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Reconceptualising Witches as *Hijras* in *Macbeth*: Tara Arts' Adaptation

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ABSTRACT

Tara Arts' *Macbeth* has been well received among theatre critics. This production employed *hijras*, a third gender community in South Asia, in place of three witches. Revered and humiliated hijras are used as a device to present the third gender politics within South Asian communities. Without changing Shakespeare's text in Macbeth, Verma succinctly alters the meaning of the text and provides a transformed interpretation of Macbeth through this production. This article examines Verma's production of Macbeth through the Hindu myth of *ardhanarishvara* (a half male and a half female) and the concept of coexistence of two genders living in the same body.

KEYWORDS

Hijras; Witches; British South Asian theatre; Tara Arts; Macbeth; Shakespeare; South Asia; Hindu Myth; In-betweenness.

British South Asian theatre has been much discussed in the last decade in terms of aesthetics, actor-training and documented history. Scholars[1] have examined the ways in which the deaths of Gurdeep Singh Chaggar (1976) and Blair Peach (1979) galvanised South Asian Youths, who used the slogan "Come what may, we are here to stay" (Puri 2015), which led to the expression of such protest against violence through theatre. Amidst racial violence and protest, some young members of the Asian community chose theatre as a means to protest racial discrimination in the UK, developing theatre in direct response to it. Jatinder Verma, along with Sunil Saggar, Ovais Kadri, Praveen Bahl, and Vijay Shaunak founded the Tara Arts in 1977 amidst a turbulent period (1960-1980) for the South Asian community in Britain (Tara Arts 2015).

Verma's Tara Arts is 'an English language company that [i]s a voice of and for Asians in Britain', as Chambers observed, (2010: 159). Adaptations being part of Tara Arts' productions, Verma has interpreted European and Shakespearean stories for British South Asian audiences and has interwoven its cultural aspects to new insights. He attempts 'to bridge the gap between Britain and Indian diasporic communities' according to Chambers (2010: 159). Further, he loads this gap with adaptations as a 'recurring feature', rightly put forth by Buonanno et.al. (2011: 1). He refers to them as 'Binglish' or 'tradaptations' which insinuates Verma's fractured identity, with multi-geo-locations such as India, Africa, and

Britain[2]. These affiliations create a sense of being neither here nor there, or being 'in-between' (Shevtsova, 2009: 204). This idea of inbetweenness empowers Verma to create a dialogue through his adaptations of Shakespeare and his European classics[3] that are located between the 'East' and the 'West', a dialogue that recognises the complexity of the term British Asian and the political overtones of the word 'Asian' (Dadswell, 2009: 224; Naidu, 2009: 230). Such adaptations as a 'norm' (Hutcheon, 2006: 197) emerge from the 'human imagination' (Hutcheon, 2006: 177) that lies in-between 'British' and 'Asian' ways of performing. Verma's this dialogue between his 'Asianness' and 'Britishness' keeps Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 'alive, giving an afterlife, it would never have had otherwise' (Hutcheon, 2006: 176) in the contexts of British South Asian family.

Macbeth, set in Scotland, is one of the shortest Shakespearean tragedies. Acting on the prophecy of three witches and political ambition fuelled by Lady Macbeth[4] (performed by Shaheen Khan), Macbeth (performed by Robert Muntford) murders King Duncan to become his successor in a show of arrogance and madness, which eventually leads to his death.

In Verma's production, Scotland is relocated to South Asia and the kingdom becomes a Punjabi British Asian family. Performed from February 2015 to May 2015 on a national tour in England, I viewed the performance on 28th March 2015 when it was live-streamed from Stratford Circus in association with the Queen's Hall and Black Theatre Live[5]. Directed by Verma, *Macbeth* 'brings Indian movement and music to Shakespeare's text, offering a powerful contemporary take on his darkest play' (Tara Arts 2015).

