

Anuvading Romeo:
Retelling 'love' in
Indian iterations of
Romeo and Juliet

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Tragic romances or tales of star-crossed lovers are not foreign in Indian popular imaginaries, be it 'Heer-Ranjha', the Punjabi epic poem, or the tale of 'Layla and Majnun' with its Persianate influences, and of course *Romeo and Juliet*. In recent years, with the formation of anti-Romeo squads by right-wing Hindu groups policing public displays of affection and intermarriage, Romeo has become a symbol of 'foreign', 'unnatural' and 'transgressive' love – a legacy of colonialism that must be purged from the imagined Hindu state. This paper seeks to

Anuvad is the Sanskrit derived Hindi word for translation. In this paper, I use it as a noun and conjugate the verb as I would use and conjugate an English word. I do this to signify the blend that Shakespeare in India often is.

re-evaluate this formulation by looking at Hindi translations, or re-iterations, of the play that help paint a more complicated portrayal of the status of Shakespeare in India so that he is more than just a 'foreign' vestige of colonialism. By 'translation' I refer not only to the practice of linguistic translation, but also to the myriad other ways in which Shakespeare is translated and adapted in India. In particular I am drawing on the Sanskrit-derived Hindi word for translation, *anuvad*. While *anuvad* does connote the 'carrying across' that Latinate words for translation imply, the 'underlying metaphor' is 'temporal – to say after, to repeat'.¹ *Anuvad*'s etymological roots in Sanskrit refer to a process of 'saying after or again, repeating by way of explanation, explanatory repetition or reiteration with corroboration or illustration'.² In this essay, I look at several iterations of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the character of Romeo in particular, as instances of 'explanatory repetitions'. In doing so, I trace a genealogy, from the 1890s to the present day, of Shakespeare and love as they manifest in these translations.

As a starting point for my argument, I turn to two iterations of Romeo that appeared in 2017. The first is the well-known phenomenon of anti-Romeo squads in Uttar Pradesh, a state in North India, and the second is a lesser-known web series titled *Romil and Jugal*, an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* where the leading protagonists are men. Yogi Adityanath, a religious Hindu leader, was appointed as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in March 2017. Upon becoming the chief minister, he created anti-Romeo squads to fulfil one of the Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP) election campaign promises.³ While forms of moral policing existed prior to his appointment, they were not explicitly called anti-Romeo squads. The goal of these squads was 'to protect the honour of women' and, per their election manifesto, to 'ensure the safety of college-going girls' and 'check eve-teasing'.⁴ On the other end of the spectrum, *Romil and Jugal* is a Hinglish web-series adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, produced by Ekta Kapoor for ALTBalaji, Balaji Telefilms' online streaming platform. Hinglish is a Hindi-English hybrid commonly spoken in urban areas in

North India. In the ten-episode series the two leads, Romil and Jugal, express both romantic love and sexual desire towards each other.⁵ Balaji Telefilms has been a major household name in Indian soap operas, which have to do with different kinds of love – heterosexual, parental, familial – but not queer love, so this was definitely an 'alt' for them. It stars Manraj Singh as Jugal, a Tamil-Brahman young man, who has accepted his queerness even though he hasn't come out as gay to his parents. He falls in love with Romil, a newly arrived, super-macho, aggressively straight Punjabi played by Rajeev Siddhartha. They live in what seems like a gated community, called Eden Meadows, in an imaginary town called Colwynganj in Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand is also a state ruled by the BJP and the state next to Uttar Pradesh. The name Colwynganj evokes McLeodganj, a neighbourhood in Himachal Pradesh, another state in North India. Both McLeodganj and Colwynganj represent a British-Indian hybrid, with McLeod⁶ and Colwyn being British names, and *ganj* being an Indian word for neighbourhood. These British-Indian hybrids resemble the Shakespeare-India hybrid that the Hinglish web-series represents. It is important to highlight that in the series Jugal directs an English-language production of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Romil is cast as Romeo. The love sonnets of the play become a means by which the love between the two men is expressed. The play within the web series, an ode perhaps to Shakespeare's many plays within plays, functions as a vehicle for both Indian love for Shakespeare, and forbidden love between the protagonists.

So, we have an Eden on the one hand and 'eve-teasing' on the other: perhaps Romeo is Adam after all. Adam cannot be divorced from Christianity – a religion that is time and time again cast as 'foreign' by right-wing groups in India, even though Christianity in India is said to date back to the sixth century CE. Adam aside, what does the right-wing deployment of Romeo have in common with a seemingly progressive web series that depicts a gay romance? In post/neo-colonial India, is Romeo, is Shakespeare nothing more than a straw man, easily deployable but ultimately hollow? Perhaps we should return to

Juliet's oft-quoted lines, 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other word would smell as sweet' (2.2 43–4). Can that which we call Romeo be called by any other word? Or to frame it another way, what happens to translation when the original has been translated or perhaps *anuvadded* – in the sense of retelling – so many times that it almost doesn't exist anymore?

1. From translation and appropriation to masalafication

The translation of drama is more often than not conceptualized as theatre translation or translating for the theatre. This distinction is important because 'theatre' suggests a performance as well as the physical space where it takes place. The use of these phrases – 'theatre translation' and 'drama translation' – sometimes interchangeably, highlights the fact that a dramatic text is usually written to be performed. Given that performance is a collective activity – both at the level of watching and at that of performing – and that the 'theatre' as a space can be imagined in different ways, 'adaptation',⁷ 'transposition'⁸ and 'acculturation'⁹ are some of the names critics give to the practical technique of 'theatre' translation. The term 'tradaptation' has emerged in the Quebecois context to refer to the translation-adaptation hybrid in the context of theatre, particularly Shakespeare, translation.¹⁰ These, along with the idea that the translated text has to be 'performable', 'actable' or 'speakable'¹¹ are used to justify a 'deviant approach to a source text'¹² and to 'explain certain strategies that may involve degrees of divergence from the source text'.¹³ Both Aaltonen and Bassnett highlight the fact that in theatre translation, the target text is not always as closely linked to the source text as may be the case in other forms of literary translation. Zatlin takes this to an extreme when she says that 'some betrayal is a necessity' in theatre translation.¹⁴ However,

all their arguments, given their use of words like 'deviant', 'betrayal', 'justify' and 'explain', seem to enforce the hierarchy that has, until recently, been prevalent in translation studies, which privileges the source text.¹⁵ Scholarship influenced by poststructuralism, postcolonial studies and other fields has helped challenge this approach to translation studies. One such perspective is articulated by Márta Minier, who notes that

the intertextual approach to translation encourages the receiver to question the dichotomy of 'translation' and 'original'. It is not only the so-called 'original' that is re-written, but other texts and artefacts may be woven into the so-called 'translation'. These influences can come from the 'source', the receiving, or even totally extraneous cultures.¹⁶

This interweaving can be seen in Hindi iterations of *Romeo and Juliet*.

