Review of *Music in Shakespeare*

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Abstract

Led by Christopher R. Wilson at the University of Hull, the *Music in Shakespeare* project catalogues a range of musical references in Shakespeare's plays and poems and offers a variety of reference materials.

Supported by the University of Hull, the *Music in Shakespeare* database seeks to "identify every music reference in each play" and in Shakespeare's poems (Wilson). The site consists of a "Home" tab, which includes an introductory paragraph and links to each play and poem; an "Introduction" tab, which provides a set of sub-tabs on topics, such as "References," "Musical Instruments," "Part-Songs," and so on; the database itself, in which users can select a play or poem and view the musical terms used in various editions of the texts; a "Conventions" tab, which explains how the terms were selected and how to read the database; and a tab for "Reference Books," which is largely outdated and does not include any relevant articles or other publications except for the database manager Christopher Wilson's article on "Shakespeare" in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* from 2001.

The database is unfortunately lacking in other ways as well. It does not offer context for or commentary on its entries, which means that nuances regarding the use of music-adjacent terms is often lost, and that literal references to music are conflated with similes and metaphors. Because of this kind of catchall approach and the lack of recent references and contexts, the database has little value for scholars; its audience is currently limited to Shakespeare enthusiasts and those interested in Shakespeare or theater trivia dealing with music.

In addition, the site is a bit clunky to use. Set up in a spreadsheet-style format, it lists sources and editions for each reference across the top, as well as the character speaking. The sources and editions include the 2008 Norton-Oxford edition, the First Folio, and the Quartos where appropriate, as well as what is listed as three "commonly used modern editions of individual plays, namely Arden, Cambridge and Oxford," but does not offer the year of publication, edition number, or editors for any of these, so it is unclear exactly which versions of these series are used in creating
the database. The header of the spreadsheet, listing the sources, characters, and line numbers, is not frozen in place, so as the user scrolls through the listings for each individual play, they must remember which column refers to what source. Because of the numerous columns involved — 14 in total — it would be helpful if this line of the spreadsheet were fixed in place. The database uses a small font (about 8 points) and calls out musical terms by surrounding them with ^ marks rather than bolding them or otherwise signifying them; it only does this in the entry for the Norton-Oxford edition. The entries do adhere to common practice in transcribing text, using "v" and "u" as they occur and forgoing the long "s." In the "Comments" column, there are asides and queries that would be better suited for other columns or for prose commentary, which could be included beneath the spreadsheet display area on the page. In the entry for 1 Henry IV, a comment on Falstaff's line "By Phoebus, he, that wand'ring knight so fair" notes "[=ballad?]." It would be useful to know why the database managers think this might be from a ballad and what ballad that might be, with evidence.

According to the "Introduction," the database classifies anything relating to sound as "music." This includes what Wilson describes as "natural phenomenon [sic];" military cues, regardless of whether music is actually specified or such terms are used in non-musical ways; expressive terms ("sigh" and "mournful" are included), and "miscellaneous or stand-alone terms which may have only an oblique connection with music but which nonetheless support a musical context." This very wide definition of "music" may at first seem to be practical as a manner of including all possible references, but it soon becomes apparent that it is applied inconsistently and that it also creates questions about the definition of music and how Shakespeare used musical or potentially musical terms. Terms are tagged within the database by use of a double caret surrounding the reference. One use in particular is in categorizing and tagging "sonnet" as a universally musical term, when it is clearly not always intended so (despite its lexicographical origin); other examples include the presence of other ambiguous terms, including "cry," and "melancholy." For example, the database lists the stage direction "A sennet sounded" in Antony and Cleopatra (Arden 2.7.16, as quoted by Wilson), but in no place is the term "sennet" defined (it is a set of pitches played on a trumpet or cornet to mark the entrance or exit of several actors at once). Similarly, the database includes examples of "sounded" as a verb: "Tell me, moreover, hast thou sounded him," says Richard II (1.2.8). But this means "to ask" or "to probe" and is not related to music; "sound" in relation to music comes from the Middle English "sounen;" "soun" in relation to depth or questioning is from a slightly different ME verb, "sounden." ("Sound" as in "healthy" or "hearty" comes from OE "sund," related to modern German's "gesunt.") Shakespeare plays with the different definitions in Romeo and Juliet, for example, when Juliet says "There is no end, no limit, measure,
bound, / In that word's death, no words can that woe sound" (Folger Digital Texts 3.2.136-27).
But the database does not distinguish between such instances of usage, which suggests to me that
it was compiled mostly without human intervention: a Shakespeare scholar would have made the
distinction here. The database could be a useful tool for finding some of the references to music and
music theory, instruments, songs, dance, and other music-adjacent words in Shakespeare's plays,
but its inconsistency and its omission of a number of references that it should, by its own criteria,
have included, alongside a few questionable inclusions, raise questions about interpretation and
bias as well as reliability.

The sources listed under "Reference Books" do not contain anything more recent than
2005 and omit essential work by Linda Austern, Amanda Eubanks Winkler, Sharon J. Harris, Seth
Lerer, Lucy Munro, Deanna Smid, and many others, as well as the 2017 collection *Shakespeare,
Music, and Performance* edited by Bill Barclay and David Lindley (Cambridge UP). A search on
"music" in the World Shakespeare Bibliography yields dozens more from the last ten years that
would, if added to the references on the database's site, make it a much more scholarly tool than
it is at present.

