INTERMEDIAL *HAMLET*: CROSSING THE BORDERS OF THEATER, TELEVISION AND CINEMA IN IRAN AND ENGLAND

Robabeh JALAYER[1] and Alireza ANUSHIRAVANI[2]

Abstract

The new millennium started with a boom in Shakespearean adaptations and interpretation in Asian cinema. During 2008-2014 with political and social upheavals, *Hamlet* became increasingly popular in Iran as well as in England so that even a film-made-for-television was also recorded for BBC and two prize-winning Iranian adaptations stood out among many films and plays of *Fajr* Festival. The analysis of interrelationships between these texts reveals a special spatio-temporal context in which Shakespeare's verbal hypotext is in interplay with modernism through crossing borders of media such as Arash Dadgar's theatrical text, Gregory Doran's televisual text and Varuzh Karim-Masihi's cinematic text. When ontologically separate art forms interact, truth is decoded through spectator's gaze and interpretation. In this article, the researchers try to analyze how intermedial transactions between media, the mediated, and the audience are at work to challenge *Hamlet* in a modern era and produce new cultural consciousness in the space in-between.

Keywords: intermediality, medial transposition, , hypotext, adaptation, appropriation, Hamlet

Introduction

Recent intermedial researches could trace the footprints of this phenomenon in various cultural communications and different disciplines probably due to the enthusiasm of modern man's global desire for crossing the borders and exceeding traditional limits of the world, whether they are actual, representational or virtual. Whereas arts and media used to require their own rules and set up their own specifications to maintain trenchant unmistakable boundaries, say up to roughly early 20th century, with the advent of cinema which is by nature multimodal or "photographed theater" (Balazs, qtd in Balme), the walls of exclusivity of theoretical discourses began to shudder. The new ground has been the locale to many creations and innovations which shared roots with many distinct artistic paradigms, yet at times so well dissolved that totally new cultural products are born. Henk Oosterling (2003: 30) refers to the outstretched wings of intermediality to show how it "reconfigures three former separated cultural domains—established in the 19th century—of the arts, politics and science, especially philosophy— enhancing an experience of the in-between and a sensibility for tensional differences". Culture is digitized now which makes it relevant to intermedial investigation. Since culture is constructed based on the contextual realities, social agreements and power relations, the interrelationships between these cultural configurations seem worthy of analysis through their media. 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.

[1] PhD Candidate of English Literature Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran, Email: rjalayer@shirazu.ac.ir
[2] Professor of Comparartive Literature Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran, Email:anushir@shirazu.ac.ir

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In-between space: the world of becoming

As Alexander C. Y. Huang argues, "the first decade of the new millennium was for Asian cinematic Shakespeare as the 1990s had been for Anglophone Shakespeare on film" (2009, 12). This article probes the ways in which Shakespeare's written text, televisual *Hamlet*, filmic *Tardid* and Dadgar's modern theatrical representation of *Hamlet* engage with intermedial spatiotemporal relationships, both in remote Asia and Blair's Britain. Transmission of information has experienced a wide variety of channels during history of mankind. Pictographic signs, logographic scripts such as hieroglyph, and later alphabet and words were designed for this purpose. Whereas Shakespeare's *Hamlet* employs the narrative medium based on words and linguistic signs and symbols which basically creates meaning through semiotic codes (written medium), this poses the question that to what extent the written medium is distinguished from or connected with performative media. Any play's substantial foundation connects with multimedial performance when it is recreated on stage not through the semiotic textual system, but through corporeal bodies of actors, with oral and musical accompaniment. Wolf (2011) takes a closer look at drama and explains that

> As for drama, a play is not just a "bookish" or "written" medium, but a multimedial performance, involving words, sounds, music (notably in musical drama such as opera and the musical), as well as visual media. (3)

The transposition of *Hamlet* as a written text to performance was originally aimed by its author who did not write the plays for readers sitting by the fire in their houses but for spectators gathering in a theater.

