Haider's "Mousetrap": Politicized Audiences in "Shakespearean" Kashmir

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Abstract

This paper interrogates Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and the extent to which a critical understanding of audience illuminates the political possibilities of adaptation. Placing the song sequence *"Bismil"* at the center of inquiry, we bring together theories of Shakespearean adaptation and Bollywood melodrama to underline the way *Haider* navigates the cultural and political ethics of a Shakespearean adaptation of a Kashmiri narrative. We place *Haider* in a long history of audience-centric criticism of *Hamlet* and attempt to understand how refashioning the play into a Bollywood melodrama complicates our notions of the affective and critical possibilities of Shakespeare and drama. The history of alienation and self-reflexivity within the play, and the newly conferred melodramatic excess and its use of public and nonindividuated audiences come together in understanding how *Haider*'s departure from *Hamlet* might be in how it refashions its audience.

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> *Zinda hai woh zinda hoga* (He is alive, he will be living)
> — Bhardwaj, *"Bismil"* (*Haider* 2014)

Haider (2014) is the third installment of Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespearean trilogy on screen — the other two being *Maqbool/Macbeth* (2003) and *Omkara/Othello* (2006) — and it is set in the war-torn landscapes of Kashmir.[1] The film's spatial setting invites the audience to confront the cultural politics of Kashmir's past and pres-

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1   In this paper, Kashmir refers to the larger geographical region comprising India-administered Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan-administered Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and the China-administered Aksai-Chin. "Kashmiri" refers to those people who inhabit this larger geographical region of Kashmir, and their language. Jammu and Kashmir is the political unit of statehood within and recognized by the Indian nation-state — a union territory since October 2019, formerly a state. The Kashmir Valley represents that portion of the state of J and K whose territorial autonomy is the center of conflict between India, Pakistan, and the Kashmiri militia.

ent through Shakespeare. As an adaptation of *Hamlet*, the film reveals that Shakespeare can be a distant, yet apropos lens with which to view geopolitical conflicts like terror, violence, and surveillance. Simultaneously, *Haider* situates itself within the framework of Bollywood melodrama, as seen in the language spoken (Hindi and Urdu, as opposed to Kashmiri) and in the modes of dramatic and stylistic excess present in several parts of the film. The play dons the disposition of the Hindi cinema melodrama to bring layers of political complexity to the adaptation. In this paper, we place *Haider* in a long history of audience-centric criticism of *Hamlet* and show how refashioning the play into a Bollywood melodrama complicates notions of audience and reception, and thereby sheds light on the political possibilities of global Shakespearean adaptations.

As a play, *Hamlet* has long been interested in performance and audience; the title character famously tells his hired group of players to "not saw the air / too much with your hand[s], thus, but use all gently" (3.2.4–5). *Haider* further replicates and expands these interests in audience and reception via the deployment of melodramatic forms. Specifically, Ravi Vasudevan's theorization of melodramatic excess in Bollywood songs as a mediation between public and private spheres of the film and its audience comes into play as a way to understand *Haider*'s political implications.

The play's use of self-reflexivity (particularly via performance and the "Mousetrap") and the newly conferred melodramatic excess come together in understanding *Haider's* departure from *Hamlet* as centered in a refashioning of the functions of audience. The song, *"Bismil"* (the Mousetrap of *Haider*), brings together elements of *Hamlet* and *Haider,* and their cultural backgrounds, demonstrating that the two texts are related to each other in a rhizomatic system of adaptations. *Haider* uses *Hamlet* to narrate a singularly Kashmiri problem, while at the same time providing further insight into and critique about Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The film demonstrates the "global reach of the Shakespearean text, [and] at the same time, lyrically [opens] up the play to local knowledges, voices, and experiences of Kashmir under occupation" (Singh 2019, 180). This is especially true of the presentation of the play-within-the-play that provides us with new ways of thinking through the possibilities of global Shakespearean adaptations, across modes and media, as a means of political action.

Bhardwaj's *Haider* moves *Hamlet* into a very specific moment of Kashmiri history: the embattled India-administered Kashmir in 1995, during the years leading up to the Kargil War. While the film still follows the basic story of *Hamlet* (and maintains many of the characters' emotional arcs), it speaks to the greater issue of the "disappeared" in Kashmir: mysterious disappearances of civilians who worked against the Indian Army.[2] The film revolves around Haider (Hamlet), the son of a doctor, Hilal (Old King Hamlet), and a teacher, Ghazala (Gertrude). Hilal is taken away by the military after assisting members of a militant group by offering his medical services. It is later revealed that it was his brother, Khurram (Claudius), who had tipped off the military.

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2   For more on disappearances in Kashmir see: Zia (2019), Mathur (2016), Amnesty International (1999), and South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (2012).

The point of departure for the film then, is rather like that of the play. All main characters — including Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (called Salman and Salman in the film), the gravedigger, and the skull — feature in the film. Haider's uncle marries his mother. Haider's search is affected when Roohdar ("embodiment of soul" / "ghost person") contacts Haider's girlfriend, Arshia (who doubles as Ophelia and Horatio), with news of his father.[3] Roohdar tells Haider of his uncle's betrayal and his father's orders of revenge before he died. The story follows Haider's search for his father through several detention camps and morgues.

