹ Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 140.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Trivedi, “Filmi' Shakespeare,” 150.

¹⁴ Although the Parsi theatre is the main influence for the ubiquity of Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema, it is not the only one for Hollywood productions of Shakespeare are also revealing.

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were translated into the Parsi theatre style – in fact, one of the intertexts of the movie is Sohrab Modi's *Hamlet* – the film was shot-by-shot visualised as Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948), and the imagery, setting and ambiance imitated or, rather, mimicked the Western production (see figures 1 and 2). As the Western source had to be assimilated into the Indian framework, the Urdu adaptation changed camera angles, rearranged dialogues, and certain aspects were not reproduced. The Ophelia-Hamlet relationship is one such instance, since it is not modelled on Olivier and Simmons's, but on the archetypal, well-known couple of Hindu mythology Radha (Hamlet) and Krishna (Ophelia), the latter being surrounded by sakhis – female companions. The reading of Laertes, Polonius and Gertrude offers no corresponding interpretation with Olivier's, for Laertes and Polonius are more protective, Gertrude is depicted as a repentant woman, and the Oedipal undertones are omitted.¹⁵ Characteristic of the movie is its success at the box office, which suggested an awakening to the reception of Shakespeare in early Bombay cinema. If the box office understood the repercussions of blending two traditions, the critical assessment had conflicting opinions because the *Filmfare* critic praised the movie, whereas the *Filmindia* reviewer loathed it due to its lack of 'Indianness.'¹⁶ Sohrab Modi's *Hamlet* illuminates the difficulties of a hybrid project, which tends to be criticised for being too preoccupied with Western ways. In this context, there is not a new version of Shakespeare, but a continuation of the approach to his plays encountered in the previous period by the Parsi theatre, whose main feature is the collaboration of aesthetic forms.

¹⁵ For an in-depth analysis of Kishore Sahu's *Hamlet*, Niyogi De, 30-36.

¹⁶ Kenneth Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: a Century of Film and Television* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 161.



Figure 1. Kishore Sahu as Hamlet.



Figure 2. Laurence Olivier as Hamlet

2. Before the Millennium: Shakespeare 'the ghost'

“The roots may look lost but every big story in the Indian film industry is from Shakespeare” said Naseerudin Shah in an interview.¹⁷ Shah reflects upon an Indian scenario where Shakespearean themes are never representative of the Shakespearean body, as if they were authorless, possessing an entity by themselves. His works are peculiarly pertinent texts whose motifs and themes are produced and re-produced for the Indian public. Endless Bollywood films are imbued with magic formulas taken from Shakespeare, where the ‘mistaken identities’ formula from *The Comedy of Errors*, the ‘love at first sight’ romance from *Romeo and Juliet* and the ‘domestication of the heroine’ from *The Taming of the Shrew* are the favourite ones. The comic heroines of his plays also easily inhabit Bollywood film projects. However, despite the ubiquitous residency for Shakespeare in India, the implication is that the references are like montage shots. Indian lives “are suffused and haunted by shades and spectres, quasi and

¹⁷ Shah qtd. in Khanna, 1
http://movies.monstersandcritics.com/indiancinema/features/article_1183279.php/Shakespeare_gets_his_due_in_Bollywood

virtual realities.”¹⁸ Shakespeare seems to be one of these ghostly forces in the Bollywood cinema, perhaps to be found away from “institutions and beyond the parameters of elite culture.”¹⁹

2.1. The *Romeo and Juliet* formula

Romeo and Juliet is the major source of many Indian popular films. It is the favourite play to be rewritten since it combines the necessary ingredients for a ‘masala’ film: destiny, trouble, but, romance above all. Movies such as *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1973), *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995), *Dil Se* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1998), *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* (dir. K. Balachander, 1981), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (dir. Mansoor Khan, 1988) and *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) seal the bond with the Shakespearean source.²⁰ All these movies focus on star-crossed lovers who suffer tremendously as a result of the impossibility of their love due to class, religious and national conflicts or simply long-established family feuds. In all these cases, Shakespeare is a latent intertext, an invisible presence.

Indian readings of *Romeo and Juliet* tend to change the dramatic *dénouement* of Shakespeare’s tragedy into a happy ending in which the soul mates will live happily ever after, or, at least, the spectator is encouraged to think so. This Cinderella -like finale in which love ‘crosses all barriers’ and catharsis is not allowed is particularly distinctive of India. On many occasions, the movies are articulated through never-ending problems where the happy inset is a mere excuse not to go against the Indian

¹⁸ John D. Caputo, “Foreword: of Hyper-reality.” In *Spiritual Shakespeares*. Ed. Ewan Fernie (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), xviii.

¹⁹ Burnett, *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*, 112.

²⁰ For a list of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations, see the appendix.

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value system, and to have a wider audience, which would have been limited if it had maintained the tragedy. *Bobby* (1973), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989), *Bombay* (1995) and *1942: A Love Story* (1994) transform the Shakespearean play into a tragicomedy with a happy ending.

Raj Kapoor's box-office success *Bobby* shows a couple that falls in love 'à la Romeo et Juliet,' in spite of the transformation of the ending, appropriated as a mode of intercultural production.²¹ The Capulets-Montagues lasting dispute is substituted by a class and religious conflict, since while Raj/Romeo comes from a very wealthy background and is Hindu, Bobby/Juliet is the granddaughter of Raj's maidservant's, and is Catholic. Beginning in the tradition of Bimal Roy's *Devdas* (1955) because the problematic hero is sent to a boarding school away from his parents, the movie seems committed to exploring the ways to accommodate *Romeo and Juliet* to the narrative, the references to it being abundant. At first glance, the *mise-en-scène* is very much Romeo and Juliet-like with the presence of a balcony. Besides, the 'head-over-heels in love' hero is even called Romeo when pursuing happiness with Bobby. The heroine, wearing mini-skirts and bikinis, stands as testimony of an increasing Westernization of Bollywood cinema. Instead of presenting Bobby as a submissive, sexually passive Juliet – the typical, though misunderstood portrait of Juliet in the Western tradition – she is sexually overt. In a sequence of establishing shots, the set – a red room and a forest – replaces explicit sexual scenes between the protagonists, following Bollywood aesthetic

²¹ *Bobby* is in fact considered an all time blockbuster in many encyclopaedias of Indian cinema. See Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney (eds.), *Pleasure and the Nation: the History, Politics, and Consumption of Public Culture in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 120.

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forms. Wet Western clothes worn by Bobby are also indicative of eroticism.²² Following *Romeo and Juliet*'s plot, Raj and Bobby elope, and, near the end, when the audience has already accepted the fatal destiny of the lovers, they jump off a cliff (see figure 3), and, in a 'caricaturesque' or almost 'carnavalesque' finale "to avoid the risk of box-office failure," the protagonists are saved by their parents (see figure 4).²³ The movie detects a withdrawal from its source, love triumphs, conflicts between the families are resolved, and a tragedy is turned into a fairy tale, just in the tradition of the Parsi theatre.



Figure 3. Bobby and Raj jumping of the cliff.



Fig 4. Happy ending since Bobby and Raj are saved by their parents.

If Raj Kapoor's *Bobby* articulates the Capulets-Montagues conflicts in a religious context, Barjatya's *Maine Pyar Kiya* imports the *Romeo and Juliet* love story concentrating on a money problem. While Prem – the Romeo counterpart – is the son of a multimillionaire called Kishen, Suman – the Juliet counterpart – is the daughter of a mechanic. Paring down the Shakespearean text, the narrative discourse highlights the excellent relationship Prem and Suman's families had in the past when Kishen was not a successful businessman. Although as in other Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots

²² Western clothes in Raj Kapoor's *Bobby* specifically allude to the well-known scenes with the wet saris to refer to eroticism. See Rachel Dwyer, "The Erotics of the Wet *Sari* in Hindi Films," *South Asia* 23.2 (June 2000), 143-159 for a detailed article on the cinematic power of the wet sari.

²³ Dwyer, *One Hundred Bollywood Films*, 50.

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the Shakespearean text is considerably reduced, *Main Pyar Kiya* has to be distinguished from other Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots regarding its use of bird imagery. The Shakespearean source text contains numerous allusions to birds: “so shows a snowy dove trooping with crows” (1.5: 48), “wanton’s bird” (2.2: 176), “I would I were thy bird” (2.2: 181), “Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love” (2.5: 6) with romantic connotations. The script not only echoes these references, but expands some of them, and makes clear parallelisms between the birds and the couple. Whenever the lovers are in trouble, a dove appears. Rather naively, the pigeon appears to stand for their love. The narrative discourse draws attention to the bird even in the opening credits, where a dove is shown. Apart from the bird imagery, the appearance of the Shakespearean source text is minimal, reduced to the love at first sight, the conflicts among the families and similarities between Raheem – Prem’s friend – and the Friar. Following in the footsteps of other Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots, *Maine Pyar Kiya* chooses a happy ending for the couple, which certainly recalls *Bobby*’s finale with the two families reconciled and reunited.

The taboo-like union between Hindus and Muslims is developed by the master of the political love story – Mani Ratnam – in the second movie of his trilogy *Bombay* (1995), in which the *Romeo and Juliet* formula also enjoys a happy ending.²⁴ According to Douglas Lanier, *Bombay*’s outset has a clear basis on Shakespeare’s play.²⁵ *Bombay* revolves around the love story of a Hindu man, Shekhar, and a Muslim woman, Shailabano whose love is forbidden by their respective families. The onset of the film works to depict their love at first sight via cinematic techniques such as the close-up at

²⁴ See Lalitha Gopalan, “Indian Cinema.” In *Introduction to Film Studies*. Ed. Jill Neldes (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 347-348 for a discussion on Mani Ratnam’s movie.

²⁵ Douglas Lanier, “Film Spin-offs and Citations: Entries Play by Play.” In *Shakespeares After Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture*. Ed. Richard Burt (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006), 248.

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the meeting-up moment, subsequently followed by a scene where rain is the protagonist – a well-known cinematic element to hint at love. This loose adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* is actually the first to replace the family feud by a religious-based conflict. Paring down Shakespeare's text significantly, the couple flees to Bombay as a result of their families' opposition to their union (see figure 5). In a movement from the particular to the general, the Hindu-Muslim clash exposed by the protagonists' families is extrapolated to the nation, where the dispute evolved into a pitched and bloody battle. The Bombay scenario – characterised by the demolishing of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 by the Hindu fundamentalists – departs completely from Shakespeare's work.²⁶ The birth of twins, family reunion, the subsequent burning of the elder generation, and the backdrop of communal riots are some of the ruptures with Shakespeare's text. The unexpected happy ending in the political milieu in which the couple is reunited with their twin sons is another departure from *Romeo and Juliet*, the movie reminding us of the fact that the Shakespearean text is only an intertext in the first half of the film.



Fig. 5. The couple elopes to Bombay.

Like *Bobby* and *Bombay, 1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) is another derivative of *Romeo and Juliet* in which there is an erasure of the tragic

²⁶ The Babri Masjid was a Mosque ordered to be built by the Mogol Emperor Babur in the 16th century.

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ending. Vinod Chopra's *1942: A Love Story* imitates Ratnam's political style in the love genre. Set in the 'Quit India movement' when Gandhi and the rest of the members of the Congress Party were arrested, the movie starts with the image of a man who seems to be hung due to his nationalistic ideals during the British Raj. The whole narrative takes place in a flashback. In this Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is Naren Singh, the son of an affluent man who is part of the British headquarters, whereas Juliet is Rajesh Wari, the daughter of an ordinary teacher who supports the freedom fighters, and considers himself one of them. Yet, this plot is multilayered, and the references to *Romeo and Juliet* are not merely reduced to this forbidden love. In a play-within-the-film, Shakespeare's text is itself performed.²⁷ Naren is Romeo in the play, whereas Juliet is performed by another Anglo-Indian's daughter. As the love this girl actually feels for Naren is unrequited, she decides to leave the theatre company, claiming that "it is not a must that every girl be a Juliet" and Rajesh Wari – usually called Rajjo in the movie – assumes her rightful place as Shakespeare's tragic heroine. Set in the period of the bloodiest and most dreadful struggles between the British and the Indians just before the independence of India, the movie interprets Shakespeare as a colonial tool, associated with the British Raj, the old ways, and the colonial past. If the film traces a movement from imperialism to independence, the performance of the play is senseless for it would assist in the process of remapping Shakespeare in the past. Only when *1942: A Love Story* is completely deprived of its colonial background, and implicitly Shakespeare, are the lovers actually able to re-unite themselves. In their common 'fight'

²⁷ The play-within-the-film included in *1942: A Love Story* reminds us of another Indian Shakespearean appropriation *In Othello* (dir. Roysten Abel, 2003) where this formula is also used. The director followed closely the highly successful stage production on which it was based *Othello: A Play in Black and White*, 1999. Richard Burt, "All that Remains of Shakespeare in Indian Film." In Kennedy and Lan, 73-109 explores the scenes with plays-within-the-films in Bollywood or pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations, such as *Shakespeare Wallah* (dir. James Ivory, 1965).

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for the independence of India, the couple rediscovers the love they felt for their country, and for each other. On the one hand, *1942: A Love Story* understands Shakespeare as a colonial vestige. But, on the other hand, the film's reworking of *Romeo and Juliet* demarcates itself from this colonial past by means of its loose and unaccredited adaptation of the story, which is the hidden plot in the movie. The Shakespearean appropriation is double then, uniting the past and present interpretation of the Bard in India, in which Shakespeare is no longer untouchable.

“Going against all box-office norms of the time,” Mansoor Khan had the guts to kill his leading pair, in what at first sight seems the first faithful *Romeo and Juliet*'s adaptation, *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak* (1988).²⁸ With an impressive beginning in which we are provided information about the bitter and unforgiving enmity between the families of Thakur Dhanraj Singh and Thakur Randhir Singh, the movie is an obvious approach to Shakespeare's text. Starring Aamir Khan²⁹ and Juhi Chawla in the leading roles as Raj (Romeo) and Rashmi (Juliet), the movie's outset shows how Raj's father ended up in prison after killing the man responsible for his sister's suicide, who belonged to the other Singh family.³⁰ In its interesting conception of the famous couple, the cast is very well chosen, basically paying attention to their youth. Destiny is crucial in Shakespeare's play, and so is it in Khan's work. The lovers meet at a party, then, they coincide again at a hotel, and irremediably fall in love, as the introductory and

²⁸ Alpana Chowdhury, “Daring to Cast Aishwarya & Shah Rukh...” Interview with Mansoor Khan. *Cineblitz International* (1 July 2000), 66.

²⁹ Interestingly, while making the movie, Aamir Khan had his own real life love drama, which seemed to be a replica of *Romeo and Juliet*. Aamir fell in love with Reena Datta, the daughter of the Bombay manager of Air India. While Aamir was a Muslim, she was a Hindu. Their courtship was cautious, and their marriage was secret. Thus, Aamir was Romeo both on screen, and off screen.

³⁰ *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* is the film that launched Aamir Khan's successful career. He has taken part in well-known box-office successes, such as *Dil Chahta Hai* and the Academy nominated film *Lagaan*, in which he was also the producer.

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thunderbolt songs show.³¹ Neither the knowledge of each other's identity nor the continuous threats by their parents prevent their union. Crucial for that is the role of Rashmi's best friend, who clearly replaces Friar Laurence as far as help and support is concerned. *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* contains many echoes from Shakespeare's play, such as the love at first sight, the family feud which makes the protagonists' love a forbidden pleasure, the intention to arrange a marriage for the heroine, the elopement of the couple and subsequent romantic marriage without a priest; everything 'dressed' with a pinch of tragedy.³² The tragic ending, in which Rashmi is killed whereas Raj commits suicide brings the audience to tears. Moreover, the endless deaths and senseless violence – against the Indian canon – make the spectators pinch themselves to reassure this is only fiction and fantasy, not reality. Although the story is clearly taken from the Shakespearean source, nowhere is it acknowledged. The posters, the DVD covers and the opening and closing credits do not recall Shakespeare; they do not even parody him or give him a wink.³³ It is here that *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* follows in the footsteps of other Bollywood derivatives of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which never recognize Shakespeare's influence; they comprise a flow that generates new constructions of Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet* tends to be in the background of many Bollywood cinema productions, however, the relationship with Shakespeare has never been applied; the Shakespearean presence is never honoured, but remains as a ghost in all these productions.

³¹ See Shanti Kumar, "Bollywood and Beyond: The Transnational Economy of Film Production in Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad." In Gopal and Moorti, 132-153 for a full description of the narrative functions of song and dance sequences in Bollywood films.

³² According to Mihir Bose, *Bollywood: A History* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2006), *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak* began a tradition which consisted of senseless violence and appealing love stories. Besides, it also grants importance to consumerist goods and marketable products.

³³ Some of the movies which make a parody of Shakespeare are *Angoor* (dir. Gulzar, 1982) and *Looking for Richard* (dir. Al Pacino, 1996). The former, which will be explained later in the chapter, shows a caricature of Shakespeare while the latter actually impersonates Shakespeare laughing at the product.

2.2. Mistaken identities

If the *Romeo and Juliet* formula is represented in many Bollywood films, the theme of mistaken identities is also granted importance. The proximity of the subject matter to the Indian mind makes it a juicy topic to be continuously exploited. In search of entertainment, the comic tone of *The Comedy of Errors* has found many derivatives. Although the integrity of the plot may be destroyed, and the Shakespearean narrative is always reduced to a couple of twins who have to endure confusion, the influence of this play is easily spotted in films such as *Anari No. 1* (dir. Sandesh Kohli, 1999), *Angoor* (dir. Gulzar, 1982), *Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan* (dir. David Dhawan, 1999), *Do Dooni Char* (dir. Debu Sen, 1968), *Gustakhi Maaf* (dir. R. K. Bedi, 1969) – it traces the story of two sisters called Asha, who substitute the brothers – and *Michael Madana Kamarajan* (dir. Srinivasa Singeetham Rao, 1991).³⁴ The transcendence of Shakespeare's work also reached the postmillennial period in which Ananth Mahadevan aimed to turn Shakespeare's work into a new comedy flick, titled *Do Dooni Char*, but it was never released. Touched by the inherent comedy of Shakespeare's work, all these movies take it as the main source – though it is not sometimes easily detected – to go all out with the laughs.

Gulzar's *Angoor* (aka *Grapes*, 1982) – inspired by Debu Sen's *Do Dooni Char* (1968) – works inside as an exception to the rule of Bollywood Shakespearean appropriations because it is itself a commemoration of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* and gives credits to the writer. The 'mistaken identities' theme is cursorily introduced in the opening credits where several images of the same person are joined to

³⁴ The first rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* was Jayant Desai's *Bhool Bhulaiyan*. With a fabulous cast including Dixit and Ghori – the Laurel and Hardy of Bollywood – the film did not own its lineage to Shakespeare.

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constitute the grapes. Interestingly, the commencement comes as a forceful reminder of the association with Shakespeare. "This is William Shakespeare. He was a famous playwright of the 16th century. He is still considered to be the greatest" says the narrator in voice-over in a three minute shot. Gulzar then affords a connection to the perennially timeless reputation of Shakespeare. Central to the film is the elaboration of parallels between the source text and the film adaptation. Just as Emilia and Egeon have twins – Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse – and purchase twins – the sons of a poor woman – as slaves, Raj Tilak and his wife have twins – both called Ashok in Gulzar's work, performed by Sanjeev Kumar in a double role – and adopt another set of twins whom they call Bahadur, starring Deven Verma in a double role as well. In both cases, an unfortunate tempest divides the family. Then, the action takes place after some years have gone by, when one of the brothers remains single and the other has married. The association between both works affects the whole plot, where everlasting misunderstandings occur. With an intelligent script and uncanny dialogue, Gulzar succeeds in adapting the main ideas of Shakespeare's work into an Indian setting, and achieves a very faithful outcome.

However, the correlation between the Shakespearean play and the movie is not a subject matter in which everything is substituted since the movie is characterised by its erasure of romance. In contrast to the Indian tradition in which "romance is the ruling form," the movie does not prioritize it; in fact, romance plays second fiddle in the story for the romantic scenes at the beginning and at the end of Gulzar's project are lost.³⁵ The dissolution of romance into pure comedy can be an attempt on the part of the director to begin a new era in which a new genre – comedy – absorbs a particular

³⁵ Verma in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 278.

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power, before held by romance. In spite of the fact that pure comedy has not shaped a variety of Bollywood movies as a result of *Angoor's* achievement, the movie is a clear departure from the Indian canon. It can be understood as an innovation or, rather, as a desire to focus on comedy *per se*, and to move away from the earlier tradition.

Although *Angoor* draws attention to Shakespeare in its introduction, nowhere in the advertising campaign – in its credits or posters – “acknowledges its debt to Shakespeare, except at the very end in an ironic self-reflexive gesture, when it flashes a portrait of Shakespeare winking at the audience.”³⁶ This argument is grounded in thinking which has seen the name of Shakespeare as a drawback for the box-office. Convinced of the marketability of the plots, the director and crew probably felt that highlighting the name was too risky. *Angoor's* posters either mentioned Shakespeare without putting emphasis on it or simply described the film as a comedy of twins, not referring back to the original source. In its avoidance of acknowledging the presence of Shakespeare, *Angoor* follows the rules dictated by the Parsi theatre and previous Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations, which never included the title of the play on which they were based.

Anari No. 1 (dir. Govinda, 1999) and *Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan* (dir. David Dhawan, 1999) are two free appropriations of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. The two films are very similar to each other, both starring Govinda – the greatest comedian of the 90s – and the two reducing the plot of *The Comedy of Errors* to the confusion caused by mistaken identities.³⁷ In Govinda's *Anari No.1*, the twins are Rahul – a Westernised affluent man living with his father and stepmother – and Raja – a

³⁶ Trivedi, “Filmi' Shakespeare,” 151.

³⁷ According to Rachel Dwyer, *All You Want Is Money, All you Need Is Love: Sexuality and Romance in Modern India* (London and New York: Cassell, 2000), 99, Govinda's popularity was at the beginning among the lower classes, but his talent soon catapulted him into fame and success also with middle class audiences.

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typical Indian servant. Rahul is dating a girl he met in Rome, Switzerland and Paris whereas Raja goes out with a maid. *Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan* develops the story of two sets of twins Arjun Singh/Bade Miyan and Pyare Mohan/Chhote Miyan. Arjun Singh and Pyare Mohan are police officers, and Bade Miyan and Chhote Miyan are thieves, yet, in the course of the action, and, mostly at the end, Bade Miyan and Chhote Miyan are employed as policemen, and the others are employed as security guards. The engagement with the romance characteristic of *The Comedy of Errors* is crucial in David Dhawan's film, since the relationship between the male characters and the female counterparts takes place in most of the development of the action. In this sense, both movies expound the philosophy of Shakespeare's work by mixing comedy with romance, albeit the play is not properly adapted, but extrapolated.

The mise-en-scène of *Anari No.1* and the one of *Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan* evokes consumerism, commoditization, and Westernization, clearly hinting at the diaspora. The world of Govinda's *Anari No.1* is a luxurious global corporate business empire full of deluxe sport cars, five star hotels, exclusive jewels, and designer clothes. Exotic locales such as Switzerland, Paris and Rome are important in the adaptation. Shot in Ramoji Film City (RFC), Dhawan's movie *Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan* also depicts an affluent city in which Western clothes, detached houses, yachts, stunning jewellery and dance clubs are part and parcel of the background.³⁸ The cast of Amitabh Bachchan as Bade Miyan and Arjun Singh is another guarantee of the diaspora as the target audience. All these elements made *Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan* the biggest entertainer of the year. Although *Anari No. 1* was not such a blockbuster, it had considerable success. These three movies are characterised by following the path of

³⁸ The Ramoji Film City began as an idea to reduce the time, cost and resources required to make a film in India. All kind of films could be made in this film city, which had plenty of décors. See Kumar, 132-153.

other Bollywood Shakespearean derivatives concerning the lack of acknowledgement of the source to have a wider audience, by re-writing the plays freely and by clearly pursuing NRI spectators.

2. 3. Taming the 'Westernised' heroine

If the Bollywood derivatives of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Comedy of Errors* unravel Shakespeare's plays, those appropriations of the theme of *The Taming of the Shrew* do exactly the same. It is a favourite topic in Bollywood cinema of the 70s and 80s, in the context of a patriarchal society where women were supposed to abide by their fathers' and husbands' rules, they had to be submissive and well-behaved. The *Taming of the Shrew* boom included works such as Manoj Kumar's *Purab Aur Pachhim* (1970), Raja Nawathe's *Manchali* (1973), Rahul Prayag Raj's *Ponga Pandit* (1975), Rahul Rawail's *Betaab* (1983), Rajkumar Kohli's *Naukar Biwi Ka* (1983), and Manmohan Desai's *Mard* (1985). They all extrapolate the theme, and Shakespeare is replaced by a sense of the overall knowledge of the plot of his plays; they conjure a presence that is and is not Shakespeare. If the method of translating *Romeo and Juliet* consisted on the replacement of a tragic ending for a happy one, the rewriting of *The Taming of the Shrew* to a contextual location usually promoted the taming of the 'Westernised' or whimsical heroine; it tried to solve the irresolvable ills that globalization or, rather, the West produced.

The semi-devotional film *Purab Aur Pachhim* (*East and West*, dir. Manoj Kumar, 1970) is the first to focus on the Indianization of the heroine.³⁹ The movie

³⁹ *Purab Aur Pachhim* is considered a semi-devotional film due to all the religious and sacred references contained in romantic songs. The title of one of these songs is "I am Radha, you are my Krishna," which

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begins with impressive shots filmed in black and white, where the cinematic technique of the close-up highlights the political context. Like *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994), the outset of this movie is located in the 'Quit India' movement, in which a freedom fighter is betrayed by a character named Harnam, and killed by the British authorities. Once the days of the British Raj are gone, the action concentrates on Bharat – the freedom fighter's son – who plays the role of a benevolent Petruchio. In his diasporic journey to London to study, he meets Preeti/Kate, a second generation non-resident Indian 'corrupted' by the West.⁴⁰ The West, and especially London, is displayed as a setting where the good, traditional Indian person is 'polluted.' In a dissolving shot sequence in which striptease locales, dance clubs and casinos become the protagonists via neon lights, London is equated with a place where lust thrives. With such an environment, it seems impossible for Preeti not to succumb to the temptations of the West. The Barbie-like Kate wears mini-skirts, is a smoker, drinks alcohol (see figure 6), dances Western music, and, more importantly, is unaware of Indian traditions, customs, religion, and values. Unlike Petruchio in Shakespeare's play, Bharat appears as a 'saviour', not only of Preeti, but of her whole family – for Preeti's father, mother and brother had left Indian values aside – and, even the rescuer of the whole non-resident Indian community in London. Following Shakespeare's text, Preeti's father arranges a marriage between Preeti and Bharat, which is accepted by Preeti because Bharat enters into her world as a breath of fresh air. Just as Petruchio 'tames' Kate in his house, Bharat 'Indianizes' Preeti also in his home, India; the travel to India contributes to the process of Indianization of Preeti. In spite of the fact that the journey

clearly refers to Hindu gods and goddesses. For an in-depth analysis of *Purab Aur Pachhim* as a semi-devotional film, see Gregory Booth, "Religion, Gossip, Narrative Conventions and the Construction of Meaning in Hindi Film Songs," *Popular Music* 19 (2000): 125-145.

⁴⁰ Rajinder Kumar Dudrah claims that *Purab Aur Pachhim* is a very clear adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Dudrah, *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies*, 68.

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was considered a mere caprice by Preeti, the power of the south Asian country turned out to be extremely appealing to the heroine. Charmed by India, she joins the philosophy of the country by giving up smoking and alcohol, wearing salwar kameez and sarees, singing traditional Indian songs, and being interested in Hinduism. Such a transformation happens at the end of the movie, which certainly reminds us of the peculiar chauvinistic ending of Shakespeare's play. In its response to Shakespeare, the movie ends with a crane-shot that shows the body of the devotional, submissive and traditional new woman Preeti has become (see figure 7), causing controversy in the West; the film then figures the constrictions of gender in the south Asian country. The Shakespearean theme of the domestication of the heroine of *The Taming of the Shrew* is replicated in *Purab Aur Pachhim* via the Indianization of Preeti, though the plot reveals a polyphony of voices and dissonances in relation to the source text.



Fig. 6. The Westernised Preeti.



Fig. 7. Preeti finally becomes a devotional and traditional woman.

Rachel Dwyer has argued that Rawail's *Betaab* (1983) is a very clear appropriation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in which the method of taming and Indianizing the heroine is recognizable.⁴¹ The film traces the story of Sunny – starring Sunny Deol – a poor livestock farmer and Roma Singh – starring Amrita Singh – a prosperous Westernised damsel. The film ratifies the presence of the West by means of luxurious items, such as designer Western clothes worn by Roma, sport cars and

⁴¹ Dwyer, *One Hundred Bollywood Films: BFI Screen Guides*, 22.

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mansions. Their first encounters are constructed as perfect scenarios for the pettiest quarrels between these two characters. As Sunny is depicted as a stunning wild horse trainer, the movie encourages an analogy between the taming or training of wild horses and that of Roma. The action takes place in the mountains, in the heart of rural India, out of the lavish villa inhabited by Roma and her father, which was decorated in a Western style to suit Roma's father's eccentric taste. Upon meeting Roma and encountering her awful character, Sunny makes her walk a long distance for rejecting his shabby four-wheel-drive vehicle. A succession of disasters leads the heroine into the hero's house at a point in which the associated evocations between *Betaab* and Shakespeare's play are not surprising. At the hero's house, Roma learns to be more humble, and begins to distance herself from the world of riches and commodities she had been used to. In an attempt to escape, Roma is bitten by a snake, and her transformation into a proper Eastern woman begins, her character loses strength and power.

Yet, the film's construction of a Shakespearean past is not only tunnelled through *The Taming of the Shrew*, but also through *Romeo and Juliet*, perhaps as an effort not to include the complete subordination of women. Half way through the movie, when Roma's change is already on the go, the protagonists realise it is their destiny to be together. Roma and Sonny are deeply in love with each other, yet, the long-standing enmity of their families seems to make their love an unconceivable task, which is nonetheless subverted by the couple. The carefully layered *Romeo and Juliet* narrative can also be seen in the egocentric need of Roma's father's to arrange a marriage for Roma, and in his exaggerated opposition to their possible marriage. Raj Kapoor's *Bobby* is clearly recreated in the scene in which Roma's father tries to blackmail Sunny

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not to be with his daughter, and, also in the caricaturesque happy ending which is so typical of Bollywood Shakespearean derivatives of *Romeo and Juliet* by means of endless similar shots. This suggests both a process of intertextuality between the source text and *Betaab*, and also between a secondary source such as *Bobby* and Rawail's work. *Betaab* provides a new form of communication with Shakespeare in India. As Shakespeare is deeply inserted into Indian culture, films like *Betaab* allow themselves to play with Shakespeare by mixing the plots of two different plays. Apart from the taming of the Westernised heroine, *Betaab* with its ironic appropriation or inappropriation of Shakespeare appears as an example of the interpretation of the Bard in the period before the Millennium, where he was a present spiritual application, a spectre with whom to play in haunting representations, but never acknowledged as a revolutionary stance, a political resistance.

3. Post-Millennial 'Collage'

If the period before the Millennium illuminates a configuration of Shakespeare as a 'ghost,' in which he was everywhere and nowhere, assuming a weird ubiquity because he was internalized in the Indian mindset and some filmmakers were not fully aware of Shakespeare's influence on them, the post-millennial period does not emulate the practices of the previous period, but plays and toys with Shakespeare. It is an era that pushes to the fore the question of the 'Shakespearean game,' how filmmakers and producers force the readers to confront unexpected proximities to Shakespeare via acknowledged adaptations, citations where he is parodied or merely quoted. With the aim of boosting audience ratings and having more world-wide releases with the non-

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resident Indians as the main target audience, Shakespeare then becomes an explosive force to be exploited beyond the mere extrapolation of his plots and themes; there is a new absorption and dissemination characterised by the asymmetry or lack of unanimity towards the Elizabethan writer. Yet, the idea of 'having fun with Shakespeare' and experimenting with him appears as a constant contribution of this period into the experience of interpreting Shakespeare.

3.1. Acknowledged adaptations

To adapt Shakespeare to the Indian screen is the new 'in' thing according to the film critic Priyanka Khanna.⁴² The precursor in this new trend of adapting Shakespeare quite faithfully to the Indian screen is Vishal Bhardwaj, a director who distances himself from the typical 'song and saree sequences' by producing what is considered more alternative, high-brow work.⁴³ Bhardwaj avails himself of the global reputation of Shakespeare to produce films clearly diasporic oriented with a considerable shorter running time and fewer musical numbers than the average Indian films, but set in India and with a personal and significant Shakespearean charge.⁴⁴ In his approach to the Shakespearean text, Bhardwaj basically censors previous incarnations of his texts in India by owning its lineage, honouring the source, and preserving what are essentially considered unhappy and cathartic endings, departing from those films soaked in pathos

⁴² See Priyanka Khanna (2006: 1)

http://movies.monstersandcritics.com/indiancinema/features/article_1183279.php/Shakespeare_gets_his_due_in_Bollywood

⁴³ In fact, his rewritings of Shakespearean plays have been given such high-brow status that they have been compared with Kosintsev's *King Lear* and *Hamlet* and with Polanski's *Macbeth*. See Sidharth Srinivasan, "The Bard of Bombay," *Cinemaya* 1.3 (1 Jul 2006): 13.

⁴⁴ Peter Brunette, "Maqbool: Bhardwaj Cleverly Reworks Macbeth into a Bollywood Film Noir," *Screen International* n1430 (21 Nov 2003): 30.

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and mawkish feelings. The implication is that there is no longer an explicit and generic transgression of the text, but a mere transposition to the Indian setting in an attempt to come to terms with Shakespeare.

Although Brunette considers that “*Maqbool* owes more to *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Body Heat* than Shakespeare,” the movie is deeply committed to Shakespeare.⁴⁵ Furthermore, in the opening montage, the film confesses being inspired by Shakespeare, detaching itself from the Parsi theatre productions, showing its status as a remake.⁴⁶ In the backdrop of a gangster community which is fuelled by violence in order to gain power, *Maqbool* retains the main plot and characters of the Shakespearean play – Macbeth/Maqbool, Lady Macbeth/Nimmi, Duncan/Abbaji, Banquo/Kaká, Fleance/Guddu, and the witches/policemen, albeit the characters undergo some transformations. As Thornton Burnett writes, the film seems to be rather preoccupied with gender issues.⁴⁷ Unlike Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Nimmi is not married to Maqbool at the outset of the movie because she is Abbaji’s mistress, and she and Maqbool become lovers in the course of the action. The implication is that a new dimension is added to the political theme of the play, that of love. It seems that what actually guides Maqbool is love for Nimmi rather than politics and ambition. There are no female witches, but Indian male cops – starring Naseerudin Khan and Om Puri – obsessed with Hindu astrological diagrams, while Kaká/Banquo is depicted as an effeminate being than in the play. The predictions, bloodstains and madness of the original play are also transposed to the Indian setting of the city of Mumbai.

⁴⁵ Brunette, 30.

⁴⁶ Mark Thornton Burnett, "Extending the Filmic Canon: *The Banquet* and *Maqbool*." In *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): 1. Available online: <http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/>.

⁴⁷ Burnett, "Extending the Filmic Canon: *The Banquet* and *Maqbool*," 3.

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Vishal Bhardwaj's movie *Omkara* – shot in synch-sound like *Maqbool* – closely follows Shakespeare's play.⁴⁸ It preserves the main plot and characters – Othello/Omkara, Desdemona/Dolly, Iago/Langda, Cassio/Kesu, Roderigo/Rajju, Duke of Venice/Bhaisaab. Bhaisaab, the gang leader, plays the role of the Duke of Venice, a mobster-turned politician who is in jail, but still has power. In Shakespeare's play, Othello chooses Cassio as his lieutenant rather than Iago, causing the latter's jealousy. Similarly, in *Omkara*, an election is coming up, and Omkara also prefers Kesu as his lieutenant – his bahubali. In the sealing of the bond with Shakespeare, the screenplay adds some complexities to the plot, and highlights traditionally considered secondary characters. Just as Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* is characterised by its preoccupation with female gender, *Omkara* does the same by revealing a stronger interpretation of characters such as Bianca – Billo Chamanbahar – and Emilia – Indu. Billo Chamanbahar is a dancer of mujra songs, whereas Indu acquires all her power at the end of the remake when she is transformed into the Goddess Kali when she discovers her husband's manipulation.⁴⁹ The exploitation of endless analogies between the play and film points to a stress on Bollywood cinematic fidelity to the Shakespearean text.

The mise-en-scène in Bhardwaj's Shakespearean remakes absolutely qualifies for the Shakespearean settings in *Macbeth* and *Othello*. Although the world of the Mob in Mumbai and in Uttar Pradesh was finally chosen in *Maqbool* and *Omkara* respectively, different settings were thought for the films, especially for *Omkara*,

⁴⁸ Synch-sound means that the dialogue and audio effects are recorded simultaneously with visual effects, instead of doing so separately in a recording studio.

⁴⁹ Srinivasan, 14. The Goddess Kali is a figure of Hindu mythology, basically featured as an individual motivated by "vendetta."

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namely the Indian cricket team – as a clear imitation of the Oscar nominated *Lagaan*⁵⁰ – and the university campus to deal with politics at university.⁵¹ Kesu – a student leader as well as a political gangster – is reminiscent of this failed decision. All these scenarios share a common parameter, their more or less overt or subvert connection with politics, which is certainly the inherent motif in these Shakespearean plays.

Treacherous transgressivity tied to sexual tension in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and race, corruption and jealousy in Shakespeare's *Othello* are clearly captured in Bhardwaj's remakes. Given the context in *Maqbool* in which the Lady Macbeth figure is the Don's mistress, the connection with the Shakespearean theme is evident since "not only does this amplify the dominant theme of treacherous transgressivity, but it also literally fleshes out of the suggestion in Shakespeare's play that Lady Macbeth uses her sexual command over Macbeth."⁵² Although Bhardwaj has always confirmed *Omkaara's* screenplay focus on jealousy over racism, he basically chose to "skate over this issue," this topic is a key motif in Bhardwaj's work.⁵³ *Omkaara* is a half high-caste Brahmin while Dolly, Bhaisaab and even Kesu and Langda are full-term Brahmins. Set in Uttar Pradesh, a state where elections are won and lost on caste politics, the fact that *Omkaara* is a half-caste is really significant. The physical colour-specific differences between *Omkaara* and *Dolly* – the former with a darkish complexion and the latter with a skin as white as a sheet – and Tassaduq Hussain's stunning chiaroscuro lensing also

⁵⁰ The film *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time* (dir. Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001) is set in the period of the British Raj in India, and revolves around a cricket match between Indian villagers and the British counterparts. Pride is not the only thing gained, but mostly independence and freedom.

⁵¹ Stephen Alter, *Fantasies of a Bollywood Love Thief: Inside the World of Indian Moviemaking* (New York: Harcourt/ Harvest Books, 2007), 46.

⁵² Trivedi, "Filmi' Shakespeare," 154.

⁵³ Naman Ramachandran, "Omkaara," *Sight and Sound* 16.10 (1 Oct 2006): 76.

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contribute to put an emphasis on caste hierarchies.⁵⁴ Thus, *Maqbool* and *Omkara* reproduce the most important Shakespearean themes.

The cinematic visualizations and effect sounds of both film adaptations reflect the poetic images of the Shakespearean plays. In *Maqbool* for instance, the numerous shots with crows – associated with bad luck in the Indian mindset – that form the background of the long scenes of Maqbool and Nimmi and the final scene before Maqbool is murdered simply function to predict fatal destiny. The shot with the terrible scream of anguish by Sameera – the Don's daughter – helps to construct the atmosphere of fear.⁵⁵ Dissolving shots in which the characters are celebrating the Muslim Festival of Ramzan Eid while Maqbool is thinking about murdering Khan basically hint at Maqbool's real ambitious nature.⁵⁶ The sound and visual effects in Bhardwaj's *Omkara* also play a significant role in the development of the narrative. Mobile phones for example are a tool to be exploited, and the blackmails and tricks are always completed thanks to these electronic machines. Invoking the Shakespearean spirit of *Othello*, Langda deceives Omkara by claiming having seen Dolly texting Kesu and the reverse process. Mobile phones form part of Langda's devilish plots of Omkara's personal and professional destruction. The image of Omkara in the jeep with Bhaisaab after the elections echoes the theme of his ascendance to power – reminding the audience of *Othello's* promotion – and clearly suggests Omkara is "Bhaisaab's political protégé."⁵⁷ Crows are also part and parcel of *Omkara's* narrative. Their presence during the marriage ceremony while Dolly is being applied henna on her hands and turmeric to

⁵⁴ Tassaduq Hussain's superb work in *Omkara* has been frequently praised. See for instance Derek Elley, "Omkara in Variety," *Variety* (7 August 2006).

⁵⁵ Trivedi, "Filmi' Shakespeare," 154.

⁵⁶ The Festival of Ramzan Eid consists of celebrating goodwill and friendship. Violence is basically forbidden in this period. Thus, Maqbool's thoughts during this celebration immediately show the violent intrinsic nature of Maqbool.

⁵⁷ Alter, 185.

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cleanse her complexion also predicts the terrible ending we are about to encounter. Sound and visual effects are not interpolated in the narration, but are full meaning elements in the script; thus, they thrive on a more faithful dissemination of the Shakespearean text.

In the remodelling of the Shakespearean text for film, *Omkara* goes beyond *Maqbool* in the preservation of specific expressions – mostly sexually charged – from the source text.⁵⁸ Integral in Bhardwaj's field of operation are quotations such as "one that loved not wisely but too well" (5.2: 344) and "making the beast with two backs" (1.1: 116-117). Interestingly, some of *Omkara*'s songs usually contain all these Shakespearean metaphors of bedding. In the 'Beedi song' in *Omkara*, the lyrics read "no quilt in sight...this cold breeze arouses the hell out of me...it's best to share somebody's quilt. Go borrow heat from the next fellow's oven...Light your fags with the heat of my bosom. It's burning inside me."⁵⁹ The 'quilt' and 'heat' metaphors clearly point to sex. Borrowing a quilt and taking fire from a neighbour's hearth suggest an illegitimate affair.⁶⁰ Interestingly, the 'Beedi song' locates aesthetic opportunity for the first sexual intercourse between *Omkara* and Dolly. Billo's, Langda's and Rajju's hectic movements in which Billo is uttering "it is burning up inside me" are intercut by the erotic scenes between the leading couple. Thus, both movies assist in the process of remapping Shakespeare faithfully into an Indian milieu.⁶¹

⁵⁸ See Alter, 12 for an in-depth analysis of the language used in *Omkara* at the beginning of the movie, which is very much like that of *Othello*.

⁵⁹ *Omkara* has six different songs: "Naina," "Omkara," "Beedi," "O Saathi Re," "Namak," and "Laakad." The 'Beedi' and 'Namak' songs are the most popular ones.

⁶⁰ Alter, 185.

⁶¹ See chapter 6 for an in-depth analysis of Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* and *Omkara*.

3.2. Shakespearean citations

The 'a priori' collision between what Shakespeare had come to signify in India and its faithful interpretation led to a paradoxical mixture of parodic and sublime rendition in which Shakespeare is not genuflected, but renewed. In the wake of the Millennium, the notion that the Shakespearean work possesses an unpredictable life is evident in its reconstruction through citations and/or quotations. Depending on the addressees of the films, directors make their characters quote and cite Shakespeare – usually when the work aims to be considered an independent art movie – or simply quote Shakespeare without actually acknowledging the source, distancing themselves from the highbrow status of the Shakespearean work, and entering into the established category of Shakespearean "Post-Millennial Parody."⁶²

Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (dir. Karan Johar, 1998) introduces a "pedagogical Shakespeare-scene-in-the-film," and is seen as the first movie in which Shakespeare is filtered through the modern late twentieth early twenty-first century ideas and associations.⁶³ At the introductory moments of the movie, the camera concentrates on a classroom with Indian students wearing Westernised clothes with a large Shakespeare mural at the back, and an attractive Hindi instructor teaching Shakespeare in the literature class named Mrs. Braganza – hinting at a Romeo-and-Juliet off-shoot *Bobby* in which the servant was called Mrs. Braganza in a double intertextual process. Through the technique of the 'close up,' the camera zooms into the book the teacher is holding, and, surprisingly, instead of having the text of the play of a well-known publisher, it is the press book for the movie *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* (dir. Baz Luhrmann,

⁶² Burnett coins the term for the title of the last chapter of his book *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*.

⁶³ Richard Burt, "All that Remains of Shakespeare in Indian Film," 93.

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1996) (see figure number 8).⁶⁴ In its elaboration of the movie's connection with Shakespeare, the filmmaker departs from the long-established tradition of associating Shakespeare with the old, the classic, the traditional or even the colonial past – as in *1942: A Love Story* – and clings to the new and postmodern vision of interpreting Shakespeare. According to this new stance, Shakespeare is no longer taught by means of the strict, faithful text of the play, but by means of the Shakespearean afterlives like the press book of *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* in an ongoing intertextual process.⁶⁵



Fig. 8. Literature instructor teaching Shakespeare via the press book of *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*.

Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001) is treated as an instance of "hyp(er)brized" cinema with a distinguishable English flavour that utilizes plots, scenes and allusions from Shakespeare's plays, so that it can be considered a new generation of Bollywood/Hollywood Shakespearean appropriations.⁶⁶ To begin with, the screenplay is loosely based on Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, and is pivoted on the same

⁶⁴ Richard Burt, "All that Remains of Shakespeare in Indian Film," 93.

⁶⁵ A similar understanding of Shakespeare can be found in *Clueless* (dir. Amy Heckerling, 1995), a modern dress off-shoot of Jane Austen's *Emma*. After quoting *Hamlet*, Heather and Cher had the following discussion. Heather: It's just like Hamlet said, "To thine own self be true." Cher: Hamlet didn't say that. Heather: I think I remember Hamlet accurately. Cher: Well, I remember Mel Gibson accurately, and he didn't say that. That Polonius guy did. Thus, instead of remembering the original source, Cher actually remembers a Shakespearean afterlife, which suggests that the study of Shakespeare is not simply restricted to the original source text.

⁶⁶ Burt, "Shakespeare and Asia in Postdiasporic Cinemas: Spin-offs and Citations of the Plays from Bollywood to Hollywood," 265-303 and *Trade Guide* 47.45 (2001): 1-3.

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tensions that animate the Shakespearean play: the battle of sexes, the question of being merry despite unrequited or impossible love, and the interesting issue of a debatable heterosexual, and potentially homosexual threesome. According to Madhavi Menon, the three male characters of the movie – Siddharth, Akash and Sameer – are inspired by the famous Shakespearean trio – Don Pedro, Benedick and Claudio.⁶⁷ Siddharth is sensitive like Don Pedro, Akash clearly invokes Benedick by his revulsion to marriage and his war of words with Shalini – the Beatrice-like character, and Sameer has the same innocent and foolish attitude towards love Claudio has, being easily fooled into the 'love cage.' Besides, other instances of the Shakespearean influence are the name of one of the boats at the Sydney marina called "Much Ado," and the opera Akash and Shalini go to see named "Troilus and Cressida." As Menon affirms, "*Dil Chahta Hai* does not name itself a Shakespearean adaptation, yet, Shakespeare is everywhere."⁶⁸ The film derives from *Much Ado About Nothing*, alludes, and refers to it and to Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, trading a new mode of habitation with Shakespeare, where he is part of the globalization campaign of the movie, but is still denied.⁶⁹ The post-millennial films suggest experimentation with Shakespeare.

⁶⁷ See Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 73 for an in-depth analysis of the Shakespearean text and Akhtar's movie.

⁶⁸ Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 81.

⁶⁹ Interview with Farhan Akhtar in Madhavi Menon, "Working notes. Bollywood filmmaker Farhan Akhtar, interviewed by Madhavi Menon", *South Asian Popular Culture* 5.1 (April 2007): 77- 85.

Conclusion

The period immediately after the independence of India harboured inflexible attitudes towards Shakespeare, and gestured towards an incursion into the author that consisted of genuflecting before him, but also mimicking him.⁷⁰ This inflexible attitude towards Shakespeare ceded place to its incorporation into the cultural imaginary of the nation characterised by its “unnoticed and unacknowledged presence – a unique appropriation, intertextuality, and absorption of Shakespeare in the Indian film.”⁷¹ As Trivedi mentions, the usually regarded colonial text has to be “demolished” in order to depart from the original and create a new and unique text.⁷² The favourite Shakespearean plays – *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew* – are basically deconstructed, to the extent that Shakespeare is totally subdued by the Indian scenario. The erasure of the tragic grandeur of *Romeo and Juliet*, the alienation of the West in “The Taming of the Shrew theme” and the reduction to the minimum of the plot of *The Comedy of Errors* simply emphasize the fact that Shakespeare is not a cultural icon in India, but a trace, a “virtually unknown entity,” sometimes even complex to elucidate.⁷³

The rewriting procedures of Shakespeare in the post 2000s period veer away “from the shopworn *Romeo and Juliet* formula” in order to engender a new interpretation in which Shakespeare is neither honoured nor seen as a vestige from the colonial past.⁷⁴ Films such as *Omkaara*, *Maqbool*, *Dil Chahta Hai* and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* form part of a project in which Shakespeare is either crucial for the narrative’s

⁷⁰ Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁷¹ Trivedi, “Filmi’ Shakespeare,” 148.

⁷² Trivedi, “Filmi’ Shakespeare,” 157.

⁷³ Verma in Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 269.

⁷⁴ Naman Ramachandran, “Review of *Bollywood Queen*,” *Sight and Sound* 13.12 (1 Dec 2003), 28.

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commercial requirements or a muted reminder of the post-millennial policy via loose allusions. Recent Shakespearean Indian off-shoots like *The Last Lear* (dir. Rituparno Gosh, 2007) – a Bengali film-within-a-film which contains numerous references to Shakespearean works – view Shakespeare as both the epitome of a highbrow status which is on the verge of dying, and as a reference of this new reality to play with. Shakespeare is so devoured that a Bollywood film such as *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* cannibalizes the reference to a mere Shakespeare mural and a press book of a Shakespearean afterlife. In the act of discarding the old, these adaptations in the post-millennium period live above the original text and the author; these works reveal themselves as playfully ludic with the Shakespearean recreation.

Chapter 3: Theorizing Diaspora

“We should concern ourselves with foreign Shakespeares, because Shakespeare, for the past century, has been writ larger than his text.”¹

Although certainly not restricted to the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, migratory movements have been more frequent in these periods, especially after the two World Wars. Communities have been dispersing and migrating to other countries, either voluntarily or forced by the political or economic conditions of their home countries. Besides, in a society in which mass media and electronics play a crucial role, these ongoing flows of people always entail a traffic of ideas, values and capital (amongst others). This multidirectional cultural traffic or journey is all the more evident in the Indian society, where migration is extremely frequent. With this background in which diaspora or transnationalism has certainly become a theme and condition in our lives, its presence being part and parcel of our existence, the proliferation on studies on diaspora and diaspora theories is unsurprising. But, why should we concern ourselves with the role diaspora plays in the understanding of Bollywood Shakespeares? What can the presence of Shakespeare and diaspora tell us about Indian modernity, if any?

These initial questions have motivated this chapter and will continue to infuse the rest of the study. Given the fact that the reception of Shakespeare in India has been all the more puzzling – with colonialism in the backdrop – its role is even more

¹ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 31.

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complicated in post-colonial India, especially in Bollywood cinema. In its process of ‘decolonizing’ Shakespeare – he emerges as one of the complex habitations of Indian modernity – Bollywood cinema accommodates Shakespeare in the diaspora, as if inhabiting a transnational space, always in circulation.² If Shakespeare is indirectly a nexus, a link of connection between diasporic peoples and the homeland – via Bollywood – or he is a mere lure to target transnational audiences, a Shakespeare and Transnationalism line of enquiry is all the more urgent in that, by and large, there is a necessity to understand and comprehend the constant and asymmetrical flows that affect Bollywood Shakespeares. These initial questions also allow us to reflect on “the global circuit that defines and determines reception and to question the unidirectional cultural flow that invariably travels from West to East or from North to South.”³

The aim, then, of the third chapter of this dissertation is to introduce the diasporic theories that will subsequently be used in the chapters of filmic analysis. Via thematically labelled sections (population movements, displacement, hybridity or cultural flows), the chapter focuses on how the concept “diaspora” has evolved. Each of these thematically arranged sections foregrounds the main ideas associated with them, favours one and hints at its application in the films. The move from abstract ideas about the concept to the more concrete and particular applications in Bollywood Shakespeares attempts to provide a very good bridge to the chapters of filmic analysis since, in the movies under study (*1942: A Love Story*, *Bombay*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Maqbool*, *Omkara*, *Bollywood/Hollywood*, *Mississippi Masala*, *Bollywood Queen* and *Second Generation*), diaspora is a condition as well as a theme. Throughout this chapter it will be regularly highlighted that in order to be reconciled with colonial identity, Shakespeare has to

² This concept of ‘habitations of modernity’ is taken from Dipesh Chakrabarty’s book entitled *Habitations of Modernity*.

³ Burnett, “Applying the Paradigm: Shakespeare and World Cinema,” *Shakespeare Studies* 38: 120.

occupy the transnational space. Transnational theory is thus contributing significantly to a new understanding of Bollywood Shakespeares, and, subsequently, to a new understanding of Shakespeare as a global entity.

1. Population movements

Notions of diaspora as dispersion of people outside the home country are frequent. There are two stances on diaspora in current theoretical approaches to population movements. One stance regards the term of diaspora as a unified, single concept which means the same no matter to whom it is applied. Gabriel Sheffer and Robin Cohen are two cases in point.⁴ Crucial in Sheffer's analysis are the political struggles of these dispersed ethnic groups in order to preserve their identities in relation to their homelands. His notion of diaspora is shaped by the presupposed idea that all transnational groups should be regarded as diasporas and is therefore rather limited. Cohen categorises diasporas into four different types: victim (Africans and Armenians), labour/imperial (indentured Indians and the British), trade (Chinese and Lebanese) and cultural (Jewish). He also establishes the main features that characterise diasporas, namely the dispossession of an original land with its subsequent trauma, migration to a place that cannot easily replace the place of birth, idealisation of the latter and a strong ethnic group consciousness among others. Cohen's main aim is to distinguish among diasporic groups, but the main drawbacks of his work are labelling and his treatment of diaspora as a unity. With such a typology, Cohen's purpose is dubious, for, after all, his decision to have this classification remains unclear. It also presents the same problem for James Clifford: labelling must be avoided, otherwise, our discussion on diasporas is

⁴ Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

a mere generalisation based on the characteristics that certain groups may or may not have, appearing as more or less diasporic.⁵ Categorisation cannot be prioritised because it is irrelevant since our interest in these groups goes beyond the mere typology.

The main tenet of the other stance on diaspora is the rejection of generalisation. It includes those critics – like Khachig Tölöyan, Richard Brubaker and Floya Anthias – who are not committed to the idea that diasporas are formed by all those living outside their home.⁶ Within this second position that deviates from the notion of diaspora as a homogeneous entity, two approaches can be distinguished: those theoreticians who do not favour any traditionally “marginalised” group in diasporic studies and those who clearly advocate for any of these groups. Sökefeld, Tölöyan and Brubaker defend strongly the first tendency.⁷ Sökefeld has observed that migrants do not always constitute a diaspora, but they may become one when they develop a new “imagination” of a community. Therefore, he challenges Connor’s argument that any migratory group can be defined as a diaspora for, if a dispersed ethnic group wanders to a different location, total integration takes place and the homeland is not part of their imagination, they are a group of people living abroad, but do not bear the traces from a so-called diasporic community. A complementary critical position is held by Tölöyan, who also goes further than Connor. His main counterargument is the lack of attention to third, fourth or fifth generation immigrants in Connor’s definition. Another critical claim by Tölöyan is the unlikelihood of considering any single migrant as part of this phenomenon. Despite the usefulness of Tölöyan’s theories, for distinctiveness is

⁵ James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 302-338.

⁶ Khachig Tölöyan, “Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment,” *Diaspora* 5.1 (1996): 3-36; Richard Brubaker, (2005) ‘The “Diaspora” Diaspora,’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28.1 (2005): 1-19 and Floya Anthias, Evaluating “Diaspora:” Beyond Ethnicity,’ *Sociology* 32.3 (1998): 557-80.

⁷ Michael Sökefeld, “Mobilizing in Transnational Space: a Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora,” *Global Networks* 6.3 (2006): 265-84.

beginning to be reconciled with diasporic studies, they are rarely consistent since the Jewish diaspora and its traumatic experience infuses his thinking. “The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora” writes Brubaker.⁸ Such an assertion illustrates Brubaker’s point of view in which he is very easily associated with Tölöyan. Rather than regarding diaspora as a group, he proposes to consider it as a stance since, otherwise, generalisation is unavoidable: everyone is described as diasporic and perhaps “no one is distinctively so.”⁹ Just as Tölöyan brings into the discussion second, third or fourth generation immigrants who tend to be forgotten in theories, so does Brubaker. Yet, he goes beyond Tölöyan by reinforcing the idea that maybe diasporas as such do not exist. What these three critics do is to question the excessive use of the term. Brubaker’s thesis reminds us that, used by extension to refer to all displaced beings, the term deviates from its original connotation and no one is now entirely diasporic. In my view, the abuse of the concept has caused its initial meaning to be in jeopardy; it appears to be at stake.

The second approach includes those critics for whom gender and class issues have been completely disregarded in diasporic studies. Despite women’s implication in the transmission and reproduction of cultural values, their roles have been diminished in this field. Floya Anthias is positioned against traditional diasporic thinkers for the complete elimination of gender in their discussion. Target of her condemnation is James Clifford among others. However, being aware of his male-focused diaspora, he tries to develop the gender paradigm briefly. Whether diasporic experiences encourage or reject gender subordination actually becomes his argument. By maintaining the connections with the homeland, patriarchy seems to be reinforced; however, diaspora also offers a

⁸ Brubaker, 3.

