

ARTICLE

Unveiling Spectatorship: Exploring Audience Engagement and Cultural Discourses in Hamlet's 'Mousetrap' and Haider's 'Bismil'

Nosheen Jaffar ^{1*} , Lubna Ali Mohammed ² , Muhammad Saleem ³ 

¹ Lincoln University College (LUC), Petaling Jaya 47301, Selangor, Malaysia

² Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities, Lincoln University College (LUC), Petaling Jaya 47301, Selangor, Malaysia

³ Department of English Language and Literature, Government Graduate College, Township, Lahore, Punjab 54770, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the dynamic interplay of spectatorship and performance in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, focusing on the concept of the play-within-the-play to explore intersecting political and cultural discourses. In *Hamlet*, the "Mousetrap" scene serves as a pivotal metatheatrical moment that reveals hidden truths and assigns guilt, drawing the audience into a profound examination of justice and morality. By contrast, *Haider* reimagines this metatheatrical device through the "Bismil" sequence, an act of political resistance set against the fraught socio-political landscape of Kashmir. Bhardwaj transforms Shakespeare's classic into a critique of political oppression, aligning it with postcolonial concerns and regional narratives. This adaptation actively subverts Western cultural dominance, urging audiences to engage critically with both the source text and its recontextualized meanings. Situating *Haider* within a broader tradition of audience-centric reinterpretations of *Hamlet*, the study highlights how Bollywood melodrama reshapes Shakespearean drama's emotional and analytical dimensions. The use of music, dance, and symbolism in *Haider* intensifies its political resonance, making the "Bismil" sequence not just a narrative device but a powerful critique of systemic violence. By emphasizing metatheatrical elements, this paper explores their role in advancing political commentary,

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Nosheen Jaffar, Lincoln University College (LUC), Petaling Jaya 47301, Selangor, Malaysia; Email: njaffar@lincoln.edu.my

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 30 August 2024 | Revised: 24 September 2024 | Accepted: 29 September 2024 | Published Online: 7 December 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i6.7172>

CITATION

Jaffar, N., Mohammed, L.A., Saleem, M., 2024. Unveiling Spectatorship: Exploring Audience Engagement and Cultural Discourses in Hamlet's 'Mousetrap' and Haider's 'Bismil'. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 6(6): 316–325. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i6.7172>

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2024 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Co. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

fostering cultural hybridization, and disrupting dominant narratives. Ultimately, *Haider* exemplifies the transformative potential of adaptations, revealing how they can deepen audience engagement and broaden the political scope of classic texts, illuminating new possibilities for resistance and critique within contemporary frameworks.

Keywords: Haider; Hamlet; Play-within-the-Play; Metatheatrical Elements; Political Resistance; Cultural Hybridization; Contemporary Frameworks

1. Introduction

For a long time, scholars in the fields of literature, drama, and cultural studies have debated and researched the concept of spectatorship. William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the film *Haider* by Vishal Bhardwaj are two examples of works that beg to be studied closely in relation to the idea of spectatorship. It is possible to study both works as examples. In *Hamlet*'s "Mousetrap" scene, a play inside a play is created, leading to an intriguing and intricate web of reality and observation. Similarly, the uncensored narrative of the *Bismil* portion in *Haider* portrays the geopolitical scenario within Kashmir. Metatheatrical explorations of identity-related power relations have been around for a long time, and both *Hamlet* and *Haider* were aware of this. Postcolonial environments are rife with this practice.

Haider, a film directed by Vishal Bhardwaj and released in 2014, is the third part of his trilogy based on the works of Shakespeare. Unlike the other two adaptations, *Maqbool* and *Omkara*, which are set in various settings, the *Haider* adaptation primarily revolves on the Kashmir region, which plays the role of a guardian figure. By using Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a framework, the play delves into the geopolitical dynamics of Kashmir, exploring its distinct social and political connections in a captivating and perceptive way. The Bollywood dramatization contained in the project *Haider* provides a political reconstruction of the editorial text. The political significance of worldwide Shakespeare is shown in the artistic styles of both Bollywood and tragedy, and *Haider* serves as a manifestation of both.

A prominent issue explored in Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is the examination of theatrical performance and the involvement of the audience. This is shown by the fact that the titular figure motivates the players to regulate their motions. The film "Haider" directed by Vishal Bhardwaj enhances and deepens the exploration of this study issue by using melodramatic aspects. Ravi Vasudevan's analysis of exag-

gerated emotional expression in Bollywood songs, which serves to connect the public and private aspects of the film and its viewers, is particularly valuable for comprehending the political connotations of "Haider." The film "Haider" was released in 1998.