Much like Hamlet, Haider realizes that Kashmir (the adapted Denmark) is a prison, but alongside the haunting of Old King Hamlet/ Hilal are the haunting politics of Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir and the Line of Control between India and Pakistan since 1947. As part of the Mountbatten Plan, various princely states of British India were given the choice to join the sovereign states of India and Pakistan. The crucial location of Kashmir at the Himalayan border between India and Pakistan renders it simultaneously "an integral part of India," and Pakistan's "jugular vein" (Kabir 2009, 1). Kashmir, under Nehru's coaxing, opted to join India with the promise of a future referendum. Caught between these two countries, the region of Kashmir has faced decades of war, curfews, and incessant violence inflicted by both Indian and Pakistani armies and various militant groups.

In the popular Indian literary imaginary, Kashmir continues to be described in positive terms, often called paradise. The famous couplet historically attributed to Kashmir goes: "*Agar Firdaus bar ru-ye zamin ast / Hamin ast o hamin ast o hamin ast*" ("if there is paradise on Earth, it is here, it is here, it is here"). Since the denial of the promised referendum, however, quips on the implication of "paradise" have filled various media reports about war, bombing, curfewed violence, army attacks, militant attacks, rape, the Dal Lake colored red, and the blood on the snow being redder than the famous Kashmir rose. This red on white, so emblematic of Kashmir, colors the title shot of the film as well. The politics of Kashmir, then, are explicitly central to the film's intentions.

Haider is certainly preoccupied with Kashmir in the 1990s, perhaps more so than it is with *Hamlet*. The film's makers have stressed on several public platforms that a reading of *Hamlet* is not necessary for an appreciation of the film. In an interview with Anupama Chopra, for example, Shahid Kapoor states, "if you didn't know what *Hamlet* was all about and if you saw the promos of the film, you probably wouldn't even know that it is an adaptation of *Hamlet*" (NDTV 2014). Kapoor has also claimed to have found *Hamlet* boring, especially Kozintsev's film version (NDTV 2014). Vishal Bhardwaj's and Shahid Kapoor's interviews with Red Carpet News TV (2014) and UK Asian (Alles 2014) provide additional details on their views of Shakespeare's play. The question then is, why *Hamlet*? It is arguable that *Haider*'s relationship to *Hamlet* is one of convenience, much like the 1960s Arab *Hamlet* tradition. It is a film adaptation of Kashmiri politics that uses the plot and characters of *Hamlet* to gain an expanded audience.

The expansion of audience works broadly in two ways. On the one hand, *Haider* allows a broader, non-Kashmiri, non-Indian audience to witness the systemic violence in Kashmir. The cultural capital of Shakespeare

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3   All translations by the authors.

affords the film greater non-native exposure and circulation. On the other hand, the film speaks on the plight of Kashmir, a topic that has historically been popular in Hindi cinema, and thus assures a Hindi-speaking audience. As such, the film familiarizes audiences of Hindi cinema with a famous work of world literature and thus expands the audience for Shakespeare's work in the contemporary era. Kashmir is a center of international violence and war that translates into a relatively underdeveloped film culture. This requires the excesses of a Bollywood melodrama and the cultural capital of Shakespeare to find enough exposure, both within and outside India and Pakistan to make a statement about the state of Kashmir.

The film's central compulsion is a simultaneous process of identification and/or alienation: it is both Shakespearean *and* Kashmiri, but never fully either. In particular, the adaptation of the "Mousetrap" within the film as a "typical Bollywood" song-and-dance sequence with stylized puppets and metaphorical verses in the song *"Bismil"* uniquely blends alienation with identification via deliberate performance choices. During this performance, Haider sings "He is alive, he will be living." He is speaking of his father, one of the disappeared in Kashmir, but his father is a synecdoche for the other disappeared in Kashmir.

This "he" can also be applied to the figure of Shakespeare and his continued cultural relevance in our globalized world. *Haider* ultimately (literally and figuratively) expands the intended audience of this famous moment of Shakespeare's play. Using techniques that blend alienation and identification, the Mousetrap's audience now includes not just Claudius/Khurram, Gertrude/Ghazala, and the people outside the "court," but also the non-Kashmiri citizens of India, the Indian army, and indeed, the general global public who have witnessed (actively or passively) the civilian disappearances and other acts of violence in Kashmir.

Hamlet in Adaptation

Haider is a conscious adaptation of *Hamlet* and understanding its processes of adaptation highlights its interest in audience and reception. Here, we use the term "adaptation" instead of "appropriation." While *Haider* can be viewed as an appropriation of Shakespeare because it is far removed from the original text, we find the term "adaptation" more appropriate because *Haider* is not "speaking back" to Shakespeare as a cultural influence or construct. Desmet and Sawyer's *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (1999) and the more recent *Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Global Appropriation* (Desmet, Iyengar, and Jacobson 2020) provide overviews of these debates.

Haider exists within a long history of adaptations of Shakespeare, but, as Mark Burnett argues, there has been little commentary and detail on "how, where and with what results [Shakespeare's] plays are translated into the idiom of world cinema" (2013, 2). Some scholars view non-English adaptations of Shakespeare as "not Shakespeare," but *Haider* participates in a trend since the mid-twentieth century of Shakespearean film extending outside of the United States and the United Kingdom.

By explicitly publicizing the film as "an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet,"* *Haider*'s relationship to *Hamlet* is solid and cited, as it were. As Christy Desmet argues, "what could be more 'faithful' to Shakespeare than simple citation? What form of recognition is more straightforward than detecting a quotation?" (44). *Haider*'s deviations in form, setting, language, and characters, however, might question whether citation is sufficient cause for being tagged as "faithful."

