

Transcultural *Hamlet*: Representations of Ophelia and Gertrud in 21st-century Iran

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ABSTRACT

Multitudes of intermedial Shakespearean adaptations, especially since 1975, have captured Iranian theatrical stage, cinema or radio as the Bard's texts are frequently modernized, transfigured and indigenized in order to add to his globalization. *Hamlet* works well in the mechanisms of temporality, spatiality, power, control and sexuality, socio-political discourses, economic upheaval, female self and gender struggles even in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Hence, Iranian directors such as Varuzh Karim-Masihi and Arash Dadgar as well as the British director Gregory Doran have re-interpreted this text based on new ideological grounds in which the characters are at times similar or different. In this article, the transformation and characterization of major characters, especially female ones such as Gertrud/Mah-Tal'at and Ophelia/Mahtab, are analyzed based on Hutcheon's Adaptation Theory to see how they are represented in an Asian society whose Islamic ideology necessitates a unique transcultural, transhistorical rendition.

Keywords: Transculturality, Hutcheon, Foucault, panoptic structure, surveillance.

INTRODUCTION

Invocation of Shakespearean drama in various media and social milieus has established a cultural mosaic that is constantly evolving in various directions. In order to present a wholesome analysis of dramatic transformation from one medium to another as well as from one culture to another, the comparative study of adaptations and appropriations of *Hamlet* is necessitated. Linda Hutcheon believes that although each "adaptation has its own aura" (2006, p. 4) and is an autonomous aesthetic object, "it is only as inherently double- or multilaminated texts that can be theorized as adaptations" (2006, p. 4). Since an/any adaptation is a transposition of a text to another textual structure (whether involving a change of genre or medium or frame), in this paper the ways of transcoding characters, specifically the female ones, will be dissected to analyze the contextualization of the same story through a variety of re-creations. The process of adaptation which includes re-interpretation will study the reasons of retelling the story over and over, in different cultural grounds, this time in an Islamic Middle-Eastern country with almost no direct socio-political connections with Britain— unlike India or many other countries which were colonized by it and whose educational system had been re-structured to fit the colonizer's ideology.

Each work of art has its own specifications related to the era in which it is written. Furthermore, social, political, economic, philosophical and ideological issues of the time prove to be influential in the attitude and mood of the work. Intermedial adaptations of *Hamlet* in Iran within the first decade of the 21st century have employed various narrative techniques and transcultural elements while being transferred from one geographical-social matrix to another. Testing the existing theoretical clichés of modes of involvement in these works can reveal much about the social norms, ideological patterns and new historical interpretations focusing on how cultural, economic, legal, pedagogical, political, and personal reasons interfere with an adaptor's motivation for adapting a work such as *Hamlet* which can be extremely intimidating for the directors.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Myriad translations, re-readings, adaptations and productions of Shakespeare's works have celebrated the Bard's transcendence in both historical and cultural terms whether in the Far East of the world, as in Japan, or in the far West, as in the US. In Iran, translation of Shakespearean plays into Persian/Farsi started around 1900 when Nasir-al-Din Shah Qajar, the king of Iran who took much interest in European

cultures, and ordered to establish “a theatre hall at the local polytechnic in Tehran in 1869” (Partovi, 2013, p. 225), where the need for Western plays was greatly felt. The trend first started with French plays such as Molière’s, then continued with others such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was translated by Hosseinqoli Saloor in 1900. Consequently, Shakespearean characters and ideology found their way into Iranian culture to enhance his globalization while fulfilling a group of Iranian elites’— or as Jameson might call — academic marketplace’ desire for new types of entertainment and learning.