Verma's *Macbeth* opens with a drummer sitting on to the right-end of the stage, with a flower-garlanded photo frame in the spotlight. Percussionist **Rax Timyr** alongside sound designer and Paul Bull provide music of thunder and battle during a kickboxing fight[6]. A wooden chair and a table, perhaps signifying a throne, placed in the middle of the stage and where the fight is choreographed. The fight, a kind of kickboxing, begins in the middle of the stage. As the fight pauses, one of the three *hijras* brings a night lamp with a long-stand and enters the stage with their opening lines: 'When shall we three meet again?' (Act 1.1, 1-10)[7] as witches converse in Shakespeare's play[8]. The hijras, third gender, appear in sari, beard, and jewellery. The fight continues and *hijras* converse about the heir of the throne. They leave the stage with singing, 'Fair is Foul and Foul is fair' (Act 1.1, 11). Their exit movement while dancing, a circular movement at their position with their palms facing upwards and singing signify the ways in which *hijras* perform in South Asian countries. Meanwhile, Macbeth wins and Banquo and Macbeth leave the stage. With a minor change (Ross's lines 1.2, 59-62 dropped), Duncan, Malcom and Captain discuss Macbeth's victory.

Moving onto the next scene, Verma projects additional flashlights when Macbeth and Banquo attempt to pass through the stage, which prevents their efforts, leaving them in frozen at the back of the middle stage. This scene is important, as it is Macbeth's first encounter with *Hijras*. Appeared from the upper-left wing and dressed in full shining and bright costume with elaborate makeup and jewellery, *Hijras*, sat in the upper-left area of the stage, continue with the lines from Act 1.3, 1-30 and start singing, whereas Macbeth stands behind them at centre-back stage: 'The Weird Sister, hand in hand…Peace, the Charm's wound up.' (Act 1.3, 32-37). This meeting fuels Macbeth's ambition through their prophecies. Macbeth's fear, surprise, and

seeking blessings symbolised the myth revolving *hijras*.

Additionally, this first encounter becomes a turning point as it happens in Shakespeare's text. Macbeth seems fearful of the events, contrasting to Shakespeare's play; Verma's Macbeth seems both fearful as well as pleasant. Engaging hijras is considered both auspicious and irritating. As their song finishes, Banquo and Macbeth are both amazed to recognise them as Banquo questions their identity: 'What are these… You should be women. And yet your beard forbids me to interpret, That you are so.' (Act 1.3, 45-47). Performing a ceremonial *Tilak* [red powder placed vertically on the forehead] ritual with high drum beats on each *tilak*, the *Hijras* vanish (Act 1.3, 49-50). This act of disappearance from the stage is performed with simplicity and walking away in the left wings. The three *hijras*' prophecies perplexed Macbeth. While he is still recovering, *hijras* moved back into the centre-left wings with a loud laughter.

Using Shakespeare's text and minimal production, Verma focuses on patricide evidenced by a flower-garlanded photo-frame on the backstage wall. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* centres on power politics and evil, Verma's adaptation underlines them within the British Asian family. Emphasised this through the multicultural cast, which allows immediate connection to Verma's focal point, his attempt to understand what it means to be a British Asian in the UK and his experience of British Asian in contemporary Britain.

Verma continues to search his understanding through a dialogue by replacing witches as *hijras*[9] in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Verma comments:

> Tara Arts' *Macbeth* is about a powerful Punjabi British-Asian family, and puts the play in a domestic context, seeing it as a story about families rather than politics. When I look at families, they have the same ambitions, anxieties, and rivalries as the corridors of power. (Tuplin, 2015)

This recontextualisation of *hijras* in Macbeth permits a new interpretation not only to British South Asians but also to British audiences by breaking the previous pigeonholes created by either South Asian playwrights or other media. While reviewing Verma's *Macbeth* in an online blog, Farrah Chaudhry, the 1623 Associate artist, feels 'guilty' of creating British South Asian pigeonhole characters on the stage (Chaudhry, 2015). Surpassing Chaudhry's list of stereotypes, Verma engages the spectator's imagination through a dialogue between Shakespeare's text and an Asian cultural setting, thereby formulating a new piece of theatre from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