Moving away from tired debates on fidelity, a more suitable model to study *Haider* as a Shakespearean adaptation might be Douglas M. Lanier's "rhizomatic" model inspired by Deleuze and Guattari. Instead of centralizing the Shakespearean original, it is placed in a web of adaptations; Lanier looks at it as a node in a rhizomatic system, rather than a root in a conventional plant system. This leads to the formulation of a different set of analytical tools and questions to understand adaptations and appropriations:

> Not "Is this or is this not 'really' *Hamlet?*", but rather, "How does this adaptation reshape or extend a collective conception of what constitutes the 'essential' *Hamlet*?" Not, "Should we count this as Shakespearean?" but rather, "In what ways does attributing the label 'Shakespearean' to this work change the cultural formation that goes by the name Shakespeare?" (Lanier 2014, 33).

To understand *Haider* in such a system would be to place it in familiarity and contrast with *Hamlet* and attempt to comprehend "What is *Hamlet* about it?" and "What is not *Hamlet* about it?" simultaneously. *Haider* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are placed in the *Hamlet* system, which includes more than just these two works.

In the Indian context, *Hamlet* is a direct product of British colonialism, after having been "embroiled with the spices and textile trade" of the British Raj (Trivedi 2004, 13). Film versions such as *Khoon-e-Nahak* (1928), *Khoon-ka-Khoon* (1935), and *Hamlet* (1954), however, are based on a standard script with Shakespeare's face often appearing within the film itself. These *Hamlet* adaptations are rarely placed within the category of "Bollywood Shakespeares" as the term includes only postindependence adaptations. *Haider* is one of the first *Hamlet* adaptations that fits within the framework of "Bollywood Shakespeare" in that it "foregrounds the transnational and global component of both entities" (Garcia-Periago 2015, 3; see also Dionne and Kapadia 2014). The Parsi versions, such as *Hamlet* (1954), despite grafting *Hamlet* onto "Indian" culture, retain the dialogue, the plot, sometimes the setting, and the character names. The play-within-the-play is intact as a play that is played upon a stage, with Shakespeare's face framed at the top. *Haider*, on the other hand, retains neither the setting, nor the plot, and very little if any of the original poetry.

Bhardwaj's *Haider,* then, varies significantly from the system of Indian *Hamlet*s, partly because of it being a "loose adaptation." While the earlier Indian film versions blatantly acknowledge Shakespeare, Haider is a master's student in English Literature, who does not see that his life is taking the course of Hamlet's. Moreover, unlike the adaptations, *Haider* is not based on a standard translated script. In fact, it is partly based on a script provided by a completely unrelated text: *Curfewed Night* (2010) by Basharat Peer. *Curfewed Night,* a memoir

about Peer's militant life in Kashmir in the 1990s, provides the political and historical context that forms the basis of core relationships and the main characters' predicaments — the other entity to which *Haider* is faithful.

At the same time, while distancing itself from previous cinematic iterations of *Hamlet* from India, *Haider* can be placed very firmly in the ethos of Bollywood melodrama. As Ravi Vasudevan theorizes in *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema* (2011), Bollywood melodrama is a narrative form that, through excess, brings together the personal and the broader political. It is a genre that exaggerates the personal to reach an audience that is public and political. For instance, Haider phrases Hamlet's most famous question in Hindi as "*Hum hai ki Nahin*?" There are two ways of translating the question: "Do we exist or do we not?" or "Are we or are we not?" While the latter is a plural, passive, variation of Hamlet's original version, the former pertains to the plot of *Haider*. The plurality inherent in this articulation speaks to a plurality of audiences for not just the soliloquy but the film as a whole.

Haider's soliloquy is fragmented and strewn across the narrative: outside the detention camp holding signs of "*Hum hai ki Nahin?*"; at the town square, while having donned his antic disposition, delivering a speech in the traditional style of a state-messenger with a drum and a loud voice; and as pillow talk with Arshia. All three versions, however, are not soliloquies. At each point, Haider has an audience, and a targeted audience at that. Unlike Hamlet, Haider wants to convey his emotions to another character within his narrative. The internal is thus externalized. For instance, the fact that a plural pronoun is being used indicates that this question does not pertain merely to his personal existential crisis, but of an entire peoples' idea of being.

Moreover, "*Hum hai ki nahin?*" is not an original question that he formulates. Early scenes in the film show several members of the community holding up signs with the same question. He uses that question to articulate his personal concerns and ideas. In the diegesis then, he borrows his question not from Hamlet but from his fellow Kashmiri citizens. It is not an internal monologic (or singular) struggle. Rather, it becomes an external dialogic struggle articulated with phrases from both *Hamlet* and Kashmir.

This plurality moves to justify a popular Indian film critic's comment that "(a)n extremely interior play is opened up, and an extremely solipsistic hero is remade into a politically aware youth who engages with the outside world as much as he battles the torments within" (Rangan 2014). This externalizing of ideas of self extends to include not just other characters within the film, but also several different categories of audience, both public (collective) and individuated, thus situating it firmly as Bollywood melodrama. The melodramatic nature of the film is best captured by the song, *"Bismil,"* in that it purposefully transforms the Mousetrap into a moment of stylistic excess that simultaneously creates and addresses various categories of audience.