To use Rejewsky's (2010) definition of medial transposition, the genetic conception of *Hamlet*-production line has to be analyzed carefully in order to find out how "a medial configuration comes into being" (56). If a genealogical projection of *Hamlet* is possible, it could be drawn as this:

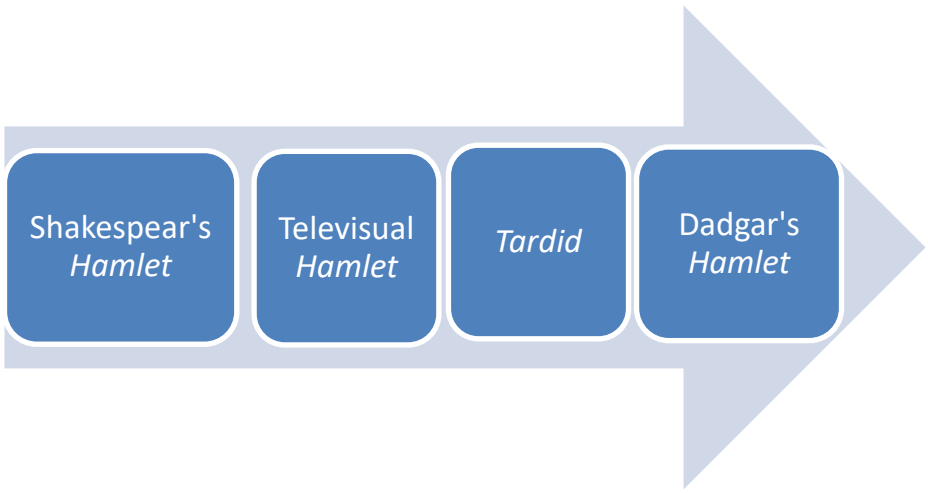


Figure 1

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The family tree has been based on the production dates, and does not claim any hierarchies related to the texts. As is clearly visualized here, the original text, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which dates back to sometime around 1599-1602, is considered to be the starting gene although this story is itself based on an older revenge storyand the investigation of all those earlier ones is not desired in this thesis. Medial transformation or extracompositional intermediality in Wolf's terminology has ensured the sustainability of the Hamlet-revenge story during the history of literature. This sustainability, in part, results from the macro-frames of the narrative that enable it to readily slip into other media.

Hamlet by Dadgar and the Quantum

In this section of the research, the structures of the play by Arash Dadgar and his group, Quantum, will be studied in order to analyze how this play has changed in the process of transformation from text to stage. This adaptation of *Hamlet* is a modern interpretation whose climactic structure resembles to that of Shakespeare's hypotext although various other formal features are different. The first question that comes to mind while investigating the process of medial transformation is about the nature of drama and dramatic representations. Drama is traditionally considered a literary sub-medium. However, its combination with body language and visual representation as well as sound and music casts undeniable doubt on the justifiability of this classification. This seems plausible to ask if drama is an "individual medium, a literary sub-medium or as a plurimedial form of representation". Wolf's (2011) pluralistic answer to this question is

> In my opinion it is beneficial to link drama to media in all three proposed ways because a medial perspective is apt to reveal aspects which a merely generic one would not highlight in the same way. If one considers drama from the perspective of a media profile in a given epoch, it makes sense to classify it as an individual medium in contrast to opera, film, and other media. Viewing drama as a literary sub-medium allows one to emphasize its particularly performative character, which opposes it to the sub-medium of book-transmitted fiction. Further, regarding drama as a plurimedial form of representation permits to highlight the fact that drama combines several semiotic systems. Further, regarding drama as a plurimedial form of representation permits to highlight the fact that drama combines several semiotic systems which can be attributed analytically to individual media. (4)

Regarding the materiality of drama and its theatrical competence, this typology seems practically relevant. Correspondingly, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Dadgar's *Hamlet* both share this plurality when they choose dramatic communication. However, it is important to differentiate the modes of communication between these two: while Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is verbal and its materiality is clearly textual, Dadgar's *Hamlet* is theatrical and "associated with the performer-audience transaction" (Keir Elam, 1988, 2). Shakespeare's semiotic codes send linguistic signals to the reader while this channel is different in a theatrical production. As Elam explains "Dramatic information can be conveyed by any or all of the systems involved, being translatable from one kind of message into another" (1988, 40). Shakespeare's philosophical tragedy is involved in an

