

This dissertation seeks to treat Vishal Bhardwaj's three Shakespeare-themed films—*Maqbool*, *Omkaara*, and *Haider*—as a coherent cinematic trilogy. The trilogy is characterized, the author argues, by recurring tensions between adaptational freedom from and fidelity to Shakespeare. Those tensions are most clearly manifest in moments of "narrative crisis" where the established narrative direction of the film becomes ideologically untenable, incoherent or implausible. These crises prompt Bhardwaj to make a decisive turn toward Shakespeare (as in *Maqbool*) or away from Shakespeare (as in *Omkaara* and *Haider*). The author argues that Bhardwaj's turn toward Shakespeare is also prompted by his desire to court an international rather than an Indian audience, not so much by the distinctive thematics of the Shakespearean works he adapts. Thus, his relation to Shakespeare perpetuates, albeit in attenuated, modified and complex form, the colonial dynamic of a (pseudo-)universal Shakespeare being incompletely adapted to an Indian milieu and sold back to the Indian public. In this way, Bhardwaj's Shakespeare films offer a new iteration of the old British cultural imperialism exemplified by the actor Geoffrey Kendal in the film *Shakespeare Wallah*, the figure who supplies the dissertation's overarching metaphor and title.

There is much of value in this examination of Bhardwaj's three films as a group (though whether or not they were consciously conceived as a trilogy is open to debate, particularly since Bhardwaj has announced that he is at work on a fourth Shakespeare-themed film, a comedy). This is, to my knowledge, the first examination of these three Shakespeare-themed films as a group, and since Vishal Bhardwaj has emerged as an important (perhaps the most important) non-Anglophone Shakespeare *auteur* of the 21st century, this ambitious project is important for assessing his achievement to date. It also makes a significant contribution to the discussion of Indian adaptation of Shakespeare in a post-colonial context, and it demonstrates a mastery of the criticism concerning that part of the Shakespeare film canon. Mr. Sharda is at his best when examining details from the films, constructing specifically Indian contexts for them (the religious subtexts of *Maqbool*, the nature and history of castes in *Omkaara*, the history of the Kashmiri conflict in *Haider*), and addressing elements that benefit from attention to nuances of naming, translation, and casting history. It is certainly true that Bhardwaj repeatedly exhibits divided loyalties to Shakespeare and the realities of Indian life he seeks to represent as he tries to align various elements of Shakespeare's tragedies with contemporary Indian culture. The discussion of *Omkaara* in terms of the mismatch between discourses of caste and race seems especially useful in that regard, as is the discussion of "terroristic" adaptations of *Hamlet* as a context for *Haider*, the latter a particularly fresh approach.

However, the overarching argument that Bhardwaj repeatedly encounters "narrative crises" that he solves by embracing or rejecting fidelity to Shakespeare seems rather strained. The crisis in *Omkaara*, for example, seems less narrative than ideological or sociological, a mismatch between the discourses of race and caste. The author's discussion of *Maqbool* becomes more concerned with the Lacanian gaze (in a universalized form) than the continuing power of a specific form of patriarchy in modern Indian culture, and it overestimates the extent to which *Maqbool* is unusual in stressing Macbeth's shame at murdering Duncan. More important, the dissertation's overarching argument would be more convincing if the author suggested how Bhardwaj's strategies of adaptation changed or developed over time in response to their reception

or Bhardwaj's evolving conceptions of Shakespearean adaptation. As is, the argument suggests that Bhardwaj keeps encountering the same tension between fidelity to Shakespeare and fidelity to Indian culture without anticipating that tension—leading again and again to a version of the same "narrative crisis." Though the author ends the dissertation with a denial that the analysis is still linked to fidelity discourse, I am unconvinced that he has moved beyond it. His discussion would be strengthened were he to consult in more depth the considerable body of adaptation theory, some of it specific to Shakespearean adaptation, that has been produced in the past twenty years. And if the crisis of each film is indeed a narrative crisis, the dissertation would benefit from substantial engagement with narrative theory, which is here not referenced at all.