This article examines Jatinder Verma's use of *hijras* as witches through which he attempts to 'produce[s] a revisionist glocal historiography for British audiences' (Buonanno et.al., 2011: 3). Verma's intended to highlight the politics of gender by employing *hijras* or third gender instead of witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, this article argues that Verma's use of *hijras* reminds the coexistence of two different genders in a human body as evidenced in the Hindu concept of *Ardhnarishwara* (a half male and a half female). Consequently, this idea unearths sociological dimension rooted in the British South Asian diaspora, his roots in India (distant ancestral cord) through Tanzania (Verma's African cord). These roots and routes merge and enlighten Macbeth's witches in a new light, perhaps beyond differences of gender, acceptance of third gender and, above all signalling the co-existence of sexes in living beings in a degenerative body. Building on to these propositions, this article examines

how Verma's migration from Africa to the UK generates this abstract notion into a tangible existence of *ardhanarishwara*.

Etymologically, '*hijra'* belongs to Urdu-Hindustani language with an Arabic root '*hjr'* that means to leave one's tribe. The OED defines 'hijra' as 'transvestite', 'eunuch', or person, especially a man, who enjoys dressing as a member of the opposite sex, or a man who has been castrated (OED, 2015). Found in South Asian countries, *hijras* are placed at the lower end of society. They depend economically on *badhai* [alms or gifts given on auspicious occasions such as birth, marriage or inauguration], performances (dancing and singing) and, begging or even as sex workers (Nanda, 1996). Siddharth Narrain associates *badhai* with 'special powers' granted to them by Rama in the *Ramayana* (Narrain, 2003). Having this revered status from the Hindu mythology and at the same time labelled as a 'criminal caste' during the colonial rule in India (1757-1947) (Reddy, 2005: 28), South Asian societies welcome, abuse, assault physically and marginalise *hijras* or third gender in every sphere of life. The section 377 of the Indian Penal Code framed by the British Government in 1860 was existent until 2014 when this community was granted a legal status in 2014 (Pukaar, 2012). Though transgender communities are legal, the long 150 years of criminalisation have meant there is an enduring negative legacy in societal perception of these communities and a continued marginalisation of individuals (Venkatesan, 2012).

Sharma provides documentary evidences of the presence of third gender in various cultures ranging from Vedic to Chinese to Greeks (Sharma, 2012). Explaining popular Hindu myths (Iravan-Mohini, Arjun (the great warrior in the *Mahabharata*) as *Brihannala* and *Ardhanarishwara* and 'homosexual union between two male gods – Shiva and Vishnu' (Agoramoorthy and Hsu 2015: 1453-1454). Agoramoorthy and Hsu compared the transgender community in a Hindu religion and other world religions (2015: 1454). Despite that, the government of India has been using a derogatory term 'eunuch' for this transgender community in identifying their legal gender 'constitutionally'. Even though the community has the constitutional and legal identity, the society has been disrespectful, insensitive, and unfriendly. On the contrary, the institution of religion (faith or superstition) provides momentary fear stricken reverence, fragile influence, and vulnerable social class.

For the purpose of this article, I take into account the Hindu concept of *ardhnarishawara* as in the image one below. With these mythical and religious views, I understand this concept as a synthesis of both genders, symbolizing incompleteness of each gender without the other. Next, it signifies interdependence of both genders. Neither of the genders could survive without each other, but complement each other. Therefore, this concept of *ardhanarishwara* represents the union of male and female genders into one. This idea that my spouse (or me as her spouse) is a companion who complements me in every way fascinates me. This all-encompassing notion of the union of genders might guide to reinterpret Tara Arts' *Macbeth*.

The image above synthesizes masculine and feminine bodies. The mythical narratives of 'a composite deity' (Dalal, 2014) of transgender have prevailed over time, although undergoing 'subtle changes' (Barren, 1984: 218). Externally, the image above suggests two genders in the same body; however, a deeper understanding implies an internal mythical structure: the co-existence of masculinity and femininity in the same

body and in the society (at least in a Hindu society prior to British rule). It, thus, symbolises an incompleteness of each gender in question. This form further reminds the viewer of interdependence of each gender. The question, here, is whether one can see through this internal symbolic meaning beyond gender and religion. When Verma uses the *hijras* as a part of the production of *Macbeth*, is he drawing on this inner symbolic structure? How does the representation of the *hijras* operate in the production? It is clear that their depiction does not 'change or purify the symbolic itself' (Barthes and Heath, 1977: 167) through Verma's adaptation. In fact, the use of the *hijras* in place of the witches, 'evokes a parallel between history and the present for the purpose of comparison and contrast' (Sanders, 2006: 140) between the 'East' and the 'West' and within British South Asian cultural contexts.