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endless process of repetition (repetition of a revenge story, repetition of humanist ideology of Montaigne and Mirandola, …), however, this process is not exhaustive since it renders more informational levels. Dadgar's adaptation starts with the reading of this text to confirm the postmodernist critics' view that

> all performances have to be 'read' and that therefore the various elements of a theatrical performance (words, action, lighting, costume etc.) are all part of a text. For this reason, they prefer to refer to the original piece as 'the work'. They also claim that, once a 'work' has been created, the author or playwright abdicates all rights over what happens in the process of translation into a performed text. (Kenneth Pickering, 2005, 2)

This director's interpretation is contextualized in a different spatiotemporal setting which consequently results in the development of a new artifact. Rewritten in the 21st century in Iran which is an Islamic country, the hypotext has been transferred from one language to another, from one geographical location to another, from one medium to another. This transmission from paper (book) to stage is all present in its own materiality and as a new medium requires its own media-specific analysis. In an encounter of Shakespearean verbal *Hamlet* and Dadgar's mind, a new cultural construction is created. To use Kattenbelt's (2008) words, "in the domain of theatre- their creative work is finding each other" and "theater provides a space in which different art forms can affect each other profoundly" (20).

Dadgar's performative text, in its own right, needs a cultural context to function properly. This cultural context with its own processes of signification, meaning-bearing behavior and social communication system necessitates specific features within the adapted transformed play. Bodies, make-up, costumes, props and language are all defined by the Iranian culture of the time although the characters seem to be performing in an avant-gard play (with some intentional estranged effects). Theater historian Erika Fischer-Lichte attempts to theorize performativity arguing that "it is the transformative potential arising from the shared ritual practices surrounding a theatre performance that makes them both self-referential and capable of constituting reality" (quoted in Ellestrom 2010, 85). *Hamlet* becomes a social reality in Iranian culture while the very act of its performance "brings something into being, not in accord with traditional forms of ritual, but as an attempt to establish what is not now recognized or authorized" (Christina Ljungberg, Ellestrom, 2010, 850. The radical hybridity of this work stems from the interplay of the visual, the gestural and the vocal synchronization. Tattoos as pictorial semiotic codes are distinguishably representative of the villainy of the characters such as Claudius connecting him to a Western representation of tyranny (however, along with songs and newspapers, they could be discussed in the media combination and intermedial references).

While watching this play in the theater, many Iranian spectators can easily associate it with Shakespearean *Hamlet*. For these spectators, part of the meaning is transmitted through this connection which reveals the impact of cultural memory and, in turn, it creates a new phenomenon which functions as a new cultural memory. The posters of the

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play also insistently use the reference to Shakespeare announcing it as a free adaptation of the hypotext. This bondage is crucial to the director for many reasons: 1) directing Shakespearean plays is known to be extremely challenging among Iranian directors; 2) the modern mediatized work could attract the attention of modern theater-goers; 3) the micro-political messages would be transmitted with a less responsibility directing at the director and the group, 4) the conventional theater-audience would prefer watching a well-known masterpiece chosen from the canonical works. This is exactly in line with whatBurnett said "To imitate Shakespeare or to use Shakespeare either on stage or in film is to take possession of a certain kind of idea of quality, to assume authority over what's regarded as a work of art in order to define yourself as a practitioner and an artist. Shakespeare is seen as the sort of litmus test for artistic accomplishment." The discussed bondage or reference starts from the point where the play is translated and with Modernists' experimentations with translation, it became an integral part of the original and creative writing process to the point that the boundaries between the original text and its translation became obviously blurred. Dadgar as a Modernist director appreciates the active engagement with the 'other' texts and media to develop the 'self'. He intentionally dissociates his *Hamlet* from the pretext by rendering a free interpretation, totally pluralistic in political, social purpose.

