

## WHEN SHAKESPEARE TRAVELS ALONG THE SILK ROAD: *TARDID*, AN IRANIAN ADAPTATION OF *HAMLET*

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Media has become an inseparable companion of 21<sup>st</sup> century culture, exerting immense influence on our daily lives. This article aims to reveal how cultural aspects and media in a particular part of the Silk Road have adapted Western canons. Iran has redefined and transformed Western culture through the modern Silk Road by the method of cinematic adaptation. Karim-Masihi employs the general plot of *Hamlet*, the well-known drama by William Shakespeare (1564-1616), in his movie *Tardid* (*Doubt* 2009); however, he transforms some of the characters to reflect the current socio-cultural aspects of Iranian society. One of the characters is named Siavash, whose life is similar to Hamlet. In passivity, he awaits his imminent death and other tragic consequences. Yet, the movie ends differently. It is not an Elizabethan tragedy in a strict sense, although the final scenes abound with corpses. This article aims to find the similarities and differences between the two works, while reasoning the significance of the alterations. It concludes with how different cultures react to the same themes.

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## INTRODUCTION: THE ADAPTATION OF *HAMLET* IN IRAN

The ancient “Silk Road has seen precious goods and philosophical ideas travelling between Asia and Europe” (Dang 107). Today, media, especially cinema, can play the same role. The significance of this research lies in the fact that a film adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in Iran can serve as an effective instance of transcultural production along the modern Silk Road. Adaptation studies have generated intense interest in the realm of cultural studies because of taking movies, video games and other leading proponents of popular culture into account. Some adaptations of literary canons do not live up to all the hype. On the other hand, there are many unknown sources that have become famous through their movie adaptations. It is worth mentioning that many of Shakespeare’s own dramas, which have been adapted all around the world, are adaptations of older stories.

*Hamlet* is not new to the modern Silk Road. It has been adapted and appropriated in Korea (Lee 129-38) and China (S. Liu 411-429). In Iran, *Hamlet* was brought to the realm of cinema by Karim-Masihi in 2009. Iran in the twenty-first century has a large population of youth who are attracted to movies. The reason that canonical texts, like those of Shakespeare, are adapted in cinematic forms in such an episteme is controversial. Though unaware of its details, many Iranians know the plot of *Hamlet* or are at least aware of its existence. After eighteen years of silence in the realm of Iranian cinema, Karim-Masihi attempted to direct *Hamlet*. He had considered the idea of adapting *Hamlet* for a long time (Raziyifar), since doubt (i.e. *tardid*), as the title of the movie suggests, has been a matter of supreme importance in his life.

One can trace the significance of doubt not only in Karim-Masihi’s adaptation of *Hamlet*, but also throughout his whole life. He went to medical school in Germany, but he quit after a year. He also registered in the College of Dramatic Arts in Tehran, but again he abandoned his studies (Molla Hosseini). Therefore, doubt is woven into Karim-Masihi’s personal life and the process of *Hamlet*’s adaptation. He formed the new setting and characters in his mind for seventeen years (Mehr News Agency). The outcome of this endeavor won the highly acclaimed *Simorgh-e Bolorin* [Crystal Phoenix] for the best film and adapted screenplay at the 27<sup>th</sup> Fajr International Film Festival in

2009 (Mehr News Agency). He had received another Simorgh for best director for his previous movie, *Pardeye Akbar (The Last Act 1990)*, eighteen years before producing his second movie. Although winning the Simorgh at the Fajr Festival enjoys a high level of credibility, this movie has been the target of scarce research. Hence, this article attempts a comparative analysis of self-doubt through the setting and characters of *Tardid* and its source, *Hamlet*.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy that narrates the story of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, who plunges into despair after encountering his father's ghost, who reveals that he was murdered by his brother, Claudius. Claudius brings corruption to Denmark by marrying his sister-in-law and assuming the throne which was Hamlet's right. Hamlet feigns madness as a strategy to reveal his uncle's dishonesty. His doubt over taking revenge causes the death of many characters, including his own mother, his beloved Ophelia, her father, her brother, and Claudius. Though Karim-Masihi transforms Hamlet's principedom to Siavash's aristocracy in modern Iran, the plot of *Tardid* has some similarities.

*Tardid* is the story of Siavash, who is from a rich aristocratic family with a lavish lifestyle. His deceased father had been in charge of a high-profit business until his recent death. Siavash's villainous uncle wrests control of the household, replacing his brother both in his financial and familial role. He plans to marry his brother's widow in order to gain ultimate control of the whole business. These events happen in the absence of Siavash, much like in the plot of *Hamlet*. His mother's consent to marriage, his father's suicide, and his uncles' corruption force Siavash to become an introvert. He doubts the reliability of the news of his father's suicide, due to his long-term plans for his business. In the first half of the movie, bewildered by the hasty wedding party succeeding the funeral, Siavash attempts to make sense of the events.