The Mousetrap

"The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" says Hamlet at the end of act two (2.2.633–34). Up until this moment, Hamlet has been "delaying" (or so purports the popular perception of Shakespeare's play), but now, our protagonist has a plan. A few lines inserted into *The Murder of Gonzago*, a "known" play, and the inclusion of a dumb show resembling Old King Hamlet's murder within a quick performance will be enough to rouse Claudius and ultimately prove once and for all that the new king is the murderer of Hamlet's father. This assemblage, or adaptation dubbed the "Mousetrap," functions as a moment of self-reflexivity which reveals Hamlet's belief in the effective power of theatre and performance. He believes the reenactment of remarriage and murder via actors will reveal the hidden guilt of Claudius and Gertrude.

The Mousetrap's foundation, then, is built out of the desire to evoke particular responses in the audience. Claudius might seem to be the main audience member targeted, especially as the opening dumb show stages the murder of a man in a garden via poison in the ear, just like the death of Old King Hamlet. Gertrude's complicity in the quick remarriage, however, is not ignored. An attentive and "guilty" ear may notice how lines like "*In second husband let me be accurst. / None wed the second but who killed the first*" can be interpreted as commentary about remarriage—rather than on the "sins" of Claudius (3.2.202–3).

Furthermore, the courtly audience, including Ophelia, serves as witness to these reactions, and audiences of *Hamlet* the play watch the characters watching the Mousetrap. The King's commentary—questions of "Have you heard the argument?" and "Is there no offense in't?"—suggests that he is making connections (3.2.256–57). Gertrude proclaims that the "Lady doth protest too much" (3.2.254). Hamlet makes interjections like "That's wormwood!" and "If she should break it now!" that show his deep investment in the drama (3.2.204, 247). Hamlet, then, serves as director, adapter, and audience member, and he receives the desired effect of a call for "Lights, lights, lights!" from Claudius and the court (3.2.296).

Much of the scholarly attention around this moment of self-reflexivity via the play-within-the play centers around the audience of the Mousetrap, particularly the timing and content of Claudius' response. Claudius' request to "Give me some light. Away!" comes after both the dumb show and the many lines of the altered *Murder of Gonzago* (3.2.295), which some critics view as too late or unrealistic; others view this delay as Claudius attempting to hide his complicity until the similarities between the performance and his own reality become too overwhelming (Wilson 1935; Granville-Barker 1927; Caldecott 1832; Mollin 1994; Edelman 2016). The repetition of both dumb show and spoken-word play may be necessary to spur Claudius, but another explanation is that words *combined* with action are the most effective "manner" of presentation, and Shakespeare is emphasizing this fact during the Mousetrap.

Both Hamlet and Shakespeare create/present a performance that forces the audience—"audience" here meaning both us, as readers/viewers, and Claudius and court within the play—to meta-reflect on their experience. For Claudius, this reflection is supposed to occur when he realizes that both the show and the play are com-

mentary on his own actions and life. As the audience of *Hamlet* sees it, the dumb show uniquely and transparently shows the process of adaptation.

This discussion of "meta-reflection" and later "distancing" invokes parts of Brecht's concept known as the *verfremdungseffekt* ("distancing" or "alienation" effect). In "A Short Organum for Theatre," Brecht says that "a representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" and in this way, the audience can escape from the "reality" of a play and view the subject of the play politically (192). Shakespeare, of course, is not deploying this nineteenth-century concept; viewing the Mousetrap as a sequence that uses anti-illusionistic techniques and moments of self-reflexivity to enable audience reflection, however, provides a framework for analyzing *Haider* and this key moment.

The Mousetrap performance alters a linear sense of time, harkening back to previous events in the narrative. As the scene begins, the audience sees people watching a play—indeed, something they are also doing. Then, the pantomime clearly enacts the earlier ghost story. The audience is thus prompted to imagine this happening in real time and are transported back even earlier in time before the play's beginning. There are traces of the old and moments of familiarity, but seeing the ghost story in pantomime also condenses serious actions in potential silly frivolity. In this way, both the audience and Claudius are invited to see moments of similarity and difference, and to question the Mousetrap's purpose. The song *"Bismil"* from *Haider* invites a similar contemplation from the audience, while also questioning the history of violence in Kashmir.

Bismil

Haider's form as a Bollywood film more broadly, and its presentation of the Mousetrap scene more specifically, reveals how Bhardwaj creates a space for the critical engagement of the audience with the drama's politics. *Haider* follows *Hamlet*'s tradition in adapting tales from elsewhere to present in front of the king: instead of the Spanish revenge tragedy, *Haider* presents tales from Kashmiri folk culture. The song sequence is a complex performance of intertextuality and adaptation.

The scene presents complex negotiations of reality and fantasy; distancing achieved via dance sequences and puppets is balanced with realism from typical filmic techniques like establishing shots of location. A group of singers and dancers accompany Haider who stars as the lead singer of the performance. Puppets, drums, and the striking backdrop of the snow-covered ruins of the Martand Sun Temple in Kashmir are employed during the scene (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Haider performs in front of the Martand Sun Temple.

Haider as an active participant in the performance marks one of the most striking differences from Shakespeare's play. He sings, dances, and narrates the song-story; he is the lead performer in a self-conceived performance; he acts, not observes. In movies, musical numbers stand out because their form is different from that of spoken dialogue, but in *Haider*, the Mousetrap scene is presented *as a performance* (not *just* a musical number that exists within the context of the film).