⁹ Ibid.

window into new possibilities. Such a criticism on the part of Anthias seems out of place and unfair for Clifford, who has at least hinted at the paradigm. The shadow of Anthias haunts Koyamparambath Satchidanandan, who also claims that gender, class and language factors must be examined in diasporic communities.¹⁰ Thus, interpreting diaspora generally can bring about some risks like the overlooking of these paradigms. As in postcolonial studies, the image of a heterosexual white male community is always pervasive and attention to difference has played second fiddle in diaspora theories. Although “difference recurs,” dispersed individuals have been lumped together in spite of their distinctiveness.¹¹ Alluding to diaspora as a group of individuals with room for diversity rather than just as a group “regulated” by certain features or rules seems the solution to the problem. These studies become then a “minefield” where manifold paradigms aim to cohabit to show that the field of diaspora can also be combined with feminism and queer theory.

Recognising some of the drawbacks mentioned before of the term ‘diaspora’ is akin to its questioning, reduction of meaning, dismissal or substitution by some critics, namely Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, Ulf Hannerz or Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma.¹² Braziel and Mannur’s thrust of argument lies in the fact that diaspora is not tantamount to transnationalism.¹³ For Braziel and Mannur, while the former concept

¹⁰ Koyamparambath Satchidanandan, “That Third Space: Interrogating the Diasporic Paradigm.” In *In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts*. Ed. Makarand Paranjape (New Delhi: Indialog Publications, 2001), 15-24.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 194.

¹² Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (eds.), *Theorizing Diaspora* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), Ulf Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture.” In *Global Culture*. Ed. Mike Featherstone (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), 237-252. Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma, *New Cosmopolitanisms* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006).

¹³ In *The South Asian Diaspora: Transnational Networks and Changing Identities*, the editors equally make a distinction between ‘diaspora’ and ‘transnationalism.’ See Rajesh Rai and Peter Reeves (eds.) *The South Asian Diaspora: Transnational Networks and Changing Identities* (London and New York, Routledge, 2009).

solely refers to the movement of people – either forced or voluntary – to one or more host countries, the latter term – transnationalism – also includes “the movements of information through cybernetics, as well as the traffic in goods, products, and capital across geopolitical terrains through multinational corporations.”¹⁴ Ulf Hannerz for instance prefers using the term ‘cosmopolitan’ to ‘diasporic’ to refer to those who “want to immerse themselves in other cultures;” those people who are similar to the locals, but not entirely one of them.¹⁵ For Rajan and Sharma, new cosmopolitanism amalgamates the effects of globalization – like migration, trade or media – with the residual elements of diasporic formations. This notion has complex and difficult layers, and clearly goes beyond Hannerz’s concept since these new cosmopolitan individuals do not belong to any specific nation-state or class. These subjects blur the edges of home and abroad, and are moving “physically, culturally and socially,” and are “using globalized forms of travel, communication, languages and technology.”¹⁶ Raja and Sharma’s model is in tandem with Arjun Appadurai’s framework in that both supersede diaspora in their paradigms to include floating populations and transnational politics. Appadurai focuses on the juxtaposition of motion with the flow of images or even sensations, reaching the conclusion that the nation state is “on its last legs.”¹⁷ What is important is to be able to reflect upon the multiple significations attached to diaspora in order to be aware of the complexities and heated debates concerning the term not to overuse it excessively. Yet, throughout this study, no distinctions are made between the concepts ‘diaspora,’ ‘transnationalism’ or ‘cosmopolitanism’; they are used indistinctively to refer to the constant movement of people in motion.

¹⁴ Braziel and Mannur, 8.

¹⁵ Hannerz, 241.

¹⁶ Rajan and Sharma, 3.

¹⁷ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 19.

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Regarding diaspora as a unity does not seem appropriate. The evolution of the term and its field of operation may actually remind us of other concepts like globalisation or even postcolonialism, which have also gone through different stages. Starting with generalisation, moving onto complaints by “forgotten” groups, rejection of the term and acceptance of it in need of a better one is the trajectory followed by all these concepts. As long as we are aware that diaspora is more than an abstract and vague name since it refers to human beings, we should not renounce the concept or should exchange it with other terms with similar connotations. The representation of population movements in the films discussed is both local and global; the Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations or off-shoots contain instances of 20th or 21st centuries Indian diasporas of transnational moments.¹⁸ These diasporic Indian communities¹⁹ are found in at least fifty three host countries such as Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Australia, Canada, or the United Kingdom and the United States of America, which are the preferred host countries.²⁰ In the film corpora, the main characters dwell in the typical host countries (*Dil Chahta Hai*, *Bollywood/Hollywood*, *Mississippi Masala*, *Bollywood Queen* and *Second Generation*) or they are participant of internal diasporas (*Maqbool*). Furthermore, as Shakespeare is one of the fissures of the movements of Indian modernity due to the colonialist expansion, Shakespeare ‘the author’ and ‘the text’ mark these temporalities. He always has to occupy a transnational space in Bollywood cinema like in *Dil Chahta Hai*, where he is specifically located in a boat. As these Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots

¹⁸ Instances of the first and second waves of Indian migrations (colonial migrations and migrations of skilled workers in the 1960s) are not obviously shown in the film corpora.

¹⁹ Ajaya Kumar Sahoo distinguishes three different types of Indian Diaspora (Punjabi, Gujarati and Telugu Diasporas). See Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, *Transnational Indian Diaspora: The Regional Dimension* (New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, 2006).

²⁰ See N. Jayaram, *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004) for an in-depth account of the ongoing journeys and different waves of the Indian diaspora in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

pursue global missions and diasporic clienteles, the image of Shakespeare is akin to that of the black identity in the Atlantic, implying an ongoing process of travel and exchange.²¹

2. Displacement

Identity crisis, displacement and alienation from the nation-state are some of the consequences of having a diasporic status. Living in another country is sometimes akin to having a traumatic experience and to developing an “imaginary homeland,” which only exists in the imagination of the departed self, not in reality.²² The diasporic self journeys back to the world of imagination where the subconscious “frees” from the tensions lived in the nation-state in a place which is neither the home nor the host country: an *escapist homeland*, a *fairy world* where to feel relieved and integrated, fully assimilated and accepted. Critics tend to emphasise this alienation of the diasporic being by relating to the conflicts between the country of origin and the country of settlement, although agreement is not precisely the rule. While thinkers such as Robin Cohen, Luis H. Francia, Stuart Hall and Vijay Mishra argue how important the analysis of these connections is in the field, Richard Brubaker and James Clifford shed light upon other issues, such as lateral connections, i.e. relations among people belonging to the same diasporic community.²³ The last part within this second section wants to revisit the concept of ‘displacement’ to claim that it cannot simply be associated with diasporic

²¹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London and New York: Verso, 1993).

²² Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Penguin, 1991), 10.

²³ Cohen, 2008; Luis H. Francia, “Inventing the Earth: The Notion of ‘Home’ in Asian American Literature.” In *Across the Pacific: Asian Americans and Globalization*. Ed. Evelyn Hu-DeHart (New York and Philadelphia: Asia Society & Temple University Press, 1999), 191-218; Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222-237; Vijay Mishra, *Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2007); Brubaker, 2005 and Clifford, 1994.

studies. It is common to find exiles or marginal communities even within the borders of the so-called nation-state, like Muslims in India or Hindus in Kashmir, demonstrating that not all deterritorialization is global in its scope – “not all imagined lives span vast international panoramas.”²⁴

The homeland and host countries are usually opposed in diasporic studies. According to Robin Cohen or Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, a segment of the population can only be called diasporic when the ties and bonds with the place of birth are maintained and when there is significant contribution to invest in it in order to restore it. Cohen thinks that the clash between these two places actually determines the diasporic identity, which is defined by alienation. Similarly, Luis H. Francia and Stuart Hall also centre their discourse on the split diasporic people feel towards the place of birth and the place of settlement. Of interest in Hall’s argument is his insistence on the mutability of identity, which is influenced as much by the past as by the present. Memory is therefore crucial since, otherwise, the “before” would not be connected with the “now” and the past would remain as a sculpture made from stone totally immutable to change. It seems that Francia follows the path once opened by Stuart Hall and applies his ideas to a more specific context: Asian American literature. Francia highlights the importance of memory in the creation of the identity of a transnational being. Diasporic communities remember the homeland in celebrations and rituals of their countries. Francia spotlights how crucial memory is, but also how unreliable it is since we finally end up mythologising the homeland and demythologising the host country. The homeland can “sometimes become so fantastic and one-sided that it provides the fuel for new ethnic conflicts.”²⁵ In fact, long-distance nationalism could be easily and irresistibly

²⁴ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 61.

²⁵ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 49.

swallowed by marginal communities, due to the nostalgia of exile in diaspora and the anguish of displacement. Organizations such as “the Unification Church or the Muslim Brotherhood” or the BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party – are by and large financially supported by diasporic citizens, and act as “incubators of a postnational global order.”²⁶

Vijay Mishra also brings the topic of the homeland into discussion. For him, melancholy is unavoidable for diasporic subjects and so is mourning for the lost object, which is the place of birth. Nevertheless, mourning is impossible, which leads to a clear “tension between a consciousness (the other’s language is our own) and a body (the other’s corporeality is not our own).”²⁷ Memory then is presented as the terrain where in-betweenness takes place. Thus, the identity dilemma for all these critics can be equated with the lack of reconciliation between the homeland/host country into one single self, the diasporic self. Hyphenated individuals are being haunted by the ghosts of the past, the homeland and, in the present, they are struggling with the *benevolent monster* of the nation-state. If fragmentation usually consists of the break between the “I” subject from the “me” object, the fragmentation of diasporic people entails two different “I” subjects with difficulties to merge into one, the result being a *pseudosubject* with an identity complex.

With Stuart Hall and Vijay Mishra’s framework in mind, this dissertation touches upon how the main characters of the film corpora expand the clichés of displacement, such as the alienation caused by the distance from the homeland, which engulfs the main characters’ minds. All the first or second generation NRIs in pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots and adaptations and – even the diasporic filmmakers – are melancholic of an ideal and unreal past and, to reconcile with it, they

²⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 164.

²⁷ Mishra, 47.

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connect with Bollywood – illusory *par excellence*. “Moving images meet deterritorialized viewers,” and via their link with Bollywood, these diasporic subjects indirectly meet Bollywood’s Shakespeare.²⁸ In Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood*, the deterritorialized grandmother mimics and re-interprets Shakespeare to connect with her homeland, where Shakespeare has to be ‘cannibalized’ to undergo decolonization. Addressed at diasporic clienteles, Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots such as *1942: A Love Story* and *Bombay* boost and incite the connection with the homeland via long-distance nationalism and the distance from Shakespeare – still acknowledged in the movies as one of the shreds and patches of colonialism. Chapter 6 of this dissertation, which explores *Maqbool* and *Omkaara*, reflects upon a new concept of displacement that is not only linked with diasporic communities, but with the transnational world. For example, Vishal Bhardwaj’s film adaptation of *Macbeth* centred on a Muslim neighbourhood is in a position to generate contexts which produce and reproduce some of the displacements lived by their own society in the whole of India, Mumbai or Bollywood cinema. If Shakespeare is literally displaced in Bollywood, the movie expands the genre and relocates Shakespeare in the transnation; he seems to live in an international panorama. Thus, the connection between Shakespeare, Bollywood and displacement is crucial to understand Bollywood and pseudo-Bollywood Shakespeares, for transnational populations directly or indirectly meet Shakespeare.

²⁸ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 4.

3. Hybridity²⁹

One of the motivating forces in the operative field of diaspora – and in the globalised world at large – is hybridity. This notion has followed a curious and interesting trajectory, and the meanings attached to it have been constructed and re-constructed, revised and negotiated. What was first notable about the term ‘hybridity’ was its original connection with colonisation. It initially entailed embracing the master’s tools on the part of the colonised people, in order to bestow on them a different outlook. The contradictions and gaps that sometimes originated were interpreted as signs of failure in the construction of the identity of the hybrid person. As appropriating the imperial power’s tools to dismantle them was not an easy task, hybridity was regarded as the condition which emphasised the alienation of subordinated people, highlighting a clear split in them. Hybridity was considered negatively, and it was thought that it had no productive side. Papastergiadis highlights the significant change in the course of events and in the interpretation of the concept, which may be due to “a perverse pleasure of taking a negative term and transform it into a positive sign: ‘to wear with pride the name they were given in scorn.’”³⁰ The hybrid person tries to cross the boundaries between “them” and “us” and the result is now a negotiation of difference. Within the diasporic framework, it has become conspicuous to interpret hybridity as the mixture of the cultural values from the homeland and those from the host country. Yet, now, it not only implies the possible coexistence of the ostensibly foreign/Western customs of the place of residence with diasporic subject’s own culture, but opens up

²⁹ Yogesh Atal prefers using the metaphor of ‘sandwich culture’ rather than the concept of hybridity. For him, ‘sandwich culture’ perfectly embraces the idea of putting something between two layers, it refers to a person carrying two labels. The typical consequence is the construct of a double identity. See Yogesh Atal, “Outsiders as Insiders: The Phenomenon of Sandwich Culture – Prefatorial to a Possible Theory.” In Jayaram, 200-218.

³⁰ Qtd. in Nikos Papastergiadis, “Tracing Hybridity Theory.” In *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. Eds. P. Werbner and T. Modood (London: Zed, 1997), 93.

new possibilities for further interactions of different cultural values in individuals all over the world – not only the diasporic ones. The complexities of modernity in post-colonial societies clearly indicate that hybridity is more and more a global trait, which is also playing an integral part of the performative process in Bollywood Shakespeares, where the local/global, traditional/modern interplay is almost unrecognizable. Nevertheless, in order to understand its specific role in the transnational Shakespeare paradigm, there is a necessity to capture the evolution of the term, and how the stage is set for a debate.

The association between productivity and hybridity is relatively recent and has two clear exponents: Stuart Hall and Khachig Tölöyan. Stuart Hall argues that diasporas are not based on purity, but on diversity, on hybridity; diasporic identities are negotiating with difference, which enables them to construct and reconstruct themselves. The intermingling of cultures – hybridity – is based on heterogeneity, rather than on purity. Tölöyan's work traverses a comparable territory through the defence of the negotiation of difference and the positive outcome. Not only does Tölöyan see hybridity as constructive, but he also presents it as the ideal condition, diasporic people having the best of the two worlds (homeland and host country). This notion of hybridity as the ideal state is notwithstanding too far-fetched and can only be contradicted, since, in trying to offer a “real, objective” portrait of hybridity, he simply achieves idealisation. In my view, Hall's argument is more powerful, realising how important the negotiation of difference is, but still being aware of the negative consequences of this state.

An opposed force to Tölöyan's theories has been Lavie and Swedenburg's work. Like Stuart Hall, Arif Dirlik or Néstor García Canclini, Lavie and Swedenburg claim

that all cultures are now hybrid.³¹ Especially relevant for them is the concept of the borderzone, which can be equated with diasporas. For them, borders are not peace territories, but “battlefields” where internal conflicts take place. Rather than combining the best of the two different sites (site of birth and site of settlement), they find hybridity difficult to cope with; the self is after all living in an in-between space, a third-space where it is trapped and caged, alienated and fragmented: hyphenated.

When Lavie and Swedenburg refer to the in-between space or third space, they emulate Homi K. Bhabha, at each stage indoctrinating readers about his quintessential terms. For Stuart Hall and Tölöyan, the process of hybridisation is one of accumulation, which would include two different cultures juxtaposed to each other as if they were part of a continuum, the result being the sum of both. Nevertheless, Homi K. Bhabha pushes to the fore the idea that the formation of hybridity does not depend on the accrual of cultures, but on the translation of the identity of the “Other.” Bhabha argues “that the hybridized person is usually rendered different both from the colonizer and the colonized and becomes another in-between and beyond both cultures and worlds, namely both the white majority society and the nonwhite minority community.”³² Thus, the diasporic being, when adopting the new culture, happens to be a new individual; he neither takes the homeland’s culture nor the host country’s, but a mixture of both. The dichotomy past-present is of paramount importance since, for the hyphenated, the past is renewed and the present is re-interpreted so that the past-present turns out to be part and parcel of the necessity of living. What is interesting is the notion of “third space”

³¹ Arif Dirlik, “Asians on the Rim: Transnational Capital and Local Community in the Making of Contemporary Asian America.” In *Across the Pacific: Asian Americans and Globalization*. Ed. Evelyn Hu-DeHart (New York and Philadelphia: Asia Society & Temple University Press, 1999), 29-60; S. Lavie and T. Swedenburg, “Introduction: Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity.” In *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*. Eds. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 1-26. García Canclini, *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias Para Salir y Entrar en la Modernidad*.

³² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 192.

Bhabha proposes because he goes beyond previous thinkers by establishing this in-between space inhabited by diasporic communities.

Another ambivalence of colonial discourse is colonial mimicry. For Fanon, hybridity occurs in the colonised subject's attempt to imitate the culture of the imperial power.³³ In Fanon's view, hybridity can only lead to a terrible schism between Western cultural commodities and values and one's own indigenous, native culture since the final aim is to imitate the Western self. The notion of hybridity is then seen negatively by Fanon as if nothing could be acquired with the intermingling of both cultures. Homi K. Bhabha engages even more in the process of colonial mimicry whereby the "Other" emulates the coloniser and becomes similar, but, in a way, still preserving its distinctiveness and difference. The "Other" then turns out to be a *quasi counterpart* of the coloniser. Mimicry is glimpsed as presenting a double articulation: on the one hand, it is a strategy of reform that appropriates the "Other," but, on the other hand, it "is also the sign of the inappropriate."³⁴ Via the alliance with the imperial power, it is implied, colonised people are parodying the colonisers, the imitation being ironical and subversive; however, there is another idea behind it: the necessity to "copy" the colonisers to feel their culture is at the same level than that of the colonisers. The effects of colonial emulation are disturbing because, in the attempt to "normalise" the colonial discourse to make it its own, the colonized power is alienated. Bhabha then articulates mimicry as both "resemblance and menace" because, by miming the settler, we also end up desauthorising this power.³⁵ This political mimicry is an interesting factor of Deepa Mehta's engagement with Shakespeare in *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002). Although the first-generation NRI grandmother in the film imitates the Western canon, she radically

³³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

³⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.

³⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 123.

transforms the Shakespearean texts into political weapons by re-creating and changing them considerably.

Just like Homi K. Bhabha delves into some problems caused by colonialism, i.e. colonial mimicry, Dipesh Chakrabarty focuses on the complexities of the mutual source of interaction between the source culture and the target culture in the specific case of post-colonial India.³⁶ Colonialism always lurks behind in each of the contradictions he regards, such as the cruel tradition of ‘sati,’ the abuse of garbage or the wearing of khadi.³⁷ The troubled passage from colonialism to post-colonialism in India requires new forms of habitation and identification. A large number of complexities of the incomplete Indian modernity form the background of several Bollywood Shakespeares, namely *Bombay* – with the partition issue – *Maqbool* – also with Hindu/Muslim riots – or *1942: A Love Story* – with the explicit and troubled passage from colonialism to Indian independence. Furthermore, the presence of Shakespeare in India – a remainder of the British presence – constitutes another intricacy of Indian modernity. The complexities of the Shakespearean *raison d’être* in the Indian subcontinent emerge for instance in *1942: A Love Story* where Shakespeare is in absentia as a result of the rise of Indian nationalism. The intermingling of local/global, tradition/modernity is thus unavoidably present in the Indian subcontinent, which affects the reception and interpretation of Shakespeare. Outside the Indian borders and frontiers, in the diasporic realm, hybridity regarding the traditions of understanding Shakespeare becomes largely empowered. According to Alexander Huang, “hybridity is often celebrated as a progressive notion, because its political agency is believed to have activated cultural

³⁶ In *Culturas Híbridas*, Néstor García Canclini delves into the complexities of modernity in South America.

³⁷ The word ‘khadi’ refers to the specific attire Gandhi wore – the white cotton tunic – which has been in vogue since. In his chapter entitled “Khadi and the Political Man,” Dipesh Chakrabarty explores the reasons politicians have in wearing ‘khadis.’ See Chakrabarty, 51-64.

flows.”³⁸ Diasporic filmmakers or British directors appropriating Bollywood – and indirectly Shakespeare – activate these cultural flows. The concept of hybridity throughout this study is not regarded as something negative, but as a necessary condition for colonial subjects to rewrite their story. In addition, hybridity in the films discussed is not restricted to the individuals, but seems a common trait that defines the whole community, and even some of the filmic projects, which tend to interact between Bollywood and Hollywood traditions.

4. Cultural Flows

If diasporas are immediately associated with population movements and ‘deterritorialization’ or displacement, the role of culture is also essential. For Parreñas and Lok C. D. Siu, diaspora is “an ongoing and contested process of subject formation embedded in a set of cultural and social relations that are sustained simultaneously with the ‘homeland’ (real or imagined), place of residence, and compatriots or coethnics dispersed elsewhere.”³⁹ This quotation highlights that there is an ongoing flow of cultural relations because, when ethnic groups migrate to another country, they take some ideas and values with them, and finally merge with those at the place of residence. Apart from the highly influential role diaspora plays, globalisation is also contributing to the transnational cultural traffic. As a result of mass migrations, new types of beings have been constructed: those who “root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things.”⁴⁰ Given the fact that the world is so massively

³⁸ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 42.

³⁹ Rhacel S. Parreñas and Lok C. D. Siu, *Asian Diasporas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.

⁴⁰ Rushdie, 154.

globalised, a considerable number of ideas and systems of beliefs are always 'travelling,' changing and challenging other deeply implicated cultural understandings. With an insatiable appetite for the control of culture, Anderson and Lee, Sharmila Sen or Arjun Appadurai attempt to decipher the intricacies of cultural flows, though with considerable differences in their approaches to the subject.

Cultural displacement has been granted an important place in the works of Anderson and Lee and Sharmila Sen.⁴¹ Four forms of displacement have been singled out by Anderson and Lee: physical/spatial displacement, cultural displacement, psychological/affective displacement and, last but not least, intellectual displacement. This classification is not very practical since, as the authors point out, all these forms are most of the time interwoven in diasporic communities. When physical dislocation takes place, other types of dislocation are somehow expected. Cultural displacement is also paramount in Sharmila Sen's analyses of diaspora; however, rather than using this term, she coins the concept "diasporic amnesia," which allots to the "cultural rupture caused by displacement."⁴² Like Anderson and Lee, she aims to highlight the reconstruction of culture and, subsequently, identity. Her contribution basically comprises the quintessential Indian diaspora instead of a general, abstract community. By locating her study, she goes beyond Anderson and Lee and manages to prove that the Indian diaspora is able to remember and re-enact culture abroad. Cultural displacement is described then as an unavoidable consequence of travelling to other places where new values and traditions interconnect and interrelate with previous ones in order to contribute to the formation or, rather, re-formation of culture.

⁴¹ W. Anderson and R. G. Lee (eds.), *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Sharmila Sen, "Our Flavour Is Greater," in Parreñas and Lok C. D. Siu, 161-176.

⁴² Parreñas and Siu, 22.

Unlike Anderson and Lee and Sharmila Sen's works, which are imbued with a certain halo of nostalgia for the culture 'lost,' Arjun Appadurai's framework is broader, and aims to negotiate the different types and levels of cultural flows. Prior to Appadurai, Benedict Anderson already specified how certain forms of mass mediations – namely novels, newspapers or new media – facilitated the imagination of the nation.⁴³ Nevertheless, he never aimed to categorize these cultural flows. Appadurai refers to five dimensions of cultural flows: 'ethnoscapes' (humans in motion: refugees, exiles, tourists, guest workers...), 'finanscapes' (the dissemination of global capital), 'technoscapes' (the global distribution of technology), 'ideoscapes' (the flow of ideas with a common political content), and, and last but not least, 'mediascapes,' which indicate the concatenation of images and distribution of information provided by the media).⁴⁴ Bollywood films act as 'mediascapes' in tracing the interaction with the diasporic clienteles. A considerable number of these 'mediascapes' are largely determined – usually unconsciously – with specific Bollywood Shakespeare vocabularies. Parodying and/or paying tribute to the Bollywood genre, the pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations and off-shoots analysed in this study – *Mississippi Masala*, *Bollywood/Hollywood*, *Bollywood Queen* and *Second Generation* – are governed by the codes of the appropriation of Shakespeare in Bollywood. Whether directed by diasporic or British filmmakers, these Westernized products signal the complex network of traditions regarding the interpretation of Shakespeare. These cultural flows are not symmetrical, and point out the extreme versatility and flexibility Shakespeare has; he is constantly alive in terms of reaction or interpretation. They add a further layer to the global understanding of Shakespeare.

⁴³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁴⁴ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 32-37.

Conclusion

If diaspora theory was thought to be homogenous and free from difficulties, this journey throughout all the different theoretical paradigms has demonstrated the overwhelming responses and contributions to this field. My aim in this theoretical chapter has been to examine the unique logic of diaspora and globalisation theories to apply them later to the film corpora in order to grasp the intricacies of Shakespeare in Bollywood. This chapter has been designed to develop a theoretical model for transnational Shakespeare. Its specific attention at the dynamics of the transnational paradigm in tangible Bollywood case studies constitutes a perfect and ideal bridge for the film analysis. Throughout the different thematically labelled sections – population movements, displacement, hybridity and cultural flows – the transnational Shakespeare line of enquiry has to be accepted to understand Bollywood Shakespeares, for the dynamics of diaspora play a crucial role in these film adaptations and off-shoots. Since the Shakespearean interpretation in the Bollywood genre bears the imprimatur of a specific location and a historical moment – complicated by Shakespeare’s association with colonialism – he always seems to be on the move, as part of the trans-nation, of the interstitial space.

The transnational theorization means that the topic of ‘Bollywood Shakespeares’ is crossing frontiers, and is contributing to the global understanding of Shakespeare. After all the migrations that have taken place in the twentieth and early twenty-first century in India – migration becoming a ghostly presence which is everywhere intrinsic in people’s lives, a motif that “governs” our *modus vivendi* – the

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Bollywood genre is being expanded thanks to Shakespeare, just like the repertoire of 'Shakespeareanness' is amplified thanks to Bollywood. Given that it has become impossible to understand Shakespeare as an entity without becoming aware of other Shakespeares, foreign Shakespeares, the study of locality has basically hindered and impeded the development of a transnational Shakespeare paradigm. An adequate theory of what it means to construct a transnational Shakespeare via Bollywood can show us how these cultural flows work. If Shakespeare is filtered and manipulated through Bollywood, which is itself being appropriated by the West, an initial evaluation reflects and hints at paradoxical articulations and tensions of Shakespeare and Bollywood. A transnational paradigm in Bollywood Shakespeares immediately suggests the movement from the local/global to a complex multidirectional traffic characterised by asymmetrical flows.

II. ADDRESSING THE DIASPORA

Chapter 4: “Quitting Shakespeare: Diaspora and Long-distance Nationalism in *Bombay* and 1942: *A Love Story*”

During an episode of *Warai no daigaku/ University of Laughs* – a 1997 Japanese play set in 1940 which contains a play-within-the-play of *Romeo and Juliet*, the protagonists – a young playwright called Tsubaki Hajime and a government censor named Sakisaka Mutsuo – deliver the following dialogue when performing the balcony scene:

Sakisaka: “Why write a romance about the western barbarians with whom your country is at war?”

Tsubaki answers that the romance is set in Italy, with whom they recently signed a treaty.

Sakisaka replies that the author is English. “If Churchill made sushi, would you eat it?”

Tsubaki: “No, because neither Hitler nor Churchill would make it properly.”

Sakisaka then suggests some cuts: “Place the action in Japan. Get rid of the British influences.”¹

This sequence illuminates the particular construction of *Romeo and Juliet* – and, by extension, of Shakespeare’s plays – in an Asian country. The reception of the British author *par excellence* is subject to the political situation that Asian countries have with

¹ Richard Burt, “Mobilizing Foreign Shakespeares in Media.” In *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace*. Eds. Alexander C. Y. Huang and Charles S. Ross (Purdue: Purdue University Press, 2009), 236.

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Britain. The inevitable association between Shakespeare and contemporary politics in 1940 is evoked by the government censor, whereas the playwright is guided by a more artistic feeling. By 'Japanizing' *Romeo and Juliet* in *Warai no Daigaku*, Shakespeare is linguistically dispossessed since the text is in Japanese, and the play is notably removed from its European influences. At a superficial level, the play acquires an eastern mystic, but, at a more intrinsic level, the play is an obvious manifesto of Japanese nationalism and/or militarism.

However, this correlation between Shakespeare and the promotion of nationalist consciousness has not emerged in all Eastern cultures. In fact, according to Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan, three different approaches to Shakespeare can be distinguished: nationalist appropriation, colonial instigation and intercultural revision.² If in China Shakespeare was ignored until after the Communist Revolution of 1949 in which Shakespeare was praised due to its high value in the Soviet Union, promoting thus a nationalist appropriation, in the Indian culture Shakespeare "arrived in the baggage of empire."³ So, the parallel that is usually drawn in India is between Shakespeare and colonialism. Intercultural revision is the latest and most innovative type of contemporary Asian Shakespeare. Kennedy and Lan use the term to refer to those performances which shed light upon the differences between the Shakespearean material and the time and place of its representation. Ariane Mnouchkine and Peter Brook are the greatest exponents of this new trend, which alters Asian traditional theatrical performances in favour of art aesthetics.

² Kennedy and Lan, 7-10.

³ Kennedy and Lan, 8.

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The image of Shakespeare as a nationalist icon is put in jeopardy in the two movies which are under analysis: *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995) and *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994). Although these two rather politicised Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots are set in two different though equally tumultuous historical periods in India – the destruction of the Babri Masjid by the Hindu community in 1992 and the British Raj period just before the Independence of India respectively – they share the objective of promoting national consciousness in order to reach a diasporic audience. The primacy of Shakespeare in the first half of the movies shifts into a complete erasure in the second half. There is then a renewed conviction of the necessity of erasing any trace of Shakespeare, eliminating it once and for all in order to have a unified India, which becomes a spiritual force in the phenomenon of long-distance nationalism. Issues such as romance, politics, gender and distribution and production are analysed in depth to highlight the overall presence of the pan-Indian nationalism in relation to the Indian diaspora. This chapter then aims to show Shakespeare's reception in these national romances.

1. Romance

Given the fact that India is a nation where a multiplicity of religions, castes and divides in general are represented, romance appears as the genre which transcends all the barriers. Although all the groups are eager to maintain their 'purity' in real life, romance is the genre which has the power of illusion, idealism and projection of one's utopic and unreal desires on screen.⁴ Patriarchal authority is also challenged in filmic romances.

⁴ To read more about the power of romance in India, see Jyotika Viridi, *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University

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The movements traced by the romantic film genre betray the real experience in India, where arranged marriages rather than love marriages are the norm. What Bollywood films really do is that they negotiate or re-negotiate the idea of romance and depict events as they could be or should be.⁵ Within the Indian romantic film genre, the ethos of Shakespeare is well represented via *Romeo and Juliet*, though as “a body of meaning that inhabits a zone of continuing appropriation in the global sphere,” it is not untouched.⁶ Following the interpretation of the famous Shakespearean tragedy in the Indian realm, especially in the Parsi theatre, the different off-shoots and spin-offs inspired by *Romeo and Juliet* such as *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1973) always transform the tragic dénouement in favour of a happy ending. The renovation of the classical text has been explored in the so-called national romances *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story*.

Bombay (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995) begins with visual and sound effects that emphasize the romantic love story. Revolving around the story of a Hindu man – Shekhar – and a Muslim woman – Shaila Bano – who meet in the fictional village of Maanguddi in Nellai District in Southern India, the originally made in Tamil and Telegu movie starts with close-ups of the couple that highlight the love at first sight which is characteristically associated with *Romeo and Juliet*. The low-angle and high-angle shots that frame the second encounter in the stairs at Shekhar’s house appeal to the spectators’ emotions as “instruments” of love. The music of *Bombay*, which is characterised by the mixture of Western and Eastern elements because the sounds of manjira and ghungroo are blended with orchestration, has the inevitable result of

Press, 2003), 73. See also Francesca Orsini (ed). *Love in South Asia: a Cultural History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵ See Rachel Dwyer, “Yeh Shaadi Nahin Ho Sakti! (“This Wedding Cannot Happen!”): Romance and Marriage in Contemporary Hindi Cinema.” In *(Un)tying the Knot*. Eds. Jones, Gavin W. and Kamalini Ramdas (Singapore: Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 2004), 59-91.

⁶ Burnett, *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*, 24.

showing aesthetically the love story.⁷ For instance, the lyrics of the second song “Tu hi re” “lost in each other we are, at first sight” alert us to the fact that they have set eyes on a stranger.



Fig. 9. Shekhar and Shaila Bano embrace during the second song.

The rain, which stands for sexuality, eroticism and love, fills in the screen in the second song.⁸ As the songs “allow things to be said which cannot be said elsewhere, often to admit love to the beloved, to reveal inner feelings, to make the hero/heroine realize that he/she is in love,” it is not surprising that the first embrace (see Fig. 9) between Shekhar and Shaila Bano occurs during the second song.⁹ The cloudy, gloomy, and even windy atmosphere— to the extent of removing the veil from Shaila Bano – which forms part of the background of the song permits the forbidden desires and dreams come true. In its gathering up of stereotypes regarding prohibited relationships and associations, the movie starts with the abusive paternalism of Shekhar’s father when he claims that he will not tolerate a girl from another community. After knowing their offspring’s choice of partners, both patriarchs stress the differences between the two communities as far as religion is concerned, and Shekhar and Shaila Bano’s love seems unable to be fulfilled.

⁷ See Arunima Mishra and Sudipta Datta, “East, West dance to AR’s tunes,” *The Financial Express* (2009): 1 where they analyse A.R. Rahman’s music – the composer of the soundtrack of Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* – as one which blends two different traditions. <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/east-west-dance-to-ars-tunes/412030/3>

⁸ See Dwyer, “The Erotics of the Wet Sari in Hindi Films,” 143-159.

⁹ Dwyer, *All You Want Is Money, All You Need Is Love: Sexuality and Romance in Modern India*, 113.

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The obnoxious patriarchy is highlighted via non-sensical orders, commands, violent threats and hits in order to depict the parents as the villains who have to be defeated. The conflicts between the two communities modelled on the fights among Capulets and Montagues provoke the elopement of the couple *à la Romeo et Juliet*. Shekhar and Shaila Bano get married in the registry in Bombay with no references to religion whatsoever. The beginning of their marriage is not a bed of roses because their most intimate moment of love-making is intercut with shots of a brothel, suggesting two levels of prohibition – the sexual union between a Muslim and a Hindu and sex as paid entertainment, as if both scenes were too horrifying to show on screen.¹⁰ However, later, once they “tie the knot” and have twins – paring down the Shakespearean text – the references to Shakespeare and romance weaken and yield to the conflicts and subsequent nationalism.

If *Bombay* endorses the communal potential of romance in the first half, *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) does the same. Based in the small hilly town of Kasauni, the movie traces the love story of the colonialist bred Narendra Singh – starring Anil Kapoor – and the daughter of the freedom fighter Rajeshwari Pathak – starring Manisha Koirala.¹¹ By means of a close-up of a statue of the couple made from mud, the opening credits of the film quickly establish that *Romeo and Juliet* is the main intertext. This specific detail immediately reminds the audience of the building of the statue mentioned at the end of *Romeo and Juliet* so that Verona remembers the lovers and peace is preserved.

¹⁰ Ravi Vasudevan, ‘*Bombay* and its Public’ in Dwyer and Pinney, 190.

¹¹ Manisha Koirala seems to be the favourite actress for national romances. She is the leading actress in two movies of Mani Ratnam’s trilogy (*Bombay*, 1995; *Dil Se*, 1998) and in Vidhu Vinod Chopra’s *1942: A Love Story*.



Fig. 10 & 11 Close-ups of the leading couple showing love at first sight.

The freeze frame is the cinematic technique used to depict the first encounter of Naren and Rajjo in the middle of a conflict. The shot-reverse-shots, the close-up of the faces of the protagonists and the expression of the eyes are indicative of the love at first sight (see Fig. 10 & 11). Not only do the visual effects contribute to the portrait of romance, but the songs – characterised by soft music using tablas, veenas,¹² wind and percussion instruments, beautiful lyrics by Javed Akhtar and stunning vocals by Kumar Sanu and Kavita Krishnamurthy – also help to do it. The first song “Ek Ladki Ko Dekha” is the outset of Naren and Rajjo’s romantic love.¹³ Naren and Rajjo are shown deeply in love – in spite of the fact that they have not spoken to each other yet – each one of them doing gestures and behaving in a way that certainly corresponds to the typical cultural construction of love. The picturization of the tune in a rainy sequence is perfect in “Rhim Jhim,” sung by Kumar Sanu and Kavita Krishnamurthy at an excellent pace. If “Ek Ladki Ko Dekha” is the first – and naïve – song which stands for the

¹² Veenas are stringed instruments used in Indian classical music.

¹³ See Natalie Sarrazzin, “Celluloid Love Songs: Musical *Modus Operandi* and the Dramatic Aesthetics of Romantic Hindi Film,” *Popular Music* 27.3 (2008): 393-411 to understand the differences between Hindi film songs and Western pop songs. While Western pop songs always begin with an introduction, Hindi film songs start with the refrain; it always comes first. See also Natalie Sarrazzin, “Songs From the Heart: Musical Coding, Emotional Sentiment, and Transnational Sonic Identity in India’s Popular Film Music.” In *Global Bollywood*. Eds. Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 203-223 for a detailed study of the number of songs needed in a Bollywood film.

beginning of Naren's and Rajjo's love, "Rhim Jhim" represents the culmination of that love. The continuous cunning close-ups of the eyes mixed with the erotic and sensual power of the water – as seen in a dewdrop in some leaves and flowers, in Rajjo's saree and in the couple's hair – create the ideal atmosphere for the kiss to take place. This song smooths the way for Naren's decision to be engaged to Rajjo; however, the clear differences between the two families – reminding us of the Capulets and the Montagues – and, above all, the 'Quit India Movement' are not appropriate for the elaboration of their love, and romance will no longer be bolstered until the end.

If this romance based on *Romeo and Juliet* assumes a visual and sound ubiquity in the movie, it even succeeds in being internalized in the leading couple. The parallel between Naren/Rajjo and Romeo/Juliet becomes explicit during their second encounter, when they first talk to each other at the library, and Naren brings a copy of the well-known Shakespearean play to Rajjo.¹⁴ Then, the balcony scene is filmically realized on three occasions. First, an interesting variation of the balcony scene takes place during the rehearsal of the play within the film, when they are the protagonists of the stage performance (see Fig. 12). Then, they in fact enact it at Rajjo's place, when Naren climbs the veranda, and they mutually declare their love (see Fig. 13). The third and last citation of this particular episode within the play reveals itself as ludic and respectful at the same time since it is recreated via the performance of a Bollywood number with the song "Kuch Na Kaho." The balcony is a mere element to play with in the musical number. The famous speech between Romeo and Juliet about "what's in a name" is also mentioned on three occasions. The first allusion occurs at the library when Rajjo and Naren play with their names. Rajjo says her name, whereas Naren does not say it until

¹⁴ Burt, "All that Remains of Shakespeare in Indian Film," 97.

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Rajjo asks, but she does not do that in this scene. A very interesting reconstruction of the famous episode appears when they are rehearsing *Romeo and Juliet* for General Douglas' visit. A curious variation takes place, for it is Naren the one who recites the episode instead of Chachi – the girl playing the role of Juliet. These are Naren's words in translation:

“Knowing name is not knowing a person. It's just a name, not a virtue. Had the rose been known as a thorn, it would still smell as sweetly. If water had been called fire, it'd still be cool. Change my name, if you will, but I'll still be the same. I'll always love you.”

Although the fragment is not a line-per-line reproduction of Juliet's speech, it nevertheless reflects the same idea – the lack of importance names have. The “what's in a name” episode dominates again at Rajjo's place, where they reproduce the balcony scene and Naren finally reveals his name. The irony lies in the fact that their names do not have the negative connotations Romeo and Juliet's surnames have. All these instances allude to an elaboration of parallels between Naren and Rajjo and the Shakespearean couple to project the importance of romance, but obviously decrease in the second half of the movie when nationalism is overtly encountered.



Fig. 12 & 13 Performances of the balcony scene.

Although in the 21st century “successful commercial films from India have veered away from the shopworn *Romeo and Juliet* formula,”¹⁵ the truth is that this “boy meets girl, falls in love, is separated, and then reunites” rule was granted a particular urgency in the late 1980s and 1990s in India.¹⁶ The revival of the feudal family romance, and, subsequently of the Hindu patriarchal structure, contributed significantly to the *renaissance* of the politics of Hindutva – the right-wing political party in India.¹⁷ Moreover, in a country where film censorship is still common with institutions such as the Central Board of Film Certification – CBFC, the miraculous happy endings are ideologically loaded, because they are immediately associated with government intervention.¹⁸ As “romantic love is the most potent force that overcomes the nation’s ills” since religious, class and caste conflicts are resolved thanks to it, romance is ‘commodified’ in the first half of Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* and Vidhu Vinod Chopra’s *1942: A Love Story* in order to promote a unified India to quench the Indian public, but,

¹⁵ Ramachandran, “Review of *Bollywood Queen*,” 28.

¹⁶ Sarrazin, “Songs From the Heart,” 208 and Faiza Hirji, “Change of Pace? Islam and Tradition in Popular Indian Cinema,” *South Asian Popular Culture* 6.1 (April 2008): 59.

¹⁷ There are many associations linked with Hindutva politics: the RSS combine (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), which consists of many subordinate organizations, such as the BJP political party. See K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake (eds.), *Popular Culture in a Globalised India* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) for an in-depth analysis of all these organizations.

¹⁸ Sheila J. Nayar in Nandana Bose, “The Hindu Right and the Politics of Censorship: Three Case Studies of Policing Hindi Cinema, 1992- 2002,” *The Velvet Light Trap* 63 (1 Apr 2009): 22.

above all, the Indian diaspora's longing and nostalgia for the ideal nation.¹⁹ This 'commodification' of romance is counterbalanced in the second half of the movies, which explicitly gesture to the pan-Indian consciousness.

2. Politics

Although according to Arjun Appadurai the nation-state as such has disappeared in this era since even in fervent nationalism there are traces of hybridity, and modernity is everywhere thanks to mass and media migration, the nation continues to be imagined by diasporic public spheres – comprising “diasporas of hope, diasporas of terror, and diasporas of despair.”²⁰ Imagination plays a crucial role, and operates among multiple circumstances in the building of a long-distance nationalistic feeling. Linked to a notion of superficial and simplistic ‘Indianness’ in order to target the diaspora, Mani Ratnam and Vidhu Vinod Chopra place their stories in tortuous and convoluted times of Indian history to affirm the ‘power of the nation’ for political reasons in a country ideologically governed by a right-wing political party. The romantic Romeo-and-Juliet love story acquires a political dimension when adapted to the Indian community, which is basically characterised by the intention to disgorge Shakespeare and what he implies from the movies’ climax and from the subsequent political and ideological message and interpretation.

¹⁹ Viridi, 202- 203.

²⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 6.

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The naïve family conflict of *Romeo and Juliet* is transposed to a Hindu-Muslim dispute in Mani Ratnam's *Bombay*.²¹ If the first part of the film focuses on the enraged patriarchal figures as a consequence of their offspring's union, the second part of the movie basically leaves Shakespeare aside, and extends the domestic and private troubles to the nation with the demolition of the 16th century Babri Masjid, a Muslim mosque built by a mogol emperor in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh by Hindu chauvinist organisations on 6 December, 1992.²² Therefore, the conflict no longer affected the families but the whole nation, because these two communities continue to coexist in trouble, and these cross-religious unions do not seem to work and to be accepted by fundamentalist-oriented movements in Indian society. Due to the Hindu belief that the mosque had been built where the god Rama had been said to be born, the mosque was attacked by the Hindus. Immediately after the pulling down of the mosque – considered a “symbol of the cultural diversity of India” – the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims resurged.²³ Riots on January 13, 1993 were followed by violent attacks and blasts – bombs which exploded in crucial landmarks of the city such as the stock exchange.²⁴ Friction, cruelty, Muslim protests and clashes with the police and security forces – who were said to take side with the Hindus – were all around. The demolition of the Babri Masjid can be considered as another metaphor of partition because it refers to the modern demonic in India which is the chaotic campfire scene between the dominant community – the Hindus – and the most important minority – the Muslims.

²¹ *Bombay* broke one of the taboos of the Indian society by depicting a couple formed by a Hindu man and a Muslim woman. It crossed the threshold, and paved the road for future releases such as *Veer-Zaara* (dir. Yash Chopra, 2004), which also deals with the union between a Hindu and a Muslim.

²² Hindus believed that the 16th century Babri Masjid had been built where the Hindu god Rama had been born. Moved by fanaticism, Hindus destroyed the Mosque to recover the supposed original setting. This act of vandalism marked the first of a series of measures of a national campaign against Muslims.

²³ Thomas Blom Hansen, “Globalisation and Nationalist Imaginations: Hindutva's Promise of Equality through Difference,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31.10 (1996), 603.

²⁴ To read more about the destruction of the Babri Masjid and its terrible consequences, see Ganti, 41 and Bose, *Bollywood: A History*, 361.

The anti-colonial film *1942: A Love Story*, which paves the road for more films of this genre such as *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (dir. Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001) and *Rang De Basanti* (dir. Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, 2006), elaborates a romance between the daughter of a nationalist leader and the son of a British Raj chief in the context of the ‘Quit India movement.’²⁵ Like Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay*, the second half of the film concentrates more on the society problems during this period than on the love story. In spite of Richard Burt’s claim that the movie is not located in a particular historical moment, the movie clearly constructs a past where Shakespeare is visualized as the icon of colonialism via a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, which is one of the events planned for General Douglas’s visit – a haughty, insolent, violent and xenophobic character – in order to uphold the revival of nationalistic sentiments.²⁶ As Shakespeare “was arguably the most successful component of the British colonial mission” – extremely associated with the entrance of entertainment and with education via Lord Macaulay’s 1835 English Education Act, and reinforced by travelling companies from abroad – the movie is inseparable from the image of Shakespeare as a colonial cultural institution. Therefore, the film has to depart from Shakespeare at the closing stages.²⁷

The remake of *Romeo and Juliet 1942: A Love Story* includes this play-within-the-film which serves a variety of purposes.²⁸ First of all, the rehearsal of some scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* by Naren and Chachi – the daughter of a supporter of the British

²⁵ The ‘Quit India movement’ was also the period in which the nationalists were getting exasperated, and the Muslim League was gaining ground.

²⁶ Burt, “All that Remains of Shakespeare in Indian Film,” 98.

²⁷ Madhavi Menon, “Review of *India’s Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance*” eds. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.3 (Fall 2007): 418.

²⁸ *1942: A Love Story* is not the only movie where a Shakespearean play is encoded. Ismail Merchant’s *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) is basically about the reception of Shakespeare’s plays in India. See for instance Geoffrey Kendal, *The Shakespeare Wallah: The Autobiography of Geoffrey Kendal/ with Clare Colvin, Introduction by Felicity Kendal* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1986).

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Raj – helps the audience envisage the context in which the action takes place. The numerous close-up shots of British flags and British headquarters, immediately followed by crane shots of the English-style theatre where *Romeo and Juliet* will be performed and, above all, the revelation of General Douglas as the main target audience corroborate the association between Shakespeare and colonialism. Known as the epitome of high-brow British culture, Shakespeare is the author chosen by the Indians supporting the British Raj. Secondly, the text that accompanies the images of the rehearsal is in Hindi, not in English, clarifying the bilingual nature of the Shakespearean text since, instead of using the original source text in English, a translation in the vernacular language is favoured. Contrary to all expectations, this is not an instance of anti-colonialism or resistance to the régime, but operates to privilege the long-established tradition of translating Shakespeare during the colonial period for the intelligibility of the text, such as the Parsi Shakespearean adaptations did in many different Indian languages. For the revolutionaries, the performance of the quintessentially British play is the perfect scenario to defeat and challenge the British Raj. The scheduled attack on the colonial forces is planned to happen during the performance, which is construed as a species of sacred possession for the colonizers, not in dialogue with the Indian mindset. The implication was that if the theatre was bombed and destroyed, the same would happen to the British Raj. However, on discovering the revolutionary attack, in a shot that certainly reminds us of Ismail Merchant's *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) where the leading couple Sanju/Romeo and Lizzie/Juliet have to shut down the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* during the wedding scene, the colonizers equally have to cancel the production. Just as the performance breaks apart, so does the romance in both movies. Thus, the cancellation of the performance is akin to

the departure from Shakespeare and colonialism, and the emergence of a patriotic discourse in the movie.

Apart from the live battles and conflicts within *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story*, the two movies had to undergo controversial and strict censorship codes. First of all, *Bombay* had to face state censorship.²⁹ In order to screen it, the producer and director were compelled to do several cuts, such as the deletion of the words Pakistan, Islamic state, Afghanistan, erasure of the exterior shots of the Babri Masjid, and a reduction of violent scenes by 25 per cent. The censor board also cut references to the Muslim deaths and to the police firing and shooting at Muslim crowds. When Bal Thackeray – the founder and leader of the Shiv Sena – watched *Bombay* in a privileged private screening of the film before its release organised by the distributor Amitabh Bachchan, he showed opposition against the tone of repentance on the part of Tinnu Anand established by the film.³⁰ In the initial version of Mani Ratnam's *Bombay*, when seeing the violence at the riots, Tinnu Anand covered his face in his hands and repented. However, Bal Thackeray in fact claimed that he never regretted it. Although the ex officio force Bal Thackeray played a crucial role in the final version of the movie by raising the first objection obliging the company to delete some dialogues, he wanted some other changes which were certainly rejected by the producer, including an entire character removed, to be re-shot with another person, and to re-name the film.³¹ Mani Ratnam's creativity in *Bombay* was limited by the CBFC and Bal Thackeray.

²⁹ Lalitha Gopalan, *Bombay* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), 33 and Nandana Bose, 27.

³⁰ Tinnu Anand was the actor who played the role of Bal Thackeray.

³¹ According to Angie Mallhi, "The Illusion of Secularism: Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* and the Consolidation of Hindu Hegemony" CAPI Occasional Paper #31. (Victoria: Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, 2006), 8, the tour and a half minute speech in which Tinnu Anand spoke about 'ethnic cleansing' and that in which he repented about the riots were the ones erased.

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The negative stereotypes of Muslims in *Bombay* as arrogant and hostile had an impact on the Muslim community, led by G. M. Banatwalla – leader of the Indian Union Muslim League – who protested strongly against the release of the movie. The so-called anti-Islamic discourse contained in Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* caused numerous protests, a delay in its opening day in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad – with large Muslim populations, and even death threats on the director.³² As the Muslim delegation demanded the elimination of some shots, the screening of the movie was banned in the cities of Hubli and Dharwar – in the state of Karnataka, and postponed by a week in Bombay by the Bombay Police, albeit the changes were not contemplated.³³ The images of the hero lifting the veil of Shaila Bano together with the shots revealing a Muslim woman without her burqa have been the most criticised aspects. The low-angle shot of the heroine abandoning her house in order to elope with her beloved with the Koran in her hand is quite striking because it implies that the “Koran sanctioned the heroine's act.”³⁴ The reading of the most important marker of Muslim ethnicity in *Bombay* – the burqa – as an erotic element is a matter of feverish criticism as well. For instance, Shekhar and Shaila's love-making is characterised by the presence of the burqa, which thematises the issue of visibility/invisibility.³⁵ The white filigreed cap is equally fetishized throughout the movie. According to Mallhi, the image of the Muslims as non-secular and aggressive is consolidated in the movie since, i.e., while Bashir – Shaila Bano's father – is always praying and exercises physical violence on several occasions – basically to his daughter and wife – Narayan – Shekhar's father – does not

³² Manjunath Pendakur, “India's National Film Policy: Shifting Currents in the 1990s.” In *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives*. Ed. Albert Moran (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 160.

³³ See *Trade Guide* 41.27, 28 (8 & 15 April 1995).

³⁴ See *Trade Guide* 41.27 (8 April 1995: 14).

³⁵ Tejaswini Niranjana, “Banning *Bombay*,” *Economic & Political Weekly* (June 3, 1995): 1292.

practise this violence, and his son himself is an epitome of secularism.³⁶ Thus, a denominator of Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* seems to be a subscription to negative racial stereotypes regarding the Muslims.

Characteristic of Vidhu Vinod Chopra's filmic procedure in *1942: A Love Story* is the problematic release of the movie. If Mani Ratnam had to struggle with the CBF, Vidhu Vinod Chopra precipitated a crisis in FMC – Film Makers Combine.³⁷ When he asked for permission to make a multi-starrer, multi-million movie, he did not receive an immediate response from the FMC since they were on strike, and decided to shoot in spite of the rejection. The consequence was that Vidhu Vinod Chopra was forced to confront his suspension from the FMC, but, fortunately, also the permission from another organisation the Film Federation of India. Intrinsicly, the movie invests in unravelling the complications with another organisation – the Film Distributors Council, which also attempted to stop Chopra from completing his film. Equally important is the bond between the film's release, as shown by the *Hindustan Times*, with one of the leaders of the BJP – Vijay Goel – regarding entertainment tax exemption.³⁸ The continuous troubles, problems and conflicts surrounding the release of these movies are only indicative of the importance of the state over cinematic creativity and art.

Both movies function as a cultural urge to efface the anxieties of the Indian society, and have been said to conform to the right-wing ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party's – BJP – a revised form of the Hindutva doctrine whose mission is "to get even with history and to develop a particular notion of Indianness."³⁹ In fact, many

³⁶ Mallhi, 8.

³⁷ Pendakur, 163.

³⁸ *Hindustan Times* (28/7/1994).

³⁹ K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, *Indian Popular Cinema: A Narrative of Cultural Change* (Stoke on Trent, UK and Sterling, USA: Trentham Books, 2004), 46. See also Dwyer, *All You Want Is*

movies of the 1990s – such as the bunch of family-centred movies like *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (dir. Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1994) or *Pardes* (dir. Shubash Ghai, 1997) – were driven by this neo-conservative politics, “washing the secular republic into a saffron hue.”⁴⁰ According to Rustom Bharucha, *Roja* and *Bombay* are clear instances of a fervent fanaticism, fascism⁴¹ – as he actually refers to the first film of the trilogy – or even “pop patriotism.”⁴² Through the unconstructive symbolic and visual signals of the Muslims that *Bombay* generates, the movie seems to support this ideology. Besides, technology appears to act as “a conveyor of the state’s ideology.”⁴³ Similarly, by its transposition to an ideal Indian past in which India was about to acquire its nationhood, Chopra’s film also replicates these beliefs. For many thinkers, Hindutva connotes ‘Hinduism,’ and is therefore a “destructive nationalism based on ethnic, racial and religious hatred.”⁴⁴ The main tenet is to go back to the Indian Golden Age associated with the Aryan race and the Vedas – where harmony was promoted – before foreign forces such as the British and the Muslims conquered India. Hinduism is advertised as a masculine, aggressive and rigid faith, and glimpsed as the most evolved religion. Given the religious dimension, the community of non-Hindus within the Indian nation is completely excluded or marginalized. In order to build unity among Hindus, distinctions regarding caste and class are not taken into account, and untouchability is no longer enforced. In the words of Nandy, the ‘demonisation’ of others supported by Hindutva

Money, All You Need Is Love: Sexuality and Romance in Modern India, 76 for the re-emergence of Hindutva.

⁴⁰ Sheena Malhotra and Tavishi Alagh, “Dreaming the Nation: Domestic Dramas in Hindi films post-1990,” *South Asian Popular Culture* 2.1 (April 2004): 21.

⁴¹ Rustom Bharucha, *In the Name of the Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 136.

⁴² Lalit Mohan Joshi, *Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema* (London: Dakini Books, 2002), 310.

⁴³ Dwyer, *All You Want Is Money, All You Need Is Love: Sexuality and Romance in Modern India*, 111.

⁴⁴ Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin, Viking, 2004), 1.

makes the Western concept of secularism impossible to achieve in India. Thus, these two movies would be then just a mere example of the status quo in India.⁴⁵

While the movies – especially *Bombay* – have been condemned for a proclamation of Hindu hegemony, they have been praised by others for the numerous images of the senselessness of communal hatred, and for the backing of a simplistic secularism. Nationalist rhetoric is put into perspective in both movies at the very end. Close-up shots of united Indians – irrespective of religion – against the British with key symbols such as the Indian flag and the demolition of the British headquarters fill in the screen in *1942: A Love Story*. This climatic sequence of the film also literalizes and reproduces the famous sentence uttered by Rishi Kumar in *Roja* when he mouths ‘Jai Hind’ (Long live India). The movie establishes the connection between both characters from the very beginning when, in the mode of flashback, the hero said the sentence. The final scene of Chopra’s film visualizes an ideal nation where being Indian is much more important than being Hindu or Muslim. In its aim to depict secularism, the second half of *Bombay* shows fearful images of both Hindus and Muslims. For Ravi S. Vasudevan, it is the first film to be sympathetic about the Muslim victims of the Bombay riots.⁴⁶ Like Chopra’s film, the closing stages of Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* equally re-fashion the nation-state as a liminal space of dreaming; a secular and modern India is advertised. Apart from the twins, who are raised with an awareness of both Hindu and Muslim traditions and serve “as symbols of the film’s plea for national unity,” the work of the steadicam and the cinematic shots at the end contribute to this pan-Indian

⁴⁵ Ashis Nandy in Radhika Desai, “Culturalism and Contemporary Right: Indian Bourgeoisie and Political Hindutva,” *Economic and Political Weekly* (1999): 697. See also Alexandra Lynn Barron, “*Fire*’s Queer Anti-Communalism,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 8.2 (2008): 67.

⁴⁶ Vasudevan, “*Bombay* and its Public.” In Dwyer and Pinney, 191.

consciousness.⁴⁷ In a Hollywood shot-reverse-shot, after being separated for a long time, Kamal Bashir looks at his brother Kabir Narayan and cannot avoid crying. The freeze-frame of two images, which consist of a lap dissolve of a close-up shot of two hands joined together to hint at harmony (see Fig. 14) among the two different religious communities together with another close-up shot of the family reunited (see Fig. 15) after the horrendous troubles idyllically function to construct the Indian



Fig. 14. Closing image of outstretched hands.