Vishal Bhardwaj's adaptation of "Haider" diverges from Shakespeare's "Hamlet" by setting the story in the politically unstable region of Kashmir. The main objective of the adaptation is to examine the audience dynamics and the interaction between the two texts, individually. The song "*Bismil*" in "*Haider*" serves as the counterpart of the "Mousetrap" scenario. It combines aspects from both storylines to show how they are interconnected inside a rhizomatic framework of adaptations. "*Haider*" explores Kashmiri themes and provides new insights into Shakespeare's influential play. The film's depiction of the worldwide spread of Shakespearean themes enables an interaction with local stories, enhancing the voices and experiences unique to Kashmir under its colonization^[1]. Furthermore, the inclusion of the play-within-the-play theme in "*Haider*" introduces new possibilities for considering the capacity of international Shakespearean adaptations as means for political discussion. The film "*Haider*" moves the story to the politically heated setting of India-administered Kashmir in 1995, during the period of increasing tensions before the Kargil War. The film's narrative revolves around Haider, the son of Hilal, a doctor, and Ghazala, a teacher. The abduction of Haider by the military serves as a catalyst for the events that unfold in the film. Further disclosures implicate Khurram, the brother of Hilal, in his act of treachery towards the government.

The film "*Haider*" faithfully reflects its theatrical adaptation by including significant characters such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are depicted as Salman and Salman, respectively. Additionally, it incorporates classic features such as the gravedigger and the symbolic skull. Significantly, Haider's uncle takes on the role of his mother's spouse, which corresponds to the incestuous implications in Shakespeare's

story. Haider's pursuit of truth is greatly impacted when Roohdar, representing the essence of the soul or spectral presence, contacts Haider's lover, Arshia, who embodies the characters of Ophelia and Horatio. Roohdar reveals vital information about Haider's father's treachery and his last desire for revenge, prompting Haider to embark on a quest through detention camps and morgues.

Haider, like to the altered Denmark in "Hamlet," confronts the understanding that Kashmir is a carceral setting. Nevertheless, the film skillfully weaves together the complex political situation of Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir and the Line of Control that has separated India and Pakistan since 1947, all while dealing with the looming presence of Old King Hamlet/Hilal. Under the Mountbatten Plan, the princely kingdoms of British India were given the choice to become part of either India or Pakistan. Kashmir's geopolitical significance is highlighted by its strategic location along the Himalayan border, which is considered both "an integral part of India" and Pakistan's "jugular vein"^[2]. Although initially opting to identify with India based on Nehru's promises of a future plebiscite, Kashmir has subsequently become entangled in a prolonged conflict characterized by warfare, curfews, and widespread brutality carried out by Indian and Pakistani forces, as well as numerous militant groups.

In the context of Indian literature, Kashmir has always been portrayed in idealized terms, frequently invoking the concept of paradise. The idealized representation is captured in the renowned couplet associated with the area: "If there is paradise on Earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." Nevertheless, after failing to follow through on the promised referendum, Kashmir's reputation as a paradise has been contrasted with harsh reality in media accounts, which include topics of war, bloodshed, and violations of human rights. Reports provide comprehensive accounts of war episodes, explosions, violence caused by curfews, military operations, militant attacks, instances of sexual violence, and the symbolic act of staining the Dal Lake with blood. The visual elements of the film are characterized by the use of red on white, which is evident in the title shot and throughout the visuals. The film "Haider" prominently emphasizes the political aspects of Kashmir, placing them at the center of its thematic focus.

"Haider" is a film that effectively uses Shakespeare's cultural influence to explore the widespread bloodshed in

Kashmir. By placing the story within the recognizable structure of Shakespearean theater, the movie appeals to a wider, global audience, surpassing geographical and cultural limitations. This film acts as a medium for spectators, regardless of their Kashmiri, Indian, or non-Indian origins, to directly address the brutal truths of violence and strife in Kashmir, which is a reoccurring subject in Hindi cinema. The film skillfully combines the exaggerated elements of Bollywood melodrama with Shakespeare's cultural influence to provide a powerful analysis of the situation in Kashmir. This contrast highlights the importance of Kashmir as a focal point of global conflict and war, requiring the use of both extravagant Bollywood style and serious Shakespearean tone^[3].

The film's narrative trajectory revolves around the complex interaction between processes of identification and estrangement, combining Shakespearean themes with Kashmiri sensitivities. This synthesis is exemplified by the transformation of the "Mousetrap" scene into a Bollywood-style song-and-dance sequence. In this sequence, *Haider's* performance serves as a heartfelt homage to his missing father and represents the lasting significance of Kashmir's struggle in our interconnected global society. "Haider" expands its reach to engage international viewers, including individuals from the Indian military forces, by involving audiences beyond just the residents of Kashmir or Indian nationals. This inclusive strategy guarantees that the film's message connects with a wide range of audiences, promoting a shared understanding of the civilian disappearances and violence afflicting Kashmir on a global level.