Encountering the spirit is the main difference between the plots of *Hamlet* and *Tardid*, since it happens in the initial scenes of the former, but almost at the end of the latter. However, this switch in plotline of the adaptation is not justifiable to some critics (Hosseinioun). After hearing the ghost's assertions about the murder and betrayal, Siavash initiates a full-scale inquiry by meeting different people. He consults his intimate friend, Garo (Horatio), to find out the accuracy of these claims. As Siavash realizes that his life is similar to Hamlet's story, he succumbs to his fate. It is his fiancée, Mahtab (Ophelia), who reproaches Siavash's passivity and resolves to change their fate. They manage to survive, while the death of Siavash's mother and uncle, some of the servants, Mahtab's father, and her retarded brother end the movie. This short story line reveals *Tardid's* similarities to and deviances from *Hamlet's* plot.

Shakespeare is a colossal name in the realm of adaptation (Leitch 3). Most Shakespearean adaptations do not mimic the setting of the Elizabethan era, nor do they conform to the time and setting of that specific play (Leitch 30). It is because the universal themes of such canonical works can be employed in any place or time. However, the change of culture in the process of adaptation needs more adjustments (Hutcheon 28). Thus, this innovative production can fit the new values it represents. In other words, the work is re-contextualized, since culture is the factor that forms the way “people habitually think” and “perceive the world” (Zhang and Lauer 663). The same idea is applicable to *Hamlet* in the process of its appropriation in Iran. After a review of the literature, the Iranian adaptation of *Hamlet* will be discussed in terms of setting and characters to demonstrate the alteration and re-contextualization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Some critics have discussed the evolution of institutions and technologies in the industry of the modern Silk Road (Ma 330-335; Kuchins, Sanderson, and Gordon 35-40). The role of the Silk Road in the exchange of ideas between Asia and Europe has also been studied (Dang 107-110). However, how these ideas are reformed in the realm of art is still an academic gap. The cinematic adaptation of Western canons along the Silk Road is a fertile land for academic endeavors. In the past, adaptations were considered an inferior art where “the virtues of both film and literature [were sacrificed] for the sake of a cheap reproduction” (Cartmell 1154). In order to categorize *Hamlet*, Andrew Sanders suggests that it is a revenge play in which “Claudius destroys his brother, marries his sister-in-law, assumes the throne, and introduces a rot into the state of Denmark” (154). Bloodshed on stage serves as the standard of revenge plays. This is because “Shakespeare’s tragic world is uncertain, dangerous, and mortal, and the catastrophes to which all his tragic dramas inexorably move are sealed by the deaths of their protagonists”, resulting from “the violence of contemporary political life, both at home and abroad”, making “an uneasy society, haunted by ideas of treason and assassination” (A. Sanders 156). Claudius is the tactful, usurping king: he is “manipulative, calculating, smooth, secretive, suspicious, and generally well-served by malleable courtiers” (A. Sanders 157).

The setting of *Hamlet* is Elsinore, which ironically reminds the audience of Elysium, the paradise in Greek mythology. Elsinore with its lack of “innocence” and myriad “eavesdroppers”, “note-takers”, and “double agents” becomes “a tortuous,

patriarchal maze for Ophelia who fails both to negotiate its pitfalls and to understand the cynical logic of its twists and turns” (A. Sanders 157). For Hamlet, it seems like a “prison”, in which he “multiplies its complexities while ostensibly attempting to purge them” (A. Sanders 157). Hamlet cannot accept his father’s death, Claudius’s accession, and his mother’s involvement in the crimes leading up to her hasty remarriage. That is why, although he is hesitant about revenging his father’s death, this drama becomes a revenge play at the end. Although different elements of revenge tragedy like seeing a ghost and madness exist in *Tarbid*, the revenge theme is not a main concern in this movie. This alteration creates a drastic change in the process of adapting an Elizabethan drama in modern Iran.

There are also alterations regarding characterization. In Shakespeare’s tragedy, although “Hamlet can play mad, Ophelia must go mad”, because “she lacks Hamlet’s mastery over reflexive role-playing”, which is partly inappropriate for “female role-playing” (Gorfain 162). Mahtab, as Ophelia’s counterpart in *Tarbid*, is portrayed differently. She does not go mad, since she possesses intelligence, flexibility and the ability to improve the situation, at least to some extent. Therefore, unlike Ophelia, who serves as the shadow of Hamlet, Mahtab does not comply with Siavash’s passivity and contradictory performances.