Fig. 15. The family together at the end.

identity.⁴⁸ “The closing image, of outstretched hands coming together to end the pointless fratricide, as silly and utopian as it may be, is still a potent antithesis to the repugnant nature of war,” so, an attempt at secularism.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Shekhar’s final decision to be willing to set his body in fire if the troubles do not stop shows the charisma and energy a person must have in order to build the new spirit of the nation free from communal violence.

Thus, the films put into play the idea that Indian nationalism is “commodified and globalised into a ‘feel good’ version” of Indian culture.⁵⁰ These two Bollywood movies represent an ideal India in the collective imagination, not “the real,

⁴⁷ David Rooney, “Bombay,” *Variety* (19 Jun 1995): 79.

⁴⁸ Gopalan, *Bombay*, 83.

⁴⁹ See *The Cinema of Mani Rathnam* (1994 Toronto International Film Festival, 1998), 16.

⁵⁰ Ashish Rajadhyaksha, “The ‘Bollywoodization’ of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.1 (January 2003): 37.

problematised nation,” and significantly contribute to the export of *Indianness*.⁵¹ The nation is portrayed as a model location with no unresolved conflicts and with the aspiration and the shared desire of fighting for independence at the end of *1942: A Love Story*. Just like Mani Ratnam’s movie *Bombay* highlights a discourse in which religion should not be one of the ills of society and being Indian should be above one’s position as Hindu or Muslim at the end of the movie, Vidhu Vinod Chopra’s film does the same. The triumph of the freedom fighters over the British oppressors after all the chaos and turmoil not only situated the movie historically, but also illustrated the rejection of Western colonialism and globalization in the present, which contributed to the box-office success of *1942: A Love Story* in India, but also in Britain, participating in the building of the diasporic ideology.

As “nationalism is at the heart of diasporic displacement”⁵² since diasporic subjects reinforce the connection with the nation-state, it is not uncommon for Bollywood movies to develop this bond to address this audience.⁵³ Although members of the Indian diaspora never get to know all the Non-Resident Indians, they are all driven by a feeling of nostalgia, and share a common image of an ideal nation or homeland – an imagined community – and aim to preserve it. According to Georges Fouron and Nina Glick Schiller, the image projected of the homeland by diasporic subjects is blurred, distorted, idealised, and mystified, so, these films contribute to the maintenance of the idealisation of the ancestral territory.⁵⁴ Curiously enough, “the ‘transnationalization’ of popular Indian film in the late 1990s is seen to have ironically

⁵¹ Dudrah, *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies*, 63.

⁵² Parreñas and Siu, 11.

⁵³ This is precisely the case of *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (dir. Nikhil Advani, 2003). A run-down ordinary café run by Indians is turned into an Indian restaurant, emphasizing the idea of ‘Indianness’ and its commodification for the restaurant becomes extremely successful.

⁵⁴ Georges Fouron and Nina Glick Schiller, *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2001), 164.

furthered a chauvinistic nationalist project.”⁵⁵ Given that this Indian diaspora is mostly Hindu, the imaginary homeland reflects this religious dimension, which is usually married to politics. Sponsoring Hindutva or fighting for the secession of Kashmir are some of the activities promoted by this politically active diasporic community.⁵⁶ These two political films explicitly articulate a desire for unity, pan-Indian consciousness, and eliminate from their ideology the presence of Shakespeare, which increasingly dissolves throughout the movies as if it were connected with a forgettable, colonial past.

3. Gender

At the end of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995), the mother talks to her daughter about the role of women, and how they have always been and still are the victims of patriarchy⁵⁷:

“Throughout my life I have worked at the behest of others. When I was young I was denied proper education because my brothers were important. I was simply married off. I had my joy only when you came. On your birth I promised that my daughter will have the joys, the freedom I never got. She won’t be another sacrificial victim to the patriarchal order. But I was wrong. It is not for us to make promises or keep them. This is the cruel truth of being a woman. Therefore, I have come to ask you your happiness. Forget him daughter, forget him.”

⁵⁵ Ulka Anjaria and Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria, “Text, Genre, Society: Hindi Youth Films and Postcolonial Desire,” *South Asian Popular Culture* 6.2 (October 2008): 128.

⁵⁶ See Rajan and Sharma, 20 and Steven Vertovec, “Three Meanings of ‘Diaspora’ Exemplified Among South Asian Religions,” *Diaspora* 6.3 (1997): 277-299 for an in-depth analysis of the political propaganda by diasporic communities.

⁵⁷ *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* is a movie about two NRIs who meet at a one-month-long Eurotrip and fall in love, without knowing the impossibility of their love because Simran has to go back to India in order to marry her childhood fiancé whereas Raj does not have to return.

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Like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* highlight gender and, via generic constraints, evoke national consciousness. According to Jyotika Viridi, there is a clear correlation between the woman and the nation. They are used as commodities to be auctioned in films, always ready to sacrifice the family, religion, or love in favour of the nation. Women are instrumental in uniting the nation, and in contributing to the pan-Indian consciousness. When political fragmentation is imminent, women appear as symbols of unity, which is both “progressive and regressive” since they are sites of contest to assert the nation’s identity to claim secularism, but the other implication is gender injustice, and women’s interests have to be sacrificed to privilege the mother country.⁵⁸

However innovative Mani Ratnam’s movie is, women’s subjectivity is not central, and is clearly subordinated to the Hindu nationalist hegemony. Within the rules that Bollywood cinema has by and large reproduced, the male character Shekhar is Hindu, whereas the female character Shaila Bano is Muslim. Shekhar is Mani Ratnam’s vehicle for effecting this hegemony, “exercising a symbolic patriarchal-communal authority,” with the importance attached to Hinduism being indicated.⁵⁹ The first cinematic shots focusing on Shaila Bano with the black burqa and in the Muslim Mosque portray the woman as the schema of Muslim religion. Nevertheless, as Angie Mallhi is aware, there is a gradual assimilation of the Muslim Juliet into the Hindu hegemony.⁶⁰ On arriving in Bombay, Shaila’s departure from her religious past begins. The inter-religious registered marriage without the religious ceremonies at the office

⁵⁸ Viridi, 72.

⁵⁹ Viridi, 199.

⁶⁰ Mallhi, 8.

clearly conceives Shaila as a crucial symbol for the subsequent pseudo-secularism.⁶¹ The Muslim Juliet is remoulded according to these demands, is deprived of her burqa and of her previous self. Shaila's entrance at Shekhar's property – where many Hindus inhabit – underscores the prejudice against Muslims, since they all seem to harbour inflexible attitudes towards her. This first contact is marked by the initial opposition against her Muslim prayers in the house. Just after this first disagreement, there exist some shots that depict Shaila praying, yet, whenever she is shown doing so, she is always interrupted, and can never finish her prayers. Once the twins are born, religion plays second fiddle in the family; in fact, there is a complete religious dissemination in the private sphere, a cultivation and mastery of secularism in the figures of the two children, and the conflicts adopt a public dimension. The clear implication of this erasure of the Muslim beliefs in the character of Shaila is that if she is able to 'sacrifice' her religion in favour of an ideal nation, all the Indian citizens should be compelled to do so. The woman is again objectified, "treated as a desirable object for possession, a willing collaborator in the scheme of things," complying to the patriarchal codes which "subsume and subjugate the feminine."⁶² In order to give voice to the nation, the woman is basically controlled by the male's imprimatur.

Such is the force of the correlation between woman and nation that its reverberations are also felt in *1942: A Love Story*. When the movie betrays a Shakespearean reading in its second half, its field of operation concentrates on conjuring the presence of a utopic Indian nation that has to circulate in the consistent

⁶¹ This scene has been interpreted by Mallhie as a clear instance of Shaila's insertion into the predominant religion since, instead of wearing a burqa, she wears a sari – which is more associated with the Hindu culture.

⁶² A. L. Georgekutty, "The Sacred, the Secular and the Nation in *Bombay*," *Deep Focus* 6 (1 Jan 1996): 79.

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global flows that Arjun Appadurai mentions.⁶³ When the bomb attack cannot be executed, and it is believed that there has been a betrayal on the part of Naren on Rajjo's radical freedom fighter father, Rajjo is persuaded to forget the British-Raj educated Naren to pursue the mission once began by her father to free India from the British Raj. Although she tries to be sentimentally attached to Shubhankar – he could be taken for Paris in *Romeo and Juliet* – the spectre of Naren always remains in her mind. However, she is eager to sacrifice her love for the freedom of her country. It is only when Naren seems to be more preoccupied with the liberation of his homeland than with simply love that he is able to recuperate Rajjo. The movie's climax mystifies Naren by presenting him as a hero in the fight against the British Raj. The implicit suggestion of this ending is that the love for his country leads to the love for his beloved. Within that schema, the sequence illuminates when the lovers pledge for each other, but, in order to achieve this sublimation of desire, the woman is realized as a scapegoat to extol the nation.

If *1942: A Love Story* discovers the flux of identity between woman and nation through the character of Rajjo, the film uses the same strategy in the figure of Naren's mother. Immediately before the inset of Naren – Romeo here – the audience is granted a glimpse of a suffering mother saying goodbye to her son just before the moment in which he is supposed to be hung, very much in the style of the most famous Bollywood film of all times – *Mother India* (dir. Mehboob Khan, 1957) – where the mother also sacrifices her own son for the nation's sake. Because of the momentary and emotional scene bordering on the melodramatic at the start of the film where the son apologises to his mother for not being a perfect son, and the mother replies that sacrificing his life for his country is the best he can do for her, *1942: A Love Story* puts a clear emphasis on

⁶³ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

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the crucial role of the mother. After this dialogue, Naren's mother utters "Jai Hind" (Long live India), and the movie begins in a flashback. In a circularity characteristic of many films, *1942: A Love Story* ends with exactly the same scene with which it began, the loving mother letting her son go to achieve the longed for independence in India. Therefore, all the women in *1942: A Love Story* work as symbols of the nation.

According to Jyotika Viridi, the 1980s and 1990s Bollywood movies are characterised by a clear anti-patriarchal stance for, as "the family is a trope for the ideal nation," the conflicts between the protagonists and their fathers and/or brothers invoke the problems undergone by the country with other communities.⁶⁴ Unscrupulous businessmen gave ground to tyrannical patriarchs. Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* and Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *1942: A Love Story* are clear exponents of this ideology. In a close parallelism to the Shakespearean tragedy, the fathers are the true villains in Ratnam's project whereas there are differences between Naren's and Rajjo's fathers. The British Raj general is the accuser in the story, but Rajjo's father represents a particularly apposite instance because his liberalism helps him understand his daughter's relationship with Naren. Given the interplay between support for the independence of India and open-mindedness, it is clear which character and attitude in *1942: A Love Story* is granted priority – Rajjo's father – for Naren's father appears as the 'Other' whose presence has to be erased in the movie, just like the British Raj. This approach to the fathers as despotic patriarchs is shared by these two movies.

As can be seen in all these different examples, "gender was mobilized as a sign to unify the 'Indian' against the 'western.'"⁶⁵ In the interests of arriving at an 'authentic' *Indianness*, the women in these two political rewritings of the Shakespearean tragedy

⁶⁴ Viridi, 208.

⁶⁵ Viridi, 13.

are represented as alternating between polarized positions, being revealed in complete service to the nation. Love and religion on an individual basis are always subordinated to the interests of the homeland. Paring down the Shakespearean text considerably, *1942: A Love Story* also constructs Naren's mother as a correlation of the nation. Through the potent, sophisticated, but rather limited images of the women who appear in these movies, the subliminal message of promoting a feeling of unity among the citizens living in India and in the diaspora is secured; yet, women's own identity and individualism is still in transit; their honour becomes "an armature of stable (if inhuman) systems of cultural reproduction", and their subordination is politically motivated.⁶⁶

4. Distribution and reception

According to Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, "contemporary Bollywood films can be usefully seen as diasporic and global cultural texts that transcend national sensibilities both in their production and distribution across numerous state boundaries and also in terms of some of their thematic content."⁶⁷ With the diaspora as the target audience in mind, *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* suggest this in-between cultural status Dudrah is talking about. Via the launch of these two movies in international film festivals, the sale of the rights to a certain distribution company and the actual reception at the box-office, the diasporic orientation is defined.

⁶⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 45.

⁶⁷ Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, "Vilayati Bollywood: Popular Hindi Cinemagoing and Diasporic South Asian Identity in Birmingham (UK)," *The Public* 9.1 (2002): 20.

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Although *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* have both a privileged place in global cinema, *Bombay* is in fact regarded as a more modern classic. With a considerable omission of the song-and-dance interludes to reach a more global audience, Mani Ratnam's movie was screened in around twenty international film festivals, including the Asian Pacific Film and Video Festival in Los Angeles, the Filmfest in Washington D.C., the prestigious Cannes festival, the Tokyo International Film festival, the National Film Theatre in London and the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid.⁶⁸ The screening of *1942: A Love Story* was reduced to the 1st Screen Panasonic Awards and to the Prague International Film Festival, where Vinod Chopra was part of the jury. The global reach of the films is manifested in the awards obtained by them. Just like *Bombay* has been granted the National award for best feature film, the Film Fare award for best director and the Screen-Videocon award for best director, *1942: A Love Story* was the winner of several Screen-Panasonic awards. These two movies are transported to a realm where foreign cinema is well received thanks to global flows.

The distribution of *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* is also indicative of their incorporation into the global industry. Like Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkara* (2006), Eros International Entertainment is the company that has the copyright of both movies. On a list elaborated by Daya Kishan Thussu, Eros International Limited is the distributor with the greatest number of Bollywood releases per year abroad.⁶⁹ Advertised as the company to bring the best of Indian entertainment if it is interesting worldwide with even broadband content, Eros International explicitly articulates a desire for the exportation of Bollywood products to its favourite audience, the non-resident Indians. Then, it is openly assumed that *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* are box-office

⁶⁸ See Gopalan, *Bombay* to see a full list of the international film festivals where *Bombay* was screened.

⁶⁹ Daya Kishan Thussu, "The Globalization of Bollywood: The Hype and Hope." In Kavoori and Punathambekar, 101.

successes instead of art-house independent works for an exclusive and selected audience. If according to Kaleem Aftab and Brij V. Lal, Eros Entertainment relies upon the distribution of the popular Bollywood extravaganzas, *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* encapsulate the spirit promoted by the distribution company elaborating their relationship with the diaspora through the commoditisation of *Indianness*.⁷⁰ In any case, the distribution mode employed in Mani Ratnam's and Vidhu Vinod Chopra's films make a powerful impression of the importance of the diasporic market.

The reception of the two movies has not followed the same trajectory. While *Bombay* has enjoyed considerable success in India and abroad since its director – Mani Ratnam – is considered an international institution along with Satyajit Ray and Mira Nair, *1942: A Love Story* has had contradictory results in India and an incredible success in the diaspora.⁷¹ Although *1942: A Love Story* earned 6,60,00,000 rupees – nett gross 3,30,00,000 and according to the website boxofficeindia.com it is in the top twelve movies of 1994 – the truth is that, in comparison with Vidhu Vinod Chopra's first film *Parinda*, which was critically acclaimed, *1942: A Love Story* did not receive the same welcome. Anna Morcom and Subhash K. Jha labelled the film as a flop, only the soundtrack being a hit since it sold over three million copies.⁷² Nevertheless, such views have to be counterbalanced with the results in the international market, where the movie had better luck, and more positive reviews since it helped in the formation of diasporic South Asian identities against a colonial past in an era marked by xenophobia.⁷³ So great was the expectation the film generated that Video Sound paid

⁷⁰ Kaleem Aftab, "Brown: The New Black! Bollywood in Britain" *Critical Quarterly* 44.3 (2002): 95 and Brij V. Lal, *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 102.

⁷¹ *The Cinema of Mani Rathnam*, 16.

⁷² Anna Morcom, "Tapping the Mass Market: The Commercial Life of Hindi Film Songs" in Gopal and Moorti, 75 and Subhash K. Jha, *The Essential Guide to Bollywood* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2005).

⁷³ Dudrah, "Vilayati Bollywood," 27.

\$US 200000 for the rights.⁷⁴ According to Rajinder Dudrah, the movie earned £66,000 from just 8 screens after two weeks of release. John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham claimed that the movie earned \$16,000 for a week-run in Chicago, which is actually the maximum an Indian distributor can expect.⁷⁵ Mani Ratnam's *Bombay*'s terrific initial value was already absorbed by the first review concerning the film contained in *Trade Guide*.⁷⁶ Not even the continuous complaints on the part of the Muslim community blurred the triumph of *Bombay*, which has now become a landmark in the canon of Indian film history.

It is with the extended reviews of Mani Ratnam's and Vinod Chopra's movies where the complexities come to the surface. In several reviews of *1942: A Love Story* appearing in the most famous Indian film magazine *Trade Guide*, the main criticism is its privilege of the upper classes, the film being targeted at them. A focus on the increase of the admission rates to thirty, forty or seventy-five rupees to watch the movie at Metro, Bombay, reinforces the theory that the motion picture favours the upper classes whereas it rejects the masses, which may have contributed to the poor response in India.⁷⁷ The lack of characters the masses could identify with and the slow pace are the main reasons why the upper classes have shown their preferences for the movie.⁷⁸ In the reviews found in blogs about Bollywood movies by diasporic audiences or ABCD (American Born Confused Desis), class versus mass is less the defining feature as it is the plot with the dazzling love story and the remake of *Romeo and Juliet*.⁷⁹ Interestingly, in spite of the fact that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is to be found

⁷⁴ John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham (eds.) *New Patterns in Global Television: Peripheral Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 79.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ *Trade Guide* 41.27 (8 April 1995).

⁷⁷ K. Z. Fernandes in *Trade Guide* 40.40 (9th July 1994).

⁷⁸ See Meena Goculdas in *Trade Guide* 40.43 (30th July 1994).

⁷⁹ See www.moviemoviesite.com.

consistently in the first half of the movie – not only taking shape in the form of an on-screen plot, but also in the form of a book, of three balcony scenes and of a play-within-the-film – neither the Indian nor the British and/or American reviews actually delves into this connection. Only some reviews by diasporic citizens simply elaborate on the idea that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is easily accommodated in the story of Naren and Rajjo in the backdrop of the colonial period. If there is a movie which has received the most contradictory and paradoxical comments, that is Mani Ratnam's *Bombay*. The main critiques are based on arguments that edge towards the supposed fanaticism of the movie, verging on fascism.⁸⁰ The rest of the Indian and foreign reviews of Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* praise the movie focusing on the talent of the filmmaker, the cinematic techniques used and the potential of the cast; yet, the only review that reveals the connection with the Shakespearean play appeared in the American film magazine *Variety*.⁸¹ Therefore, while some of the foreign reviews touch on the issue of Shakespeare as an implicit influence in these two movies, the Indian reviews never make comments about the ways in which *Romeo and Juliet* is skirted around in *Bombay* and in *1942: A Love Story*. At the heart of this production and distribution procedure lies an interest in addressing the transnational public where Shakespeare's name has found a controversial niche.

⁸⁰ Bharucha, "In the Name of the Secular," 136.

⁸¹ Rooney, 79.

Conclusion

During a typically patriotic episode in Gyan Mukherjee's *Kismet* (1943), the protagonist sings the following melody:

“From the heights of the Himalayas
We've thrown down the gauntlet today.
Give way, give way, you people of the world
For Hindustan is ours.”

As at other moments in Mukherjee's film, the sequence points to a clear nationalist slogan. Such an emphasis on the promotion of pan-Indian consciousness has proved to be central and key in the two movies under analysis – *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story*, and in other national romances of the period such as *Fire* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 1996).⁸² All these movies that choose to depict a national crisis through a love story attempt to place high the communal identity of the nation. Taking this premise into account, in a country where Shakespeare is tantamount to colonialism, the political off-shoots of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story*, replicate the previous understanding of Shakespeare in Bollywood where Shakespeare's *oeuvre* is clearly subordinated to the political motifs and implications of the films, and remains in the periphery. The issues of romance and politics in the films discover that Shakespeare continues being inscribed into the cultural context of British inheritance. It is significant, then, that in contraposition to Shakespeare's reputation in other countries, in

⁸² To read more about national romances, see Barron, 65.

India, in a nationalist discourse, Shakespeare has to be removed from the scene, since, otherwise, the political purpose of the film project would be dismissed.

It is in the marketing campaign of *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* where Shakespeare's complete disappearance is seen. Although Shakespeare is deliberately mentioned in post-millennial Bollywood adaptations of his plays such as *Maqbool* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2002) and *Omkaara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006), his name does not appear during the distribution and reception process of these two political adaptations of the nineties intentionally, as if his name became indissoluble from the colonially inflected period and he were associated with an extinct mode of entertainment. Responses to the films only seem to trouble the position Shakespeare occupies in the Bollywood industry for, while the Indian reviews endeavour to simply omit any reference to Shakespeare or the play, foreign reviews at least establish a union between the plots. Nevertheless, this situation simply confirms that while Shakespeare is a lure in the west, this is not the case in the east.

Although *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story*'s elaboration of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is not constant, it allows the movies to reach the diasporic market. Romance can be deployed as a marker of communal identity; it intrinsically points to an idealised world with no conflicts where happy endings are possible. If romance is 'commoditized' for a transnational audience, so is the nationalist narrative contained in both movies. In the words of Arjun Appadurai, electronic media and mass migration have recently become globalised.⁸³ As *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* are certain forms of mass mediation, they contribute to the process of 'glocalisation' of Shakespeare.

⁸³ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 20.

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Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hai*

*"I am here not to bury Caesar, but to praise him.
Shakespeare? I don't know. What's the difference?"*¹

In Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002), the grandmother is a Shakespeare *connoisseur*, constantly reciting famous quotes from *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Twelfth Night*, but she is not willing to reveal the source. Given the fact that the movie is conceived as an instance of hybrid cinema – mixing Bollywood and Hollywood conventions – the film follows in the footsteps of previous Bollywood movies in its treatment of Shakespeare. It echoes back and forth the main themes and issues of Shakespearean drama, although it never cites Shakespeare in the process of reflecting Bollywood aesthetics. A similar claim can be made for the post-millennial postcolonial Bollywood film by Farhan Akhtar *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001) since, despite the fact that the references to Shakespearean themes, couples and even allusions to plays abound – especially to *Troilus and Cressida* and to *Much Ado About Nothing* – the source is never acknowledged; the authority of Shakespeare is ignored.²

Apart from its lack of cultivation of Shakespeare's importance, Farhan Akhtar's *opera prima* offers a new perspective regarding the construction of Shakespeare in India because it reveals the extent to which Shakespeare becomes a transportable property in

¹ *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002). *Bollywood/Hollywood* is later explored in chapter 7.

² In an interview with Farhan Akhtar, the filmmaker does not confirm the Shakespearean influence in the movie. Menon, "Working notes. Bollywood filmmaker Farhan Akhtar, interviewed by Madhavi Menon," 77- 85.

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this world characterised by constant ethnoscaples and ideoscaples.³ Instead of linking Shakespeare with a colonial past in India from which a departure is needed – as previous Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots such as *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) did to confront a postcolonial present – the movie locates him in Australia in the form of a sailboat's name, an opera and the development of the couple's relationship. The implication is that the problems that accrue from the encounter with Shakespeare and India due to the colonial past are still present and, even in a Bollywood movie, Shakespeare – when somehow referred to – has to be placed outside India.

Via the subsections of migration, queer, genre and reception, the aim of this chapter is to show how the film not only locates Shakespeare in the diaspora, but ratifies the importance of this community by addressing it, with a special focus on the youth diasporic culture. The travels to Goa and to Australia – as tourists or transnational subjects – the queer readings of the male friendship in the movie à la *Much Ado* by NRIs, the parody of Bollywood cinema conventions and the reviews constantly stating the Western flavour of the movie spotlight a cross-cultural appeal. Considered a diasporic film by Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, *Dil Chahta Hai* extends and expands the notion of Shakespeare in the diaspora, and travels then beyond the limitations of a historically entrenched confinement.⁴

³ See Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 33 for a definition of 'ethnoscaples, ideoscaples, finanscaples, mediascaples.'

⁴ Dudrah, *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies*, 67.

1. Migration

The concept of nation *per se* is in decline due to the growing permeability of borders. According to Arjun Appadurai, “the boundaries of nation-states are now becoming porous not only in terms of people moving in and out, but cultures, customs, and social practices are becoming migratory as well.”⁵ National boundaries are more difficult to establish in this era where migration has now acquired a ubiquitous presence with large numbers of people on the move. An epitome of such development of the theme of migrancy is *Dil Chahta Hai*. The movie draws attention in its mode of operation to the friendship of its three male protagonists, and recreates the male characters of *Much Ado About Nothing* in Akash (the Benedick figure, starring Aamir Khan), Sameer (the Claudio figure, starring Saif Ali Khan) and Sid (the Don Pedro equivalent, starring Akshaye Khanna). Nevertheless, unlike the Shakespearean comedy, there is no single setting, but the film is an instance of multiple localities.⁶

Although the beginning of the movie takes place in India, Akash, Sameer and Sid soon travel to Goa, where they are temporary residents at a five star resort. According to Ulf Hannerz, a tourist should never be considered a diasporic citizen or a cosmopolitan for he does not immerse himself in other cultures.⁷ A similar claim is uttered by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur since all movements and dislocations cannot be labelled diasporas.⁸ However, the notion of a traveller as a diasporic individual is ambiguated by Gabriel Sheffer, who challenges it by considering all

⁵ Appadurai qtd. in Rajan and Sharma, 17.

⁶ To read about the similarities between *Dil Chahta Hai* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, see Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 73-93.

⁷ Hannerz, 241.

⁸ Braziel and Mannur, 3.

temporary citizens diasporans.⁹ Elderly people from Scandinavia, Great Britain and Germany who settle in southern countries or Americans who establish in foreign countries are articulated as diasporic citizens for Sheffer. In his description of ‘ethnoscapes,’ Appadurai also includes tourists within his category, simply referring to them as the bunch of people who have to move or want to move. If *Dil Chahta Hai* prioritizes a world in motion, it is not surprising that the movie incorporates several instances of displacement.

Akash and Sid simultaneously become different kinds of *émigrés* after their horrendous argument caused by the love relationship Sid aimed to have with an elder woman called Tara – starring Dimple Kapadia, the female lead in *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1973), which is based on *Romeo and Juliet*. If Akash, Sameer and Sid’s trip to Goa represents a specific type of migration characterised by a temporary presence as tourists, Akash’s journey to Australia elaborates on the typical migration abroad on the part of the Indian community since 1960s. N. Jayaram identifies three different kinds of migrations in India in the postcolonial period: the emigration of Anglo-Indians to Australia and England, the famous ‘brain drain’ of skilled workforce, and the emigration of skilled and unskilled manual workers to West Asia.¹⁰ Sent to Australia to run his father’s business, Akash belongs to the first category of migrants. He resembles the wealthy diasporic citizens depicted in Bollywood films of the 90s, namely Raj and Simran – the leading couple of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995) – or Rahul Khanna – the protagonist of *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (dir. Karan Johar, 1998).¹¹ A luxurious house, a sports car and smart designer clothes signal his status.

⁹ Sheffer, 85.

¹⁰ Jayaram, 26.

¹¹ The portrait of rich NRIs has continued to be a trend in postmillennial movies as well, such as *Kabhi Kushi Kabhie Gham* (dir. Karan Johar, 2001) or *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (dir. Nikhil Advani, 2003).

More interestingly, the song ‘Tanhayee’ at the closing scenes of the movie builds on the loneliness and nostalgia for the homeland most NRIs suffer. Akash is presented as an alienated subject, full of melancholy, which is certainly unavoidable for diasporic subjects. During this song, for the first time the audience feels that Akash is in transit in Australia, and seems to have an in-between existence, also motivated by his beloved Shalini’s departure. Sid is a different kind of migratory citizen. He essentially comments on the internal migrations within the country. It is also through the row with Akash that Sid decides to do an Art workshop in a different city. *Dil Chahta Hai* then points up the development of diverse instances of migrations.

Means of transport are crucial in the second half of *Dil Chahta Hai*. After the intermission, the camera zooms into an airplane where Akash and Shalini meet after a troublesome first encounter. This scene in the plane is virtually contemporaneous with similar shots in other so-called diasporic movies where migrancy is imperative. *Masala* (dir. Srinivas Krishna, 1991) begins and ends with the close-up of the plane, while *Bride and Prejudice* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2005) also commences with a visual shot of a plane. In *Dil Chahta Hai*, the plane in the first place and the rest of means of transport – such as sailboats, cars and helicopters – in the movie function as chronotopes.¹² The literal meaning of the word – time (*chronos*) and space (*topos*) – acquires a more metaphorical meaning and is used “to explain the entrance of history into the space of the novel, suggesting that chronotopes locate the specific historical and material conditions within the text.”¹³ Consequently, these means of transport or chronotopes recreate history within the visual text. In Farhan Akhtar’s movie, they are therefore

¹² Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981).

¹³ Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 119.

associated with spatial mobility and displacement – especially that of the postcolonial South Asian diaspora, exemplified in the film in the character of Akash.

Although according to Richard Burt, the movie does not locate Shakespeare in a specific place, it is in fact in Australia where the connection with Shakespeare is in evidence.¹⁴ The only allusion or echo to Shakespeare in India is Sameer and Pooja's relationship, which draws loosely upon the Hero and Claudio romance. Yet, Shakespeare or his works are never mentioned when the characters are in India, following the path of the reception of Shakespeare in the Indian subcontinent where his presence is spectral rather than openly acknowledged. By placing Shakespeare in Australia, *Dil Chahta Hai* identifies Shakespeare with the diaspora. To begin with, the relationship between Akash and Shalini – which wholly develops in Australia – is modelled on Shakespeare's Beatrice and Benedick. The witty battle of sexes fills the screen, especially in the first cinematic shots. Akash is depicted as a non-believer in love, always mocking those who strongly favour its existence. For instance, when asked by Priya – Sameer's first girlfriend – the type of girl he likes, Akash answers "one who lives her life and let me live mine." In contrast, Shalini lends credence to the specific nature of love. In this sense, Shalini differs from Beatrice since she never shows fierce opposition to marriage – not even at the movie's outset. In fact, she never wishes to be independent from men, and her conflict entails two men – her fiancé and Akash – rather than the wish to be independent and the inevitable desire for Benedick as in Beatrice's case. Their view towards love is explicit in the song 'Jaane Kyon.' This song facilitates a glance at a sailboat named *Much Ado*, reinforcing therefore the connection with the Shakespearean comedy (Fig. 16).

¹⁴ Burt and Boose, 274.



Fig. 16. A sailboat named *Much Ado* appears in the second half of the movie.

For Paul Gilroy, the image of the ship plays on the suggestion of a continuous negotiation between Africa, the Americas and Western Europe.¹⁵ The ship illustrates the temporalities of the world and migration, and links past, present and future. By extension, what is memorialized with the sailboat being called *Much Ado* is the notion of a transnational Shakespeare, the Ocean being the highway where he travels.

In its closing images, *Dil Chahta Hai* constructs Shakespeare as a site of refinement. The filmmaker utilizes the mythical characters Troilus and Cressida based on Homer's famous pair to shed light upon Akash and Shalini's romance. Worried about Akash's disbelief in love, Shalini invites him to attend an opera entitled 'Troilus and Cressida' in order for him to understand the true meaning of love.¹⁶ Shalini summarises the plot of *Troilus and Cressida* for Akash, and asks him who the woman

¹⁵ Gilroy, 13.

¹⁶ A Western-style opera of *Troilus and Cressida* focused on Troilus and Cressida's love story was performed for the 1994 Shakespeare Festival in China. See Levith, 82.

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for whom he would be ready to die a thousand times is, as Troilus said. Then, Akash makes a correlation between his relationship with Shalini and that of the famous couple, and imagines Shalini as his Cressida. Dressed as the operatic singer in the role of Cressida, Shalini appears as the woman for whom Akash would be ready to die a thousand times (Fig. 17). Interestingly, the film does not build upon Troilus' disillusionment with Cressida after her departure to the Greek camp where her flirtation with Diomedes is patent, and her love for Troilus fades. The opera inserted in Farhan Akhtar's movie does not satirize Homer's characters – as Shakespeare did – but mythifies them again, in line with the movie's narrative discourse. Akash is transported to an ideal realm with two high-brow forces entangled – Shakespeare and opera – where he is able to express his true and sincere feelings; he is overwhelmed by the passion and over-emotive performance aesthetics, and seems to be seduced by this world.



Fig. 17. Shalini dressed as Cressida.

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The brief association between Shakespeare and high-brow culture points to another similar sequence in the Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoot *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994). If Shakespeare is mediated through an opera in French in *Dil Chahta Hai*, the modality of representation in *1942: A Love Story* is the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in Hindi during the British Raj. This performance is also taken as exemplary of a bookish background, for, in the British Raj period, those familiar with Shakespeare were those belonging to the upper classes, the English colonizers or the Indian *intelligentsia*. The audience is also very similar in both scenes. Just like in Farhan Akhtar's movie the spectators are clearly Western and white – with the exception of the NRIs Shalini and Akash – those 'intended' addressees in *1942: A Love Story* are the white English colonizers. This shows that the correlation between Shakespeare and high-brow culture is not an isolated incident in *Dil Chahta Hai*, and has to be witnessed as part of a habitual practice in Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots in which whenever there is a play-within-the film or any other form of representation within the movie, the aura of high art always emerges.



Fig.18. Shalini and Akash see the opera Troilus and Cressida.

By invoking Shakespeare in Sydney for NRIs, the director explicitly draws on the associations embedded in a globally charged environment. If a well-known Indian Shakespearean film adaptation like *In Othello* (dir. Roysten Abel, 2003) prioritizes the local dimension of Shakespeare via ongoing references to the culture in which it is inserted having an Othello who is a Kathakali trainer,¹⁷ *Dil Chahta Hai* sheds light upon a global – or rather – transnational Bard. This Bollywood movie interestingly suggests then that the proper home of the Shakespearean text is the diaspora since the presence of Shakespeare in India is certainly complex, still associated with the colonial.

2. Queer readings

When the word Bollywood is mentioned, heteronormative romances immediately come to mind. Family tensions, arranged marriages turned into love marriages and impossible love stories are the crucial themes in a cinematic world where the boy/girl story is the successful formula. Movies such as *Hum Aapke Hain Koun...!* (dir. Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1994) – known as a marriage film, delving the whole time into one single wedding – *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995) or *Devdas* (dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002) are typical box-office successes which condense the Bollywood spirit where there is no hidden meaning and no possible alternative road to homosexuality.¹⁸

¹⁷ Kathakali is a classical Indian theatrical performance. It is characterised by excessive make-up of characters, body movements, costumes and gestures. Its origins can be traced back to the state of Kerala during the 17th century. Apart from *In Othello*, there is also a famous Kathakali *King Lear* by David MacRuvie, first presented in Edinburgh in 1990.

¹⁸ There are many remakes of *Devdas* – a novel by Saratchandra Chatterjee – in Hindi cinema (dir. P.C. Barua, 1935; dir. Bimal Roy, 1955; dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002).

However, according to Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, the interest in queer themes and representations in recent Bollywood cinema is boosting, and is being promoted by the diaspora.¹⁹ Dudrah wonders about the connection between the homeland and the queer diaspora in this peak of expansion of queer themes: “Is the homeland simply reconfigured in the queer diaspora, or does the homeland also respond to the queer diaspora, or vice versa, albeit in secret ways?”²⁰ Whether the homeland plays a passive or an active role in the depiction of same-sex is actually the nodal point. The homeland is certainly appropriated, reconfigured, and, ultimately, rewritten in the diaspora. From Amitabh Bachchan’s movies in the 1970s – characterised by the strong male presence on and off screen – to the most recent blockbusters such as *Main Khiladi Tu Anari* (dir. Sameer Malkan, 1994), the queer diaspora negotiates with the homeland and reterritorializes it.²¹ “Cinematic images which in their ‘originary’ locations simply reiterate conventional nationalist and gender ideologies may, in a South Asian diasporic context, be refashioned to become the very foundation of a queer transnational culture.”²² According to Gayatri Gopinath, erotic triangular relationships involving two men and a woman who plays second fiddle in the romance and dreamy song and dance sequences represent the most interesting moments for queer messages.²³ Given that queer diasporic citizens tend to be invisible in the nation, almost non-existent, via

¹⁹ Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, “Queer as Desis: Secret Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Bollywood Films in Diasporic Urban Ethnoscapes.” In Gopal and Moorti, 288-308.

²⁰ Dudrah, “Queer as Desis: Secret Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Bollywood Films in Diasporic Urban Ethnoscapes,” 294.

²¹ Raj R. Rao, “Memories Pierce the Heart: Homoeroticism, Bollywood-Style,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 39, 3/4 (2000): 299-306 for an in-depth analysis of the screening of Amitabh Bachchan’s movies in relation to the promotion of homoeroticism. The dark movie hall was the perfect scenario for same-sex desire.

²² Gayatri Gopinath, “Queering Bollywood: Alternative Sexualities in Popular Indian Cinema,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 39, 3/4 (2000): 284.

²³ *Ibid.*

nostalgia, they imagine ways to belong to the longed for homeland.²⁴ Their identity is complicated for them since gender issues intersect with their distinctiveness as diasporic national subjects. If for Alan Sinfield gay subcultures are tantamount to hybrid citizens because they both involve moving from a place – heterosexual/homeland place respectively – to another – gay community/host country – queer NRIs are double hybrid, covering both categories.²⁵ For Thomas Waugh and Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, however, it is not only the diaspora *per se* which is responsible for the growing attention to sexualities, but also the mother country itself. “Indian cinema has traditionally been more than hospitable to same-sex desire – regardless of the fact that it has never been so named.”²⁶ Although the references are intrinsic, more covert than overt, same-sex desire is somehow welcome, by means of buddy movies, namely *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (dir. Nikhil Advani, 2003) and *Chameli* (dir. Sudhir Mishra, 2003). What is clear then is that the diasporic community has been crucial in the building of a queer consciousness in Bollywood cinema.

One of the films that promotes friendship/*dosti* with queer sexual connotations is Farhan Akhtar’s *Dil Chahta Hai*. It takes the form of the successful romantic film genre and relies on the same love and emotional codes, the difference being it is among men.²⁷ It departs from previous Bollywood conventions and aesthetics such as cross-cultural clashes and family obligations, and paves the road for movies which focus on individual desires and friendship, such as *Hum Tum* (dir. Kunal Kohli, 2004), *Kal Ho Naa Ho*

²⁴ Gayatri Gopinath, “Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion.” In Braziel and Mannur, 261-280 for the importance of nostalgia in order for the queer diasporic citizens to rewrite the nation.

²⁵ Alan Sinfield, “Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identities and the Ethnicity Model,” *Textual Practice* 10.2 (1996): 271-293.

²⁶ Thomas Waugh “Queer Bollywood, or I’m the Player You’re the Naive One: Patterns of Sexual Subversion in Recent Indian Popular Cinema.” In *Key Frames: Popular Cinema and Cultural Studies*. Eds. Matthew Tinkcom and Amy Villarejo (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 280-97. See Dudrah in Gopal and Moorti, 288-308.

²⁷ Sarrazin, “Songs from the Heart,” 208.

(Tomorrow May Never Come) (dir. Nikhil Advani, 2003), *Salaam Namaste* (Hello Good Day) (dir. Siddharth Anand, 2005) or *Rang De Basanti* (Colour It Yellow) (dir. Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, 2006).²⁸ The three main characters – Akash, Sameer and Sid – are indebted to the protagonists of *Much Ado About Nothing*. According to Madhavi Menon, clear parallelisms can be drawn between arrogant Akash and Benedick, sweet and sensitive Sameer and Claudio and thoughtful Siddharth and Don Pedro.²⁹ If the plot of *Much Ado About Nothing* pivots on the central male presence, *Dil Chahta Hai* plays even more with physicality, “as the gym bodies of Akash, Siddharth, and Sameer are constantly, and tantalizingly, on display.”³⁰ The three men constantly touch, hug each other and spend time together. For Kimberly Ringler, the film employs doors to suggest intimacy between the three men.³¹ Akash, Siddharth and Sameer always gather in their rooms, which the audience knows in detail. The constant close-up shots and handheld camera shots of their rooms suggest the intimacy of their union, for they usually meet indoors. Thus, the mise-en-scène provides the ideal *locus* for the elaboration of erotic desire.

Farhan Akhtar’s *Dil Chahta Hai* is clearly manifested as an illuminating example of the threat that women pose to the founding mechanism of manliness, in line with Kenneth Branagh’s adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1992). As Celestino Deleyto realises, in Branagh’s adaptation, “the proud group of men in leather who dominate the first few minutes of *Much Ado* soon starts crumbling under the influence of the ‘female space’ of Messina.”³² The strong bond developed in the war among the

²⁸ Anjaria and Anjaria, 125-140.

²⁹ Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 81.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ In Nelmes, 348, 349.

³² Celestino Deleyto, “Men in Leather: Kenneth Branagh’s *Much Ado About Nothing* and Romantic Comedy,” *Cinema Journal* 36.3: 93.

male characters is immediately menaced by the female world. The first half of *Dil Chahta Hai* also depicts the women interfering in the male bonding, and forcing changes “in what is often perceived to be a stable economy between men.”³³ Deepa – a girl in the pursuit of Akash – is constantly ridiculed and laughed at. At the dance club in India or at the hotel in Goa, Deepa breaks the male stability, and is harshly humiliated. Akash is responsible for the regular rows between Sameer and his girlfriend Priya, which lead to their break-up. Right after one of their arguments, Priya makes Sameer choose between Akash and her, and Sameer appears insecure. This helps to explain the power of men in the plot in contrast to the secondary role of the female characters. The first song they all sing “Koi Kahe”, which highlights their union, has now turned into an emblem, an anthem of gay culture abroad.³⁴ Tara is the only woman who represents a more intriguing variation in the film’s formula, and challenges the stability among the friends. It is precisely when Sid declares his love for Tara that his friendship with Akash suffers. Anyway, Tara is the only exception and the idea of the woman as a peripheral character is granted priority.

According to Madhavi Menon, Akash and Siddharth have a kind of homoerotic relationship.³⁵ Akash and Siddharth form a potent alliance, which is broken when Tara is brought into play; Siddharth’s love for an older woman breaks the male harmony, and precipitates their ‘break-up.’ The filmmaker confirms that he set up “Tara and Akash as rivals for Siddharth’s affection.”³⁶ The movie is consistent in its portrait of a triangular

³³ See Lalitha Gopalan, “Indian Cinema,” in Nelmes, 348.

³⁴ Dudrah, “Queer as Desis,” 295 to read about how South Asian Gay and Lesbian club nights appropriate the song as part of their subculture. The song curiously draws attention to the three male characters’ leather pants. Just like the leather trousers in Branagh’s *Much Ado About Nothing* are for Celestino Deleyto a “symbol of the film’s construction of male bonding as the most formidable opponent of heterosexual union,” the pants in *Dil Chahta Hai* equally condense both homoerotic desire and male bonding. See Deleyto, 99.

³⁵ Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 93.

³⁶ Menon, “Working notes,” 78.

relationship, for, when Akash and Sid are reunited at the end of the movie, Tara is immediately eliminated in order for the other two components to complete their union. To put it another way, Tara has to be sacrificed and eliminated so that Akash fills out the vacant space to complete the 'romantic circuit.' The nameless relationship Sid has with Tara finds a parallel in the attraction between the two men. *Dil Chahta Hai* then complicates traditional Bollywood love stories, because Sid is fully realized as a lover of forbidden pleasures – an older woman and another man.³⁷ Like Sid, Shakespeare's Don Pedro is also the type of man who ponders all the time, and is also attracted by prohibited desires. The difference in outlook between these two male characters involves the ending. While Don Pedro is excluded from the final heterosexual scene, Sid is integrated via a brief, surreal encounter with a girl. Yet, Sid's 'reconciliation' with the heterosexual world has been invalidated by the filmmaker, and has been considered as the movie's main drawback by Akhtar himself. Homoeroticism therefore undercuts the character of Sid.

The realization of gender sexualities represents a narrative of fabulous proportions for Sameer as well. After Akash and Sid's discussion, the movie shifts to sequences where heteronormative romance is central. It is precisely when the three men are apart that their relationships with the female characters develop. In Sameer's case, this is quite explicit. When talking to Sid about Pooja, Sameer tells him that he has not declared his love for her because he does not want to lose the little friendship he has with her. He claims how lonely he has been without Akash and Sid, so, Pooja is now a surrogate of Akash and Sid's love. Pooja is not the beloved *par excellence*, but is

³⁷ Menon, "Working notes," 78. In this interview, the filmmaker regrets his decision of finding a partner for Siddharth at the end of the movie. The manifestation of Siddharth as Shakespeare's Don Pedro throughout the whole film is lost at the end when a partner is found for him. *Dil Chahta Hai* is not consistent in the parallelism between the two characters.

secondary in *Dil Chahta Hai*. All these moments suggest the possibility of reading queer practices alongside the mainstream terms of dosti/friendship. If, according to Celestino Deleyto, Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* indirectly contributes to the evolution of the genre of romantic comedy by "dramatizing the impossibility of homoerotic desire in Messina rather than simply hiding it," Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hai* similarly expands the Bollywood genre via an exaggeratedly ambivalent discourse, which can be interpreted differently by the homeland and the diaspora.

3. Genre

Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hai* was a milestone in the history of Bollywood cinema. Bollywood movies of the 90s represent the right-wing ideology of the Hindutva doctrine, their plots are extremely traditional, focusing on ideal nuclear families in which the elders have to be respected and obeyed, or on nostalgic past events that help to create the myth of a unified India.³⁸ *Dil Chahta Hai* is no longer interested in finding a point of negotiation with the political party in power, but paves the way for a new genre of movies in which individual desires are crucial.

Advertised as a Hollywood-Bollywood film, *Dil Chahta Hai* is a very clear example of hybrid cinema.³⁹ According to García Canclini, given that there are no pure cultures, they obviously have to confront unexpected combinations.⁴⁰ Such hybridity is explicitly shown in Farhan Akhtar's film. Though produced in India, *Dil Chahta Hai* is

³⁸ The movies *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (dir. Sooraj R. Barjatiya, 1994) and *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) exemplify this tradition perfectly.

³⁹ Burt and Boose, 274.

⁴⁰ García Canclini, 20.

the first of a group of movies whose aim is to mix Bollywood and Hollywood genres.⁴¹ First of all, as Rachel Dwyer claims, the movie parodies Hindi cinema conventions.⁴² Instead of sticking to the aesthetics of what is considered the ‘national’ cinema in India, it departs from them, or expands them, which is characteristic of current transnational cinema. The impressive marriage spectacles are turned into failures in the film. Shailini’s prenuptial celebrations with Rohit are the perfect occasion for Akash to declare his love for her, and run away with the bride. Thus, *Dil Chahta Hai* breaks this marriage convention, which is later echoed in subsequent Shakespearean adaptations, such as Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Omkaara* (2006).⁴³ Secondly, the song and dance sequences only serve to emphasize the distance from Bollywood aesthetics. In traditional Bollywood movies, the hero and heroine lip-sync love songs to advance the plot. Yet, *Dil Chahta Hai*’s songs have very different functions. The first song in *Dil Chahta Hai* ‘Koi Kahe Kehte Rahe’ (“Someone may say [about us]...”) is the only one which introduces lip sync and choreography, but manipulates the formula via techno music and a setting with neon lights. This song resembles European and American video clips. The film’s catchy title song ‘Dil Chahta Hai’ is for instance a non-diegetic element, performed Hollywood-style, for the music plays in the background, and is not sung or heard by the characters, and sometimes even broken up by dialogue scenes.⁴⁴ Besides, the typical heterosexual couple is replaced by the three male friends. Another song that begins in the voice-over is ‘Kaise Hai Yeh Rut’ (“What season is this?”), which is heard while presenting the no-no relationship between Siddharth and Tara – the mature

⁴¹ This is the case of *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002).

⁴² Rachel Dwyer, “Review of *Bollywood/Hollywood*,” *Sight and Sound* 13.4 (1 April 2003): 34.

⁴³ *Omkaara* runs away with Dolly – Desdemona – while she was celebrating her prenuptial celebrations to Rajju – Roderigo.

⁴⁴ Philip Lutgendorf’s review with comments by Corey Creekmur:
<http://www.uiowa.edu/~incinema/DilChahta.html>

woman. Half way through the song, Sid lip syncs the song, and becomes diegetic. However, it inverts the intention of dream sequences, since it depicts a forbidden love and the lover appears by himself. The scenes of Siddharth painting Tara are intercut with images of soap bubbles and butterflies. *Dil Chahta Hai* pursues its parodic agenda by invoking the hero instead of the heroine running through the meadows with visual metaphors of height indicating the growth of his love. This cinematic shot of Siddharth in the middle of the fields with daisies blossoming is a clear parody of the scene of the blockbuster *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995) in which the couple – starring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol as Raj and Simran – reunites. The only song which seems to be modelled on typical Bollywood songs is the love song elaborated for Akash and Shalini, set in Australia with very exotic locations. It is diegetic because the couple lip syncs it. The excessive change of clothes – Akash and Shalini change their dresses eight times in the course of the song – testifies to the emphasis the song places on classical Bollywood. There is a visual metaphor of rising or height – the cinematic shot in the helicopter accompanied by a crane shot of Sydney – which is associated with the rising emotions of the couple.⁴⁵ This high-angle shot of the couple basically legitimates typical Bollywood moves.

The love song for Sameer and Pooja *Woh ladki hai kahan* (“Where is that girl?”) – toys with an ambivalence towards Bollywood, because pays homage to it, but, at the same time, also mocks and parodies the Indian cinematic industry. In a very metatextual scene in which the characters are watching a Hindi film, they see themselves on screen, and sing verses that refer back to the styles and stars in the history of Bollywood romance. From *Sangam* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1964) to *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1973),

⁴⁵ Sarrazin, “Songs from the Heart,” 208.

Sameer and Pooja seem to be reincarnated into the great names of Bollywood cinema. According to Lutgendorf, even the 90s are alluded to in the song via “the couple done up as Madhuri and Shah Rukh, dancing in the Western Ghats amidst Yash Chopra-esque mist.”⁴⁶ The last song in the movie ‘Tanhayee’ is another non-diegetic element, since it is background music. Exotic locales are substituted by extremely ordinary locations. An underground station, Akash’s flat, the street, and even the cemetery in Sydney are the *loci* portrayed. This song encapsulates the spirit of transnationalism, because Akash is all the time moving from one place to another, and he is the expressive image of loneliness, despair and nostalgia.⁴⁷ In fact, the prominence of migration and diaspora as themes in *Dil Chahta Hai* makes the movie a clear instance of transnational cinema.⁴⁸ Thus, the distancing techniques and parody of Bollywood conventions in *Dil Chahta Hai* bring transnational cinema to mind.

The music⁴⁹ in *Dil Chahta Hai* – composed by Shakar Mahadevan, Ehsaan Noorani and Loy Mendonca – also demonstrates the hybridity in the movie.⁵⁰ For Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, Bollywood music is now influenced by a great range of musical traditions and styles, “from Indian classical and folk music to Western pop.”⁵¹ The western sounds are very easy to detect in Farhan Akhtar’s film. ‘Koi kahe’ is inherently disco rock and techno, whereas the title song is international jazz-pop. Furthermore, the cinematic shots with the overall presence of neon lights at the dance

⁴⁶ Philip Lutgendorf’s review: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~incinema/DilChahta.html>

⁴⁷ Hamid Naficy (ed.), *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 55 to read about some of the inevitable outcomes of transnationalism.

⁴⁸ Ezra and Rowden, 7.

⁴⁹ The music score of *Dil Chahta Hai* has generally been praised, though has been harshly criticised on the magazine *Screen India*. The “resultant mish-mash” from the combination of past Hindi film songs and Western numbers has been the object of all the criticism. See http://www.screenindia.com/old/fullstory.php?content_id=10163

⁵⁰ This trio also composed the music of *Mission Kashmir* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 2000).

⁵¹ Dudrah, *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies*, 54.

club during the song 'Koi kahe' have an English/American flavour.⁵² 'Kaisi hai ye rut' is almost New Age, while 'Woh ladki' "jigs to frenzied Celtic and bluegrass fiddling."⁵³ The most interesting hybrid experiment from the musical point of view is the song 'Jaane Kyon', which incorporates a didgeridoo and rock beat, and two vocalizations are perfectly intersected.⁵⁴ According to Natalie Sarrazin, a male vocal drone is interplayed with the sound of the helicopter while a female soloist is accompanied by a mock-Aboriginal/ American gospel chorus.⁵⁵ Another instance of cross-cultural exchange is the fragment from the opera *Troilus and Cressida* in French. Given the over-emotive performance aesthetics and the vocal timbre, Akash first mocks the style, but ends up internalizing the parts. His first encounter with opera and Shakespeare is welcome. The experimentation with new sounds involves the embrace of the West, and the first steps to transnational cinema.

Lending the three men the central role, Farhan Akhtar's film opens up new avenues for exploring individual desires instead of family obligations. Gone are the days in which romance and family were the "configurations of cosmopolitanism and 'Indianness'" in movies such as *Pardes* (dir. Subhash Ghai, 1997) or *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (dir. Sooraj R. Barjatiya, 1994).⁵⁶ Set in the cities of hypermaterialization like Goa and Sydney, the film delves into the rise of a commodified youth culture in which friends are the new family.⁵⁷ The characters of *Dil Chahta Hai* dwell in luxurious apartments, go to nightclubs, own the latest technological gadgets and smartest cars,

⁵² <http://www.technospot.in/10-movies-of-last-decade-that-revolutinized-hindi-cinema/>

⁵³ Lutgendorf.

⁵⁴ A didgeridoo is a wind instrument used by native Australian aborigines.

⁵⁵ Sarrazin, "Songs from the Heart," 212.

⁵⁶ Jigna Desai, "Bollywood Abroad: South Asian Diaspora Cosmopolitanism and Indian Cinema." In Rajan and Sharma, 126.

⁵⁷ Ramona Wray "Shakespeare and the Singletons, or, Beatrice Meets Bridget Jones: Post-Feminism, Popular Culture and 'Shakespeare (Re)-Told.'" In *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-first Century*. Eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 191 for a development of the notion of friends as the new family in British and American comedy dramas.

wear designer clothes, do not travel on a budget, and are always in pursuit of their individual desires in their career and love. The moral axis of *Dil Chahta Hai* is not the conflict between individual desires and society, but the conflicts among the three male friends. The role of parents is certainly secondary, extremely diminished. The conventional battles with strict and authoritarian patriarchs establishing the inescapable pressures and obligations to their offspring are not important in Farhan Akhtar's film. In fact, the parents in *Dil Chahta Hai* are thoughtful and supportive. For instance, when Akash goes back to India, and cannot but think all the time about Shalini, his father advises him to follow his heart before it is too late; he gives him the last push to declare his love for her. During her engagement party with Rohit, Shalini thinks it is her duty to abide by her adoptive parents' rules and marry Rohit, but, contrary to our expectations, the adoptive father encourages her to marry Akash to make them happy. Thus, the emphasis of the film clearly falls on the characters' aspirations, elaborating a new wave of Indian cinema.

Dil Chahta Hai is inscribed with the market stamp of youth culture, urban angst and a consumerist lifestyle. According to Asha Kasbekar, the success of *Dil Chahta Hai* "marked the emergence of a completely new phenomenon – that of 'new' Bollywood."⁵⁸ *Dil Chahta Hai* comes into its own as a movie that broke free from rural viewers, and was clearly targeted at an urban audience. While previous Bollywood movies had a heterogeneous spectatorship in mind, the target audience of *Dil Chahta Hai* was rather homogenous. The main themes of the film: love in all its variations – for friends, for women and for men – excessive consumerism characteristic of a well-off upper middle-class, and the continuous migration and diaspora generated resistances on

⁵⁸ Asha Kasbekar, *Pop Culture India!* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC Clio, 2006), 202.

the part of the rural areas, and “indicated changing times and tastes” in Bollywood cinema.⁵⁹ The bright colours of the sets – vivid reds, deep blues, and rich greens – the minimalist and art deco furniture and abstract, profound paintings by Sid also represent this particular mood of the film.⁶⁰ The whole focus on youth culture further restricted the viewers, since middle-aged people could not identify with the topics and issues discussed. The film turned out to be revolutionary; “it defined a generation, both of filmmakers as well as avid film watchers. Such movies virtually spawn a new era of films.”⁶¹ *Dil Chahta Hai* offers a possibility of change in the future evolution of the Bollywood genre, and is also deeply committed to the establishment of transnational cinema.

4. Reception

The English flavour of *Dil Chahta Hai* was hinted at on the day of its release. The music – with an opera included – pace and length of the movie comprise a ‘Westernization’ that generates new constructions of Bollywood cinema.⁶² The urban look and middle aged woman-young man relationship may be appealing to the elite, arty audience.⁶³ The reviews advance and predict the “patronage and flavour from the youth in Mumbai city and overseas (in the U.S. and U.K. mainly),” but a flop in the rest

⁵⁹ Kasbekar, 202.

⁶⁰ Sita Menon, “Trip on *Dil Chahta Hai*” (2001) <http://www.rediff.com/entertai/2001/aug/10dil.htm>

⁶¹ <http://www.technospot.in/10-movies-of-last-decade-that-revolutinized-hindi-cinema/>

⁶² See ‘Dil Chahta Hai,’ *Trade Guide* 47.45 (11 August 2001), 1-3.

⁶³ Taran Adarsh, *Dil Chahta Hai* (6 August 2001)

<http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/movies/review/6738/index.html>

of India.⁶⁴ All the Indian reviews at the premiere of *Dil Chahta Hai* shed light upon the picturisation of an English film in the garb of a Bollywood movie.

The subsequent reviews of *Dil Chahta Hai* simply confirm the initial reactions. The movie evoked cheap and crude responses from the masses; it was too western for their liking. According to Derek Bose, *Dil Chahta Hai* “became a resounding flop all over the country, but from the Mumbai territory alone it was more than able to make up for the losses and be declared a megahit.”⁶⁵ The total grosses in a period of seven weeks was 6,27,24,012 rupees, which placed the movie as an average project.⁶⁶ The main criticism on the part of the regular Indian cinegoer has been the view of India, seen through the eyes of the upper classes. The jet-set, holidays in five star hotels, luxurious lifestyle in the homeland and host country and journeys in convertible Mercedes are not conceived as part of an India where poverty is still very much present.