However, the question of the sanctity of the source text is perhaps even more important when one discusses Shakespeare and the translation of his works. Owing to the process of 'canonization', an enterprise imbricated with colonialism, people believe that there is a 'special quality' in his works that should not be 'tampered' with.¹⁷ Despite this, Shakespeare himself can be called 'the great adapter and the great appropriator'.¹⁸ This is because his extensive sources included translations of Plutarch and because several differing versions, iterations, perhaps *anuvads* of his works exist in the English language. Irrespective of this, Bassnett argues that directors working with Shakespeare in languages other than English have more scope for experimentation because they are not 'bound by the canonical status attributed to the text's English'.¹⁹ While this may be true of some countries, and some spaces, the manner in which Shakespeare was intentionally introduced to India complicates this argument.

Shakespeare was first introduced to Indian audiences through the British East India Company as the entertainment provided for the company men (and perhaps their wives)

in the eighteenth century, and then through the 'systematic study' of English literature in schools and colleges from 1817 onwards.²⁰ This educational system informed and later was guided by the work of Thomas Babington Macaulay, often thought of as the architect of English education in India, and subsequently in other British colonies. In his famous Minute of 2 February 1835, which is more popularly known as the Minute on Education in India, Macaulay makes an argument about 'the intrinsic superiority of Western Literature' and goes on to make the bold claim, without knowing either Sanskrit or Arabic, that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'.²¹ Given that by this point Shakespeare was not just a popular dramatist but the pinnacle of English literature, Macaulay was most likely envisioning Shakespeare in that 'single shelf', perhaps even a whole shelf of Shakespeare.²² Nandi Bhatia argues that the ongoing myth about the 'authority of Shakespeare', that is, the 'special quality' that makes translations of his work seem inferior, is 'specially kept alive through educational institutions in India and abroad and through an imaginary construction of audiences' singular love for Shakespeare to support notions of "timelessness" and "universality" accorded to Shakespeare'.²³ The impact of this institutionalization can be seen right through the twentieth century up until today. For instance, Lala Sitaram was a Shakespeare translator of the early twentieth century, and a product of the Macaulayan system of education. One of his goals was to create a series of translations under the name of 'Sitaram's Hindi Shakespeare'. Each translation is published with a preface in English in which he writes that 'An attempt to publish a translation of Shakespeare, "the chief glory of English Literature," does not stand in need for any apology.'²⁴ 'The chief glory' is a phrase that suggests Sitaram's love for Shakespeare and his belief in Shakespeare's genius.

The love for Shakespeare is reflected in *Romil and Jugal*, when Jugal says in episode one, 'Whenever I look at the stars I think of Shakespeare. Just imagine *chaar sau saal pehle usne bhi yahi aasman dekha tha, aur socha hoga apne* star-crossed

lovers *ke bare me*, Romeo and Juliet' ('Just imagine, 400 years ago he would have seen the same sky and thought of his star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet').²⁵ In many ways, Jugal's words resonate with Juliet's 'cut him out in little stars' and the issues of sparagmos and diaspora discussed in the introduction of this collection. What is striking is that Jugal doesn't reference Layla-Majnun, or even Heer Ranjha, here or elsewhere in the series. I would like to suggest that this is because of his class and caste position (upper middle-class Tamil Brahmin, living in a gated community) which means that he has probably been educated all his life in English, a system that bears the legacy of Macaulay. To counter Bassnett, I argue that educated Indians are in many ways still bound by the text's 'canonical' nature, and even to a large extent the 'canonical English' of the text. Jugal's insistence on retaining Shakespearean English in the staged version of *Romeo and Juliet* that he is directing, can be read as an example of this.

While *Romil and Jugal* presents itself as an 'adaptation' of *Romeo and Juliet*, I think it is worth turning briefly to the work of Craig Dionne and Paramita Kapadia, who distinguish between adaptation and appropriation. They note,

the critical stake in the revisionist gesture is whether the new literary form is merely an *adaptation* of the original text, implying that the original play in some ways remains stable and has a guiding influence on its use or reproduction, ... or in critical appropriations [that] assert a *site of contest* where identity and ideology converge but perhaps never cohere into a unified vision, suggesting a more fluid or performative space that provides a meeting place of different agents or social voices on a mutually even playing field.²⁶

For them *adaptation* carries with it a connection to the original that can lead to questions like: how faithful is to the original? Does it capture Shakespeare's special quality? Questions such as these carry with them the same assumption – the primacy of the original – that lies beneath the work of scholars like Phyllis

Zatlin. In contrast, *appropriation* suggests a meeting place for equals. It is this sense of a meeting place that allows Jonathan Gil Harris to argue for a 'Masala Shakespeare', the title of his most recent book. The book, which is structured like a five-act play, opens with a chorus, wherein he writes:

This is a tale of two phenomena – one foreign and one local. Let's call them the firangi and the desi. The firangi travels to India. There it is greeted by locals as if it were family. And it turns out that it is family: it has a desi twin with whom it is often confused. Because the two of them are as similar as *do angoor* (two grapes) from a bunch.