For this review, I made a careful comparison of the database's musical references provided
for *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*, two plays in which music has a significant role; I spot-checked
references for two plays in which music does not play much of a role, *Julius Caesar* and *The
Comedy of Errors*; and I examined the database's findings for the poem *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Most audiences are familiar with the music referenced in *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*: there are
several identified songs in each play, and there are additional musical references throughout. For
*Twelfth Night*, the *Music In Shakespeare* database finds most of the musical references, but misses
a few, among them Maria's reference to "caterwauling" and Malvolio's to the singers' "squeak[ing]
out" their catches (Folger Digital Texts 2.3.73, 91). More problematic is the way that the database
appears to cherry-pick words as musical and non-musical. In *Twelfth Night*, "cry" is tagged as
musical language in 1.5, but not 2.5; "consonancy" is not included as a musical term; "melancholy"
is also identified as musical in the section on emotional language, but not when it appears in 2.5.
The section on "References" holds that Act 3 of *Twelfth Night* is "devoid of music"; this is just one
example of where interpretation between readers will differ, causing specific uses to go unnoticed.
In 3.1, Olivia asks that the door be shut against Feste, who carries a pipe and tabor; does this
not suggest that she does not want to hear him play and/or sing? Does Sir Toby's calling Maria a
"wren" in 3.2.65 not suggest bird-song, or is it only to play against Maria's use of "gull" in referring
to Malvolio? Does Malvolio's "nightingales answer daws" (3.4.39) not have musical meaning as
defined by the "Song Birds" section? Is it certain that Sir Toby's description of "a swaggering accent
sharply twanged off" refers to music? It could be a reference to speech that mimics a plucked string, or it could refer to pronunciation in an entirely non-musical way. "Chantry," as used in 4.3.25, is tagged as musical. But it refers to a private chapel, and while the name does come from its one-time use as a space for singers, that origin does not mean that it retains musical connotations in the play.

In Hamlet, the database also selects terms to include and exclude that do not agree with the site's stated methodology. Based on the text that explains the terms that are included, Hamlet's entries for 1.1 should include the clock striking 12; the same bell "beating one" (Folger Digital Texts 1.1.46); the "squeak and gibber" of the dead (1.1.128); and the crowing of the cock in the stage directions at 1.1.151, none of which are present in the database. If military terms like "march" are included, as the introduction states, then the reference to Old Hamlet's "solemn march" (1.2.211) should be in the database, but it too is missing, as is Marcellus's reference in 1.2.172 to the cock's crowing. In 1.4.45, the ambiguous "airs from heaven or blasts from hell" should probably be included as musical references; so too should the ghost's cries of "swear" from off or underneath the stage in 1.5. Other examples include the omission of Hamlet's "sigh so piteous" in 2.1.106; Polonius's use of "harping" in 2.2.204; the "hideous crash" and "alarm" of the First Player's recitations in 2.3.501, 534; the use of "rhapsody" in 3.4.47; "discord" in 4.1.46; and others.

In the database's entries for Julius Caesar and The Comedy of Errors, the confluence of sound with music and the lack of a more exact methodology for selecting terms for the database leads to several questionable inclusions, and there are omissions as well. The same holds for the database's entries on The Rape of Lucrece: many are omitted, including "dancing and revelling" ("The Argument"); "high-pitched thoughts" (line 41); and more.

In addition to the erratically chosen selections that make up the database, the database's sections lack scholarly rigor. The database offers brief discussions of the categorizations it employs, including "emotional words," "musical philosophy," "bird songs," and various other groups. However, these short sections do not provide scholarly support for the claims they make. For example, the section on "emotional words" cites as musical the "conventional melancholic 'sigh' of love-sickness characterizes Armado's emotional attempt to woo Jaquenetta, urged on by Moth, in Love's Labour's Lost (3.1.10-11)." But the anonymous author of this passage does not cite any of the copious scholarly literature on the sigh, musical or spoken, nor on the widespread understanding that the musical sigh functions as mimesis of the spoken sigh, rather than the other way around. The section on musical instruments is similarly lacking in citations: the (again) anonymous author of the text writes of the virginal, a keyboard instrument, that "Queen Elizabeth herself is thought to have been an accomplished player;" there is eyewitness testimony of Elizabeth I's skills with the instrument and further scholarship that should be referenced here. Similarly, the
discussion of instrumental consorts and the composition and use of "mixed" or "broken" consorts — groups consisting of both wind and string instruments — lacks any references to scholarship on instrumental music-making. The section on song birds stretches all credulity in terms of pairing references with musical meaning: the text marking the presences of owls in Richard II and Macbeth are in no way used to reference music. The "Conventions" page too is full of problematic scholarly practices: "Empty boxes [in the database] or ones containing an En-dash indicate there is no variant or that a music reference is not specified." How are users to know which has no variant and which lacks the musical reference?