The journey of conceiving third gender as witches in Shakespearean era and putting them in a criminal category in Victorian times through a legal mechanism in 1860s in British colony seems to have a full circle in Tara's production. Such a line of thought allows seeing Verma's adaptation as a form that is symptomatic of cultural compulsion to repeat (Carroll, 2009: 1). Though Shakespeare's play is adapted in Asian contexts, Verma's dialogue between the East and the West reminds the legacies of the colonial past and its societal impact on cultural, political, and religious lives of South Asians today.

Within South Asian society, *hijras* wear saris, and take great care with elaborate makeup, maintaining a clean-shaven appearance, and adorning them with jewellery. The image below taken from the production demonstrates a considerable disjunction in the way in which the *hijra* were represented within the Verma production.

Verma's *hijras*[10] have been called 'Bollywood' queens or drag queens, rather than '*hijra'*. Verma's decision to refer to these figures as queens rather than '*hijra'* reflects the complex valency of the word - both considered derogatory and at the same time its acceptable use in colloquial Indian languages. According to Verma, 'By casting the witches in Macbeth as provocative Bollywood queens, I am exploring the dangerously vain ambition driving Macbeth' (Khan 2015). In an earlier interview given on Tara Arts' *the Kanjoos* (2012), an adaptation of Moliere's *The Miser*, Verma clarifies the term 'Bollywood':

> Here I am using the term in the overt sense of big brash, archetype or character, song sequences and all of that. I suppose to say the cinema of Ray, Adoor Gopal Krishna and others, […] it's the theatricality of Bollywood that interests me: […] It is the only cinema in the world which is still theatrical... […]They have [the] camera in front of them [as] its being staged. That is what I mean by theatricality in the best of them; the soul, the dance, it's not just peripheral element. It pushes…time or narrative. I think that for me is what is very exciting about it. So, those sorts of ingredients constitute theatricality in Bollywood. (Verma 2012)

Verma's extracting the elements of Indian performing arts (song and dance) presented in a naturalistic mode of acting brings this theatricality of Bollywood. Considering the additional level of Bollywood exaggeration, the production builds a considerable distance between the theatrical representation and symbolic register of queens, while also referencing the world of the *hijra* beyond the stage.

The parallels of the social and cultural place of the *hijras* in contemporary South Asian society and the witches of Shakespearean England reveal some uneasy resonances. When *hijras* demand alms (money) on trains or knocking door to door, they are perceived to threaten unpleasant repercussions if they are provoked. Likewise, Pamela Mason suggests 'The witches are actors who have the capacity to prompt illusion of fear, apprehension, and curiosity in the soldiers who encounter them. They are representations. They are not real' (2008:348). As Mason identifies, even within the immediate context of *Macbeth's* production, witches were not always considered real, and within the dramatic structure of the stage play itself they are seen as illusory.

However, Verma's witches (*hijras*) are staged representations, albeit exaggerated into Bollywood queens, of a living community in South Asian countries. Witches in Elizabethan period were supposedly labelled as a representation of evil, 'the instruments of darkness' (Act 1.3, 122-125), and '[s]ome claim Shakespeare used real black magic in the witches' chants' (Weston, 2014: 142).

As noted earlier, *hijras* have 'supernatural' or mythical powers bestowed by Rama drawn from Hindu scriptures and later embedded in a Hindu social hierarchical structure, but they are not cast as evil. Indeed Verma's *Macbeth* does not provoke the *hijras*, instead he seeks blessing from them. Recasting the witches as *hijras* alters the sociocultural context for Macbeth's blessing by the witches 'Be bloody, bold and resolute: laugh to scorn/ The Power of man; for none of woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth' (Act 4.1, 93-95). Macbeth's desire for further reassurance in the play from the supernatural reads differently when given by the *hijra*. This might be recognition of a doubt in mythical or supernatural powers of *hijras* in providing security and such incredulity leaves him alone with his fear, apprehension and curiosity (see Act 4.1, 147-149 and 155-156).

