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Shakespeare Reception in India and The Netherlands until the Early Twentieth Century

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Abstract: In his article "Shakespeare Reception in India and The Netherlands until the Early Twentieth Century" Vikram Singh Thakur locates Shakespeare in two different cultural contexts by looking at its reception in The Netherlands and India. His analysis is based on the fact that Shakespeare was a foreign playwright to both cultures yet both have gradually assimilated his works into their respective cultures and made him, probably, the most performed foreign playwright since the 1870s. Thakur aims at understanding how the reception of a work in different cultures is mediated by various social, cultural, historical, and ideological sieves through which the work gets filtered and reaches the target audience.

Vikram Singh THAKUR

Shakespeare Reception in India and The Netherlands until the Early Twentieth Century

Shakespeare has always been an object of critical enquiry for scholars, as well as theater practitioners around the world and hundreds of approaches towards Shakespeare bear testimony to his popularity (see, e.g., Huang and Ross). Some have glorified Shakespeare as the unshakable monolith of English literature, while others have discovered him to be an important site of imperialism and colonialism. These divergent approaches resulted in a wide range of Shakespeare scholarship. In the study at hand I discuss Shakespeare's work in two different cultural contexts by looking at its reception in India and in The Netherlands which is, of course, at variance for the varied geographical, historical, and cultural differences between the two cultures and countries. However, what makes me attempt this study is the fact that Shakespeare was a foreign playwright to both countries yet both cultures have gradually assimilated his works and made him, probably, the most performed foreign playwright since the 1870s.

Theater in The Netherlands in the sixteenth century was dominated by morality plays: playwriting was not a professional enterprise but a hobby for the educated citizens who looked towards the classics or to Italian and Spanish writers as models. Robert Henri-Leek informs us that plays were organized in *Rederijkerskamers* (Chambers of Rhetoric) of which "D'Eglantier (The Eglantine) was the most prestigious at the turn of the century … [that] played an important part in the promotion of the educated Amsterdam dialect as the national language, and in the battle against the intrusion of foreign idiom into its literature" (8). Thus, when Shakespeare's plays came to The Netherlands, they might not have found an easy path to tread owing to the presence of classical and continental models of drama. In India theater proper, by contrast, had almost disappeared by the eleventh century and theatrical activity was sustained by sparse folk and traditional performances, which too, were on the decline by the eighteenth century. The theatrical vacuum proved helpful in the growth of modern Indian theatre. When English theater was introduced in cities like Calcutta (Kolkata) and Bombay (Mumbai), the educated elite for whom it was a novel experience took to it with enthusiasm. As R.K. Yajnik points out, "There was no question of the model to be followed. India simply adopted the mid-Victorian stage with all its accessories of painted scenery, costume and make-up" (103). Also, English theater seemed to impart the educated elite a distinct cultural identity as described by Sudipto Chatterjee in the following words: "The Bengal Renaissance was the outgrowth of the grafting of a foreign culture onto a more-than-willing native culture. For the Bengalis their response to what was imposed by the British was a search for a cultural identity that could, at some level, set them on a par with their European overlords. It is in the wake of this endeavour to assume/regain a respectful self-identity that, in 1840s, several theatres [among other institutions] were spawned in the native quarters of Calcutta" ("Mise-en-(Colonial)-Scene" 20). Consequently, there was a flood of theater buildings in Calcutta with the opening of a Hindu theater, the first Bengali theater on 28 December 1831. The early productions were staged with all their "Englishness" intact including proscenium stage, box sets, carefully chosen costumes, and well-rehearsed dialogues in English. As Shakespeare's plays were performed frequently in the English theaters, it was no surprise that they formed the chief repertoire for modern Indian theater too.