The database could be significantly strengthened by offering brief definitions or commentaries on the instances in which musical terms or language is employed. Glossing words and phrases such as "passy-measures pavin," "wassail," "tabor," and others would provide readers with a greater understanding of the texts included in the database and the context in which they appear in the plays. It would also be a boon for instructors if the database included the full text of the excerpted lines from the Arden (or other popular) editions used, given their popularity in teaching. These additions, along with more scholarly and carefully cited sections, would improve the database significantly, making it a far more reliable and useful resource for users.²

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from plays are reproduced as they appear in the database, which keys them to the Norton-Oxford text. See the first paragraph on the "Conventions" tab, which reads "the start text is the Norton-Oxford second edition of the complete works, Stephen Greenblatt (general editor), Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2008), except for Edward III which uses the Royal Shakespeare Company edition (ed. Roger Warren, 2002) in order to keep the Cambridge and Oxford texts as the comparators" (Wilson)

2. The editors would like to acknowledge the copyediting and markup work of Ceciley Pangburn and other students in Sujata Iyengar's ENGL 4810 class at the University of Georgia in Fall 2019.
References


telling moment involves the slum dwellers staring directly into the camera during the song "Kaala Paisa Wala" ("Black Money People"), a song that critiques the upper classes' corruption and their exploitation of the lower classes. This is an indictment of the viewers, who are likely seated in malls built on the detritus of former slums, in the same cycle of exploitation. These theatrical devices make for a jarring juxtaposition with the very real and recognizable prejudice and violence that shapes the lives of the characters. It is paradoxically very difficult to get lost in the fiction of the film as we are constantly reminded that it is not real, and this awareness sharpens our ability to analyze, interpret, critique and reflect. This disavowal of realism is the literal realization of a Mirrorland that is both familiar, but at the same time intangible.

The film takes pains to establish Arshinagar as an unspecified location that is at once nowhere and everywhere, not real but at the same time not unknown (Sen 2017). The puppeteer-narrator, Reshma Bai, informs her audience at the outset: "Koi bhi thakte pare, Bangal, Bihar, MP, Orissa" ("It could be anywhere, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa"), underscoring the equivalence between Arshinagar and today's India. The film thus slips between concentric circles of geographic boundedness — the stage, the town, the neighborhood, the region, the country, and the universal or the abstract, its shifting registers making apparent the simultaneous universality and particularity of its narrative. The puppet show suggests that this tale is of a more universal nature, blending a fairytale quality with a privileging of place over character, of locality over personality, of Arshinagar over Rono and Julie. It is the very universality of the tale that serves to unmoor it from reality as, right before the scene shifts to the material reality of Arshinagar, Reshma Bai, the puppeteer, tells her gathered fairground audience that everyone has an "arshinagar" within themselves. She thereby moves Arshinagar from anywhere/everywhere to within the minds of the audience — a subjective interiority where they will see themselves reflected. The strong implication over here is that this production, this realization of an abstract "arshinagar," will ensure that the members of the audience see themselves reflected and will, hopefully, reflect on themselves.

The thematic and political concerns of Arshinagar thus suggest a move towards alienating the audience, particularly in the focus on the strange yet familiar neighborhood of the Arshinagar slum, rather than solely on the lives of the two wealthy protagonists. This eponymous slum is a neighborhood whose social, political, and religious life is saturated with mirrors. The teashop, a site for the latest gossip and news, has a large mirror on its back wall that reflects the rest of the set; the barber's shop across from it has several mirrors that are angled to reflect the narrow alleys weaving through the cramped slum; broken shards of glass cover the walls in makeshift designs;
and larger mirrors on the walls are covered in graffiti, all serving to reinforce the crowded and consticting atmosphere of the Arshinagar slum.

The mirrors are aesthetically crucial in depicting the film's climactic scene of violence, serving as a reminder of the distorted truths and the propagative and retributory nature of communal violence in contemporary India. For the residents of the Arshinagar slum, there is a predictability in their quotidian lives and a shared distaste for the wealthy Mitras and Khans, but at the slightest hint of religious turmoil, the differences between these neighbors are underscored. What is exposed here is the underside of community life, the convivial space of the para or neighborhood is flipped on its head, a situation described by a resident as "Janam bhar chini jader tara aaj anjaan" ("Those we've known all our lives have turned strangers overnight"). The mirrors in Arshinagar reflect the carnage, multiplying and blurring the turbulence while also appearing to trap the victims who can see the reflections of their attackers approaching but have no escape. The neighbors — attackers and victims — thus blur into one as the self appears to literally be annihilated by its reflection in the mirror. Mirrors thus appear frequently through the film and serve not just as a realization of the town's name but rather as a repeated materialization of the themes of distortion, reflection, repetition, and misrecognition that undergird the narrative by marking the border between the material and the immaterial, what is tangible and what is imagined.

Arshinagar thus consistently plays with audience's expectations, walking a fine line between proximity and remoteness, between familiarity and strangeness — between the self and the other in the mirror. It offers up mixtures, a blending of substance and shadow, of the quotidian and the fantastic, of reality and fiction, of the convivial and the distressing. Theater bleeds into film and the image in the mirror acquires substance. There is a constant crossing of borders, a pushing of boundaries, in language, identity and form. This is what the film forwards as its core ideology in its use of Baul music and overtly determined cross dressing. This is what the film embodies in its modes of performance, questioning how we might define a film, its language, and its genre.

Star Crossed Lovers and Indian Popular Cinema

The figure of the neighbor and the space of the neighborhood are conspicuous as distinctive markers of Arshinagar's approach to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. However, to rely exclusively on this analysis would be to replicate a dominant mode of Global Shakespeare criticism where Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and Arshinagar are placed alongside each other and the changes or shifts from the former — presumed to be a stable text — are tabulated as if they occurred in a vacuum. I argue, instead, that the film's theorization of the neighbor/hood provides a productive
springboard for the reconceptualization of the status of an adaptation, particularly within the fundamentally adaptational field of Global Shakespeare.