This reading allows us to reinterpret the production in larger contexts. First, it reiterates the law of nature that guides understanding interdependence of our own existence. Though it might seem overlooking the dynamics of gender and politics, it hints that without 'You' 'I' am incomplete and 'We' together make a full circle. This notion becomes very vital in the contemporary world. Second, Male (*Purush* could mean cause) flourish with the help of Female (*Prakriti* could also mean nature, creation). The exploitation of any kind of resources on either part creates an imbalance and shakes foundation of futuristic sustainable living through inclusivity. Finally, beyond the notion of *ardhanarishwara*, this symbol accommodates the 'Other', not as other, but as a part of 'Self'. The idea of inclusion directs our attention to the outside and inside of our mental states, a dialectical form that is present in every form. With these two qualities imbibed, a balance can be achieved and the difference between 'Other' and 'Self' can be diluted. This conditional difference where 'other' and 'self' gets diluted seems idealistic and Verma in his own right attempts to take a step towards it through this production.

Maintaining a balance between the demands of the plot of *Macbeth* and the complex idea of *hijra* is finely executed in Verma's adaptation. In her online review of the production, Chaudhry identified her own British Asian identity within the play: 'the multi layered and sometimes disjointed and complex lives of British Asians' are 'perfectly injected' into the play (Chaudhry 2015). 'My life is full of strangeness and eccentricities, so the bearded *hijras* made perfect sense to me

and the entire production made sense of the nonsensical' (Chaudhry 2015). Chaudhry considers that Tara Arts' production could represent the British Asian community in Britain. By employing *hijras* as witches, Verma enters into the conflict within the British Asian family and the politics of gender. The casting of *hijras* as witches not only brings theatricality through their dancing and singing, but also challenges Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with South Asian culture lineage.

In contrast, Daniel Bowen sees much alignment between the story of *Macbeth* and this cultural lineage, bringing out:

> a comic complexity in the writing (something usually overshadowed by attempts to gothicise the witches), reminding us that these roles would have been played by men on the Elizabethan stage. The comedy, in what is usually a dark introduction, immediately tells us that the *Macbeth* we know is going to be challenged through this performance on stage and is going to be given a new light. (Bowen 2015)

Though Bowen highlights the comic complexity here in Verma's adaptation, his view also posits a challenge that "runs counter to the ideas of connoisseurs of the original" (Nicklas and Oliver 2012, 2). By employing *hijras*, Verma enriches the idea that the "cultural capital of canonized works" such as *Macbeth* can be brought into an animated debate about our valuing of the 'original' and of 'adaptation', and makes explicit the transformation of syntactical meaning that can be produced through changing the context in which the play-world is set.

The scholarly literature on adaptation has largely focused on major points of discussions grounding their work on films, the question of cultural recycling, commercial success of adaptation, and her taxonomy of adaptive modes (interactive, participative and immersive) (see Hutcheon 2006)and the choice of medium (see Robert Stam 2000). David Lane (2010) understands adaptation as "the act of taking an existing book, play text or screenplay and transposing it to another context". (Lane 2010, 157) Ley has discussed adaptation as a key component of construction and theatrical formation (Ley, Diaspora Space, the Regions, and British Asian Theatre 2011, 208) in the contexts of British South Asian theatres.

This article puts forth that Verma, in this production, employs existing theatrical as well as non-theatrical material in the new ways but with a different cultural context. This allows for a creation of a new piece of theatre bringing renewed meaning to the existing text as Lane (2010) argued.

Following Hutcheon's argumentation for adaptation to be considered in its own right, not always in relation to its success in reproducing or representing Shakespeare's work, Verma' *Macbeth* is a novel production in the lineage of previous productions, surpassing Stam's argument that "adaptation is automatically different and original due to the changes of the medium" (Stam 2000, 55). Here, Verma changes the contexts, not the medium, relocating the action in an Indian cultural setting. Verma has used Shakespeare's text, and his interpretation and analysis directs our attention towards the politics of power in *Macbeth* and the position of *hijras* in South Asian countries.