Dadgar seems to be seeking new ways to respond to contemporary social issues that not only have affected the individualist mindset but also question the very function of human power and will in cultural space. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, this philosopher-hero is centralized; however, Dadgar's modern interpretation contains a multiplicity of centers. This decentralization puts the characters on the edge rather than in the center, each being of prominence to the action yet simultaneously trivialized, marginalized and even deleted from the story. His play insists on is theatricality by weird make-up, costumes and acting that are suggestive of an intentional departure from realism to a more expressionist view. Sami Sjoberg argues that "the intermedial work plays with different modes of signification and produces effects impossible for language alone" (Ellestron, 2010, 124). Hence, we can assume that Shakespeare's verbal text would have not been granted so much popularity if the only medium had been merely language (to support this idea, one can compare the popularity of his poems as verbal medium and his plays as visual medium).

Dadgar' dynamic attitude in directing a classical play reflects the negotiation between his nostalgic respect for the stage tradition and avant-garde trends that would characterize his plays. While being an innovator and experimenter in stage direction, the main sources of his work are classical texts, as the list of his theatrical productions show: *Ajax*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Breakfast for Icarus* to name a few.

Elizabethan stage did not make use of 'realistic' sets, period costumes, or elaborate mise-en-scène which resulted in an almost empty stage. Also 'lighting' or 'architectural design' had at least two centuries to appear on the stage yet. However, Dadgar's stage never fails to use appropriate lighting while he employs the same empty setting on his

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stage. This contradiction results in a 'synthesis' between past and present practice. Taking this into consideration, we can assume that Elizabethan theatre and twenty-first-century theatre could be regarded as different media, since their codes and conventions are of similar nature but belong to different cultural landscapes; thus Dadgar's diachronic mise-en-scène in his adaptation would also be intermedial.



Figure 2: only 3 chairs on the stage



Figure 3: Hamlet's desk and some lights



Figure 4: a mattress to represent swimming pool



Figure 5: a portable toilet with lighting to enhance the soldier's miserable situation

The audience is spelled with the presence of past on the stage as the classical characters bind the magic of Shakespeare's story with the modernization of the contemporary director.

Televisual *Hamlet: Shakespeare for the Mass*

"The medium is the message." Marshall McLuhan's famous utterance becomes so fundamental that it claims medium not only holding the message but being the message itself. This claim is amazingly distinguished when it comes to television and televisual texts. The unbelievable popularity of television can easily be inferred by the fact that it has become an indispensible item in any household and many spectators follow TV dramas or talk shows. For many, TV seems to be a more intimate medium than either film or

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theatre. And Janet Harbord (2007) discussing about the impossibility of material independence of films, notes that" technological convergence has disarmingly blurred the distinction between modes of dissemination and cultural forms: both television and computer are associated with specific practices of production, aesthetic features and technologies, yet they are also transmitters of other cultural forms such as films" (1). Sarah Cardwell analyzes the temporality and performativity of television when postulating theories about this mass medium. She combines theories of Connor and Ellis about a close connection between what is televisual and postmodern: "both television and the postmodern are fast-paced, contemporary, fragmented parts of the 'mass'culture" (96). Hence, both phenomena receive the critical views and negative attitudes which have always been targeted toward the mass culture. Although television is regarded an autonomous medium and therefore, has its own media-specific feature, many theories consider them of some common materiality which brings about similar theoretical methodologies. The paradoxical connections of past and present and past represented within the present through this medium inclines Beja (1979) discusses this problematic:

> It is a commonplace to say that in reading a good story we 'loose ourselves' in the work, and often that is true; but even when we become so absorbed in the imaginary world we are reading about that we can say that it has happened, it has occurred because we have been willing to let it. And ultimately a part of us remains quite aware of what is going on. (12)