*Arshinagar* is not the first Indian film to depict inter-religious love, communal violence, or riots. Nor it is the first Indian film to demonstrate a pertinent, if unattested likeness to *Romeo and Juliet*. However, in its combination of the two and because it self-consciously inserts itself into a national and global tradition of adapting *Romeo and Juliet* for film, it renders visible the modes, methods, and motivations of that process. Thus, considering *Arshinagar* as part of a neighborhood of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations allows for the acknowledgement of a constellation of influences rather than the limited and singular original/copy relationship.

*Romeo and Juliet* seems to be a play that is especially suited to Indian popular cinema: warring families, obstructive parents, young doomed love, quarrels, suicide — these features seem to be an intrinsic part of the typical Bollywood film. The earliest Indian cinematic adaptation was *Ambikapathy*, a 1937 Tamil film, and in the eighty years since, *Romeo and Juliet* has been a source text that Indian filmmakers have frequently turned to, though not always with acknowledgment, and that Indian filmgoers have frequently utilized as a framework or reference for interpreting these films. This is not to say, however, that every Indian film that seems, however tangentially, to adopt the story of the star-crossed lovers is ultimately indebted to Shakespeare. To start with, this would — given the manner in which the Indian film industry has functioned and continues to function — be impossible to prove. Equally, such a blanket claim would seriously undervalue the potential influences of other tales of star-crossed lovers in the Indian folk and mythic archives like Laila and Majnu, Heer and Ranjha, Mirza and Sahiba, Sohni and Mahiwal, which are frequently made into films as well.

I am arguing, however, for the existence of a category of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations in Indian cinema. These films, which straddle the line between familiarity and novelty, are neighbors — refracted, distorted, and repeated versions of each other — and have shaped the way in which young lovers are portrayed in Indian cinema. While the tragic story of a pair of star-crossed lovers has been a popular trope in Indian cinema, it has not previously been suggested that there is a distinct group of films constituting a field of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations. In making just such a suggestion, I do not want to forward a privileging of the Shakespearean text, but rather to open up avenues of comparative study by sketching the broad contours of this field. I want to demonstrate that these films share more than a common core narrative, specifically with respect to the choices made in the process of adaptation.
Shakespeare is figured in these films as that familiar yet distorted image in the mirror, as we recognize and grasp moments of direct translation, oblique citation, or vague echo. The references to the Shakespearean text within the dialogue or narrative of the film emphasize a link while also providing viewers with a discursive framework for interpretation. In other instances, these films are in direct conversation with other Indian or international filmic adaptations of the play, and thus their use of Shakespeare is filtered through these sources. From the 1970s onwards, there were several Indian films that had young doomed love as a central plotline, ranging from Raj Kapoor's tremendously successful *Bobby* (1973), which set up the romantic relationship between a wealthy Hindu boy and a poor Goan Christian girl; to K. Balachander's *Ek Duje Ke Liye* (*Made for Each Other*, 1981), which set up the romantic relationship between a North Indian girl and a South Indian boy; to Mansoor Khan's *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (*From Judgement Day to Judgement Day*, 1988) a landmark film that set up the romantic relationship between the children of two feuding Rajput families. There were also several films based on indigenous folk tales and legends that contained a similar story of star-crossed lovers, like the Punjabi tale of *Heer-Ranjha* (1970) and the Persian tale of *Laila Majnu* (1976). All these films, whether explicitly using the Shakespeare text or not, tried to distance themselves from the cultural cachet accompanying the Shakespeare label in an attempt to produce popular entertainment.

In a departure from this tradition, Habib Faisal's *Ishaqzaade* (*Rebellious Lovers*, 2012); Manish Tiwary's *Issaq* (*Love*, 2013); Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Goliyon Ki Ras Leela Ram-Leela* (*A Play of Bullets Ram-Leela*, 2013); and Aparna Sen's *Arshinagar* (2015) all market themselves as adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* and specifically as local, contemporary, and modern retellings. One of the most recent iterations, a webseries called *Romil and Jugal* (2017), which reworks the central relationship as one between two gay men, brings together several of the elements that are present in other versions, particularly underscoring the overlaps between the "filminess" of Bollywood and a perceived melodramatic undercurrent in Shakespeare's love story. This contemporary trend of self-conscious references to Shakespeare in the paratextual materials accompanying the films is a product of the global expansion of Shakespeare's cultural capital beyond the exclusive purview of high-brow entertainment to include the popular. This accords a secondary and derivative status to these films, dismissing not just the presence of a range of other intertexts, but also papering over alternative relationships to Shakespeare.

This group of films is largely the product of the way in which the film industry functions in India. Remakes are extremely popular, and commercially successful films are often dubbed or remade in different languages in order to reach a wider or different audience. Box-office success is prized above originality and, as a consequence, filmmakers have few qualms about borrowing or
reusing material that has proven to be successful in a different context or at a different time. Thus, an equally rich archive for source material is to be found in other adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*. While contemporary Indian adaptations replicate successful narrative devices and tropes from other Indian films that may or may not have themselves been influenced, however tangentially, by *Romeo and Juliet*, they also draw prominently from three of the most internationally popular filmic versions of the play: Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), the film version of *West Side Story* (1961), and Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996).