Nowadays, *Hamlet* is still read, played, and adapted all around the world. The drama itself and its adaptation have also been the subject of literary criticism. The reason behind this can be “the influence of Freud and theories of psychoanalysis” (J. Sanders 54). Because this drama highlights the exploration of mental crisis and doubt, it has attracted many critics of the modern era like the forefather of Modernist poetry and criticism T. S. Eliot (1888–1965). Later, Eliot’s “*Hamlet and His Problems*”, *Hamlet* found a new dimension in the realm of adaptation in its first post-war theatrical release by Laurence Olivier during the 1940s. Eliot and Olivier show the panoramic process of perceiving and adapting *Hamlet* in modern times. That is why Julie Sanders notes that “one of the fundamental effects of adaptation is to mobilize a reader’s or audience’s sense of similarity and difference” (106). These similarities and differences are of great importance in the process of studying the cinematic adaptations of literary works.

## CHARACTERIZATION IN *TARDID*

Most of *Hamlet's* characters have counterparts in *Tardid*. Karim-Masihi weaves the history of the Silk Road into the fabric of modern Iranian culture by choosing the name Siavash for the protagonist of *Tardid*. Siavash is an Iranian mythical figure in *Shahnameh* (*The Book of Kings*) written by Ferdowsi around the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Ferdowsi's tomb is situated in Tous, a city near Neishabour that had an influential role in the history of the Silk Road (Thubron 276-277; Misra 402). The story of Siavash is narrated in the epic genre, which, like tragedy, recounts the life of nobles. Siavash manages to survive after passing through fire to prove his integrity, pride, and guiltlessness. Although there are many admirable heroes in Iranian mythology, the reason for choosing the name of Siavash can be found in the Persian folklore gathered, revised and modified by Ferdowsi. Siavash is a prince with whom his step-mother, the queen of Persia, falls in love. Queen Sudabeh tries to seduce him in various ways. Nevertheless, Siavash is so virtuous that he cannot accept such a shameful offer to become the lover of his father's wife. Because Sudabeh finds him stubborn, she accuses him of seduction and reckless behavior. As a result, he was sentenced to cross fire, the test of virtue, innocence and truthfulness at the time. Tested by fire, Siavash is proved to be honest and innocent. Because of all the complications in his family and country, he decides to travel along the Silk Road. He chooses Turan in Central Asia, Iran's enemy, as his destination. After making peace between the two countries, he lives eternally in Turan while he is continually bothered for being a stranger. Ultimately, he is killed since some Turanians are envious of his success. His murder is followed by acts of revenge which build the link with *Hamlet's* revenge plot.

The legend of Siavash has some similarities to the story of the Prophet Joseph as narrated in the Quran. The story of Joseph has been popular among Persian poets since the Middle Ages. One can mention Jami's recounting of Joseph and Zolaykhā's love story in *Haft Awrang* (*Seven Thrones*) (1468-1485). Ferdowsi intentionally chooses Siavash's legend not only because he is Muslim, but also because Tous is in the vicinity of Mashhad, a religious city where Imam Reza's holy shrine is situated. In fact, Siavash in *Tardid* is called Joseph once to remind us of this implication, in the sense that Joseph has been far from his family for a long time. Similarly, Siavash in *Tardid* avoids meeting his family members. Similar themes can also be found in the myth of Phaedre and Hippolyte, or *Desire under the Elms* (1924) by Eugene O'Neill. Although these stories connote love of mother for the son, *Hamlet* and *Tardid* mostly highlight a Freudian Oedipus complex. The parallels between legendary Siavash and

Karim-Masihi's Siavash are revealed in the presentation of marital infidelity and lust. Siavash of *Tardid* is also disgusted by all these flaws in his family, intending to leave after bidding farewell to Mahtab. Unlike Hamlet and Ophelia, Siavash and Mahtab's temporary emotional separation has happened before the first scenes of the movie.

Since Siavash of the mythology survives fire and Siavash of the movie also survives, in spite of the fact that he must be murdered, based on the resemblance of his fate to that of Hamlet, this choice of name is significant. Karim-Masihi tries to transfer this sense of survival to the audience throughout the movie. By considering the mythical Siavash, the audience knows that Karim-Masihi's Siavash will also survive in the movie, even when all the evidence suggests his life's exact resemblance to Hamlet. As there is no rhythmic similarity between Hamlet and Siavash, Karim-Masihi could choose other Iranian names that sound similar to Hamlet, for instance, Hamed, Hamid or Homan, as the protagonist. With this in mind, he aims to remind the audience not only of Hamlet but also of a Persian hero to bridge Europe and Asia. He intends to introduce his own version of Hamlet. On the other hand, by a smart choice of name, he proves how Hamlet could have a different fate if he were in contemporary Iran. That is how the modern Silk Road plays an influential role in portraying an effective instance of transcultural adaptation.