A tale of twins from different lands: it may sound like what the English term a comedy of errors, and what the Bengalis call a *bhranti bilas*. How, you may ask, can a firangi have an Indian twin? Yet, the twins' tale isn't just a comedy of errors. It's also a highly serious story of Rekhta *vanshavaaliyan* or *mishrit khaandan* (mixed lineages). It is, in short, a tale of masala genealogy. The genealogy of masala. But also, genealogy as masala.²⁷

While I disagree with his account of the 'locals' greeting Shakespeare 'as if it were family', we reach the same conclusion: Shakespeare is no longer the 'firangi', the foreigner, he once was. The notion of 'masala genealogy' and 'genealogy as masala', where 'masala' is defined as 'a concoction that is tasty and spicy, but it is also literally a mixture' is compelling when it comes to *Romeo and Juliet*.²⁸ Harris is talking specifically about the similarity between Shakespeare's plays and 'masala movies' (mainstream Bollywood movies) whose 'stories mix tragedy with comedy as well as scenes of dialogue with song-and-dance routines. Its lovers, too, are mixtures, often coming from different communities. And its sources are equally mixed: there is usually no "original" story in a masala movie, as its narrative is a *khichdi* of other, earlier stories or formulas.²⁹ *Romil and Jugal* is, in many ways, Bollywood-

adjacent, and definitely masala Shakespeare. The ALTBalaji platform describes the show as being 'filled with masti, masala, emotion, laughter, songs, and drama'.³⁰ These are all qualities that Harris associates with Masala movies. More than this, however, is the fact that the web series, sometimes self-consciously, engages with stereotypical masala tropes. For instance, in episode one, Jugal when making the case that he has no future in India says to his best friend Meher, 'I mean *M yeh koi movie thodi hai ki suddenly koi hot hero jaisa banda Switzerland se utarke mere paas Colwynganj pahunche aur dekhte dekhte sab kuch slo-mo ho jaye. Picche background mein music bajne lage aur meri zindagi hamesha ke liye badal jaye*' ('I mean, M, this isn't some movie where a hot hero like dude leaves Switzerland and reaches Colwynganj, and suddenly everything becomes slo-mo [slow motion]. Music begins playing in the background and my life changes forever'). At the end of the episode, when Romil enters on a motorbike, the pace of the visuals slows down, music begins playing and time seems to stop for Jugal. All the tropes of a romantic masala movie, barring Switzerland, are in place. When Jugal's efforts to shake Romil's hand and introduce himself are thwarted, a voiceover with the dialogue above is heard, and the episode ends with a shot of Jugal looking dreamily in the direction Romil went, setting up expectations that this is definitely going to be a form of masala Shakespeare.

What is the 'masala genealogy' of *Romil and Jugal*? What kind of 'love' can be traced through a genealogy of masala? Are the anti-Romeo squads a part of this genealogy? Before attending to these questions, it is worth highlighting the distinction Craig Dionne and Paramita Kapadia make between appropriations and Bollywood Shakespeare. While in the former it might be a local tradition that is interacting with Shakespeare, in the latter it is hard to dismiss 'the transnationalism of both performance traditions'.³¹ Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani go a step further in their analysis of *Omikara*, Vishal Bhardwaj's Bollywood adaptation of *Othello*, by arguing that 'the film calling attention to its debt

to Shakespeare is less a consequence of Indian cinema, self-conscious of its marginal position on the world stage, seeking validation in Shakespeare, than it is a sign of Bollywood's assertion of its own newfound stature'.³² So, Bhardwaj is using Shakespeare as a form of global capital to make his work not just legible, but more marketable and popular on the 'world stage'. This is true of *Romil and Jugal* too, though perhaps with a slightly different demographic, because as a web series it is accessible to viewers around the world, even if it is on the lesser-known streaming platform ALTBalaji.³³ Furthermore, as Gupta suggests, Balaji Telefilms created the ALT brand in order 'to put out controversial and racy content without tarnishing the mother brand. ALT allowed Balaji to go beyond its saas-bahu barriers and churn out material that appealed to the global sensibilities of tech-savvy Indian youth.'³⁴ The keyword here is 'global'. Shakespeare may not be 'foreign' anymore, but he does allow transnational media producers to access a 'global' sensibility.

2. 'O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?'

This line from Act 2, scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the play's most famous. Each episode of *Romil and Jugal* begins with a quote from the play in the title screen, perhaps as a way to tap into a 'global' sensibility, and the line above begins episode one. Juliet's rhetorical question echoes in an article on the anti-Romeo squads, published in the *Indian Express* on 2 April 2017. In 'Why art thou Romeo' Jonathan Gil Harris traces how, through several vernacular and Bollywood iterations, Romeo has transformed from a romantic hero, albeit a foolish one at the start of the play, who is in a consensual relationship with Juliet, to an eve-teaser. Had Romeo been an eve-teaser, Harris argues, he would have 'chased' after Rosalind, instead of pining over her.³⁵ So, why is this the case? Do we just

accept that Romeo in India is no longer Shakespeare's young tragi-romantic hero? Perhaps an empty signifier? Why isn't it Majnun of Laila Majnun fame, or Ranjha of Heer Ranja fame, who are the eve-teasers, the embodiments of an undesirable machismo?

Here I turn to the work of Francesca Orsini and Harish Trivedi. In the introduction to a collected volume on love in South Asia, Orsini writes about the four main 'repertoires' of love that developed in South Asia and 'have been active over a very long period of time', largely syncretically, in the region.³⁶ These four 'repertoires' are

the Sanskrit and Prakrit repertoire centering on *shringara* and *kama* and comprising epics, lyrics, plays, collections of stories and treatises, on philosophy, conduct (including sexual conduct) and medicine; the oral repertoire of folk epics, tales and songs; the Perso-Arabic repertoire centering on *ishq* and *muhabbat* comprising religious injunctions, Sufi poems and interpretations, worldly texts on ethics and conduct, poetic romances (*masnavis*), eulogies (*qasida*) and lyrics (*ghazal*), and stories of adventure and chivalry; and the repertoire of devotional bhakti poetry and philosophy. To these must be added the modern repertoires of *prem* and 'love'.³⁷

So, *prem* and 'love' are the modern iterations or strands of love devoid of the religious, scriptural and 'traditional' connotations of the earlier strands of love. Interestingly, while Orsini distinguishes between *prem* and Sanskrit repertoires of love, John T. Platts, who compiled a *Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* in 1884, foregrounds the usage of *prem* in Sanskrit rather than in Hindi or Hindustani (the vernaculars popular in North India).³⁸ He defines *prem* as 'Love, affection, kindness, tender, regard, kindliness, friendship'.³⁹ This definition, even while being from a Briton's perspective, is symptomatic of Victorian ideals of love – tenderness and kindness over passion. Perhaps modern love and *prem*, then,

is a love tied closely to the profane – the domestic sphere and matrimony – where the earlier repertoires tended to have a spiritual component too. Thus, Romeo is an embodiment of this repertoire while Ranjha and Majnu belong to the earlier ones.