*Arshinagar* forms a part of this "neighborhood" of films and is consciously in conversation with its aesthetic, linguistic, and narrative traditions. Perhaps most obviously, *Arshinagar* joins this field in its utilization and citation of films that preceded it, both in India and abroad. Rono is referred to at one point as "ishaqzaade" (rebellious lover), the title given to the most recent Hindi version of *Romeo and Juliet*. His guitar-playing motorbike-riding persona is reminiscent of Raj (the Romeo character) in *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*. The graffitied sets and the color-coded gangs (the Mitras in red and the Khans in black) are indisputably influenced by the sets and the portrayal of the gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, in *West Side Story* and, perhaps tangentially, by the Bollywood version *Josh* (2000). Luhrmann's imagery haunts the film too — our introduction to the different characters is accompanied by a voiceover; the massive buildings of the two enterprises, Mitra and Khan, mirror those of the Montagues and Capulets on Verona Beach; the endings of both films depict the two sets of grieving parents pulling up in black cars. The joint funeral at the end, with the bodies carried in on stretchers — each covered in the custom of their faith — recalls the ending of Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Neighboring Tales**

Embedded in *Arshinagar's* flashbacks is another version of the same story: Rono's mother and Julie's father were once in love and planned to marry, with his mother going as far as agreeing to convert to Islam. Madhu and Sabir's failed romance is wrenched into the present of the film when we see, hidden in a safe, the scrap of paper Madhu has preserved for thirty years, containing the Hindi words: "*Mujhse shaadi karogi?*" ("Will you marry me?"). This is not just the title of a popular Hindi movie, but has become a line that is associated with Hindi popular cinema more broadly, an example of "filmi dialogue," further consolidating *Arshinagar's* contiguous relationship with Hindi popular cinema.

According to Sen, this mirror relationship in the previous generation serves to demonstrate that nothing has changed in thirty years, that Hindu-Muslim relationships continue to be doomed to fail. There is, however, a difference. Madhu and Sabir buckle under parental pressure and the
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present shows them in conventional marriages with members of their own community. Rono and Julie on the other hand, do manage to thwart their parents and consummate their relationship; it is communal violence that ultimately proves their greatest obstacle. The relationship between Madhu and Sabir is one demonized in popular depictions of love jihad — a conspiracy theory regarding an alleged activity undertaken by young Muslim men who feign love to non-Muslim women in an attempt to get them to convert, one that is symptomatic of the fear of losing the woman, as bearer of cultural and religious values, to the Other. Conversion for Rono and Julie on the other hand, is never brought up — they discuss their dreams for the future, how they will make a living, what they will eat, even drawing out a floor plan of their first home, but religion is never mentioned. It only becomes significant when the riots begin, when they cannot escape from religious categorization and the possibility that they will be seen, perceived as a threat, and immediately eliminated.

Arshinagar thus works out different trajectories for what is ostensibly the same story, simultaneously marking out points of convergence and divergence. These neighboring tales are distinct not merely because of a generational gap, but more importantly because of the mirrored gender roles. In Madhu and Sabir's doomed relationship, the film points to a configuration rarely depicted as successful in Indian Romeo and Juliet adaptations, in which the man is a social minority, i.e. Muslim, lower-class, or lower-caste. It is significant that Rono and Julie's relationship — the one at the center of the film and the one that we, as audience members, are meant to identify with — depicts the reverse of the love jihad dynamic. This is a plausible configuration, in which the Other can be assimilated into the dominant community simply because she is female, while the reverse is barely entertained. By including both, ultimately unsuccessful, configurations, Arshinagar encapsulates the dominant trend for depicting transgressive relationships in Indian popular cinema. These neighboring pairings invite markedly different responses, resulting in a restricted understanding of what a socially transgressive relationship in contemporary India can look like.

The field of Indian Romeo and Juliet adaptations in film thus provides us with a site for reimagining the conceptual and critical category of adaptation beyond one that relies exclusively on an individual genealogical relationship between "original" and "copy." The category of adaptation is, therefore, infinitely more complex, comprising multiple sources or intertexts and multiple avenues or modes of transformation. In Indian popular cinema, adaptation is thus a sedimentary layering of influence: a character from here, a trope from there, a line from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, an image from Baz Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet. To use Gerard Genette's terminology, there is no single hypotext or anterior text that the adaptation transforms (Genette 1997, 5). It
may be more useful, in this instance, then to think of a web of hypotexts that exist in some relation to each other and to the adaptation — a neighborhood of texts.

Applying this model to critical work in the field of Global Shakespeare thus requires not just a decentering of the Shakespearean text but also cognizance of the neighboring texts whose traces, influences, reflections, and refractions may be observed in the adaptation. This reconceptualization shares the move towards "decentered multiplicity" forwarded in recent theorizations of the Shakespeare rhizome by such critics as Douglas M. Lanier and Alexa Alice Joubin (Lanier 2014, 28). The Shakespeare rhizome is a model that goes beyond the Shakespeare texts and "necessarily includes faithful and unfaithful adaptations, and adaptations of them, and adaptations of them" (Lanier 2014, 29). What this alternative model of the Shakespeare rhizome requires is for us to "conceive of our shared object of study...as the vast web of adaptations, allusions, and (re)productions that comprises the ever-changing cultural phenomenon we call 'Shakespeare'" (Lanier 2014, 29).