Verma, as an interpreter and a storyteller, has concretized the story of Macbeth by extrapolating the notion of a third gender from South Asia to the witches in Shakespeare's text (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3). By employing Shakespeare and his canonical text, Verma shares the complex nature of his British Asian identity. This adaptation reminds the hybrid nature or in-between existence of

British Asians. On the one hand, Verma seems to refer his past association with his Asian ancestry in a colonial state in Africa through his use of *hijras* in place of witches. On the other hand, Verma acknowledges the influence of Shakespeare's text while growing up in a colonial state. Adapting Shakespearean or canonical texts in the British South Asian contexts, Verma's production poses an interesting challenge to see it through the lenses of a Hindu myth, by doing so he creates a performance text without appropriating or altering the source text. Verma's adaptation has come to retell the story of Macbeth in a twenty-first century in a multicultural society. As Hutcheon (2006) observes,

> It seems logical that time and place shifts should bring about alterations in cultural associations; however, there is no guarantee that adapters will necessarily take into account cultural changes that may have occurred over time. (Hutcheon, A Theory of Adaptation 2006, 145-146)

Verma in this context has raised the cultural changes that have been associated with hijras or third gender. Verma's employing British Asian Punjabi context allows a new interpretation that coexistence in a multicultural society such as Britain can be possible as in the case of hijras in South Asian societies. At the same time, Verma provides an important signal that existing injustices towards *hijras* in South Asian countries. Hijras have survived and flourished despite these social, political and cultural discriminations. The Indian cultural context, costume, movement, and music, alter and adapt the underlying meaning of Shakespeare's text in Verma's production and brings a new dimension to this adaptation.

In addition, one might raise the question of the appropriation of cultural material. Verma here interpolates South Asian (Indian) cultural settings in Shakespeare's text, changing its meaning and producing a broader concept of "performance text" that might be more familiar from in the postdramatic theatre (Lehmann??). Verma's practice is not limited to borrowing textual and linguistic material, but extends the idea by the literal incorporation from a different culture and in doing that he challenges the canonical work as well as making his (and diasporic theatre's) presence felt. By this presence, Verma employs the processes of adaptation and recontextualising the text as a discursive tool where the text becomes a tool, or "a dialogue" for the exploration of the relationships, tensions, and discourse on form and content between two cultures, two political contexts and two societal concerns and differences of aesthetics. This new work creates a dialogue between two different cultural contexts without altering the text and thus, without 'appropriating' (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 20) the Macbeth it remains faithful to the original suggesting the plurality of voices.

Thus, Verma's restaging of the original offers a new reading in the British South Asian context and "features a specific and explicit form of criticism: a marked change from [the] original cannot help but indicate a critical difference" (Fischlin and Fortier 2000, 8). This difference can be visible in glocalising Shakespeare, produced according to *Macbeth's* text with South Asian cultural setting, providing "intercultural interaction which is more critical and confrontationist" (Trivedi 2010, 2).

Though Verma has repeated Macbeth, the pleasure of viewing (dis)comfort of third gender allows to locate them in South Asian societies. The belief and disbelief in the existence of

hijras' power and subjugation in South Asian societies vary extremely to both ends and Verma captures both ends of extremely within the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In this sense Verma's Macbeth becomes a "multilaminated work" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7) which refers Shakespeare's text as a departure point to cite the issues of third gender. With this renewed understanding of the adaptation of the existing dramatic texts, Verma's *Macbeth* re-presents a questioning of the canonical text and at the same time distances the text's assumptions by positioning it in a different cultural context without altering the original. If William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* explores the politics of gender, then Verma's production invests this politics to the third gender and third space. By such investment of 'sharing stories' (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 4) between two cultures, Verma translates the third gender into the third space or inbetweenness. Haq (2015) locates such inbetweenness of *hijras* in "[B]eing neither here nor there in terms of sexual identity" (Haq 2015, 3). Such locating of *hijras* brings a parallel social hierarchical structure and politics of third space and identity within British South Asian theatre discourse. Verma's transition from fictional witches to non-fictional realities of South Asian community brings a new interpretation to Shakespeare's play. In this sense, it is not an imitation as Hutcheon would argue, but engages with the history of the text as Ley analyzed in his discussions on adaptations. Thus, Tara Arts' *Macbeth* acts as a provocative theatrical adaptation.