Shakespearean women first entered Iranian literature through a comedy, and later through his tragedies as well. The second Pahlavi’s reign was the peak of theatrical productions in their modern form due to the king’s particular interest in this sort of art; as Jalili Kohne Shahri and Pishgar state 500 Western plays were translated and performed in this period (2012, p. 91). However, *Hamlet* was not allowed to be performed on stage because, as Malekpour suggests, Pahlavi regime was opposed to the performance of those plays in which kings are murdered (1984, p. 62) although many other Shakespearean plays were extremely popular and constantly staged. Presenting a murdered king, a usurping new king, a mad prince and a licentious queen, who could easily be read metaphorically, seemed to be an insult to the royal family, or the play could, accidentally enough, demonstrate a close resemblance between the contemporaneous social, political matrix of Iran and what Montrose assumes “the dominant ideology of Tudor-Stuart society - the unreliable machinery of socio-political legitimation” (p. 587). Pahlavi dynasty overthrew Qajar (1785-1925) whose weakness was extremely notable both inside and outside the country. Ervand Abrahamian notes that although “Nineteenth-century Europeans tended to depict the Qajars as typical “oriental despots,” the power of the king was sharply limited – limited by the lack of both a state bureaucracy and a standing army. His real power ran no further than his capital” (p. 10). General Reza Khan, the first Pahlavi, took control over Tehran in a coup in 1921 and was crowned as king in 1925 to be exiled to Mauritius by the Allies in 1941. His son, Prince Muhammad Reza was appointed as the new monarch in the same year. However, being reprimanded for suspicious origins of their power (they were continuously called, by many such as Mohsen Kadivar, “puppets” of the United States and Britain), the Iranian royal family needed the same legitimation the 17th century- British royalty wished for.

With the advent of new technologies, the adaptations of Shakespearean plays continued in the next decades

in a variety of media and forms which involved many well-known Iranian directors and playwrights as well as radio and screenwriters such as Atila Pesyani, Mohammad Charmshir, Arash Dadgar and Reza Gooran. The transaction between media especially from one culture to another brings about various changes and challenges to the work. The examination of different interpretative traditions contributes to our understanding of the mechanisms of cultural exchange, spatiality and temporality.

OPHELIA/MAHTAB: TRESSPASSING BORDERS

Directors such as Varuz Karim-Masihi and Arash Dadgar who won Simorgh prizes for their Shakespearean adaptations, have tried to decenter the original text. These new interpretations resulted in a manifestly different variety of hypertexts that can be called new texts by many although some scholars such as Anderegg would argue that “recognizable generic identities” (2003, p. 2) constitute a subgenre as Shakespearean films/adaptations to which these texts belong, and they are not a different category. Each director has chosen a special manner to modernize and transfigure the palimpsestuous text in order to add to its popularity and indigenization. Karim-Masihi indicates in an interview that as a result of temporal and spatial changes, clothing, characters, social conditions and relations inevitably change (<http://www.mehrnews.com/news/957088/>). In *Tardid (Doubt)*, which extremely turns away from its predecessor’s theatricality, it is “the point of departure or conclusion that is totally transfigured” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 6). In this filmic re-interpretation, although the story seems to be the common denominator, and the characters almost stand parallel to the hypotext, modern assumptions of more active female characters, namely Ophelia who in Amanda Kane Rooks’ words is “the most identifiable and resonant of all Shakespeare’s heroines” (2014, p. 475), help push the original story further in time to fit a more liberal century in which female characters do not have to be rendered mad if they ask for more freedom or power in the society. Shakespeare’s Ophelia, although refined, well-educated and young, “is represented as the projection of others, her father and brother and Hamlet who set aside her statements about herself and revise her into obedience” (Ronk, 1994, p. 21). She is striped of social power by what Foucault calls the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure. Patriarchal voice of the society comes through Polonius and Laertes’ comments when they order her to be chaste. Whereas she desires for sex, the power will censor her because she follows the pleasure-seeking element which stands against the dominant social discourse for

women. Power is discursively constructed by male characters such as Hamlet, Laertes or Polonius when they use the power of language to order her to be off to nunnery, or to stay away from Hamlet or to spy on him while she is devoid of using the same language to persuade or resist. She confines herself to language of songs which according to Pettijohn and Sacco becomes “popular during threatening social and economic conditions” (2009, pp. 297-311). Hence the social/political discourse can be dug up from Ophelia’s feminine language of songs as Cooper and Condon mention:

Lyrics resemble the historical remnants available in an Indian burial mound. Just as an archeologist must reconstruct cultural reality from innumerable fragments left by a former Native American civilization – pieces of pottery, projectile points, tools for building, stone drawings, ancient toys and games, eating utensils, religious tokens and death masks. (Cooper & Condon, 2004, p. 228)

Ophelia’s desires and sadness are hidden in her songs while she is not allowed to reveal them due to the restrictive social discourses at that time.