What the theorization of the neighbor and the neighborhood opens up instead is a space for considering the ethical charge both of our orientation as scholars and of the relationship(s) between these various "adaptations, allusions, and (re)productions." To conceive of these relationships as neighborly and to conceive of discrete groups as neighborhoods requires us to consider not just lines of influence, but also the paradoxical potential for proliferation and contraction. To analyze Arshinagar within the framework of a neighborhood of Indian Romeo and Juliet adaptations is then not just to disclose citational traces or lines of influence, but to consider how it neighbors these adaptations. In the following sections I focus on two elements of the film — its experimental use of language and its depiction of the nation — to demonstrate how Arshinagar both disturbs and preserves what constitutes an Indian adaptation of Romeo and Juliet.

Indian Popular Cinema and Neighboring Languages

While Arshinagar is the first Bengali filmic adaptation of Romeo and Juliet, it draws, as has been demonstrated above, on a long history of Romeo and Juliet adaptations in Hindi popular cinema. Largely because of its reach in a country where a significant percentage of the population are illiterate, Hindi popular cinema performs what Benedict Anderson described as the role of print-language in imagining a national community, providing an awareness of "fellow viewers" (to adapt Anderson's term "fellow-readers") who are bound not necessarily by geography but by a shared set of prescribed values and beliefs. Partly as a product of this role, the language of Hindi popular cinema or "filmi dialogue" has become a form of national lingua franca that circulates outside of celluloid. On the other hand, Bengali cinema, like other regional cinemas, is marked
by its linguistic and corresponding geographical exclusivity. While Bengali cinema consciously shaped itself as a culturally superior contrast to the commercial "stunt-filled adventure – romance genres" of Hindi popular cinema, it has been increasingly influenced over the last few decades by the dominant masala Bollywood films and now it is largely only language that continues to separate Bengali popular cinema from its pan-Indian Hindi counterpart (Gooptu 2010, 31).

Arshinagar works in part to reflect this influence, but it also troubles the established separation between these neighboring languages, both of which derive from Sanskrit. Though Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* presents the Montagues and Capulets as inherently socially similar, there is a hint at a discernible distinction between the two families when Tybalt suggests he recognizes Romeo by the way he speaks: "This, by his voice, should be a Montague" (I.4.165-6). What is barely hinted at in *Romeo and Juliet* is amplified to become the defining feature of the soundscape of *Arshinagar*. Every character has a unique style of speaking, making them easily identifiable by their voices. At the most basic level, *Arshinagar*’s soundscape distinguishes the Mitras from the Khans. As a cultured Muslim family, the Khan's lexicon is peppered with words having Persian-Arabic roots. While some of these would be a standard part of the Muslim Bengali lexicon, others seem to be borrowed from Urdu. On the other hand, the Mitras largely use standard colloquial Bengali, relying on words with Sanskrit etymology. Thus, the religious identity of each family is further underscored by distinct lexicons; we know by their "voices" whether they are Muslim or Hindu.

In his seminal work on code-mixing in India, linguistics scholar Braj Kachru has suggested the code-switching (switching from one code or language to another) and code-mixing ("transferring linguistic units from one code to another") are "essentially used as communicative strategies with various motivations" (1978, 108; 111). He identifies three distinct types of code-mixing with respect to Hindi: Sanskritization, Persianization, and Englishization, with the former two associated with Hindu and Muslim identity respectively, and argues that one of the primary functions of these shifts and mixes of different codes is to "reveal or to conceal region, class and religion" (1978, 111). *Arshinagar* depicts these shifts and mixes with respect to Bengali where, as demonstrated above, a Persianized Bengali points to a Muslim identity, while a Sanskritized Bengali points to a Hindu identity.

Even within the Khan family, however, there are subtle distinctions. When Sabir Khan is convinced by his grandmother to come to the aid of Tayeb, whose hotheaded nature has landed him in jail, he says to his sister, "Ei shob tumi ki bolchho appa, tumie bhalo jaano, / ragle pore na mumkin taar buke shamlano. / Dimaag taar ekdomi noi shoja. / Daadi-jaan aapni she bojhan" ("What're you saying Sister! You know well / Tabbu's hot temper is impossible to quell! /
I've tried to reason with him in vain! / Grandma you explain!"). Sabir's fluent Bengali borrows a few words from Urdu. His grandmother, Daadi-jaan, on the other hand, speaks Urdu with a few words of accented Bengali sprinkled in. Convincing him to come to the aid of his sister, she says, "Dekho Sabir, aurat-er kaun acche aar, baap, khasam noi bhai" ("Look Sabir, who else is there for a woman...but father, husband, or brother?") The Khan family hails from the northern province of Awadh and in the speech patterns of the different generations we can trace their assimilation into the eastern state of Bengal.

In addition to Bengali and Hindi-Urdu, the film also incorporates a number of English words and phrases, resulting in a hybrid code referred to by the portmanteaux Benglish and Hinglish. These have generally been considered "a marker of modernization, socioeconomic position, and membership in an elite group" (Kachru 1978, 113) and have more recently been understood as "the aspirational language of the upwardly-mobile, vernacular [...] working classes" (Orsini 2015, 200). The latter instance is reflected in the interactions between the slum dwellers as they incorporate English words like "majority," to indicate political dominance, into their daily interactions. In a private conversation between Manik the teashop owner and his wife, who encourages him to consider the offer for his property to allow their son a better future, the words "offer," "teacher," "best," "school" and "English-medium" are all in English. At the other end of the spectrum, we have Rono — in all likelihood a product of this English-medium schooling — whose speech is peppered with English phrases like "Baby just wait!"; "Fusion is in!" These are, however, paradoxically not emblematic of upward social mobility or superior education, but are instead borrowed or absorbed from popular culture. Thus, the use of English in this film is multifaceted: ranging from quotidian life to popular culture to legal and political registers, it is largely determined by who is speaking it. The use of English thus simultaneously reflects the global dominance of the language and the film's imbrication in the local frictions of linguistic politics.