In an attempt to trace the 'masala genealogy' of love and *Romeo and Juliet* I turn to two early translations, or *anuvads*, of the play which centre the notion of *prem* by incorporating it in their titles – Gopinath Mishra's 1898 translation is called *Premilila* and Lala Sitaram's, published in 1931, is titled *Prem Kasauti*. Mishra's is particularly interesting in this regard because unlike Sitaram who Indianizes the entire play, the rest of Mishra's play is not Indianized.⁴⁰ For instance, while in Sitaram's play Juliet is Jalaja and Verona is Varnagar, in Mishra's play all character names remain as they are in Shakespeare's play and the action takes place in Verona. However, in the preface to his translation Mishra notes that '*Nayak aur nayika ke naam ke karan angrezi me is natak ka naam Romeo and Juliet hai parantu maine is anuvad ka naam natak ke ashay ke aadhar par prem lila rakh diya hai ki jo is ko padhne se purn sarthak pragat hoga*' ('Because of the hero and heroine the play is called Romeo and Juliet in English, however I have named this translation *Premilila* on the basis of the play's intent and meaning which will be revealed by reading it').⁴¹ Clearly, for Mishra, *Romeo and Juliet* by another name does have a function, as explicatory as it may be, and this function is to foreground the notion of *prem*, with its 'modern' connotations perhaps. Further, *premlila*, the title of his translation, is assonant with *ramlila* and *raslila* (traditional performances of the stories of the gods Rama and Krishna respectively). On the one hand, this could be ironic, problematizing the dichotomy set up between 'older', 'traditional' repertoires of love and the 'modern', less sacred repertoire. On the other, it could be a way of creating an equivalence between Shakespeare and the classic religious epics, and in doing so, granting epic status to this exploration of 'modern' love.

In terms of the repertoires and the nuances of the word 'love', I turn to a brief comparison of the two translations focusing on a few lines spoken by Romeo in Act I Scene 1.

SHAKESPEARE:

Why, such is love's transgression.
Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,
Which thou wilt propagate to have it pressed
With more of thine. This love that thou hast shown
Doth add more grief to too much of mine own

(1.1.183-7)

MISHRA:

kyon? Yeh sab mohavrit prem ka parinam hai. Mein sweekar karta hun ki mere dukh mere hrday me bharpurvak stith hain ki jinko tum apne dukhon se vishesh badhaya chahte ho. Mujhpar sneh pragat karke tum mere atyant dukh ki vishesh vridhi kar rahe ho.

(why? This is the result of mohavrit prem (infatuation caused by *prem*). I admit that my grief lies heavy in my heart which you want to especially increase with your griefs. By showing me sneh you have particularly added to much of my grief).⁴²

SITARAM:

Yahi to prem ki badi chaal hai. Hum jis dukh se dukhi hai woh hamara hi kamaya hua hai. Tum bhi dukhi hoge to hamare dukh ka boj aur humko daba dega. Tumne jo yeh prem dikhaya isse humare prem ka dukh aur bhi bad gaya.

(This is *prem*'s big trick. The grief that grieves us is that which we have earned. If you are aggrieved then the weight of my grief will further stifle me. This *prem* you have shown me, it has increased my *prem*'s grief).⁴³

While there are many differences between the two translations, the one I want to highlight is the difference between the heterosexual love Romeo feels for Rosalind and

the homosocial love that Benvolio shows to Romeo. Carla Freccero suggests that work in queer theory and sexuality studies, particularly of the early modern period, has made possible a 'reading of this tale as a romantic comedy gone awry, a story about a young man struggling to leave the homosocial pack whose bonds of blood (-sport) militate against the normative demands of adult heterosexual marriage'.⁴⁴ By using the same word 'love' to describe both emotions, Shakespeare is creating a continuum between homosocial and heterosexual love, though this may in fact be due to a dearth of vocabularies of love in the English language. Mishra uses the expansive vocabulary of love available to him in Hindi to distinguish between a 'modern' romantic love – *prem* – and a platonic love – *sneh* – that is associated with friendship. Sitaram, however reverts back to using *prem* for both categories of love, even doubling down on this by including the word a third time in his rendering. Perhaps these translations indicate a tension between the large repertoires of love that exist in the region and an all-encompassing modern 'love/*prem*'.

In his analysis of translations and adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*, Harish Trivedi takes this argument further by suggesting that the western concept of love and selfhood was translated into Hindi, into Indian languages, through the translations of Shakespeare's plays, such that *Romeo and Juliet's* love was a colonizing one. In doing so, he asks the rather provocative question, 'Did the English language and Western civilization penetrate so deeply into our culture as to colonize our very notion of love?'⁴⁵ While the West versus India dichotomy that Trivedi sets up might be too simplistic, could it be that the bastardization of Romeo (from a romantic hero to an eve-teaser) is a form of empire writing back, of cannibalizing Romeo to produce something new?⁴⁶ Perhaps it is, but it is also a way to 'other', to foreignize, certain kinds of love. The Heer Ranjhas and the Laila Majnus belong to the earlier strands of love, while 'Romeo', as a symptom of 'modern' love, needs to be eliminated. In the context of the anti-Romeo squads and the fact that they have emerged in UP,

against the backdrop of love-jihad and Ghar-wapsi,⁴⁷ which are movements against inter-religious marriage, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, Romeo becomes a stand-in for 'cross-communal love'.⁴⁸ This makes Romeo's being reframed as an eve-teaser something to be wary of. The us versus them dichotomy becomes problematic here because it can be argued that the anti-Romeo squads, by cannibalizing and transforming Romeo, are just decolonizing our love and ridding our culture of the English language. If translating *Romeo and Juliet* into Hindi was the result of colonial education, and perhaps even indoctrination, then imbibing Romeo with new meanings could be seen as an anticolonial move, albeit one that feeds into the hands of the right wing.