The fundamental element of alteration in this adaptation is Siavash's fiancée, Mahtab. Karim-Masihi redefines Ophelia in modern Iran. Although Ophelia is ready to surrender when she loses her father and fiancé, Mahtab discovers her potentiality and strength at a time of loneliness and loss. While she seems as innocent as a child in the first scenes, she appears firm enough to save her life and Siavash's from a tragic end. In the beginning, Mahtab is obsessed with her appearance. On the other hand, this seemingly flat character changes after her father's death. Unlike passive Ophelia who plunges into depression, Mahtab attempts to save her family. When she realizes how Siavash and Garo are passively awaiting the tragic end, she inspires them. Her endeavors motivate Siavash and Garo to change their fates.

The significance of Mahtab's name, which means moonlight, is revealed in the last scene. When she finds Siavash alive, she stands by a pond, so that she is reflected in the water. This reminds the audience of a famous Farsi sonnet by the contemporary poet Fazel Nazari: "Resembling the image of moonlight's face in the water / You are in my heart, though you are far away" (qtd. in Morshed). It seems that Karim-Masihi had the same line of poetry in mind when choosing the name of Mahtab for this character. At the same time, this scene reminds the knowing audience of Ophelia's death in water or as Gertrude puts it, "[w]hen down her weedy trophies and herself

/ Fell in the weeping brook” (4. 7. 176-177). Ophelia’s corpse in the pond stands in sharp contrast with the reflection of Mahtab in the pool while she is helping the wounded Siavash.

Siavash’s family is not aristocratic. However, he comes from a rich family. He is busy with a family-owned business and lives in a luxurious house, similar to a palace, full of butlers and maids. Siavash’s mother, Mahtalat, who is attired in widow’s garments throughout the movie, orders those around her in a queen-like fashion. Not surprisingly, Siavash’s uncle is similar to a king in behavior.

The role of Garo, Siavash’s friend, is akin to Horatio in *Hamlet*. Much like Horatio, Garo is an intellectual. However, Karim-Masihi modernizes and indigenizes this character by showing that Garo has studied engineering in an Iranian university. What seems remarkable is that Garo and his mother are the only Christian characters in the movie. Since the majority of the population of Iran is Muslim, audiences rarely see Christian characters in films. Because Karim-Masihi is Christian himself, the presence of characters with a marginalized religion is justifiable. Though these Christian characters do not play the leading roles, their significance lies in their influential role. Modeled after Shakespeare’s play within the play, they direct the play *Hamlet* in the movie *Tardid*. They introduce the culture and tradition of Persian Christians. They always help the protagonists, further the plot and amend the relationship between Siavash and Mahtab. Though Christianity might be marginal in Iran, the characters and their roles in this movie are not marginal at all. Therefore, the director adds another dimension to Shakespeare’s characters in the form of the collaborations between Muslims and Christians to highlight the pluralism of a transcultural adaptation on the Silk Road.

In one of his interviews, Karim-Masihi justified his choice of Garo: Garo is Christian in contrast to the other Muslim characters in the same way that Horatio is from Rome and is different from others in *Hamlet*. That is why both Horatio and Garo are trusted by the protagonists. In Shakespeare’s drama, Prince Hamlet’s social status is higher than that of Horatio. Of course, the culture of Elizabethan times and the dominant discourse of the Great Chain of Being dictate this social stratification. In *Tardid*, although Siavash is very rich, his relationship with Garo is not that of a superior to an inferior, as these matters have been rather obviated in contemporary Iran. That is how the culture of the modern Silk Road redefines and challenges the historical hierarchy of Europe.

When Siavash informs Garo of his doubts, he attempts to help him by arranging a meeting with Samsami, the family’s enemy, who has no counterpart in *Hamlet*. More