At its most complex iteration, code-mixing in Arshinagar involves all three languages within a single interaction, like Reshma Bai's introduction to the puppet show that forms the film's framing device:

\[ Accha aisi waisi kahaani na acche \] (No ordinary tale this!)
\[ Eke bare bilayati qissa \] (A foreign one!)
\[ Sex-pee-yaar Sahib ka. \] (Written by Lord Shakespeare himself!)
[Onlooker: Sex?]
\[ Arre sex nahi baba \] (No! No! Not sex!)
\[ Sala sab kuch te aajkaal lok sex dhunde \] (People look only for sex these days!)
Ami bolchilam ki Sex-peeyar Sahib (I'm talking about Shakespeare Sahib!)
Gi-rate writer! (Great writer!)
Uska likha hua voh qissa acche (A tale written by him!)
Vaise sex bhi acche thora bahaut. (Well, sex is there too, in small doses)

Following what Reshma Bai is saying over here requires varying degrees of knowledge in all three languages, from certain words in English to the syntactical structures of Hindi-Urdu and Bengali.

In its use of multiple languages, Arshinagar allows us to conceive of language relations as neighborly as well. While being cognizant of the diachronic relations between languages that belong to the same Indo-European family, the film also allows us to take a synchronic perspective, reflecting the ways in which these languages continue to border, push, influence, shape and neighbor each other in contemporary India. The broad and diverse lexicon is balanced by the formal constraint of rhymed verse, with characters often completing each other's line-rhymes. The speaking styles of Arshinagar's characters are thus not merely marked by differences, but ultimately come together to form a complete and coherent semantic whole. The shifting, or rather hybrid, linguistic registers of the global, the national and the local mirror a similar shifting of place that is central to Arshinagar's privileging of location. Thus, Arshinagar does not merely complicate what constitutes an Indian filmic adaptation of Romeo and Juliet, but more broadly what counts as a Bengali film.

The Nation as Neighborhood

Scholarly consensus has been that Indian popular cinema is intimately concerned with the nation and nationalism, often mapping the social, political, and historical concerns of national identity onto the cinematic family. The filmic adaptations of Romeo and Juliet utilize one of the industry's core cinematic tropes — heterosexual, romantic, and transgressive love — in their exploration of this nation-as-family metaphor and function simultaneously as a barometer for dominant social concerns. The catalytic feud between the Montagues and the Capulets is set up within a specific framework of conflict ranging from class in Bobby (1973), to language in Ek Duje Ke Liye (Made for Each Other, 1981) to patriotic loyalty in 1942: A Love Story (1994) to religion in Ishaqzaade (Rebellious Lovers, 2012). Arshinagar follows in this tradition by mapping the conflict between the two families onto contemporary religious strife between Hindus and Muslims.

However, while prior adaptations of Romeo and Juliet that are concerned with "what it means to be 'Indian'" deal with the central category of the family whose homogeneity envelops and subsumes difference under a shared morality, Arshinagar uses the heterogeneous neighborhood as
its analogue for a state in turmoil (Dwyer 2014, 37). The town is a microcosm of Indian society: unmistakably diverse, its fragile unity under threat from the competing demands of religious and political allegiance, balancing a commitment to tradition with the advancing forces of modernity and development, and controlled by the rich and powerful. Gendered and religious identities take on different valences in this context where both difference and equivalence are apparent, and by moving from the implied ultimate reconciliation inherent in the category of the family to the profound ambivalence at the core of neighborly relations, *Arshinagar* provides us with a more provocative and productive mode of depicting and understanding the nation.

This is perhaps most evident in the figure of Tayeb (Tybalt). Tayeb is Rono's image in the mirror. Color-coded as his photo-negative, he resembles him not just in appearance but in his love for his cousin Julie. Though a permissible match for a conservative Muslim family, the volatile Tayeb is never presented as a viable marriage prospect, coded instead as a thug and outsider (Sen 2017). He embodies the figure of the neighbor — "that intimate other...with whom we can partially identify, but who displays a strange, potentially hostile desire — a death drive — that uncannily threatens the dream of community" (Edmondson 2011, 10).

If *Arshinagar* is a film about the Indian nation, Tayeb represents the limit case of citizenship. In his first appearance in the film, he is incited to violence by Monty (Mercutio) who seems to know just which buttons to press. Tayeb scoffs at the Mitra gang: "*Tau tora Mitter, amra holam Khan / Bahadur Shah'r ujir amar dadu'r dadu'r dadu*" ("Yet you are mere Mitras, while we are Khans sublime! / We are descendants of Bahadur Shah the Great"). Monty responds by taunting him: "*Khub bujechhi chandu / Na Shahrukh na Salman tobu 'ami Khan' / Tor baap chhilo refugee, podobi Akhtar / Adh pagla chani se chokhe, Unani daktar / Tui ki bhabe hothat holi Khan?" ("Ah! Now we've got it straight! / Not Shahrulk, nor Salman, and yet he is a Khan! / Your dad was a refugee, surname Akhtar! / Half-crazy bleary-eyed a Unani doctor. / How come you suddenly turned Khan?")

