

## Book Review

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***Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: "Local Habitations."* Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti, eds. New York: Routledge, 2019. 344 pp. \$170 (cloth); \$52.95 (paper); \$37.06 (eBook). ISBN 978-1-1389-4692-7; ISBN 978-0-3676-6577-7; ISBN 978-1-3156-7040-9.**

The important attempts by scholars to diversify the literary canon and include marginalized figures and voices lead many early modernists to wonder what role Shakespeare will continue to play in academic settings. In what ways has Shakespeare affected education across the globe? How will the teaching of his texts change to include more diverse perspectives and identities? Outside of academia, how has Shakespeare contributed to cultural identity across time and location? *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas: "Local Habitations,"* edited by Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti, successfully broadens conversations in Shakespearean studies to include not only the ways that Shakespeare has affected Indian society through colonial influences, but also the ways that Indian culture and norms have modified Shakespeare to make him a transnational citizen of India. The book looks specifically at the ways that Indian cinema has used Shakespeare to tell Indian stories and represent Indian identities, including regional/local identities outside of the larger mainstream Bollywood film industry. Trivedi and Chakravarti best summarize Shakespeare's influence on Indian cinema by saying that the films "show differing degrees of transculturation, transformation and citation" (2), where Shakespeare's texts are not always strictly represented, but instead, his plays are used as reflections within larger Indian storytelling. Trivedi and Chakravarti write that Shakespeare becomes "truly 'homed', not just translated and adapted but adopted and assimilated as one of our own" (10).

The book acts as an encyclopedic reference for the numerous Indian films that have incorporated Shakespeare in some way. It is separated into four sections of essays, a fifth section of interviews, and a final section that provides a list of influential, relevant Indian films. Any scholar interested in delving into the expansive world of Indian cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare would benefit from reading this text, as would anyone who is interested in research that considers how Shakespeare studies will grow and develop in a postmodern, postcolonial, and diverse global world. Because the text considers not just how Shakespeare has influenced India, but also how regional/local Indian filmmakers have found their own voices strengthened through Shakespearean translation, adaptation, and appropriation, much of the research in the book can be further investigated by scholars across literature, film, and postcolonial studies.

The first essay section begins with Poonam Trivedi's essay, "Woman as Avenger: 'Indianising' the Shakespearian Tragic in the Films of Vishal Bhardwaj," which looks at how Indian adaptations of *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet* reimagine Shakespeare's women. Trivedi writes that these films, *Maqbool* (2004), *Omkara* (2006), and *Haider* (2014), respectively, create "an alternative space for female agency and heroism" (40). Robert S. White's essay "Eklavya: Shakespeare Meets the *Mahabharata*" investigates an Indian version of *Hamlet*, where Shakespeare collaborates with Indian stories, philosophy, and identity, including the Hindu concept of Dharma. Similarly, "Reworking Shakespeare in Telugu Cinema: *King Lear* to *Gunasundari Katha*" by Nishi Pulugurtha discusses how Telugu cinema uses a transcultural approach to Shakespeare by connecting *King Lear* with Indian myth and folktales. C. S. Venkiteswaran's essay "Shakespeare in Malayalam Cinema: Cultural and Mythic Interface, Narrative Negotiations," also connects Shakespeare to indigenous Indian myth in Malayalam cinema through different translations of his plays. The last essay in this section by Koel Chatterjee considers how the Bollywood film *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988) modifies the plot and characters from *Romeo and Juliet* to address cultural norms in India, including gender expectations and honor feuds.

The second essay section begins with Amrit Gangar's "The Indian 'Silent' Shakespeare: Recouping an Archive," which researches Shakespeare's influence on silent films in Indian cinema studies, as well as on Parsi theater. The next essay by Anil Zankar titled "Shakespeare, Cinema and Indian Poetics" reviews the Indian philosophy of aesthetics, called Rasa, across Indian films that adapt or reimagine Shakespeare.

The essays in the third section probe the difference between a globalized Shakespeare and local interpretations/adaptations. Preti Taneja's "Such a Long Journey: Rohinton Mistry's Parsi *King Lear* from Fiction to Film" looks at postcolonial negotiations in Shakespeare and Indian films by comparing the novel *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry and Sturla Gunnarsson's film adaptation (2002). In "Cinematic *Lears* and Bengalingness: Locus, Identity, Language," Paromita Chakravarti explores the way that dichotomies of east/west, tradition/modernity, colonial/postcolonial, and enlightenment values/popular prejudices of the Bengali identity are represented through Indian adaptations of *Lear*. Varsha Panjwani investigates the ways that Indian indie films have been largely ignored in cinema studies in the essay "Shakespeare and Indian Independent Cinema: *8x10 Tasveer* and *10 ml Love*." Panjwani discusses two adaptations of *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and how limited resources have affected the way that each film has been received by audiences, as well as how that has opened up creative liberties for the directors to interpret Shakespeare materially. Thea Buckley's "'Singing Is Such Sweet Sorrow': *Ambikapathy*, Hollywood Shakespeare and Tamil Cinema's Hybrid Heritage" looks at a Tamil love story adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* to discuss sexual taboos and Indian politics.

The fourth section of essays includes four essays: "Gendered Play and Regional Dialogue in *Nanjundi Kalyana*" by Mark Thornton Burnett, which investigates an Indian adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*; "Not the Play but the Playing: Citation of Performing Shakespeare as a Trope in Tamil Cinema" by A. Mangai, which explores how Shakespeare evolved from a literary figure to film adaptation in Tamil cinema; "Indianising *The Comedy of Errors*: *Bhranti Bilash* and Its Aftermaths" by Amrita Sen, which discusses multiple different

adaptations of the same Shakespearean play across different Indian languages and locations; and, “Regional Reflections: Shakespeare in Assamese Cinema” by Parthajit Baruah, which studies the influence of British colonial rule in Assam, the development of alternative cinema in Assam, and the use of Shakespeare to discuss political themes.

As a whole, the book helps us to better understand how the study of Shakespeare has affected nonwestern audiences, specifically in a postcolonial India, while also providing new innovative ways to interpret and re-imagine Shakespeare’s themes and characters. Throughout the essays and interviews, it is evident that Indian cinema is not just appropriating Shakespeare to make a profit, but that these film makers, many of whom do not have formal literary degrees, love Shakespeare for his ability to represent humanity. Although many of the referenced films take creative liberties in their adaptations of Shakespeare, Indian cinema is shown to engage in deep close readings of Shakespeare’s plays, increasing dialogue across film and early modern literary studies.