The use of the play-within-a-play concept has been widely recognized as a crucial feature in theatrical works, providing a meta-theatrical examination of complex themes and narratives. In Vishal Bhardwaj's film "Haider," which is a reinterpretation of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" set in the turbulent backdrop of Kashmir, the "Mousetrap" scene takes on a significant role with the song "Bismil." This sequence serves as a powerful means of political commentary on the region's turmoil and highlights the influential role of audiences in shaping narratives.

Academic discussions about the use of self-reflexivity in Shakespeare's plays, specifically in "Hamlet," have extensively explored the importance of the "Mousetrap" performance as a means of uncovering truth and accusing those responsible^[4, 5]. Bhardwaj's film adaption not only main-

tains this introspective tradition, but also infuses it with a localized and politicized audience involvement, as observed by^[1]. The “Bismil” sequence in the film “Haider” goes beyond being a simple tribute. It skillfully combines aspects from Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” with the film’s Kashmiri setting, while also questioning traditional relationships between performers and audiences^[6]. The said movie attempts to kindle audiences to dynamically engross with the storyline by diminishing the boundaries stuck between the spectators and the narrative to unparalleled levels. The conception of the “liberated viewer” anticipated by Rancière in 2009 is echoed in this notion.

^[7] and^[8] discussed that Bhardwaj’s adaption is widely admired for its adroitness in incorporating Shakespearean notions into present political milieus, meritoriously taken into account concerns corresponding resistance, occupation, identity, and resistance. The “Bismil” segment of this adaption functions as a heartbreaking reflection on the complications and problems confronted by the Kashmiri people^[9].

2. Cultural Reinterpretations: Shakespeare Cinema Adaptations and Haider’s Portrayal of Revolutionary ‘Bismil’

The present research investigates the complexity of the “The Mousetrap” sequence in Bhardwaj’s Haider. The sequence turns the traditional theatrical production into a large musical performance that abolishes the difference between reality and fiction. Moreover, this adaptation makes use of self-reflexivity and anti-illusionistic components to showcase a dramatization in a movie. Ultimately, the presented paper insists away from the conventional cinematic ways of performing Hamlet. Haider is a 1995 Bhardwaj movie that embodies a modern adaptation of an ageless drama of Hamlet, set in the prevalent political unrest of India-administered Kashmir. Primarily, it addresses the pressing issue of enforced disappearances in the region. The movie narrates the story of Haider, played by Shahid Kapoor, who thrusts himself into the perplexities of the social landscape of Kashmir. It depicts the abuses of human rights committed by state officials in the region. The movie utilized a variety of distancing techniques which are similar to Brecht’s alienation effect, which encouraged the audience to ponder the

underlying political aspect consciously and critically. Haider combines truth and fiction in ways that are characteristic of movies generally made in Bollywood, but it deploys the creative elements to indicate socio-political critique with one another.

In its inclusion in the magnificent musical spectacle “Bismil”, the “Mousetrap” sequence from Haider is made transcendent via balletic choreography, puppetry, and breathtaking cinematography on the backdrop of Kashmir’s iconic signifiers. This precise setting opens the door for viewers to involve in a broader discussion about human rights violations in Kashmir than the imaginary narrative would allow. As a tale set, Bhardwaj takes full advantage of the power of the puppet to enhance the experience by incorporating groundbreaking puppeteering methods that range from elegant simplicity to complex machinations and subverting long-held notions of authenticity.

Puppets represent prominent identities and concepts to heighten the perception of alienation in Haider and draw attention to the foreboding overtones of the story. Moreover, the film also uses point-of-view shots to connect the viewer’s directly, further enhancing the emotional identification with Haider’s performance, and the gravity of situation ethics experienced by the characters. The film’s tragic plot and anti-illusory filmmaking elements combine to create an engaging film experience that compels the viewer to consider the gravity of ethical fallout of state-sanctioned oppression and violence.

Bhardwaj’s adaptation of the “The Mousetrap” scenario in Haider thus extends the classical film-making vertically, offering the dramatic exploration of political violence and ethical culpability within the spectrum of Kashmiri identity and resistance. In the film Haider, Bhardwaj uses anti-illusionistic and alienating techniques to confront viewers with the complicated cultural politics of Kashmir. Shakespeare’s play before the play, the “Mousetrap,” is the apex of guilty emotion and the vengeful capacity of tortured beings experiencing insurmountable increases in their mood of the feeling. The “criminal” appellation in the framework of narrative draws the likelihood of people behaving immorally.