While Yogi Adityanath and the BJP's rhetoric might be about eve-teasing, newspaper reports have shown that the anti-Romeo squads often target consenting heterosexual couples who are out in public without ever asking the woman whether or not she is being harassed by the man in question. Perhaps expressing love for an individual of the opposite sex in public is modern love, is western love, is Romeowala love, because it is assumed to be without parental consent. Another kind of love that is often seen as a western import is homosexual love. Suresh Kumar Koshal, who filed a motion against Naz Foundation and others in order to overturn the Delhi High Court ruling of 2009⁴⁹ that decriminalized homosexuality, believes that India should not be swayed by acceptance of homosexuality in the West. In an interview with NPR (for an American audience) he said, 'Your society is totally different ... Our society, in spite of a total onslaught by Western culture, we have a deeply religious society – and homosexuality is seen as undesirable.'⁵⁰ Several binaries are being set up here: you versus us, Western culture versus our culture, not deeply religious versus deeply religious, homosexuality as desirable/or certainly not undesirable versus homosexuality as undesirable. Similarly, Yogi Adityanath, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh who instituted the anti-Romeo squad, stated in 2013 that 'homosexuality is dangerous to social morality'.⁵¹ If the anti-Romeo squads are a kind of

moral police, Shakespeare the epitome of Western literature, and Romeo, his most well-known romantic hero, perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to see Romeo as also embodying homosexuality and homosexual desires from the right wing's point of view. In fact, the anti-Romeo squads have been targeting gay couples too, or indeed any men they perceive as being gay. For example, in April 2017, an 'anti-Romeo' police squad in Rampur, in Uttar Pradesh, arrested an uncle and his nephew, mistakenly believing the pair to be a gay couple. They had to pay 5000 rupees each to secure their release.⁵²

Against such a backdrop, the Eden of the web-series is a far cry from reality. The first episode was released on 15 April 2017, just two weeks after the uncle and nephew were arrested. Be that as it may, the series enacts what Akhil Katyal calls the 'doubleness of sexuality' and the complicated matrix of the idioms of homosexual desire in South Asia. Katyal writes,

Gay and lesbian identity in the subcontinent is shot through and made more complicated and exciting by other idioms of same-sex desire which interact with them; these idioms neither confer as much definite identifiability or isolability [sic] to a people like homosexuality does, nor might they be politically mobilizable in the same way that the idiom of gay and lesbian identities are. These are widely present and often specifically social and cultural idioms, be that of habits (*aadat, lat, baazi*), of friendship (*dost, saheli, yaar*), of play (*masti, baazi, shauk*) of love (*ishq, dil, pyaar*), through which same sex desire operates in common discourse, through which it finds shape in language and through which it is often framed, understood, appassioned [sic] and lived out to varying degrees of happiness and duress.⁵³

Jugal acknowledges that he is gay, using that word in English, right from episode one. He does so in conversations with his best friend Meher and her mother Naina, not with his parents. However, even before Jugal acts on his desire for Romil, and before Romil admits that he is gay, the vocabulary of

friendship that Romil uses stands out. He makes it a point to say '*tu mera yaar hai*', '*tu mera dost hai*', 'come on bud', even when the occasion doesn't really necessitate it. Using Freud, Holtzman argues that 'Bollywood gay humor is an exposure of desire between *yaars*. Romantic/sexual attraction to a *yaar* may be deeply repressed in the unconscious but is nevertheless present, in some form, within the psyche.'⁵⁴ While *Romil and Jugal* doesn't peddle in the kind of homophobic gay humour that Bollywood, especially masala films, are wont to do, the language of *yaari* that Romil uses could in an unconscious way express his romantic desire for Jugal. Several scholars of queerness in South Asia, like Ruth Vanita and Shohini Ghosh, have used metaphors of continuum, or overlap, to express the ways in which homosociality intersects or is imbricated with homosexuality, especially in their reading of masculine friendships in Hindi cinema. For Vanita, for example, there is no 'rigid homosocial/homosexual divide' in Hindi cinema; rather 'there is a fluid continuum from friendship to eroticism.'⁵⁵ Katyal argues that the 'continuum is too easy an analytic' to fully capture the interruptions, the complexity, that different situations demand.⁵⁶ Here I think it is useful to track Romil's use of language. He does not slide from the vocabulary of friendship, of *yaari*, to that of expressing a gay identity directly or fluidly, as the image of a continuum suggests. Rather, the detour, or perhaps interruption is via a sense of unknowability, unsayability and perhaps even untranslatability. In episode five, a day after Romil has kissed Jugal for the first time and indicated that he reciprocates Jugal's feelings, Romil says, '*Khud to samajh nahin pa raha main tujhko kya samjhaun*' ('I can't understand [it] myself, what can I make you understand'). In this moment, the continuum is interrupted. But perhaps it's the pressures of the narrative, the filminess or maybe even of *Romeo and Juliet* where love just is, and then is clearly expressed in beautiful romantic sonnets, that Romil says, '*Saalon se mein koshish kar raha hun to understand* (I've been trying to understand for years). I mean I've always known that I am, you know, different.' Hindi fails him, and he turns

to English and the vocabulary of 'difference' as a placeholder, a placeholder for the untranslatable. This clip, where Romil says, 'I've always known that I am, you know, different' is one of the snippets chosen by ALTBalaji for their YouTube channel and other promotional purposes with the tagline 'love is love'. 'Love is love' is the slogan of LGBTQ pride across the globe that goes along with political mobilization and allows for transnational identifiability. After they have sex for the first time, in episode six, Romil and Jugal are lying together under the stars⁵⁷ and talking about the first times they knew they were gay. Romil, who in a previous episode was not able to say how he felt because he didn't have the vocabulary for it, is now able to articulate that he knew he was gay when he was twelve and he had a crush on a boy who was new to his class. He is doing something quite common in queer narratives, especially coming out narratives, that is, retroactively giving oneself a queer birth.⁵⁸ Diana Fuss sees this as part of the tension in gay and lesbian literature, 'between a view of identity as that which is always there (but has been buried under layers of cultural repression) and that which has never been socially permitted (but remains to be formed, created, or achieved)'.⁵⁹ In the case of *Romil and Jugal*, this tension is played out in the character of Romil. His hearkening back to knowing he was gay in school signals his gay identity as 'that which is always there'. In episode five, the morning after Romil kisses Jugal for the first time, Romil is seen tearing posters of women that he had up on the walls of his bedroom, with an expression on his face that is half teary, and half filled with laughter – a literal manifestation of him excavating himself from the 'layers of cultural repression'. At the same time, Section 377 has meant that a gay identity has not been legally or socially permitted. Yet in Romil's case, with his unarticulatable feelings, and their unknown quality, a gay identity 'remains to be formed, created or achieved'.