However, the cultural and temporal transmission has created a different reading of this character by situating it in an Islamic country with female struggles for more power and freedom of speech. Therefore, Mahtab/Ophelia in *Doubt* becomes a modern image of a young girl who would passionately try to survive. Unlike Shakespearean passive Ophelia, she can foresee the future and fight the dark fatalistic ending. She is beautiful, active and lively. She does not retreat from her senses after her father’s death, but is able to detect the hidden conspiring hands at work as well as the reasons behind it wisely. She does not surrender to fatalism and sorcery (which Siavash’s mother practices). On the contrary, when Siavash and Garu/Horatio have charted the parallel story of Siavash and Hamlet (Siavash, very similar to Hamlet, is presented as “a grieving son lurking in the shadows” in Burnett’s words) and are ready to yield to the same gloomy fate, she announces that she will not stand aside to see Hamlet and Ophelia’s tragic ending befall her, her fiancé and her brother and, hence, gets involved in the power struggle to rescue her mentally-retarded brother, Danial/Laertes, who is the best option to be manipulated by the corrupted uncle (Khosro) and his new allies to kill Hamlet/Siavash. Although she is late to the fight scene, she happily finds out that Danial who has blindly triggered the gun given to him in order to kill Hamlet, has only wounded Siavash, but has killed the evil uncle and the doctor responsible for his madness to

achieve full poetic justice. The last scene renders a tragi-comedy instead of Shakespeare’s bitter tragedy which seems to be more loyal to the happy-ending-factor of Hollywood (probably for modern mass-taste’s attractions) rather than to the hypertext. However, the intertextual relationship with John Everett Millais painting of drowned Ophelia (1852) is obviously maintained in the last scene when Ophelia’s (Mahtab’s) reflection is displayed in the pond, not her dead body

Another kinesthetic interpretation of *Hamlet* is Dadgar’s *Hamlet* which stages a more faithful Ophelia in the spirit of the Shakespearean one. She is as passive and easily-broken as Ophelia and when she is put under pressure by her father, brother and lover, she cannot bear it anymore. Finally, her father’s death becomes the last stroke to drive her into madness. However, transcultural mechanisms have worked well into her indigenization in Iranian culture by presenting her as an ugly southern girl with dark skin, unlike Shakespeare’s delicate heroin. She sings sad songs from Bushehr, a city in the south of Iran with pleasant yet melancholic music. The folklore she sings consists of a few songs about falling in love, disloyalty of the beloved, loneliness, treachery, death, absurdity, etc...

I want to go away and be alone
 Alone, only with my shadow
 It’s the sad time of leaving
 I well know the time when to go
 The two days of life
 Is the story of how you die,
 How to take the two happy days of life
 into the graveyard.
 ...
 Don’t trick me again, you heart!
 I won’t be tricked by you again. (Ebrahim
 Monsefi, author’s translation)

Themes of Ophelia’s life are all almost revealed through either this song or other ones. Transition of pale-skinned Ophelia to a Dark-skinned southern girl seems relevant to the whole textual re-reading as the women in the south of Iran are mostly deprived of many rights and probably suffer from the same passivity as Ophelia did centuries ago. Intermedial nature of the play employing verbal, musical or visual processes brings about a full network of cultural and medial exchange in order to render a clearer picture of Ophelia. Since the character is staged in an Islamic country, her body has to be fully covered. Therefore, unlike 2009-BBC version or Zeffirelli’s text, no emphasis is laid on the female body as the object of masculine gaze. Laertes repeatedly refers to her ugliness and emphasizes that Hamlet cannot love her;

he only tends to use her sexually. Sexuality and sexual imagery cannot be openly employed on the stage; therefore, images such as deflowering are delicately alluded to in order to avoid the total censorship of the play. While there is no Nunnery scene in *Doubt* due to the replacement of youth's sexual desires by contemporary social/political issues and interestingly too much emphasis on Mousetrap (whether in the old building of cinema which is being renovated or at home when during the wedding party a mouse is seen by the guests who start screaming), this scene is highlighted by Dadgar in which Hamlet, divided between his thirst for revenge and love for Ophelia and aware of the presence of Claudius and Polonius, slaps her to make her get away from him and go to a nunnery announcing "I know you people well, I know all the tricks you use to reach your goals" (*Hamlet*) which seems to be directed more to Claudius and Polonius rather than to the innocent Ophelia. However, Ophelia, offended by the remark, believes that he now rejects her because she had surrendered her body to him (probably not a fashionable conception in the contemporary Western culture, but might be still true for the Iranian patriarchal discourse of chastity). This physical and verbal violence forms resonant connections with hysteria resulted from the suffocating patriarchal power structure of the country, whether it is Denmark, England or Iran in which, as Foucault indicates, multiple mechanisms of control in relation to sexuality are at work.