Haider’s appeal in its ferocity could connect to the horrible threat he dislikes seeing justice, concerning the country’s tense Bandipora to the north. The wild birds of prey symbolically transcend birds’ literal interpretation. The film Haider

prominently focuses on the theme of poisoning, particularly in many instances when Haider engages with the camera, effectively conveying a palpable sense of impending danger to the spectator. Despite the movie's positive reception and widespread attention, Hindu nationalist groups vehemently condemned it on social media and urged for a boycott. It is noteworthy that while Haider's depiction of India was mostly negative, it faced censorship in Pakistan. Bhardwaj's unwavering defence of his creative vision and portrayal of Indian socio-political reality is often emphasized in media coverage. The film's mixed reviews exemplify its potential to incite controversy and deliberation. Haider effectively utilizes Brechtian concepts of alienation to compel audiences to actively analyze its political subtext. The picture benefits from its prestigious connection to both Shakespeare and Bhardwaj, which adds a captivating and meaningful quality to it. As a result, the audience's knowledge of the source material enhances the effect of Haider's changes from the original story, creating a strong feeling of discord and alienation.

3. Reinterpreting Hamlet: Exploring Adaptations in Cinema

Haider consciously adapts Hamlet, emphasizing audience reception. While some may see it as an appropriation, "adaptation" better describes its distance from Shakespeare's original intent. Scholars like Desmet and Sawyer offer insights into such debates, though limited commentary exists on Shakespearean film's global translations, as^[10]. Despite differing views on non-English adaptations, *Haider* aligns with a trend of Shakespearean films expanding beyond Anglophone territories.

Explicitly labelled as a Hamlet adaptation, Haider's relationship with the source material is overt.^[11] suggests that citation is a straightforward form of recognition, yet Haider's deviations raise questions about its faithfulness.^[12] rhizomatic model offers a fresh perspective, viewing Haider as a node within a network of adaptations rather than a direct derivative. This approach presents new analytical tools for understanding Shakespearean adaptations.

Comprehending Haider in relation to Hamlet necessitates analyzing both parallels and discrepancies to determine which elements correspond to Shakespeare's play and which

deviate from it. By situating Haider and Shakespeare's Hamlet within the greater context of the Hamlet system, we can discern their connection in the midst of various adaptations.

Historically, Hamlet adaptations in Indian cinema have been influenced by British colonization. Early films faithfully followed Shakespeare's original screenplay and used his images^[13]. Nevertheless, Haider distinguishes itself from conventional adaptations by aligning itself with the genre of "Bollywood Shakespeare" through its emphasis on its transnational and global aspects^[14, 15]. Unlike previous Parsi adaptations that maintained Shakespeare's dialogue and storyline, Haider significantly diverges by abandoning the original setting, plot, and poetic themes.

Bhardwaj's *Haider* distinguishes itself from prior Indian versions of Hamlet by employing a more flexible approach to adaption. In contrast to previous films that explicitly acknowledged Shakespeare, Haider showcases a protagonist who remains oblivious to the similarities between his own life and that of Hamlet. In addition, the film takes inspiration not from a conventional translated script, but from an unrelated piece called "Curfewed Night" by Basharat Peer^[13]. This book offers the necessary political and historical background that is crucial to Haider's story, showcasing the film's faithfulness to additional sources apart than Shakespeare's work. Haider deviates from previous Indian film interpretations of Hamlet yet closely adheres to the conventions of the Bollywood melodrama genre.^[16] defines Bollywood melodrama as a narrative style that combines personal and political elements through exaggeration and abundance, with the goal of captivating a wide audience. The movie translates Hamlet's famous query into Hindi as "*Hum hai ki Nahin?*" a term that encompasses both individual and societal aspects.

In the movie *Haider*, the soliloquy is broken up and spread out over the story, with Haider speaking to different groups of people in different locations. Unlike Hamlet, Haider aims to express his emotions to other characters in his narrative, expressing a shared existential crisis rather than an individual one. Furthermore, the query "Hum hai ki nahin?" does not solely originate from the character Haider, but rather it is adopted from the broader Kashmiri community, serving as a representation of a collective hardship.^[17] argues that Haider turns Hamlet's introspective journey into a politically conscious narrative, appealing to a wide range

of audience types. The film's theatrical essence, exemplified in the song "Bismil," reinterprets the Mousetrap sequence as a moment of stylistic opulence, appealing to many segments of the audience.

4. Mousetrap' Scene in Hamlet and the 'Bismil' Sequence in Haider

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the "Mousetrap" sequence is a crucial moment of self-reflection. Hamlet uses a play-within-a-play to reveal Claudius's guilt and elicit specific reactions from the audience. This scene has been extensively discussed by Wilson (1935)^[18], Granville-Barker (1927)^[19], and Caldecott (1832)^[20]. Hamlet's conviction in the influential influence of theater and performance is demonstrated by the creation of the "Mousetrap," a performance that seeks to provoke Claudius by reenacting the murder of Old King Hamlet^[18, 19].