"Bismil" as a stereotypical Bollywood song-and-dance routine uses melodrama and elements of Kashmiri folk culture to playout what Ravi Vasudevan would describe as the "narrative blockage" and "injustice" done to Haider (43–44). *"Bismil,"* then, follows Vasudevan's theorizing of melodrama as a "public-fictional form deriving from a recalibration of the relationship between public and private spheres" (10). In this case, it is performed as an allegory for two sets of publics: the one within the film and the one without.

The performance is not being staged exclusively for Khurram. Haider brings his personal anguish (that by the hand of Khurram) into the public arena by performing in front of the entire wedding party. At the same time, the subtext of the song is for the benefit of the film's audience, spelling out the torment Kashmir faces. While it may be a tool to catch the conscience of the king, it can also be read as attempting to catch the conscience of the people involved in the Kashmiri situation who might be members of the film's spectator circle (as well as those who had gathered to watch the film being shot).

The song's lyrics demonstrate one way in which the film expands its audience. Haider sings, "*Mat mil mat mil gul se mat mil / oh, Bulbul-e-bismil*" ("Do not meet the flower, / O wounded bulbul"), which is targeted at two, maybe three sets of audiences. Hamlet's show was focused on Claudius and more broadly Gertrude and the

court. Haider's most obvious audience is, of course, Khurram, of whose deeds Haider is admitting being in the know. Implicit in the lyrics, however, is a broader nondiegetic audience. Haider sings:

> *Zakhmi nar ko qaid kiya (qaid kiya, qaid kiya)*
> *Zanjeeron mein bandhwaya*
> *Baramulla ke shiri pul se*
> *Phir paani mein phikwaaya*
> *Jhelum . . . Jhelum . . .*
> *Laal laal hua laal laal hua*
> *Laal laal hua laal*
>
> (He had the injured male [bulbul] imprisoned
> And tied him up in chains
> And from the bridge in Baramulla
> Threw him to a watery grave
> The Jhelum [river] . . . the Jhelum . . .
> Has become red, has become red,
> Has become red, so red)

These lyrics more immediately reference the disappearance of his father, Hilal, who takes on the metaphor of the male bulbul, and Haider's suppositions that Khurram must have aided in his disappearance. In referencing a small (Indian) Kashmiri city on the banks of the Jhelum, the song is speaking to a local audience that is familiar with the geography of Jammu and Kashmir (the political state unit of the Indian nation-state).

But for those on whom that might be lost, the lyrics go on to reference the Jhelum River, the predominant river of the Kashmir Valley where the bodies of the disappeared are thrown. The song repeats how the blood of the disappeared has stained the river's waters—"*laal laal hua, laal laal hua, laal laal hua laal,*"—provoking a strong image with the audience regardless of proximity to Kashmir. For non-Hindi speakers, the official subtitles further emphasize "Jhelum" by translating the Baramulla bridge as the "Jhelum bridge." This self-reflexive moment invites the audience to remember the earlier song, "Jhelum," that more explicitly outlines the violence the river has witnessed. As these associations and meanings begin to intertwine, the representation of Haider's father also intertwines with those who are "disappeared." In that way, Haider is not only complaining about his own "narrative blockage," but represents the real-life injustice experienced by the people of Kashmir.

The reference to the bulbul metaphorically represents Operation Bulbul (or Operation Nightingale), placing the film within the cultural politics of Kashmir. (It is interesting to note that the official subtitles translate "bulbul" to "nightingale," even though it is the bulbul and not the nightingale that is indigenous to India.) Haider speaks of the force that came between the nightingales-in-love and destroyed the peace, love, and harmony of the land that had existed until then. Praveen Swami discusses "India's forgotten army" and notes

that "'Bulbul,' was a mid-ranking military intelligence official working with troops of the 5 Rashtriya Rifles in Sumbal, near Bandipora" and that "'Song' was a coded reference to details about anti-terrorist operations in the hard-hit Bandipora belt, in northern Kashmir." The image and meaning of the nightingale/bulbul thus transcend from meaning a simple songbird to an allusion to antiterrorist operations in Kashmir. Haider's association of Khurram with the movement as well as the death of his father speaks to the performance being more attuned to the narrative of Kashmir and its sufferings (as represented in *Curfewed Night*) than to the needs of Haider (as it would be in *Hamlet*).

Beyond the lyrics, the film also expands the audience visually. The audience of onlookers of Haider's performance within the film itself includes a large group of Kashmiri citizens who came to watch the shoot and ended up being extras. As Amrita Sen argues, in "Indigenizing Shakespeare" (2019), the film incorporates local performative genres within larger Bollywood conventions. In this way, the audience is again expanded to include the people of Kashmir and India and to all viewers who have now witnessed the injustices of the civilian disappearances. This suggests that these viewers may be complicit in the crimes, but it only definitively presents them as witnesses. *Hamlet* the play includes meta-reflection, but there is no condemnation of the viewing audience as complicit murderers. In *Haider*, the various audiences are asked to take a stance and to engage with these issues more critically; they are asked to reflect on whether they are complicit and whether some sort of action should be taken.