Shakespeare's reception in The Netherlands dates back to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when traveling actors from England would visit the Low Countries and Germany to perform their plays. As Leek notes, some of the English actors even settled down in the Low Countries and there is evidence of collaboration between them and the Dutch actors (2-5). Leek notes also that "the hiring of theatre costumes by Joane Paijn (John Payne), Paulus Pirson, John Butler and Arien Van Bergh jointly, in The Hague (October 1639), provides the first suggestion that there were active combinations of English and Dutch players at this stage. Cooperation between the same John Payne and another Dutch actor, Jan Batist van Fornenbergh, is recorded in 1645, and in March of the following year Payne and William (van) Roe signed a partnership contract with Dutch actors in Amsterdam" (5). Shakespeare's reception in India was unlike that of the Dutch. Shakespeare was introduced to India by British officers towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century. They

performed Shakespeare plays, along with those of other English playwrights, for entertainment. Although the British established many English play houses and put on Shakespeare's plays regularly, these play houses catered exclusively to English audiences. Kironmoy Raha notes that in Bengal even the ushers and door-keepers at such theaters were English (13). Thus, there could not have been any collaboration, at least initially, between the British and Indians owing to the former's approach of social and cultural segregation. It is in 1848, however, that we hear of a native Bengali actor Baishnav Charan Adhya (aka Addy) performing Othello in an otherwise all-English cast at the Sans Souci theater in Calcutta. The play was directed by James Barry and had Mrs. Leach's, a well-known English actress in Calcutta, daughter playing Desdemona with Addy as Othello. It may be argued that the Indian actor was probably not cast for his histrionic talents but his color which made him suitable to the role. This seems to be endorsed by a report in an English newspaper which called him a "real unpainted nigger Othello" which set "the whole world of Calcutta agog" (Raha 13). The novelty of a "Native" playing Othello was advertised in the *Calcutta Star* thus: "On Thursday Evening, August 10th, 1848, will be acted Shakespeare's Tragedy of 'Othello.' Othello … the Moor of Venice … By a Native Gentleman … (Mitra qtd. in Chatterjee, "The Staging" 59). The *Bengal Harkaru's* review of 19 August 1848 praised Addy's confidence and pronunciation as follows: "Othello's entry was greeted with a hearty welcome, and the first speech, 'Let him do his spite', evidenced considerable study and the absence of that timidity so constantly the concomitant of a first appearance. Slim, but symmetrical in person, his delivery was somewhat cramped, but, under all circumstances, his pronunciation of English was for a native remarkably good" (Mitra qtd. in Chatterjee, "The Staging" 61).

Another review in *The Englishman* criticized Addy's speech and pronunciation but lauded him for attempting the role: "In the delivery, however, the effects of imperfect pronunciation were but too manifest. This was to be expected, but not to the extent it occurred. Scarcely a line was intelligible, and this did not arise from the low tone of voice; Othello spoke quite loud enough, but he 'mouthed' too much. Had he spoken in his natural tone, he would have succeeded far better. His action was remarkably good in some parts, and once or twice when he delivered himself in a modulated tone, we were much pleased with the effect produced. Taking it as a whole, we consider the performance wonderful for a Native. It reflects great credit on his industry and performance" (Mitra qtd. in Chatterjee, "The Staging" 64). Jyotsana G. Singh, following Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry, sees this event as disrupting the simple colonizer-colonized binary whereby the Bengali actor by putting on the "white mask" also "enacted his difference from the white world, both in fictional Venice and in colonial Calcutta. Thus, instead of being appropriated by the colonial sahib's play-text, the Indian actor revealed the ambivalence of its cultural authority through a native strategy perhaps best described by Homi Bhabha as 'camouflage, mimicry, black skin/white masks''' ("Different" 446).

Shakespeare's reception in The Netherlands, at least until the second half of the nineteenth century, was informed by French neo-classical discourse. The eighteenth century was a period of political turmoil in The Netherlands. Even culturally, the Dutch looked for inspiration towards the French. Thus, it is not a surprise that the literary and theatrical tastes of the Dutch were influenced by French aesthetics. French theatrical discourse during this period was predominantly neo-classical: Paul Franssen has accused "French classicism for the Dutch lack of enthusiasm for Shakespeare" (211). It was mainly for Shakespeare's flouting of the unities and his mixing of tragedy with comedy that his plays were criticized in France and The Netherlands. At the most, if Shakespeare was favored by some of the scholars and playwrights, they attributed his negligence of the classical rules to the "ill taste" of his time. Thus, Shakespeare's plays had to be adapted into neo-classical discourse to find a place in the French dramatic tradition. Jean-Francois Ducis's adaptations of the Shakespeare's plays to fit them into neo-classical discourse present the best example of this tendency. For his *Hamlet*, H. Carrington Lancaster informs us, Ducis had to alter Shakespeare's text considerably,