The foundation of *The Mousetrap* is based on the intention to provoke specific responses from the audience, particularly Claudius and Gertrude, by depicting remarriage and murder (Wilson, 1935^[18]; Granville-Barker, 1927^[19]). The courtly audience including Ophelia, acts as observers to these responses, resulting in a meta-theatrical encounter where the audience observes the characters observing the *Mousetrap* (Caldecott, 1832^[20]).

Academic debates about this self-reflective moment often focus on the timing and substance of Claudius's reaction. Some critics consider it to be unrealistic or delayed, while others see it as an effort to hide involvement until the similarities become too obvious^[21, 22]. The recurrence of both the stupid show and spoken-word play serves the purpose of either stimulating Claudius or highlighting the efficacy of integrating words and actions in a performance (Wilson, 1935^[18]; Granville-Barker, 1927^[19]).

The *Mousetrap* section compels both the characters in the play and the audience to partake in meta-reflection, encouraging them to acknowledge the subject matter while simultaneously observing it from a detached standpoint (Brecht, 1964^[23]). The distancing effect, similar to Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect), allows for political interpretation and encourages the audience to reflect on the performance (Brecht, 1964^[23]). The performance disrupts the linear perception of time by referencing past occurrences

and compressing significant actions, which prompts the audience to contemplate the intention and discern similarities and distinctions (Wilson, 1935^[18]; Granville-Barker, 1927^[19]; Caldecott, 1832^[20]). Vishal Bhardwaj's film *Haider* utilizes a comparable approach in the "Bismil" song sequence, prompting the audience to reflect about and consider the historical atrocities in Kashmir^[21, 22].

The film *Haider*, directed by Bhardwaj, incorporates the "Mousetrap" scene from Shakespeare's play to provide a platform for the audience to critically interact with the political aspects of the drama. *Haider*, instead of being a Spanish vengeance tragedy, adapts Kashmiri folk tales. In doing so, it follows the tradition of *Hamlet* by presenting stories from many cultures to the king^[16]. The song sequence is an intricate display of intertextuality and adaptation.

The scenes of *Haider* explore the interplay between reality and fantasy by employing a combination of dance routines and puppets to create a sense of detachment, while also incorporating standard film methods such as establishing shots of the setting to maintain a sense of realism. *Haider*'s active involvement as a performer marks a significant departure from Shakespeare's play, as he participates in singing, dancing, and narrating the song-story, actively portraying a character instead of merely observing^[16].

The song "Bismil" employs melodrama and incorporates elements of Kashmiri traditional culture to depict the "narrative blockage" and "injustice" experienced by *Haider*^[16]. It is presented in the customary Bollywood style of song and dance. Vasudevan's theory of melodrama posits it as a "public-fictional form" that arises from a reconfiguration of the connection between the public and private realms. This theory suggests that melodrama functions as an allegory for two distinct groups of audiences: those depicted within the film and those existing outside of it.

The performance is not solely intended for Khurram (Claudius). *Haider* publicly expresses his own distress by playing in front of the entire wedding party. The underlying message of the song is intended for the film's viewers, explicitly portraying the suffering experienced by Kashmir. The words of the song illustrate how the picture broadens its viewership. *Haider*'s dialogue, "Do not meet the flower, O wounded bulbul," serves as a message for both Khurram and a wider audience outside the main characters of *Hamlet*, such as Claudius, Gertrude, and the court^[16].

The mention of Baramulla in the song appeals to the local audience who are well acquainted with the geographical location of Jammu and Kashmir, namely a small city situated on the banks of the Jhelum River (Slater, 2019)^[24]. The words of the song portray the Jhelum River, where the bodies of the missing people are thrown away, and its waters are tainted with blood - "laallaalhua, laallaalhua, laallaal-hualaal"^[21]. The official subtitles highlight the significance of "Jhelum" by translating "Baramulla bridge" as "Jhelum bridge," prompting the audience to remember the previous song "Jhelum," which describes the acts of violence observed by the river^[25]. As these connections become closely linked, the portrayal of Haider's father also becomes closely linked with those who have been forcibly removed, signifying the injustice endured by the people of Kashmir.

The mention of the bulbul symbolically signifies Operation Bulbul (also known as Operation Nightingale), placing the film within the cultural dynamics of Kashmir^[24]. Although the bulbul is native to India, the official subtitles interpret it as "nightingale." However, the symbolic representation of the nightingale/bulbul goes beyond its literal meaning and refers to anti-terrorist operations in Kashmir^[24]. Haider's connection between Khurram's involvement in the movement and his father's murder indicates that the play is more focused on portraying the collective pain of Kashmir, as depicted in the book "Curfewed Night," rather than addressing Haider's personal desires, as in Shakespeare's "Hamlet"^[25].