The process of reading or watching becomes partly a process of making meaning through oblivion of the presence of ourselves and dissolving in the past of the story told. The text thus becomes the present since it is read or watched or produced as 'contemporary'. When the audience is able to make the reference with the text of the past (hypotext) or is told about it, the process of synthesizing meaning might be a bit different due to the fact that a genre's socio-cultural significance can initiate multiple responses from the audience. This is the case with Doran's adaptation of *Hamlet* in 2009. It must be noted that Doran's play was first directed for theater-audience in Royal Shakespeare Company and later it was filmed and broadcast on a DVD for television broadcast. Josh Nelson in his comments on the television film adaptation as

> Filmic productions of theatrical performances have an unfortunate tendency to be, as the Bard might put it, 'a little more than kin, and less than kind'. Often shot with static or spatially distant cinematography, weakened by conflicting performance styles, or overly lengthy, the transition from stage to screen is not always harmonious. (http://www.philmology.com/?p=1305)

However, Doran's minimalist presentation, although it has lost its immediacy as a play, characterized by its simplicity and strong performances is largely a successful one. Doran uses a single-camera setup to film this modern adaptation and in choosing this, Holly Parsons argues that, he aims "to some extent construct an imagined spectator, a person who was never there. We might think about how camera placement, sound quality and other technical factors position the viewer in relation to the filmed performance"(http://findingshakespeare.co.uk/the-plays-the-film-hamlet-20082009). The

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single-camera technique is especially preferred by the director if specific camera angles and camera movements are deemed crucial to the success of the production. This technique allows the director to present fast-paced actions which are normally contradictory to his hesitation and state of inaction. The filming method which Nelson explains is "more typical of television (cutting between mid-shots and occasionally moving in close) to capture the nuances of the performances and the play's theme of madness" which is directly following the hypotext whereas Dadgar's *Hamlet* is less affiliated with this theme.



Figure 6: Hamlet with Super 8 camera

Elizabeth Klaver (2000) is right when she describes how a film incorporates other media such as a play or a painting, explaining that "the other media have to be first translated into electronic beams of light before they can be visually represented. For this reason, film and television appear to absorb other media more completely into their performative grounds" (93-94). Doran's *Hamlet* was set in "the glossy black mirror-like floor and the huge full-height mirrors at the back of the stage, which shattered dramatically when Polonius was shot" (cited in RSC website).



Figure 7: mirrors shattered



Figure 8: Mirrors shattered

However, the televisual text has some scenes performed outside a theater stage and in that closely resembles a cinematic text. BBC version of *Hamlet* is considered to be categorized as medial transposition when Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is transmitted from a verbal text into a performative one exclusively to broadcast on television. This is different

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from Dadgar's play on stage because as Sidney Homan (1992) believes "television can be distant and cold" (118). While everything in the play is life-sized, the televisual text is two-dimensional and will not be able to sense the presence of the audience. Moreover, the employment of CCTV and the Super 8 camera that Hamlet uses to record his uncle's reaction of guilt enhances this distance, as Nelson's disapproving tone shows, "perhaps in an attempt to impose a heightened filmic sensibility upon proceedings. And yet, while such imagery may reinforce the element of surveillance, their clumsy and intrusive execution is more disruptive than innovative". The atmosphere of surveillance and paranoia is thus enhanced and vividly conveyed to the spectators while in the Shakespearean hypotext this atmosphere is mostly created through Rosencrantz and Guildenstern when spying on Hamlet.

David Tenant, who stars as Hamlet, is not like Shakespeare's Hamlet dressed in 17th-century costumes, or in ragged shorts of Dadgar's Hamlet, but in a T-shirt and parka, representing a modern man in the modern world. His refreshing humor and sarcasm seems to befitting the indecisive yet philosophical persona. His displays of what Harold Bloom has called a "proleptic imagination" is repetitively shown in his language while using various metaphoric references. "This is a Hamlet of quicksilver intelligence, mimetic vigour and wild humour," wrote Billington: "one of the funniest I've ever seen." Tenant gives the audience an insight to the character's multiple personalities with his temperamental mood swings, his mad capriciousness and his playful revenge-plan.