> to make it conform to French usage in regard to unities and proprieties. He wrote Garrick that he could not put on the French stage a loquacious, country actors, or a duel. He allows Claudius to be a prince of the blood, but not the brother of the murdered monarch, and makes him the father of Ophelia, who is much more like Corneille's heroines than Shakespeare's. Her marriage was opposed by the late king, much as that of Aricie was by Theseus in *Phedre*. Gertrude has, with the complicity of Claudius, poisoned her husband. She feels remorse for her deed, has not married Claudius, and wishes her son to reign. Hamlet, who is depressed, but sane, tests his mother, not with a play, but with an urn, inherited from Sophocles and Voltaire. It is he alone who sees the ghost and converses with

him. His friend Horatio is called Norceste. Polonius is a mere confidant. Laertes, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern have disappeared (470-71).

In India, on the other hand, Shakespeare's reception was favorable owing to various similarities that existed between the Indian dramatic tradition and Elizabethan drama. Yajnik, for instance, has noted the absence of the dramatic unities in both the traditions (128). Also, Shakespearean tragicomedy finds its parallel in Indian dramatic tradition as Yajnik notes, namely that "it was the privilege of the Sanskrit dramatist to inspire the most diverse sentiments (*rasas*) in the mind of the audience through the performance of one play" (128). Other reasons for the easy assimilation of Shakespeare in India were the lack of an Indigenous dramatic tradition and the introduction of Shakespeare into education curricula by the British. There was, of course, as I mention above, the tradition of classical Sanskrit theater in India, but it had almost disappeared by the eleventh century and theater activity was sustained by sparse folk and traditional performances, which too were on the decline by the eighteenth century due to the lack of patronage. There was a void as far as theater activity was concerned. At this juncture, the decline of folk and traditional performances and the rise of English theater paved the way for "modern" Indian theater. This was furthered by the quest of the Indian middle-class for a distinct cultural identity which English theater seemed to offer. Chatterjee describes this quest for a distinct cultural identity in Calcutta as follows: "The Bengal Renaissance was the outgrowth of the grafting of a foreign culture onto a more-than-willing native culture. For the Bengalis their response to what was imposed by the British was a search for a cultural identity that could, at some level, set them on a par with their European overlords. It is in the wake of this endeavour to assume/regain a respectful self-identity that, in 1840s, several theatres [among other institutions] were spawned in the native quarters of Calcutta" ("Mise-en-(Colonial)-Scene" 20).

The Indigenous reform movements stemming from colonial intervention into social practices also paved the way for the emergence of a modern sensibility and thereafter "modern" Indian theater. Folk and traditional performances had already come under severe attack by the British for being "licentious," "immoral," and "degraded." The educated Indian middle-class followed the colonial example and condemned these performances as "degenerate" which needed cleansing to become "respectable" viewing. Indologists suggested differentiating between the "great" and the "little" traditions. Thus emerged the difference between the *margi* and the *desi* which in turn influenced the treatment of all expressive forms. The model provided by Western theater was followed in terms of conventions, techniques, and devices. Representing this "imitative" theater were the early productions of plays mostly by English-educated Indians. Especially secondary school and college students staged Shakespeare's plays under the tutelage of their British teachers such as Henry Derozio and D.L. Richardson who created among their students an unfading admiration for the Bard. The students were taught to recite lines from Shakespeare and enact them and Richardson advised his students to watch Shakespeare productions. Thomas Macaulay noted of Richardson: "I may forget everything else about India, but your reading of Shakespeare never" (Macaulay qtd. in *Centenary Volume* 4; see also Viswanathan). The 1853 Act which introduced competitive examination for civil servants included English literature and language as optional subjects which included Shakespeare's plays (see Macaulay). Also, the travelling companies which frequently visited India performed Shakespeare's plays and helped in popularizing them among the educated Indians. Soon it became a rage among the educated Indians to stage Shakespeare. As late as 1926, C.J. Sisson observed this fad for performing Shakespeare among Indian students who "busy[ied] themselves almost exclusively with Shakespeare in English" (15). It is interesting to note that while Shakespeare in France and, by extension, in The Netherlands, was considered a "drunken savage" (Carpenter 196) and his works considered to be devoid of any moral values, he was taught in Indian schools and colleges to educate the "uncivilized" and "morally depraved" Natives to inculcate "moral" values among them (see Singh, "Shakespeare"). The paradox is an example of how literature and language can be (and have been) appropriated to suit particular agendas.