The performance of *"Bismil"* uses multiple techniques to engage the film's audience. Visually, Bhardwaj employs Dadi Pudumjee's puppetry; the puppets in the performance collapse the dumb show within the performance of *"Bismil"* (fig. 2). Three puppets are included in the scene representing Ghazala, Haider's father, and Khurram, and the latter's representation as a larger-than-life puppet with two faces—one with a bird's beak alluding to the nightingales mentioned in the song and one with a red, devilish-like form—represents Khurram's guilt. The puppets never look completely human, but as the dancers move the puppets, the puppets become ghostly imitations. Through this use of puppets, Khurram sees an eerie representation of all of those who have been thrown into the river. Quite literally, at one moment the smaller puppet representative of Haider's father is thrown off the stage to his "grave."

Figure 2. Dadi Pudumjee's puppets being used as part of Haider's story.

The use of cinematographic perspective heightens the direct address of *"Bismil"* as a performance. Much of the song is shot from the point-of-view of Khurram and Ghazala, thus both Khurram and the audience are directly addressed by the performance. Intermittently, the song also cuts to mid-shots and a close up of Shahid Kapoor's face in shallow focus looking directly into the camera (fig. 3). These moments of frontal address, that are directed at both the movie's audience and Khurram, reach their performative climax at the end of the song, when the direct address occurs concurrently with lyrics that warn Ghazala and suggest that Haider's father (as well as the others who have disappeared) will be alive. Haider sings:

Zinda hai woh zinda hoga,
Mujrim bhi saraminda hoga (repeated)
Hosh mein aaja, hosh mein aaja
Aye bulbul-e-bismil
Khushbu-e-gul mein zehr bara hai

(He is alive, he will be living
The criminal will be shamed [repeated]
Come to your senses,
O wounded bulbul,
The flower's scent is filled with poison)

This first line is as much of a hope as it is a demand. Haider earlier mentioned watery graves, but he also hopes that his father is alive. And if his earthly body is no longer present, Haider suggests that his father will still be alive in memory. The phrase "he *will* be living" echoes this idea of memory, but also demands of Khurram and the others involved in this conflict that they ensure the disappeared will not be killed.
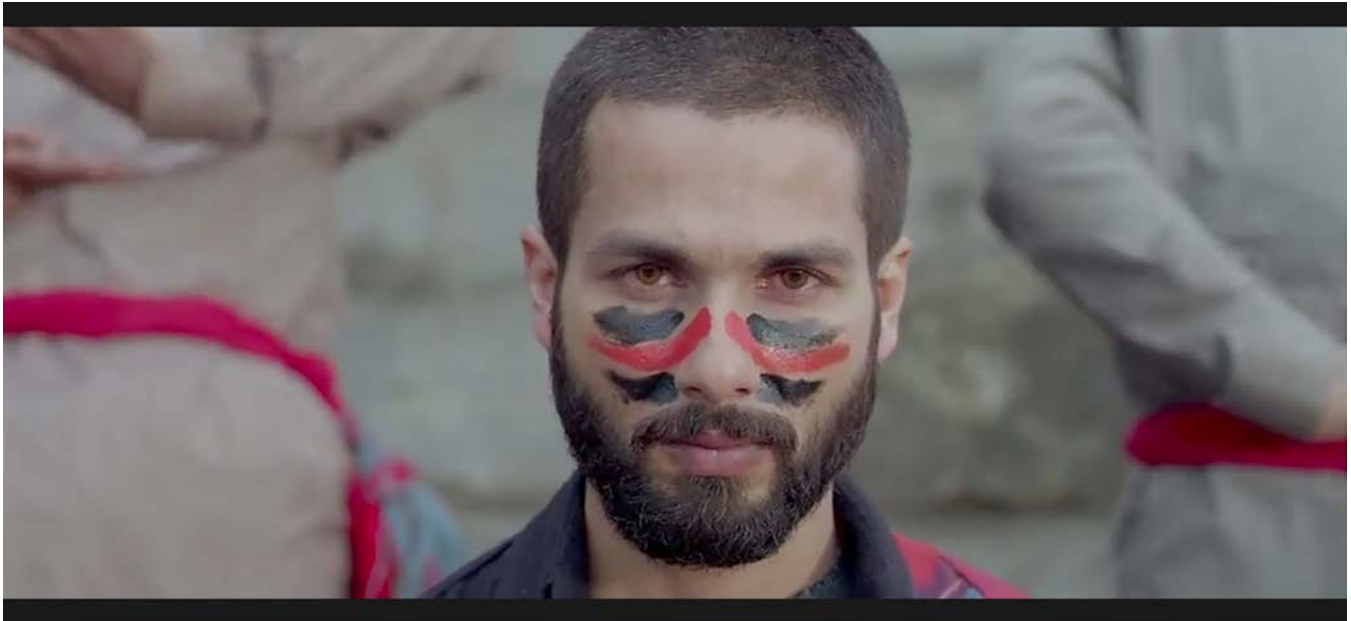
Figure 3. A close-up of Haider as he directly addresses the camera.

Haider insists that the criminal cannot hide any longer, and after this performance with the puppets, suggestive lyrics, and direct address, it would be hard to deny that the criminal is Khurram. And yet, "criminal" is used — not "Khurram," "father," "leader" or something more direct. This aligns with the allegorical nature of the song and opens opportunities for others (members of the viewing audience) to join in the conception of "criminal." Haider pleads "come to your senses" which is directed to Ghazala (since he is reasonably unhappy with his mother's nuptials with Khurram); but again, this is enfolded into a metaphor of the "nightingale," which encompasses others who might be indirectly involved with the conflict in Kashmir.