“Sick and tired of all the unreal shenanigans seen ad nauseam in countless Bollywood love stories the past few decades,” the present generation of NRIs identified with *Dil Chahta Hai*, and transformed it into a mainstream hit.⁶⁷ The success of *Dil Chahta Hai* among the overseas audience promoted the re-emergence or re-discovery of past filmic representations whose narratives prioritized the interests and desires of this new generation of NRIs.⁶⁸ The “pop culture-mediated ways” of *Dil Chahta Hai* found then a very easy niche among young eager NRIs around the globe.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ ‘Dil Chahta Hai’ in *Trade Guide*, 3.

⁶⁵ Derek Bose, *Brand Bollywood: A New Global Entertainment Order* (New Delhi: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2006), 26.

⁶⁶ <http://www.boxofficeindia.com>

⁶⁷ Ziya Us Salam, “Film Review: *Dil Chahta Hai*” (August 17, 2001) <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2001/08/17/stories/09170225.htm>

⁶⁸ According to Derek Bose, 37, this was precisely the case of movies such as *Sholay* (dir. Ramesh Sippy, 1975), *Pakeezah* (dir. Kamal Amrohi, 1972) or *Satya* (dir. Ram Gopal Varma, 1998).

⁶⁹ Jyotika Viridi and Corey K. Creekmur, “India: Bollywood’s Global Coming of Age.” In *Contemporary Asian Cinema: Popular Culture in a Global Frame*. Ed. Anne Tereska Ciecko. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 4.

Chapter 5: Shakespeare on the Move

As a rule, the Indian reviews of *Dil Chahta Hai* do not mention any connection between the movie and Shakespeare.⁷⁰ In spite of the fact that all the reviews claim that *Dil Chahta Hai* has an English zest, Shakespeare is never mentioned. In fact, even the filmmaker himself denied the association. In a 2007 interview, Farhan Akhtar rebuffed the idea that *Dil Chahta Hai* was conceived as a Shakespearean adaptation, despite the fact that Shakespeare fills the whole movie.⁷¹ Although the allusions to *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Troilus and Cressida* are explicit, his decision to deny the Shakespearean influence can be based on two reasons. First, as the construction of a Shakespearean past is tunnelled through an immediate legacy of colonialism, the history of Bollywood cinema confirms that the movies do not acknowledge the Shakespearean source to depart from a colonial past. The continuing resonances of the British Raj are felt in the subversion of the Shakespearean presence by Farhan Akhtar to follow the tradition of previous Bollywood movies influenced by Shakespearean plays. Secondly, perhaps linked with the previous argument, the name of Shakespeare is not a lure in India for the masses to go to the cinema, just the opposite. Already taking a risk by stating explicitly the echoes to Shakespearean plays, the movie does not announce the name of Shakespeare in the trailer or posters of *Dil Chahta Hai* because it would have been considered too high-brow, even for the Indian youth or the diasporic target audience.

⁷⁰ No international reviews of *Dil Chahta Hai* have been found. The connections between Farhan Akhtar's movie and the Shakespearean plays have been noticed by Shakespearean scholars, such as Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, Lanier, "Film Spin-offs and Citations," 132-365 and Burt, "Shakespeare and Asia in Postdiasporic Cinemas: Spin-offs and Citations of the Plays from Bollywood to Hollywood," 265-304.

⁷¹ Menon, "Working notes," 81.

Conclusion

Dil Chahta Hai follows the trajectory of previous Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots regarding the ‘cannibalization’ of Shakespeare. Shakespearean presence is reduced to a mere name, a plot, an echo, a topic or a theme. In *Dil Chahta Hai*, Shakespeare is relegated to the name of a boat, the battle of sexes theme or an opera-within-the film. The linguistic intricacies of his plays are no longer important in this new way of interpreting Shakespeare, since he is always mediated – the original text is not used, but constantly remodelled by translation – and the audience has to be satisfied with the remains of Shakespeare and his plays. Moreover, Farhan Akhtar’s Shakespearean off-shoot, like its predecessors, does not testify the Shakespearean influence. Although the names of two Shakespearean plays do appear, in an interview, the filmmaker denies the similarities between these two Shakespearean plays and his movie, despite the fact that *Dil Chahta Hai* is infused with the Shakespearean authority. All these off-shoots make and remake Shakespeare, produce a new Shakespeare in which the forgetfulness of his name is not tantamount to a lack of celebration. They all highlight the continuing value of Shakespeare, but they also suggest that he has to be recycled.

At the same time, *Dil Chahta Hai* progresses beyond previous Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots. Political Bollywood Shakespearean remakes of the 1990s such as Vidhu Vinod Chopra’s *1942: A Love Story* (1994) and Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* (1995) have to depart from Shakespeare and from his past in India as a colonialist icon, and have to confront him to address the diaspora via a nationalistic discourse. However, *Dil Chahta Hai* is the first not to move away from Shakespeare, and accommodates him in Australia, as part of the diaspora. *Dil Chahta Hai* also breaks fresh grounds

Chapter 5: Shakespeare on the Move

concerning the Shakespearean plays the film appropriates, since, instead of re-making the over-present *Romeo and Juliet*, it explores two Shakespearean plays that are not very well-known to popular audiences. If *Dil Chahta Hai* discovers and locates Shakespeare in the diaspora, the different topics analysed of the movie – queer, genre and reception – simply confirm the diaspora as the target audience. This is to argue that the film is for and about the transnational community. In the midst of an era of migrations, there can be no postmillennial realization of Shakespearean plays that is not shaped by these events; thus, the movie grounds the transnational thematically. Instead of representing typical Bollywood conventions and aesthetics, the film uses the interstices between Bollywood and Hollywood, and moves in the direction of transnational cinema. *Dil Chahta Hai* contributes to present Shakespeare's global status as a transnational voice, and inaugurates a new wave of reception of Shakespeare in India with global resonances.

Chapter 6: Transnationalising Shakespeare and Bollywood in

Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* and *Omkara*

*“Do not be intimidated by Shakespeare. He is one of us. He is basically, a moplah from North Kerala who is called, Sheikh Speare”*¹

*“The Indian people seem at last to have appropriated Shakespeare, like cricket, as an imperial icon and have done it well”*²

The post-millennial period of Bollywood cinema greets William Shakespeare, “welcoming him as the ‘man’ of the ‘millennium,’” resulting in a growth of Shakespeare’s authority in India.³ Although the 1990s witnessed several Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots (*1942: A Love Story*, dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994; *Bombay*, dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995), the first Bollywood-acknowledged appropriations of Shakespearean works are Vishal Bhardwaj’s films (*Maqbool*, 2003; *Omkara*, 2006). Simultaneously, Shakespeare has also proved an accommodating friend to the codes of

¹ Purshottam Nedungadi in Ramu Ramanathan, “Shakespeare in India” <http://stellamaristheatre.blogspot.com/2010/01/shakespeare-in-india-by-ramu-ramanathan.html> The words ‘moplah’ and ‘Sheikh’ are both related to the Arab world. ‘Moplah’ is a Muslim in Malabar, while a ‘Sheikh’ is a leader of an Arab village.

² Poonam Trivedi, “Mak[jing]...Strange/ Even to the disposition that I owe’: Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool*,” *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 4.2. (Spring/Summer 2009).

³ Burnett and Wray, *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-first Century*, 1.

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Indian high-brow, parallel cinema in locally inflected productions such as *In Othello* (dir. Roysten Abel, 2003) or the Bengali movie *The Last Lear* (dir. Rituparno Ghosh, 2007). Film critic Randeep Ramesh compared this recent swing in interpretation of Shakespeare in India with the 1990s Hollywood period in which innumerable Shakespearean adaptations were produced.⁴

Maqbool and *Omkara* are interesting case studies because they are not mere local productions, simply interested in portraying 'Indianness' via traditional Indian theatrical modes on screen, but are part of a new paradigm called the 'McShakespeare,' which aims to delve into the translocal, where the global is signified within the local.⁵ The term 'McShakespeare' toys with 'McDonaldisation' to allude to the commodification of Shakespeare due to globalisation. In an era marked by continuous migrations, displacements and deterritorializations, Bhardwaj's films explore these themes, which become permanent conditions throughout the filmic projects. Theoretically based on Arjun Appadurai's framework and on the latest studies on transnational cinema by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, this chapter aims to show how these film adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Othello* continually move in the interstices between the local and the global, which is the main feature of transnational cinema.⁶ If, according to Ezra and Rowden, transnationalism "enables us to better understand the changing ways in which the contemporary world is being imagined by an increasing number of filmmakers across genres as a global system rather than as a collection of

⁴ Randeep Ramesh, "A Matter of Caste as Bollywood Embraces the Bard," *Guardian* (29/07/2006): 28.

⁵ Carolyn Jess-Cooke, "Screening the McShakespeare in Post-Millennial Shakespeare Cinema." In Burnett and Wray, 163-185.

⁶ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 1996; Ezra and Rowden, 2006.

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more or less autonomous nations,” Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkara* stand out as epitomes of transnational cinema.⁷

The first section of this chapter focuses on genre, exploring how *Maqbool* and *Omkara* expand Bollywood conventions and aesthetics, such as the diegetic songs, spectacular dances, impressive marriage spectacles, and even the whole Bollywood industry via the constant link with the underworld – Macbeth is a Bollywood ‘don.’ Shakespeare indirectly makes Vishal Bhardwaj amplify the genre. The second section of this chapter is devoted to displacement, and concentrates on the depiction of the half-caste *Omkara* and the Muslim community in *Maqbool*. Instead of making the characters of *Macbeth* mainstream Hindu, they are all Muslim – with the exception of Kaka (Banquo), Guddu (Banquo’s son), and the corrupt policemen Purohit and Pandit (the witches). Given the negative stereotypes of Muslims after the attacks of 9/11 and those of 2002 in Gujarat and their scarce appearance in Indian cinema now, the film generates a construction of Muslims as exiles, as a marginal community locally and globally speaking. The third section of this chapter deals with mobility. It concentrates on the constant ‘ethnoscapes’ throughout the movies, the over-present means of transport, and the specific locations where they are set. The last part of this chapter focuses on the distribution of these two film adaptations, and how it contributed to their success in the West. All the sections have the purpose of promoting a reading of the Shakespearean plays which is both localised and globalised. The Bollywood label has to be broadened in the tradition of transnational cinema. The implication is clear, the latest film adaptations of Shakespearean works in Indian cinema are by-products of a society characterised by ongoing migrations so that they do not interpret and adapt Shakespeare

⁷ Ezra and Rowden, 1.

for a single isolated post-colonial community, but for this transnational society where diaspora is the norm.

1. Genre

Vishal Bhardwaj gives his film adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Othello* (*Maqbool* and *Omkaara*) a thrilling indigenous native flavour; Shakespeare has been made clear to an Indian audience. While Scotland is transposed to the Muslim environment of the Mumbai underworld, Venice is skilfully captured in the hinterlands of Uttar Pradesh. Following the path already established by the Parsi theatre adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, *Maqbool* retains the main plot and characters of the Shakespearean play – Macbeth/Maqbool (starring *Slumdog Millionaire*'s star Irrfan Khan), Lady Macbeth/Nimmi (starring Bollywood star Tabu), Duncan/Abba-ji, Banquo/Kaka, Fleance/Guddu & Malcolm, Boti/Macduff and the witches/ the two corrupt policemen Purohit and Pandit (starring the well-known Om Puri and Naseeruddin Shah). In *Omkaara*, Bhardwaj posits an even better correlation between the names of the Shakespearean *dramatis personae* and his main characters, preserving the first letter of the names.⁸ Thus, Othello is Omkaara 'Omi' Shukla, Desdemona is Dolly Mishra, Iago is Ishwar Tyagi (usually called Langda), Cassio is Kesu Upadhyaya and Roderigo is Rajju. All the Shakespearean characters have very distinguishable Hindu names and Brahmin surnames. According to Lalita Pandit Hogan, "they also have metaphysical resonance because of being names of deities with whom Indians feel an identity based

⁸ The pseudo-Bollywood Jane Austen adaptation *Bride and Prejudice* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2005) equally maintains the first letter of the names of the source text in the target text. Consequently, Lizzy Bennet is Lalita Bakshi, Jane Bennet is Jaya Bakshi, Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet are Mr. and Mrs. Bakshi, Bingley is Balraj, Charlotte Lucas is Chandra Lamba, Mary Bennet is Maya Bakshi, Lydia Bennet is Lacki Bakshi, Caroline Bingley is Kiran, Williams Collins is Mr. Kohli or George Wickham is Johnny Wickham. The names of Georgina Darcy and Mr. Darcy are kept.

connection that has nothing to do with belief, but concerns individual dispositions and other scripts associated with deities who, through iconography, festival, song and seasonal ritual, are part of lived life in India.”⁹ For instance, through the constant reference to Omkara as a great warrior and his abduction of Dolly, the mythical allusion to Arjuna, the great warrior in the *Mahabharata* who kidnaps Krishna’s sister cannot be missed.¹⁰ Here, too, a version of Sita of the *Ramayana* is glimpsed in Dolly because her honour is also doubted at the expense of ocular proof, and is finally killed.¹¹ Just like Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is freely ‘tradapted’ to Urdu – to suit the Muslim environment – *Othello* in Bhardwaj’s production is delivered in a strong input of Khariboli dialect instead of politically correct Hindi. At the level of plot, the similarities with the Shakespearean original are equally striking. Thus, the complex issues raised by Shakespeare’s plays are not diluted in *Maqbool* or *Omkara*.

Maqbool’s elaboration of the supernatural is remarkable. Shakespeare’s “three weird sisters” appear in the form of two corrupt clairvoyant policemen Purohit and Pandit. Bhardwaj’s witches interestingly embody some of the bawdy puns implicit in the figure of the porter. For instance, the scene in which the policemen urinate reminds the audience of the porter’s line “Marry sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine” (2.3: 24). *Maqbool*’s impressive opening sequence first shows a close-up shot of a *kundal* motif (see Fig. 19) – a horoscope grid used by Indian astrologers – on a window pane of a van, which is being utilized by Pandit and Purohit to monitor the criminal underworld.¹² While interrogating a rival gangster, Pandit traces his finger through the grid as if

⁹ Lalita Pandit Hogan, “The Sacred and the Profane in *Omkara*: Vishal Bhardwaj’s Hindi Adaptation of *Othello*,” *Image & Narrative* 11.2 (2010): 49-61.

¹⁰ Hogan, 51.

¹¹ Unlike Desdemona and Dolly, Sita is not killed, but banished by her husband Rama.

¹² On other occasions, Pandit and Purohit make the charts with sand, curry, blood or sweets. See Daniel Rosenthal, *100 Shakespeare Films* (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 123.

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etching the ominous. The second remarkable shot in this remake of *Macbeth* is that of the horoscope covered by blood, which testifies to the murder of the gangster by the Hindu cops. Rather than simply predicting the future as the witches do in *Macbeth*, the cops are always responsible for the characters' fate. Their decision not to kill Boti near the end ratifies their importance, for Boti is the one who kills Maqbool. The policemen "function as supernatural agents obsessed with maintaining cosmic balance."¹³ Their philosophy is that of "shakti ka santulan," a balance of power, by letting fire and water confront. Interestingly, the filmmaker consciously decides to deprive the film of ghosts.¹⁴ Whenever a ghost is evoked in the Shakespearean play, in its Bollywood counterpart, Maqbool either hallucinates or is visibly disturbed, but never sees ghosts, which are not recurring motifs in Indian cinema.

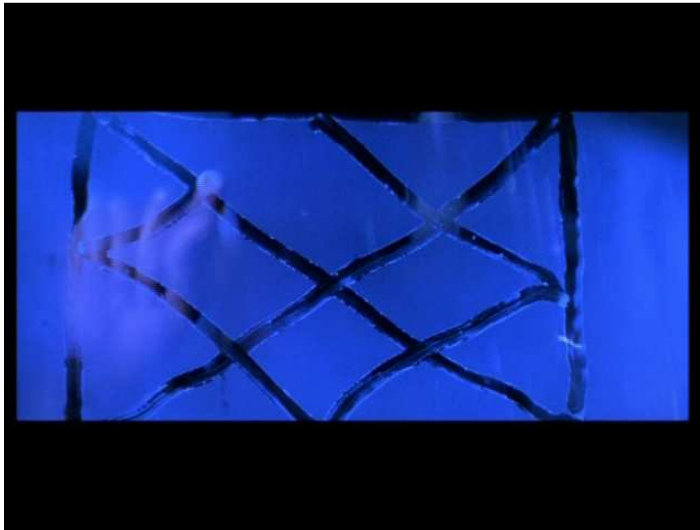


Fig. 19. A kundal motif at the opening scenes of *Maqbool*.

According to Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, "all adaptations make their habitations not only in specific geographic mileux and media but also in *citational*

¹³ Amrita Sen, "Maqbool and Bollywood conventions." In *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). Available online: <http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/>.

¹⁴ Raja Sen, "Interview to Vishal Bhardwaj" <http://www.rediff.com/movies/2006/jul/27vishal.htm>

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environments: generic and cultural fields that incorporate specific stances towards source materials and rules for handling them.”¹⁵ At first sight, Bhardwaj then seems to resituate *Macbeth* in a specific *citational environment* – the visual, aural, gestural and sonorous dynamics of Indian movies. Given that one of the most important features of Bollywood movies is the expansion of the narrative, Vishal Bhardwaj does so via its murdering duo. Maqbool and Nimmi embody very interesting and complex reworkings of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Unlike their Shakespearean counterparts, they are not married, and their love seems a forbidden pleasure because the film transforms Nimmi into Abba-ji’s young mistress. Given that Bhardwaj’s film adaptation emphasises a father-son relationship between Maqbool and Abba-ji, the desired relationship with Nimmi is at all costs avoided by Maqbool in the introductory scenes. However, his love for Nimmi soon precipitates the betrayal and murder of his master. The clearest difference with Macbeth is that ambition is not his only motivation, and Maqbool is given several incitements. Being substituted by Abba-ji for a new heartthrob who is a Bollywood actress, Nimmi carefully orchestrates the manipulation of Maqbool in Bhardwaj’s film by revealing the love of Guddu/Fleance & Malcolm for Sameera – Abba-ji’s daughter – who substitutes Duncan’s sons. This liaison would certainly jeopardize Maqbool’s high position in the gang by the rise of Guddu via his marriage to Sameera. In the words of Suddhaseel Sen, “such complex motivation leads to Maqbool’s murder of Abba-ji on the night before Guddu and Sameera’s wedding.”¹⁶ Furthermore, the suggestion of Abba-ji’s murder of his previous master bespeaks as another incitement for Maqbool.

¹⁵ Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 29.

¹⁶ Suddhaseel Sen, “Indigenizing *Macbeth*: Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool*.” In *Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective*, special issue, edited by Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Borrowers and Lenders* 4.2 (Spring/Summer 2009).

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A crucial strategy of *Maqbool* is Nimmi's pregnancy and subsequent maternity. Previous productions of *Macbeth* in Asia also offered a paean to the maternal womb; thus, the movie takes part in a process of surrogation. In the words of Joseph Roach, surrogation refers to the process by which "every new version of a work inherits the ritual functions of its predecessors to maintain specific networks of meaning."¹⁷ As Blair Orfall suggests, "the appearance of a potential child" is "*Throne of Blood's* strongest influence on *Maqbool*."¹⁸ The Lady Macbeth character in *Throne of Blood* – Asaji – is pregnant, though her child is never born. Pregnancy was already broached in a previous Indian production of *Macbeth* named *Maranayakana Drishtanta* by H. S. Shiva Prakash.¹⁹ Although Mangale – the Lady Macbeth figure – gives birth, the baby is killed by the deposed prince. Interestingly, in *Maqbool*, the child not only survives, but is looked after by Sameera and Guddu/Fleance and Malcolm. This is because Nimmi dies as a consequence of giving birth and guilt. Nimmi does not commit suicide because it is not accepted in Indian culture. Crucial of the final scenes of Bhardwaj's *opera prima* is *Maqbool's* death. After seeing his son lovingly cradled by Sameera and Guddu, (see Fig. 20) he abandons the hospital where he is shot dead by Boti. While *Macbeth* never yields, "*Maqbool* willingly dies."²⁰ *Maqbool* internalizes all his violent deeds, and is willing to perish for the order to be restored.

¹⁷ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁸ Blair Orfall, "From Ethnographic Impulses to Apocalyptic Endings: Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* in Comparative Context." In *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).

¹⁹ *Maranayakana Drishtanta* by H. S. Shiva Prakash was the main production of a rehabilitation programme at Mysore prison. For an in-depth analysis of the production, see Poonam Trivedi, "It is the Bloody Business which Informs Thus...': Local Politics and Performative Praxis, *Macbeth* in India" in *Massai*, 47-57.

²⁰ William C. Ferleman, "What if Lady Macbeth Were Pregnant?: Amativeness, Procreation, and Future Dynasty in *Maqbool*." In *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), 4.



Fig. 20. Sameera and Guddu cradling Maqbool's and Nimmi's baby.

The characters in *Omkara* equally inhabit inflated versions of their Shakespearean *alter egos*. Here, for instance, Omkara/Othello does not stand alone, but “is given a full household” with a sister Indu/Emilia, and a grandmother.²¹ In order to provide emotions and emphasise the ethnic flavour, the Indian Othello and Desdemona are not married in the opening scenes of Vishal Bhardwaj's film, but do so in the course of the action in a sumptuous marriage spectacle which delights the audience. Intrinsic to *Othello* is race, which is elaborated as caste in this film adaptation. Omkara is half-caste because his father was a Brahmin, and his mother a slave. In spite of the fact that this adaptation concentrates more on jealousy than on caste, it still has some prominence. The actor playing the role of Omi Shukla – Ajay Devgan – has a very dark skin, whereas the actress playing Dolly – Kareena Kapoor – has a very white complexion. As Lalita Pandit Hogan has mentioned, colour difference can be placed in a mythic context,

²¹ Nishi Pulugurtha, “The Moor Recontextualised: *Othello* to *Omkara*.” In *Silhouette*. Ed. Amitava Nag (2010) 7, 107.

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in which Omkara is Krishna – blue-black – and Dolly is Radha – white.²² The black and white dichotomy in *Omkara* implicitly celebrates Hindu myths. Bhardwaj’s Iago also has more shades, and is not a character of motiveless malignity. Omkara’s choice of Kesu over Langda as the next bahubali takes place on screen, instead of off-screen as in Shakespeare’s play (see Fig. 21).



Fig. 21. The ceremony takes place on screen in *Omkara*.

At this moment, the film pushes to the furthest point a victim exposition of Langda when it seems he is going to receive the ceremonial plate, and is finally handed to Kesu. Langda’s fantasies before the ceremony and his anger after it – visualized in a powerful medium shot of Langda ‘crowning’ himself as the next bahubali with his own blood as he looks at himself in the mirror – have the purpose of presenting a more sympathetic Iago. Indu/Emilia is a more complex character than her Shakespearean counterpart, being transformed into a vindictive Hindu goddess stabbing her husband to death. As Vishal Bhardwaj himself notes, Billo Chamanbahar/Bianca “is a fiery independent spirit and enjoys more screen time than most of the other adaptations.”²³ It is with the extended scenes of Langda, Indu and Billo that Bhardwaj aims at a carefully gradated ‘Indianisation’ of the Shakespearean play.

²² Hogan, 54.

²³ *Omkara* production notes. Available at BFI (British Film Institute).

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Although *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* have a clear Indian flavour and appeal, their place within the so-called Bollywood cinema is somehow ambiguous by their unusual adoption of Bollywood conventions and aesthetics. Bollywood cinema is characterized “by music and dance numbers, melodrama, lavish production and an emphasis on stars and spectacle.”²⁴ Shorter running time and a smaller number of musical spectacles are some of the elements that contribute to their possible success in a global urban environment.²⁵ Bhardwaj’s movies develop a modality of articulation in which Shakespeare is not parodied, but the Bollywood industry is. In spite of the fact that the movies take Bollywood conventions as the point of departure, ‘bollywoodizing’ themselves, they cleverly draw freely upon them, suggesting a movement towards transnational cinema. The films clearly demonstrate that it is in fact possible to expand and amplify the term ‘Bollywood,’ especially via the use of Shakespeare.



Fig. 22. “Ru-ba-ru” sung by qawwals at the Sufi temple.

“To talk of Bollywood is inevitably to talk of the song and dance sequence,” claim Sangita Gopa and Sujata Moorti.²⁶ From the early movies to the latest ones, song and dance sequences have been distinctive of Bollywood aesthetics; they have signalled

²⁴ Dudrah and Desai, 1.

²⁵ For Peter Brunette, these two particular conventions may help *Maqbool* in the overseas circuit. See Brunette, 30.

²⁶ Gopal and Moorti, 1.

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‘otherness’ and have been distinct of national identity. Music interludes tend to be inserted rather arbitrarily. For decades, there has also been an interest in shooting the song and dance sequences in foreign and exotic locations. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995) or *Swades: We, The People* (dir. Ashutosh Gowariker, 2004) are perfect examples of this tradition. However, Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* are exemplary in exposing a new understanding of song and dance sequences, which are well integrated into the narrative, do not show the nature of bucolic landscapes in Switzerland or Goa or include perfect choreographies. *Maqbool* only offers three songs, which are conceived as “festive interludes.”²⁷ The first music interlude – and perhaps the most remarkable one – is *Ru-ba-ru* (“we are face to face”), performed by qawwals at a Sufi tomb (*dargah*), which plays with non-diegetic/diegetic sounds, and transforms religious lyrics into secular hymns (see Fig. 22).²⁸ The opening of the song highlights *Maqbool*’s conflicted reaction to Nimmi’s love declaration, the whole scene accompanied by what at first sight seems background music. Cinematic images of the couple are intermingled with visuals of Abba-ji’s coterie. The song’s coda with Abba-ji’s gang and the Shakespearean *alter egos* Nimmi and *Maqbool* arriving at the tomb shows that the sound is in fact diegetic, actually heard by all the characters, not just the viewers. Unlike standard Bollywood fare, this music interlude has the purpose of not only unmasking the lust and desire Nimmi and *Maqbool* feel for each other, but also of highlighting the infatuation between Sameera and Guddu/Fleance & Malcolm, and *Maqbool*’s growing awareness of the progressive and risky potential of such relationship. The second song sequence entitled *Rone Do* (“Let me cry”) sung by Rekha is atmospheric. The interlude is not a mere visual or sound pleasure, but

²⁷ Antony R. Guneratne, *Shakespeare, Film Studies, and the Visual Cultures of Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 71.

²⁸ A Sufi tomb is always built for a religious figure, usually a Sufi saint.

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reinforces the love between the main couple. At gunpoint through medium close-up shots of the couple, Nimmi forces Maqbool to declare his love for her. Via a brilliant use of cinematic images full of eroticism with symbols like the white net,²⁹ the final shot explicitly shows – contrary to standard Bollywood film songs which simply suggest – the consummation of this relationship. At Guddu and Sameera’s wedding, a group of women sing “Jhin min jhini,” accompanied by an improvised choreography in which even Maqbool participates. Interestingly, the filmmaker intercuts this innocent, naïve scene with another one in which a Bollywood actress – blackmailed by Abba-ji’s mob – performs in front of a male audience, being the object of the male gaze. This Bollywood actress plays the role of the vamp, who is the heroine’s *alter ego*, typical of popular Indian movies. In the words of Mukul Kesavan, “as an object of desire the heroine is unsatisfactory, blurred by virtue and the soft-focus of romantic love – but the flaunted carnality of the vamp invites uncomplicated lust.”³⁰ Although Nimmi is not precisely the image of virtue *per se* for she is portrayed as a prostitute, her true love for Maqbool prevents her from being a plain carnal figure for Abba-ji.³¹ At a superficial level, the film adaptation projects the standard Bollywood song and dance sequences, and seems to be haunted by them, but, at a more intrinsic level, Bhardwaj’s *opera prima* suggests a series of layers that broaden its use of Bollywood typical fare, giving birth to a more complex aesthetics.

²⁹ The scene of the white net is very similar to the episode in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* in which Saleem’s grandparents make love with the help of a white sheet.

³⁰ Mukul Kesavan, “Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: the Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema.” In *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State*. Ed. Zoya Hasan (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994), 255.

³¹ The image of the vamp in Indian cinema has a long and interesting history. Rooted in the Muslim term ‘tawaif,’ the vamp is always the heroine’s alter ego. A film like *Devdas*, for instance, explores this figure in the character of Chandramukhi in contraposition with the well-known heroine Paro. The figure of the courtesan is also similar to the vamp, though it constitutes its own micro-genre (courtesan films). *Pakeezah* (dir. Kamal Amrohi, 1972) and *Umrao Jaan* (dir. Muzaffar Ali, 1981) are instances of this genre.

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Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkaara* is poised between Bollywood and a transnational reworking of Bollywood motifs as song and dance sequences, which "are more convincingly rooted in the plot than in typical examples of the genre and seem to accommodate the film tastes of a Western audience."³² The opening song is the title "Omkaara," sung by Sukhwinder Singh. In the tradition of a tribal fashion song based on the story of the great Rajput warriors Aala-Udhal, the "Omkaara" title is a clear non-diegetic element in the movie.³³ This instance is one of the best transpositions of the Shakespearean play into an Indian setting, for the brave, fearless Othello is cleverly morphed into a harsh, bold Omkaara depicted as a great warrior. The change of the rhythmic pattern in the middle of the song arousing the tempo hints at the unpredictability of Omkaara. This song marks the beginning of the movie. The second song is the brilliant and moving "Naina," which as another non-diegetic element in the song, serves the purpose of explaining the start of Dolly's infatuation with Omkaara. The visual and sound techniques amplify the narrative of *Othello* via flashbacks, such as the outset of Dolly/Omkaara's romance and Dolly's love declaration to Omkaara at the pre-nuptial festivities for her wedding to Rajju. An interesting addition of the song to the play concerns Dolly and Kesu characters, and strengthens their affinity prior to Dolly's engagement to Omkaara, for she gives Kesu a love letter addressed at Omkaara. The next song is the well-paced "Beedi," performed by the courtesan Billo Chamanbahar/Bianca whose look was modelled on the girls of Meerut in Uttar Pradesh.³⁴ According to Susanne Gruss, although this song follows the path of previous courtesan songs in the Bollywood industry, its main signs of expansion of the genre are the chiaroscuro mise-

³² Susanne Gruss, "Shakespeare in Bollywood? Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkaara*." In *Semiotic Encounters: Text, Image and Trans-nation*. Eds. Sarah Säckel, Walter Göbel and Noha Hamdy (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), 223.

³³ Gulzar, <http://melodyjunction.freeforums.org/how-aandhi-got-its-songs-gulzar-t401.html>

³⁴ *Omkaara* production notes.

en-scène and the purpose of the song, which seems to be *de rigueur* in all Omkara's song and dance sequences. To Gruss's arguments, the spontaneous choreography, the incredibly large male audience, the intercutting of this scene with Omkara and Dolly's love scene, the montage shots and the integration of two male protagonists (Langda/Iago and Kesu/Cassio) in a typical courtesan song can be added. For Gruss, "Beedi" is rooted in the plot because it depicts Kesu completely drunk. But the song also shows the *kummerbund* (the equivalent of the handkerchief in the Shakespearean tragedy) for the first time and the consummation of Omkara and Dolly's relationship. "O Saathi Re" is another non-diegetic song. Unlike other Bollywood song and dance sequences designed for couples, the main characters always remain in the same realistic setting, and do not change costumes. The "Namak" song is very similar to "Beedi" for it is also sung by Billo Chamanbahar to a male audience, and seems to be part of the tradition of the courtesan micro-genre. According to Susanne Gruss, this song allows the filmmaker to provide the background for the murder of the rival gangster.³⁵ After Dolly's assassination, Bhardwaj introduces an atmospheric song "Jag ja" to relieve the audience of the tension of the murder. The film adaptation in this way deconstructs prototypical Bollywood songs.

Apart from the music interludes, a second prominent – and debatable – feature of Bombay cinema is its escapist quality. In Shakuntala Banaji's view, heated debates on escapism versus reality will always lurk behind the surface of Bollywood cinema.³⁶ It is commonly said that reality is missed in commercial cinema. There seems to be a dichotomy between the realism of serious cinema and the escapism of popular films. However, a considerable number of critics highlight the psychological realism or

³⁵ Gruss, 235.

³⁶ Shakuntala Banaji, *Reading Bollywood: The Young Audience and Hindi Films* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 1-8.

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realism of the emotions contained in Bollywood films. These movies, they claim, may treat the “representation of reality playfully, even apparently subversively.”³⁷ Interestingly, *Maqbool* and *Omkara* seem to continue with the debate between realism and escapism. Unlike most post 1970s Hindi movies – characterized by “melodramatic plots, extravagant emotions and fabulously picturized song-dance sequences,” to explore the escapist quality – *Maqbool* and *Omkara* capture reality more authentically.³⁸ To begin with, both adaptations shed light upon the underworld, although *Maqbool* centres on a specific metropolis, Mumbai. The prologue and accompanying shots from *Maqbool* and *Omkara*’s outset intensify cities full of corruption and violence. The expected introduction to the protagonist is replaced in *Maqbool* by a depiction of Mumbai as an urban space where gangsters feel at ease for the police is equally involved in corruption. The shots of Purohi and Pandit – Shakespeare’s Weird Sisters – firing another gangster at point-blank range immediately establish that there is no law in Mumbai. Moreover, the only benevolent police officer – Devsari, who has no Shakespearean counterpart – has no power since he is removed from Mumbai when he becomes a problem for the gangster’s scheming. In the ruthless world of *Maqbool*, there is no confrontation between community and law. The introductory shots in *Omkara* shed light upon the violence within the gangster world, when Omkara and the other members of the gang kill their immediate rivals.³⁹ Unlike movies like Ram Gopal Varma’s *Satya* (1998) in which the “gangster alone retains an original humanity, acting ruthlessly in his own interest, but also instinctively loyal to his comrades and kind to

³⁷ Banaji, 4.

³⁸ Gopal, “Sentimental Symptoms: The Films of Karan Johar and Bombay Cinema.” In Mehta and Pandharipande, 16.

³⁹ Alfredo Michel Modenessi explores the issue of violence in *Omkara* and in the Mexican adaptation *Huapango* (dir. Iván Lipkies, 2004). Michel Modenessi, A. “Is this the Noble Moor?’ Re-viewing *Othello* on Screen through ‘Indian’ (and Indian) Eyes,” *Borrowers and Lenders* 7.2 (2012): 1-17.

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strangers,” there is no loyalty in Maqbool’s and Omkara’s coterie.⁴⁰ The life in the metropolis is dominated by violence which comes full circle: Abbaji killed his former boss, Maqbool kills Abbaji and Boti kills Maqbool. In *Omkara*, there is no loyalty either, which comes to light when Kesu – instead of Langda – is ‘professionally’ promoted. In *Maqbool*, the disenchantment with the city – and its ruling system – can also be observed when Bollywood cinema is equally corrupted. Gangsters in *Maqbool* do not only rule the city and the politics, but even the entertainment business, in the form of cinema; Mumbai is then at the expense of the underworld. The portrait of the city of Mumbai in *Maqbool* differs considerably from the depiction of other metropolis in typical Bollywood movies, in which there is a complete idealisation. The fantasy of the city as a clean space with no rubbish whatsoever and with no real references to a specific urban space is completely revolutionized by Bhardwaj. In *Maqbool* and *Omkara*, there is no escape or fantasy, just reality.

The marriage spectacles in *Maqbool* and *Omkara* do not capture the old-fashioned Bollywood spirit. Bollywood cinema has always planned with immaculate attention the wedding rituals, such as *mehndi* or *sangeet*.⁴¹ Filmmakers like Karan Johar, Yash Chopra or Sooraj Barjatya’s cinematic weddings display all the glamour and luxury one can imagine. Barjatya’s *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994) for instance has become the wedding film *par excellence* – it is a clear apologia to marriage – to the extent that Indian and diasporic women turn to the movie to celebrate their own weddings in full Bollywood style. However, Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkara* cannot

⁴⁰ M. Madhava Prasad, “Realism and Fantasy in Representations of Metropolitan Life in Indian Cinema.” In *City Flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience*. Ed. Preber Kaarsholm (London, New York and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2007), 91.

⁴¹ Mehndi consists of applying henna to the bride. During the sangeet ceremony, the bride and groom’s friends and relatives sing and dance traditional folk songs. Both rituals tend to be celebrated together nowadays.

add to this list of wedding-video films. Although with the re-make of Duncan's sons into Abba-ji's daughter Sameera, Vishal Bhardwaj aims to have a wedding in his *opera prima*, it is not successful, but a complete fiasco for it is interrupted with Maqbool's assassination of Abba-ji. While in Shakespeare's *Othello* the wedding is reported, as it takes place off stage, in *Omkara* it is part of the action. Unlike its Shakespearean counterpart, *Omkara* commences with Dolly and Rajju's interrupted wedding due to Dolly's elopement with Omkara, and ends in a circular movement with Omkara and Dolly's ill-fated marriage ceremony, which depicts a miserable bride and groom.⁴² Mad with jealousy, Omkara appears as a man full of doubts – as the talk with Indu/Emilia and his joke on marriage show. The ominous images of black crows before the wedlock constantly scare Dolly.⁴³ In a world “where weddings are celebrated not through fireworks but gunfire,” and where weddings are the threshold of deaths – since Sameera's nuptials are suspended for her father's death and Omkara and Dolly's Hindu marriage spectacle is followed by a chain of horrendous deaths – the sacred ceremony is polluted.⁴⁴ The portrait of failed wedding ceremonies is a clear subversion of Bollywood conventions.

In Merchant Ivory's *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965), the successful Bollywood actress Manjula, who fancies the Romeo-like character Sanju, attends a stage production of *Othello* by the Shakespereana Company, and leaves the theatre before the play is over, unable to face the tragic ending.⁴⁵ Manjula's attitude accords with the Parsis

⁴² Before the wedding ceremony, Omkara and Dolly lived together for some time. Their union before wedlock is not very realistic since Uttar Pradesh is one of the most patriarchal regions in India.

⁴³ Poonam Trivedi mentions that crows are also present in *Maqbool*, but for other reasons. They are a visual cinematic allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and form the background of the first long scene of Nimmi and Maqbool. See Trivedi, “Filmi Shakespeare,” 148-58.

⁴⁴ Srinivasan, 13.

⁴⁵ *Shakespeare Wallah* (dir. James Ivory, 1965) foregrounds the tension in post-colonial India when Shakespearean plays were represented on stage, for they were still associated with colonialism and the British Raj. The film aligns itself with the view that the popular and successful Bollywood cinema

whose adaptations of Shakespearean works were deprived of the tragic ending. Similarly, more recent Bollywood appropriations of Shakespearean tragedies have re-interpreted the tragic *dénouement* because it is not in keeping with the Indian mindset. The Indian film critics Aditi Tandon and Sidharth Srinivasa comment on how hard it is for Indians to digest *Omkara*'s finale, since the audience is abandoned "defenceless in the last moment, when death and dryness take over."⁴⁶ At the climax of the film, the dreadful – though beautifully cinematographed – scenario with Dolly's corpse in a red saree moving in a swing and Omkara's body on the floor was a milestone in popular Indian cinema, as nothing similar had ever been seen before.⁴⁷ Unlike *Omkara*'s ending which is not faithful to the original source for it does not end with "the tragic loading of this bed," *Maqbool*'s ending is faithful to the Shakespearean original text. It retains the tragedy, though visually, the final shot of the film does not leave the audience in such an anxious state, the camera moving from Maqbool's rolling head to a reddish sky.⁴⁸ Just before that, a medium shot of Sameera and Guddu with the baby suggests the necessity of the restoration of a fragmented and cruel society by means of Maqbool's murder. Anyway, *Maqbool* and *Omkara* are the first Bollywood film adaptations of Shakespearean works that make Indian spectators confront tragic endings. The devastatingly tragic climaxes of *Maqbool* and *Omkara* have received numerous criticisms in Indian film magazines like *Screen*, in which Deepa Karmalkar shows her anger not only at the tragic ending *per se*, but at the films's incapacity of activating the

substituted Shakespearean plays' popularity; Shakespearean works proved difficult to rival the Indian popular cinema in its golden era. Thus, the movie's clear implication is that Shakespearean works cannot be appropriated by Bollywood cinema.

⁴⁶ See Aditi Tandon, "Vishal Dares to Indigenise 'Othello,'" *Tribune India* (28 July 2006) <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20060729/cth1.htm#6> and Srinivasa, 12-15.

⁴⁷ Guru Dutt's famous movies *Pyaasa* (1957) and *Kagaaz Ke Phool* (1959) are also characterised by their intensive cathartic insets. However, tragedy is hinted at, not shown visually on screen.

⁴⁸ The mystic nature of *Maqbool*'s end resembles closely the ending of Orson Welles' adaptation (1948).

“lachrymal glands.”⁴⁹ Thus, the melodrama of *Devdas* for instance seems to be required, and Shakespeare is used to re-create the genre.

According to Rachel Dwyer, one of the main features of Bollywood cinema is the lack of nudity and explicit sexual scenes in the movies.⁵⁰ However, Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* eschew this typical convention of Bollywood cinema by their impassioned love scenes. In spite of the fact that several sequences in *Maqbool* still articulate Bollywood aesthetics to suggest eroticism, such as Sameera feeding Guddu and Maqbool tending Nimmi’s wound, its explicit depiction of Nimmi and Maqbool’s lovemaking stands on the fringes.⁵¹ *Omkaara* progresses beyond *Maqbool* concerning the ferocity of the sexual moments, which is uncommon for commercial screen stars. Interestingly, the formulaic nature of Hindi films is transcended on two occasions – Dolly-Omkara’s lovemaking and Indu-Langda’s savage coital moment. While Dolly and Omkara’s sex scene mixes neutral colours with dark shades to make it real and show the purity of their love, Indu and Langda’s intimacy is lit with “yellow mid tones to make it appear surreal.”⁵² These convoluted moments imply a “peregrination” to a new direction in popular Indian cinema.

“Bollywood is referred to thematically within diasporic films themselves,” claims Jigna Desai.⁵³ Movies such as *My Bollywood Bride* (dir. Rajeev Virani, 2006) or *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002) parody Bollywood cinema literally.

⁴⁹ Deepa Karmalkar, “Tragic Artifice,” *Screen India* (4th August 2006)

<http://www.screenindia.com/fullstory.php?contentid=13142>

⁵⁰ Rachel Dwyer, “Kiss or Tell? Declaring Love in Hindi Films.” In *Love in South Asia. A Cultural History*. Ed. Francesca Orsini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 289-302. See also Mihir Bose, *Bollywood: A History*, 35 and Johan Manschot and Marijke de Vos, *Behind the Scenes of Hindi Cinema: A Visual Journey Through the Heart of Bollywood* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2005), 10 for the argument that Indian films are characterised by the forbidden display of flesh.

⁵¹ According to Rachel Dwyer, the two most common depictions of lust and eroticism are the giving of food and the tending of a wound. See Dwyer, “Kiss or Tell?” 300.

⁵² Sameer Chanda’s “Making of *Omkaara*” in *Omkaara* production notes.

⁵³ Desai, “Bollywood Abroad,” 117.

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Interestingly, although not a cross-over film at first sight, Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* lampoons the Bollywood industry metatextually. Just like Duncan makes Macbeth Thane of Cawdor for being crucial in expelling Norwegians from Scotland, Bhardwaj turns Macbeth into a Bollywood 'don,' in charge of ruling the film business for contributing to the disappearance of the rival gang headed by Mughal. The narrative discourse in this way establishes a nexus between Bollywood and Mumbai criminal underworld. The financing of films is also the mafia's field of action. Given that Mumbai is regarded as a city in which many deals are compromised on black money and there was no film industry until the late 90s, speculation was common in Bollywood.⁵⁴ In 2000, for instance, the producer of the blockbuster *Chori Chori Chupke Chupke* (dir. Abbas Alibhai Burmawalla and Mastan Alibhai Burmawalla, 2000) was arrested due to his alleged criminal implications.⁵⁵ The blackmails to Bollywood actors are well illustrated in *Maqbool* via the Bollywood actress who is threatened by Maqbool, and becomes Abba-ji's new heart-throb. The allusions to the popular Indian cinema industry do not merely concern Maqbool and the actress at the end, but also Nimmi and Abba-ji. In one of the meetings at Abba-ji's place, Kaka/Banquo wants Nimmi to work in a movie directed by the best Bollywood directors (Karan Johar, Ram Gopal Verma or Mani Ratnam). Yet, Abba-ji's angry and icy look clearly implies his dissatisfaction with Kaka's comment, for "gangsters believe that Bollywood is peopled by the cheap and vulgar kind – *ghatiya*."⁵⁶ Just after Abba-ji watches the dance performance, the corrupt policemen Pandit and Purohit recall Abba-ji's wedding, in which a murder was also committed. Using language and facial expressions of self-pity,

⁵⁴ Arjun Appadurai, "Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai," *Public Culture* 12.3 (2000): 627-51.

⁵⁵ Philipp Hinz, "Shakespeare's Dirty Business: Reading Signs and Controlling Looks in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool*," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 145 (2009), 158-175.

⁵⁶ Trivedi, "Mak[ing]...Strange," 3.

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Abba-ji/Duncan explains how his dear friend was assassinated. In an interesting low-angle shot, Inspector Pandit informs Maqbool of Abba-ji's implication in the crime, and claims that if Abba-ji had not "been in the underworld, he would have been in films; what an actor he is." Viewers are therefore placed in the position of encountering a very different reading of Shakespeare's play regarding Duncan's role. While in the original text Duncan is a positive, benevolent character, Abba-ji – like Tsuzuki in *Throne of Blood* – is a usurper himself.⁵⁷ He has a violent past in which he achieves his power through the killing of the former leader. This idea carries a very special connotation because, just like Abba-ji had to eradicate the previous gangster leader to enforce his rule, Maqbool has to do the same. This deed is presented as a ritual marking of a boss's cycle, and justifies Maqbool's violent act. The fact that Inspector Purohit tells the story to Maqbool reinforces the policemen's manoeuvres in the characters' destiny, paring down considerably the Shakespearean witches, which simply predict, but are not involved in the development of the action. The metatextual references to Bollywood remark again *Maqbool's* cross-over dimension.

For Carolyn Jess-Cooke, "*Maqbool* can be read as a political venture for Bollywood's inclusion in the global economy," just like *Omkara*.⁵⁸ Yet, both movies have also risen above their genre by means of an interesting and clever filmic hybridity; a rich web of Eastern and Western intertexts. Apart from the 'Brandoesque' style of Abba-ji's voice and the overall spirit of Coppola's first *Godfather* (1972) in *Maqbool* and closing stages based on Luc Besson's *León* (1994), the movie is indebted to a well-known tradition of Bollywood gangster movies, such as Ram Gopal Varma's *Satya*

⁵⁷ See Hiroshi Yamamoto, "The Originality of Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*." In *Shakespeare in Japan: A Publication of the Shakespeare Yearbook*. Eds. Tetsuo Anzai, Soji Iwasaki, Holger Klein and Peter Milward SJ (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 155 for a detailed analysis of Tsuzuki (Duncan)'s usurpation.

⁵⁸ Jess-Cooke, 178.

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(1998), *Company* (2002) or Mani Ratnam's *Nayakan* (1987).⁵⁹ Vishal Bhardwaj himself admits on an interview having been strongly influenced by Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* in the poetic flavour of the adaptation.⁶⁰ Bhardwaj's revelation of Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* as the source of real inspiration for his film adaptation instead of the original Shakespearean text in English simply corroborates the complexity regarding the appropriation of Shakespeare in Indian cinema.⁶¹ *Omkara* shares with *Maqbool* the majority of the intertexts, such as Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972) and the Bollywood gangster movies. *Omkara* was interestingly made to resemble the Hollywood dusty westerns of the 1960s.⁶² In *Macbeth's* and *Othello's* transposition to modern India, they also follow in the footsteps of Gulzar's *Angoor* (1981) – based on *The Comedy of Errors* – which is considered the first Bollywood Shakespearean appropriation. This generic hybridity shows how Vishal Bhardwaj manages to escape the hegemony of Bollywood cinema, and does not 'bollywoodize' his films to cater to a diasporic audience of Indians as Ashish Rajadhyaksha suggests, but rather, universalize them to participate in the process of transnationalism.⁶³ Rather than betraying an uneasy relationship with the Shakespearean intertexts as the previous Indian adaptations of Shakespearean works in which Shakespeare was always unacknowledged, Bhardwaj's *oeuvre* manages to insert Shakespeare successfully. Furthermore, the use of Shakespeare makes Bhardwaj expand the Bollywood genre, moving towards transnational cinema.

⁵⁹ As Vishal Bhardwaj claims "any film that deals with criminal mafia, wherever it is, has to refer to *The Godfather* in some way."⁵⁹ See Alter, 15.

⁶⁰ See Brahmanand Singh, "Interview with Vishal Bhardwaj." In *Cinema in India* (India: National Film Development Corporation, 2003), 47.

⁶¹ *Throne of Blood* was also a crucial intertext in the Taiwanese adaptation of *Macbeth* entitled *Kingdom of Desire* (1986). Just like *Throne of Blood's* strongest influence on *Maqbool* is Nimmi's pregnancy, the Lady Macbeth character in the Taiwanese adaptation – Lady Aoshu – is equally pregnant. Like Lady Washizu in *Throne of Blood*, she also instigates Aoshu to kill the Banquo character. See Levith, 109.

⁶² *Omkara* production notes.

⁶³ Rajadhyaksha, 23-39.

2. Displacement

Displacement is one of the main features of transnational cinema. For Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, the displaced person “grounds the transnational both thematically and in terms of global awareness...loss and deterritorializations are often represented not as transnational states on the transnational subject’s path to either transcendence or tragedy, but instead as more or less permanent conditions.”⁶⁴ This condition permeates the identity of these people who are deterritorialized. Although, traditionally, displacement was associated with individuals who migrated from one place to another and neither belonged to the site of birth or the site of settlement, Corinn Columpar draws a parallelism between diasporic people and aboriginals, who may feel as displaced as migratory citizens within their own native land.⁶⁵ In a similar note, the transposition of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* to a Muslim *milieu* within a large Hindu majority in India – and, by extension within the microcosm of Mumbai – similarly bespeaks displacement. Though set in a Hindu environment, *Omkara* also focuses on a crisis of identity which is somehow internalized in a manifold of characters.

The local and global political dimension in which *Maqbool* is articulated makes the audience question the movie’s incursion in the Islamic world. The year prior to *Maqbool*’s release (2002) witnessed widespread religious riots in Gujarat, which caused numerous deaths of both Hindus and Muslims.⁶⁶ The movie also has to be understood in the global context of the terrible attacks of 9/11 in which the image of the Muslims was

⁶⁴ Ezra and Rowden, 7.

⁶⁵ Corinn Columpar, *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World Cinema* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 2010). To read more about the traditional opposition between the site of birth and the site of settlement, see Francia, 191-219; Hall, 222-238.

⁶⁶ Prior to this year the Hindu-Muslim riots in India were quite frequent. A dispute of similar dimensions occurred in Ayodhya in 2002 when Hindus demolished the Babri Masjid (a well-known Mosque) to rebuild the site where Rama was supposed to have been born. See chapter 4.

severely damaged.⁶⁷ “The deliberate effort to terrorize Muslims” is not only rooted in these two recent historical events, but was remarkably increased by the Shiva Sena – the right-wing political party in India – with a powerful media campaign of hatred and rumour targeted at Muslims in order to enhance the figure of the Hindu citizen.⁶⁸ Consistent in its national hysteria, the Shiva Sena managed to ‘Hindusize’ the urban space, and consolidated the archetype of Muslims as invaders, as the ‘Others.’

In tracing the interaction between Bollywood cinema and Muslims, it is often forgotten that there has been no linear relationship; the portrait of Muslims has undergone an evolution and transformation from integration to disappearance and even ‘demonization.’ In the post-partition era, the sub-genre of Bollywood cinema entitled Muslim social emerged with films like *Mughal-e-Azam* (dir. K. Asif, 1960), and later continued with other movies, such as *Umrao Jaan* (dir. Muzaffar Ali, 1981). The ‘Muslim social’ basically touched upon the typical issues of Bollywood drama, such as “love, marriage, family, festivals, customs, rituals,” but within a Muslim *milieu*.⁶⁹ Muslim culture became popular in Bollywood cinema. The poetry of Urdu language, tawaifs, nawabs and Moghul rulers were over-present in the movies.⁷⁰ In fact, the important role Moghul rulers fulfilled during the anti-colonial period and the post-partition era in Bollywood movies has been explored by Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen in their co-authored book entitled *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema*.⁷¹ While they were “the symbols of power and repositories of justice” during the anti-colonial era, during the Nehruvian era after Independence, “films showed them as symbols of

⁶⁷ Karan Johar’s *My Name is Khan* (aka *Mera Nam Khan Hai*, 2010) is a cinematic attempt to portray the cruelties Muslims have to undergo, for they are all identified with terrorists.

⁶⁸ Malhotra and Alagh, 649.

⁶⁹ Shvetal Vyas, “The Disappearance of Muslim Socials in Bollywood.” *Muslim and Non-Muslim Understanding*, 1.

⁷⁰ A tawaif was a courtesan girl, and a nawab was a man who belonged to the Moghul Empire.

⁷¹ Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen (eds.) *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009).

tolerance.”⁷² However, the decline of Muslims in Bollywood cinema became common in the 1990s and, even more after the inter-communal conflicts in Gujarat and the 9/11 incidents. Maidul Islam sheds light upon three problems in the representation/stereotyping of Muslims in this period.⁷³ First and foremost, in spite of the considerable presence of Muslim actors, directors and lyricists, there is an under-representation of Muslims as main characters.⁷⁴ The second problem Islam identifies is the misrepresentation of Muslims, as either feudal characters or violent agents. The anti-Islamic stance can be seen in movies such as *Roja* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1992), *Ghulam-e-Musthafa* (dir. Partho Ghosh, 1997), *Dil Se* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1998), *Mission Kashmir* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 2000) or *Black Friday* (dir. Anurag Kashyap, 2004) where the Muslims are terrorists. According to Rustom Bharucha, this negative stereotype of Muslims is also reproduced in *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995), embedded into a right-wing nationalist vein.⁷⁵ The last problem the author notices is the disappearance of Muslims to promote secularism.

Maqbool exposes strategically a minority which has recently been ostracized locally and globally. With an underworld framework, *Maqbool* adds to the group of movies that depict Muslims as villains. Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* – tightly linked to the specific location of Scotland – is rewritten in the Indian Islamicate culture.⁷⁶ *Maqbool*’s characters are given typical Muslim names, such as Maqbool/Macbeth or

⁷² Ziya Us Salam, “Culture on Camera,” *The Hindu* (January 29, 2009) <http://www.thehindu.com/arts/cinema/article96927.ece>

⁷³ Maidul Islam, “Imagining Indian Muslims: Looking Through the Lens of Bollywood Cinema,” *Indian Journal of Human Development* 1.2 (2007): 403-422.

⁷⁴ The most famous Bollywood actors are Muslim: Aamir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Saif Ali Khan, Salman Khan.

⁷⁵ Bharucha, “In the Name of the Secular,” 136.

⁷⁶ The dislocation of Scotland is common in film adaptations of *Macbeth*. Courtney Lehmann precisely explores the role of transnationalism and how Scotland is always somehow present in *Macbeth* film adaptations, such as Bogdanov’s film or *Scotland, PA*. See Courtney Lehmann, “Out Damned Spot: Dislocating *Macbeth* in Transnational Film and Media Culture,” in Burt and Boose, 231-251.

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Jahangir/Duncan.⁷⁷ In fact, as Anthony R. Guneratne notes, the name Jahangir Khan has very interesting connotations, alluding to the Moghul emperor imprisoned by his son Shah Jahn.⁷⁸ The story was first filmed by Sohrab Modi in *Pukar* (1939), and became the first Muslim social film.⁷⁹ According to Carolyn Jess-Cooke, they even greet each with ‘Salaam’ or ‘Khuda Hafiz.’⁸⁰ From the surma in Jahangir’s eyes to clothes – white tunics and caps (men) and *chaddar* or head scarves (women) – food (basically ‘paan’), architecture, gestures, decoration in the houses with silver plates and photos of Mecca, language (regionalized Urdu), accents or the depiction of a “mujra” by Abba-ji’s new heartthrob, everything suggests the Muslim ethos (see Fig. 23 & 24).



Fig. 23 & 24. Examples of the depiction of the Muslim community in *Maqbool*.

At *Maqbool*’s outset, the whole community recreates a typical Islamic ritual, which consists of a trip to a *darga* or Sufi temple, where a qawwali ghazal song – a devotional song – is performed. There are two ‘namaz’ (Islamic prayer scenes) in *Maqbool*. The first shot which concentrates on a ‘Namaz’ takes place after Nimmi’s and Maqbool’s lovemaking scene. While in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* Lady Macbeth invokes

⁷⁷ Curiously enough, *Maqbool* is played by a well-known Muslim actor (Irfan Khan), whereas Nimmi is played by the famous Muslim actress Tabu.

⁷⁸ Anthony R. Guneratne emphasizes the wide-ranging influence of the Moghul inheritance on *Maqbool*, when Abba-ji even quotes the emperor’s lament. Guneratne, 71.

⁷⁹ As was mentioned in chapter two, Sohrab Modi directed the first Bollywood Shakespeare film entitled *Khoon Ka Khoon* (1935).

⁸⁰ Jess-Cooke, 183.