Dadgar's Ophelia's appearance and the songs are groomed to reverberate the war-stricken people in the South of Iran. Likewise, many characters in *Hamlet*, such as the gravedigger, Gertrud, Rose and Guil, mention that the people of Denmark have been involved in war because of King Hamlet's thirst for blood and more political power. Even her dark skin reminds the audience of her mysterious origin, suggesting that she is probably Polonius' illegitimate daughter from a black slave or maid, or a brothel-going experience as inferred from Branagh's version, or the outcome of his marriage to a dark-skinned woman who is not certainly very favorable to the court. Her color locates her in an even more degraded, lower position than other women, and she ends up in a more trivial position to men and also to white women. She is dressed in humble white clothes very similar to those of servants while Gertrud wears elegant, erotic black and red clothes inviting male voyeurism while arming her with more sexual power over the royal court. The queen's lust—or power—seeker soul effectively utilizes her body in this regard.

Ophelia's appearance and body politics make her the right person to be put under surveillance, marginalized and confined in a nunnery which could

be by comparison likened to the disciplinary institutions that Foucault studies in his *The History of Madness*. She is socially deemed unproductive since she is of no use to the court after her father's death and also clearly disruptive to Hamlet's revenge plan. Accordingly, an irrelevant object, she should be either locked up or excluded by being accused of having gone insane or becoming an outsider now that her familial service for and connection with the court is lost.

GERTRUD/ MAH TALA'AT: FAMILIAL EVIL OR SOCIAL HEROIN?

In Karim-Massih's *Doubt*, Gertrud/Mah Tala'at seems to be more of a superstitious wealthy house wife involved in domestic affairs and in search for love and a happy marriage, at times exercising some spells and magic like a modern witch. Jealous of her husband's mistress who is their chauffeur's wife, she dubiously appears to be an accomplice in her unfaithful husband's murder. She is bribing the mistress to keep her quiet while she is fighting for her threatened position, reputation and status. However, the film follows the same trend as Shakespeare's play in which neither her guilt nor her innocence can be proved. Being repeatedly insulted and orally violated by her son who is accusing her of plotting against her husband, pretty much like Shakespeare's Gertrud who drinks the poisonous wine, she finally gives up and strangles herself on the balcony where everyone can gaze at her dead body. The sexual theme is obviously presented by a lusty opportunistic woman, Mrs. Afrasiabi, who used to be Hamlet senior's mistress. Her promiscuous behavior with men clearly suggests the idea of a Gertrud divided into two bodies: one as the loyal wife who is angry with her husband's disloyalty and trying to remove or silence the infamy and the other, the archetypal seductive femme-fatale exercising power over Khosro as the new authority.



Hamlet's reproaches against his mother are not fully justified in the Iranian version since, unlike Western tradition, Gertrud's marriage in the Islamic hegemony is not uncommon as there are many instances of

widows marrying their brother-in-laws to preserve familial ties, children or fortune as well as the patriarchal authority of husband's family over the woman's social and financial life. Hence, this Hamlet seems to be closer to Freudian oedipal son than Dadgar's more philosophical, complicated, and violent character, whom by virtue cannot be called a hero. Social codes such as marriage to an in-law, Iranian wedding ceremony, Bushehri mourning traditions performed by Polonius/Anvari's relatives, etc. bring about a clever performative transculturation. This indigenization is dexterously developed in the text, making it more plausible to the modern receptive culture and audience in the Middle East.