Bhardwaj thus uses anti-illusionistic, alienating techniques in adapting the Mousetrap scene from *Hamlet* to highlight the larger political struggles for Kashmiri national identity, and to critically engage the audience with these complex identity struggles. These adaptations seemingly removed from the original play, however, leave us with a question: do these techniques work in catching the targeted audiences' conscience, within and outside the narrative? The answer is not simple. Within *Haider*, Khurram and Ghazala are clearly affected during the performance as the point-of-view shots of them looking confused, concerned, sad, and remorseful prove. At the end of the performance, Haider kneels in front of Khurram, and we see tears in both of their eyes. And yet, at the next moment, Khurram begins clapping and smiling, asking, "Who wrote this play?"

The key difference in this moment between *Haider* and *Hamlet* is that in *Hamlet*, Claudius calls for "lights" and leaves rather quickly. In the performance history of *Hamlet* on screen, Claudius usually looks upset and indeed "guilty." Claudius is thus still powerful in terms of being the king, but he is genuinely affected by the performance, and in the context of the play, he could be identified as a murderer. Later, he orders the death of Hamlet. If we view the Mousetrap as successful, then this scene is key because it proves his guilt and revitalizes Hamlet's search for revenge.

Here, however, Khurram laughs — his tone implies that he understands Haider's intent, but ultimately, Haider has no power to overthrow his position. Unlike Claudius, Khurram applauds and calls out Haider's plan. He is aware that a "ghost person" has filled Haider's head with stories, true as they may be. Khurram still has power, and he orders his men to follow Haider and put him in a mental institution. Haider thus *did* catch the conscience of Khurram, but this whole endeavor may have been pointless. If this performance makes no impact on Khurram, we might instead say that this scene instead reveals Haider's knowledge of Khurram's wrongdoings. Though Khurram, of course, is not the only audience of *"Bismil."*

It is difficult to say whether the film's audience was forced to critically engage with this scene, but much evidence suggests that they were indeed affected by it. As Vats notes in 2014, the film drew a "fierce reaction on social media from Hindu nationalists, who called for a boycott" and the film has been banned in Pakistan, even though the film casts more of a negative light on India. Gossip sites include heated discussions on the ethics of the film, and popular articles on *Haider* include quotes from Bhardwaj defending his presentation of India. Aseem Chhabra's "Vishal Bhardwaj's Haider shows the truth about Kashmir that India can't wish away" (2014), for example, discusses the #BoycottHaider twitter campaign, and Vikas Pandey's "Why is 'Indian Hamlet' controversial?" (2014) mentions Bhardwaj's defense of the film. The film, then, certainly invited debate.

The 2015 edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival featured a panel discussion titled, "Hamlet's Dilemma" to talk about Vishal Bhardwaj's latest Shakespearean endeavor, *Haider*. Taking part in the panel were Vishal Bhardwaj and Basharat Peer, writers of *Haider*; Tim Supple, part of the Global Shakespeare Project and a director of Shakespearean theatre, who had recently been working with theatre groups in India; and Jerry Brotton, a professor of Renaissance Studies. The discussion ended with a question from prolific Indian playwright, Girish Karnad, asking the writers why they differed from the original *Hamlet* so much when writing the film's climactic scenes. Supple responded to Karnad saying that the writers were probably trying to remain "ethically faithful" to the people of Kashmir (Jaipur Literature Festival 2015). This statement implicitly articulates the existence of a choice between being faithful to Shakespeare, who provided the characters, and to Kashmir whose narrative it is.

The (non)existence of this choice to be "ethically faithful" to one or the other is significant to the success of the adaptation. Given Bhardwaj's history with Shakespeare on film (and the relative lack of it with Kashmir),

it should have seemed obvious that his loyalties lay with the bard. *Haider*, as already mentioned, is Vishal Bhardwaj's third Shakespearean film, and his Hindi *Hamlet* came almost a decade after the first two. In 2014, *Haider* hit the screens to critical acclaim and significant box office. There were, however, several critics, like Karnad, who felt that *Hamlet* had largely been ignored by *Haider*.

This is part of a discourse of critique within the Hindi film industry that insists upon *Haider*'s lack of faithfulness. Baradwaj Rangan, for instance, picks on Haider's "To Be" soliloquy and puts teen-Hamlet Ethan Hawke's rendition higher on the scale. Rangan places *Haider* alongside several adaptations and argues that it falls short, as an adaptation, but not as a film. Another critic rather neatly sums up this emotion in his review: "Bhardwaj relocates the action [of *Hamlet*] to Kashmir in the mid-1990s. If the graft doesn't quite take, it's because the film is so persuasive in portraying the oppression of the Kashmiri people that the woes of Hamlet seem small beer" (Gilbey 2014). Again, this could be considered fulsome applause if this were the first time the woes of 1990s Kashmir were being presented to the audience. Bollywood, however, has a long history of engaging with Kashmir (Chakravarti 2016; Kabir 2019).

Haider differs from Bollywood in that it uses a widely familiar (yet rooted in Hindi film tradition) tale of a young prince seeking revenge, to play out the woes of Kashmir. To borrow from Mark Burnett (2019):

> As part of its representational apparatus, the film takes pre-existing 'Bollywood' constructions (notably, the association of Kashmir with 'love' and 'traditional literary paradise') only to upturn them. It unsettles a reliance on Hindi as a marker of nationhood in its incorporation of Kashmiri-accented Hindi, Kashmiri terms and an Urdu-language score (158).