Figure 9: Modern Hamlet in a T-shirt



Figure 10: playful Hamlet

Another strong choice in BBC adaptation is Patrick Stewart's double-casting as Claudius and the Ghost although he is skillfully able to present the personality differences very clearly. Aaron Cutler describes him as "a majestic Shakespearean actor (his *Macbeth* will be out later this year), and here he plays the new king Claudius as a sweet, catering plutocrat, deeply enamored with Hamlet's mother Gertrude and ruling a kingdom for her. His Ghost, by contrast, is staunch and stiff, a crusty monster, shouting, whispering, and oh-ohing as he urges Hamlet to avenge him" (http://www.slantmagazine.com/dvd/review/hamlet-1736). This choice very well

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addresses the fact that Hamlet's personality resembles more his uncle than his father although their appearances as brothers are extremely alike.



Filmic Text: Tardid

Films or –pejoratively- 'mixed' art are cultural sign systems which are repetitively characterized by their intermedial nature. As an autonomic entity, films now need a wider media-specific system to be studied and commented on. As Mitchell (1994) puts it

> The pictorial turn has engendered a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies and figurality. It is the realization that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.), and that visual experience or "visual literacy" might not be fully explicable on the model of textuality. (16)

This definition problematizes the interplay of the textual entity, audience as well as visual experience that brings into mind the problem of presenting past in the present along with the problem of media-specificity while being condemned for intermediality. The problem is more evident when it comes to the 'writer's movies' which refers to those adapted texts that make meaning through the referential relationship with the verbal hypotext. In these adaptations, the conceptuality of literature is transformed to the visuality of film (a phenomenon the many spectators of cinema would appreciate).*Tardid*, Vazuzh Karim Massihi's film, is an adaptation of Hamlet which falls in the in-between-ness of literature and cinema.

As any adaptation, it raises issues regarding medium specificity, mediality and the correspondence with intermedial space. With the first encounter with the filmic text, the title (Tardid which mean Doubt), the spectator can make up a metaphor and a correlation with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. "As a thematic figure, it interprets the hesitation of the characters to step out from their lethargic environment" (Hajnal Kiraly, 202) which keeps them in an intriguing corrupted world (the castle-like house and the company). The thematic metaphor of doubt builds up a connection with the demolished movie theater whose dark environment represent the moral devaluation of many characters such as the

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uncle (Khosro) or Mahtab's father (Polonius) or even the doctor being the representative of an elite world. This demolished, dark cinema can also represent the self-referentiality of this medium as Modernist art, although the ruins readily bring the frail status of this art in the contemporary socio-political Iranian environment to mind. The variety of symbols and metaphors taken from the hypotext try to reconcile differences between the literary text and film.

The characters in both the verbal play and the cinematic text get involved within the network of knowledge-power relation. When they correspond to the semantic of 'thinking in perspective,' their connection with knowing and desire becomes clearer. If we can divide the interior and exterior world in the film, the interior world of the house or the company is set inside the frame of lack of knowledge or doubt or hypocrisy (which acts in a blindfold of knowing/pretending not knowing). Siavash and Mahtab both cross this threshold which makes them able to see or to understand the situation. The first window to open to the situation is through dreams. Mitchell (1984, 505) categorizes dreams as mental images. The dream Siavash/Hamlet has about his father initiates a visual modality. The dreams as well as the exorcism ritual (both mental images) are visual elements that connect with understanding and power. The house and the company are like traps in which Siavash and Mahtab are kept ignorant. Once they step out of it (as when they are in Sistan and Baluchestan or the cinema or the hotel room), the reality becomes identifiable even though they are in the gloomy ruins of the cinema. Both the hero and the heroin understand the close connection with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* so they desire to change their fates. As a drama of hesitation, both in the hypotext and Karim-Masihi's adaptation, the protagonists struggle between action and observation. Analyzing this type of drama, Kiraly (ed Ellestrom, 2010, 208) argues that

> The drama of hesitation is not only that of characters, but evidently that of the 'two face' of the medium: showing (or opening a window to) reality (the documentary tradition established by the Lumiere brothers) and telling a story, creating a diegesis, the illusion, the magic of another world often associated with the pioneering work of Melies. The film chooses the 'descriptive mode', thus creating or modeling a *visionary world*.