Mah-Tal'at and Mahtab's plight for playing a more integral role in the family and society is in line with the contemporary trend of women's demands in the actuality of everyday life as Hooglund observes:

These alternative spaces of expression play a crucial role in disseminating intellectual debates on the condition of women, debates that flourished especially after the end of Iran-Iraq War. In doing so, they largely used contributions from reformist clerics who are increasingly attentive to the plight of women. And women are demanding that rules of Islam be adapted to the realities of Iranian society, an integral part of which are women's social, political, economic and cultural activities. (2002, p. 66)

These Reformist activities were accelerated between 1999-2009, leading to various filmic productions of Rakhshan Bani-Etemad and Tahmineh Milani whose cinematic texts were followed by many other directors in the following years. Veiling women in the post-revolution social structure, whether in reality or filmic presentations, imply plenty of meanings. Patriarchal power structure tried to confine women inside houses or under long veils in order to assure their marginalization. Naficy works on the meaningful relationship between veiling and unveiling in Iranian hermeneutics in his search for hidden intentions. He argues that:

Instances abound in Iranian culture: high walls separate and conceal private space from public space, the inner rooms of a house protect/hide the family, the veil hides women, formal language suppresses unbridled public expression of private feelings, modesty suppresses and conceals women, decorum and status hide men, the exoteric meanings of religious texts hide the esoteric meanings, and the perspective-less miniature paintings convey their messages in layers instead of organizing a unified vision for a centered viewer. Modesty is thus operative

within the self and pervasive within society. Veiling is the armature of modesty, requiring further elaboration (2000, p. 39).

Modesty becomes the new social code for female identity. Reality and humane feelings are thus concealed under veils, walls and even long shots of cinema which no longer dare to portray female body or face. All female characters in the/ a movie are fully covered by long dresses and scarves although their aristocratic class or Christian religion (Garu's mother is Christian) does not entail them to do so. Furthermore, Naficy classifies Iranian cinema into three phases and observes the characteristic of the second one as "androgynous":

In the second phase (mid-1980s), women appeared on the screen either as ghostly presence in the background or as domesticated subjects in the home. They were rarely the bearers of the story or the plot. An aesthetics and grammar of vision and veiling based on gender segregation developed, which governed the characters' dress, posture, behaviors, voice, and gaze. (...) The evolving filming grammar discouraged close-up photography of women's faces or of exchanges of desirous looks between men and women. In addition, women were often filmed in long shot and in inactive roles so as to prevent the contours of their bodies from showing. Both women and men were desexualized and cinematic texts became androgynous (Naficy, 2000, p. 40).

Due to international recognition earned by Iranian films and reformist activities after 1990s, depiction of female appearance and aspiration became possible. However, codes of censorship still continued to impose restrictive boundaries and, therefore, receptive audience's implications and interpretations were extremely necessitated. This results in the increasing use of metaphors and ironies in order to convey the director's intentions indirectly while visual barriers are at work to obstruct vision. In *Doubt*, the house has long walls and thick curtains which gives it a panoptic structure. The long doors are mainly closed in order to hide what is behind. The company owned by the family also has multiple doors in which people lower their voices when they see Hamlet. The ruined dark cinema that is under construction (which serves as a crisis heterotopia to Siavash, Mahtab and Garu) is also probably a metaphor for the country or family's status in which many secrets are hidden. Mahtab is wearing local veils in an exorcising ceremony (Govati or Damal which is exercised in Sistan and Baluchestan, in order to get rid of evil spirits possessing a man or a woman, which is very similar to the exorcism of which Greenblatt talks as "the

institutional negotiation and exchange of social energy” (2004, p. 616) when Hamlet is having a dream of it.



Likewise, Mah-Tal’at is repeatedly presented wearing a veil (in Hamlet senior’s funeral, in her wedding, etc.). Dreams, veils, thick curtains and doors block the characters’—and audience’s— perception of reality. Accordingly, secrets, lies and ignorance seem to be social discourses to which many have surrendered.

Gertrud in *Doubt* is more concerned with people’s judgments than her wishes. She repeatedly asks Siavash/Hamlet to be present in the ceremonies in order to be approved by the public and avoid their judgmental comments. Her culture-bound anxiety puts her in a weaker position than that of the active Ophelia/Mahtab who is courageous enough to fight against fate and patriarchal patterns. While Ophelia’s personality in Shakespeare suggestively connects to its Greek origin meaning “help,” which highlights her socially-weaker status, Mahtab which means “moonlight” seems to be a correct semiotic code to refer to her role as shining on the dark parts of the story and revealing the ugly truth. Interestingly, Mahtab and Mah Tala’at in Persian are from the same linguistic root, both being connected to the moon. Here the binaristic identity of Gertrud/MahTala’at is more effectively disclosed. Unlike Shakespeare or Dadgar’s sophisticated unified queen, MahTal’at’s identity is divided between the good-natured, active Mahtab and the seductive and manipulative Mrs.