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the ‘spirits’ to give Macbeth the strength to kill Duncan, in Bhardwaj’s movie, Nimmi prays to Allah for the same purpose. The second ‘namaz’ scene occurs after Abba-ji’s murder. Vishal Bhardwaj’s Indian *Macbeth* acquires an interesting – though questionable – dimension when adapted to the Muslim environment, and religion is somehow associated with violence.⁸¹ In the course of action, just before Abba-ji’s assassination, the film adaptation addresses directly another Muslim stereotype. Challenged by Nimmi, Abba-ji makes his personal bodyguard Usman drink alcohol – forbidden in Islam – to prove Usman’s loyalty in front of his whole gang. Poonam Trivedi notes the presence of another crucial cliché in the movie – the slaughter of a goat – which helps the audience envisage Maqbool’s hallucinations.⁸² The last Islamic festivity depicted in the movie is Ramadan. Abba-ji and some members of his gang explicitly claim the necessity to have peace until *Eid ul-Fitr*, which marks the end of the Ramadan, but the promise is constantly broken.⁸³

At first sight, the movie seems to deploy Islam in a positive way. *Maqbool* tones towards secularization with the Hindu characters partaking in the Muslim religious festivities with felicity. Whether in the Ramadan or in the journey to the *Sufi* temple, Kaka and Guddu intermingle with the Muslim community. Besides, the film’s purpose may be the criticism of corruption in politics in India rather than the condemnation of a marginal community, since, after all, the history of *Macbeth* in India is linked with protests against the political system. For instance, Utpal Dutt’s *Macbeth* (performed in

⁸¹ The parallelism between Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather* can also be seen in the close link between religion and crime. *The Godfather’s* climax consists of a scene at a church where a baptism is being celebrated. At the same time, a chain of cruel murders take place. However, *Maqbool* can rather be influenced by Mani Ratnam’s *Roja* (1992), in which the terrorist always prays just before a violent action.

⁸² Trivedi, “Mak[ing]...Strange.”

⁸³ For an in-depth analysis of all the Muslim rituals and festivities, see Aisha Khan, “Rites and Rights of Passage: Seeking a Diasporic Consciousness,” *Cultural Dynamics: Insurgent Scholarship on Culture, Politics and Power* 19.2/3 (July-November 2007): 141-164.

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1975 with other members of the Little Theatre Group in the folk tradition of ‘jatra’) has to be understood as a protest play against the Emergency period, characterised by Indira Gandhi’s dictatorship and the growing control of the mafia. Lokendra Arambam’s *The Stage of Blood* – produced for the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence in 1997 – was “conceived as a radical assertion of dissidence.”⁸⁴ This free adaptation of *Macbeth* aimed to complain about the anarchy in the state of Manipur. Sudhaseel Sen claims that the *mise-en-scène* in *Maqbool* – characterised by a nostalgic Urdu-speaking élite – and the portrait of Hindu criminals in *Omkaara* can also emphasize the positive depiction of Muslims in the movie.⁸⁵

However, the extreme clichéd portrait of Muslims in *Maqbool* seems to adumbrate an anti-Muslim subtext; Islam is usually deployed in a degrading and negative way. The pivot of David Mason’s argument in his article “Dharma and Violence in Mumbai” is precisely the problematic move in and out of Hindu/Muslim communities in *Maqbool*, which resembles the Shakespearean plays’ “preference for Catholicism or the Church of England.”⁸⁶ To begin with, there is a neat link between the Islamic *status quo* and criminality, for all the main gangland characters are Muslims. Called a “microcosm of India,” the *mise-en-scène* in the movie is Mumbai, a multicultural city in which violence is predominant.⁸⁷ When Abba-ji is asked to take part in a drug business and he claims: “Mumbai is my sweetheart, can’t jilt her at this age and settle down in Karachi or Dubai,” the first inference here is that Mumbai is the homeland for Abba-ji, it is *sa chérie*, the “apple of his eye” where he is known as the

⁸⁴ Trivedi, “It is the Bloody Business which Informs Thus...,” 51.

⁸⁵ Sen, “Indigenizing *Macbeth*: Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool*.”

⁸⁶ David Mason, “Dharma and Violence in Mumbai.” In *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), 3.

⁸⁷ See Archit Guha, “The Pariah’s Paradise: Examining the Causes of Migration in Colonial and Post-Colonial Bombay,” *Awaaz Journal* 2.2 (2010): 6-9.

“Messiah of the minorities,” and he does not aim to go to a host country where he is not known and has no reputation as a “don.” But this is not the only implication. By uttering such a sentence, Abba-ji also distances himself from other terrorists like Chota Shakell or Dawood Ibrahim, who had to run their business from abroad. Dawood Ibrahim fled India, and settled in Dubai, where he was in touch with his henchmen by mobile phone. According to Asha Kasbekar, until the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, Dawood Ibrahim remained untouchable in Dubai.⁸⁸ However, he was declared a global terrorist by the US when his connection with Al-Qaeda was discovered. The movie then seems to make an association between Abba-ji and well-known Muslim terrorists. Interestingly, there are only four characters in the whole film adaptation which are actively and openly Hindu: the two corrupt policemen Pandit and Purohit (with Brahmin names and hair in *shikhas*), and the Hindu counterparts of Banquo/Kaka and Fleance/Guddu & Malcolm. Pandit and Purohit go beyond the spirit of Shakespeare’s witches since they do not just advance the action, but their *manoeuvres* are crucial for the film’s final resolution – as if they were Hindu minor deities.⁸⁹ The fact that they exercise the ultimate power purportedly measures the extent of Hindu power in present-day India. The discussion on religion plays an even major role when talking about Kaka/Banquo (one of the most sympathetic characters in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*). In one of the best rewritings of Shakespeare’s *dramatis personae*, Kaka is the loyal friend (in fact, perhaps the only loyal character, always trusting Maqbool until the end). Banquo’s religion is revealed in a powerful cinematic shot which depicts Banquo praying in front of the Goddess Kali (see Fig. 25). Immediately afterwards, he is killed off-screen. The film complicates even more its religious vision via the character of Guddu (an amalgam of Fleance and

⁸⁸ Kasbekar, 8.

⁸⁹ According to David Mason, shikhas are “tufts of hair left growing from the crown of the head as a sign of Vaishnava devotion.” Mason, “Dharma and Violence in Mumbai,” 2.

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Malcolm), who, interestingly, assumes a more visual presence in *Maqbool* than his Shakespearean counterparts in *Macbeth*. From the beginning of the movie, Guddu is reluctant to kill, as the powerful close-up shots of Guddu's hands shaking while holding the gun to assassinate Boti show. Instead of murdering Boti, Guddu makes him join their gang. The rest of the visual images of Guddu expose him as a man in love with Sameera, as a loving and caring son until he plots with Boti to overthrow Maqbool. The film's closing stages direct the audience's gaze to a crucial, decisive medium shot of Sameera and Guddu cradling Maqbool's and Nimmi's baby – though the film on several occasions plays with the possibility of Abba-ji as the father – tenderly. Immediately after this cinematic shot, the violent picture of Boti/Macduff killing Maqbool appears. Ending in a circular movement, the movie implicitly declares that violence is at the hands of Muslims, not only within the cinematic discourse of *Maqbool*, but also in the world. While the Hindu citizen is not capable of such violence, the Muslim is, the film hazardously seems to claim. In response to the frequent stereotyping of Indians as terrorists, *Maqbool* appears to highlight the differences between the two communities quite dangerously. *Maqbool* then perfectly captures a displaced community in an era marked by mobility and deterritorialization, but, the complex portrait of Muslims in the film unfortunately contributes to the perpetuation of their marginalization. The film defines the Indian nation “as having experienced the same trauma and thus as belonging to that select group of nations who stand in opposition to and in threat of being terrorized, for their liberal democratic models, by fundamentalist terrorist groups.”⁹⁰ With the construct of the Muslims as the ‘Other’ locally and globally speaking, the movie contributes to the representation of trauma as transnational. Shakespeare is

⁹⁰ Thakur in Mehta and Pandharipande, 89.

adapted and acknowledged within India when the ‘Other’ is no longer British imperialism, but the Muslim community, *Maqbool* dangerously seems to indicate.



Fig. 25. This image of Banquo in front of the Goddess Kali is perhaps the clearest reference to his religion.

Although Shakespeare’s *Othello* constructs displacement via race, *Omkara* does not map the paradoxes of displacement according to race, but according to other issues. *Othello* has broken ground in the different periods in which it has been performed, and has acquired a political dimension. As early as in 1848, *Othello* was played by a black character, generating a great expectation in the Indian *milieu*. In the well-known film *Shakespeare Wallah* (dir. James Ivory, 1965), it is precisely while the Shakespeareana troupe is performing *Othello* that the audience is distracted with the entrance of a Bollywood actress named Miss Manjula. The presence of a white actor performing the role of a black character cannot attract the viewers’ attention in an independent India. Quite recently, Shakespeare’s *Othello* has witnessed a plethora of stage adaptations in different traditional Indian performance modes.⁹¹ The Kathakali *Othello* (1996) and Roysten Abel’s *In Othello* (2002), which freely relies upon the Kathakali dance drama,

⁹¹ Nandi Bhatia, “Different *Othello*(s) and Contentious Spectators: Changing Responses in India,” *Gamma: Journal of Theory and Criticism* 15 (2007): 155-174. Special Issue on *Shakespeare and Worldwide Audiences* for an intellectually stimulating discussion on the 1848 production of *Othello* in Calcutta, the fictionalized representation in *Shakespeare Wallah*, the Kathakali version and *Omkara*.

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are clear epitomes of this tradition.⁹² This latter film adaptation uses an Othello who is a native villager. The filmmaker constantly alludes to the clear colour difference that marks his Othello, if he is compared with the rest of the characters, especially the white Anglophone Iago. The ostensible rejection towards race in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkaara* – only mentioned at the beginning with references to the colour of Omkara by Indu/Emilia – is certainly awkward in “the post 9/11 milieu that is marked by racial tensions in the West.”⁹³ Nevertheless, Bhardwaj's choice of skating over this issue is compensated enough in the depiction of some of his characters.

Omkaara overdoes displacement through Omkara, Kesu, Langda, Dolly and Indu. While Othello is black in the Shakespearean play, converting himself into an outsider, Omkara is a half high-caste Brahmin in an environment in which the rest of the characters – Bhaisaab/Duncan, Dolly/Desdemona, Kesu/Cassio and even Langda/Iago – are fully-fledged Brahmins. Omkara had an outcaste mother and a Brahmin father, as Dolly's father – Raghunath Mishra, the Bhaisaab's lawyer – reminds the audience: “I considered you a Brahmin and forgot that only one half (of you) is Brahmin; the other comes from that low caste kanjri (prostitute).” Omkara's half-caste identity diminishes his authority, whereas his identity as a Brahmin legitimizes his power. Interestingly, Keshav Uppadhyay's nickname is ‘firangi’, which denotes his foreignness. According to Lalita Pandit Hogan, the word ‘firangi’ is related to the British heritage, linking closely English culture and colonialism, but also connotes those ‘westernized’ Indians in present-day India.⁹⁴ The film explicitly states that this Indian Cassio is from the city. His modern attire – with shirts, woollen vests, worn out trousers and Ray-ban sunglasses – his constant image in a motor cycle and his fluency in English highlight his

⁹² Kathakali is a dance drama typical from Kerala (in the south of India).

⁹³ Bhatia, “Different Othello(s) and Contentious Spectators: Changing Responses in India,” 171.

⁹⁴ Hogan, 55.

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westernization. His command in the English language is exploited on two interesting occasions. At the outset of the movie – when the gang of Dolly’s father visits Omkara’s place after Omkara’s ‘abduction’ of his daughter – Kesu speaks English, and is criticised, and even punched by one of the men of Mr. Raghunath Mishra’s gang.⁹⁵ The other crucial episode in which his English accent is proved is when he teaches Dolly the Stevie Wonder song “I just want to say I love you.” His English pronunciation is better than Dolly’s. Kesu epitomises the typical desi Indian (NRI), who is rather westernized. Langda/Iago equally exemplifies displacement. From the beginning, he seems loyal to Omkara, for whom he has been working fifteen years. However, Omkara chooses Kesu over Langda as the next chief lieutenant – bahubali – to attract his political supporters – University students. Langda differs significantly from Shakespeare’s Iago, since he is not a character of motiveless malignity. Before the ceremony, Rajju/Roderigo arouses expectations in Langda as the next bahubali. He makes him wear sunglasses, and together sing “Langda, bahubali.” During the on-screen ceremony, the camera cleverly focuses on Langda’s face when Omkara makes Kesu the next chief lieutenant; his anger, hurt and disbelief are extremely well conveyed by Saif Ali Khan. The moment which posits even more complexity and promotes Langda’s displacement is when he has to inform Bhaisaab’s supporters of the choice of Kesu as the next bahubali. In spite of the fact that Omkara tells Bhaisaab that Langda will understand the situation, he never dares to explain his choice to him. After the ceremony, Langda shatters his own reflection in a looking-glass, and crowns himself bahubali with his own blood, by putting a *tilak* on his forehead. Such visual images have a clear two-fold effect. On the one hand, Langda is

⁹⁵ Mr. Mishra is Dolly’s father.

depicted as a much more sympathetic Iago. On the other hand, his exclusion from the political group highlights his marginalization.

The characters of Dolly/Desdemona and Indu/Emilia are clearly displaced in Bhardwaj's *Omkara*.⁹⁶ Both had to abandon their homes in order to be with Omkara and Langda; their homes stand for the homeland whereas the fictional city in the heartland of Uttar Pradesh where they live with their partners stands for the host country. Brahmin as Dolly's family is, their ambitions and aspirations for Dolly's future clash with her own intentions of being with a gangster since the family's reputation would be lost.⁹⁷ Her migration consciously reflects a paradox; her displacement is both voluntary and forced because it is implied that in order to be with Omkara, return to her family is impossible. "We renounce our homes and walk into your lives with bare empty hands. We are regarded as disloyal sooner than loyal" states Indu referring to the complex situation of women. Thus, the female displacement is enhanced when the woman marries someone her family does not approve of. Unlike Shakespeare's *Othello* which is anchored to the marginalization of its main character via race – turning him in the only outsider – Vishal Bhardwaj's film adaptation plays with this issue, portraying a whole society – instead of a character – which is displaced. Displacement is the foundation for the relationships in *Maqbool* and *Omkara*, confronting the audience with the current deterritorialization of communities in an era marked by mobility. As displacement is one of the most important characteristics of transnationalism,

⁹⁶ The reference we find in *Maqbool* to this issue of female displacement from home when women get married or become mistresses is the following assertion uttered by Nimmi at the moment when she feels she is going to be replaced by a new mistress: "Jahangir has got a new mistress, how can I face going home? Everyone knows I'm Jahangir's mistress. He looks disgusting with his clothes off, must be my father's age."

⁹⁷ According to James Mill, *The History of British India* (London: J. Madden; Piper, Stephenson and Spence, 1858) there are four varnas or castes in Hindu society: Brahmins (priests, scholars and teachers), Kshatriya (warriors and rulers), Vaisya (traders, agriculturists and merchants), and Sudra (workers or servants). Brahmins were members of the priestly class in the Hindu Varna system and of the highest caste in the caste system of Hindu society.

Bhardwaj's adaptations confirm the need to target a transnational community rather than simply a post-colonial society.

3. Mobility

At the beginning of Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003), the construction of a religious pilgrimage to a *darga* or Sufi temple functions to evoke mobility (see Fig. 26). Massive migrations of people underpin the dispersion of Indians throughout history, especially in contemporary society.⁹⁸ The montage scenes combining the dispersion of the main characters (Nimmi/Lady Macbeth, Abba-ji/Duncan, Maqbool/Macbeth) with those of the Muslim inhabitants of Mumbai going to the Sufi temple dissolve into one another to allude to a metaphorical concept of diaspora. For Robin Cohen, the most important features of being diasporic involve the distance from the homeland and a difficult relationship with the country of settlement.⁹⁹ However, migration is not limited to the diasporic community, but has a ubiquitous quality in a world in which large numbers of people are on the move (ethnoscapes).¹⁰⁰ As Richard Burt claims, the "very mobility and hybridity extends well beyond diasporic migrant communities, particularly when it comes to transnationalized cinemas."¹⁰¹ As migration is the epitome of transnationalism, the films' absorption of it – the religious pilgrimage in *Maqbool* is but one example – simply echoes its importance in Indian culture and society. Mobility plays a crucial role in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003) and *Omkara* (2006).

⁹⁸ Danny Boyle's film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) also deals with the topic of migration. External factors force the hero Jamal Malik (starring Dev Patel) to move continuously from one place to another to find a kind of "umbilical cord" location. Since their mother's death, Salim and Jamal Malik struggle to earn a living. Their journey throughout India commences on a train to veer then towards the Taj Mahal and finally to Mumbai, which is also regarded as a city where to pursue dreams.

⁹⁹ Cohen, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

¹⁰¹ Burt, "Shakespeare and Asia in Postdiasporic Cinemas," 287.



Figure 26. Journey to the Sufi temple in *Maqbool*.

Although already in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* the location is shifted from the military camp, to Inverness and to Macbeth's house, *Maqbool* constantly meets transnationalism and multilocal identities. In the discovery of a migratory area, the city of Mumbai is glimpsed as a "host city" where the Indian community travels to look for more job opportunities, as if it were the "Mumbai Dream" when they do not attempt to pursue the "American dream." The mise-en-scène in the movie is Mumbai, a multicultural city in which violence is predominant. *Maqbool* follows in the footsteps of previous films of Indian cinema like *Miss Frontier Mail* (dir. Homi Wadia, 1936) or *Satya* (dir. Ram Gopal Varma, 1998), which equally focus on this metropolis.¹⁰² The experience of 'going to Bombay,' to the metropolis, is an allegory of the current movements to other locations.

Yet, the film narrative constantly teases the audience regarding movement, and interestingly calls more than one location 'home.'¹⁰³ In the middle of the movie, when Abba-ji is informing about his new resort in Mauritius, Miyan Maqbool proposes a

¹⁰² Prasad, 85.

¹⁰³ Jess-Cooke, 177.

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candidate to be banished there – Guddu (Fleance and Malcolm), for he has a secret affair with Sameera. Instead of being taken negatively, the migration to Mauritius is most welcome, especially by Abba-ji, who calls Mumbai a swamp, and considers necessary for his daughter and future son-in-law to migrate to Mauritius. If Mumbai was regarded before as Abba-ji's sweetheart, he defines it now as a swamp. The peculiarity of this statement lies in the parody regarding his view of Mumbai, which is certainly not as idyllic as it could be imagined before. Besides, the wedding attempt between Sameera and Guddu takes place at a city different from Mumbai. Given that Gabriel Sheffer considers elderly people from Scandinavia, Britain and Germany who establish in southern countries such as Spain and Italy as another type of diasporic citizens, this temporary migration to another city can also be interpreted as forming part of the diasporic phenomenon.¹⁰⁴ When Miyan Maqbool is worried about his life near the end of the movie, he takes his passport and Nimmi's to flee Mumbai, and establish in a different city, though Nimmi's madness makes impossible Maqbool's escape. Hence, it could be contended that *Maqbool* does not revolve around one single location, but sheds light upon multilocal identities.

Following the path of Shakespeare's *Othello* where characters move from Venice to Cyprus, migration also works as an important device in *Omkaara*. *Omkaara*'s backdrop is very different from Maqbool's, for the Mumbai metropolis is substituted by a Wild West location. For those who are not familiar with Uttar Pradesh – where the film is in fact set – the *milieu* may resemble that of *Blackboards* (dir. Samira Makhmalbaf, 2000) or other transnational films with itinerant characters in a sort of

¹⁰⁴ Sheffer, 85.

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Wild West landscape.¹⁰⁵ In fact, the filmmaker's decision not to choose a prototypical and recognisable Indian setting – as he did in *Maqbool* with Mumbai – manages to open up the possibilities of mobility and itineracy, for the backdrop could be no one and everyone's land.

Means of transport in *Maqbool* and *Omkara* also operate to show the prominence of mobility. Objects like cars, vans, motorbikes and lorries have multiple significations attached to them; their presence is a sort of homage to migration so that the audience feels in continuous movement throughout the films' narrative. The numerous close-up shots of objects show their significance, so, it is quite likely to focus the attention on them, rather than on people. Motorbikes play a crucial role in *Omkara* being driven by Rajju and by Kesu/Cassio. Such is their presence that Kichlu – starring Pankaj Tripathy – uses a motorbike to commit the murder of Bhaisaab/Duke of Venice while he is in a car, the implication being that even an assassination can take place in motion. Likewise, cars and lorries also have a ubiquitous presence, the latter interestingly used to commit murders. At the start of *Maqbool*, the camera zooms into a lorry where a rival gangster is going to be killed. While Shakespeare's *Macbeth* starts with the witches talking, Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool*'s opening constructs the witches/corrupt policemen as active and violent agents in the course of the action. *Omkara*'s outset concentrates on the centrality of male authority through Omkara threatening members of a rival gang in a lorry. In this connection then, both films argue that images with means of transport impulse movement in the celluloid.

¹⁰⁵ The film *Blackboards* deals with itinerant Kurdish teachers carrying blackboards to look for students in the hills.

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Arjun Appadurai refers to the global configuration of technology as ‘technoscapes.’¹⁰⁶ *Omkara*’s meticulous focus on technology for narrative purposes capitalize on a successful formula, seen for instance in *Hamlet* (dir. Michael Almereyda, 2000), in which important information is learnt on TV. Technology makes its first appearance in the form of MMS clips on a mobile phone used to blackmail a rival gangster. Then, Bhaisaab’s election party is aired on TV. Rajjo/Roderigo is watching it, but oddly enough, when the name of the next bahubali is going to be announced, the connection breaks down. Visually speaking, this scene is very successful, and even extends the narrative of its Shakespearean counterpart for the connection problem leads Rajjo to imagine Langda as the next bahubali, and inflames Langda’s ‘fire’ for power. Re-writing Shakespearean tragedy successfully, “mobile phones are used where Shakespeare employed eavesdropping.”¹⁰⁷ At *Omkara*’s closing stages, Langda reasserts himself in his accusation of Dolly’s affair with Kesu by means of mobile phone texts.¹⁰⁸ The back and forth text messages confuse Omkara, and contribute to his growing jealousy. Hence, technology is prolific in Vishal Bhardwaj’s film adaptations. At an age which “is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration,” we are positioned not so much as spectators of this transnational phenomenon characterised by internal mobility, but as direct participants, agents involved in the process.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

¹⁰⁷ Philip French, “Omkara” *The Observer* (Sunday 30 July 2006)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2006/jul/30/philipfrench2/print>

¹⁰⁸ This tradition of using mobile phones when Shakespeare used eavesdropping can also be seen at *Much Ado About Nothing* in the BBC *Shakespeare Retold* mini-series when Claudio is constantly fooled about Hero’s infidelity by means of texts.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Said, “Reflections on Exile,” *Granta* 13 (Autumn 1984): 159.

4. Distribution and reception

“As the Indian diaspora worldwide is growing and consuming more movies across a greater number of platforms than ever before,” films are more and more addressing this audience, and also an international audience in their transnational aims.¹¹⁰ The distribution and reception of Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkara* simply confirm these new target audiences. *Maqbool* opened at Toronto Film Festival, and was received as the “new wave Shakespeare.” *Omkara* follows this trend. Distributed in India by the producers of *Bandit Queen* (dir. Shekhar Kapoor, 1994) Kaleidoscope Entertainment, *Maqbool* was distributed internationally by Videovision Entertainment. The chief executive of the company Anant Singh claimed that *Maqbool*’s universal appeal made the movie their safe bet abroad.¹¹¹ “We have been distributing Bollywood movies in South Africa for over fifteen years and we have been looking for an Indian film to launch internationally and we feel that *Maqbool* has great potential,” uttered Anant Singh, with the clear conviction of *Maqbool* being the right choice.¹¹² *Omkara*’s distribution company is Eros Entertainment, which announces itself as having the biggest Bollywood hits and as the one in charge of taking them to the non-resident Indians, albeit they sometimes do Hollywood films for India. Eros Entertainment is a vertically integrated company, whose business centres on the release of 20-25 new movies a year, and the maintenance of a library of over 1300 titles including *Main Hoon Na* (Farah Khan, 2004) and *Paheli* (dir. Amol Palekar, 2005).¹¹³ Kaleem Aftab and Brij

¹¹⁰ Liz Shcackleton, “India Inc Extends its Global Reach,” *Screen International* 1637 (21 March 2008), 14.

¹¹¹ Anant Singh, “Videovision Acquires *Maqbool* Distribution Rights,” *Africa Film and TV* 38 (1 November 2003): 14.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Interestingly, Eros Entertainment and Sony Pictures Entertainment have co-invested in certain Indian movies. While Sony Pictures will distribute them in the US market, Eros will focus on the distribution in other international territories. See “Sony and Eros’ Hindi plan,” *Screen International* 1612 (21 September 2007): 5.

V. Lal corroborate that Eros Entertainment relies upon the distribution of the popular Bollywood extravaganzas.¹¹⁴ Interestingly enough, its exploration of non-traditional international markets such as Europe and South-East Asia has been quite recent. According to Sunil Lulla, Eros' Managing Director, what prompted Eros to distribute *Omkara* internationally was the star cast, its universal appeal, the music, and the love story.¹¹⁵ Although Shakespeare is not even once mentioned by Lulla, he may be another reason, for "Shakespeare sells" abroad.¹¹⁶ In any case, the distribution modes employed in Vishal Bhardwaj's films make a powerful impression of the importance of a market which covers much more than the nation-state.

The ethos of how Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* and *Omkara* have been received has not been conditioned by the budget employed. With a budget of 3,00,00,000 rupees, Bhardwaj expected *Maqbool* to "have a crossover appeal in America and England."¹¹⁷ In fact, he showed his conviction that the entire budget would be recovered from sales overseas, and the earnings in the domestic market would just be an additional benefit.¹¹⁸ The reviews at *Maqbool*'s premiere in film magazines such as *Trade Guide* or *Screen International* equally highlight the movie's appeal to the intelligentsia, non-Indian westerners and the international film festivals rather than the "hoi polloi."¹¹⁹ Obviously, the implication of these reviews is that the audience watching this movie cannot be safe

¹¹⁴ Aftab, 95 and Brij V. Lal, 102.

¹¹⁵ The star cast includes Saif Ali Khan as Langda/Iago for he was a big appeal abroad after his enormous success in movies such as *Hum Tum* (dir. Kunal Kohli, 2004). See "Interview to Sunil Lulla," *Screen India* (30th November 2009). Available online http://www.screenindia.com/old/print.php?content_id=13090

¹¹⁶ Emma French, *Selling Shakespeare to Hollywood. The Marketing of Filmed Shakespeare Adaptations from 1989 into the New Millennium* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2006), 17.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Vishal Bhardwaj by Arthur J. Pais, 6th November 2003, 1 in rediff.com.

¹¹⁸ Indu Mirani, Interview to Vishal Bhardwaj "The Music Plays On," *Cinema in India* 3.3 (Jan/March 2004): 22.

¹¹⁹ "Maqbool," *Trade Guide* 50.17 (31 January 2004), 5 and Brunette, 30.

from high culture.¹²⁰ *Omkara*'s budget was higher than *Maqbool*'s. *Trade Guide*'s reviews similarly shed light upon *Omkara*'s international flavor. The numerous doses of Mumbai dialect, the high pricing, slow pacing and the Shakespearean plot, violence and tragic ending are some of the arguments provided for the fact that this movie is another vehicle designed to target a different audience.

The box-office figures verify the initial impressions and the filmmaker's intentions. In spite of Amrita Sen's claim that "*Maqbool* succeeds in the domestic as well as the international markets," the truth is that in its first week in India, *Maqbool* did not make an impression with 22,74,376 box-office revenues in Mumbai – where the profits in the whole of India were expected to be the highest.¹²¹ The international market was a different case altogether, where *Maqbool* found a very easy niche. *Omkara* follows the path of *Maqbool*. While Bhardwaj's second Shakespearean film adaptation had a very poor opening in India – slightly better at multiplexes – and equally poor nett gross (23,89,00,000 rupees), it had an enormous international response.¹²² The movie grossed about 425,000 dollars in North America in three days and was number ten in the UK along with Hollywood movies like *Cars*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* or *Superman returns*. The screen average for UAE was terrific – 11878 \$ – and for Australia – 4940 dollars.¹²³ With an initial outlay of 4.4 million dollars, the film earned more than 789.694 dollars from box-office revenues. Both movies then have gained international approval, and have been screened at international film festivals, such as the Toronto

¹²⁰ See Rachel Dwyer, "Bollywood Bourgeois," *India International Centre Quarterly* 33 (2007): 228 for the same assertion that *Maqbool* and *Omkara* seem to be aimed at educated audiences.

¹²¹ Sen, "*Maqbool* and Bollywood conventions."

For the box-office figures, see *Trade Guide* 50.17 (31st January – 7th February 2004), 7.

¹²² See *Trade Guide* 52.44 (5th August 2006), 8.

¹²³ See *Trade Guide* 52.44 (August 2006).

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Film Festival (*Maqbool*) or the Cannes Film Festival (*Omkaara*). They can be considered successful attempts “to push the boundaries of commercial Hindi cinema.”¹²⁴

In her article “Shakespeare in Bollywood? Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Omkaara*,” Susanne Gruss broaches the different approaches to the movie by Western and Indian critics since the former considered that the movie was too Bollywood, whereas the latter were irritated by its departure from Bollywood conventions.¹²⁵ However attractive her assertion is, nowhere in the article does she name one of the reviewers or the film magazines where she found the information. To prove the veracity of this assertion, different Indian and British reviews of *Omkaara* have been analysed. Aditi Tandon, an Indian journalist who works for *Tribune India*, finishes his review saying that it is in the end when “you wish Bhardwaj had cheated on Shakespeare a little. The ‘desi’ version of ‘Othello’ could well have ended with a ‘baraat’” (a Hindu wedding procession).¹²⁶ The breaking of the conventional Bollywood mould – especially the tragic ending – has equally been mentioned by Sidharth Srinivasa.¹²⁷ Although Srinivasa’s review is characterised by its constant praise of Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Omkaara*, he concludes by remarking his preference of Akira Kurosawa’s Shakespearean film adaptations, as if they were more ‘authentic’ or more ‘Asian.’ Concerning the British reviews of Bhardwaj’s *Omkaara*, they certainly discuss the ‘Bollywood excesses.’ For instance, Demetrious Matheou mentions that “it’s rum when Iago breaks into a song-and-dance

¹²⁴ See *Trade Guide* 52.44 (August 2006).

¹²⁵ Gruss, 235.

¹²⁶ Tandon.

¹²⁷ Srinivasa, 13.

number.”¹²⁸ This new and seemingly revolutionary Shakespearean film adaptation provokes different reactions depending on the nationality of the critics.¹²⁹

The analysis of the reviews also indicates the almost complete disappearance of Shakespeare and Shakespearean characters in the Indian reviews. Common in all these reviews is to explore the performances of the star cast, the music, lyrics, and costumes, but the adaptation *per se* plays second fiddle. Surprisingly, when explaining who plays who, the Indian critics avoid mentioning the names of the Shakespearean characters. For example, in “Vishal dares to indigenise ‘Othello,’” Aditi Tandon claims that Saif Ali Khan is the “evil maker,” Vivek Oberoi “the diehard loyalist” and Konkona Sen “the conscience keeper,” as if Indian audiences were not familiar with the *dramatis personae*.¹³⁰ A review of *Omkaara* which appears in *Trade Guide* is even more representative of this tradition of referring to the characters by the actors and actresses’ names. This is illustrated when the reviewer mentions the sequence in which “Saif tries to poison Ajay’s mind against Kareena and Vivek.”¹³¹ The review pushes further the concern with audiences having difficulties to digest Shakespeare, and refers to the stars’ names, which are part and parcel of the Indian cinegoers’ lives. In spite of the still reluctance to allude to Shakespeare in the Indian reviews, both *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* are epitomes of this new wave of Shakespeare in India. The distribution modes and box-

¹²⁸ Demetrios Matheou, “Omkaara,” *The Independent* (30th July 2006) <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/reviews/omkara-nc-409924.html>

¹²⁹ In a similar note, Alexander Huang mentions the interesting case of *The Banquet* (dir. Xiaogang Feng, 2006) which was also criticized by Chinese critics for being too ‘Westernised’ and not Chinese enough. See Alexander Huang, “Asian Shakespeares in Europe: From the Unfamiliar to the Defamiliarised.” In *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*. Eds. Graham Bradshaw, Tom Bishop, Ton Hoenselaars and Clara Calvo (2008), 55.

¹³⁰ Tandon.

¹³¹ *Trade Guide* 52.43 (29th July 2006): 3.

office figures confirm Vishal Bhardwaj's movies are the perfect examples of Hindi-language films which "are becoming more palatable to global audiences."¹³²

Conclusion

As Douglas Lanier, Susanne Gruss and Nishi Pulugurtha claim *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* do not follow the trajectory of previous Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations such as *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1004) or *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995) for which Shakespearean *oeuvre* was immediately connected with the colonial discourse.¹³³ At the same time, they also depart from Bollywood Shakespearean offshoots like *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1977), *Betaab* (dir. Rahul Rawail, 1983), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (dir. Mansoor Khan, 1988) or even *Dil Chahta Hai* (dir. Farhan Akhtar, 2001) in which Shakespeare was constantly bolstered, undone and refreshed or appeared as a cultural icon. Vishal Bhardwaj's films are also elaborated to move away from other interesting, considerably acclaimed projects such as *In Othello* (dir. Roysten Abel, 2002) in which Shakespearean presence is "differently mediated."¹³⁴ What *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* endeavor to experiment with is the extent to which Shakespeare can be constructed as a transnational icon.

According to Sidharth Srinivasa, "*Omkaara* is a Hindi film which is truly ahead of its time," but, *Maqbool* is equally transgressive.¹³⁵ The constant transformation and expansion of Bollywood conventions in both films via failed marriage spectacles,

¹³² "India on Parade," *Screen International* 1596 (11th May 2007): 28.

¹³³ Lanier, 109; Gruss, 235; Pulugurtha, 111.

¹³⁴ Burnett, *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*, 157.

¹³⁵ Srinivasa, 15.

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awkward song-and-dance sequences, the on-screen portrait of flesh, the tragic endings and the mixture of several cinematic genres and intertexts alert the viewers that *Maqbool* and *Omkara* are pieces of fledgling cinema. According to Hamid Naficy, “loneliness is an inevitable outcome of transnationality, and it finds its way into the desolate structures of feeling and lonely diegetic characters.”¹³⁶ Thus, perhaps the most forceful iteration of the transnational dimension can be seen in the curious and complex displacement showed in *Maqbool* by means of its depiction of an Islamic community. Marginalized globally and locally after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Gujarat incidents, the presence of the Muslim community in *Maqbool* is to say the least suspicious. *Maqbool* and *Omkara* re-configure and re-articulate the Bollywood genre and broaden it. Considered the first acknowledged Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations at first sight, it is to say the least surprising that they defy the norms of so-called Bollywood cinema. In this new wave of Shakespearean interpretation and appropriation in India, Shakespeare is not the one ‘cannibalized,’ but the cinematic genre which aims to adapt it; quite unconsciously, Shakespeare makes Bhardwaj universalize Bollywood.

¹³⁶ Hamid Naficy qtd. in Ezra and Rowden, 7.

III. BEYOND BOLLYWOOD

Chapter 7: Parodying Bollywood, Parodying Shakespeare:

Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood*

*"I'm returning to my first love." He held up his book.
"English literature at its finest. You've heard of
William Shakespeare. Yes, even a girl from Gouripur
has heard of Shakespeare."*¹

During this episode in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, Chanu Ahmed – the Bangladeshi protagonist – shows his admiration for Shakespeare as well as Shakespeare's world-wide appeal, as he assumes that even his wife Nazeen – a girl from a village in India – must have heard of Shakespeare. Later on in this passage, Chanu recites from *Richard II*, and becomes invested in nostalgic enthusiasm for Shakespeare.² This episode is quite revealing. On the one hand, Chanu's condescending, pedantic attitude seems to be determined by his knowledge of highbrow culture, i.e. Shakespeare. Throughout the novel, he criticizes the uneducated Bangladeshi masses who have migrated to England, and distinguishes himself from these NRIs. Chanu's exact replications of some Shakespearean fragments evoke British colonial education in India in which

¹ Chanu, *Brick Lane*'s protagonist talking to his wife Nazeen. Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 70.

² These are the fragments Chanu quotes in *Brick Lane*: "O! that I were as great/ As is my grief, or lesser than my name./ Or that I could forget what I have been,/ Or not remember what I must be now" (*Richard II* 3.3: 136-139). "Mine eyes are full of tears, I cannot see:/ And yet salt water blinds them not so much/ But they can see a sort of traitors here./ Nay, if I turn my eyes upon myself, I find myself a traitor with the rest" (*Richard II* 4.1: 246-250).

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memorization by rote of well-known Shakespearean excerpts was compulsory. However, it turns out that his apparent *expertise* in English literature and other fields is always exaggerated. On the other hand, the episode contains a very stimulating argument regarding Shakespeare according to which the high-brow icon is challenged. Chanu's quotations from *Richard II* are interestingly cut by his wife's worldly thoughts and actions, such as the grooming of Chanu's nose hair. Nazeen refuses to accept and swallow the specific readings of Shakespeare's texts by Chanu. Thus, apart from the traditional view of Shakespeare adopted by Chanu, *Brick Lane* intrinsically incorporates a parody of Shakespeare intermingling the quotations from *Richard II* with earthly pursuits and material conditions. Rather than a 'cult' figure, Shakespeare becomes an object of experimentation in the novel.

If in the pursuit of Shakespeare in *Brick Lane* irony is always present, Shakespeare enjoys a similar fate in Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002), a film in which his plays are admired and parodied at the same time. Like Chanu, the identity of the grandmother in the movie seems very much constructed via Shakespeare. Yet, she rejects to acknowledge the Shakespearean source. Distancing from Mehta's early works *Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998) and the unfinished *Water*, *Bollywood/Hollywood* is conceived as a fusion project – an Indo-Canadian production – and, as such, mirrors other crossover movies like *Monsoon Wedding* (dir. Mira Nair, 2001) or *Bend It Like Beckham* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2002).³ Although the “dream of the crossover is yet to happen,” *Bollywood/Hollywood* was released at a time in which these hybrid films were

³ *Water* was finished in 2005. Mehta in fact began shooting the film in February 2000. However, due to the endless death threats by protesters during the set of *Water*, Mehta finally had to shut down the production and could only finish the movie in 2005. See Sean Davidson, “Bollywood/Hollywood in Toronto International Film Festival,” *Playback Supplement Toronto* (2 September 2002): T23.

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“making inroads into the Indian market.”⁴ The *mélange* of aesthetics, traditions and dynamics has the decisive effect of paying tribute and parodying Bollywood, at the same time that it recalls Hollywood dynamics to have a wider audience. With her own crossover cosmopolitanism – being born in India, but brought up in Canada – Deepa Mehta aims to appeal with her movies to more Western audiences. However, *Bollywood/Hollywood* does not simply conform to a superficial mixture of traditions, but engages with Shakespeare in the process. The movie correlates Shakespeare and Bollywood extensively thanks to the first-generation immigrant Shakespearean-spouting matriarch.

This chapter then examines the ways in which Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood* appropriates Shakespeare. It takes as a premise the idea that the movie both pays homage and parodies Bollywood and Shakespeare. Given that Deepa Mehta’s ‘extravaganza’ explores the Bollywood aesthetics, the film gains accidental additional knowledge on Shakespeare. The first section of this chapter highlights the portrait of the stereotypes of the diasporic community in Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood*. The second section entitled identity touches on the issue that while first generation immigrants seem to have constructed their identities thanks to Shakespeare – having been educated in a colonized country – the identities of second and third generation individuals are influenced by Bollywood. In diasporic communities, the two independent – though mutually imbricated – subjects (Shakespeare and Bollywood) contribute to the formation of their personalities. The third section focuses on the different kinds of hybridity present in the movie – of film genres, of Shakespearean

⁴ Rachel Dwyer in John Winter, “Bombay Breakout,” *The Guardian Friday Review* (12 December 2003): 11 and *Trade Guide* 49.14 (4 January 2003): 10.

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texts, and even of traditions regarding the understanding of the Shakespearean *oeuvre*. This section will demonstrate that a diasporic director like Deepa Mehta recycles the Shakespearean texts as filtered through the Bollywood genre. Given that Bollywood cinema refuses to acknowledge the Shakespearean source texts, the grandmother in Mehta's movie (mis)quotes him and is unable to cite him. The myth of Shakespeare 'the icon' in Occident is smoothing the path for a 'Shakespeare' that has transcended his British heritage.

1. Clichés

In tandem with other diasporic movies like Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) or Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* also parodies certain features of the diaspora that are designed to indicate the internal structure of the Bollywood genre. Set in the 'little India' of Toronto, the story revolves around the love relationships of a third generation immigrant (Rahul Seth), first with a white pop star called Kimberly and later with a NRI escort (Sue) who finally becomes his fiancé. The narrative equally concentrates on the family's reactions to these love encounters. The main plot is accompanied by a subplot which entails the engagement parties of Rahul's sister – Twinky – and her fiancé Bobby. If mother love, the generation gap, class/caste snobbery and "the clash between tradition and progress," are supposed to construct the dynamics of the diasporic community, *Bollywood/Hollywood* imitates them.⁵ Yet, *Bollywood/Hollywood's* recreation of the diaspora is certainly

⁵ Patrick Peters, "Bollywood/Hollywood," *Empire* 166 (1 April 2003): 64.

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anachronistic for Hindi cinema is moving now in a new direction. The imitation of all these characteristics is “as stuck in the 1970s as the recreation of Hindi film.”⁶

The film considers significantly the articulation of the generation gap. In an obsolete vein, the mother and grandmother value Indian traditions, such as arranged marriages to Indian women – whether living in the host country or in the homeland – to preserve their culture.⁷ In a hilarious scene of *Bollywood/Hollywood* in which possible candidates for future spouses are interviewed by Rahul’s mother and grandmother, a caption ironically and jokingly alludes to the ‘transaction’ claiming: “mother goes shopping.” Both are against marriages to white women. Their maintenance of customs can be seen on the occasions when the whole family prays together to honor the gods Rama and Krishna, or at Twinky and Bobby’s engagement, in which the display of ‘Indianness’ reaches its peak. Similarly, Sue’s father constantly clings to the rules of his place of birth. He feels a very deep nostalgia for his Bathinda – his motherland, “the land of corn bread and mustard greens, of sweet sunshine and the sound of ankle-bells.”⁸ He seeks an unreal, idealized homeland, which only exists in his head.⁹ In spite of the fact that he lives in Toronto with his family, he has not adapted to the host country, and molds his character according to what he considers Indian principles. His attitude clashes with that of his daughter, an in-between subject born in Toronto unable to understand her father’s melancholy. Curiously enough, the personalities of Mummy-ji as well as Sue’s father generate intriguing traces that testify to a Bollywood presence;

⁶ Dwyer, “Review of *Bollywood/Hollywood*,” 34.

⁷ According to Madhulika Khandelwal, the prioritizing of Indian art and values constitutes the main features that form the first generation immigrants’ mentality. See Madhulika Khandelwal, “Indian Immigrants in Queens, New York City: Patterns of Spatial Concentration and Distribution, 1965-1990.” In *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora*. Ed. P. Van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 178.

⁸ This is the way Sue’s father describes his Bathinda.

⁹ See Francia, Hall and Mishra.

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their shared pathologies and extreme reactions are Bollywood-esque. These two first generation immigrants use Bollywood as a springboard for exploring their identities, and for clinging to the past.

The third generation diasporic community is also recreated following the main traits of the Bollywood canon. Rahul defines himself as a Westernized Indian, for he lives wealthily, enjoys the pleasures of independence, wears Western clothes, but is destined to be guided by 'Indian' principles. The concept of filial obedience – typical in Bollywood movies – comes to light when Rahul's mother commands him to find a girlfriend for Twinky's wedding. He hires an escort – Sue – and, thinking that she is Hispanic, teaches her the "ten clues to be Indian" – involving clothes, behavior, religion – as if he were following a book entitled "Indian values for dummies." Curiously enough, Rahul becomes immediately enchanted by Sue when she sings a song in Hindi; he is then charmed by her 'Indianness.' The song "melts the cynical hero's attitude toward love and marriage, revealing his true Indian heart."¹⁰ Deepa Mehta provides an extremely clichéd, disappointing resolution to the hero's realization of his 'Indianness.'

Bollywood/Hollywood also focuses on Sue's crisis of identity. According to Emily Ignacio, diasporic subjects vacillate between the two cultures they apparently embrace – the homeland and hostland traditions.¹¹ Sue – Sungita – is not only dissatisfied with two cultures, but positions herself as an individual partial to multiple identities. In fact, Mehta's first approach to the character of Sue is made through the appropriation of a Hispanic identity. When Rahul asks her where she is from, and she provides a very vague answer "I can be whoever you want me to be," he assumes she

¹⁰ Sarrazin, "Songs from the Heart," 216.

¹¹ Emily Ignacio, *Building Diaspora: Filipino Community Formation on the Internet* (New Brunswick, NJ, USA: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 47.

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has Hispanic origins. She plays that role in the first half of the film, and even collaborates in her construction of an Indian self for Rahul's family until she reconciles with her 'Indianness' at Twinky and Bobby's engagement. Via constant and forceful flashbacks, the spectators learn about the origins of Sungita's conflict with her Indian identity. It is rooted in her parents' attempt to arrange a marriage for her, and in her complex relationship with her father, a living dead in Toronto who longs for the return to his beloved India. Following in the footsteps of Bollywood movies from the 1970s like *Purab Aur Pachhim* (dir. Manoj Kumar, 1970), the heroine is turned into the ideal Indian woman, and all her troubles are finally dispelled.

The most thought-provoking illustration of the discrimination against NRIs occurs to the character of Govind – Rahul's brother. Mehta brings to the fore this process of repression via low-angle shots and shot-reverse-shots which indicate Govind's trauma. With a considerable lack of confidence, Govind is and has been the constant object of cultural, ideological and religious bigotry at school. His schoolmates fight against him, break his videocamera and insult him. But, this discrimination is not an isolated case, has been part and parcel of Govind's existence, and the cause of his alienation. This violence as an unfortunate reaction on the part of the host country towards foreigners has been analysed by Sandhya Shukla, who even delves into xenophobic murders. The hostility towards Govind is interrupted by Sue, who encourages the boy to face his partners in a naïve and surreal sequence. Govind may be associated with other characters in films who have also been the victims of hostility, like a Sikh boy in Gurinder Chadha's *The Mistress of Spices* (2005). Although Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* is supposed to reconfigure the genre via parody and clichés, as Corey Creekmur notices, the movie seems "far inferior to the films it

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believes itself to be cleverer than.”¹² The imitation of Bollywood aesthetics entails misconception of the genre, and the Bollywood dynamics can never be as accessible as the movie aims.

2. Identity

According to Ziauddin Sardar, “the metaphysics of the Amitabh and post-Amitabh films has been internalized by a whole generation of Asians who have known little of the subcontinent except what they have seen on the endlessly grinding and over-used video machines.”¹³ Such monopoly of Bollywood movies in the construction of the identities of second generation immigrants can be observed in Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood* along with the hypercanonical presence of ‘Englishness’ through the quotations – or rather misquotations – of Shakespeare by the matriarch.

Grandma-ji – starring Dipa Pathak in her last role – always responds enthusiastically by alluding to Shakespeare at difficult and important moments. Her treatment of Shakespeare is experimental throughout the movie, for she misquotes him, and conceives the famous excerpts as her own. Thus, she appropriates Shakespeare’s language for her own ends. For instance, at the opening of the movie, the male protagonist third generation immigrant Rahul Seth is dating a white pop star called Kimberly. As his father dies at the very beginning, he is brought up by his Mummy-ji and his Grandma-ji, who are against this relationship with someone that does not belong to the Indian community. To show her disgust after the encounter with Kimberly,

¹² Corey K. Creekmur, “Review of *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*,” *Film Quarterly* 59.1: 50.

¹³ Ziauddin Sardar, “Dilip Kumar Made me Do It.” In *The Secret Politics of Our Desires: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema*. Ed. Ashis Nandy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 70.

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Grandma-ji misquotes from *Richard III*: “this is the winter of our discontent,” instead of “now is the winter of our discontent” (see Fig. 27).¹⁴ Besides, the use of the quote equally shows that it is misapplied – like in many newspapers – because the winter of our discontent for the Yorks meant that winter had been replaced by summer and they were the reigning dynasty; so, in the play, originally it means something positive. However, grandma-ji in *Bollywood/Hollywood* uses it to show her disgrace by having a white girl in the family; exactly the opposite of its original source. When she is faced with the possibility of Rahul marrying this white Canadian pop star, the granny states: “Et tu, Brutus” in a very clear parallelism with “Et tu, Brute” immortalized by Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (see Fig. 28).¹⁵ Generally understood to signify the utmost betrayal, grandma-ji utters the sentence to refer to her grandson’s disloyalty. Later in the film, after Kimberly died meditating and Rahul was forced to find a girl from his own community if he wanted his sister’s wedding to take place, Rahul hires an escort called Sue to play the role of his girlfriend in front of his whole family. Mehta continues to explore the Shakespearean connection in a scene in which Sue and the granny are talking sincerely. When Sue invites grandma-ji to go to a club, she appropriates Jaques’ words from *As You Like It* and says: “All the world is a stage, and all men and women are mere players” (see Fig. 29).¹⁶ She inserts “are,” omits “the,” and replaces “merely” by “mere;” she certainly feels free to manipulate at ease. Toying with this metaphor, grandma-ji claims that she can in fact attend a disco, for, after all, the world is a stage where the actors are merely performing a role which can be played somewhere else.

¹⁴ *Richard III* 1.1: 1.

¹⁵ *Julius Caesar* 3.1: 77.

¹⁶ *As You Like It* 2.7: 146-147.

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Fig. 27. The grandmother (mis)quoting Shakespeare. *Bollywood/Hollywood*.



Fig. 28. The *Julius Caesar* misquotation.



Fig. 29. The misquotation from *As You Like It* by the Shakespearean spouting grandmother in *Bollywood/Hollywood*.

At Twinky and Bobby's engagement party, the spectators encounter another misquotation when Rahul and Sue's love is beginning to flourish. Rahul's grandmother claims: "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks. /It is the East, and Sue is the sun."¹⁷ Although she retains an almost line-by-line quotation, she pointedly replaces Juliet for Sue. When the narrative seems to manifest that Sue is in fact a prostitute, and Rahul's mother denies her love for Sue claiming that she did not know that she was a

¹⁷ *Romeo and Juliet* 2.2: 2-3.

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prostitute, the grandmother quotes from *Macbeth*: “How’s the smell of the blood still? All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.”¹⁸ Grandma-ji replaces “here” for “how,” and compares Rahul’s mother with Lady Macbeth. Just like Lady Macbeth could not clean the stigma of having collaborated in King Duncan’s murder, Rahul’s mother cannot make amends for her wrongdoing regarding Rahul’s marriage choices. The last Shakespearean allusion best represents grandma-ji’s uneasy relationship with Shakespeare. It is perhaps one of the most remarkable, engaging and original sequences in the entire film. When the whole family refuses to trust Sue, the granny says to Rahul: “I’m here not to bury Caesar, but to praise him.” Rahul answers: Shakespeare? And the granny finally utters: “I don’t know, what’s the difference? The meaning is clear, bury the past, praise the future.” This fragment illustrates again another misquotation on the part of the grandmother. Instead of using Antony’s ironically loaded line “I come here to bury Caesar, not to praise him” – in fact intended to praise Caesar – she removes the irony and clearly shows her intention of honouring Sue.¹⁹ She basically insists on the fact that Rahul should not focus too much on Sue’s past, but on their future together. Even though the Shakespearean references are endless, her refusal to acknowledge the Shakespearean source and, subsequently the Shakespearean primacy, reveals her constant negotiation with the plays and the influence of Bollywood in her understanding of Shakespeare.

Grandma-ji both mimics and deconstructs the Shakespearean texts. On the one hand, her endless quotations of the Shakespearean texts place her as a Shakespearean fan whose identity has been self-fashioned with the help of the plays – the close-up shot of a volume of the complete works of Shakespeare on her night table simply confirms it.

¹⁸ *Macbeth* 5.1: 20.

¹⁹ *Julius Caesar* 3.2: 80.

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In a way, the protagonist of Rituparno Ghosh's *The Last Lear* (2007) Harish Mishra (starring Amitabh Bachchan) seems to be modelled on the grandmother of *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Like the grandmother, Shakespeare has contributed to Mishra's identity. He was a theatre actor who had performed the role of Puck, always quotes Shakespearean texts, and had an accident before he played the role of King Lear. Yet, the only difference between these two characters is that while Mishra always defends, kneels down and even reasserts the value of Shakespeare's authority claiming "don't you dare say something against Shakespeare," grandma-ji has a clearly vexed relationship with Shakespeare, as she often misquotes him.²⁰ On the other hand, as Madhavi Menon claims, by misquoting Shakespeare, grandma-ji perfectly enacts what Homi Bhabha has called the "ambivalence of mimicry," almost the same, but not quite.²¹ For Homi K. Bhabha, the colonised being imitates and emulates the coloniser and becomes similar, but still preserves his 'otherness.'²² Articulated as both "resemblance and menace," mimicry is frequently political.²³ As grandma-ji "freely inserts words and commonplace truths of her own into quotes from Shakespeare," she mimes the culture of the colonizers, appropriating it and, at the same time, desauthorising its power.²⁴ She is the prototypical image of a colonized woman from the pre-Independence era; thus, her Shakespeare 'obsession' is rooted in her childhood and education. Given that she belongs to the high class, her schooling has to be associated

²⁰ Harish Mishra's identity seems also modelled on the main character of *36 Chowringhee Lane* (dir. Aparna Sen, 1980) called Miss Violet Stoneham – starring Jennifer Kendal. Miss Violet Stoneham is nostalgic of the colonial past in which Shakespeare was a key figure. She endlessly quotes from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*. Like Miss Violet, Mishra also grumbles about the loss of theatre and Shakespeare.

²¹ Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 74. In his chapter "Citation. Bollywood Quotes *Much Ado*," Menon highlights the differences between citation and quotation. While the former renders authority, the latter merely authors.

²² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 74.

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with Shakespeare and the authority he professed in colonial India. During the colonial period in India, Shakespeare represented and accentuated the essence of ‘Englishness,’ and its study was obligatory in the curriculum since 1835 for the *bhadralok* – the Indian *élite*. As a first generation immigrant, the audience has to assume that Shakespeare has been part and parcel in the search of her identity, but she resists his authority due to India’s colonial past. Mehta then continues to explore the confusion with Shakespeare in the movie.

If the grandmother internalizes Shakespeare, other characters in *Bollywood/Hollywood* cling to Bollywood, for it “helps to construct South Asian and diasporic identities.”²⁵ The first articulation of Bollywood is central in the character of Go (Govind, Rahul’s brother). When Rahul announces that he is in love with a white girl, the melodrama in his family ensues with the mother and grandmother complaining. For Govind, this melodrama is “way better than any Bollywood movie.” The mother’s reaction is quite ‘Bollywoodesque,’ and Govind compares his mother with Reema Lagoo in *Hum Saath-Saath Hain: We Stand United* (dir. Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1999). Besides, he also makes a parallelism between his grandmother and Zohra Sehgal in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 1999). Treated as a crucial influence, recent Bollywood is convenient for the shaping of his identity. Always with a hand-held camera, Govind immortalizes the important moments in the family in extremely metafilmic sequences. But Mummy-ji equally participates in the discourse about Bollywood cinema in *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Just after she has been informed about Kimberly’s death and Rahul’s unhappiness, she says: “What have I done to deserve this? To have a Devdas hero for a son.” As the filmmaker always has a Western

²⁵ Desai, “Bollywood Abroad,” 117.

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audience in mind, there is a clarification in the captions of who Devdas is, a very tragic and well-known Indian hero.²⁶ The behaviour of Mummy-ji throughout the whole movie appears to be based on the mothers of Bollywood films of the 70s and 80s, obsessed with arranged marriages. Sue and Rahul also allude to the Bollywood genre.²⁷ At the club where they meet, they have a very curious conversation: “That sounds very Bollywood.” Rahul is certainly shocked and says: “What do you know about Bollywood? S: Enough. R: Do you like Bollywood? S: I love it. All the sing-song and the melodrama.” R: “If you are familiar with Bollywood, it almost makes you honorary Indian.” They consider Bollywood cinema an identity marker because it acts as the ‘voice of the nation;’ the films are “emblems of national homeland culture.”²⁸ Interestingly, even one of the suitable female candidates for Rahul seems to have forged her identity on Bollywood movies. While she strongly criticises parallel cinema that concentrates on poverty and other similar issues, she praises Bollywood for being able to depict and represent Indian values and traditions. This assertion cannot be taken seriously and the irony is implied, for Deepa Mehta herself has been considered a high-brow filmmaker in the movies she did prior to *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Finally, Sue’s father emphasizes all the time the cultural space between Bollywood and the diaspora. He constantly craves for tradition, but the “tradition that he proudly draws sustenance from is old Bollywood films!”²⁹ He is in the tradition of powerless father figures in Bollywood movies, such as the father in *Dilwale Dilhania Le Jayenge*. When he tells Sue off, he adopts sentences from movies. At one point, Sue realises that he is quoting

²⁶ The story of Devdas revolves around the love story between Paro and Devdas. When an arranged marriage is fixed for Paro and she marries an old man, Devdas undergoes a state of decadence and degradation, which involves heavy drinking. Then, a courtesan – Chandramukhi – falls in love with Devdas and helps him in this difficult period of his life. Devdas finally dies at Paro’s house without being able to see her off.

²⁷ Like on other occasions in the movie, the captions poke fun at Bollywood’s traditions.

²⁸ Desai, “Bollywood Abroad,” 131.

²⁹ *Bollywood/Hollywood* production notes, 4.

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from *Pardes* (dir. Subhash Ghai, 1997), an old movie about the corrupt West.³⁰ His vision of the world is based on the Bollywood films of the 70s, which concentrated on the rejection of Westernization. Thus, Deepa Mehta's movie reveals interesting parallels between Shakespeare and Bollywood regarding the building of one's identity. Yet, if the personality of the first generation immigrants is considerably influenced by Shakespeare and what the author represented in India, the identity of the second and third generation is controlled by Bollywood. Bollywood has now officially emerged as the new 'in' thing, the new 'ideoscape' that contributes to the dissemination of ideas to explore identity issues.³¹ Therefore, *Bollywood/Hollywood* seems to be in tandem with projects like James Ivory's *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) for both insist in the replacement of Shakespeare by Bollywood in the construction of the identities of the new generations.