In the Indian context, Katyal articulates the same tension by theorizing the 'doubleness' of sexuality. He writes,

'sexuality' is marked by what I call doubleness, whereby there is a constant tension between the way it is conceptualized and the way it is lived out. This doubleness of sexuality ensures that no matter how much the 'gay' or 'lesbian' subject is given specific contours, like in various forms of identity politics and literary genres that centre around sexuality, that subject's position will remain, in actual experience, always open-ended and contested, always forming and unforming.⁶⁰

So even while the pressures of the plot, of the rom-com⁶¹ genre and perhaps of identity politics (both Katyal and Fuss engage with this framework) eventually create a stable gay identity for Romil, there are brief moments where an 'open-ended and contested' subject position can be seen.

Does being a 'gay' Romeo allow Romil to be legible to a wider transnational LGBTQ community? This may be particularly true, if one considers yet another *anuvad* of 'Romeo', the website Romeo (formerly known as Planet Romeo). Created in 2002, Planet Romeo 'is the world's most exciting network for gay and bi males, and trans people ... [that seeks to] connect millions of gay guys all over the world – across borders, cultures, and languages'.⁶² While he does not analyse why they use 'Romeo', Katyal argues that the ways in which they describe their origins 'sets the rhetorical stage for the projection of a worldwide "genuine gay community," a phrase that the PR [Planet Romeo] team constantly uses in its promotional material whereby it proposes a deep affective resonance of the idiom of gayness among people all around the world'.⁶³ Perhaps this 'deep affective resonance' is in no small part due to the global cultural capital of *Romeo and Juliet* as 'the greatest love story of all time'.⁶⁴ Romil coming into a recognizable 'gay' identity, as a gay Romeo, has access to this 'genuine gay community' globally as well as nationally.⁶⁵

The utopian possibility evoked by the name Eden of a global gay community is enacted through the fact that the series does not end as the play does. In the Shakespearean play,

the plot of Friar Laurence to stage the young lovers' deaths goes awry and Romeo and Juliet tragically die. While their deaths represent the epitome of star-crossed heterosexual love, they also allow for a queer reading of the play as one that 'deconstructs reproductive futurism' by 'killing those children in the name of whose futurity the social order of the play is organized'.⁶⁶ In the series, Romil and Jugal's plan to stage their death works. The series ends with both sets of parents accepting their children's sexuality, and the narrator (Jugal's sister Ramya) says that Romil and Jugal have moved to New Zealand and have gotten married. One of the last scenes in the series is a wedding celebration in Colwynganj. In this instance, the protagonist's death, a form of queer death, may have been expected from both Shakespeare purists looking for a 'faithful' adaptation as well as from the transnational LGBTQ community. Given that the show was produced before Section 377 was overturned, a tragic ending would have played into teleological, homonationalist⁶⁷ progressive narratives, that is, that India needs to catch up with the west in terms of LGBTQ rights. Perhaps the ending subverts this, perhaps it doesn't. The gay men get to live, and they get parental consent and family approval. However, they have no option but to build their lives away from India, whether with each other or alone.⁶⁸ Their mobility is a marker of their class privilege, since a rural gay Romeo and Juliet might more likely have ended in tragedy.⁶⁹ A queer Eden is depicted as being impossible in India. In the end, *Romil and Jugal* and the anti-Romeo squads may not be that dissimilar in their outlook, even if one is in a progressive garb. Both displace a Romeowala love, especially a gay Romeowala love, from India to the West – returning the great British import along with it, the *prem*, the *sneh* forgotten. Perhaps 'prem' is not the same as 'love' after all, even if they are both modern constructs.

So, what do these *anuvads* – the anti-Romeo squads, Romil and Jugal, Mishra and Sitaram's versions, and indeed theories of translating Shakespeare – have in common? If we see them as part of a masala genealogy, with the keyword being masala,

and as explanatory retellings, what are these (re)iterations seeking to explain? Perhaps it is authenticity – an authentic Indian relationship, a legible gay identity or even an authentic Shakespeare, infinitely translatable with its universal qualities. But the masala shades of the iterations have shown that nothing is quite so *straightforward*, even when the pressures of the fact that it is *Romeo and Juliet* might make it seem *straight-laced*. Romeo and Juliet, or the idea of Romeo and Juliet, is so reified that its construction as a stable, authentic source text propels these masala iterations. Carla Freccero suggests that

the greatest irony of all may reside, finally, in the work of memorialization and perpetuity performed not by the thematics of the play, but by its endurance as literature. A condition of the drive's representation, of the *frisson* generated in Romeo and Juliet's death-driving readers, of the text's seemingly infernal ability to breed new iterations of the myth of heterosexual love – as well as counter-narratives to this myth – is its monumentalization as literature.⁷⁰

Romeo and Juliet as a memorial to a stable, easily definable, easily articulatable kind of love. A memorial – that which celebrates something that no longer exists. Romeo and Juliet as a monument dedicated to a myth, something solid to represent that which cannot be contained – the masala of Shakespeare, the unknowability of queer excess.

Notes

- 1 Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, 'Introduction: Of Colonies, Cannibals and Vernaculars', in *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, eds. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London: Routledge, 1999), 1–18, 9.