The least successful element in the dissertation is the argument regarding Bhardwaj as "Shakespeare salesman" or wallah. The dissertation repeatedly returns to *Shakespeare Wallah* as an emblematic moment in the relationship between Shakespeare, especially imperial Shakespeare, and the newly ascendent, culturally confident and independent Indian cinema. It seems quite debatable whether this one moment can be projected onto the Shakespearean adaptations of Bhardwaj, emerging as it does from a very different political and social context, with a Shakespeare adapted to Indian culture in ways that Kendal doesn't seek to do, and referencing a Shakespeare that now arguably carries a different sort of cultural charge or authority than that of late imperial British culture. This part of the argument depends very heavily upon Bhardwaj's single comment, first referenced on p. 3 and much repeated throughout the dissertation, that he used Shakespeare "to touch a chord with international audiences so there were many commercial considerations in my head." Important as this one quotation is for gaining access to Bhardwaj's intentions, it needs to be balanced with other of his comments that qualify or even contradict this idea. (As well, the notion that "international audiences" would be any more familiar with Shakespeare than Indian audiences needs to be interrogated.) This argument would benefit from a sustained engagement with debates in recent years about "global Shakespeare," about Shakespeare's capacity (or not) to move beyond his imbrication with the colonial or even post-colonial past, about the status of Shakespearean "fidelity" in a world where Shakespeare is routinely translated (linguistically, culturally, intermedially), and about the effects of adapting Shakespeare to a primarily visual medium that can more readily cross cultures.

The formal aspects of the dissertation warrant some comment. The writing style is lucid if often needlessly long-winded. The introduction needs rethinking, for as it goes along it gives the impression not of pursuing one large argument or context but rather of adding new topics with each new section without their being synthesized into some whole. (Might the discussion of *Shakespeare Wallah* and Jennifer Kendal be confined to a single separate chapter? Might the discussion of Bhardwaj's biography be pruned and focused on just elements relevant to the three films—if it is needed at all?) Also, the introduction includes multiple summaries of dissertation chapters (plus a summary of the introduction itself on p. 11-2!) when only one such chapter summary section is needed, and the reflective notes are much too long. Overall structure too needs some reconceptualization. Though the author seeks to give the dissertation an overall cohesion with the "Shakespeare salesman" and "narrative crises" arguments, the chapters tend to move in quite different analytic directions—the *Maqbool* chapter stresses the formal element of the Lacanian gaze, the *Omkara* chapter explores race and caste and, to a lesser extent, gender relations, and the *Haider* chapter addresses recent Indian-Pakistani politics. The virtue of this is that each analytic approach matches specific thematics in each film, but this also means that Mr. Sharda's claim that Bhardwaj's three films constitute a cohesive single project, a trilogy, becomes

rather less tenable. Most important is the stultifying effect of too much repetition. The dissertation reuses many of the same quotations or examples again and again, and the chapters are excessively signposted with anticipations of future arguments or reprises of past ones. The return to analysis of the very same scene in *Shakespeare Wallah* in chapter after chapter is especially tiresome, and it becomes indicative of the argument being stuck in one contextualizing paradigm. Also, there are too many sentence fragments, especially so in the *Haider* chapter; these are almost always dependent clauses or phrases incorrectly punctuated as complete sentences. Indeed, the dissertation ends on a fragment/run-on.

Despite these issues, this dissertation is, in my judgment, a valuable and original addition to the scholarship on Bollywood's adaptation of Shakespeare, and demonstrates the author's engagement with some of the broad critical problems raised by Shakespeare's global afterlife, especially in an Indian context. I recommend that this dissertation be advanced for a *viva voce* examination.

The Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, 19 November 2018

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To be corrected:

- p. 48; "Purab aur Pschim" should read "Purab aur Pachnim"
- p. 57: "Jahangir/Ducnan" should read "Jahangir/Duncan"
- pp.69- 70: the table does not include video sales
- p. 98: "innervates" - do you mean "energizes"?
- p. 117: "trawl through" has a negative connotation; try "run through" (see also 151)
- p. 123: "it's" should be "its"
- p. 158: "form" should read "from"
- p. 160: "the the"
- p. 161: font of note 84 should be corrected
- p. 197: "Bhaand" should read "Bhand"
- p. 199: line skip: is there a missing quotation here?
- p. 210: "super-addition" should read "imposition"
- p. 218: "tranquillity" should read "tranquility"; "Bukingham" should read "Buckingham"

Bibliography: the bibliography uses an inconsistent format for entries. Articles include the year of publication after the author's name, but books, book chapters, and films include the date of publication at the end of the entry. The format should be consistent across all entries.

Also, some cited sources are not included in the bibliography: p. 20 (Bahaduri and Malhotra), p. 125 (Poromita Chakraborty), and p. 198 (Anandam Kavoori and Kalyani Chadna).