3. Hybridity

As there is *prima facie* evidence that the notion of hybridity is possibly the most studied feature in diasporic communities for NRIs usually mix their homeland's culture and values with those of the host country, hybridity is at the peak of its meaning in Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Although García Canclini proposes that every single being can be a hybrid – whether he is diasporic or not – Mehta chooses its primary significance.³² In fact, much of the production's vitality lies in its ingenious use of the concept, which extends to the combination of the film genres, the interconnection of

³⁰ Sue's father even sings the lyrics of the well-known song "I Love India" from the movie *Pardes*. The lyrics say: "I've seen London, Paris and Japan. I've seen Michael Jackson, I've seen it all. But my India beats the hollow."

³¹ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 32.

³² García Canclini.

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“Shakespeare traditions that are both Asian and Western,” and the presence of multiple Shakespearean texts in the forms of quotations, intertexts or visual cinematic shots.³³

This section touches the chord with the idea that the parody of Bollywood necessarily implies the parody of Shakespeare. The apparently superficial and naïve crossover film adds unexpected layers to the question of politics attached to its particular use and abuse of Shakespeare. *Bollywood/Hollywood* has a pronounced purpose to boost the cultural connection between Shakespeare and Bollywood to indirectly contribute to a new understanding of Shakespeare.

According to Jigna Desai, “*Bollywood/Hollywood* literally and figuratively merges the two cinemas with its psychosocial dialogue accompanying romantic comedy, family drama, and musical numbers.”³⁴ The three-hour Bollywood films are ‘multigenres’ characterized by the presence of melodrama and action, but romance and music above all. This imbrication of sing-song and melodrama fills in the screen of *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Deepa Mehta exploits the conventions that have become compulsory in the typical Bollywood movie.³⁵ The musical numbers composed by Sandeep Chowta are usually outside the film’s diegesis, are sung in Hindi and represent the characters’ mood.³⁶ According to Natalie Sarrazin, there are certain songs in Bollywood films that allude to the different stages in a heteronormative romance.³⁷ In *Bollywood/Hollywood*, the spectators can listen to a song when Kimberly dies, when Rahul realizes Sue’s true origins via *Soona Sona Roop Hai* – a typical Punjabi wedding song – at the engagement party, when Sue and Rahul’s love mushrooms (*Rang Rang*

³³ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 34.

³⁴ Desai, “Bollywood Abroad,” 118.

³⁵ Peters, 1.

³⁶ As Richard Burt mentions, Sandeep Chowta is a Bollywood composer, while the choreographer is from Toronto. See Burt, “Shakespeare and Asia in Postdiasporic Cinemas: Spin-offs and Citations of the Plays from Bollywood to Hollywood,” 275.

³⁷ Sarrazin, “Celluloid Love Songs,” 208.

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Mere), when they have an argument, etc.³⁸ In order to appeal to more Western audiences and to create an “object of macabre beauty and discomfort,” Mehta at the same time distances her film from various Bollywood conventions. For instance, she includes most of the musical numbers at the numerous celebration events for Twinky and Bobby’s future wedding to be more coherent with the plotline.³⁹ The movie is also deprived of the lovers’ duet in exotic places. Moreover, the captions prior to the songs, such as Rahul-ji’s song “Life is so empty with no you,” inject humour “negating the song’s melodramatic impact.”⁴⁰ The heavily moralistic Bollywood movies are challenged in the song *Dil Kabootar Khana Hai*, performed by the drag queen Rockhini – also Rahul’s driver, Rocky – in an attempt to hint at the cross-dressing of Shakespeare’s plays. Unlike the Bollywood originals, the dances included in *Bollywood/Hollywood* tend to be improvised; there is no hard choreography work in each musical number. The songs then both pay a tribute and parody the Bollywood genre.

The veneration of other Bollywood maxims is illustrated in the inclusion of marriage spectacles – or, rather, engagement festivities.⁴¹ Following the path of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* – the Bollywood marriage film *par excellence* – the wedding festivities are also included in ‘masala’ projects like Mira Nair’s *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), Gurinder Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2005), or even Gurinder Chadha’s *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), via the introduction of Pinky’s wedding. In their attempt to concentrate on Bollywood aesthetics, all these crossover movies do not dilute the

³⁸ At this moment there is a cameo of Akshaye Khanna in the movie, a very famous Bollywood actor who for instance played one of the leading roles in *Dil Chahta Hai*.

³⁹ Guy Maddin, “Bollywood/Hollywood: Bully for Bollywood’s musical melodramas!!” *Cinema Scope* 12 (1 October 2002): 22.

⁴⁰ Bollywood/Hollywood production notes.

⁴¹ According to Tejaswini Ganti, the backdrop of cultural spectacles like weddings is very frequent in Bollywood movies. See Ganti, 36.

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impact of these spectacles, but shed light upon them. As any Bollywood prototypical and traditional film or masala product, marriage is highlighted in Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood*, and this topic continues to strive for legitimacy. From the very beginning, the audience learns about Twinky – Rahul's sister – and Bobby's engagement, and how crucial it is in the course of events. Mummy-ji threatens Rahul to cancel Twinky's wedding if he does not find a nice Indian girl to marry, and he has to accept it since Twinky is pregnant. Later on, every single event is related to the future wedding, whether the action develops at the bride or groom's house or at Rahul's apartment. Events range from the stag and hen parties to the 'appropriate' engagement celebrations, and are the perfect occasions to display Indian customs, values and traditions.

But apart from a collection of Bollywood motifs, Deepa Mehta's film lays claims to Bollywood as an active presence *per se*, even intertextually speaking. The shots in which Bollywood 'filmi' music can be heard and movies play in the background are infinite. From Rahul and Sue's first meeting at a club to the appearance of the ghost of Rahul's father, Bollywood is always part of the backdrop, as another entity. In fact, a considerable number of A. R. Rahman's songs namely "Rang De" or "Mehndi Hai" are part of the music scores. Mehta's film equally includes music from *Kabhi Kushi Kabhie Gham* (dir. Karan Johar, 2001) and from her earlier project *Fire*. Bollywood buffs are also some of the intertexts in *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Justyna Kucharska highlights that some of the clips which appear in the background are taken from *Pardes* (dir. Subash Ghai, 1997), *Khubsoorat* (dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1980)

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and *Thakshak* (dir. Govind Nihalani, 1999).⁴² According to Rachel Dwyer, the closing dance reminds the audience of *Howrah Bridge* (dir. Shakti Samanta, 1958) and the frequent use of ‘Shakalaka Baby’ by A. R. Rahman suddenly recalls the Tamil movie *Mudhalvan* (dir. S. Shankar, 1999).⁴³ The *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* routine with everyone falling in love with Sue has been noticed by Sara Gill.⁴⁴ As has been said above, the crossover film makes factual references to old and new Bollywood texts, such as *Pardes*, *Devdas*, *Hum Saath-Saath Hain: We Stand United* or *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* to prove once and again that the majority of the characters have grown up with the Bollywood film sagas. To merge even more with Bollywood, the movie introduces “Hindi cinema stalwarts” like Dipa Pathak or Akshaye Khanna.⁴⁵ The final result is a hyper-real atmosphere full of Bollywood clichés.

But, as a “joyous mish-mash of Indian and American plot clichés,” Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood* equally inserts Hollywood conventions.⁴⁶ The first allusion to Hollywood appears at the very outset of the movie when the pop star Kimberly is introduced. She works for the cinema industry, and dies with the famous logo behind her. The love story between Sue and Rahul is considered to be based on *Pretty Woman* (dir. Garry Marshall, 1990), for Sue is working as an escort, is hired by Rahul and finally they end up together as a couple.⁴⁷ If one of the well-known features of Bollywood cinema is the forbidden onscreen kissing, *Bollywood/Hollywood* presents

⁴² Justyna Kucharska, “Diasporic Cinema as a Double Palimpsest. *Bollywood/Hollywood* by Deepa Mehta.” In *Visions of Canada*. Ed. Catherine Bates, Graham Huggan, Milena Marinkova and Jeffrey Orr (Masaryk: Masaryk University Press, 2007), 213.

⁴³ Rachel Dwyer, “Review of *Bollywood/Hollywood*,” 34.

⁴⁴ Sara Gill, “Sara’s BollyBash,” *Eastern Eye Magazine* (February 14, 2003): 9. Apart from the *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* routine, the movie can equally be influenced by *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, in which all the characters end up head over heels in love with Aman.

⁴⁵ Dwyer, “Review of *Bollywood/Hollywood*,” 34.

⁴⁶ Alice Fisher, “*Bollywood/Hollywood*,” *Time Out* (February 19, 2003): 71.

⁴⁷ Kate Stables, “*Bollywood/Hollywood*,” *Sight and Sound* 14.4 (April 1, 2004): 74; Gill, 9 or *Trade Guide* 49.14 (January 4, 2003): 9.

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a unique challenge by its visual performance. Concerning the cinematic techniques, the numerous handheld and Steadicam scenes together with the frequent use of dollies promote the interplay with Hollywood.⁴⁸ All the reviewers of Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* sustain the argument that the love story in the film follows the *modus operandi* of a typical Hollywood rom-com,⁴⁹ and Sue's actions are the engines that propel the Western-style narrative.⁵⁰ The film, however, gives primacy to Bollywood rather than Hollywood aesthetics, and, as Rachel Dwyer points out, the apparently perfect *mélange* of genres never completely works.⁵¹

Hybridity in Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* is not only at the level of the mixture of film genres, but also at the level of the interconnection of Shakespearean traditions. The endless Shakespearean quotations from *Richard III*, *As You Like It* or *Romeo and Juliet* on the part of the matriarch remind the audience of the fact that Mehta's project is not a customary Bollywood film. In fact, "no self-respecting Bollywood matriarch would quote Shakespeare; no ma'am, she would draw her darts from the quiver of Indian scriptures."⁵² If Shakespeare in Bollywood movies usually emanates from the mouth of University professors such as Dr. Kundanlal in *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* (dir. K. Balachander, 1981), who explains to his daughter the meaning of the famous fragment 'what's in a name' in depth, or from high-school literature teachers like Mrs. Braganza in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (dir. Karan Johar, 1998), Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* turns away from this tradition, liberates Shakespeare from the

⁴⁸ Marise Strauss, "Koch Lights up Mehta's Bollywood Extravaganza," *Playback* (November 11, 2002): 22.

⁴⁹ To emphasize the romance, Mehta uses the "palette of blues, reds and violets." Strauss, 22.

⁵⁰ See Stables, 74; Davidson, 23.

⁵¹ Dwyer, "Review of Bollywood/Hollywood," 34. Other reviews of Mehta's movie equally insist on the failure of the Hollywood rom-com. See *Empire* 177 (March 1, 2004): 137.

⁵² *Bollywood/Hollywood* production notes.

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scholarly world, and confines him to a first generation immigrant grandmother.⁵³ Instead of exploiting the image of a matriarch excessively focused on religion – like the grandmother in Srinivas Krishna’s *Masala* (1992) – grandma-ji is obsessed with Shakespeare, always clinging to it at crucial moments. The movie demonstrates unique ways in which Shakespeare is reconfigured with a certain familiarity and strangeness at the same time. Although the Bollywood tendency is symptomatic of the curious absence of literal translations from Shakespearean texts, Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood* departs from this tradition, and includes quotations in English. In spite of the fact that all the characters in *Bollywood/Hollywood* often switch from English to Hindi and vice versa, and the “two tongues have to become one,” the mode of interpreting Shakespeare chosen by Mehta is still in the original English language.⁵⁴ The singularity of the quotations lies in the fact that they are rather misquotations, linking the Western tradition of reciting Shakespeare with the Indian colonial past in which grandma-ji stands for the colonized subject. The lack of acknowledgement of the Shakespearean source equally lays a strong claim to the centrality of the Bollywood tradition in the understanding of Shakespeare, for Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood* follows the path of previous Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots.

Yet, Shakespeare is not only quoted in the movie, and has several incarnations. The core narrative of *Bollywood/Hollywood* frequently uses and reframes Shakespeare, adding again a Western layer to the film. Viewers will immediately recognize the Shakespearean allusions from the very outset. At the beginning of the movie, Rahul is

⁵³ *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* itself is very clearly based on *Romeo and Juliet*. Sapna – the Juliet counterpart – asks for the notes of *Romeo and Juliet* at the outset of the film, and can be seen on several occasions reading the play. Together with *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* is one of the few Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots that preserves the tragic ending. The Indian Romeo and Juliet couple – Vasu and Sapna – jumps off the cliffs to commit suicide.

⁵⁴ Maddin, 22.

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talking to his father in his deathbed, and the subsequent cinematic image spectators see is that of a picture of Rahul's father. The frequent appearances of the ghost of Rahul's father certainly provide a reference point to Shakespeare via the connection with Hamlet and his father's ghost. Rahul, like Hamlet, sees the ghost of his father. Charles and Mary Lamb in their *Tales from Shakespeare* wrote that "the young prince...loved and venerated the memory of his dead father almost to idolatry."⁵⁵ This veneration has been reproduced in *Bollywood/Hollywood*, where Rahul always seems to be guided by his father. Twinky and Bobby's elopement to get married is inevitably associated with Jessica and Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* or Othello and Desdemona in *Othello*. Therefore, Shakespeare is also an active presence in Deepa Mehta's film.

As a sign of directorial bravura in her delicate task of balancing between these two extreme poles in the understanding of Shakespeare, Mehta winks at the Bollywood tradition via a sudden and brief reference to *Romeo and Juliet*. Bollywood's appropriation of Shakespeare is not characterized by a mystification of Shakespeare, but rather by its particular use and abuse of *Romeo and Juliet*. A significant number of Bollywood films such as *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1977) or *Maine Pyar Kiya* (dir. Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1989) establish a connection with the famous Shakespearean text through the love story *per se* – considerably reduced to the main ideas. In other Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots like *Ek Duije Ke Liye* (dir. K. Balachander, 1981) or *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994), the play is commented, alluded to, analysed and even performed (*1942: A Love Story*). Besides, *1942: A Love Story* stands out for its particular representation of the famous balcony scene – depicted in the movie three times. Taking as a premise the importance of *Romeo and Juliet* in Bollywood

⁵⁵ Qtd. in Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 76.

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cinema, Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* parodies it at the film's ending. After the couple's apparent break-up, Rahul climbs Sue's balcony to woo Sue. Contrary to the audience's expectations, Rahul does not quote and cite Shakespeare, but Pablo Neruda – alluding to his first encounter with Sue in which she quoted Sonnet XII.⁵⁶ Thus, the irony reaches its climax in this Romeo & Juliet-esque balcony scene in which the spectators wait for a Shakespearean allusion, to no effect, as the allusion never materialises. The Shakespearean presence in Deepa Mehta's movie is then a curious mixture of its interpretation in Bollywood and Hollywood; it both exemplifies the traditional concept of Shakespeare in the West with an interesting debunking of its cultural authority, as done in Bollywood.

Conclusion

Fennyman: Who is that?

*Henslowe: Nobody. The Author.*⁵⁷

Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood* seems to insist in the complete erasure of Shakespeare's authorship. If Shakespeare "exists in drag in Bollywood films," i.e. Shakespeare is not an active presence, but a passive one, like another resource, this Indo-Canadian movie is part of this Bollywood legacy regarding Shakespeare's role towards his own *oeuvre*.⁵⁸ When Courtney Lehmann concentrates on the process of giving the Shakespearean corpus its body (its *auteur*) back, and argues that something of

⁵⁶ Alice Fisher claims that the movie in fact pokes fun at cultural stereotypes by its mixture of references to typically acclaimed high-brow cultural products such as William Shakespeare with allusions to low-brow products like JLo. See Fisher, 71.

⁵⁷ From *Shakespeare in Love* (dir. John Madden, 1998), screenplay by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard.

⁵⁸ Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare*, 93.

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Shakespeare endures in spite of the ‘problematization’ of authorship brought about by poststructuralist theory, the lack of authorship gains foothold in Bollywood and, subsequently, in *Bollywood/Hollywood*.⁵⁹ The Shakespearean corpus somehow remains, but is never cited in the traditional Bollywood genre. Considered one of the most important emblems of *Englishness*, and associated with the colonial past in India, Shakespeare the author does not lie at the heart of his work. Deepa Mehta’s *Bollywood/Hollywood* certainly continues this tradition according to which Shakespearean authorship is problematized. The movie equally gains a political dimension by the endless (mis)quotations on the part of the grandmother, as if the Shakespearean works had to be cannibalized, spectralized, appropriated – or rather – misappropriated not only in the post-independence India, but also in the diasporic world. Although the misquotation can be discouraging, it also entails fluidity with the Shakespearean corpora.

However, Mehta’s movie not only conforms to Bollywood principles, but also participates in the Hollywood tradition of interpreting and understanding Shakespeare via the endless allusions to his works – for no Bollywood movie would do this. When filmmakers in the West play with Bollywood aesthetics, the reception and interpretation of Shakespeare is filtered via Bollywood, but with a Hollywood touch. *Bollywood/Hollywood* has a contested relationship with Hollywood as well as with Bollywood, and, similarly, it also has a contested relationship with the two traditions of understanding Shakespeare. A crossover movie like *Bollywood/Hollywood* becomes the perfect means not to restore Shakespeare, but to experiment with him. In fact, the interpretive possibilities of Shakespeare are enriched thanks to these hybrid works

⁵⁹ Courtney Lehmann, *Shakespeare Remains: Theater to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2002).

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which toy with these two traditions, since they present “Shakespeare as a continually evolving repository of meaning rather than a fixed textual corpus.”⁶⁰ These instances – diasporic works with a Shakespearean touch – are rereadings of Shakespeare’s symbolic capital, of his works, and of his world-wide reception to renegotiate the boundaries between the Eastern and Western sites. The fusion of the traditions is configured to participate actively in a new Shakespearean presence, in which the parody of the national English poet is promoted along the parody of Bollywood dynamics. Interrelations between Shakespeare, Bollywood and diaspora in *Bollywood/Hollywood* expand the repertoire of ‘Shakespeareanness’ in the West. In this film, Shakespeare becomes an “intercultural signifier,” and interestingly points at a two-way exchange.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 34.

⁶¹ Daniel Fischlin, “Deepa Mehta and Shakespeare”

http://www.uoguelph.ca/shakespeare/multimedia/video/m_v_deepa_mehta.cfm

Chapter 8: Transnational and bi-racial *Romeos and Juliets*:

Mississippi Masala and Bollywood Queen

“So when everybody keeps saying it’s going to be one world now, right, it’s going to be a global village, the assumption is it’s going to be Western media in this global village. Well they’re wrong, they’re not. Because the moment it becomes a global village, then Western media is totally threatened by Asian culture and Asian media. So in the next stage, that is what’s going to happen. And what you are seeing in the UK is the beginning of that”¹

The fascination with Asian culture which Kapur refers to in this quotation has also been felt in adaptations of Shakespeare. In the 1980s, Peter Brook’s *Mahabharata* (1985) and Ariane Mnouchkine’s productions – *Richard II* (1981), *Twelfth Night* (1982), *Henry IV, Part One* (1984) – appropriated Shakespeare freely and “dislocated Indian theatrical modes.”² Brook and Mnouchkine are the best-known theatre directors identified with the importation of Asian performance modes, and the exponents of interculturality *par excellence*. Moreover, European tours of Asian Shakespearean productions have become common. In his co-edited book with Charles Ross *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace* which aims to develop the links between these three entities, Alexander Huang claims that a book on Asian

¹ Florian Stadler, “Cultural Connections: *Lagaan* and its Audience Responses,” *Third World Quarterly* 26.3: 518.

² Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 21.

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Shakespeares in Europe is still needed.³ Beginning with the Thich Nhat Hanh scene in Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000) to Kenneth Branagh's most recent Shakespearean adaptation *As You Like It* (2006) set in Japan, an interest in Asian themes can be visualized on Shakespeare on screen. More epitomes of Asian influence on Shakespearean adaptations or off-shoots are Jonathan Sen and Neil Biswas' version of *King Lear Second Generation* (2003) with Asian manufacturing and music, *Indian Dream* (dir. Roger Goldby, 2003) based on an Indian actor performing Puck and, finally, Tim Supple's TV production of *Twelfth Night* (2003) which echoes Bollywood movies at its outset.⁴

If Asian culture has such a prominence for European – above all, British – playwrights and filmmakers appropriating Shakespeare, Bollywood conventions *per se* enjoy a startling popularity in Britain. They are extrapolated by British and diasporic film directors and turned into successful formulas. The release of Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* in 1991 represents a disruption of Western narrative aesthetic forms in its mélange of Bollywood and Hollywood cinematic techniques and moves, visual and sound effects and conventions in general. *Mississippi Masala* is the film that mediates the move to hybrid cinema, in a world where Bollywood has replaced Hollywood – “bankrupt for ideas” – as the new source of inspiration; it is the new ‘in’ and ‘cool thing,’ so the West is blending more and more with the East.⁵ In the move to the hybrid cinema circuit, other diasporic filmmakers – first or second generation – have contributed to this new trend with movies such as *Bhaji on the Beach* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 1993), *Bride and Prejudice* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2004), *The Mistress of*

³ Huang and Ross, 10.

⁴ Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy, “Our Shakespeares: British Television and the Strains of Multiculturalism.” In Thornton Burnett and Wray, 90-113.

⁵ Heather Tyrrell, “Kissed by Culture,” *Sight and Sound* 11.12 (2001): 6.

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Spices (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2005), *Monsoon Wedding* (dir. Mira Nair, 2001), *The Namesake* (dir. Mira Nair, 2006) or *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002). Within the British *milieu*, Andrew Lloyd Webber's big budget musical *Bollywood Dreams* (2002) actually prepared the ground for the "Bollywood obsession." The department store Selfridges and the Victoria and Albert Museum also paid homage to Bollywood cinema by opening a Bollywood set and a special exhibition respectively in 2002.⁶ In addition, the British Film Institute also aimed to pay tribute to the Indian popular cinema through a dazzling cycle of movies called "ImagineAsia" in 2002.⁷ Natalie Sarrazin appraises how characteristics of Bollywood cinema "have crept into mainstream US and England's mainstream popular culture" with the soap opera *Passions* and films such as Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* (2001), which interestingly conjugates Shakespeare and Bollywood.⁸

Although the first full-length film by the independent British filmmaker Jeremy Wooding *Bollywood Queen* (2002) and Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991) seem to be in line with these two traditions – the fascination with Asia in Shakespearean adaptations and productions and the enthusiasm in parodying Bollywood – the balance is tipped in favour of this second tradition.⁹ This chapter explores the myriad points of aesthetic and narrative contact between Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations and two crossover films *Mississippi Masala* (dir. Mira Nair, 1991) and *Bollywood Queen* (dir. Jeremy Wooding, 2002). The sections entitled clichés and film genre focus on the links between Shakespeare, Bollywood and diaspora, for both films concentrate on the analysis of diasporic

⁶ Stadtler, 518.

⁷ Stadtler, 517-524; Kaushik Bhaumik, "Consuming 'Bollywood' in the Global Age: the Strange Case of an 'Unfine' World Cinema." In *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film*. Ed. Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006), 188-199.

⁸ Sarrazin, "Celluloid Love Songs," 394.

⁹ Jeremy Wooding's *Bollywood Queen* is a sequel of his short *Sari and Trainers* (1999). Before this full feature film, he directed two other shorts *Paris, Brixton* (1997) and *Soul Patrol* (2000).

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communities clearly influenced by the Bollywood genre and, subsequently, Shakespeare. By imitating Bollywood aesthetics, the Romeo-and-Juliet formula soon comes to light. Aiming to reach a diasporic audience, these hybrid Shakespearean off-shoots regurgitate a considerable number of clichés of the NRI community living abroad, such as the crisis of identity or the generational conflict. The ‘romance’ section proves how the movies depart from the Western tradition, and follow Bollywood’s interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* in their unaccredited references to Shakespeare and the erasure of the tragic *dénouement*. However, the reception of the films exposes that while Bollywood movies do not owe their lineage to Shakespeare and the product is still popular, the lack of credit of the Shakespearean text and the story being remade as a ‘romcom’ hardly ever work in the West, where Western critics always point out the Shakespearean influence. The implication is that although Shakespeare, Bollywood and diaspora are entwined in these movies, this combination is not appealing to diasporic communities perhaps due to the ambiguity of traditions. The harsh film reviews obtained by these hybrid films and their failed attempts to include any reference to Shakespeare in the trailers reveal the impossibility of clinging to long-held images of Shakespeare in India in the Western world where Shakespeare is a “by-product of the globalization.”¹⁰

1. Romance

Romeo and Juliet is the major source of many Indian popular films. It is discovered as the favourite play to be rewritten since it combines the necessary ingredients for a ‘masala’ movie: destiny, trouble, but, romance above all. Movies such

¹⁰ Burnett, *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*, 140.

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as *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1973), *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995), *Ek Duuje ke Liye* (dir. K. Balachander, 1981), *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) or *Josh* (dir. Mansoor Khan, 2000) seal the bond with the Shakespearean source. All these movies focus on star-crossed lovers who suffer tremendously as a result of the impossibility of their love due to class, religious and national conflicts or simply long-established family feuds. Although there are impassioned variations on the same idea, the reading of *Romeo and Juliet* is easily detected.

The tendency in the Indian analysis of *Romeo and Juliet* consists of the lack of acknowledgement of the Shakespearean source, following the path already opened by the Parsi theatre. Moved by a commercial motto, the Parsi adaptations never recognized the Shakespearean text, in case audiences were discouraged by works usually regarded as instances of highbrow culture. In the words of Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, “it would not be an exaggeration to assert that Shakespeare was popularized, commercialized, and insinuated into the psyche of these audiences – without them knowing that it was Shakespeare – through the transformations effected by the Parsi theatre.”¹¹ Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots such as *Bobby*, *Bombay* or, even more faithful adaptations like *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (dir. Mansoor Khan, 1988) are consistent in their procedures of not owning their lineage to Shakespeare, neither in the film posters nor in the opening or end credits or DVD covers, Shakespeare being kept at a remove.

In ravaging the tragic grandeur in favour of a happy ending in which the soul mates will live happily ever after, or, at least, the spectator is encouraged to think so, the Parsi theatre also paved the way for the interpretation of the famous tragic love story in the Bollywood mindset. For instance, the Parsi play *Romeo and Juliet – Bazm-e Fani*,

¹¹ Trivedi and Bartholomeusz, 16.

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also known as *Gulnar Firoz* (1890) – by the Urdu dramatist of the Parsi stage Ahsan turns the sublime status of the tragic ending into a happy one, “completely running the original upside down,” as Hansen mentions.¹² This work then is not a unique case, but just the first of a series of rewritings which altered the original to tone with the Indian way of thinking. The turn of tragic endings into happy endings was unavoidably promoted by the shortage of pure dramatic tradition in India. Based on a fundamental religious basis where death was equated with rebirth and renewal – in contrast with the West where it overshadows everything, the tragic *dénouement* was completely out of the question. In the words of Yajnik: “the Hindu playwrights admit that death is a terrible thing to witness on the stage and they agree that the great mythological heroes should rather inspire in the minds of the audience feelings of reverence than of agony by an undignified spectacle of their death, which would resemble that of ordinary mortals. If they swoon, they always recover.”¹³ In order to maintain an idealistic and utopian atmosphere where good characters are rewarded and evil characters are punished for their sins, tragic endings were completely forbidden. The “commediation” of Shakespeare’s tragedies during the colonial period offered a denser reading of the Indian society, which clearly absorbed Shakespeare into its own particularities and peculiarities. It was part of the cultural resistance process of the colonized culture since Shakespeare was “bolstered and undone, refreshed and relegated.”¹⁴

This tradition has continued with Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots, such as *Bobby*, *Bombay, 1942: A Love Story* or *Josh* which treat the Shakespearean play as having a happy ending. Just as *Bobby* ends in a ‘caricaturesque’ finale in which the low-

¹² Gupt in Hansen, 92.

¹³ Yajnik, 23.

¹⁴ Burnett, *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*, 156. In his penultimate chapter ‘Post-Millennial Parody’, Burnett deals with the free circulation of Shakespeare in three film adaptations: *In Othello*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *The Street King*.

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class Catholic Juliet and the high-class Hindu Romeo jump off a cliff to commit suicide and are finally saved by their parents, the political adaptations of the story *Bombay* and *1942: A Love Story* have unbelievable and even surreal endings. The Muslim Juliet and the Hindu Romeo in *Bombay* and the nationalist Juliet and colonialist-bred Romeo in *1942: A Love Story* are reunited irrespective of the terrible conflicts, bloody fights, murders and violence in general which had filled the screen and background throughout the development of the action in both movies. This Cinderella-like finale in which love ‘crosses all barriers’ and catharsis is not allowed is particularly characteristic of India. In *Josh*, after considerable violence and struggles between two rival gangs – the Eagles and the Bicchu – the lovers are finally reunited.¹⁵ On many occasions, the movies are articulated through never-ending problems where the happy resolution is a mere excuse not to go against the Indian value system, and to have a wider audience, which would have been limited if it had maintained the tragedy.

In the interests of arriving at a Bollywood/Hollywood understanding, diasporic filmmakers – and even British directors – imitate the heteronormative romance and cultivate the mastery of Shakespeare as understood in Bollywood cinema. The liberal and permissive forms through which Shakespeare has been disseminated in India have been parodically or implicitly rephrased in these hybrid works. The alliance with Shakespeare is not contemplated as a suturing agent, but as a spectral presence. Removing the halo of ‘untouchable’ play, *Romeo and Juliet* is accommodated in works such as *Mississippi Masala* or *Bollywood Queen* where its presence is not easily seen, but its shadow is easily recognised.

Mira Nair’s first handed social commentary *Mississippi Masala* has constantly

¹⁵ Lanier, “Film Spin-offs and Citations,” 297.

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been considered a remake of *Romeo and Juliet* or even a neo-realist *West Side Story* with a happy ending.¹⁶ Following up her first colour-vibrant feature *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), the Indian-born director focuses on an affecting, but extremely complex interracial affair, or even a “multiracial stew” as Rita Kempley uttered.¹⁷ Juliet is Mina – starring Sarita Chaudhury – an Indian woman whose family was condemned to exile from Uganda to Mississippi when Idi Amin banished all Asians in 1972, and Romeo is Demetrius – starring Denzel Washington – a black carpet cleaner whose job is basically restricted to shabby motels.¹⁸ The lovers’ encounter drawn by chemistry and physical appeal happens when Mina’s car crashes with Demetrius’ carpet-cleaning van (see figure 30). The crossed lovers seem to be ‘destined’ to each other when their fortuitous and ‘love at first sight’ meeting repeats itself on several occasions (see figure 31). Although Demetrius first appears to have a crush on Alicia – Roseline’s counterpart – and Mina is supposed to satisfy her parents going out with Harry Patel – Paris’ counterpart – they immediately fall in love. However, as certainly expected in a society where hierarchy and colour play a crucial role and people believe they have “to stick to their own kind” as Mina’s father says, this interracial relationship is not a bed of roses and, “when the imminent romance kicks in, it’s time for an updated clash of caste-conscious Capulets and hardscrabble Montagues.”¹⁹ Mina’s father – the Indian born Ugandan émigré Jay – and Mina’s mother express very clear opposition to the romance,

¹⁶ See the different reviews of the movie Desson Howe, “*Mississippi Masala*” (February 14, 1992) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpsrv/style/longterm/movies/videos/mississippimasalarhowe>; Brian L. Johnson, “A Review of *Mississippi Masala*” <http://www.imdb.com/Reviews/14/1449> ; Mark R. Leeper, “Review of *Mississippi Masala*” <http://www.imdb.com/Reviews/12/1271> and Frank Maloney, “Review of *Mississippi Masala*” <http://www.imdb.com/Reviews/12/1267>

¹⁷ Rita Kempley, “*Mississippi Masala*” (February 14, 1992) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpsrv/style/longterm/movies/videos/mississippimasalarkempley_a0a29a.htm

¹⁸ Idi Amin was a dictator and President of Uganda from 1971 to 1979. For the Ugandan expulsion, see John Scheckter, “Peter Nazareth and the Ugandan Expulsion: Pain, Distance, Narration,” *Research in African Literatures* 27.2 (1996): 83.

¹⁹ Howe, 1.

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just as Demetrius' family does, causing confrontation between the two ethnic groups. The rejection of Mina and Demetrius' love relationship is certainly manifested in the decision on the part of the Indian community not to continue employing Demetrius as a carpet cleaner any longer in order to make the black community understand that colour matters and that their group's hue is fairer than the black's one. Despite the fact that the two races have a common origin in slavery – for the purpose of taking Indians to Uganda was the building of the colony's railways – the characters in *Mississippi Masala* fundamentally reject the notion of miscegenation. As suggested by Alexander Walker, “colour has its undertones of prejudice, too.”²⁰ On discovering the affair, the filmmaker recalls to the audience the remains of a Shakespearean allusion through the lovers' reunion to be together. However, they do not secretly marry as in the Shakespearean source. Following the approach to Shakespeare in Bollywood cinema, the clearest point of departure with the Shakespearean intertext is the ending, where tragedy is twisted into a romantic comedy with the triumph of love, which brings all the different elements together into harmony (see figure 32).



Fig. 30. Love at first sight.

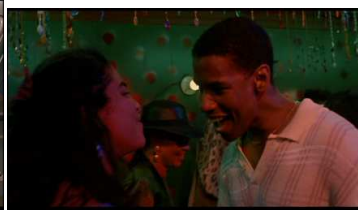


Fig. 31. The second encounter.



Fig. 32. Happy ending.

Bollywood Queen, which can be described as a “Romeo and Juliet-style story of lovers from clashing cultures” mixes the synchronised Hindi songs and dances with the down-to-earth reality of the community of British-Asians living in London's East End.

²⁰ Alexander Walker, “Maid in America,” *Evening Standard* (January 16, 1992): 28.

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It constitutes a new episode of productions – British products with Indian material²¹ – influenced by the typical Bollywood clichés in adapting Shakespeare.²² *Geena* – starring Preeya Kalidas – is Juliet, a second generation British Asian born in London, but displaced from the Western group, while Jay – starring James McAvoy – is Romeo, a West Country boy. The forceful inaugural sequence with Geena and her ‘guru’ uncle talking about the future and the role the stars play in it has its reverberations throughout the movie. The scene in which Geena is rescued by Jay with extreme close-up shots of their eyes (see figure 33) is indicative of how their love mushrooms. In the same scene, the utopic, fantastic and dream-like moment when the lovers levitate in a freeze frame shot also shows the blossoming of their love. However, the cross-cultural love has to undergo endless complexities due to the enmity among families, which certainly recalls the conflicts among Capulets and Montagues. In order to have a serious relationship with Jay, Geena has to break up her relationship with her wealthy boyfriend – Paris’ counterpart. Both families run fashion enterprises with a special attention on designer clothes, albeit Geena’s family sews fake designer clothes; thus, the family feud is on two levels: ethnic and financial. Lending particular importance to the Romeo and Juliet plot and working against the odds, the couple takes the bull by the horns, elopes together, subsequently returns to solve the problems, but has to finally escape the peevish and patronising father Geena has to gird their loins for a new adventure and a new life together. The last medium shot of the couple winking at the audience basically shows how the movie pays homage to the traditional transformation of the finale in Bollywood cinema since despite all the roadblocks put in their path, they manage to find

²¹ More examples worth mentioning are *East Is East* (dir. Damien O’Donnell, 1999) and *Bend It Like Beckham* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2002).

²² David Rooney, “A Review of *Bollywood Queen*,” *Variety* (February 24, 2003): 54.

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a way to be together and live happily ever after.



Figure 33. The camera zooms into Jay's and Geena's eyes in *Bollywood Queen*. This is a form of narrative focalization, for we see Geena as Jay sees her and viceversa.

Both movies cause antagonisms regarding the original Shakespearean ending, and love is always favoured; the doors are unbolted for it, like in the Bollywood fashion. As “Bollywood film romances and ‘happy endings’ indicate the preservation of cultural values and authenticity,” *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* employ this technique in their portrayal of the diasporic community.²³ They preserve the Bollywood curious appropriation of the Shakespearean tragedy, and, being ‘masala’ movies, seem to pave the way for a new interpretation of Shakespeare, which can certainly create a dislocation in his cultural value in the Western world.

2. Clichés

In the first shot-reverse-shot between Doug and Tilo in Gurinder Chadha's *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), the male protagonist Doug offers genuine insights into how diasporic individuals do not break the grip of the homeland and build a liminal space, which becomes their true home. “I may have passed this store a hundred times, but I

²³ Jigna Desai, “Bombay Boys and Girls.” In Ezra and Rowden, 65.

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was always scared to come in. I was not sure it was ok for a guy like me, you know. It seems it is for your community” claims Doug (cast as Dylan McDermott) when talking about the bazaar of spices run by Tilo. This bazaar appears as a cornerstone in this ‘interzone,’ since it brings glimpses of Indian culture into the Western world. Just as Doug encodes his “non-belonging” in a society marked by Indian traces, Jay – the male protagonist in Jeremy Wooding’s *Bollywood Queen* – also characterises the East End where Geena lives by its exoticism. The African American Romeo of *Mississippi Masala* equally encounters a third space where NRIs inhabit in Mississippi, and shows his disruption from this ‘Indianness.’ The portrait of a “little India” in *Bollywood Queen* – as in other Br(A)sian movies such as *The Mistress of Spices* – or in *Mississippi Masala* is one among several ready-made formulas and stereotypes of the NRI community that the films follow.

Bollywood Queen replaces Verona with London’s East End (Brick Lane area), constructing a minoritized and minimalist space which reflects the allure of India.²⁴ A similar recent in-between theatrical project called “Shakespeare Goes Bollywood: Popo Gigi” (2009) mixes Bollywood with *Romeo and Juliet* with the backdrop of another highly populated diasporic area – Brixton.²⁵ According to Sandhya Shukla, the largest populations of Indian diasporas inhabit in cities like New York and London.²⁶ A variety of intramural/extramural spaces are articulated, represented as full of restaurants, religious institutions, clubs, sari shops and other manifestations of Indian culture so that the homeland is always present. Just as *Mississippi Masala* portrays the Mississippi area

²⁴ Brick Lane – the heart of London’s East End – is one of the streets that appears at the beginning of the movie. *Brick Lane* is also the title of Monica Ali’s debut novel (2003), which was made into a film by Sarah Gavron in 2007.

²⁵ This masala mixing Shakespeare and Bollywood was first shown on 15th September 2009 in Croydon.

²⁶ Sandhya Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 78.

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and *The Mistress of Spices* portrays the San Francisco Indian area, *Bollywood Queen* equally takes place in a by-product of the Indian diaspora. In a crane shot at the opening of the movie, the camera moves around the shops which are inextricably 'Indian': sari shops are everywhere, stalls with samosas and typical Indian sweets, Bollywood posters advertising the next releases and names of the streets written in English, Hindi or Bengali. The camera also focuses on the Indian population from the very beginning. The diasporic longing for the nation is a main issue in the liminal space represented in *Bollywood Queen* from its outset.

The feature of the NRI community which has been the most clearly manifested in *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* is the crisis of identity diasporic beings suffer. Transnational subjects are according to Homi Bhabha "caught between worlds that collide as often as they collude," and are therefore *quasi* subjects belonging neither to the homeland nor to the host country they inhabit. *Mississippi Masala* delves into this feature via Mina and her father Jay, whereas *Bollywood Queen* focuses on second generation female character Geena, her father and Jay.²⁷ The female protagonist of *Mississippi Masala* Mina was born in Uganda, had Indian origins, and then, migrated to England and to Mississippi. Similarly, in *Bollywood Queen*, Geena is born in the UK, but her origins are back in India. In *Mississippi Masala*, Jay is another case in point. He feels Uganda is his country, but others see him as a foreigner on ethnic grounds – he is African but not Black African, as Okelo reminds him. With the arrival of Idi Amin, Indians in Uganda are forced to face a second dislocation – a double diaspora. This renders Jay as a useless, ineffectual citizen in Mississippi, where he does not adapt. Interestingly, his relationship with his wife echoes that of Capulet and Lady

²⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan." In *Voices of the Crossing: The Impact of Britain on Writers from Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa*. Eds. Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000), 135.

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Capulet in Shakespeare's play. She is the strong one, whereas he is the failed patriarchal figure. Mina, Jay and Geena are then "caged" or "captured" in a society where they belong, but do not completely belong, where they are integrated, but not completely so; "almost but not quite" as Homi K. Bhabha mentions.²⁸

It is worth noticing that the characters' crisis of identity in *Mississippi Masala* has to be associated with their double dislocation.²⁹ The repertoire of historical experiences that shape the three main characters – Mina, Jay and Kinnu – begins in the opening scenes of the movie when they – and other Indians dwelling in Uganda – are forced to leave the country by Idi Amin. After the first ten minutes of the film, the narrative concentrates on the depiction of 'new hybrid ethnicities' through Mina.³⁰ Mina is not simply Indian, Ugandan or American, but a racialized subject who carries multiple identities.³¹ At the barbecue at Demetrius' place, she is asked where she is from, and does not know what to answer. Yet, just before this moment, the audience has been informed by Mina herself about her 'masala' identity, her mixture of a myriad of identities. The hybrid cultures of *Mississippi Masala* are ultimately connected to those described by Néstor García Canclini under a different set of national circumstances.³²

Bollywood Queen is first preoccupied with Geena's crisis of identity. Like other NRIs, she lacks the "schema" to construct a successful self, alienation being the result. Instead of having the "best of the two worlds," she feels displaced.³³ This displacement is apprehended on several occasions. In a conversation with Jay, she crystallizes her identity problems:

²⁸ Bhabha, "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan," 135.

²⁹ See Shukla, 241 to read about this double dislocation in *Mississippi Masala*.

³⁰ Shukla, 241.

³¹ The women in *Bhaji on the Beach* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 1993) are also racialized subjects. They are Asian, black, and British at once.

³² García Canclini.

³³ Tölöyan, 3.

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Geena: “You are not from around here, are you?”

Jay: “I am not from London, if that’s what you mean...while you...”

Geena: “What am I? An eskimo?”

Geena feels displaced like an Eskimo, which marks her distance from British culture. “Do you think anybody is English? Really English? It’s a fairy tale” writes Zadie Smith trying to debunk the myth of *real* English citizens, but, yet, doubts are still more likely to appear whenever someone does not belong to the white ethnicity.³⁴ Following the trajectory of other diasporic Juliets like Mina in *Mississippi Masala* whose identity is questioned being Ugandan, Indian and American at the same time, Geena’s identity is constantly challenged. Jay’s father also develops the point of Geena’s contested identity by regarding her as an outsider.³⁵ Geena’s “otherness” also floats in the air when Dean – Jay’s brother – calls her “Paki bird” since names are ways of gaining control and superiority over a group, or on individuals belonging to another group.³⁶ Dean’s derogatory name for Geena is a strategy to cope with racial and social difference since the “Paki bird’s” middle class situation places her above Dean’s working class condition. “Many immigrants of all races can identify with this dilemma of being either/or/both and vacillating between each identity” claims Emily Ignacio, her main rationale being this split, which also characterises the main female character in

³⁴ Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2001), 196.

³⁵ Gurinder’s Chadha’s *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) toys with the idea of stereotypes against foreigners through the character of Jules’ mother, who, the very moment she sees Jess (Parminder Nagra), mentions arranged marriages and how Jess’ parents may have already found a nice doctor for her.

³⁶ Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: Art in Multicultural America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990). The term “Paki” is also used in Gurinder Chadha’s *Bend It Like Beckham* (2003). When Jess – the girl from an Indian background – is playing a football match, she is called “Paki” by a girl from the opposing team. As a result, she is offended and has an extremely violent attitude towards her since “Paki” clearly refers to a person from Pakistan instead of India. Jess tries to justify her hostile behavior by saying to her trainer: “She called me Paki. You don’t know what that means” and, then, he claims: “Of course I know...I’m from Ireland...” In *Bollywood Queen*, Jay yells at his brother and commands him to refer to Geena by her name instead of using ‘Paki’, and he also makes clear that she is from India and not from Pakistan. It is particularly interesting that these distinctions between Indians and Pakistanis appear in two movies released in 2002, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

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Bollywood Queen.³⁷

The space of the cliché in *Bollywood Queen* is mostly defined through gender. Gender also constrains Geena's freedom since women's bodies have been used to reinforce patriarchy for they have been the objects of endless transactions. In fact, William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is positioned in this way; Capulet has complete parental authority on Juliet arranging a marriage with Paris. Speeches like "But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,/ To go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church,/ Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither" prove that Juliet's independence is ephemeral, reduced to her decision of marrying Romeo with universally acknowledged tragic consequences.³⁸ Constant here is the renewed conviction of women as the embodiment of nation, nationalism, tradition and past values – customs usually associated with the motherland, which is feminised. In the words of Emily Ignacio: "Preserving one's culture through protecting women is common among oppressed racial or ethnic groups both within and between nations. However, this narrow focus on protecting racial and/or national boundaries often maintains gender inequality within the group at the same time that it exacerbates patriarchy."³⁹ The situation is even more complex for hybrid women, who tend to be ostracized in their ethnic communities. The perils of this inadequate status are seen by Sunaina Maira in her insightful analysis of Indian American women.⁴⁰ They are expected to be coy, submissive women with quaint habits and, needless to say, Westernisation is almost forbidden for them. Interestingly, the rejection of Westernisation has been the focus of some iconic Bollywood *Romeo*

³⁷ Ignacio, 47.

³⁸ *Romeo and Juliet* 3.5: 152-155. All the quotations from the play have been taken from *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³⁹ Ignacio, 79.

⁴⁰ Sunaina Maira, "Identity Dub: The Paradoxes of an Indian American Youth Subculture (New York mix)," *Cultural Anthropology* 14.1 (1999): 29-60.

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and Juliet off-shoots, such as *Purab Aur Pacchim* (dir. Manoj Kumar, 1970) in which the modern westernised female character is turned into the ideal 'Eastern' woman at the film's climax. Jeremy Wooding's female protagonist Geena emerges as an instance of the unfair treatment of hybrid women, her two selves collapsing into one another. "We all want to be dutiful daughters, don't we?" says Geena, being represented as having a double life, "one at home and one like this."⁴¹ One of the songs Geena sings summarises perfectly well her inner conflict:

"I'm sick of being two people, of living a double life. I'm a Gemini Twin in a permanent spin. It's a double confusion and strife. I don't want to be a trophy girlfriend, stuck on some trophy guy's shelf. I can't be dealing with the way that I'm feeling, don't want to be fighting myself."

This fragment is an exposure of Geena's true emotions. The low budgeted, edge-of-British traditional works Jeremy Wooding's *Bollywood Queen* is certainly concerned with gender and its limitations. "Sometimes, I would prefer being a man" says Geena to Jay, being aware of the restrictions imposed on the female sex that quelled women's independence. Her choice of going out with Jay has terrible consequences since her father feels he has lost authority and claims in a medium shot sequence – after discovering the relationship with Jay – "it's all a question of trust. We don't trust you like a village girl. I can't let you go anywhere." Geena's father is judged to be out of touch with the realities of the world where he now lives.

Geena's brothers also consider her a trophy, a puppet whose strings they can pull and manipulate at ease. As Sunaina Maira notes, in their articulation of hybridity,

⁴¹ Geena utters this sentence the first time she dates Jay. With the fragment "one like this," she refers to a life of freedom where she can be her own mistress.

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men are praised whereas women are censured; their self-esteem is strongly damaged.⁴² While the actions of Geena's brothers are neither questioned nor judged, Geena is the guarantor of traditions and sobriety must guide her life. In *cognoscenti* circles, "women's bodies often become the locus of anxieties about preserving tradition in the diaspora," thus, the film adopts a satirical stance to challenge these beliefs.⁴³ However, this British-Bollywood extravaganza updates the gender issue, challenging submission by presenting Geena as a feminist "Dad, I choose who I go out with" and by running away with Jay at the climax of the film. In keeping with images of diasporic beings, Jeremy Wooding's movie attempts to understand – and parody at the same time – the complexities of hybridity of men and women living in the diaspora.

Mina and Geena's fathers are also deeply affected by crisis of identity. In movies associated with the diaspora, such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995) or the diasporic *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots like *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002) or *My Bollywood Bride* (dir. Rajeev Virani, 2006), the figure of the father embodies emasculation and disempowerment, either being dead (*Bollywood/Hollywood*) or ill (*My Bollywood Bride*). Losing one's home is equated with displacement and with the deterioration of the patriarchal order. While diaspora acts as a catalyst for freedom for the majority of the characters in fusion projects, the patriarch longs for the homeland values, where he felt respected and obeyed. This question of the father's displacement calls for a re-examination of the role of Juliet's father in these Shakespearean off-shoots. Unlike Capulet, who establishes his power over Juliet all the time via sentences like "she will be ruled/In all respects by me," the power of father figures in *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* is greatly

⁴² Maira, "Identity Dub."

⁴³ Sunaina Maira, "Ideologies of Authenticity: Youth, Politics, and Diaspora," *Amerasia journal* 25.3 (2000): 145.

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diminished.⁴⁴ In *Mississippi Masala*, Jay is brought to bear the operation of double displacement, and the complete absence as father figure. Having been expelled from his adored Uganda, Jay – starring Roshan Seth – cannot live an ordinary life in Mississippi.⁴⁵ He spends his days remembering his friend Okelo’s words “Africa is for Africans, black Africans” and writing lawsuits to the different regimes in the Ugandan government to recover his property, but it never works. In fact, he is living off his wife’s and daughter’s earnings – the former running a liquor store and the latter cleaning bathrooms at a motel. Although the father is physically present in *Mississippi Masala*, he is transformed into a powerless figure. The end of *Mississippi Masala*, which localizes Jay in Uganda, is meant to prove his ‘defamiliarization’ with this country after years of banishment. Once in the country he has always considered his homeland, Jay realises “home is where the heart is,” and his heart is with Kinu, his wife. Along these lines, in *Bollywood Queen*, Geena’s father appears as completely feeble. His old age and the terrible illness he suffered function to fix Geena’s father as a powerless father figure. In a confrontation with his eldest son who had been playing his role while he was in hospital, Geena’s father says: “I am still the patriarch, you know.” The close-up of the camera focuses on Geena’s father’s sad countenance, suggesting a “symbolic castration.” Along these lines, Gurinder Chadha’s *The Mistress of Spices* points to a common praxis of emasculation in her depiction of first generation Indian immigrants. Geeta’s grandfather (starring Anupam Kher) visits Tilo’s bazaar to be given spices for his mental peace, being unable to understand his and his son’s

⁴⁴ *Romeo and Juliet* 3.4: 14-15.

⁴⁵ Roshan Seth’s presence has been frequent in crossover films, such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (dir. Stephen Frears, 1985) or *Monsoon Wedding* (dir. Mira Nair, 2001).

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disempowerment in contrast with his granddaughter's free will and increase of power.⁴⁶ Geeta always has her way – works until very late, dresses in the Western fashion and marries a Chicano; she does what she wants to do and is not controlled by the men in her family.⁴⁷ For Geeta's grandfather, a crucial backdrop of living in the diaspora is the loss of power of father figures. Therefore, Nair and Wooding translate the father figures according to diasporic standards, as seen in other masala movies.

Bollywood Queen also moves to elaborate the role of Jay as an outsider. His movement to the big city from Somerset places him as a stranger, also undergoing a crisis of identity. "Don't touch my things. You are here because I let you be here" says Dean to Jay, emphasizing that Jay is an outsider. Curiously enough, the movie constantly plays with and breaks the stereotypes of the white citizen as a 'native' and the coloured individual as the outsider, for Geena is the real Londoner, whereas Jay is a foreigner. Displacement dominates the scene at the local multiplex. The Anglo-Indian Juliet and the Somerset Romeo are watching a Bollywood movie in Hindi, a language that Geena does not speak. It seems that the diasporic multitude at the multiplex shares this linguistic problem, and subtitles in English are provided. Therefore, Geena and Jay are equally displaced while watching the Bollywood movie. After being in a cinema full of Indians listening to a film in Hindi, she asks him: "how does it feel to be a minority, then?" Jay's answer being: "I feel suitably impressed." Geena incorporates Jay into her peripheral culture and makes him feel as a stranger in the city of London.

⁴⁶ Interestingly, Gurinder Chadha aims to show the loss of power on the part of father figures via the same actor – Anupam Kher, who plays the role of Mr. Bhangra in *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) and Mr. Bakshi in *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), two powerless fathers.

⁴⁷ Geeta's marriage to a Chicano breaks social taboos, according to which Indians can only marry other Indians. While this traditional idea still underlies Geeta's grandfather's mentality, she is engaged in a revolutionary act in which all racial barriers are broken down. When she announces her marriage to a Chicano to her family, she emphasizes that her would-be husband does not belong to the white community, but to a coloured community. Thus, she advocates for the union of coloured people whether they are black, brown, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc.

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Jay's whiteness also contributes to his displacement in Geena's family. "People stick to their own kind. You are forced to accept that when you grow older. I'm only trying to spare you the pain" says Jay to Mina in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* and Geena's father equally disagrees with miscegenation. Jeremy Wooding's decision of having a relationship of two people who belong to different ethnicities is based on the desire to create harmony within disharmony. The movie finally shows that many characters are struggling with an identity crisis.

The last cliché in *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* is the generational conflict between the first and the second generation of NRIs. In one of the last takes in the movie, Geena decides to sing a song at her cousin's wedding and claims: "This is our way of offering respect to our parents' generation and of keeping our traditions alive." Although hybridity is common to all individuals, the blend of cultures seems to be more patent in second generation diasporic beings. According to Farhan Akhtar, "there is a certain culture that is emerging with the new generation which is kind of fusing these cultures together."⁴⁸ At the core of the first generation NRIs values are tradition, respect and longing for going back to the homeland, whereas the second, third and fourth generation immigrants are defined by their extreme blend of cultures. Mira Nair's and Jeremy Wooding's films cast then light on this issue.

"Desi parties" are powerfully at work in *Bollywood Queen*.⁴⁹ They are organised by and for Indian Americans and involve mixing sounds from Bollywood movies with American/British sounds, adopting Western urban and casual fashion to "display a seemingly hybrid identity that symbolically juxtaposes Indian and urban American

⁴⁸ Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hai* bonus DVD (2001).

⁴⁹ The concept "desi parties" has become assimilated and naturalised. It refers to South Asian parties which mix Eastern and Western music.

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popular cultures.”⁵⁰ Jeremy Wooding’s *Bollywood Queen* is a film that thematizes youth subculture as a central premise; the project encompasses several instances of “desi parties.” In one of their outings, Geena and Jay go to a place called “Cyber masala.” The name itself hints at mixture; thus, diasporic beings are attracted by this pub, which advertises encounters with other South Asian second generation immigrants and a hyphenated identity. The film shows how Geena and her brothers interrelate with other second generation NRIs, share their feelings and aim to solve their identity problems with other members of the same community. Mixing Indian and British popular cultures, they defy the traditional dichotomy Indian as good and British as bad since, after all, pristine cultures do not exist.⁵¹ The youth in these desi parties is constructed as a subculture. According to Stuart Hall and other theorists of the Birmingham school, individuals belong to a subculture when there is “a set of social rituals which underpin their collective identity and define them as a ‘group’ instead of a mere collection of individuals.”⁵² This group is bolstered in *Bollywood Queen*, and threatened by the presence of Jay – an outsider, a non-Indian English individual. Geena’s brothers harbour inflexible attitudes towards him, being fully realized as a stranger in the British Indian youth subculture as he does not share their social values.

In these crossover Shakespearean off-shoots, the first generation also stands in stark contrast to the second generation. Just as Mina’s relatives aspire to retain the homeland values, traditions and culture in the site of settlement, Geena’s parents and relatives do the same. NRIs belonging to the first generation seek an unreal, idealised

⁵⁰ Sunaina Maira, “Identity Dub,” 37.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² John Clarke et al, “Subcultures, Cultures and Class.” In *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*. Eds. Stuart Hall and T. Jefferson (London: Hutchinson, in association with Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1976), 35.

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homeland, which has been explored thanks to an unreliable memory.⁵³ “Identification with an imagined ‘where you are from’ is also often a sign of, and surrender to, a condition of actual marginalisation in the place ‘where you’re at’” claims Ien Ang.⁵⁴ While Mina and Geena attempt to combine two cultures, their parents cling to the rules and customs of their place of birth. “Tradition is important in our family and this can never work” says Geena’s father in relation to Geena’s relationship with Jay. As Indians are supposed to marry other Indians, he is certainly bothered by this adoption of “foreign” customs. Along these lines, Jay suggests the necessity of sticking to one’s own kind when he learns about Mina’s romance with an African American. Their attitude towards their daughters marks them as nostalgic diasporic individuals, who are certainly oriented to the communal past and tradition. The myriad clichés of the diaspora in these crossover movies seem to be intentionally picked up from Bollywood films, shaping an interchange between these two entities.

3. Film genre

The first immediate interrelation between Mira Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* and Bollywood takes place when the three protagonists are expelled from Uganda, evicted from their home. Kinnu – Mina’s mother – is obliged to get off the bus which was taking them to the airport, and has to show the policemen their collection of vinyl records of Bollywood music. The lyrics of the one they listen to are those of the well-known Bollywood classic Raj Kapoor’s *Shree 420* (1955) *Mera Joota hai Japani/Yeh*

⁵³ Francia, 191-219; Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 222-238.

⁵⁴ Ien Ang, “Migrations of Chineseness: Ethnicity in the Postmodern World.” In *Cultural Studies: Pluralism and Theory*. Ed. David Bennet (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press, 1993), 40.

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*Patloon Inqlistani/Sar pe lal topi Rusi/Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani.*⁵⁵ This intertextual reference encourages the alliance with Bollywood, which is now so common in ‘desi’ (Non-Resident Indian) movies. The first encounter between the main protagonists in *Bollywood Queen* features an extreme close-up of Geena and Jay’s faces, at one point the camera zooming into their eyes. This shot takes inspiration from Bollywood films, this being the first out of a handful of the Bollywood conventions employed in the making of Wooding’s experiment. “In cueing ocularity to the aural, Bollywood films constitute a subaltern modernity that disrupts the minimalist silences and ocular centrality of most ‘Western’ modernisms” claims Woodman Taylor when dealing with some of the features of Bollywood cinema.⁵⁶ The instances of intense visual interaction are Indian cultural specific. By invoking echoes of Bollywood cinema, Jeremy Wooding’s British-Bollywood extravaganza *Bollywood Queen* follows the path already established by Baz Luhrman’s *Moulin Rouge* (2001), and by Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Bollywood Dreams* (2002), starring *Bollywood Queen*’s protagonist Preeya Kalidas. Their narrative discourse owes a great deal to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, approached through Bollywood. *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* also have a purposeful flirtation with the Shakespearean tragedy. Following the trajectory of other Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots such as *Bobby* (dir. Raj Kapoor, 1973) or *Henna* (dir. Randhir Kapoor, 1991), *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* change the tragic *dénouement* into a happy ending, and do not acknowledge the Shakespearean

⁵⁵ My translation of this passage: My shoes are Japanese/These trousers are English/The red hat on my head is Russian/ But even so, my heart is Indian.