- 2 Sir Monier-Williams Monier, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary Etymologically and Philologically Arranged* (Delhi: Motilal Bansaridass, 1997 [1899]), 38.
- 3 The BJP is the right-wing political party that Prime Minister Narendra Modi belongs to.
- 4 'What Are Anti-Romeo Squads', *News18.com*, Accessed 11 September 2018, <https://www.news18.com/news/india/what-are-anti-romeo-squads-how-do-they-operate-points-to-know-1362855.html>.
- 5 The episodes range from 19 minutes to 24 minutes in length.
- 6 Sir Donald Freill McLeod was a Lieutenant General of Punjab.
- 7 Phyllis Zatlin, *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation* (Clevendon: Multilingual Matters, 2005), 1.
- 8 Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, 'Translation Science and Drama Translation', in *Page to Stage: Theatre as Translation*, ed. Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), 8.
- 9 Sirkku Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society* (Clevendon: Multilingual Matters, 2000), 55.
- 10 See, for example, Denis Salter, 'Acting Shakespeare in Postcolonial Space', in *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (New York: Routledge, 1996), 117-35; Mark Fortier, 'Undead and Unsafe: Adapting Shakespeare (in Canada)', in *Shakespeare in Canada: A World Elsewhere?* eds. Diana Brydon and Irena Makaryk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 339-52; and Leonore Lieblein, "'Cette belle langue": the "tradaptation" of Shakespeare in Quebec', in *Shakespeare and the Language of Adaptation*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 255-69.
- 11 Zuber-Skerritt, 'Translation Science and Drama Translation', 8; Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage*, 43; Zatlin, *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation*, 23.
- 12 Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage*, 43.
- 13 Susan Bassnett, 'Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre', in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, eds. Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere (Clevendon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 1996, 90-108.

- 14 Zatlin, *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation*, 1.
- 15 David Johnston, 'Metaphor and Metonymy: The Translator-Practitioner's Visibility', in *Staging and Performing, Translation* eds. Roger Baines, Cristina Marinetti and Manuela Perteghella (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 13-14.
- 16 Márta Minier, 'Definitions, Dyads, Triads and Other Points of Connection in Translation and Adaptation Discourse', in *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*, ed. Katja Krebs (New York: Routledge, 2014), 23.
- 17 Susan Bassnett, 'Engendering Anew: Shakespeare, Gender, and Translation', in *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), 57.
- 18 Barbara Hodgdon, 'Afterward', in *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. Sonia Massai (London: Routledge, 2005), 157-60, 158.
- 19 Bassnett, 'Engendering Anew', 57.
- 20 Poonam Trivedi, 'Afterword', in *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, Performance*, eds. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 13-43, 13-15.
- 21 Baron Thomas Babington Macaulay Macaulay, 'Minute of the 2nd of February, 1835', in *Speeches by Lord Macaulay with His Minute on Indian Education*, ed. G. M. Young (London: Oxford University Press, 1952 [1835]), 345-61, 349.
- 22 Graham Holderness identifies as 'the great formal inauguration of bardolatry as a national religion', David Garrick's 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee, 'which "marks the point at which Shakespeare stopped being regarded as an increasingly popular and admirable dramatist, and became a god" (Deelman, p7)'. See Holderness, ed., 'Preface: All This', in *The Shakespeare Myth* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), xi.
- 23 Nandi Bhatia, 'Different Othello(s) and Contentious Spectators: Changing Responses in India', *Gamma: Journal of Theory and Criticism* 15 (2007): 157.
- 24 L. Sitaram, 'Foreword', in *Jangal Me Mangal*, ed. L. Sitaram (Allahabad: Ramnarayan Lal Bookseller, 1931), 1-2.
- 25 All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

- 26 Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia, 'Introduction', in *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, eds. Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 7.
- 27 Jonathan Gil Harris, *Masala Shakespeare: How a Firangi Writer Became Indian* (New Delhi: Aleph, 2018), 2.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 30 'Romil and Jugal: More Details', *ALTBalaji*. Accessed 2 February 2019, <https://altbalaji.com/show/129>.
- 31 Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia, 'Introduction: Shakespeare and Bollywood: The Difference a World Makes', in *Bollywood Shakespeares*, eds. Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 11.
- 32 Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani, 'The Global as Local/Othello as Omkara', in *Bollywood Shakespeares*, eds. Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 108.
- 33 Launched in 2017, ALTBalaji has 'surpassed a million paid users within a year of launch and [now] has an audience from over 96 countries. It has a paid subscription base of 8.9 million.' M. Farooqui, *TV Continues to Be Our Success Story, ALTBalaji Is Star Performer Group COO Pantvaidya* (2019). <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/trends/entertainment/tv-continues-to-be-our-success-story-altbalaji-is-star-performer-group-coo-pantvaidya-3417411.html>. Accessed 1 February 2019.
- 34 Kovid Gupta, *Kingdom of the Soap Queen: The Story of Balaji Telefilms* (Noida: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2014), 176.
- 35 Jonathan Gil Harris, 'Why Art Thou Romeo', *The Indian Express*, 2 April 2017. Accessed 1 February 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/life-style/why-art-thou-romeo-4595484/>.
- 36 Francesca Orsini, 'Introduction', in *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History*, ed. Francesca Orsini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-39, 1.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 4.

- 38 Sitaram, Gopinath and Platts were more or less contemporaries in the sense that they would have participated in the British educational infrastructure in the late nineteenth century, whether as student or teacher.
- 39 John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968 [1884]), 260.
- 40 In translation studies Mishra's would probably be called a translation and Sitaram's an adaptation, but I consider them both to be translations, in the word's iterative sense, since both translators use the word *anuvad* to describe what they are doing.
- 41 G. Mishra, *Premilila*, ed. Microfilm (Benares: Chandraprabha Press Company Limited, 1898), 2.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 43 L. Sitaram, *Prem Kasauti* (Prayag: Indian Press, 1931), 11.
- 44 Carla Freccero, 'Romeo and Juliet Love Death', in *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 302-8, 303. In *Romil and Jugal*, Jugal moves from a heterosocial friendship with Meher to a homosexual relationship with Jugal.
- 45 Harish Trivedi, 'Colonizing Love: *Romeo and Juliet* in Modern Indian Disseminations', in *Indian's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, Performance*, eds. Poonam Trevedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 74-91, 75.
- 46 To cannibalize is a Brazilian metaphor for translation. Bassnett and Trivedi, *Introduction: Of Colonies, Cannibals, and Vernaculars* (Oxon: Routledge, 199), 4-5.
- 47 Since 2009, 'Far-right Hindu groups allege that "Love Jihad" is a conspiracy by Muslim groups to lure Hindu women into marriages with Muslim men and to convert them to Islam' (Khalid, 2017). Ghar Wapsi is a programme of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a right-wing organization, and one that Yogi Adityanath and the BJP are affiliated with. The programme seeks to "'reconvert" people who it claims had changed their religion from Hinduism' (PTI, 2015).