facts are revealed to Siavash in this meeting, since he discovers that Mahtab's father, Anvari, remarried after his first wife's death (Mahtab's mother). His second wife is the daughter of the same enemy, Samsami. The word Samsami, which literally means sword, is an appropriate name for a business rival. Anvari, Mahtab's father, is a schemer as well as an accomplice in the family's corruption. Like Polonius, he is considered injudicious and thus is occasionally belittled by Siavash. He is forced to divorce his pregnant wife in order to stabilize his position in the family's business, despite his love for the woman. Anvari's second wife, Sarvar, does not have a counterpart in *Hamlet*. In *Hamlet*, there is no reference to Polonius' second wife or mistress. His first wife was Siavash's paternal aunt. In his second marriage, Anvari's offspring is a mentally handicapped son, whose name is Daniel. His counterpart in *Hamlet*, is Laertes, who is a well-educated man. Laertes means avenger, which suits his role in avenging his father's murder. Siavash tries to treat Samsami, who has been paralyzed because of a heart attack, with respect. His sickness is a result of the pressures of business and the rivalry between him and Siavash's father. Importantly, it seems that Siavash, unlike his family, prefers peace and negotiation. This deviation which challenges the rules of revenge tragedy tries to redefine Senecan plays on the modern Silk Road highlighting the peaceful nature of Iranians. That is how Karim-Masihi utilizes the Silk Road to transfer culture rather than commerce.

## **THE GHOST: FROM ELIZABETHAN TIMES TO PRESENT-DAY IRAN**

Shakespearean adaptations mostly use other contexts rather than the Elizabethan era (Leitch, 30). In the same vein, *Tardid* employs another setting, which results in myriad alterations. Shakespeare initially presents an apparition in *Hamlet*, which determines all the subsequent events. Nonetheless, current trends in Iranian cinema frown on non-realistic scenes and ghosts. Culturally, it is not the public taste since all Fajr Festival winners are realistic films. Majid Majidi, Ebrahim Hatamikia and Daryoosh Mehrjooi, who are the top Fajr Award winners for best director, are known for their realistic masterpieces (Entekhab News). Karim-Masihi alters the apparition scene to satisfy his Iranian audience and the traditional society (Tajvidi). His audiences are generally familiar with name of Shakespeare, though they may be unaware of the details of *Hamlet*. To indigenize the ghost, he uses an Iranian custom instead. This local color is represented in the ceremony of the Govati dance or Zaar ritual, which is customary

in southern parts of Iran. The ghost of Hamlet's father is replaced by the ethereal Govati dancer. This is a type of holy healing that extricates evil souls from the body (Karim-Masihi 16). Though the relevance of the Govati dance to the history of the Silk Road is obsolete, ritualistic dance plays an important role in the Silk Road (X. Liu 55-81). Karim-Masihi notes that he could have used any other ritual; however, he chooses to portray Shakespeare's ghost in 21<sup>st</sup> century Iran differently (17). He utilizes a southern ceremony since Iranians associate the south with fantasy and exoticism. This representation of the ceremony makes the movie more tangible to an Iranian audience. To present a successful transcultural adaptation, Karim-Masihi builds a bridge between Iranian tradition and British culture. At the same time, *Tardid* introduces Iranian ceremonies to people all over the world. It transfers culture through the modern Silk Road by the method of adaptation. Bahram Beyzai, an eminent Iranian director, had previously used the same *Zaar* ceremony in his acclaimed movie *Bashu, Gharib-e Koochak* (*Bashu, the Little Stranger* 1986). Interestingly, Karim-Masihi has been an assistant director in most of Bahram Beyzai's movies including *Bashu* (Cinemakhabar).

The presence of the ghost in *Tardid* is more rational than in *Hamlet*, since an intermediary, a dervish, summons the apparition. A southern Iranian dervish, Caliph, is the one through whom Siavash communicates with his father. His father's spirit forces Caliph to come to Tehran to meet Siavash by reciting a line of poetry from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1120): "And this was all the harvest that I reap'd – / I came like water, and I go like wind" (couplet no. 28, 10). Interestingly, Khayyam is tightly linked to the Silk Road since he is originally from Neishabour. Known for its high quality turquoise, Neishabour is a significant town in the history of the road (Misra 402). As Caliph cannot be healed, he comes to Siavash, at the behest of the ghost. Siavash has met Caliph previously because of his research in Persian rituals. By taking over Caliph's body, Siavash's father reveals the mischievous events in the family indirectly. From then on, Siavash's manners become rather odd. Even Mahtab calls him mad. Hamlet's irrational behavior is one of the causes of Ophelia's anxiety. Therefore, she consults her father about it. Mahtab and Siavash's relationship is much closer, resulting in Mahtab's direct accusation of madness and her struggle to help Siavash.