The initial Dutch translations of Shakespeare's plays were done either from French or German translations, thus twice removed from the original text. This was partly due to the Dutch translators' unfamiliarity with the English language. Ducis, for example, knew no English and depended on other French translations of Shakespeare's plays like Pierre de la Place's *Hamlet*. It was only in the mid-

nineteenth century that there were attempts at direct translations from English in Dutch (Leek vi). On the other hand, most of the Indian translators who took Shakespeare for translation approached the original English texts as they had already familiarized themselves with the Bard through English productions and also with the language. So most of the translators used the original texts. S.K. Das makes an interesting point that although the English-educated Indian translators were translating the English text into Indian languages, they themselves preferred to read Shakespeare in the original as reading "a translation of an English text in Hindi or Telugu was admission of one's inferior status" (49). The exercise of Shakespeare translation was to introduce his plays to the non-English readers in the country and Das also opines that because Shakespeare, along with other English writers, had already been taken by the growing English-educated community as the touchstone of literature, they wanted to produce literary works following Western models. Das quotes Rabindranath Tagore who admitted that "Shakespeare plays are always our dramatic model" (45). Shakespeare translations, thus, also provided the Indian translators, many of whom were playwrights themselves, an opportunity to create a congenial environment where they could produce their own works by following foreign literary models.

It is interesting to juxtapose the theatrical scene in The Netherlands from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the 1880s and that in India from 1870s to 1920s as theatrical traditions in these periods seem similar. However, one needs to be cautious in making judgments on Indian theater during this period because of the colonial presence which complicates such attempts. Until the mid-nineteenth century in India and the beginning of the nineteenth century in The Netherlands theater in both the countries was the domain of "cultured" and wealthy middle and upper classes to whom theater represented "high" culture. However, owing to nineteenth-century urbanization which both countries witnessed, there grew a lower middle class which craved for new forms of entertainment. To this class in The Netherlands classical rules of drama meant nothing and theater was no more a sacred place of worship (Leek 70). In India, in contrast, Parsi theater created a new kind of theatrical culture as it deconstructed the notion of theater which had hitherto been an affair of the rich and the educated by taking it away from the elite circuit and transforming it into an entertainment for the masses. The tastes of audiences in both the countries during these times seem similar to an extent. Parsi theater, for example, built on melodramatic plots, their emotional appeal, expansive sets and costumes, and wonderful stage effects. Somnath Gupt in *The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development* observes that "If the taste of the Bombay audiences can be guessed from the dramas performed, then it seems they preferred melodramas and farces. This was the influence of the contemporary English theatre. In London in the mid-nineteenth century, these were the kinds of drama that were most frequently performed. … This influence had come to England from Germany. The plays of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller were influential throughout the European world. Their dramas contained an excess of sentiment in lieu of logic and thought" (19).

A similar sentiment is echoed by Leek who observes that "Mrs Ziesenis, *prima inter pares* of the last generation of classical tragedians and tragediannes, retired from the boards in 1815, refusing to play any longer to empty houses that would be filled after the interval by people who paid for their seats only to see the *Ballet divertissement*" (70). Such an audience wanted spectacle, action, thrill, and variety entertainment. Theaters being commercial enterprises had to cater to the audiences' demands. Thus, the Dutch theater of this period, as Leek observes, exploited French melodrama, vaudeville, farce, and ballet (70-71). Despite these similarities between the two theatrical traditions of this period, there was a major difference in the approach towards Shakespeare. Dutch theater during this age, argues Leek, was "far from conducive to the introduction of responsible Shakespeare translations on the Dutch stage. With the majority of the theatre-going public Ducis' tragedies passed for the genuine article, and both management and actors happily continued to play them … as long as they were good for a thousand guilders in taking at the box office; they could be mounted with small casts in simple standard sets and were sterling pieces for those actors who wished to show that they had not forgotten the fine art of classical acting" (72-73). The age of Parsi theater (1870s-1920s) in India, on the other hand, was definitely the most productive for Shakespearean productions. In fact, Shakespeare and Parsi theater worked well for each other. On the one hand, Shakespeare provided Parsi playwrights with ample raw material to create dramatic narratives of their plays, on the other