⁵⁶ Woodman Taylor, “Penetrating Gazes: The Poetics of Sight and Visual Display in Popular Indian Cinema,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 36 (2002): 297.

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intertext.⁵⁷ In a curious interaction with Bollywood aesthetics, *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* encounter Shakespeare.

“Films of the Indian subcontinent, for example, quite frequently use Romeo and Juliet-like scenarios as their basic armature” writes Douglas Lanier.⁵⁸ Thus, parodying Bollywood, Mira Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* and Jeremy Wooding’s *Bollywood Queen* imitate the Romeo and Juliet/romance formula.⁵⁹ The appropriation of Shakespeare is clear from the outset when the protagonists see each other and immediately fall head over heels in love. Geena comes from a family who is in charge of a rag-trade business at London’s East End, whereas Jay works with his brother at the rival clothing factory. So, the episode of Geena and Jay’s forbidden love relationship due to the enmity among families also recalls the conflicts among Capulets and Montagues. Curiously enough, unlike the Shakespearean play, the confrontation among the families also has a racial component, for Jay does not belong to the NRI community. This interesting twist of *Romeo and Juliet* can also be found in *Mississippi Masala* since, while Mina is Ugandan-Indian-American, Demetrius is African American, and is not a second generation diasporic individual. William Shakespeare’s *Romeo* is enmeshed in the intertextual process in *Bollywood Queen* when Dilip – Geena’s ex-boyfriend – is named “bogus Romeo.” Furthermore, the movie’s trailer emphasizes the intertextuality with the Shakespearean play, since Jay is described as Romeo, and Geena is defined as Juliet. Then, the subsequent elopement echoes Romeo and Juliet’s secret wedding.

⁵⁷ According to Richard Burt, *Mississippi Masala* does not directly refer to *Romeo and Juliet*, but it is clear it is based on it since it is very similar to *Bobby* and *Henna*. See Burt, “Shakespeare and Asia in Postdiasporic Cinemas,” 276.

⁵⁸ Douglas Lanier, “What’s in a Name?: *Romeo and Juliet* and Popular Culture” in Sourcebooks edition of *Romeo and Juliet* ed. Marie Macaissa (Chicago: SourceBooks, 2005), 23.

⁵⁹ When the protagonist of *Brick Lane* (Nazeen) first goes out to the street by herself, she sees a poster advertising a Bollywood movie, which also develops the Romeo and Juliet theme. The type at the foot of the poster says: “the world could not stop their love,” which simply confirms the importance of this theme in Bollywood cinema. See Ali, 39.

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Unlike *Mississippi Masala*, *Bollywood Queen* reveals that the relations with *Romeo and Juliet* are not merely reduced to the famous couple. According to Douglas Lanier, Geena's oldest brother plays a Tybalt-like role trying to convince Geena's father of the inappropriateness of Jay as an eligible suitor for Geena, and Dean is Mercutio's counterpart since he ends up wounded in the fight scene.⁶⁰ *Bollywood Queen's* approach to *Romeo and Juliet* also occurs at a more profound level, for the role of Fate is inscrutable in the play and in the film. The interpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has always generated heated debates about whether the play should be considered a pure tragedy of Fate or a tragedy of character. Given that the prologue reads "a pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,"⁶¹ the older and more popular view – supported by Bertrand Evans amongst others – claims that the lovers have no free will, and can only carry the weight of the tragedy. The opposite extreme is embraced by Franklin M. Dickey for instance, who finds *Romeo and Juliet* as free agents.⁶² In their pursuit of their love blindly, *Romeo and Juliet* "become moral exempla of excessive passion...and are accordingly punished."⁶³ It is certainly not clear if the operation of natural forces can be resisted and challenged by human will.⁶⁴ Just as the issue of fate in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is complex and readers do not know whether the protagonists can be somehow responsible for their own destiny or fate is outside their hands, this issue is also problematic in Jeremy Wooding's film.⁶⁵ Although the movie's opening shows Geena's uncle as a clairvoyant making an emphasis on the power of

⁶⁰ Douglas Lanier, "Film Spinoffs and Citations," 301.

⁶¹ Prologue, 6.

⁶² Franklin M. Dickey, *Not Wisely But Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies* (San Marino: Huntingdon Library, 1957).

⁶³ Blakemore Evans, 14.

⁶⁴ See Virgil Whitaker, *The Mirror up to Nature. The Technique of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (San Marino: Huntingdon Library, 1965) to read about this complexity.

⁶⁵ *My Bollywood Bride* (dir. Rajeev Virani, 2006) equally toys with the issue of fate. However, the film is deprived of the play's complexity regarding this issue, and favours the importance of stars in the process.

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stars on people's fate, the film's climax highlights quite the opposite idea when Geena's uncle says: "Geena, the stars simply guide us, the rest is up to you." In spite of the fact that these two passages in *Bollywood Queen* remind us of the play's own ideological orbit and complexity, the film finally opts for the idea that people are responsible for their own destiny.

According to Sheila J. Nayar, Bollywood movies are "films which are, incidentally, frequently ridiculed by critics for their masala ("spice-mix") blend of tawdry escapism, formulaic storytelling, and narratively irrelevant song-and-dance numbers."⁶⁶ Although Mina and Demetrius are never involved in song-and-dance interludes, this music fills in the environment, especially during the wedding spectacle included in Mira Nair's film. Dancing to the music of Bollywood, all the guests are supposed to find their roots with their homeland, but Mira Nair's choice of cinematic shots during this scene operates to suggest these individuals' distance to it. *Bollywood Queen* echoes the song-and-dance sequences that are extremely characteristic of Bollywood movies. What this film endeavours to show is a very explicit connection with these movies. The soundtrack consists of a collaboration between musician Steve Beresford and vocalist Najma Akhtar, "who is Bollywood Queen's own playback singer," and aims to blend Indian and Western influences.⁶⁷ An important music scholar, Natalie Sarrazin, elaborates on the notion of the glimpse song, which consists of a tune lovers sing the very moment they meet recalling the beloved's face.⁶⁸ If in Raj Kapoor's *Bobby* (1973) Rishi Kapoor sings 'Main shayar to nahin' (I am no poet) while remembering the face of Bobby – a girl he has just met – or in *1942: A Love Story* (dir.

⁶⁶ Sheila Nayar, "Invisible Representation: The Oral Contours of a National Popular Cinema," *Film Quarterly* 57.3 (2004), 14.

⁶⁷ *Bollywood Queen*'s information folder at BFI (British Film Institute).

⁶⁸ Sarrazin, "Celluloid Love Songs," 393.

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Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1993) Anil Kapoor (Naren) lip syncs “Kuch Na Kaho” while thinking of Rajjo, in *Bollywood Queen* Geena sings a song while recalling Jay’s face. The rain element is another feature used to identify the “glimpse song,” and, obviously, Jeremy Wooding’s film is also modelled on this. The song overlays Geena’s feelings for Jay. While she sings, drops of rain touch her face and skin (see Fig. 34). In this sense, Wooding’s movie signals through its songs to a systemic equation with Bollywood cinema.



Figure 34. Glimpse song with the rain element in *Bollywood Queen*.

Many cinematic shots and settings in these crossover movies also derive from Bollywood. In the words of Natalie Sarrazin:

“The principal duet is often pictured in pastoral settings involving nature, lush fields, and flowers. Cinematographically, a long shot and panoramic view capture the lovers in mountains, in fields, by oceans, waterfalls and other sensual settings...The shot from above is important, as height or rising up plays a role in establishing almost a sacred or mythic transcendence for the couple.”⁶⁹

The three elements Sarrazin identifies in this Bollywood convention – lovers’ duet, bucolic setting and crane shot – occur in *Bollywood Queen* (see Fig. 35).

⁶⁹ Sarrazin, “Celluloid Love Songs,” 399.

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Distinctive in this quotation is the use of the crane shot that dominates the bucolic setting where the main duo occurs. In *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995) for instance the main characters sing their duet in a bucolic setting. When Geena and Jay run away to the countryside, the scenario portrayed – the West country with its prototypical pubs and bed and breakfasts – is very similar to the faraway places depicted in this kind of escapist film culture.⁷⁰ In *Mississippi Masala*, the cinematic shot which highlights the lovers' reunion during a stormy night at a gas station is modelled according to Bollywood dynamics.⁷¹ Hence, the shots in these movies take an approach to the Bollywood genre.



Figure 35. Crane shot when Geena and Jay are singing a duet in *Bollywood Queen*.

Susan Hayward is well aware of the impact of marriages in Bollywood cinema.⁷² Whether the movies are released in the 70s, 90s or in the post-millennium, the marriage is a catch-all category for the foreign. The Indian-born director, Harvard educated Mira Nair and the British filmmaker Jeremy Wooding are greatly inspired by this tendency in their 'masala' movies. In *Mississippi Masala*, the wedding between two secondary characters – Anil and Chanda – is a perfect opportunity to display glamour, play and lip

⁷⁰ The film *Sangam* (1964) is about one couple who goes to Switzerland at a specific point. It is only one instance of the vogue for exotic lands.

⁷¹ Cecelie S. Berry, "Mississippi Masala," *Cinéaste* 19.2/3 (1992): 67.

⁷² Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 3rd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 57.

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sync Bollywood songs, and, above all, revive all the stereotypes of the NRIs as portrayed in Bollywood cinema. This cultural translation equally occurs in *Bollywood Queen*. After Geena and Jay's elopement *à la Romeo and Juliet*, they decide to go back to London to attend the wedding of Geena's cousin, a perfect occasion to put into display a myriad of Bollywood conventions. In spite of the fact that neither in *Mississippi Masala* nor in *Bollywood Queen* the protagonists get married like the Shakespearean couple, weddings are undoubtedly welcome in these hybrid products in their aim to pay tribute – and parody at the same time – the Bollywood genre.

Furthermore, Bollywood is not just a ghostly presence, but is an entity *per se* in *Bollywood Queen*. As a Bollywood fan, posters of Bollywood actors and celebrities cover the walls of Geena's room. Geena's *modus vivendi* is highly indebted to this kind of cinema; she is seduced by the life and romance she sees in Bollywood movies. Geena's identity is then constructed upon this cinema. Yet, this Anglo-Indian Juliet is not the only second generation diasporic being who internalizes the customs and values of Bollywood cinema as those of her own community. According to Ziauddin Sardar, popular Indian cinema gives diasporic subjects the 'identity kit' they need in order to stand up for themselves in a society where they do not belong completely.⁷³ For most of them, to be Asian is to be modelled on Bollywood characters' *modus operandi*, to be an Amitabh, a Rani Mukherjee or a Kajol; to be Asian is to be constantly trapped by the over-present formulas of this kind of cinema. After the massive migrations of Indians in the 1960s, the majority of them know very little – or nothing – of the subcontinent, and everything is apprehended via Bollywood movies, which work like 'mediascapes.'⁷⁴ The VCR in the 1980s and the entrance of cable and satellite television in the 1990s

⁷³ Sardar, 70.

⁷⁴ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 37.

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contributed significantly to the formation of their identities.⁷⁵ Like Mina in *Mississippi Masala*, Geena has not visited the Indian subcontinent, so, these movies become a welcome substitute on which to model her self-identity. Interestingly, Geena's father is not modelled on Juliet's father, but his depiction as the eternally suffering patriarch in the host country is based on the fathers of the 1990s Bollywood movies. His identity is also a filmic one, and his destabilization depends on the previous performativity of patriarchs in Bollywood movies. The clear implication is that this community can only articulate its own nature through "the formulas of potboiling melodrama" of Bollywood cinema.⁷⁶

Given their status as markers of moral value, Bollywood texts were made an integral part of diasporic movies metatextually speaking. In *Mississippi Masala*, for instance, three male characters – Jay (Mina's father), Anil and Pontiac – are shown watching a Bollywood movie after the wedding reception. Jeremy Wooding's *Bollywood Queen* also gestures towards a Bollywood value system half way through the movie when the main characters attend a local multiplex to watch a Bollywood movie. Interestingly, metatextuality of Bollywood equally appears in Bollywood movies and in fusion projects. Rajiv Menon's *Kandukondain Kandukondain* (2000) and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003) are two cases in point. The former – an adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* – reinterprets Edward Ferrars as a filmmaker named Manohar who wishes to make a re-make of *Speed* (dir. Jan de Bont, 1994) departing from the Bollywood tradition, but finally has to give in because, otherwise, his movie would not have been produced. The latter shows how Maqbool/Macbeth is in charge of the Bollywood industry. As for diasporic movies where Bollywood appears, Gurinder

⁷⁵ Rachel Dwyer, "Planet Bollywood." In *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*. Ed. Nasreen Ali, Virinder S. Kalra and S. Sayyid (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), 362- 371.

⁷⁶ Sardar, 70.

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Chadha's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) is an interesting case. When Lakhi/Lydia and Johnny Wickham/George Wickham run away from Lalita/Lizzy Bennet and Darcy, they try to hide in the darkness of a cinema screen at the BFI. At that point the BFI is having a Bollywood season, and the movie is *Purab Aur Pacchim* (based on *The Taming of the Shrew*).⁷⁷ The scene in which Darcy and Wickham have a real fight juxtaposes an on-screen fight between the two main characters of *Purab Aur Pacchim*, in which the ideal Indian hero saves the Westernised female character from an exaggerated 'Westernised' diasporic pervert. Like Lakhi and Wickham in *Bride and Prejudice*, the Anglo-Indian Juliet from Brick Lane and the Somerset Romeo go to a movie theatre to watch a Bollywood movie. This is an enthralling scene because, neither Geena nor Jay can understand Hindi, and they need the subtitles. In a mixture of boredom and fascination, their faces get close because the movie makes them feel passionate and they kiss. This instance of film-within-a-film is accompanied by a description of Bollywood movies by Jay as "mad, bad, beautiful" when Geena answers "this is Bollywood." After the Bollywood experience, the hero seems to fall in love "not only with Geena, but also with Indian culture."⁷⁸ The metatextuality with Bollywood reaches its peak in the movies via the presence of well-known Bollywood actors such as Roshan Seth and Sharmila Tagore – cast as Jay and Kinnu – in *Mississippi Masala* and the cameo of *Lagaan*'s English co-

⁷⁷ Interestingly, *Bride and Prejudice* seems to be modelled on this Bollywood *Taming of the Shrew* offshoot *Purab Aur Pacchim*. Just like *Purab Aur Pacchim* shows a very explicit criticism of Westernization, *Bride and Prejudice* also rejects Westernization in favour of a superficial 'Indianness.' *Bride and Prejudice*'s ending depicts everyone in India celebrating typical Indian weddings, wearing Indian clothes like sarees or kurtas and playing traditional Indian drums. Just like the last shots of *Purab Aur Pacchim* focus on the female protagonist Preeti's newfound awareness of Indian culture, the last cinematic shots of *Bride and Prejudice* showing Mark Darcy playing the drums follow the same purpose.

⁷⁸ Tyrrell, 6.

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star Rachel Shelley.⁷⁹ With the down-to-earth realistic portrait of the NRI community, the film also hopes to attract a similar audience to that of British comedies like *East is East* (dir. Damien O'Donnell, 1999), *My Son the Fanatic* (dir. Udayan Prasad, 1997) or *Bend It Like Beckham* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2001) or British soap operas such as *EastEnders*, from which many actors and actresses for *Bollywood Queen* were selected.⁸⁰ In an era in which “the white middle classes are eating up Asian culture like fish and chips,” Mira Nair and Jeremy Wooding make the most of this new trend by making crossover movies out of a cross-racial romance with explicit references to Bollywood cinema.⁸¹ Via the imitation of the Bollywood genre, a different form of Shakespearean appropriation emerged. The Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots – often considered obscure bits of Shakespeariana and too far removed from the core of Shakespearean knowledge – entered the Western world through the back door. The dialogue between Eastern Shakespeare and Western Shakespeare is now served thanks to a middle-ground terrain, Bollywood.

4. Reception

In their production values and distribution, *Bollywood Queen* and *Mississippi Masala* abide again by Bollywood rules and conventions. Jeremy Wooding's film was produced by the company Screen Finance, described as “the UK's most prolific production company in 2001 having produced and co-produced 14 films in twelve months with budgets from US\$3M-US\$37M.”⁸² Just as Bollywood Shakespearean off-

⁷⁹ *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (dir. Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001) was the second movie to be nominated for the Oscars after *Mother India*. This movie catapulted Bollywood to fame in the West.

⁸⁰ According to Jeremy Wooding, *Bollywood Queen*'s mode of production closely follows that of *Bend It Like Beckham*. E-mail communication with the filmmaker.

⁸¹ Sally Kinnes, “A Race against Time – Television,” *The Sunday Times: Culture* (August 31, 2003): 24.

⁸² *Bollywood Queen*'s information folder, available at the BFI.

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shoots never acknowledge the source, *Bollywood Queen* and *Mississippi Masala* replicate them – albeit references to the famous Shakespearean couple cannot be avoided in *Bollywood Queen*'s trailer. However, the reception of the movies generates an intricate dialogic relationship between these Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots and *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen*. On the one hand, the uneven intermingling of 'indie grit' and Bollywood flavour turns into a hotly topic of debate in the reviews. On the other hand, the reviews equally corroborate the imperious necessity of bringing Shakespeare back to the place he deserves in the Western *milieu* via incessant allusions to *Romeo and Juliet* and nonstop criticisms to the ending, in which everything is worked out against the odds.

Bollywood Queen may have been conceived for an audience of overseas Anglophiles and diasporic individuals with its portrait of first and second generation NRIs. This is in fact verified analysing the 35 screens where the movie was shown in the UK. According to Jeremy Wooding, *Bollywood Queen* followed the screening path of *Bend It Like Beckham* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2002), and was shown in mainstream multiplexes in highly British Asian populated areas and dedicated Bollywood cinemas.⁸³ A low-budget movie (\$1m dollars), *Bollywood Queen* made its money back on international sales. It was screened in six cinemas in Singapore, in South Africa and the CIS countries. Curiously enough, even though the movie was due to show in India, the distributor finally pulled out. Thus, while the domestic and NRI audience resisted to the pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoot, the international Anglophile viewers welcomed the movie positively, especially in Rumania where it was a success.

Mississippi Masala was equally conceived for an international audience. The

⁸³ All the information in this paragraph about box-office figures and international sales has been directly provided by the filmmaker Jeremy Wooding in an e-mail communication.

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premiere of the movie took place at the Curzon Cinema – specialised in new British films and world cinema. As J. Hoberman claims, Mira Nair “addresses Third World themes of deprivation and displacement” to hint at a diasporic community. Yet, as *Bollywood Queen*, Mira Nair’s film was precisely highly questioned by the Indian diaspora. British Asian communities in the London suburbs complained about the inter-racial love and sex.⁸⁴ With a total gross of \$7,308,786, the movie had a considerable success in countries like France, Sweden, Australia, the Netherlands or Argentina. Yet, the reception of *Mississippi Masala* is not in tandem with Mira Nair’s first feature *Salaam Bombay!*, which became a world-wide success.

From their inception at the Cannes Festival, the general mood about the films has been indifference or deep and profound disgust.⁸⁵ Peter Bradshaw refers to the story as “pretty daft” and Naman Ramachandran even suggests that Jeremy Wooding should not have continued the short on which *Bollywood Queen* was based entitled *Sari and Trainers*.⁸⁶ The ‘kitschy’ glamour of Bollywood that appears in *Bollywood Queen* has sometimes been praised by film critics and reviewers. Jane Howdle, Peter Bradshaw or Jamie Russell celebrate the song-and-dance sequences in *Bollywood Queen*.⁸⁷ They all seem to be fascinated by the exuberant Bollywood numbers and their interesting supply of exoticism. British Asian reaction towards *Mississippi Masala* “varied from lukewarm to hostile.”⁸⁸ The controversy caused by the movie among film critics basically affected

⁸⁴ Amit Roy, “Hindus Angry as New Film Explores Love Between Asians and Blacks,” *Daily Telegraph* (January 1, 1992).

⁸⁵ In *Observer Review* (May 26, 2002), it is said that during the release of *Bollywood Queen* at the Cannes Festival, many people in fact walked out of the cinema.

⁸⁶ Peter Bradshaw, “Bollywood Queen,” *Guardian* section 2 (October 17, 2003): 2 and Ramachandran, “Bollywood Queen,” 28.

⁸⁷ Jane Howdle, “Bollywood Queen,” *Empire* 173 (1 Nov 2003): 67; Bradshaw, 2 and Jamie Russell, “Bollywood Queen” (October 6, 2003)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2003/10/06/bollywood_queen_2003_review.shtml

⁸⁸ Roy, 1.

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the portrait of the Indian community.⁸⁹

The directorial undertaking of formulating the happy ending instead of a tragedy does not seem to work in the West. *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* have both been harshly criticised as far as the finale is concerned. Concerning Nair's vibrant and colourful movie, it has received the biggest complaints due to these unresolved resonances. For instance, Danny Su claimed: "The conflict was resolved in a matter of a few seconds. There was no clear explanation of why the resolution came so fast and trouble free."⁹⁰ The rapid resolution, short-lived confrontation and the final erasure of the conflicts are the main criticisms Su brings to mind. Surat Andersen equally considers that *Mississippi Masala*'s ending is just a "simplistic solution to the problems" the protagonists face.⁹¹ In tandem with the previous film critics, Michael Sragow disdains the ways *Mississippi Masala* finishes.⁹² Although meant as an affirmative vision, the medium close-up of Demetrius in a dashiki and Mina in Indian clothes inevitably poses the question if "they have anything to say to each other."⁹³ In a similar note, Yvonne Taylor considers that the film's only weakness is the innocent and naïve ending.⁹⁴

The light reading of *Romeo and Juliet* by the British filmmaker Jeremy Wooding in the last minutes of *Bollywood Queen* has equally been condemned. This is explained

⁸⁹ See Erika Surat Andersen, "Review of *Mississippi Masala*," *Film Quarterly* 46.4 (1993): 23 to read about the problematic characterization of the Indian community. For Sandhya Shukla, however, both communities could be criticized since they are all based on stereotypes. Shukla, 241. Interestingly, *Mississippi Masala* has not been the only diasporic film which has been perceived with contestation. Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* for example was accused by two Hindu nationalist groups (the Vishwa Hindu Parishad – VHP – and the Bajrang Dal) of being offensive and vulgar, basically during the shooting of the movie in Amritsar. See Desai, "Bollywood Abroad," 123.

⁹⁰ Danny Su, "Mississippi Masala Barely Scratches the Surface of Racial Conflict," *The Tech Online Edition* 15 (February 14, 1992) <http://tech.mit.edu/V1112/N5/masala.05a.html>

⁹¹ Andersen, 25.

⁹² Michael Sragow, "Mississippi Masala," *New Yorker* (April 20, 1992): 82.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Yvonne Taylor, "Mississippi Masala," *The Voice* (December 24, 1991): 49.

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by Rooney as follows: “the story's sputtering motor becomes especially problematic in the chaotic final act.”⁹⁵ The lovers’ escape from the wedding of Geena’s cousin’s begins a continuum of flimsy and clumsy shots with no charm and irremediable confusions accompanied by a poor hand-held camerawork that accelerate the action to the lovers’ happiness in the North Pole. The compulsory Bollywood overtones of the movie’s climax also become the major source of criticism for Ramachandran.⁹⁶ In their aim to copy Bollywood, the directors have to end abruptly the narrative discourse in the normal 90 minutes in contraposition to the 140 minutes of Bollywood movies, the result being a seemingly unconnected plot with a hectic and messy resolution.

The lack of credit to Shakespeare in *Bollywood Queen* interestingly finds ambiguity in this movie’s marketing campaign through a trailer attempting to wink at Shakespeare, or rather, his characters, as if the film director was aware of the movies’ subsequent failure if Shakespeare was not mentioned or, at least, hinted at. *Bollywood Queen* is fully encoded as Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* since the trailer exploits all the conventions and echoes all the themes of the play. Advertised as a classic tale in which romance and family conflicts articulate the whole movie, *Bollywood Queen* clearly announces that Jay is Geena’s Romeo and Geena is Jay’s Juliet, implicitly evoking Shakespeare. In a similar note, in the making of the trailer, Ian McShane, who plays the secondary role of Frank (Jay’s father), also draws a parallelism between *Bollywood Queen*’s main characters and the Shakespearean counterparts. Nevertheless, despite mentioning the celebrated Shakespearean characters, the writer’s name never appears in the trailer; the narrative impetus is directed towards the growing abandonment of the author, ‘the death of the author’ as Roland Barthes said since the

⁹⁵ Rooney, “A Review of Bollywood Queen,” 54.

⁹⁶ Ramachandran, “Review of Bollywood Queen,” 28.

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'creatures' seem to have life irrespective of their creator; Shakespeare is then dispossessed of his oeuvre.⁹⁷ Such is the forceful importance of his characters that they no longer need to be associated with him, but have their own identity in the global world. Hence, it is peculiarly apposite that *Bollywood Queen*'s trailer should make a point of consistently invoking the lineage of Shakespeare's popular cultural visibility in an attempt to reach an audience of overseas Anglophiles. Yet, it is a mere wink since this pseudo-Bollywood movie still follows the film genre's interpretation of Shakespeare which is condemned to letdown in Occident. *Bollywood Queen*'s trailer is just an instance of the complexity of mixing two different traditions regarding Shakespeare's place, ambiguity being the result.

This complex relationship is even more intriguing in most of the reviews analysed of both movies, for they manifest how *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* are inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*. J. Hoberman, Christopher Tookey, George Perry, Jeff Sawtell, Hugo Davenport, Michael Sragow or Nigel Andrews emphasize this connection in *Mississippi Masala*.⁹⁸ The reviews of *Bollywood Queen* – whether long or short, criticise or praise the movie – are also characterised by the references to *Romeo and Juliet* as the movies' main intertext. Amongst many responses to Jeremy Wooding's film, Jamie Russell argues that *West Side Story* is the other intertext of *Bollywood Queen*, which is itself based on *Romeo and Juliet*.⁹⁹ Curiously enough, Gregory Stephens similarly regards *Mississippi Masala* "a mockup of *Romeo and Juliet*

⁹⁷ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

⁹⁸ J. Hoberman, "Family Affair," *Village Voice* (Feb 11, 1992): 65; Christopher Tookey, "Mississippi Masala," *Sunday Telegraph* (January 19, 1992): 41; Geoffrey Perry, "Mississippi Masala," *Sunday Times* (January 19, 1992): 5; Jeff Sawtell, "Mississippi Masala," *Morning Star* (January 17, 1992): 5; Hugo Davenport, "Mississippi Masala," *Daily Telegraph* (January 16, 1992): 14; Sragow, 82; Nigel Andrews, "Mississippi Masala," *Financial Times* (January 1, 1992): 19.

⁹⁹ Russell, 1.

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by way of *West Side Story*.”¹⁰⁰ Although these film critics confirm the link between Mira Nair and Jeremy Wooding’s movies with *West Side Story*, their arguments are simply based on the presence of songs and dances. They were unable to realise the Bollywood charisma in the movies, which they mistook for a Western musical. Therefore, the films’ approach to Shakespeare is done through Bollywood. These reviews implicitly criticize the assumption that British Asian and crossover films (by diasporic filmmakers) can imitate Bollywood production values regarding the interpretation of Shakespeare since Western critics always mention the Shakespearean contribution. *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* epitomize a tradition in which denying the status of Shakespeare by not acknowledging the source – as Bollywood does – is not compatible with the globalized cultural icon he has become in the West. The highly charged importance of Shakespeare in the West is substituted by another tradition in which Shakespeare has a merely passive presence.

Conclusion

According to Alexander Huang, there are three modes of Asian Shakespeares in Europe: European productions with Asian motifs, subtitled Asian productions touring Europe and European-Asian co-productions.¹⁰¹ Although Jeremy Wooding’s *Bollywood Queen* seems to identify with the first mode of Asian Shakespeares in Europe for the movie is made by a British filmmaker with Bollywood motifs, it in fact stands out from ‘appropriate’ Asian Shakespeares channelling Shakespeare through Bollywood, i.e. the movie’s main focus is not Shakespeare, but Bollywood. If Shakespearean theatre

¹⁰⁰ Gregory Stephens, “Romancing the Racial Frontier: Mediating Symbols in *Mississippi Masala*,” *Spectator* 16.1 (1995): 70.

¹⁰¹ Huang, “Asian Shakespeares in Europe,” 52.

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directors and filmmakers are charmed by the market value of Asian visuality, Jeremy Wooding is equally enchanted by the world of Bollywood and – indirectly, Shakespeare – through its peculiar appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet*. This interesting process of rewriting the Shakespearean text is also faithfully reproduced in *Mississippi Masala*. Imitating the film genre, the romance *à la Romeo and Juliet* is unavoidable. Far from simply ‘imitating’ the narrative discourse with constant allusions to the Shakespearean tragedy, Mira Nair’s *Mississippi Masala* and Jeremy Wooding’s *Bollywood Queen* also follow the path of previous Bollywood Shakespearean off-shoots regarding the change of the tragic *dénouement* in favour of a happy ending and the lack of acknowledgement of the Shakespearean source. Although *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* may be considered anomalous Shakespearean off-shoots, they are the forerunners of a new interpretation of Shakespeare’s afterlives in the Western World. This rich network of interpretations enables multifaceted modes of reading both Shakespeare and Bollywood. The West is then experiencing a new, interesting way of being acquainted with Shakespeare, which consists of the complete cannibalization of his plays, *Romeo and Juliet* above all, and the recession of the author’s name. The movies then promote the interaction between two mutually imbricated traditions – Eastern and Western Shakespeare. The common tendency in Shakespeare’s reception is to demonstrate the multiple interpretive Shakespeares around the world, and how they dialogue with each other and among themselves to produce new readings of Shakespeare’s texts.

However, as the reception and marketing campaign of *Mississippi Masala* and *Bollywood Queen* have demonstrated, the Shakespearean influence still persists. *Bollywood Queen*’s trailer unavoidably mentions the well-known Shakespearean characters. In a similar note, all the film critics reviewing both movies refer to *Romeo*

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and Juliet as the main intertext. The ghostly status Shakespeare acquired in some Bollywood off-shoots seems to be condemned to failure in Occident. Given that Western film and theatre directors are not so free to manipulate the effect produced by Shakespeare's authority, Shakespeare cannot be reinvented as a spectre in the Anglophone world. With their hybrid nature of traditions and styles, Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* and Jeremy Wooding's *Bollywood Queen* reflect upon the potential limits and losses of appropriating the Bollywood interpretation of Shakespeare in the West because it jeopardises Shakespeare's continued cultural vigour and celebration. Thus, the movies present themselves as alternatives to the binary opposition between local Shakespeares and canonical English-language representations and productions, reinscribing Shakespearean texts into cross-cultural dialogues.

Chapter 9: Experimenting with *King Lear* in a Diasporic Context:

Jon Sen's *Second Generation*

On April 11, 2011 the Edinburgh festival director Jonathan Mills claimed that the festival in 2011 was going to “explore the cultural influence of Asia on Europe, and vice versa, as well as build a bridge between the two continents.”¹ However remarkable the statement may sound, there is nothing very extraordinary in it since Shakespearean plays have been building this bridge for many years. From Ariane Mnouchkine's and Peter Brooks' adaptations of Shakespearean plays with an Asian touch to the latest rewritings such as the UK production *Mind Walking* (2011), Shakespeare has kept coming back repeatedly as a figure of cultural exchange.²

Jon Sen's *Second Generation* (2003) – set in London's Brick Lane Area – is a clear product of this Eastern-Western exchange, intermingling the Western classic *King Lear* with subtle Bollywood aesthetics. In the process, Bollywood's understanding of Shakespeare is appropriated. The novelty of this production is that it is the first time that ‘Bollywood’ encounters *King Lear*. Although the history of *King Lear* on the Indian stage and Indian social life is rich and vast, the play was not successful in Bollywood cinema, and no film adaptation or off-shoot has ever been acknowledged.³ On the

¹Jonathan Mills in Debesh Banarjee, “King Lear, Odissi Dance and the Sarod” (April 11, 2011) <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/king-lear-odissi-dance-and-the-sarod/774298/>

² *Mind Walking* (2011) is a UK production with a 1st generation NRI Lear figure named Bobbie who has ‘obliterated’ his Indian past until he suffers from Alzheimer and is then haunted by his true roots.

³ In spite of its title, *The Last Lear* (dir. Rituparno Ghosh, 2007) is not an adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The movie focuses on a theatre actor modelled on the Shakespearean character. The film

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Indian stage, the adaptations of *King Lear* range from English performances – such as some made in 1832 for the Chowringhee Theatre – to localized productions with happy ending, namely *Atipidacharita* in 1880 and post-colonial versions of the play. Indian journalists have tended to see the play as an opportune means to explore the intricacies of politics in the subcontinent. For instance, the Indian journalist Sanjay Kumar exploited recently the similarities between Lear and the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who, like Shakespeare's elder king, thought that he was suffering more than he had sinned and deserved.⁴ Yet, *King Lear* has passed completely unnoticed in Bollywood until Jon Sen and the diasporic scriptwriter Neil Biswas decided to adapt it with a Bollywood touch.

Second Generation invited considerable criticism for turning a canonical Shakespearean tragic *dénouement* into a happy ending. Even if the film adaptation could be said to be based on Nahum Tate's version of the play (1681) – also characterized by its happy resolution, which includes the marriage of Cordelia and Edgar – it is in fact strongly influenced by Bollywood's understanding of Shakespearean plays. Apart from the happy ending which is so common in popular Indian movies, *Romeo and Juliet* somehow circulates around Jon Sen's *Second Generation*, clearly hinting at the films which are its major influence. Via an in-depth analysis of the rewriting of the plot and main characters of *King Lear* in *Second Generation* and an exploration of the cultural flows regarding the film genre, this chapter aims to shed light upon Bollywood's influence in *Second Generation*'s rewriting of *King Lear* as a result of the ongoing

basically includes quotations from *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*. It is not categorized as a Bollywood film.

⁴ Sanjay Kumar, "Manmohan Singh as King Lear" (February 24, 2011) <http://the-diplomat.com/indian-decade/2011/02/24/manmohan-singh-as-king-lear/> In this article, Kumar toys with the sentence 'I am a man more sinned against than sinning' to complain about Singh.

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‘ideoscapes.’⁵ Unlike the other pseudo-Bollywood adaptations analysed in previous chapters, the movie’s main target is not Bollywood, but Shakespeare. Yet, within a diasporic setting, it seems impossible to dissociate Shakespeare from the interpretation provided by Bollywood cinema, and the two are mutually entangled. With its replaying of one of the most dramatic Shakespearean works into a melodrama with a happy ending, *Second Generation* confirms that these diasporic Shakespearean off-shoots are veering towards a new wave of Shakespearean rewritings, experimenting with the texts and transforming them into *transtexts*.

1. Rewriting *King Lear*

Although Jon Sen’s *Second Generation* does not follow the Shakespearean text faithfully at all, the movie is a “very contemporary version of the timeless classic” with a diasporic backdrop. The Shakespearean source text is radically transformed, the scenes are mixed up and, yet, the audience nonetheless can feel the pulse of the story throughout the film.

As Ellen Dengel-Janic and Johanna Roering have realized, *Second Generation* explores the dynamics of *King Lear* by retaining the three sisters and the confrontation between the father and the youngest daughter, amongst other issues.⁶ As Jon Sen’s project claims to speak for the diaspora, *Lear* is transformed into a 1st generation NRI Sharma-ji, whose kingdom is a curry business in London (see Fig. 36). The factory

⁵ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 37.

⁶ Ellen Dengel-Janic and Johanna Roering, “Re-Imaging Shakespeare in *Second Generation* – A British-Asian Perspective on Shakespeare’s *King Lear*.” In *Drama and Cultural Change: Turning Around Shakespeare*. Eds. Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker (Trier: WVT, 2008), 211-219.

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prepares Indian food and condiments like korma, masala and chutney sauces for British supermarkets. The beginning of *Second Generation* features a man in hospital, lying motionless on a bed at the Intensive Care Unit in a coma. Unlike King Lear, who divided the kingdom among his two eldest daughters, Sharma-ji never gives up his power and authority. His daughters simply take over when he is in hospital; there is no division of the kingdoms scene as such. The decision not to include the most crucial scene of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is striking, for the treatment of Lear changes considerably. The rewriting makes Lear more of a victim than the source text, in which he is responsible for his destiny and fate. Lear's daughters – Goneril, Reagan and Cordelia – are Pria, Rina and Heere respectively. Unlike Shakespeare's Goneril, Pria is single, and is depicted as the typical woman who has to struggle in a men's world. Like Reagan, Rina is married, but her husband Arun is more similar to Albany than to Cornwall. Albany's development throughout the play is appropriately captured in *Second Generation*. While at the onset of the movie Arun is a secondary character – clearly on the periphery – he is later on recreated as a more lively character, one who speaks his mind and shows his anger. He disagrees with Pria and Rina's decision of sending their father to an asylum, for he considers it is their duty to look after their father, especially now that he is an old man. This scene blatantly rewrites Lear's eviction from his daughters' houses. If there is a character that differs significantly from the Shakespearean original is Heere Sharma – the Cordelia figure. She appears as the typical second generation woman aiming to break away from her Indian traditions and roots to settle down in the West with a Western boyfriend until she finally discovers that one is always haunted by the past; it keeps coming back. While Cordelia's transgression is her refusal to re-affirm her love for her father, Heere's misdemeanor, in her father's

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eyes, consists of her series of relationships with white men, the latest involving a white journalist called Jack. Her openness regarding her sexuality is also responsible for the breach between Heere and her father. While Cordelia is dutiful and obedient, Heere is rebellious. Yet, one of the typical readings of the movie is that Heere's insurgence diminishes at the end of the film when she seems to evolve into a submissive Indian wife, perfectly fit in the Indian lifestyle as if she were Kate in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. Interestingly, she even transforms Cordelia's language in order to follow the model of the perfect Indian wife. While in 1.1 Cordelia claims "Haply when I shall wed,/ That lord whose hands must take my plight shall carry/ Half my love with him, half my care and duty" to make explicit to her father that she cannot only love him, in *Second Generation* Heere says exactly the opposite of what Cordelia says in *King Lear*. Instead of telling her father that it is impossible for her to only love him, she says to Jack that he should not have made her choose between her father and he, for she cannot be just his.⁷ According to Dengel-Janic and Eckstein, *Second Generation* seems to be a "surprisingly conservative rendering of the Lear tale," as far as Heere is concerned.⁸ However, the text could also be read as an extraordinarily modern, second-wave feminist reading. Heere is a woman who negotiates her relationships and wants to have a partner without giving up filial love. She matures and discovers the importance of loving a father as well as a partner. Thus, there are competing, clashing readings which can be provided for it.

⁷ 1.1 (100-03) in Stanley W. Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The History of King Lear*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁸ Ellen Dengel-Janic and Lars Eckstein, "Bridehood Revisited: Disarming Concepts of Gender and Culture in Recent Asian British Film." In *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000 + New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Ed. Lars Eckstein, Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Christoph Reinfandt (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 55.

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Fig. 36. The Lear figure Sharma-ji in *Second Generation*

Sen has managed to find a way of presenting Kent and Gloucester amalgamated in one single character, Hansaab Khan (see Fig. 37). On the one hand, the character of Khan is certainly inspired by Kent, sharing even the first letter of his surname.⁹ Like Kent, he is banished from the kingdom, i.e. Khan is fired from the company after working for more than twenty years there. Just like Kent always takes Lear's side, Khan always supports Sharma-ji. On the other hand, the character of Khan is indebted to Gloucester. He also has two sons named Firoz (see Fig. 37) and Sam – the counterparts of Edmund and Edgar respectively. Khan's tragic ending – he commits suicide at home, feeling emotionally abandoned and professionally redundant – must be considered in relation to Gloucester's fantasized death at Dover. While Gloucester's suicide at Dover is a mere fantasy, Khan's suicide is real and achieves iconic intensity required to sustain audience contemplation. Sen does not provide a compelling juxtaposition of Firoz and Sam's energies with those of Edmund and Edgar; Sen's characters are more benevolent than their Shakespearean counterparts. One aspect that is certainly striking is Khan's religion. While Sharma-ji and his family are Hindus,

⁹ Looking back at other Bollywood re-creations of English plays or novels such as *Bride and Prejudice*, the keeping of the first letter of the name or surname seems to be the norm. In Jon Sen's *Second Generation*, other characters also maintain the first letter of their counterparts' names. This is the case of Rina (Reagan), Arun (Albany).

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Khan and his sons are Muslims. It is at least surprising and shocking that the only aspect in the whole film in which the ending is bleaker than in the original source is precisely the suicide of the Muslim patriarch. While the Earl of Gloucester is finally comforted in death by his son Edgar, in *Second Generation* Hansaab Khan dies completely alone, without any comfort. The movie explores the dynamics of two different religions on the surface and, by presenting the Hindu-Muslim conflict at times, Jon Sen's project intrinsically takes a postcolonial perspective, and is immediately associated with the partition in India. It basically reminds the audience of how painful the partition was for everyone, and how the conflict is still extant. Moreover, given that *King Lear* is remarkable for the division of the kingdoms, there is then an undeniable connection between the Shakespearean play and the Indian subcontinent, for it was equally divided into two separate countries, which eventually became three with the independence of Bangladesh.

Mohan in *Second Generation* and the Fool in *King Lear* are very similar; Sen's reading of the fool is really faithful to the source text (see Fig. 37). *King Lear*'s 1.4 brings the fool centre stage. His down-to-earth and ironic comments concerning Lear's mistake in giving his kingdom to his daughters ("if I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine. Beg another of thy daughters") are cleverly re-enacted and revitalized by Mohan in Jon Sen's *Second Generation*.¹⁰ For instance, at one point, Mohan tells the truth to Sharma-ji about his daughters – i.e. that they wanted to turn off the machine to which he was connected when he was in a coma and that they wanted to sell the curry business – and Sharma-ji is caught in the prism of his own blind

¹⁰ Stanley W. Wells and Gary Taylor (eds.), *The History of King Lear*.

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ignorance.¹¹ The Fool in *Second Generation* is described by Roshan Seth – the actor who performs this role – as “a jaded boozier, who provides an ironic running commentary on the unfolding events of both families.”¹² The choice of actor to perform the role of the Fool is not random. In the words of Gautam Basu Thakur, Roshan Seth is “without a doubt the quintessential ‘face’ of Nehru on Indian celluloid.”¹³ Seth has starred as Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on innumerable occasions: Attenborough’s *Gandhi* (1982), Shyam Benegal’s *The Discovery of India* (1988), Griffith’s *Food for Ravens* (1997) and Hindmarch’s *The Last Days of the Raj* (2007). By having a celluloid Nehru, the connections with Shakespeare’s Fool are made explicit, for both are epitomes of common sense. Like the fool in *King Lear*, Mohan always tells the truth. For instance, when he is with Heere at a café, he criticizes her generation, since they do not want to accept responsibilities. The constant references to Mohan as a fool (it’s not the time nor the place, you fool/ drunkard fool) constantly emphasize the doubling. In *King Lear*, the fool disappears in the middle of the play (act 3), and, in *Second Generation*, Mohan equally disappears halfway through the movie.

¹¹ According to Alessandra Marino, the fool in *Second Generation* points out that Sharma-ji’s main attributes are blindness and folly, thus suggesting an identification with Gloucester and the king. Alessandra Marino, “Cut’n’mix *King Lear: Second Generation* and British-Asian Identities.” In *Shakespeare and Conflict: A European Perspective*. Ed. Carla Dente and Sara Soncini (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 170-183.

¹² Production notes of *Second Generation*.

¹³ Gautam Basu Thakur, “Globalization and the Cultural Imaginary: Constructions of Subjectivity, Freedom & Enjoyment in Popular Indian Cinema.” In Mehta and Pandharipande, 86.



Fig. 37. Hansaab Khan (Gloucester and Kent), Mohan (the fool) and Firoz (Edmund).

Interestingly, Jon Sen's *Second Generation* invites a deeper understanding of the mother figures than its primary source. If *King Lear* is basically characterized by the total absence of mothers – there are no references whatsoever to them – Sen shows extraordinary insight in using flashbacks to remember them and to explain to the audience what life was like when they were alive. The audience learns for instance that Khan's wife died of cancer whereas Sharma-ji's wife committed suicide. Sonali – Sharma-ji's wife – suffered from depression and killed herself to escape the strict patriarchal codes of her society and community. According to Alessandra Marino, Heere is as rebellious as her mother was, and resembles her so much that they even appear as the same person in Sharma-ji's hallucinations; "mother and daughter become confused in the eye of patriarchy."¹⁴ Sharma-ji is constantly haunted by the spirit of his wife, caught in a guilt complex, as if he was the one to blame for his wife's death. In fact, the movie starts with images of Sonali when he suffers from a coma and is about to die, emphasizing her importance in the story and in Sharma-ji's actual medical

¹⁴ Marino, 176.

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condition. According to Suzuki Tadashi,¹⁵ “Lear’s tragedy of solitude and madness must be brought forth not as specific to his kingship in distant time and space but as relevant to any old man living in any age in any country.”¹⁶ Sen then translates Lear’s tragedy to a first generation NRI whose madness is strongly associated with his wife’s death and his refusal to throw her ashes to the Ganges river. Sharma-ji is haunted by the ghosts of his past, linked with the homeland, and he cannot reconcile with it in the host country. Thus, Sharma-ji’s identity dilemma has to be equated with the impossibility to reconcile the homeland with the host country in his diasporic self.¹⁷ When, towards the end of the film, he finally complies with this Hindu burial rite back in India, he is relieved, his madness mysteriously disappears and he solves all his identity dilemmas and problems with his daughter Heere in a tragicomic happy ending.

Nahum Tate’s rewriting of *King Lear* with a tragicomic ‘happy ending’ in which Edgar marries Cordelia is revived in Jon Sen’s vision of *King Lear*. If in Tate’s version Edgar and Cordelia are already in love before the division of the kingdom, Heere and Sam were also a couple before Heere’s conflicts with her dad, and were “pushed apart by parental disapproval arising from religious difference.”¹⁸ The other strong motif of Nahum Tate’s Restoration ‘improvement’ of the Lear tale is the relationship between Edmund and Reagan, which gains considerable attraction in *Second Generation*.¹⁹ Like Reagan in *King Lear*, Rina is married and has an affair with Firoz. Yet, *Second Generation*’s engagement with Nahum Tate’s rewriting is certainly feeble, and is simply reduced to these two issues. Although Jon Sen’s project appears to

¹⁵ Suzuki Tadashi is a Japanese theatre director and writer who has adapted Shakespeare’s plays to the Japanese stage on several occasions. His versions of *King Lear* and *Macbeth* are particularly well-known.

¹⁶ Suzuki Tadashi quoted in Ian Carruthers, “Fooling with Lear.” In Trivedi and Minami, 99.

¹⁷ Mishra, 47.

¹⁸ Geraldine Harris, *Beyond Representation: Television Drama and the Politics and Aesthetics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 97.

¹⁹ Nahum Tate (1681), *King Lear*. Ed. Jack Lynch. Rutgers University: Newark.

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reach back and reconnect with the previous revision of the Lear tale, *Second Generation* does not finally offer this dialogue with *King Lear*, and inevitably flirts with a ‘Bollywoodisation’ of Shakespeare. Given that *Second Generation* deploys the Shakespearean text more as a resource than as the privileged original, the film unsurprisingly reinforces a connection with Bollywood Shakespeares.

2. Cultural flows

Second Generation is an opportunity to replay Shakespeare’s *King Lear* in a diasporic context; it describes and defines NRIs, and indirectly explores the cultural flows which are the result of a constant mobility. The movie is intent on developing the persistent ambiguities of second generation individuals, such as Heere and Sam. Given that they are inhabitants of Homi Bhabha’s ‘third space,’ they are hybridized, in-between subjects who mix their source with their target culture. Although at the outset of the movie, Heere and Sam only seem to emulate Western culture and obliterate their origins, they always preserve their distinctiveness and difference. In the numerous scenes with friends, this difference is mostly highlighted via the use of Bengali language or the persistence or ‘reproduction’ of certain customs, such as ‘Holi’ or the different burial ceremonies. The rest of second generation subjects – Pria, Rina, Firoz and Arun – equally appear as in-between, hybrid individuals, always in conflict with Eastern and Western customs. The degree of complexity of the main characters is not cut down; on the contrary, it is even increased. The hybridity of the main characters and, even that of the scriptwriter, precisely activates the persistent cultural flows in the movie, such as the

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negotiation with Bollywood cinema, and with Bollywood interpretation of Shakespeare's works.

Although Jon Sen's movie apparently does not seek to imitate Bollywood aesthetics for it is basically guided by its rewriting of *King Lear*, the film, being set in a diasporic ambiance, is intrinsically underwritten by the dynamics of Bollywood cinema. The implication is that, whenever diaspora is encountered, Bollywood emerges, even if it is not a priority, and is not advertised in the marketing campaign. According to Ty Burr, the film is "as melodramatic as a Bollywood flick, but features London's Brick Lane."²⁰ Thus, *Second Generation* is influenced by Bollywood, and, indirectly, by the mode that Indian cinematic appropriations have of negotiating with Shakespeare.

The first feature of Bollywood in *Second Generation* is its music, which is juxtaposed with desi and hip hop tones. Bollywood music has an extraordinary power throughout *Second Generation*. Sen's innovative articulation consists of a montage with these different kinds of music and how they are brought together into an intense dialogue. R&B and hip hop music is represented in the figure of the young kid who is turned into a star. The record company easily promotes his desi music, which is an allure for the second generation. The initial scenes with Heere in the disco which her boyfriend Jack attends are framed with Bollywood sounds. Heere has just learned that her sisters want to switch off the machine to which her father is connected, she feels gloomy and miserable, and inevitably identifies with the Bollywood song she hears. Melodrama in *Second Generation* is always explored through Bollywood. After Hansaab Khan's suicide, Heere helps Sam fold his father's white clothes, and, at this crucial moment, the audience hears Bollywood music in the background. In middle-shot

²⁰ Ty Burr, "Second Generation," *Entertainment Weekly* (July 22, 2005).

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sequences, Heere and Sam are committed to the task of washing and folding Khan's clothes while they are observed in close-up shots by Amber and Jack – Sam and Heere's partners. The implication is that Heere and Sam inhabit a world which is completely different to that of Amber and Jack, so, the latter can only be mere spectators. The development of this duty is perfectly situated in the middle of the film, accompanied by the appropriate music in order to reinvigorate the traditional component of such a chore. Bollywood music is also heard while Sam and Firoz are cleaning the house after Khan's suicide. It seems that, whenever melodrama is echoed, a Bollywood soundtrack is needed.

In line with Bollywood adaptations of English works such as *Aisha* (dir. Rajshree Ojha, 2010) – based on Jane Austen's *Emma* – or *Bride and Prejudice* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2005) – based on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice – Second Generation* is characterized by the considerable number of festivals and festivities which are celebrated.²¹ For instance, the movie's outset depicts the cremation of Heere's mother on a funeral pyre. As Hindus believe that the soul is reincarnated through a cycle of successive lives called *samskara* and death is a key part of this cycle referred to as "the final sacrifice," the cremation of Heere's mother is crucial in this cycle. The Hindu ritual of cremating one's body contrasts significantly with the Muslim tradition where cremation is prohibited, and the body has to be buried. Given that Hansaab Khan was a Muslim, his burial followed the Muslim rites. Throughout the film, some images represent another ritual, that of the puja, which consists of worshipping a God or Goddess in Hindu culture. As the Lear figure (Sharma-ji) finally survived, all the

²¹ *Aisha* for instance depicts all the off-stage marriages that appear in the novel. *Bride and Prejudice* equally expands and amplifies the marriage issue. Weddings are invented – such as the one at the beginning of the film – or are considerably amplified. This is precisely the case of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins' marriage.

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relatives showed their devotion to a deity to thank for Sharma-ji's improvement. In these two rituals, women and men wear special clothes. The last celebration which is developed fully throughout Jon Sen's *Second Generation* is Holi or Indian Festival of colour that marks the beginning of spring. In Northern India, "the Raas-Lila dances celebrate love in the spring, and honor Radha and Krishna, whereas in Southern India, Kander, the love god and his wife Rati are the focus of stories and songs."²² As part of an influx of Indian concepts in a diasporic community, the celebration of Holi in the movie takes place on several occasions. Before committing suicide, Khan watches some videos in which Heere and Sam are throwing paint to each other in order to celebrate Holi. The last scene in London at the end of *Second Generation* is also inspired and touched by the same ritual. The director does a montage with images of Heere and Sam as children during Holi contrasting with their current situation during the same festival. *Second Generation* then becomes "Bollywoodised" through the underlying motif of festivities and festivals.

Another inheritance of Bollywood cinema is the Bollywood cast in Jon Sen's project. The film is saturated with well-known names like Roshan Seth (*Mississippi Masala*, *Monsoon Wedding*), Om Puri (*Maqbool*, *White Teeth*, *Bollywood Calling*, *Rang De Basanti*), Anupam Kher (*1942: A Love Story*, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, *Mohabbatein*, *Bend It Like Beckham*) who constantly take part in Bollywood movies, but also transcend the limits of their cinema by participating in British projects which are influenced by the Indian cinematic medium. In *Second Generation*, people are also faced with an unprecedented young cast that has performed crucial roles in diasporic movies. These are precisely the cases of Nitin Ganatra (*Bride and Prejudice* or *The*

²² Production notes of *Second Generation*.

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Mistress of Spices), Parminder Nagra (*Bend It Like Beckham, Bollywood Queen*) or Christopher Simpson (*White Teeth, Brick Lane*).²³

While the spectators may be pondering over the *mise en scène* (London's Brick Lane), ideas about the diaspora run on the screen. Curiously enough, they are rather old-fashioned, for they are based on the 1970s Bollywood movies. This exchange and/or appropriation of ideas about the diaspora follows the trajectory of the so-called 'ideoscapes' or cultural flows explored by Arjun Appadurai.²⁴ There is a constant flow or travel of concepts that is clearly present in the movie. To begin with, the intergenerational conflict is fully displayed in *Second Generation*. The main source of conflict between Sharma-ji and Heere has to be reduced to the generational gap that exists between both of them. Heere dares to mix Western with Eastern customs, whereas her father (Sharma-ji) clings to the homeland rules. Heere for instance sees no problem in having a white boyfriend, but Sharma-ji treats this issue as a 'sacrilege.' Sam also captures this duality of belonging to two worlds; Sam is also a mixture of West and East. Although he is a Western DJ and music producer, his Eastern culture also emerges, as when he speaks Bengali with Heere. According to Neil Biswas, the scriptwriter, "they are both caught between the world of their families and the world outside."²⁵ This conflict between cultures is as much part of their identity as their bilingualness."²⁶ They emerge as in-between, hybrid individuals.

In spite of Heere's resolution, rebellion and courage to adopt some Western customs, she ends up favouring Indian traditions in the style of the film *Purab Aur*

²³ Parminder Nagra also appears in the multicultural project *Twelfth Night* (dir. Tim Supple).

²⁴ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*.

²⁵ This clash between first and second generation individuals is also described in other movies, such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*.

²⁶ Biswas, "Conflict Between Cultures can be Positive," *The Guardian* (September 8, 2003): 1.

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Pacchim.²⁷ Although the movie seems open-ended and it can either be interpreted as favouring Eastern traditions – obliterating the West – or exoticizing India from the perspective of a ‘foreigner,’ my reading of the film’s ending is that it proposes a conservative and traditional perspective, distinguished by the prevalence of Indian traditions. In spite of Neil Biswas’ defense of the mixture of cultures in second generation individuals, the two young characters finally get in touch with their spiritual and long-lost Indian roots, and appear to obliterate their Western side. The implication is that no matter what is done in the course of one’s life, one should finally be guided by the rules of the mother country. Heere was lost, but was able to find the right path once she went back to India. Although born and brought up in England, she is capable of behaving as a ‘good Indian wife’ should, even bargaining with the local growers in the market.²⁸ Going back to India is the solution to all the problems and troubles in the middle of the film. In *Second Generation*, even the Muslim Edgar figure – Sam Khan – returns to India as if the motherland was devoid of problems. “India provides safety, stability and a sense of belonging, which are based on cultural ‘purity’ as well as a strictly heteronormative structure.”²⁹ Thus, in line with Bollywood movies of the late 70s basically, the film supports family values over individualism and nostalgia for the home country.

The real strength of Jon Sen’s adaptation lies in its ability to indirectly appropriate Bollywood interpretation of Shakespeare’s works. Unlike *Romeo and Juliet*, which has enjoyed a prolific life on the Indian stage as well as in Bollywood, *King Lear*

²⁷ The film *Purab Aur Pacchim* – inspired by Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* – has already been discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

²⁸ Another interpretation of Heere bargaining in the local market could be that of a Western woman used to getting her way in every realm of existence (including sex and relationships) in spite of her family or the environment.

²⁹ Dengel-Janic and Roering, 218.