For Karim-Masihi, the ghost does not initiate the conflict. In contrast to Shakespeare, he presents the apparition in the latter part of the movie, when Siavash is already suspicious of his family's hypocrisy through other evidence. The spirit provides only one item of proof. His father's apparition is the last piece that completes the

image of truth for Siavash. His father appears to him in Caliph's body in the form of an uncanny dance. The first scene of the movie is Siavash's nightmare about Caliph. There is also a book in his room with Caliph's picture. The dervishes' leader, Caliph, gazes at Siavash in rage, resulting in his waking up with fear. Almost at the end of the movie, the audience understands the significance of Siavash's nightmare. Therefore, in *Tardid*, there is also a reference to the spirit in the first scene. In contrast, his presence is delayed until much later. Nevertheless, Garo's trust in Siavash when he narrates the illogical story about the ghost is partly criticized and hence considered as a weak point (Hosseinioun). Furthermore, the role of Horatio in delivering the message of the ghost to Hamlet is replaced by Caliph. In other words, a group of indigenous dancers and healers replace the apparition. Karim-Masihi has re-contextualized *Hamlet* with such an alteration to show the significance of Shakespeare along the modern Silk Road.

## THE TRANSCULTURAL ADAPTATION: REVISIONS AND RECREATION

*Tardid* is an Iranian adaptation of an English Elizabethan drama, *Hamlet*. Therefore, it is a type of transcultural adaptation. These adaptations include "a change of language" and also "a change of place or time period" (Hutcheon 145). Many cultural alterations can be seen from the very beginning of the movie. In addition, recreations are seen vividly in the ghost scene to represent Iranian culture. Karim-Masihi adapts the plot to the new culture, which inevitably leads to deviations and a new interpretation of self-doubt. The purpose of adaptation is "to shorten the gap between works created earlier and contemporary audiences" by updating the work (Hutcheon 146).

*Tardid*'s title sequence contains a floating doll on the water, which reminds us of Ophelia's committing suicide in the water (Act 4, Scene 7). This different beginning and the assertiveness and central role of Mahtab challenge the knowing audience. Of course, she does not replace Siavash's central part, but she stands beside him. Likewise, Mahtab plays a vital role in changing the ending of *Tardid* which is in contrast with Ophelia's passivity in *Hamlet*.

The beginning of *Hamlet* represents the guard soldiers' caution, as they have seen the dead King Hamlet's ghost twice before. Only the logical and educated Horatio does not accept the apparition's existence before seeing it. Horatio is brought to converse with the spirit because of his knowledge and education. In *Tardid*, the beginning of

the movie introduces Siavash's nightmare which is not resolved until the end of the movie and Govati's scene. The unrest that is associated with Siavash continues until the end of the movie. It is foreshadowed by his nightmare and many gothic elements like the mysterious noises from a TV set, the wind's howl, the presence of rain and sudden lightning.

From the very beginning, Siavash avoids meeting his uncle, who is now his step-father. Siavash is surprised by what happens around him, specifically his mother's haste in marriage to her brother-in-law. At the beginning of the movie, Siavash seems preoccupied since most of the time he is silent or shocked. Not only does he remain inactive in the first part of the movie, but also his gloom for his father's death is complicated by his mother's hurried marriage.

The relationship between Siavash and Mahtab in the adaptation is that of a couple who love each other more affectionately than what one witnesses in *Hamlet*. Their forthcoming marriage has been influenced by the recent events in the family, the merging funerals and marriage ceremonies. That is why Mahtab's father attempts to soothe Siavash, remedy the situation and improve his bond with Mahtab. There are other conflicts in this family. The first tension between Siavash and his mother can be seen in the decision about keeping Siavash's father's picture on the wall. Siavash is offended when it is removed, since he insists on keeping it against his mother's decision. This conflict reminds the knowing audience of Hamlet requesting his mother to "[l]ook here upon this picture and on this, / The counterfeit presentment of two brothers" (3. 4. 55-56). This implicit clash over the picture in *Tardid* does not take place in a conversation. Yet, the mother and son command the maids based on their own wishes. Karim-Masihi re-contextualizes the anger, hatred, and revenge of Act 3, Scene 4 to a comic situation.

Siavash has been so shattered by the recent events in his family that he is even afraid of mice, the animals that are seen throughout the movie. The mice are present in the movie to refer to *Hamlet's* moles. To give an illustration, their presence at the wedding party, coupled with Garo's puppet mice, serves as links to *Hamlet* (Tebyan). While Siavash is joking with Garo, he claims that today he is a different person because the sun has risen in the south. The key sentence that shows a turning point in Siavash's behavior signifying his madness is "sun has risen in the south". This is when Siavash begins his game of madness. He leaves his phone calls unanswered, avoiding contact with his family. Siavash doubts the obligation of the immediacy of his mother's marriage four months after her husband's death. He believes his mother could have postponed the marriage. During his feigned madness, he starts searching

for the reasons for his father's death. This marriage results in his cold relationship with his mother whom he used to adore.