In addition to the lyrics, the film broadens its viewership visually by including local Kashmiri civilians as spectators and supporting actors during the filming process^[25]. According to Sen, A.^[25], the film incorporates local performance genres within Bollywood traditions to make Shakespeare's work more indigenous. This expands the audience to include people from Kashmir, India, and all viewers who experience civilian disappearances. In contrast to Hamlet, where the audience is not held responsible, Haider's different audiences are urged to contemplate their possible involvement and contemplate adopting proactive measures^[25].

The film "Bismil" utilizes many techniques, such as Dadi Pudumjee's puppetry, to actively involve the audience in its performance^[25]. In the "Bismil" performance, the puppets are used to portray Ghazala, Haider's father, and Khurram. Khurram is depicted as a larger-than-life puppet

with two faces. One face has a bird's beak, which represents the nightingales, while the other face has a red, devilish form, symbolizing his guilt^[25]. While manipulating the puppets, the dancers transform them into spectral replicas, causing Khurram to observe a disquieting portrayal of individuals who were cast into the river. Additionally, Haider's father's puppet is physically hurled from the stage, symbolizing his "grave"^[25].

"Bismil" is a theatrical production that benefits from the employment of cinematographic viewpoint since it promotes the direct transmission of the story. Considering that the majority of the song is told from the point of view of Khurram and Ghazala, it is possible to have direct connection with both Khurram and the listener^[11]. The periods of frontal address, which are addressed towards both the listener and Khurram, reach their zenith toward the conclusion of the song. This coincides with the lyrics, which warn Ghazala and hint that Haider's father, along with other individuals who have disappeared, will still be alive^[26].

Haider utilizes anti-illusionistic and alienating methods to adapt the "Mousetrap" scene from Hamlet, with the intention of emphasizing the broader political conflicts surrounding Kashmiri national identity. This adaptation aims to critically involve the audience in grappling with the intricate themes of identity^[26]. Although this adaptation diverges from the original play, it prompts inquiries regarding the efficacy of these tactics in capturing the moral awareness of the intended audiences, both within and beyond the storyline.

In the film, Khurram and Ghazala are clearly influenced by the performance, as shown through point-of-view views that reveal their uncertainty, concern, regret, and remorse^[26]. Nevertheless, Khurram's later approval and rejection of the performance as a mere "play" implies that Haider's endeavors may have been ineffective in dethroning his position of authority^[25]. While Haider manages to evoke a sense of guilt in Khurram, the fact that he is unable to influence Khurram's behavior raises doubts about the effectiveness of the performance.

However, the film's audience was undeniably impacted, as seen by intense discussions, demands for boycotts by Hindu nationalists, and the film being prohibited in Pakistan^[27, 28]. The panel discussion at the Jaipur Literature Festival on "Hamlet's Dilemma" brings attention to the ongoing argument regarding the film's adaptation and its "ethi-

cal fidelity” to the people of Kashmir or Shakespeare. The discussion of criticism within the Hindi cinema industry, namely on Haider’s deviation from Hamlet, holds great importance^[17]. While some critics contend that the film’s depiction of Kashmiri tyranny eclipses Hamlet’s troubles, others support the adaptation’s capacity to convey the region’s hardships through a recognizable storyline^[2]. Haider distinguishes itself from prior Bollywood portrayals of Kashmir by employing a well-known narrative of a young prince seeking vengeance to illustrate the region’s troubles.

The realism of Haider is credited to its narrative, which draws inspiration from the memoir *Curfewed Night* by Basharat Peer, a Kashmiri journalist. Haider’s ability to embody Shakespearean, Hindi, and Kashmiri characteristics is evident. The film’s dialogue between the conflict-ridden and heavily militarized Indian Kashmir of 1995 enables the Shakespearean and Kashmiri storylines to mutually influence and enhance each other. Haider and Haider exhibit no allegiance to either India or Pakistan, although they appear to endorse either Azad Kashmir or the establishment of an independent Kashmir state. Each of the two songs provides a narrative means to differentiate themselves from their source and get recognition in the other. This enables Haider to embody both the essence of Shakespearean literature and the cultural identity of Kashmir, so fostering a more comprehensive and varied portrayal of the region.

The Wasp-Orchid model of adaptation explains the complex relationship between alienation and recognition that occurs when a wasp interacts with an orchid. Haider is a captivating translation of Shakespeare’s Hamlet within this framework, drawing on various interpretations such as Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Kozintsev’s film adaptation, and even Arab adaptations from the 1960s. Bharadwaj’s choice to assign the name “Salman” to both the characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern emphasizes their interchangeable and largely unknown qualities, which aligns with Stoppard’s thematic investigation.