As such, it has been the most successful representation of the woes of Kashmiri people. In the words of Kashmiri film critic Sameer Yasir (2014):

> Movies in the past two decades have either talked about the sacrifices made by the soldiers in Kashmir or present the people in a stereotypical fashion. [. . .] There is no doubt that no movie can perfectly portray the sense of injustice and alienation that the people of Kashmir feel today. But Vishal Bharadwaj's *Haider* [. . .] has not just come close to portraying that uncomfortable picture but for the first time many Kashmiris are feeling an association with this movie.

One of the key reasons for this success of authenticity is arguably that the script borrowed from the memoir of a Kashmiri journalist. *Haider* is Shakespearean (and therefore global), Hindi (and therefore Indian), and Kashmiri. Sandra Young, for example, discusses the "limitations of indigeneity" and the "imaginative mode" provided by Shakespeare to *Haider* in "Beyond Indigenisation" (2018). Sarkar's analysis of the film suggests that it "brings the elements of Shakespearean appropriation to a dialogue with the setting for its action — the militancy-hit and militarized (Indian) Kashmir of 1995 — so that the Shakespeare-track and Kashmir-track in the film's rendition of them are allowed to inform and inflect each other" (34).

This is reflected in the storyline where, unlike other films set in Kashmir, *Haider* and Haider show no affiliation toward either India or Pakistan but seem to support *Azad Kashmir* or an independent Kashmir state. The two tracks offer each other a narrative recourse to distinguish themselves from their origin and find recognizability in the other.

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ADAPTATIONS AND HAUNTINGS

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It is this alienation and recognition that elicits the wasp-orchid model of adaptation. The wasp and orchid, through their interaction remain "distinct creatures from different orders of nature, [while both] bend their modes of becoming in the direction of each other" (Lanier 2014, 28). *Haider* and *Hamlet* operate through each other and influence all possible interpretations. *Haider* adds to the way Hamlet/*Hamlet* can be understood, and the malleability of Shakespearean drama.

It can be argued that *Haider* is not only an adaptation of *Hamlet*, but also of Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (1964) and even the Arab *Hamlet*s of the 1960s. Simultaneously it rereads each of these while rereading *Hamlet* the way each of the interpretations have. For instance, by naming both the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern characters "Salman," Bharadwaj is playing into the idea that they are interchangeable and practically anonymous, speaking to Stoppard's interpretation. At the same time, by giving the Salmans a clear and direct motive to kill Haider, the film is also commenting on the corresponding gap in the Shakespearean original. It is impossible to deny that *Haider* is influenced by *Hamlet*, even if it were not stated in the film's byline.

By bringing another plane of existence into the *Hamlet* narrative, *Haider* formulates a new set of questions for *Hamlet*: the (lack of) agency given to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; the reduced role of Gertrude; Hamlet's highly singular, monologic, and individualized identity; the possibility of an external public; and the relationship between Hamlet and Horatio. Similarly, by using the *Hamlet* narrative to critique the politics of Kashmir, *Haider* is in line with other political adaptations of the play. The wasp-orchid model allows us to move away from questions of fidelity and allows us to understand *Hamlet* and *Haider* as informing and influencing interpretations of each other.

By being roped in to speak of the troubles of the people of Kashmir, *Hamlet* is bending itself as a narrative, towards Hindi cinema, and its modes of address within melodrama. By appropriating an age-old tale of revenge that was born in Europe, *Haider* is bending itself toward being a more transnational narrative than other melodramatic representations of Kashmir. Replacing the wasp and orchid with *Hamlet* and the Kashmiri narrative as represented in *Curfewed Night*, *Haider* becomes an interstitial moment where the two elements bend their becoming toward each other: to form a "relation [of] mutuality of change between otherwise unconnected elements" (Lanier 2014, 28).

Mutual change suggests that the interaction between the two elements is a two-way street. *Hamlet* offers Kashmir a suitable narrative model and character archetypes to tell its tale. Hamlet also gives Haider a process through which to think and speak out his woes about his family, his state, and his country. At the same time, an Indian director having made a critically acclaimed Shakespearean trilogy gives to popular Hindi cinema a status that it had not achieved pre-*Haider*.

Hamlet, then, haunts us—as audiences, readers, critics, etcetera.[4] Within the context of Shakespeare's play, Hamlet is dead, but through Haider he is alive again as we view the melancholy prince of Denmark on screen in a new form. *Haider* often emphasizes, however, that this existence of *Hamlet*/Hamlet is a ghostly one. *Haider*/Haider remains haunted by the politics of Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir and the (ir)resolution for the disappeared. The puppets within *"Bismil"* appear as ghostly imitations of the human form and as specters of what once was.

Not only does Hamlet reappear in ghostly form in adaptations, but so too does his ghostly father. The ghost of Old King Hamlet continues to haunt, to ask: "Remember me" (1.5.98). Perhaps so will Irrfan Khan (the actor who played Roohdar—the adaptation of Shakespeare's ghost in the film) who died as we were writing this article. Shakespeare and *Hamlet*/Hamlet "will be living" again and again, continuing to haunt audiences and find new life in future adaptations and iterations. *Hamlet*/Hamlet continues to haunt our present and future —"he is alive, he will be living."

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4   For more on haunting and *Hamlet* see Derrida (1994); for more on haunting in relation to *Hamlet* and/or performance studies see Carlson (2001) and Rayner (2006).

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