Afrasiabi. When she tries to be active and powerful in supporting her son, Hamlet/Siavash, she becomes the motherly figure alluding to Virgin Mary and when she tries to honor her sexual desires by loving Khosro/Claudius, she becomes the sensual Mary Magdalene. The intertextual nature of this character makes her a transcultural entity open to various interpretations based on the receptive audience’s knowledge and creativity.

On the other hand, Dadgar’s Gertrud is obviously a feministic character with tendencies for power in the social structure of the court and society. As previously mentioned, she is dressed in black which carries connotations of dark nature, satanic power, elegance, formality, fear, death, evil, and mystery and also red which is associated with fire, war, determination, thirst for blood, desire and sensuality; therefore, both colors are combined to convey the right semiotic code in this performative text. The director seems to be intentionally situating her in the shade so that her mysterious personality cannot be readily read. She cannot be interpreted conveniently since she speaks out her disapproval of King Hamlet’s wars and unquenchable thirst for war. At times, she acts as if she is a mother to the nation and at times, she becomes a seductive woman in search of lust— either for sexuality or power— both of which are denied to her because she has to hang on to patriarchal hypocrisies of chastity for women. According to Greenblatt’s definition of Self as “temporal and spatial construction which cannot claim independence from society and its ideology,” Gertrud’s complex personality becomes the right predecessor for more modern women such as Angela Merkel, Anusheh Ansari, Marzieh Ebtekar, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Tahmineh Milani, Condoleezza Rice,... trying to achieve more rights for themselves or their gender in a variety of fields. She is the only person who sympathizes with Ophelia and does not misuse her although she might seem manipulative with men. She slips into the “male/active/subject” position in various ways, some of which are not approved ideological and social discourses of the time for a woman. Dadgar deploys Shakespeare’s Queen in the process of adaptation to render a new reading and portrait of the character based on the contemporary gender/social demands or as Montrose puts it “rites of passage which give a social shape, order and sanction to human existence” and “impose culture-specific thresholds upon the life circle” (1996, p. 33). Dadgar’s performative text departs from a simplistic binarism that is a characteristic of various plays or filmic texts common to the Iranian stage and screen in which characters are still divided into black and white.

CONCLUSION

Recent developments in contemporary communication have caused various changes in social and ideological transformations of the self, especially the female self. The comparative study of these works reveals that since Shakespeare's era, women as social entities and female characters as social illusions have gone under great changes. It seems that what Foucault defines as power or rather government in his later works clarifies this new trend in contemporary social relationships between men and women: "the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the 'agonism' between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence" (1982, p. 223). This new political trend seems to have been more in action in movies because the white screen reveals more instances of it in such cases as *Doubt* rather than in the more loyal BBC televisual adaptation of *Hamlet* or Dadgar's modernized theatrical *Hamlet*. However, the comparative analysis reveals that all 3 adaptations reveal much about the on-going discourses in their societies and times. Although the panoptic structure of the house in *Doubt* and the police which seem ever present, yet invisible, invoke the feeling that even private lives of the characters are under surveillance, female characters' fight against oppression seems optimistic. The omnipresence of power in all levels of relationships between the characters are delicately observed, for instance, the patriarchal power relationship of Hamlet-Mahtab and Khosro-Mah-Tal'at, the romantic power relationship of Mahtab-Siavash and Mah-Tal'at-Khosro, the boss-worker relationship of Khosro-Anvari, knowledge/power relationship of Mrs Afrasiabi-Mah-Tal'at, Siavash-Khosro (Siavash is aware of his connection with Hamlet's tragedy and the fate awaiting him and thus he is able to avoid it while Khosro Roozbahan is not) etc. Consequently, Karim_masihi's re-interpretation of Hamlet ends up as a tragi-comedy with a poetic justice at the end because of his more modernized characters who are active and involved in the power equation, while Dadgar's reading is more loyal in tragic spirit to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and BBC 2009-version. Both of these versions are extremely political in intention since they are set in societies that are experiencing a period of terror and disappointment.

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