In addition, Bharadwaj’s film intelligently tackles the omissions in the original Hamlet story by giving the Salmans a distinct reason to kill Haider, thus highlighting the corresponding holes in the narrative. Haider’s incorporation of additional narrative layers in the Hamlet framework prompts new investigations into various aspects, including the agency of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the diminished role of

Gertrude, Hamlet’s individualistic identity, the concept of an external public sphere, and the dynamics between Hamlet and Horatio.

Haider introduces additional dimensions to Hamlet’s narrative by exploring the limited agency of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the diminished role of Gertrude, Hamlet’s unique and introspective personality, the potential presence of an external audience, and the dynamic between Hamlet and Horatio. Haider, similar to other political adaptations of Hamlet, offers a critique of Kashmiri politics via the medium of the play. The wasp-orchid method allows us to disregard the concept of fidelity and see the reciprocal influence between Hamlet and Haider in their readings.

Hamlet’s acknowledgment of the issues faced by Kashmiris aligns with the melodramatic conventions of Hindi film. Haider distinguishes itself from previous Kashmiri melodramas by including a European revenge narrative, therefore adding an international dimension to the film. In the book *Curfewed Night*, the wasp and orchid are substituted with Hamlet and the Kashmiri story. The film *Haider* represents a transitional phase when these two components create a relationship of reciprocal transformation, despite their lack of direct connection^[12]. Mutual transformation denotes a reciprocal and bi-directional interaction. Kashmir may use Hamlet’s narrative structure and character tropes to convey its tale. Haider may also articulate his complaints against his family, state, and country via the character of Hamlet. Simultaneously, an Indian director, renowned for directing a critically acclaimed trilogy based on the works of Shakespeare, brings Hindi cinema to an unprecedented height.

Hamlet captivates and lingers in the minds of spectators, readers, pundits, and others. In Shakespeare’s play, Hamlet meets his demise, but in the film *Haider*, he is resurrected. Haider emphasizes that Hamlet is characterized by its ghostly nature. The political situation in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and the unresolved issues surrounding the disappearance of Haider. “Bismil” puppets are uncanny humanoid reproductions and apparitions from the past. Hamlet and his father seem spectral in many adaptations. The ghost of the previous monarch, King Hamlet, appears and requests, “Do not forget about me” (1.5.98). Irfan Khan, the actor who played the role of Roohdar, Shakespeare’s ghost in the film, passed away while we were writing this narrative. Shakespeare’s play Hamlet will continue to be performed again, captivating

audiences and being reimagined in new and exciting ways. Hamlet continues to have a lasting impact on us, both now and in the future. He remains a significant presence, as if he was still alive and will continue to be so.

5. Conclusion

The study of spectatorship and performance in literature and film, particularly in the context of postcolonial studies, has received much scholarly attention. Vishal Bhardwaj's film "Haider" and William Shakespeare's play "Hamlet" both explore the concept of a play inside a play in a meaningful manner. Haider's Bismil examines the distress of Kashmiri society. The inclusion of metatheatrical aspects in Hamlet, such as The Mousetrap play inside the play, serves to prompt an exploration of power dynamics and the questioning of identity. These themes effectively blend parts of fiction and reality. Bhardwaj's version of Haider showcases the potential for global political implications in Shakespearean adaptations by blending elements of Bollywood with Shakespearean tragedy. Given that the movie transposes Shakespeare's drama to the politically turbulent and recognizable setting of Kashmir; viewers might analyze its attraction in relation to the play's political nexus. The Bismil scene includes elements of Kashmiri culture and enhances the impact of Shakespeare's tragedy. The film's portrayal of the conflict against the politically sensitive setting of Kashmir allows viewers to examine their fascination with the relationship between the two narratives. The "Bismil" experience enhances the development of Kashmiri visual grammar while also instilling a contemplation of Shakespeare's macabre oeuvre. The "internal play" style of "Haider" enables an examination of the political discourse that arises from the global admiration for Shakespeare. This emphasis is astute and contributes to the overall cleverness of the piece. This narrative of citizenship and otherness in Haider is brought to life by a combination of Shakespearean paradigms and Kashmiri planetary persuasions.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, N.J.; methodology, N.J.; validation, N.J.; formal analysis, N.J.; investigation, N.J.; writing—original draft preparation, N.J.; writing—review and editing, N.J.; visualization, L.A.M.; supervision, M.S. All

authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding this publication.