In this adaptation, Verma addresses the issues of third gender and the third space as "translated people" (Ley, Theatre of Migration and the Search for a Multicultural Aesthetic: Twenty years of Tara Arts: Jatinder Verma in an Interview with Prof Grahma Ley 1997, 350-351). This strategy offers "British audiences a theatrical experience that constantly shifts between the familiar and foreign" as Buonanno et al., (2011) observe and echoes David Weston's argument that "But we English have always have been sceptical of foreigners having the temerity to attempt our beloved Shakespeare" (Weston 2014, 145). This article has explored how London becomes a "hybrid cultural location" (Hingorani 2010, 7) highlighting tensions between local (London) and global (South Asia). This hybridity as a force in the form of *hijras* can transform the ways in which the third gender and third space converse across the West and in the East. This conversation through Verma's production is powerful and useful in unpredictable ways. Vastly more important is the way that this production moves beyond the depiction of *hijras* [and the myth of *ardhanarishwara*] and speak here – highly important – for diasporic South Asians in Britain. Certainly, Verma's production marks, historically speaking, a continuity of a dialogue between the East and the West, *Macbeth's* contribution to contemporary theatre and political discussion may lie in the demonstration that our interdependence in terms of cultures, races, and in this case gender.

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[1] For further historical readings and insights into the development of British South Asian theatre, see Ley (1997, 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2014), Ley and Dadswell (2011 and 2012), Dadswell (2007 and 2009), Chambers (2011, 2012), Hingorani (2009) and Khan (2012), Daboo (2009) Godiwala (2006 and 2009).

[2] For a detailed description of the term 'Binglish', see Ley (1997), Verma (2006), Hingorani (2006 and 2010), Shevtsova (2009), Chambers (2011) and Ley and Dadswell (2011), and Patel (2012).

[3] For example, his 1992 production *Heer and Romeo* explores connections between Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Punjabi poet Varis Shah's 18th Century poem *Heer and Ranjha*. In 1993, *Troilus and Cressida* examined the world of corruption, love, and war. His 1994 adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was condensed for two performers and three handheld Japanese Bunraku puppets focusing on the relationship between Caliban and Prospero. He returned to *The Tempest* in 2007-2008 with a mixed race production highlighting the politics of oppression, cruelty, and greed across cultures. Another adaptation was *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1996-1997) co-produced with The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. Using multicultural Asian, African, Caribbean, Arab and English cast, Verma created a global love story; also produced in 2010 by Little Actors Youth Theatre and South West Youth Theatre using physical theatre. Verma's The Merchant of Venice explores the story of love, money and revenge set in South India amidst Christian and Jewish communities.

[4] On a completely side note, I may wish to compare Lady Macbeth with Manthara, an elderly lady accompanied to Kaikaiyei, one of the queens of Dashrath in the epic of the Ramayana.

[5] It is a pioneering consortium of eight regional Black and Ethnic Minority theatre companies on a touring circuit. Arts Council (England) funded this partnership between Tara Arts, Derby Theatre, Queens' Hall (Hexam), the Lighthouse (Poole), Theatre Royal Bury St. Edmunds, Theatre Royal Margarate, Stratford Circus (London), and Key Theatre (Peterborough). Part two of this paper deals with 'geo-televisual aesthetics' as defined by Basu. (Basu 2010)

[6] This savage and furious fight is a superb example of full-hearted exchanges of blows and each character's expressions can be recognised as excited as one can see in the Bollywood films.

[7] All the textual quotes are taken from Verma's production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Wherever Verma has omitted lines have been otherwise stated. The parenthesis is used to suggest the text references in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

[8] This paper uses Nicholas Brooke's edition of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

[9]Aldous and Sereemongkonpol have discussed how third gender community is known in different parts of the world.

[10] For full list of the cast, please visit http://tara-arts.com/whats-on/shakespeares-macbeth/cast-creatives

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