Though Tayeb calls himself Khan and is frequently put to work by them to intimidate uncooperative sections of the town, he is never quite considered a full member of the family. He cannot escape the fact that he is dependent on his maternal relatives and that his father was an Akhtar, a refugee, presumably from neighboring Bangladesh. Though he boasts that his mother's family is descended from the retinue of Bahadur Shah, this claim to nobility does not hold much weight. His claims to the family and to the nation are through his mother and are therefore outweighed by his father's outsider status. Thus, Tayeb presents another productive site for the theorization of the neighbor. Though he is related to the Khans, his non-Indian lineage prevents his complete assimilation — both into the family and into the nation. He is the figure that both...
"rattles" and "ratifies" the legitimate citizenship of Arshinagar's residents (Edmondson 2011, 10). The nation, in *Arshinagar*, is thus not merely a contained entity but rather one that acknowledges and excludes its neighbors.

*Arshinagar* is thus experimental not just in its use of language and its blending of film and theater; it also seeks to build on and complicate the nation-as-family metaphor that is so prevalent in Indian popular cinema. The figure of the neighbor and the space of the neighborhood are most pronounced in *Arshinagar's* thematic and narrative components, but expanding this focus on the simultaneously proximate and different to the film's form, language, and genre allows us to conceive of the boundaries between cinema and theater, Bengali and Hindi, original and adaptation, Shakespeare and "Global Shakespeare" as pliable, porous, and reflective. Ultimately, what the film offers us is not just an alternative iteration of *Romeo and Juliet*, but, in its rich experimentation, a novel approach to the genre of adaptation itself.

Notes

1. The Baul occupies a fundamentally ambiguous role within the Bengali imaginary. The word itself is usually glossed as "mad" and members of this syncretic religious sect, which draws on both Hinduism and Islam, reject orthodox religious practices. They are best known in popular culture for the orally transmitted popular Baul songs that celebrate spiritual freedom.

2. All transcriptions from the film are my own. Unless otherwise noted, I make use of the translations provided in the film's English subtitles. However, where necessary, I provide my own translation. This is because the film's subtitles seek to retain the effect of the rhymes present in the original and in doing so occasionally sacrifice conveying a more literal translation.


4. Quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, third edition (Shakespeare, 2015) and cited parenthetically by line number.

5. For studies on the overlap between the Indian nation and Indian popular cinema, see *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947-1987* by Sumita S. Chakravarty; *Bollywood's India: Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Contemporary India*, by Rachel Dwyer; *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India*, by Priya Jaikumar; and *The Cinematic ImaginNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History*, by Jyotika Virdi.

Thomas Cartelli; *Postcolonial Shakespeares*, edited by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin; *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, edited by Parmita Kapadia and Craig Dionne.

7. See *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, by Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner, and Kenneth Reinhard for an extended discussion on the figure of the neighbor in the fields of critical theory and psychoanalysis.

8. In *The Neighboring Text*, George Edmondson analyzes three different texts dealing with the story of Troilus and Criseyde to forward this notion of a horizontal (as opposed to genealogical) relationship between texts within the context of psychoanalytic and medieval understandings of the figure of the neighbor.


10. For a discussion on pertinent versus attested likenesses in Shakespeare adaptations see "Pertinent Likeness: Kurosawa's *The Bad Sleep Well* as a version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" by Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson.

11. Reviews of the Urdu 1947 *Romeo and Juliet* compare the performance of Nargis (who played Juliet) with that of Norma Shearer, who had played Juliet in an American movie (directed by George Cukor, 1936) a decade earlier. Given what we know of the functioning of the Indian film industry at that time, it's very likely that the Urdu version relied to a certain extent on the American film that preceded it.

12. In her talk, "Image as Text in *Arshinagar* (2015): A Bengali Experiment with Shakespeare" at the 2016 Indian Shakespeares on Screen conference, Koel Chatterjee listed these among several filmic citations in *Arshinagar*, arguing that this rich layering of references transformed the "image into text" for contemporary consumers of Shakespeare.

13. English language media frequently uses the Romeo-Juliet reference when reporting cases of honor killings and/or love jihad (also called Romeo jihad). In fact, the unpleasant connotations of the term "Romeo" form the primary meaning associated with the name in India, as it is frequently used to describe young men who make a practice of harassing women on the streets. The recent promotion of "Anti-Romeo squads" in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, ostensibly to protect the honor of women, draws on this connotation of the name.

14. In her paper, "'Shakespeare and Cultural Appropriation: The Case of Vishal Bhardwaj's Haider and Aparna Sen's *Arshinagar,*" circulated at the Shakespeare and Cultural Appropriation Seminar at SAA 2019, Shormistha Panja also argues for an important distinction between the two inter-religious couples. She suggests that the difference between the two generations is a
product of encroaching globalization and capitalism that have rendered older ties — like those of family and religion — meaningless (Panja 2019).

15. Both Robert Stam and Linda Hutcheon in their work on adaptation theory use Gerard Genette's taxonomy of transtextuality, one that delineates the different types of relationships between texts, in order to point to the inherently palimpsestuous nature of adaptations.

16. For multilingual quotations, the use of underlined italics points to Hindi-Urdu, the use of italics points to Bengali, and the use of roman script points to English.
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