During his search for the truth, Siavash claims that the explanations provided by others relating to his father's suicide are irrational. Firstly, his father had plans to live for a hundred years with his expertise in business. Secondly, his father's chauffeur, Khosro Afrasiabi, has just died in an accident. In addition, the conspicuously suspicious actions of his family members augment his doubts, since they are constantly murmuring on the phone or whispering together. He cannot understand why they pay large sums of money probably as bribes. Indeed, what adds to Siavash's doubt is that Anvari has forced Afrasiabi to work for them instead of Samsami, the family's business rival. While Hamlet's doubts are mostly originated from seeing the spirit, Siavash's doubts are based on rationalizing the inconsistencies he finds in the events around him and the responses of others to his father's death.

A foreshadowing of the tragic end is seen in both works. In *Hamlet*, it is a play within the play. In *Tarbid*, it is when Siavash and Garo fight humorously, imitating shooting with guns and pretending to be wounded. They seem to be soul-mates, having a mutual interest in antiques. However, throughout the movie, until the last scenes, Garo believes that Siavash's taking account of the similarities between his life and Hamlet's is only an illusion. Another foreshadowing of the tragic ending is portrayed in the inner play; it is when Anna is practicing *Hamlet* in Armani language on the stage. Anna, Garo's mother, is Mahtab's piano teacher and is Christian. The piano is an important instrument in Christian rituals. While Karim-Masihi puts great emphasis on the influential role of Christians like Garo and Anna in the movie, he also stresses the role of the piano both in Christianity and in the course of the film. Anna's acting group later performs *Hamlet* at the wedding party, leading to Siavash's uncle's anxiety. The piano is also the instrument which is given to Mahtab as a gift to improve her relationship with Siavash.

Siavash, in a message to Mahtab, writes a note on the mirror using Mahtab's lipstick. He writes Hamlet's letter to Ophelia which centers around doubt:

Doubt thou the stars are fire,  
Doubt that the sun doth move,  
Doubt truth to be a liar,  
But never doubt I love. (2. 2. 115-118)

This demonstrates how Siavash is beginning to suspect what is happening around him

in his family.

Mahtab and Siavash are depicted as agile youths. Siavash climbs the walls in many scenes, connoting the ups and downs of his life. Siavash's mother, Mahtalat, is interested in magic. The matter of pouring poison in drinks is implied by the potion she prepares for her new husband secretly. It is mentioned that these acts are related to the past to connote how *Tardid* is a new reading of an old story, *Hamlet*. It is also a code to remind us of the poison that kills the queen in *Hamlet*.

Siavash's stance on his mother's marriage has not been that of objection in the first place, as he has been too shocked to do so. Nonetheless, after some time, he doubts the reasons for the immediacy of this marriage. Unlike the respect for Hamlet's father, everybody reminds Siavash of his father's affairs and flaws to distance him from this thought. They talk about his financial support of Afrasiabi's wife after her husband's death or his affair with this woman. That is why Afrasiabi disapproves of the presence of his wife in Siavash's father's workplace. The reasons they provide for his father's committing suicide is his flop in business, which could have led to his execution. However, Siavash is not persuaded. At first, Siavash exploits Mahtab in order to know more about Anvari.

The first signs of his madness are revealed when Siavash acts as if he were catching fish without a fishing net in a small pond. He believes that the creatures in the pond are all crabs that pretend to be fish. The negative interpretation of crabs implies his view toward family members. They have murdered his father, based on the apparition's story. Siavash changes subjects in the middle of conversations. He refrains from answering Anvari's questions. Hamlet uses the same strategy in his conversation with Polonius. The odd manner of Siavash is reflected in his speech about crude books and lascivious thoughts, while he was famous for respect, manners and a sense of decorum in his words. He claims to prefer horses' neighing to sinful people's laughter. While he is acting as if he were mad, he can easily understand the hypocrisy in Afrasiabi's wife's behavior when she visits him in his father's workplace. Since Mahtab is strong and stubborn, Anvari exploits Afrasiabi's wife to understand Siavash's motivation. At the same time, Mahtab, harassed by Siavash's aloofness from her, summarizes his personality in a few offensive characteristics. That is how the passive Ophelia is redefined as the assertive Mahtab in the modern Silk Road.

In order to solve the mystery, Siavash meets his father's friend and employee in the company. Siavash's doubt is portrayed in the scene of papers flying in the wind to symbolize his restlessness after hearing the spirit's news. On the wall of Siavash's company, Karim-Masihi hangs the Persian calligraphy of "To be or not to

be, that is the question". Furthermore, Siavash constantly draws an analogy between his fate and Hamlet's destiny. These allusions look ingenious to some critics while others disapprove of Karim-Masihi's explicit references to *Hamlet* (Ghoreishi). Karim-Masihi himself justifies his direct references by mentioning that the majority of moviegoers are not aware of the details in *Hamlet's* story line (Raziyifar). Attracting both the knowing and unknowing audience to Shakespearean adaptations has always been a dilemma (Camp 109), since the adapter must be careful about how much s/he includes direct references to the adaptation.