References

- [1] Singh, J.G., 2019. Haider: Translating Shakespeare's Hamlet into a Kashmiri Context. In: Trivedi, S., Chakravarti, M. (Eds.). Shakespeare in Contemporary Adaptation and Cultural Mobility. Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK. pp. 175–194.
- [2] Kabir, A.J., 2009. Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA. pp. 1–259.
- [3] Alles, V., 2014. Haider — Vishal Bhardwaj and Shahid Kapoor Interview [Video file]. Available from: <https://youtu.be/2Cp38K4L2sg> (cited 13 September 2014).
- [4] Calderwood, J.L., 1986. The Antic Disposition: A Study of Self-Representation in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Shakespeare Quarterly. 37(1), 29–46.
- [5] Höfele, A., 1994. The Play-Within-the-Play in Hamlet. Renaissance Drama. 25, 131–154.
- [6] Mehta, R., 2017. Haider: Adapting Hamlet in a Post-colonial Context. The Explicator. 75(3), 155–159.
- [7] Burnett, M.T., 2017. Bollywood and Postcolonial Shakespeares: Vishal Bhardwaj's Haider. Literature/Film Quarterly. 45(2), 125–141.
- [8] Trivedi, P., 2017. Haider and the Politics of Shakespeare in Postcolonial India. Critical Survey. 29(2), 39–54.

- [9] Basu, S., 2018. Haider: Adapting Shakespeare in a Postcolonial Context. *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. 21(2), 189–205.
- [10] Burnett, M.T., 2013. *Shakespeare and World Cinema*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. pp. 1–290.
- [11] Desmet, C., 2014. Recognizing Shakespeare, Rethinking Fidelity: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Appropriation. In *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, edited by Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY, USA. pp. 41–58.
- [12] Lanier, D.M., 2014. Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value. In: Huang, A., Rivlin, E. (Eds.). *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, 21–40. Palgrave-Macmillan: New York, NY, USA. pp. 1–238.
- [13] Trivedi, P., 2004. Introduction. In: Trivedi, P., Bartholomeusz, D. (Eds.). *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*, 13–47. University of Delaware Press: Newark, DE, USA. pp. 1–303.
- [14] Garcia-Periago, R.M., 2015. English Shakespeares in Indian Cinema: 36 Chowringhee Lane and The Last Lear. *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*. 9(2), 63–86.
- [15] Dionne, C., Kapadia, P., 2002. Shakespeare and Bollywood: The Difference a World Makes. In *Bollywood Shakespeares*. Palgrave Macmillan US: New York, NY, USA. pp. 1–18.
- [16] Vasudevan, R., 2011. *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*. Palgrave-Macmillan: New York, NY, USA. pp. 1–258.
- [17] Rangan, B., 2014. 'Haider'. Very well made, if a tad too footnote-heavy — but why 'Hamlet'? Baradwaj Rangan. Available from: <https://baradwajrangan.wordpress.com/2014/10/04/haider-very-well-made-if-a-tad-too-footnote-heavy-but-why-hamlet/> (cited 4 October 2014).
- [18] Wilson, J.D., 1935. *What Happens in Hamlet*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- [19] Granville-Barker, H., 1927. *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. Sidgwick & Jackson: London, UK.
- [20] Caldecott, T., 1832. *Editing notes to Hamlet, and as You Like it. A Specimen of an Edition of Shakespeare*. Edited by William Shakespeare. Printed for the author by William Nicol: London, UK.
- [21] Mollin, A., 1994. On Hamlet's Mousetrap. *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*. 21(3), 353–372.
- [22] Edelman, C., 1994. The very cunning of the scene': Claudius and the Mousetrap. *Parergon*. 12(1), 15–25.
- [23] Brecht, B., 1964. *A Short Organum for Theatre*. In: Willett, J. (Ed.). *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Hill and Wang: New York, NY, USA. pp. 179–208.
- [24] Slater, M., 2019. Hamlet in Kashmir: Political Allegory in Vishal Bhardwaj's Haider. *Shakespeare Bulletin*. 37(3), 365–390.
- [25] Sen, A., 2019. Indigenizing Shakespeare: Haider and the politics of appropriation. In *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Global Appropriation*. Routledge: London, UK. pp. 388–397.
- [26] Desmet, C., Iyengar, S., Jacobson, M. (Eds.), 2020. *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Global Appropriation*. Routledge: New York, NY, USA. pp. 1–14.
- [27] Verma, R., 2018. Shakespeare in Indian Cinema: Appropriation, Assimilation, and Engagement. In *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*. Routledge: London, UK. pp. 83–96.
- [28] Pandey, V., 2014. Haider: Why Is 'Indian Hamlet' Controversial? BBC News. 7.
- [29] Trivedi, P., Chakravarti, M. (Eds.). 2019. *Shakespeare in Contemporary Adaptation and Cultural Mobility*. Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK. pp. 1–281.
- [30] Burnett, M.T., 2019. 'Hamlet' and World Cinema. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. pp. 1–192.