hand, Parsi theater helped popularize Shakespeare among the masses. A guess can be made about Shakespeare's popularity among the Parsi playwrights by looking at the number of Shakespeare translations or adaptations. Yajnik, in 1934, listed some two hundred adaptations of Shakespeare in Indian languages. More recently, Javed Mallick, a theater critic, has identified at least seventy-five Urdu play scripts which are either direct or indirect translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, done by Parsi playwrights for performance and that are still extant (82). There may have been more Shakespearean adaptations which are not known for many Parsi play scripts are lost. Almost every major playwright of Parsi theater whether in English, Gujarati, Hindi, or Urdu/Hindustani translated, adapted, or appropriated Shakespeare's plays. To name a few among Shakespeare adaptors, Agha Hashr Kashmiri, popularly known as "Shakespeare-e-Hind," Narain Prasad Betab, Ahsan Lucknowi, Edulji Khori and Mehdi Hasan (aka Ahsan) deserve mention (see Gupt; Loomba). The success of these translators/adaptors is located in the fact that they looked for appropriate cultural and gestural parallels in addition to linguistic parallels while translating/adapting a foreign play into their own culture(s).

Most of the Parsi productions of Shakespeare were free adaptations with extreme liberties taken. New scenes were introduced and those which did not fit into the design were dropped. An example of the later case can be found in Karimuddin Murad's adaptation of *Pericles* as *Khudadad* in which the father-daughter incest motif was dropped for its incompatibility with "Indian" sensibility. Instead, the king is poisoned against his son Khudadad by the minister Azlam which makes Khudadad flee from his kingdom (Malick 165). Thrill, intrigue, and murder were added to the plots and Yajnik argues that a play like *The Taming of the Shrew* was probably not adapted to the Urdu stage owing to the absence of bloodshed and sentimental pathos (135). On the other hand, a play like *Titus Andronicus*, which no other theater approached because of blood and gore in the play, was adapted in Urdu by A.B. Latif (aka Sad) as *Junune Vafa* (*Mad Fidelity*, 1910) and staged by the Shakespearean Theatrical Company in 1910. Although a whopping sum of 1000 pounds was spent by the manager V.K. Nayak on the production for the elaborate Roman costumes and scenery, yet the production was a failure, as Yajnik notes, possibly because: "a) the high-sounding Roman names did not appeal to the people and b) scholastic touches given by many Arabic words fell flat on the ears of the illiterate playgoers" (156). Scenes of pathos were exploited to the fullest. Often new pathetic scenes were interpolated showing the characters facing "even greater misfortunes than are to be met with in the originals in order that their virtue might shine the more" (Yajnik 233). Also, in some cases, scenes from various Shakespeare plays were incorporated within a single production. For example, Agha Hashr Kashmiri's adaptation of *Richard III* as *Saide-havas* for the Parsi Theatrical Company incorporated scenes from the last two acts of *King John*. Similarly, scenes from two plays are mixed in *Dil Farosh*, an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* to Kashmiri and J.P. Mishra notes that "After a conventional song, Bassanio (Kasim) in the position of Orlando is presented praying to God to protect him from the evil designs of his elder brother Mahmud, who not merely seeks to deprive him of his rightful share in property but also rivals him in his love for Portia" (41).

Some of the Shakespeare's plays were adapted or appropriated by different playwrights for different companies. *King Lear*, for example, was adapted by Munshi Murad Ali for the Victoria Theatrical Company (1905) as *Hara-Jita* and by Agha Hashr Kashmiri for the Parsi Theatrical Company as *Safed Khun* (1906). Similarly, *Othello* was adapted by Munshi Mehdi Hasan for The Empress Victoria Company as *Shaheede Vafa* (1898) and by Najar Dehlvi for the Parsi Alfred Company as *Sher-Dil* (1918). Most of the Shakespearean tragedies were transformed into happy endings probably because of the absence of tragedy as a genre in classical Indian theater and in folk theater(s). Thus, although both versions of *King Lear* as *Hara-Jita* by Munshi Murad Alli for the Victoria Theatrical Company and *Safed-Khun* by Agha Hashra Kashmiri for the Parsi Alfred Company follow the original text but end happily by uniting Lear and Cordelia the latter being crowned (Yajnik 171). Similarly, *Romeo and Juliet's* adaptation by Mehar Hasan as *Bazme Fani* (*The Fatal Banquet*, 1897) is transformed into a tragicomedy in three acts. Also, *Kali Nagin* (1906), an adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra* produced by one Joseph David for the New Parsi Victoria Company, ends happily with Antony regaining his throne and uniting with his family.