After the inner play, while the mother and son are arguing about the mistake Siavash has made by arranging such a play in the middle of a wedding party to spread rumors, Anvari is eavesdropping. When Siavash opens the window, Anvari accidentally falls, leading to his death. In this scene, Siavash is more naive than Hamlet, since Hamlet, in contrast to Siavash, is determined to kill somebody. This event exacerbates the tragic end for most of the characters in *Tardid*. As a result, Siavash's relationship with Mahtab deteriorates. His father's ghost is linked to Anvari's funeral, since the audience sees southern rituals of mourning. The south plays an important role in the characterization of Mahtab since she is originally southern.

### **WHY DIFFERENT ENDINGS FOR *HAMLET* AND *TARDID***

Most of the characters in *Hamlet* have counterparts in *Tardid*; nevertheless, Karim-Masihi alters some of the main characters to adapt the movie to the modern Silk Road, which is current Iran. Mahtab is always worried about her brother, due to his mental condition. When Garo reveals the resemblance of their life to the story line of *Hamlet*, the ominous revelation makes her nervous. Siavash's relationship with Mahtab is recovered. She forgives Siavash, attempting to save her family first by saying prayers and asking God for help, then by acting against the plots of Siavash's family. In the morning, they dash off to go after Daniel to save him, in light of their knowledge of the ending of *Hamlet*. Yet, Daniel is abducted to practice shooting so that he can kill Siavash at Anvari's funeral to avenge his father. While Laertes' intellectuality is converted to Daniel's mental problem, their similarity in avenging their fathers is undeniable.

To her chagrin, Siavash's mother, whether an accomplice in the family's corruption or not, hangs herself after discovering that her husband plans to kill her son. In

contrast with the plotting of Siavash's uncle, Daniel shoots Siavash, but is unable to kill him. Siavash's uncle and some other minor characters are slain by Daniel. Then he is led to a car, which is to be blown up. Some critics consider this hasty death of all the antagonists and minor characters who acted as Siavash's adversaries one of the weak points of the movie (Ghoreishi), although financial problems are also influential in the rapid ending (Raziyifar). Mahtab, who is happy to see Siavash alive but gloomy because of her brother's death, stands near the pond. Her image in the water reminds the viewers of Ophelia's suicide. While Siavash has been more like a quitter in his lack of determination, Mahtab is a contemporary Iranian woman who can change her fate. In contrast to Hamlet, who postpones revenge through his indeterminacy, Siavash seems paranoid about his own life. His paranoia leaves little space for avenging his father's death.

## CONCLUSION

The modern Silk Road is a path for exchanging ideas between Asia and Europe. The adaptation of a canonical European writer in Iran serves as an example. *Hamlet's* cinematic adaptation in Iran introduces an instance of transcultural production on the modern Silk Road. Karim-Masihi redefines Hamlet's doubt in his *Tardid*. He re-contextualizes and indigenizes *Hamlet* in terms of characterization, plot, setting and ending. He redefines Shakespeare's ghost and introduces Persian culture to the world. The importance of the Silk Road is augmented because of Karim-Masihi's allusions to Persian poets like Ferdowsi and Khayyam. They lived in Tous and Neishabour, two influential cities in the history of the road.

In conclusion, the different ending might surprise the knowing audience (Taherkhani). Nonetheless, adaptations are always concerned with recreation. Due to the preference of the majority of Iranian audiences (Brown 340-341), the ending is happy since the antagonists are murdered and the lovers are united. How characters are privileged or punished for their behavior reveals Karim-Masihi's poetic justice that is added to the story line. It must be mentioned that although all the immoral antagonists die, Daniel, an innocent mental retard and the counterpart of Laertes, is killed. Both Hamlet and Siavash depict doubt, but their beloveds are portrayed differently. Ophelia's passivity contrasts with Mahtab's assertion and zest for life. While Ophelia commits suicide, Mahtab saves Siavash's life.

Karim-Masihi has adapted Hamlet in the form of a movie to reflect the same

themes and notions in a new context and episteme, the modern Silk Road. That is why re-contextualization is inevitable in such a recreation. This consolidation of the analysis of setting and characterization has illuminated how the alteration of such elements can create a new work with another denouement. Karim-Masihi adapts the plot of Hamlet to the new socio-economic episteme to attract an Iranian audience. By presenting Iranian rituals like the Govati dance, he also introduces Iran to viewers all over the world through the modern medium of the Silk Road.

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