The visionary world that Siavash is involved in (or repetitively observing or imagining) is the last refuge he takes for his hidden psychological desires or fatalism he believes in. This visionary realm creates a space where he is roaming about in confusion and doubt, a realm with no demarcated borders between reality and imagination. Karim-Masihi's *Tardid* attempts to create the reality by showing, while repeatedly the characters associate themselves with the theatricality of *Hamlet*. The film ends with a close-up of Mahtab being reflected in the pond, blurring our view of the reality and situating her in the symbolic world. The last scene once again shatters the material reality that a film claims. Mahtab becomes an image, a reflection in water that questions the transparency of reality.

The semiotic analysis of the filmic text and the Shakespearean play is very helpful in opening a new angle to this medial transformation. Analogously, the three-act structure

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of the filmic text adapts well to the three-act structure of the original text. The introduction of the film is where all the characters such as Siavash, Mahtab, Khosro, MahTal'at and others are introduced to the spectators. This point sets up the main conflict (Is the uncle the murderer? And how to take revenge?) while in the confrontation point, the characters start dealing with it and the challenge has to be kept moving forward in order not to bore the audience (at times by using subplots or character behavior). The last act, Act III, presents the final confrontation of the movie, followed by the denouement. This act is the shortest because the hero is face to face with the villain and has to take action. At this point, Siavash has to confront his corrupted uncle, however, his too-passive-personality makes him less effective than Ophelia and practically this is the police (or just luck) that resolves the problem. Although alterations have been made to the role of characters and their prominence or extent of presence, the main structure of the play is almost preserved.

As a fictional film which tells a fictional story or a narrative, *Tardid* tries toconvince theaudience that the unfolding fiction is real through various believable characters, narratives, mise-en-scène, camera movement, sound, and lighting. To maintain a sense of realism, great detail is included in the screenplay, which avoids form deviating from the predetermined behaviors of a classical screenplay as opposed to the behavior of documentaries or experimental films. As a mode of classical form, *Tardid* imitates human perception. According to Deleuze "classical cinema stabilizes the image flux by creating logical connections and associations, logic driven by narrative structure" (qtd. in Harbord, 2007, 25).Siavash, Mahtab, Garu, Khosro and MahTal'at are all depicted as believable characters who are engaged in a network of a murder and revenge story. To enhance this sense of reality, Siavash is informed not by his father's ghost roaming about, but in his dreams and then by Khalipheh who is somehow connected to the supernatural world. The events are logically presented and set of shots do not leave the audience in an ambiguity. The boundary between the imaginary and the real is clearly intact. The structure of the film, as a game of various components to be fitted together, replays the relation between indecision and strictly bounded narrative.



Figure 11: Khalipheh in Guwati ritual to exorcise the father's ghost

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The Iranian audience like any other "decodes" the story's meaning, when watching the film, taking all their own previous experiences and knowledge and subconsciously applying it to what they see. People always interpret a film with pre-existing expectations and this is metaphorically depicted within the film when Siavash finds out about the similarity of his own story with that of Hamlet. Therefore, the filmic text often reflects how spectators evaluate political, social or even economic issues or rather just observe the current economic determinism. Reversely, it also manipulates or reshapes the way the audience analyzes those issues, resulting in a cultural dynamic process sending and receiving a message.

In studying three Latin American filmic manifestations of Shakespeare, Burnett argues that "It is no longer possible to talk about Shakespeare within existing geographical and political parameters; instead alternative paradigms that acknowledge exchange must be developed,…, that stand testimony to the ethical valences of a global Shakespeare citizenship" (120). *Hamlet* seems to be the perfect palimpsest in which twenty-first-century political discussions, cultural, and social vexations in Iran and England are written and rewritten through a variety of media.

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