Song and music were integral to Parsi theatre. Somnath Gupt notes that even fighting heroes and dying heroines would sing on the Urdu stage (115). Parsi theater has also been referred to as opera because of music added to the play and Parsi theater scholars such as Gupt credit Dadi Patel for introducing music on the Parsi stage (see Gupt). Gupt notes that "the addiction to songs grew to such an extent that occasions of joy, deaths, wars, and dialogues were all accompanied by singing" (182). Lyrics printed on the "opera book" or programs were given to the audience and one could find audience singing their favorite songs from the "opera book." Not only Indian classical music was incorporated but one could also find pieces of Western music and love scenes were often depicted through songs. Ania Loomba observes that a production of *Sher-Dil* (an Urdu adaptation of *Othello* by Najar Dehlvi) staged by the Parsi Alfred Company in 1918 opens with "Brabantio entertaining Othello with dance and music. The Desdemona-Othello's courtship was often depicted through songs. Roderigo and Iago sing in duet to awaken Brabantio and his kinsmen with the news that the 'peacock is in the house of the thief' or that Desdemona and Othello have eloped" (119). *Khun-e-nahaq*, an Urdu adaptation of *Hamlet* by Munshi Mehdi Hasan for the Parsi Alfred Company (1898) was transformed into a musical. The play opens in the court of Claudius "celebrating the nuptials of Claudius and Gertrude with dance and music" (Yajnik 161). The audience response to the songs on stage is described by Gupt as follows: "The audience, when pleased with the actors' songs, would shout 'Once more!' Sometimes, 'once more' was demanded even after the drop scene had fallen. If 'once more' was declared two or three times, the manager would satisfy the audience's desire by having the scene repeated. Sometimes this created the ridiculous effect of slain characters, recently killed in combat, rising from the floor and beginning to fight all over again" (174). This fad for music increased the demand for trained classical singers. Gohar Jan and Munnibai, for example, who were trained semi-classical singers became the most popular singers and actors of Parsi theater (Loomba 118).

Parsi theater in its early phase used few props or furniture on stage like early colonial theater of Bombay probably due to financial constraints. Instead, as in English theater, painted curtains were employed to make the stage seem "real." Later, when Parsi theater became commercial, professional rivalry among theater managers led them to spend large amounts of money on creating stage spectacle and company managers would spend thousands of rupees for scenic effects and dazzling costumes in a single production. Painted curtains retained their importance and painters were commissioned from Europe to paint them. Later, Indian artists were employed and names of celebrated painters like Hussain Buksh were advertised on the playbills. In order to attract the audience, playbills advertised spectacles like "Transformation Scenes" which the audience could see. Stage effects of storms, seas or rivers in commotion, sieges, steamers, aerial movements, and the like were employed and enjoyed by the audience (Yajnik 113). Costumes were another elaborate affair with the Parsis that added to the spectacle. In early Parsi theater dazzling costumes were used regardless of the specificity to the periodical or cultural contexts in which the plays were set. Sometimes costumes were indigenized to suit the setting although this was not always the case. For instance, the playbill for *Ek Bevapha Mitr (A False Friend)*, an adaptation of *Othello s*taged by The Parsi Stage Players, advertised in *Rast Goftar* (1865) mentioned that the play would be staged in Gujarati language and Spanish costume (see Willmer 200). Owing to such mixture in costumes Ania Loomba describes the result as "a strangely hybrid dress, sometimes more Indian than Victorian, sometimes the other way around, and a theatrical look that was common in early Indian cinema as well" (121). However, more attention was given to the appropriateness of costumes in the later period. It is clear, then, that whereas melodramatic Dutch theater prevented the development of Shakespearean productions, Parsi theater appropriated Shakespeare for its melodramatic content.

In conclusion, my comparative study presents only some points of conjunction and disjunction in the history of Shakespeare reception in India and The Netherlands. I hope the study helps one to understand how the reception of a work in different cultures is mediated by various social, cultural, historical and ideological sieves through which the work gets filtered and then reaches the target audience. This is what makes the reception of Shakespeare in India and The Netherlands (or for that matter in any other culture) distinct despite the fact that both cultures imported Shakespeare.

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