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has been basically reduced to the theatre in India. The first ‘tradaptation’ of the play took place in 1880, was entitled *Atipicharita* and had a happy resolution. After independence, *King Lear* was again performed on the Indian stage in 1962 with a young Roshan Seth, who plays the role of the Fool in Jon Sen’s film. *Second Generation* is therefore the first movie in Bollywood or pseudo-Bollywood cinema to adopt the happy resolution for this canonical work. From the first Indian translations/adaptations of the works of Shakespeare to the Parsi theatre performances and, even some of the latest Bollywood film adaptations, we can see that the transformation from a tragic ending to a happy one is part of the process of adapting/interpreting Shakespeare in India. Choosing to repeat and imitate the Bollywood formula, *Second Generation* experiences a duality or double articulation – appropriation of the Bollywood genre and, consequently, of the interpretation of Shakespearean works in Bollywood. Given that ideoscapes are “concatenations of images” that flow among cultures, this double appropriation experienced by Jon Sen’s *Second Generation* acts as another ideoscape.³⁰

Second Generation highlights a feature often found in Indian Shakespeares – and, above all, in Bollywood Shakespeares – the happy ending. *À la mode* of Nahum Tate’s *King Lear*, the Cordelia and King Lear figures – Heere and Sharma-ji – do not die and the corresponding Edgar (Sam) and Cordelia end up together in Calcutta, presumably in wedlock. Yet, these are the only issues retained from Tate’s *Lear*, and the film is much more indebted to Bollywood and its interpretation of Shakespeare than to the Restoration adaptation. While Nahum Tate’s *King Lear* displays Goneril, Reagan and Edmund dead, they remain alive in Sen’s movie. In Shakespeare’s *King Lear* or even in Nahum Tate’s *Lear*, the audience/ readers never feel any sympathy towards

³⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*, 36.

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these characters, but this changes completely in Jon Sen's adaptation. *Second Generation* explores a new psychological dimension which makes these three characters seem more benevolent to the spectators' eyes. As "Indian films often have this drive to erase the ethical differences between characters," Jon Sen and Neil Biswas were forced to transform and revitalize their moral behavior and to understand their evil nature.³¹ The director and scriptwriter justify Pria's (Goneril) actions through her distressed past. When Pria was just a child, she found her mother's dead body after she had taken pills to end her life. Instead of telling her sisters, she decided to keep it as a secret which marked her whole life. Thus, the degree of complexity of the character is different from the original source. Jon Sen is clearly intent on developing a more benign Regan with the character of Rina. From the beginning, she is always the go-between between her father and her sister Heere; she is not just evil for the sake of being evil. The most significant difference between the original Shakespearean character and Rina has to do with the development of the relationship with her sister Pria (Goneril). In Shakespeare's play, the two sisters fight over Edmund, whereas in *Second Generation* they never argue – let alone about the Edmund figure Firoz – who is Rina's lover. Although Rina tries to follow her heart in the end to run away with Firoz and divorce her husband, their love is just impossible. According to the rigid Bollywood conventions, a character cannot be happy after infidelity, so, her ending is not going to be idyllic. When she talks to Heere, she regrets having married Arun instead of Firoz, and the audience cannot but pity her. The Edmund figure is equally softened. Unlike Edmund in Shakespeare's play, Firoz is not a bastard, never makes such a harsh soliloquy as Edmund in 1.1 of *King Lear*; he is

³¹ Theresa Kenney, "Aisha, Rajshree Ojha's Urban Emma: Not Entirely Clueless," *Persuasions On-Line* 32.1 (2011).

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never as evil as Edmund.³² In fact, whenever he makes mistakes – as when he contributes in the dismissal of his dad or with his affair with Rina – he regrets them at the end, and decides to start from scratch. Firoz’s decision to finish his relationship with Rina is triggered by a guilt complex, for his father saw them together before he committed suicide. *Second Generation* then transforms Goneril, Reagan and Edmund – Pria, Rina and Firoz respectively – into more comprehensible characters, and reduces considerably their ambivalences and ambiguities.

The great majority of Bollywood adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* always change the tragic *dénouement* into a happy ending. *Bobby*, *Maine Pyar Kiya* or *1942: A Love Story* – openly or intrinsically based on Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* – choose to make this alteration of the ending.³³ Jon Sen and Neil Biswas re-interpret Shakespeare similarly in their rewriting of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. In their attempt to appropriate and revitalize the genre, Jon Sen and Neil Biswas are forced to explore the characters’ reconciliation with their past and how Heere and Sharma-ji can be rewarded with an idyllic and melodramatic – activating the lachrymal glands – finale in the home country.³⁴ As soon as the characters leave England, they adopt the Indian way of understanding Shakespeare together with Indian culture and values. While Heere had been oscillating between the East and the West in England, her doubts are erased once she returns to India and connects with her obliterated ‘Indianness.’ The Lear figure Sharma-ji is equally offered a very different understanding from the original source.

³² In Nahum Tate’s rewriting, Edmund is more wicked than his Shakespearean counterpart, for he even plans to rape Cordelia.

³³ This wave of interpreting – or rather re-interpreting – Shakespeare is also common in South Korea now. A very recent Korean Costume Drama TV series entitled *The Princess’ Man* (dir. Kim Jung-min and Park Hyun-suk 2011) – whose main intertext is also *Romeo and Juliet* – also decided to resolve it happily. The leading characters – Se-ryung (Juliet) and Shin Myun (Romeo) – not only end up together – for the audience’s relief – but they even have a daughter.

³⁴ Melodrama is the most characteristic formula of Bollywood movies.

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Sharma-ji is given an opportunity to start again within his own country. Given that Sharma-ji's madness was caused by his inability to perform one of the religious rituals when his wife died, it disappears when he reconciles with his past by throwing his wife's ashes to the Ganges river. Jon Sen's film attributes a major influence to this religious ritual for the restoration of moral order. The scene illustrates "how the guilty patriarch is transformed into a redeemed figure, a man who resembles a benevolent grandfather much more than the despairing King Lear."³⁵ Therefore, "*Second Generation* shies away from moral ambivalence and instead opts for redemption through religion."³⁶ The icing of the cake is the fruitful reunion of Heere and Sam back in India. Following the trajectory of Bollywood movies, individualism loses over family relations, which are strongly invigorated. Just like Sharma-ji never recovers his curry business – his kingdom – Heere cannot be guided by her independent impulses. Jon Sen and Neil Biswas then conceive their filmic project as a Bollywood 'feudal family romance,' characterized by a conservative conclusion in which the couple is reunited, but is also incorporated into the governing ideology of the feudal family, with Sharma-ji as the head of the family.³⁷ Many critics precisely link "the centrality of the family film to the active solicitation of a diasporic audience, since the ideology of the undivided Indian family links the nation to the diaspora."³⁸ Yet, *Second Generation* enhances the joint family in the nation. While segregated in the diaspora, its integration is possible in the nation state. Via the negotiation with a foreign cinematic genre, new dimensions of

³⁵ Dengel-Janic and Roering, 217.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ See Sangita Gopal, "Sentimental Symptoms: The Films of Karan Johar and Bombay Cinema." In Mehta and Pandharipande, 15-35 to read about the conservative ideology of feudal family romances. Gopal also compares Karan Johar's films and previous family feudal romances to conclude that the role of the family is completely reinvented in Johar's movies.

³⁸ Gopal, 22.

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the canonical text are discovered, with the alteration of the ending as the main alien element.

The reading of *King Lear* in *Second Generation* also owes a great deal to the Bollywood tradition in which *Romeo and Juliet* is the favourite Shakespearean work. Conscious of the Bollywood tradition of clinging to *Romeo and Juliet* even when *Romeo and Juliet* is not the focus of the adaptation, Heere and Sam clearly emerge as a convenient diasporic couple in which Cordelia and Edgar give way to Romeo and Juliet. Although the Khans and the Sharmas have always been best friends, at one point – after Khan’s dismissal – they become rival families, but the children inevitably come together (see Fig. 38). Khan’s opposition to their union is both based on the rivalry recently formed between the families and on a religion issue. Religion has always played a crucial role in Bollywood *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations. *Bobby* revolves around a Catholic Juliet and a Hindu Romeo. In *Josh* (2000), the Juliet figure (Shirley) is a Catholic, whereas the Romeo figure (Rahul) is a Hindu. Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* is the first movie to depict a Hindu Romeo and a Muslim Juliet, suggesting a focus on India’s partition.³⁹ *Second Generation* is also significantly engaged with the partition via its Muslim/Hindu Romeo and Juliet, but, unlike Ratnam’s *Bombay*, the Muslim character is not Juliet but Romeo (Sam). The connection between Heere and Sam and Romeo and Juliet has also been observed by several critics. According to Steve, “this cross-culture, generation gap drama incorporates a bit of *King Lear* (a father at war with his three daughters) and *Romeo and Juliet* (lovers from rival families coming

³⁹ Although Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* is the first film which includes a Muslim Juliet and a Hindu Romeo, on stage, Utpal Dutt’s jatra *Romeo and Juliet* (1970) was a pioneer.

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together).”⁴⁰ Lopa Patel even conferred more importance to the love story – with clear references to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* – than to the rewriting of *King Lear*.⁴¹ The production notes of the product equally emphasize how they all were “attracted to the prospect of bringing a love story into a context that was so rich and unexplored” rather than focusing on the connections with *King Lear*.⁴² Danny Dyer, who plays the role of Jack, highlights the love story as the main element to take into account in *Second Generation*.⁴³ Although *Second Generation* is mainly indebted to *King Lear*, there are hints to the famous Shakespearean couple for the filmmaker to make his product look like a Bollywood film.



Fig. 38. Heere (Cordelia) and Sam (Edgar) in *Second Generation*.

Another characteristic of Bollywood Shakespeares is to relativize the cultural authority of Shakespeare by alluding to several Shakespearean works apart from the one which is the object of study, with some confusion in the process. In imitation of this, the film’s narrative is freshened with a series of references to other Shakespearean plays apart from *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*. For instance, the audience sees that the movie is deeply absorbed in a Shakespearean world when the old-aching patriarch Sharma-ji feels guilty about his wife’s death and Khan’s death and imagines their spirits

⁴⁰ Steve, “Last Night’s TV – Family Turmoil and a Tall Tale,” *HighBeam Research* (16 September, 2003).

⁴¹ Lopa Patel, “Second Generation – A New Channel 4 Drama,” *Redhotcurry* (27 August, 2003) <http://www.redhotcurry.com/about/index.htm>

⁴² Production notes of *Second Generation*.

⁴³ Production notes of *Second Generation*.

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talking to him as if he were a diasporic Richard III. The juxtaposition of images of the two characters certainly recalls the last scene in *Richard III* when the king was almost ‘harassed’ by the ghosts of the people he had killed. Curiously enough, Nitin Chandra Ganatra, who performs the role of Firoz Khan, does not compare his character with Edmund, but with Malcolm in *Macbeth* since both feel trapped. His comparison with Malcolm centres on the fact that, as older siblings, they have taken on the responsibility of the family business, and have not had the time to become themselves. Yet, this analogy is extremely weird, and no one would have ever imagined such correlation. This can be interpreted in two very different ways: a) Ganatra shows great mastery in Shakespeare or b) Ganatra is a clear example of an individual with an Indian cultural background in which Shakespearean plays are easily mixed, and even confused. *Second Generation* then embodies the logic of a remake of *King Lear* set in a diasporic world with a considerable Bollywood flavour, to the extent that in the end it is impossible to know whether it is Shakespeare or Bollywood the first thing appropriated.

Conclusion

If for Gary Taylor “Walmart Shakespeare” alludes to those adaptations which appropriate the “flagship commodity of the world’s most powerful culture,” i.e. Shakespeare, *Second Generation* not only appropriates Shakespeare – the flagship commodity of English-speaking cultures – but also Bollywood.⁴⁴ In fact, although marketed as a remake of *King Lear*, *Second Generation* clearly approaches Shakespeare

⁴⁴ Dominic Dromgoole and Gary Taylor, “Welcome to Bardworld,” *Guardian* (July 13, 2005).

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through Bollywood. In fact, in this movie, Shakespeare is sometimes decentered when compared with Bollywood's role. The plot-resolution, cast, diasporic themes and the whole way of approaching Shakespeare – the happy ending, the mixture of Shakespearean works and even the presence of *Romeo and Juliet* – are inherited from Bollywood. Jon Sen's project is clearly aware of the fact that not only Bollywood, but also Shakespeare are constructed in his film. As Bollywood cinema certainly aims to please non-elites, and is deeply absorbed in popular subculture, it is evident that *Second Generation* – in imitation of this cinematic genre – also puts more importance on the masses than the elite. Consequently, *Second Generation* adds to the list of cultural products that establish the strong relationship between Shakespeare and popular culture Douglas Lanier explored.⁴⁵

This variation on Shakespeare's *King Lear* simply confirms the importance of Bollywood interpretation of Shakespeare's *oeuvre* in Shakespeare's global understanding. If the aforementioned pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean film adaptations popularized the use of a happy *dénouement* in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Second Generation* moves beyond providing a happy ending to *King Lear* in the Bollywood fashion, a play that has never been the object of transformation, alteration or recycling in Bollywood cinema. With the excuse of rewriting Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Second Generation* offers the adapter a golden opportunity to explore Bollywood aesthetics with a diasporic frame. Consequently, the movie suggests that diaspora inevitably meets Bollywood and Shakespeare. Furthermore, the film also has a certain power of turning Shakespeare into just another construct to play with and experiment. *Second Generation* is the vivid example or illustration of how diaspora is constantly favouring cultural

⁴⁵ Douglas Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

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flows, and how the understanding of Shakespeare and its work is strongly affected. The travels from East to West offer and discover new dimensions of understanding the Shakespearean texts. Under the influence of an alien cinematic culture, Shakespeare's *oeuvre* receives a more radical treatment in some Western adaptations, since the works may briefly appear in incongruous manners, but, yet, the transformation of the works still preserves the Shakespearean distinctiveness. *Second Generation* merely confirms the necessity of analyzing and exploring Bollywood forms even in Western Shakespearean adaptations in order to have a wider spectrum of the transnational Shakespeare paradigm, and how it evolves and is modified by the ongoing cultural flows.

Conclusions

This dissertation opens and closes with the primacy of diaspora and transnationalism in the articulation of Bollywood and pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations and off-shoots. Diaspora and transnationalism contribute significantly to the understanding of Bollywood Shakespeares and their influence on the Western interpretation of Shakespeare. This study argues that this is the case because a) the topics derived from transnationalism are reproduced in the Bollywood and pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations under study, b) Shakespeare occupies a transnational space in Bollywood adaptations of his works, either localized in diasporic places such as Australia or in films targeted at transnational societies and c) diaspora favours the constant dialogue between the reception of Shakespeare in Bollywood and in the West. If in the history of Shakespeare in India, Shakespeare was first associated with the entry of colonialism and the presence of the English diaspora, it has now to be understood in connection with the Indian diaspora and transnationalism. Just as the corpora of Bollywood films analysed in the dissertation (chapters 4, 5 and 6) prove that Shakespeare is located in the diaspora – *Dil Chahta Hai* – or is addressed at a transnational audience – *Maqbool* and *Omkara*, the corpora of pseudo-Bollywood films (chapters 7, 8, and 9) demonstrate that diasporic populations play crucial roles in the re-interpretation of Shakespeare in the West via Bollywood. Given that the mobility of people – ‘ethnoscapes’ – entails cultural flows, the travelling of texts is compelling and a different, foreign Shakespeare arrives at the West, characterised by ‘cannibalization’ and trivialization. Aiming to connect with their culture, NRI directors – Deepa Mehta in

Bollywood/Hollywood, Mira Nair in *Mississippi Masala* – or even the British filmmaker Jon Sen and diasporic scriptwriter Neil Biswas in *Second Generation* – cling to Bollywood, and they indirectly adopt the Bollywood interpretation of Shakespeare, characterised by the simplification of Shakespeare's works, the lack of acknowledgement to Shakespeare, the constant presence of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the transformation of a tragic *dénouement* into a happy ending, not only in *Romeo and Juliet* off-shoots, but even in a *King Lear* spin-off.

The close bond or rather necessary existence of diaspora in the late 90s Bollywood Shakespeares is effectively demonstrated in the movies examined in chapters 4, 5 and 6 (*1942: A Love Story*, *Bombay*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Maqbool* and *Omkaara*), for all of them are targeted at transnational and/or international audiences. Yet, not all of them convey the same meaning, and approach Shakespeare and its relationship with diaspora in exactly the same way. While *1942: A Love Story* and *Bombay* clearly defend and demand Shakespeare's disappearance in India due to its association with colonialism, and are in favour of a long-distance nationalistic message promoted basically by diasporic populations, *Dil Chahta Hai* not only relocates Shakespeare in the diaspora, but also focuses on a transnational community as main target audience. *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* present Shakespeare as a transnational icon. The issues examined in Bharadwaj's films and their expansion and universalization of the genre cannot but boost transnationalism.

Shakespeare makes Vishal Bhardwaj expand the Bollywood performance medium. *Maqbool* and *Omkaara* challenge and amplify the typical Bollywood conventions as they move in the direction of transnational cinema characterised by

“cultural diversity, transnational experiences and multinational identities.”¹ As Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* and *Omkara* are the first acknowledged Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations, they inevitably “raise the questions of how border-crossing works are seen and why.”² Via their attempts to fit the platters of international festivals and audiences and their construction of a changed and developed Bollywood model, *Maqbool* and *Omkara* expand the nature of the genre.³

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 equally highlight the idea that Shakespeare is reduced to the minimum in Bollywood. The troubled relationship between Shakespeare and the colonial past in India explains the ‘cannibalization’ of Shakespeare as well as the lack of acknowledgement of the Shakespearean influence in Bollywood movies. The impression in early Bollywood movies is that Shakespeare has to be deconstructed, reinvented and even trivialised in order to continue circulating in Bollywood, and is always kept to a minimum. While the Shakespearean allusions are reduced to a play-within-the-film in *1942: A Love Story* and to the ongoing references to *Romeo and Juliet* in this work and in *Bombay*, they are minimised to an opera-within-the film, a Shakespearean plot and some titles of Shakespeare’s *oeuvre* in *Dil Chahta Hai*. The lack of acknowledgement of Shakespeare is common in these three works. The conspiracy against Shakespeare’s authorship has dominated Farhan Akhtar’s *Dil Chahta Hai* considerably, where, in spite of the engagement with the Shakespearean canon, the movie still resists naming him in the marketing campaign. In spite of the fact that *Maqbool* and *Omkara* are acknowledged Shakespearean adaptations, they always raise heated debates due to their double identity – being both Bollywood movies and

¹ Andrew Higson, “The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema.” In *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 18.

² Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, 234.

³ Like *Maqbool* and *Omkara*, Feng Xiaogang’s film *The Banquet* (2006) also has a double identity for it is both a Chinese film and a Shakespearean adaptation.

Shakespearean adaptations. The question of whether they are Shakespearean enough or not always lurks behind the surface.

This trivialization of Shakespeare's works in Bollywood functions to confirm Shakespeare as a complex habitation of India. The extreme simplification of the plot in pre-1990s off-shoots, such as *1942: A Love Story* or in *Bombay* and in some pseudo-bollywood off-shoots corroborates that the link between Shakespeare and colonialism is somehow present in the adaptations and off-shoots of the film corpora. The connection between Shakespeare and the Indian colonial past is all the more explicit in *1942: A Love Story*, where Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was expected to be performed in front of a British General and Shakespeare was condemned to disappearance in the post-colonial era. *Bollywood/Hollywood* inscribes again Shakespeare during the Indian colonial period via the character of the protagonist's grandmother, who misquotes and mimics Shakespearean works to emerge as an in-between subject and to distance herself from the Shakespearean image provided by the British Raj. Other adaptations and off-shoots, such as *Bombay* and *Second Generation* do not refer back to the colonial period, but to partition via Hindu and Muslim Romeos and Juliets, alluding to the riots in the aftermath of India's partition.

The final part of this dissertation traces the transformation and reinvention of the Shakespearean identity in the West due to the constant cultural flows and mobility of the texts via the appropriation of Bollywood. The Shakespeare-Bollywood interrelations are surprisingly accommodated in the West by diasporic and Western filmmakers as a result of the constant 'journey' of ideas – 'ideoscapes' – and films – 'mediascapes.'⁴ The

⁴ A very interesting example of the incessant journey of 'ideoscapes' can be seen in the Chinese Shakespearean off-shoot *A Time to Love* or *Qing ren jie* (dir. Jiangi Huo, 2005), where the lovers start to be constructed upon the famous Shakespearean couple after watching Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and*

movies examined in chapters 7, 8 and 9 (*Bollywood/ Hollywood, Mississippi Masala, Bollywood Queen* and *Second Generation*) explore a new wave of interpreting Shakespeare, characterised by experimentation. Haunted by the exotica of Bollywood aesthetics, Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair, Jeremy Wooding or Jon Sen engage with these dynamics. Interestingly, the parody of Bollywood clichés hides a Shakespearean presence. The sequences of the lovers falling in love immediately, the continuous recreations of the balcony scene and the conflicts in tandem with those of the Capulets and Montagues certainly recall Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. But the refusal to acknowledge the Shakespearean influence and the happy endings alert the viewers that they are in fact watching recreations of the play which follow closely the Bollywood mode of reading the Shakespearean text. The implicit idea is that the West does not seem to override the East, for the works do not interact with Shakespeare via the original text, but through another form of representation. As Bollywood occupies now a transnational space, Shakespeare is also an integral part of this process. These pseudo-Bollywood adaptations and off-shoots do not show the binary relationship between the original Shakespearean source text and the subsequent adaptation or off-shoot, but they appropriate Shakespeare via Bollywood. The encounters between Shakespeare and Bollywood in the West open up new possibilities for the evolution and reception of Shakespeare, which include more experimentation and 'trivialization'.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 explore then a new wave of experimenting with Shakespeare. The four works examined in these three chapters somehow debunk the cultural authority of Shakespeare in the West. In *Bollywood/Hollywood*, Shakespeare is misappropriated, misquoted and even denied by the main character's grandmother.

Juliet (1968). After that, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* becomes their guide book for their relationship until the end in which they get married. The ambivalent open ending is reminiscent of the interpretation of the Shakespearean text in Asia.

Mississippi Masala and *Bollywood Queen* change considerably *Romeo and Juliet* under the influence of the foreign cinematic genre. These films offer two different understandings of the play in the West. Despite the film reviews by Western critics in which the references to Shakespeare are constant and ongoing, neither *Mississippi Masala* nor *Bollywood Queen* acknowledges the Shakespearean presence. Jon Sen's *Second Generation* adds to the group of movies that are intent on developing a new Shakespeare in the West. Equally influenced by Bollywood, *Second Generation* treats Shakespeare as another construct to play with and experiment. The original source text is completely reinvented following the Bollywood conventions. Although Jon Sen's *Second Generation* makes an allusion to the original source text in the marketing campaign, it almost passes unnoticed. *King Lear* and part of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* in general is altered in order to promote the idea that "Shakespeare's works are themselves nothing but commodities in entertainment business."⁵ Bollywood is then somehow contributing to the Shakespearean afterlife.

Bollywood and pseudo-Bollywood adaptations and off-shoots provide a wide spectrum of (re)interpretations of Shakespearean works that go beyond the traditional boundaries between Eastern and Western traditions. Due to the continuous flows of people and media, the Bollywood genre is developing, internationalising and universalizing at the same time it is being appropriated – or rather parodied – by the West. 1990s and post-millennial Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations and off-shoots cannot be fully understood in terms of national cultures or indigenous cultures, but in terms of diaspora and transnationalism since they seek international attention. Furthermore, new readings of Shakespeare will be determined by the partial inclusion of

⁵ Yukari, "Is this Shakespeare? Inoue Hidenori's Pop Adaptations of Shakespeare." In Trivedi and Minami, 153.

Conclusions

Bollywood in the West. Diasporic Shakespearean adaptations and off-shoots – by diasporic filmmakers or Western directors, but within a diasporic frame – imitate the Bollywood genre and, indirectly, appropriate Bollywood cinema's interpretation of Shakespeare. Shakespeare occupies then a transnational space where his works are always in circulation. They are appropriated by Bollywood, which is itself imitated in the West indirectly and subtly affecting the construction of Shakespeare there, which is more experimental and trivialized. Bollywood and pseudo-Bollywood Shakespearean adaptations challenge the cultural authority of Shakespeare in today's globalized 'Bardmart,' and they move towards a transnational Bard, beyond post-coloniality.

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Appendix

Bollywood adaptations and off-shoots

Films	Year	Director	Shakespeare's play	Critic
<i>Aan</i>	1952	Mehboob Khan	The Taming of the Shrew	Douglas Lanier, Alex Huang
<i>Aasha</i>	1957	M.V.Raman	Hamlet	Douglas Lanier, bufvc
<i>Agneepath</i>	1990	Mukul Anand	Reference to Macbeth, to the hands	Poonam Trivedi
<i>Agni Varsha: The Fire and the Rain</i>	2002	Arjun Sajnani	Hamlet	Douglas Lanier, Richard Burt
<i>Anari No. 1</i>	1999	Sandesh Kohli	The Comedy of Errors	Rajiva Verma
<i>Angoor</i>	1982	S. S. Gulzar	The Comedy of Errors	Rachel Dwyer, Douglas Lanier, Richard Burt, Nandi Bhatia
<i>Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan</i>	1998	David Dhawan	The Comedy of Errors	Rajiva Verma
<i>Betaab</i>	1983	Rahul Rawail	The Taming of the Shrew	Rachel Dwyer, Rajiva Verma
<i>Bhool Bulaiyan</i>	1933	Jayant Desai	The Comedy of Errors	Madhavi Menon
<i>Bobby</i>	1973	Raj Kapoor	Romeo and Juliet	Rachel Dwyer, Douglas Lanier
<i>Bombay</i>	1995	Mani Rathnam	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier

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<i>Chori Chori</i>	1956	Anant Thakur	The Taming of the Shrew's theme	Rajiva Verma
<i>Danger</i>	2002	Govind Menon	Hamlet	Douglas Lanier
<i>Deewarein</i>			TV series based on Hamlet – it was taken off in media res	Rajiva Verma
<i>Dil Chahta Hai</i>	2001	Farhan Akhtar	References to Much Ado About Nothing, Troilus and Cressida and built in a way similar to MAAN.	Rajiva Verma, Douglas Lanier, Madhavi Menon, Alex Huang, Richard Burt
<i>Dil Farosh</i>	1937?	D.N. Madhok	The Merchant of Venice	Rajiva Verma
<i>Dil Se (From The Heart)</i>	1998	Mani Rathnam	Romeo and Juliet spin-off	Richard Burt
<i>Do Dooni Char (Two Twos are Four)</i>	1968	Debu Sen	The Comedy of Errors	Rajiva Verma, Douglas Lanier
<i>Ek duuje ke liye (Made for Each Other)</i>	1981	K. Balachander	Romeo and Juliet	Rachel Dwyer, Douglas Lanier, Richard Burt
<i>Eklavya</i>	2007	Vidhu Vinod Chopra	Hamlet	Priyanka Khanna
<i>Family (King Lear)</i>	1996	Vijaya Bapineedu	King Lear – although the film has been considered an adaptation, it actually has few references	Douglas Lanier
<i>Gustakhi Maaf</i>	1969	Raj Kumer Bedi	The Comedy of Errors	Rajiva Verma

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<i>Hamlet: Prince of Denmark</i>	1989	S. Nathan	Hamlet	bufvc
<i>Hamlet (Khoon-e-Nahag)</i>	1955	Kishore Sahu	Hamlet – it takes as main intertextual code Lawrence Olivier’s Hamlet. It is believed to have been based on a stage production.	Kenneth Rothwell, Douglas Lanier, bufvc
<i>Hathili Dulhan</i>	1932	J.J. Madan	The Taming of the Shrew	Rajiva Verma
<i>Heer Raanji</i>	1970	Chetan Anand	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier
<i>Henna</i>	1991	Randhir Kapoor	Romeo and Juliet	Richard Burt
<i>Hum Paanch</i>	1980	Bapu	Hamlet	Rajiva Verma
<i>Hum Tum (Me & You)</i>	2004	Kunal Kohli	Based on When Harry Met Sally, itself based on Much Ado	Patricia Kyger
<i>Josh</i>	2000	Mansoor Khan	Based on West Side Story, itself based on Romeo and Juliet	Mark Thornton Burnett, Alex Huang, Douglas Lanier
<i>Junglee</i>	1961?	Subodh Mukherji	The Taming of the Shrew theme	Rajiva Verma
<i>Jwala</i>	1938	Master Vinayek	Macbeth	Douglas Lanier, bufvc
<i>Khoon-e-Nahak</i>	1928	K.B. Athavale	Hamlet	Rajiva Verma
<i>Khoonka-Khoon</i>	1935	Sohrab Modi	Hamlet – recording of a stage production	Rajiva Verma, bufvc

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<i>Kutumb</i>		Subhash K. Jha	Hamlet	Richard Burt
<i>Main Hoon Na</i>	2004	Farah Khan		
<i>Maine Pyar Kiya</i>	1989	Sooraj R. Barjatya	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier
<i>Manchali</i>	1973	Raja Nawathe	The Taming of the Shrew	Rajiva Verma
<i>Maqbool</i>	2002	Vishal Bhardwaj	Direct adaptation of Macbeth	Poonam Trivedi, Rachel Dwyer, Nandi Bhatia, bufvc
<i>Mard</i>	1985	Manmohan Desai	The Taming of the Shrew theme	Rajiva Verma
<i>Michael Madana Kamarajan</i>	1991	Srinivasa Rao Singeetham	The Comedy of Errors	Douglas Lanier
<i>Mr. Romeo</i>	1974	Subhash Mukerji	Romeo and Juliet	Alex Huang
<i>Mr. Romeo</i>	1997	K.S. Ravi	Romeo and Juliet spin-off	Richard Burt
<i>Naukar Biwi Ka</i>	1983	Rajkumar Kohli	The Taming of the Shrew theme	Rajiva Verma
<i>Omkaara</i>	2006	Vishal Bhardwaj	Direct adaptation of Othello	Bufvc Nandi Bhatia
<i>Pak Daman or Shaheed-e-Naaz</i>			Measure for Measure	
<i>Ponga Pandit</i>	1975	Prayag Raj	The Taming of the Shrew theme	Rajiva Verma
<i>Pukar</i>	1939	Sohrab Modi	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier
<i>Purab Aur Pachhim</i>	1970	Manoj Kumar	The Taming of the Shrew	Rajinder Kumar Dudrah
<i>Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak</i>	1988	Mansoor Khan	Romeo and	Rachel Dwyer,

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<i>(From Judgment Day to Judgment Day)</i>			Juliet	Douglas Lanier
<i>Reshma Aur Shera</i>	1971	Sunil Dutt	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier, Alex Huang
<i>Richard III: A Bollywood Musical</i>	2003	Serge Tampalini	Richard III – a video recording of a Bollywood musical version of Richard III	bufvc
<i>Romeo</i>	1976	S.S. Nair	Romeo and Juliet spin-off	Richard Burt
<i>Romeo in Sikkim</i>	1975	Kaul Karikishen	Romeo and Juliet spin-off	Richard Burt
<i>Romeo and Juliet (Anjuman)</i>	1947	Akhtar Hussein	Romeo and Juliet	Rajiva Verma, Douglas Lanier
<i>Said e Havas (King John)</i>	1936	Sohrab Modi	King John – film of a stage performance of a version of KJ	Douglas Lanier, bufvc
<i>Savkari Pash</i>	1936	Baburao Painter	The Merchant of Venice	
<i>Sholay</i>	1975	Ramesh Sippy	Romeo and Juliet	Alex Huang, Richard Burt
<i>Snip!</i>	2000	Sunhil Sippy	A Shakespeare citing hairdresser	Richard Burt
<i>The Stranger Aguntak</i>	1991	Satyajit Ray	Hamlet – the references to Shakespeare are not very clear	Douglas Lanier
<i>Uran Khatola</i>	1955	S.U. Sunny	Twelfth Night	Rajiva Verma
<i>When Hamlet Went to Mizoram</i>	1990	Pankaj Butalia		bufvc

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<i>Yeh to Kamal Ho Gaya</i>	1982	Rama Rao Tantineni	The Comedy of Errors	Rajiva Verma
<i>Zalim Saudagar</i>	1942	J.J. Madan	The Merchant of Venice	Rajiva Verma
<i>Zan Mureed or Kafire Ishq</i>	1936	Shanti Kumar	Based on a Parsi production of Ant & Cleopatra	Rajiva Verma
1942: A Love Story	1994	Vidhu Vinod Chopra	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier

Productions in India, but in other languages

Film	Year	Director	Language	Shakespeare's play	Critic
<i>Ambikapathy</i>	1957	P. Neelakantan	Tamil	Romeo and Juliet	Madhavi Menon
<i>Bahadur Ganda (The Valiant Husband)</i>	1976	A. V. Sheshgiri Rao	Kannada	The Taming of the Shrew theme	Rajiva Verma
<i>Bhrantibilas</i>	1963	Manu Sen	Bengali	The Comedy of Errors	Rajiva Verma
<i>Gunasundari Katha</i>	1949	Kadri Venkata Reddy	Telugu	King Lear	The Shakespeare Society of India
<i>In Othello</i>	2003	Roysten Abel	English	Othello	Douglas Lanier, Alex Huang, bufvc, Mark Thornton Burnett

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<i>Kaliyattam</i>	1998	Jayaraaj Rajasekharan Nair	Malayalam	Othello	Rajiva Verma, Douglas Lanier, Poonam Trivedi, Alex Huang, Richard Burt, bufvc
<i>Kannaki</i>	2002	Jayaraaj Rajasekharan Nair	Malayalam	Antony and Cleopatra	Douglas Lanier, Richard Burt
<i>Kanniyin Kathali</i>	1949	K. Ramnoth	Tamil	Twelfth Night	Madhavi Menon
<i>Manohara</i>	1954	L.V. Prasad	Tamil	Hamlet	Madhavi Menon
<i>Nanjundi Kalyana</i>	1989	K. Rajashekar	Kannada	The Taming of the Shrew	Rajiva Verma
<i>Shylock</i>	1940	S. Sarma	Tamil	The Merchant of Venice	Rajiva Verma, Madhavi Menon
<i>The Last Lear</i>	2007	Rituparno Ghosh	English	Many references to Shakespeare's plays	bufvc
<i>Yellamma</i>	2001	Mohan Koda	Telengana (dialect of Telugu)	Macbeth – Indian reworking of Macbeth set in 1850s India in the time of the Sepoy Mutiny.	Douglas Lanier, bufvc

British-Asian productions

Film	Year	Director	Shakespeare's play	Critic
<i>Ae Fond Kiss</i>	2004	Ken Loach	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier
<i>Bollywood/Hollywood</i>	2002	Deepa Mehta	References to Shakespeare's plays	Madhavi Menon, Richard Burt
<i>Bollywood Queen</i>	2002	Jeremy Wooding	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier, Richard Burt
<i>Mississippi Masala</i>	1991	Mira Nair	Romeo and Juliet	Douglas Lanier, Richard Burt
<i>Monsoon Wedding</i>	2001	Mira Nair	Structured like a Shakespeare's comedy	Richard Burt
<i>My Bollywood Bride</i>	2006	Rajeev Virani	Romeo and Juliet	
<i>Second Generation</i>	2003	Jon Sen	King Lear	Madhavi Menon
<i>Shakespeare Wallah</i>	1965	James Ivory	Many Shakespearean plays are mentioned	
<i>Water</i>	2005	Deepa Mehta	It loosely follows Romeo and Juliet	Danielle Van Wagner with Daniel Fischlin

Resumen de la tesis doctoral

Esta tesis doctoral se inscribe principalmente en el campo de los estudios shakespearianos y post-coloniales, más concretamente dentro de los estudios sobre la diáspora, aunque también hace uso del legado teórico-crítico de los estudios fílmicos y los estudios culturales. El tema de esta tesis doctoral parte del reciente interés por estudiar y analizar la recepción de las obras de Shakespeare fuera de las fronteras europeas. Tras la publicación de las obras pioneras *Post-colonial Shakespeares* (Loomba and Orkin, 1998) y, posteriormente, *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* (Massai, 2006) han sido muchos los críticos que se han interesado por la contribución de otras culturas al estudio e interpretación de Shakespeare, viendo cómo otras sociedades mezclan el concepto de lo ‘local’ con lo ‘global,’ transformando por completo el texto original (Orkin, 2005; Kennedy y Lan, 2010; Huang, 2010; Minami, Carruthers y Gillies, 2010; Trivedi y Bartholomeusz, 2005; Trivedi y Minami, 2009). A pesar de los numerosos trabajos que estudian a Shakespeare en un contexto multicultural, los que profundizan en la recepción de Shakespeare en la India son escasos, como son casi inexistentes aquellos que desarrollan con exhaustividad la presencia de Shakespeare en el cine popular indio, más conocido como Bollywood. Este trabajo de investigación se propone, por tanto, cubrir las lagunas existentes, investigando en un campo que está empezando a ser descubierto.¹

¹ La investigación realizada para esta tesis doctoral se ha llevado a cabo en parte gracias a los proyectos de investigación 12014/PHCS/09 (Great War Shakespeare II: Mitos, Agentes Sociales y Cultura Global), financiado por la Fundación Séneca, EDU2008-00453 (Culturas de la Conmemoración: El Tercer

La producción y recepción de las obras de Shakespeare en el cine de Bollywood no han sido estudiadas todavía en ninguna colección.² A pesar de la existencia de adaptaciones y derivados de textos shakesperianos en el cine de Bollywood, tales como *Angoor* (dir. Gulzar, 1982) – basada en *La Comedia de los Errores – 1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) – inspirada en *Romeo y Julieta*, con una pequeña representación teatral de la obra – *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002) – spin-off con numerosas citas de las obras de Shakespeare – o las adaptaciones de *Macbeth* y *Othello Maqbool* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2003) y *Omkaara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006), no ha aparecido todavía ninguna monografía que se centre en éstas. Esta tesis doctoral, por tanto, aspira a llenar esta laguna.

Metodología y marco teórico

Esta tesis doctoral ha requerido un estudio de todas las adaptaciones, reescrituras y derivados de las obras de Shakespeare en Bollywood. Para ello, se ha realizado una lectura detallada de todas las obras, volúmenes, blogs y artículos que mencionan algún tipo de relación entre Shakespeare y las películas bollywoodienses, y un análisis crítico-teórico de las películas más importantes del cine popular indio con el fin de buscar citas, representaciones dentro de las películas o simplemente referencias a Shakespeare en éstas.

Centenario de Shakespeare (1916) y la Idea de Europa), y FFI2011-24347 (Culturas de la Conmemoración II: Recordando a Shakespeare), financiados por el Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación.

² Actualmente, los críticos Craig Dionne y Parmita Kapadia están editando el primer volumen sobre la presencia de Shakespeare en Bollywood llamado *Bollywood's Shakespeare: Cultural Dialogues Through World Cinema* (Palgrave, Macmillan) en el que aparece un capítulo mío sobre *Maqbool*. Su publicación está prevista para 2013.

El acercamiento al tema de este estudio se ha llevado a cabo a través de las teorías sobre la diáspora, que, hasta ahora, no han sido aplicadas sistemáticamente a los estudios shakesperianos. Al analizar la interacción entre Shakespeare y Bollywood, así como el diálogo entre Occidente-Oriente-Occidente, se siguen de forma sistemática en esta tesis doctoral algunos de los conceptos proporcionados por Arjun Appadurai (1996), Homi K. Bhabha (1990), García Canclini (1989) o Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002).

Hipótesis de trabajo y objetivos de la investigación

Esta tesis doctoral, titulada *Shakespeare, Bollywood and Beyond*, parte de la hipótesis de que la diáspora y el transnacionalismo desempeñan un papel fundamental no sólo en la interpretación de las adaptaciones bollywoodienses de las obras shakespearianas, sino también en la interpretación global de Shakespeare a través de Bollywood. Gran parte de la autoridad textual de Shakespeare en la cultura occidental está siendo imaginada y consumida siguiendo los parámetros de Shakespeare en Bollywood, como es la experimentación total con su obra. La reducción de los argumentos de las obras originales, la falta de reconocimiento a las obras de Shakespeare como principales influencias y la transformación de los finales en las adaptaciones pseudo-bollywoodienses simplemente confirman esa influencia, fomentada por la constante movilidad cultural. Estas adaptaciones pseudo-bollywoodienses, por tanto, activan un diálogo constante con la recepción de Shakespeare en Bollywood gracias al transnacionalismo.

Los objetivos que persigue esta tesis doctoral son los siguientes:

1. Demostrar que las adaptaciones de las obras de Shakespeare desde 1990 hasta la actualidad consideradas como “bollywoodienses” o “pseudo-bollywoodienses” están dirigidas a la diáspora o tratan sobre ésta.³ El marco teórico que se propone, en el que las teorías de García Canclini (1989), Appadurai (1997) y Bhabha (1994) son cruciales, es, por tanto, un marco teórico que nace del concepto de la diáspora. Los temas derivados de las continuas migraciones, tales como la hibridación o cuestiones de género han sido analizados en las películas para ver hasta qué punto el transnacionalismo está presente en ellas. Además, las campañas de marketing, las reseñas hechas de dichas películas y los datos de taquilla se han estudiado en la mayoría de las películas objeto de análisis.
2. El segundo objetivo – directamente relacionado con el objetivo anterior – es señalar la importancia que tiene el fenómeno de la diáspora y el transnacionalismo a la hora de comprender no sólo la interpretación de Shakespeare en Bollywood, sino también su influencia en Occidente. Si Shakespeare ocupa cada vez más un espacio transnacional en las adaptaciones bollywoodienses de sus obras, la movilidad cultural fomenta el diálogo entre esta apropiación y la de Occidente creando productos híbridos.
3. Manifestar la evolución del cine de Bollywood debido a la influencia del transnacionalismo, hacia un género cada vez menos nacionalista y más universal.

³ Las adaptaciones “Pseudo-bollywoodienses” son aquellas que imitan muchas de las fórmulas utilizadas por Bollywood, tales como la presencia constante de canciones y bailes, el excesivo uso de melodrama o los finales felices, pero que están realizadas, dirigidas y producidas en Occidente.

4. Analizar un corpus bien definido de adaptaciones y derivados bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare para establecer los rasgos comunes a todos ellos.
5. Observar si la asociación entre Shakespeare y el colonialismo en la India todavía sigue vigente en algunas adaptaciones y derivados del corpus fílmico y cómo este hecho influye en su interpretación.
6. Establecer semejanzas respecto a la interpretación de Shakespeare en las adaptaciones bollywoodienses y pseudo-bollywoodienses.
7. Demostrar que, gracias a la constante movilidad cultural, la recepción de Shakespeare en Bollywood está influyendo en Occidente. La tesis aspira a mostrar cómo los textos shakespearianos han adquirido diferentes significados debido a la influencia de Bollywood. Hay un constante diálogo entre Shakespeare y Bollywood por un lado, y Bollywood y Occidente por otro, que está dando lugar a una nueva interpretación, que no pertenece del todo ni a Oriente ni a Occidente. Estas adaptaciones pseudo-bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare reproducen la interpretación de Shakespeare en Bollywood – caracterizada por una ‘canibalización’ de los textos originales – para así descubrir una nueva dimensión. Shakespeare se convierte en objeto de experimentación gracias a la influencia de Bollywood.

Descripción del corpus fílmico

El corpus fílmico de esta tesis doctoral está compuesto por nueve películas filmadas a partir de 1990, ya que la década de los 90 marca el comienzo de una nueva etapa caracterizada por películas sobre y para la diáspora. En esa década se estrenaron

tres películas – *Mississippi Masala* (dir. Mira Nair, 1990), *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) y *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995) – y el resto fueron estrenadas durante el nuevo siglo – *Dil Chahta Hai* (dir. Farhan Akhtar, 2002), *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002), *Bollywood Queen* (dir. Jeremy Wooding, 2002), *Second Generation* (dir. Jon Sen, 2003), *Maqbool* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2003) y *Omkara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006). El corpus consta de cinco películas realizadas en Mumbai (*1942: A Love Story*, *Bombay*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Maqbool* y *Omkara*), tres películas dirigidas por directores pertenecientes a la diáspora (*Mississippi Masala*, *Bollywood/Hollywood* y *Second Generation*) y una película británico-bollywoodiense (*Bollywood Queen*).

La selección de estas películas obedece al interés por estudiar adaptaciones y derivados en los que la recreación de Shakespeare fuera considerable. El corpus está formado por una amplia gama de productos culturales, tanto cultos como populares. No forman parte del corpus fílmico películas como *Shakespeare Wallah* (dir. James Ivory, 1965), *36 Chowringhee Lane* (dir. Aparna Sen, 1981) debido a la fecha en la que fueron estrenadas y por no ser consideradas películas bollywoodienses. *In Othello* (dir. Roysten Abel, 2002) tampoco forma parte del corpus fílmico por no pertenecer al canon bollywoodiense.

Estructuración de la tesis

Esta tesis doctoral se divide en tres partes claramente diferenciadas. Mientras la primera constituye el marco teórico *per se*, la segunda y tercera partes consisten en la

aplicación del marco teórico a las películas objeto de estudio. La segunda se centra en la relación entre Shakespeare, Bollywood y la diáspora en conocidas adaptaciones y derivados bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare. La tercera parte de la tesis doctoral analiza un nuevo paradigma: adaptaciones y derivados pseudo-bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare, realizadas por directores británicos o pertenecientes a la diáspora.

La primera parte de la tesis comprende tres capítulos. El primero proporciona una introducción a la representación de Shakespeare en la India, que incluye el ámbito educativo, el teatral y el editorial. El segundo capítulo consiste en una visión general de las adaptaciones, reescrituras y derivados de Shakespeare bollywoodienses y allana el terreno para el análisis del corpus fílmico. El último capítulo de esta parte teórica de la tesis se centra exclusivamente en teorías sobre la diáspora enfatizando los principales paradigmas, y cómo serán aplicados al análisis de las películas.

Las partes segunda y tercera de esta tesis doctoral corresponden al análisis del corpus fílmico. La segunda parte se dedica únicamente al análisis de adaptaciones y derivados bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare realizadas a partir de 1990. Esta sección explora con exhaustividad la importancia que tiene el transnacionalismo para comprender el fenómeno de Shakespeare en Bollywood. El primer capítulo de esta segunda parte, el capítulo cuarto, estudia dos derivados de *Romeo y Julieta*: *1942: A Love Story* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 1994) – que incluye una pequeña representación teatral de la obra – y *Bombay* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1995). Las alusiones a la obra de Shakespeare en las dos películas desaparecen de forma sistemática hacia la mitad de estos proyectos fílmicos, pues ambas promueven el nacionalismo y a Shakespeare lo

consideran un mero vestigio del colonialismo. El capítulo quinto explora la presencia de Shakespeare en *Dil Chahta Hai*, así como su localización en un espacio transnacional. El capítulo sexto analiza los proyectos de Vishal Bhardwaj (*Maqbool* y *Omkara*) que demuestran que la apropiación de Shakespeare más fiel al texto conlleva una expansión del género cinematográfico de Bollywood hacia un cine cada vez más transnacional.

La última sección está compuesta por cuatro adaptaciones de las obras de Shakespeare que demuestran que la imitación de las fórmulas del cine popular indio también conlleva de forma sutil – y nunca explícitamente – la apropiación que Bollywood hace de Shakespeare. El capítulo séptimo examina la parodia que se hace tanto de Bollywood cómo de la apropiación de citas de Shakespeare en la película *Bollywood/Hollywood* (dir. Deepa Mehta, 2002). El capítulo octavo estudia dos off-shoots de *Romeo y Julieta: Mississippi Masala* (dir. Mira Nair, 1990) y *Bollywood Queen* (dir. Jeremy Wooding, 2002) que recrean la obra de Shakespeare al estilo de Bollywood – con final feliz y sin reconocer la influencia shakespeariana – pero sin éxito en Occidente. El capítulo noveno contiene un análisis de *Second Generation* (dir. Jon Sen, 2003), una adaptación de *King Lear* caracterizada por su final feliz, afirmando así su conexión con la tradición bollywoodiense.

Conclusiones

Esta tesis doctoral empieza y acaba con la importancia de la diáspora y el transnacionalismo en las adaptaciones bollywoodienses y pseudo-bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare. La diáspora y el transnacionalismo son cruciales a la hora de

comprender las adaptaciones bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare y cómo éstas han influido en la interpretación occidental de Shakespeare. Esto se debe a tres factores: a) los temas derivados de la diáspora se reproducen en todas las adaptaciones bollywoodienses y pseudo-bollywoodienses objeto de análisis, b) Shakespeare ocupa en las adaptaciones bollywoodienses un espacio transnacional, localizado en áreas de la diáspora como Australia o bien en películas cada vez más dirigidas al público transnacional y c) la diáspora favorece la interacción entre la recepción de Shakespeare en Bollywood y en Occidente. Si en la historia de Shakespeare en la India, Shakespeare se asoció en principio a la entrada del colonialismo en el subcontinente asiático y a la diáspora inglesa, se tiene que entender ahora en relación con la diáspora india y el transnacionalismo.

Si las películas bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare aquí analizadas (capítulos 4, 5 & 6) muestran que Shakespeare se localiza en la diáspora – *Dil Chahta Hai* – o se dirige a un público transnacional – *Maqbool* y *Omkaara* – las adaptaciones y derivados pseudo-bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare (capítulos 7, 8 & 9) demuestran que las poblaciones transnacionales tienen un papel muy importante en la reinterpretación de Shakespeare en Occidente a través de Bollywood. Como la movilidad constante conlleva movilidad cultural, el ‘viaje’ de textos también se produce, por lo que llega a Occidente un Shakespeare distinto. En efecto, el que llega a Occidente es más libre, más ‘canibalizado’ y trivializado. Los directores diaspóricos como Deepa Mehta en *Bollywood/Hollywood*, Mira Nair en *Mississippi Masala* o Jon Sen en *Second Generation*, intentando conectar con su cultura de origen, recurren a Bollywood e, indirectamente, adoptan la interpretación bollywoodiense de Shakespeare,

caracterizada, como se ha dicho anteriormente, por la máxima reducción posible del texto y argumento de las obras shakesperianas, la falta de reconocimiento del origen shakespeariano del producto final y la presencia constante de *Romeo y Julieta*, así como la transformación de un final trágico a un final feliz, no sólo en derivados de *Romeo y Julieta*, sino incluso en una adaptación de *King Lear*.

Los capítulos 4, 5 y 6 muestran la importancia del transnacionalismo en la lectura de las películas analizadas (*1942: A Love Story*, *Bombay*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Maqbool* y *Omkara*). Sin embargo, no todas expresan la relación entre Shakespeare y la diáspora de la misma forma. Mientras que *1942: A Love Story* y *Bombay* defienden – e incluso indirectamente solicitan – la desaparición de Shakespeare en la India debido a su asociación con el colonialismo y están a favor de promover el nacionalismo – que se utiliza como “commodity” para lograr más adeptos en la diáspora – *Dil Chahta Hai* no sólo localiza a Shakespeare en la diáspora, sino que va dirigida a un público transnacional. El capítulo 6 examina las películas *Maqbool* y *Omkara* – basadas respectivamente en *Macbeth* y *Othello* – desde una perspectiva transnacional. La desviación – al mismo tiempo que expansión – del género cinematográfico bollywoodiense, la migración y desarraigo de las comunidades estudiadas en las películas, así como la recepción de las mismas demuestran que las adaptaciones bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare no pueden centrarse simplemente en la sociedad postcolonial, sino que tienen en mente un público internacional.

Los capítulos 4, 5 y 6 igualmente enfatizan la idea de que el uso de Shakespeare en Bollywood se reduce de forma considerable. La relación problemática entre Shakespeare y el pasado colonial en el subcontinente indio explica de alguna forma

tanto la ‘canibalización’ de Shakespeare como la falta de reconocimiento de la presencia de sus obras en las películas de Bollywood. El modelo bollywoodiense de apropiación e interpretación de Shakespeare se ha caracterizado por la alusión constante a obras como *Romeo y Julieta* – que es el principal intertexto de numerosas películas, la reducción a la mínima expresión de los argumentos e incluso la transformación de un final trágico por un final feliz. Lo que se puede deducir de las primeras adaptaciones bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare es que éste tenía que ser deconstruido y reinventado para poder seguir siendo utilizado en el cine de Bollywood. Las alusiones shakesperianas se reducen a la representación de *Romeo y Julieta* en *1942: A Love Story* y a constantes referencias a la obra en esta película y en *Bombay*, mientras que en *Dil Chahta Hai* quedan reducidas a una ópera dentro de la película, a un argumento shakesperiano y a algunos títulos de obras de Shakespeare. La falta de reconocimiento de la influencia de Shakespeare es común en las tres películas. El caso de *Dil Chahta Hai* es ya extremo, puesto que, a pesar de su inevitable relación con el canon shakesperiano, la película se resiste a nombrarlo incluso en la campaña de marketing. Aunque *Maqbool* y *Omkara* son reconocidas adaptaciones shakesperianas, todavía fomentan debates sobre su doble identidad – ya que son, al mismo tiempo, películas bollywoodienses y adaptaciones shakesperianas. Siempre parece permanecer la duda de si son lo suficientemente shakesperianas o no.

La simplificación de las obras de Shakespeare en Bollywood confirma la complejidad acerca de la situación de Shakespeare en la India y su pasado colonial. Si uno de los objetivos de esta tesis doctoral consiste en observar si la asociación entre Shakespeare y el colonialismo en la India todavía sigue vigente en algunas adaptaciones

y derivados del corpus fílmico, lo confirma esta simplificación extrema en los derivados anteriores a 1990, concretamente en *1942: A Love Story*, *Bombay* o *Dil Chahta Hai* y en algunos derivados pseudo-bollywoodienses como *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Además, la asociación entre Shakespeare y el pasado colonial es explícita en adaptaciones como *1942: A Love Story* a través de la representación de *Romeo y Julieta* con motivo de la visita a la ciudad de un general del imperio británico. Sin embargo, a medida que la película desarrolla una ideología independentista, Shakespeare desaparece de *1942: A Love Story* y de la India – la película sugiere. En el derivado pseudo-bollywoodiense *Bollywood/Hollywood* la conexión entre Shakespeare y colonialismo se vuelve a establecer a través de uno de los personajes principales, la abuela del protagonista, quien cita a Shakespeare erróneamente para reinterpretarlo y así establecer la distancia con la imagen de Shakespeare promovida durante el Raj británico. Otros derivados de las obras de Shakespeare como *Bombay* y *Second Generation* no muestran ni aluden al colonialismo, pero sí a la era post-partición mediante Romeos y Julietas que trasladan la lucha entre Capuletos y Montescos a enfrentamientos entre hindúes y musulmanes, haciendo referencia por tanto a los conflictos que se originaron tras la partición de la India, inmediatamente después de su pasado colonial.

Los resultados que se obtienen en los capítulos 7, 8 y 9 destacan cómo la recepción de Shakespeare en el cine de Bollywood influye en Occidente como resultado de la globalización, la importancia de la diáspora y, sobre todo, de la movilidad cultural. Las películas analizadas en los capítulos 7, 8 y 9 exploran una nueva forma de interpretar la obra shakesperiana caracterizada por la experimentación. Los directores Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair, Jeremy Wooding y Jon Sen se rinden ante la estética de

Bollywood con el fin de imitarla o parodiarla. Lo interesante es que la apropiación/parodia de clichés bollywoodienses ‘esconde’ una presencia shakesperiana. Las escenas de los protagonistas enamorándose de manera inmediata, las constantes recreaciones de la escena del balcón y los conflictos basados en la rivalidad entre Capuletos y Montescos nos recuerdan *Romeo y Julieta* constantemente. Sin embargo, el rechazo a reconocer la influencia shakesperiana junto con los finales felices confirman que esto no es una adaptación tradicional de Shakespeare, sino la versión bollywoodiense de Shakespeare. La idea implícita es que Occidente no está anulando a Oriente, ya que las obras no interactúan con el texto original, sino con otra forma de representación. Como Bollywood ocupa ahora un espacio transnacional, Shakespeare también es parte de ese proceso. Estas adaptaciones y derivados pseudo-bollywoodienses no muestran la relación binaria entre el texto original shakesperiano y su correspondiente adaptación o derivado, sino que acceden a Shakespeare a través de Bollywood. La relación entre Shakespeare y Bollywood en Occidente ofrece nuevas posibilidades para la evolución y recepción de Shakespeare, que incluyen mayor experimentación aún a expensas de una cierta trivialización.

Los capítulos 7, 8 & 9 exploran una nueva forma de experimentar con Shakespeare. Las cuatro películas analizadas en estos tres capítulos disminuyen la autoridad de Shakespeare en Occidente. En *Bollywood/Hollywood*, Shakespeare ni se utiliza ni se cita de forma correcta, e incluso se niega – debido a la asociación entre Shakespeare y el imperialismo británico en la India a través del personaje de la abuela del protagonista (Grandma-ji). *Mississippi Masala* y *Bollywood Queen* cambian el final trágico de *Romeo y Julieta* por uno feliz bajo la influencia de este género

cinematográfico. Estas dos películas ofrecen dos nuevas formas de entender la obra en Occidente. A pesar de las reseñas realizadas por críticos occidentales dónde las referencias a Shakespeare son constantes, ni *Mississippi Masala* ni *Bollywood Queen* reconocen la fuente shakesperiana. Influida también por Bollywood, *Second Generation* utiliza a Shakespeare como un elemento más con el que experimentar.

Esta tesis doctoral (*Shakespeare, Bollywood and Beyond*), por tanto, no pretende ofrecer una revisión detallada de la historia de Shakespeare en el cine de Bollywood, sino examinar cómo la interpretación de Shakespeare en Bollywood está influyendo en algunas películas realizadas en occidente. Las películas analizadas enfatizan que otras interpretaciones de la obra de Shakespeare se pueden producir gracias al diálogo y negociación con Oriente. Estas adaptaciones pseudo-bollywoodienses reinterpretan las obras de Shakespeare de una forma diferente y, sobre todo, demuestran que es posible combinar dos tradiciones. Las constantes migraciones contribuyen a la evolución y transformación del género cinematográfico de Bollywood que es cada vez más universal, así como a la imitación de su estética en Occidente. En la era de la globalización, el fenómeno de Shakespeare en Bollywood adquiere más importancia a nivel internacional. Las obras son apropiadas por Bollywood, que es a su vez imitado y parodiado en Occidente, transformando indirectamente la recepción e interpretación de Shakespeare. Las adaptaciones y derivados bollywoodienses y pseudo-bollywoodienses de las obras de Shakespeare ponen a prueba la autoridad cultural de Shakespeare y fomentan una visión de Shakespeare en continuo movimiento, con una gran repercusión transnacional.