- 48 Harris, *Masala Shakespeare*, 80.
- 49 The Delhi high court ruled in favour of Naz Foundation in *Naz Foundation vs Government of NCT Delhi*, thereby decriminalizing homosexuality (Section 377) in 2009. The Supreme Court overturned this decision and reinstated section 377 in 2013 ruling in favour of Suresh Kumar Koshal. In 2018, however, this ruling was overturned in Navtej Singh Johar vs the Union of India, thereby striking section 377 and decriminalizing homosexuality. *Romil and Jugal* was released in 2017, when homosexuality/sodomy was still illegal.
- 50 Lauren Frayer, Sushmita Pathak and Furkan Latif Khan, 'India's LGBTQ Activists Await Supreme Court Verdict on Same-Sex Intercourse Ban', *NPR.org*, 26 July 2018. Accessed 1 February 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/26/631829366/indias-lgbt-activists-await-supreme-court-verdict-on-same-sex-intercourse-ban>
- 51 Kuwar Singh, "Disease," "dangerous," "curable": What key public figures in India think of homosexuality', *Quartz India*, 5 September 2018. Accessed 1 February 2019, <https://qz.com/india/1380027/section-377-what-ramdev-adityanath-zakir-naik-think-of-gays/>
- 52 R.S. Benedict, 'India Police Arrest Uncle and Nephew after Mistaking Them for a Gay Couple', *Hornet*, 3 April 2017. Accessed 2 February 2019, <https://hornet.com/stories/anti-romeo-squad-gay-uncle-nephew/>.
- 53 Akhil Katyal, *The Doubleness of Sexuality: Idioms of Same-Sex Desire in Modern India* (New Delhi: New Text, 2016), 2. Here it is worth highlighting that the word Mishra uses for homosocial love – *sneh* – is not among the idioms of same-sex desire that Katyal references. This is perhaps because not only is it archaic, but it is also inherently platonic.
- 54 D. Holtzman, 'Between Yaars: The Queering of Dosti in Contemporary Bollywood Films', in *Bollywood and Globalization: Indian Popular Cinema, Nation and Diaspora*, eds. R. B. Mehta and R. V. Pandharipande (London: Anthem Press, 2010), 113.
- 55 Ruth Vanita, 'Dosti and Tamanna: Male-Male Love, Difference, and Normativity in Hindi Cinema', in *Everyday*

- Life in South Asia*, eds. Diane P. Mines and Sarah Lamb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 149.
- 56 Katyal, *The Doubleness of Sexuality*, 152.
- 57 The metaphor and imagery of the stars reappears.
- 58 In this scene, it is Romil who asks Jugal when he first knew he was gay. Jugal replies uncertainly, 'Maybe 13'. The difference between Romil's certainty and Jugal's uncertainty is, I believe, owing to the fact that it is Romil and not Jugal whose story is a coming out narrative.
- 59 Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 100.
- 60 Katyal, *The Doubleness of Sexuality*, 1.
- 61 The ALTBalaji platform describes the series as a 'young and never-seen-before rom-com version' of Romeo and Juliet. (*Romil and Jugal: More Details*. <https://altbalaji.com/show/129>. Accessed 2 February 2019).
- 62 Planet Romeo B.V., 'About Us', *PlanetRomeo.com*. Accessed 2 February 2019, <https://www.planetromeo.com/en/about>
- 63 Katyal, *The Doubleness of Sexuality*, 122.
- 64 *Romil and Jugal: More Details*. <https://altbalaji.com/show/129>. Accessed 2 February 2019.
- 65 During his research in 2010, Akhil Katyal found that there were 'about 50,000 Indian user profiles hosted on that website' (*The Doubleness of Sexuality*, 122). Given that access to the internet has grown in the last decade, the number must be substantially more by now.
- 66 Freccero, 'Romeo and Juliet Love Death', 306.
- 67 Jasbir Puar developed the framework of homonationalism 'for understanding the complexities of how "acceptance" and "tolerance" for gay and lesbian subjects have become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated' (Jasbir Puar, 'Rethinking Homonationalism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 45:2 (2013), 336–9).
- 68 The series ends with a phone call suggesting that the two are getting a divorce. While this may not be a 'happy ending' it

- is not really a tragedy either, in the way their deaths would have been.
- 69 One such instance is that of two women, Swapna and Sucheta, who committed suicide in rural West Bengal. This has been 'chronicled' in the filmmaker Debalina's documentary '... Ebang Bewarish'. Interestingly, an article written about this film is titled 'Lovestruck Juliet': S. Bag, *The Love Issue: Lovestruck Juliet*. <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/H8xiB49bsya0wbmufESgzJ/The-Love-Issue-Love-struck-Juliet.html> (2014). Accessed 2 February 2019.
- 70 Freccero, 'Romeo and Juliet Love Death', 307.

8

Bridging performance and philosophy: *Romeo and Juliet* in Korea

Seon Young Jang

1.

What can I say about Shakespeare performances in Korea, especially when they are adapted into Korean, with Korean traditional artistic devices? Most studies begin with the academic topography called 'Asian Shakespeare', which has shaped studies of theatre in Japan, China, Taiwan and India. The most common term in this terrain is 'intercultural', as observed in currently representative publications dealing with Shakespeare in Asia.¹ Poonam Trivedi presents the intercultural as a resistance against Europeanisation;² interculturalism is her solution to the tension between the polarities 'of authenticity versus difference, of the universal versus the hybrid, and of the global versus the local'.³ This intercultural discourse recurs in recent work by Hyunjung