



Postcolonial Adaptations of *Shakespearean* Plays

CMN 3100 Literature In Motion- Final Project- Postcolonial Adaptations

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Research topics



This study primarily focuses on ***Shakespearean adaptations in non-European regions***, analyzing the translation, rewriting, and localization of Shakespeare's works in non-European film and literature to ***observe how the "European culture" represented by Shakespeare is reinterpreted in various non-European languages, media, and cultural contexts.***

Why ?

In China, "The Merchant of Venice" has been introduced by the Ministry of Education as an academic textbook in junior high schools.

Theoretical Context

World Literature & Circulation(week 5)

world literature studies how texts move across different countries and languages, not just inside one nation.

The article argues that focusing only on English and European translations hides many other routes of circulation. Our map uses this idea to show Shakespeare adaptations outside Europe, especially in Asia.

Digital Humanities, Gender & Vernacular / Decolonial Critique(week 10)

Large digital projects and world-literature syllabi often rely on centralized corpora that privilege English, European languages, and male authors.

Our project responds by focusing on non-European adaptations of Shakespeare and reading Wikidata gaps as signs of missing languages and women writers.

Data|Collection

Data Source and Tools

Main data source: **Wikidata**

Adjustment of Scope

We expanded the scope from “Asia + specific plays” to
“non-European regions + all Shakespeare-related adaptations”

After re-running the query, we obtained more data from **Japan, China, Korea, India, etc.**, which provided a better foundation for our map visualization

01

02

03

Initial Design & Problem Encountered

Initial plan: focus only on **Asian regions + a few specific Shakespeare plays**

After running the first query, we found that the **number of results was much lower than expected** and many Asian adaptations were **missing or incomplete** in Wikidata

data cleaning

Tool and Purpose

We used OpenRefine to clean raw data from Wikidata and turn a messy table into a standardized dataset for analysis and StoryMaps.

Standardizing Key Fields

We normalized place names (country/city) and unified different date formats into one comparable format. When we first imported the dataset into the map, some points were missing because latitude and longitude were incomplete or inconsistent, so we checked and completed the coordinates to ensure every item appeared correctly in StoryMaps.

Links and Data Gaps

We noticed that some items had external links while others did not. We read this uneven linking as a sign of unequal visibility in the digital record: unlinked items are harder to verify and more likely to be overlooked.

Data Visualization

1. Symbols
2. Layers
3. Time Slider



Key Findings

- Adaptations are found in major regions worldwide.
- Most countries have localized rewriting examples.
- There is no single cultural center → a multi-center dissemination pattern.

StoryMap Design



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Introduction

This study aims to explore the postcolonial recontextualization of Shakespeare in non-European countries, analyzing how these adaptations, through cross-linguistic, cross-media, and cross-temporal means, present local cultural absorption, identity negotiation, and even cultural resistance. By comparing adaptation strategies in different non-European countries, this project will reveal how Shakespeare's "universality" is redefined, challenged, and recreated in non-European contexts.



Merchant of Venice illustrations

Why this topic

Our choice to study adaptations of Shakespearean plays in non-European regions stems not only from academic interest but also from our personal experiences. All three members of our research team grew up in the Chinese education system, where Shakespeare appeared as a classic of world literature in compulsory reading during junior high school; for example, *The Merchant of Venice* was often used as a window into understanding "European culture" and "universal values."

Through this educational experience, we gradually realized that Shakespeare was not passively received in China, but rather reinterpreted and integrated into the local context. Therefore, we hope to further explore whether similar recontextualization phenomena exist in other non-European regions.

Map



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Haider
India (2014)
"Haider" is a modern adaptation of William Shakespeare's tragedy *"Hamlet,"* set in 1995 during the Kashmir conflict ravaged by insurgency.

Sidecar

Options

1 2 3 4 5

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Haider
Replacing the Danish royal intrigue with the political conflict in Kashmir, revealing state...

uMahatha
Placed within the history of the Zulu Kingdom, the power struggle metaphorically represents...

Romeo y Julieta de Buenos Aires
Replacing European tragedy with the identity of a colonial city and the mood of tangos to express...

Al Hamlet Summit
Using court intrigue as a metaphor for the political realities of Middle Eastern countries,...

Throne of Blood くものすじょう

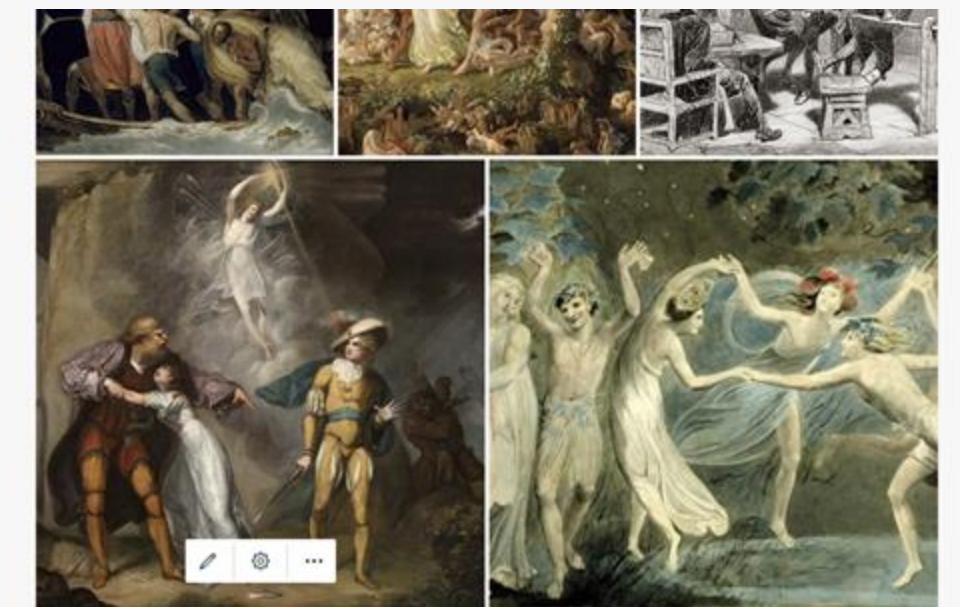
Map tour

Options

1 2 3 4 5

Analyze

Our selection of Shakespearean adaptations from non-European countries is not merely to showcase different national reinterpretations of the classics, but rather to reveal a common phenomenon: when Shakespeare left Europe, he was no longer a passively imported "universal classic," but rather reinterpreted and translated within his native context. Therefore, our research focuses not only on how Shakespeare influenced the world, but also on how the world rewrote Shakespeare.

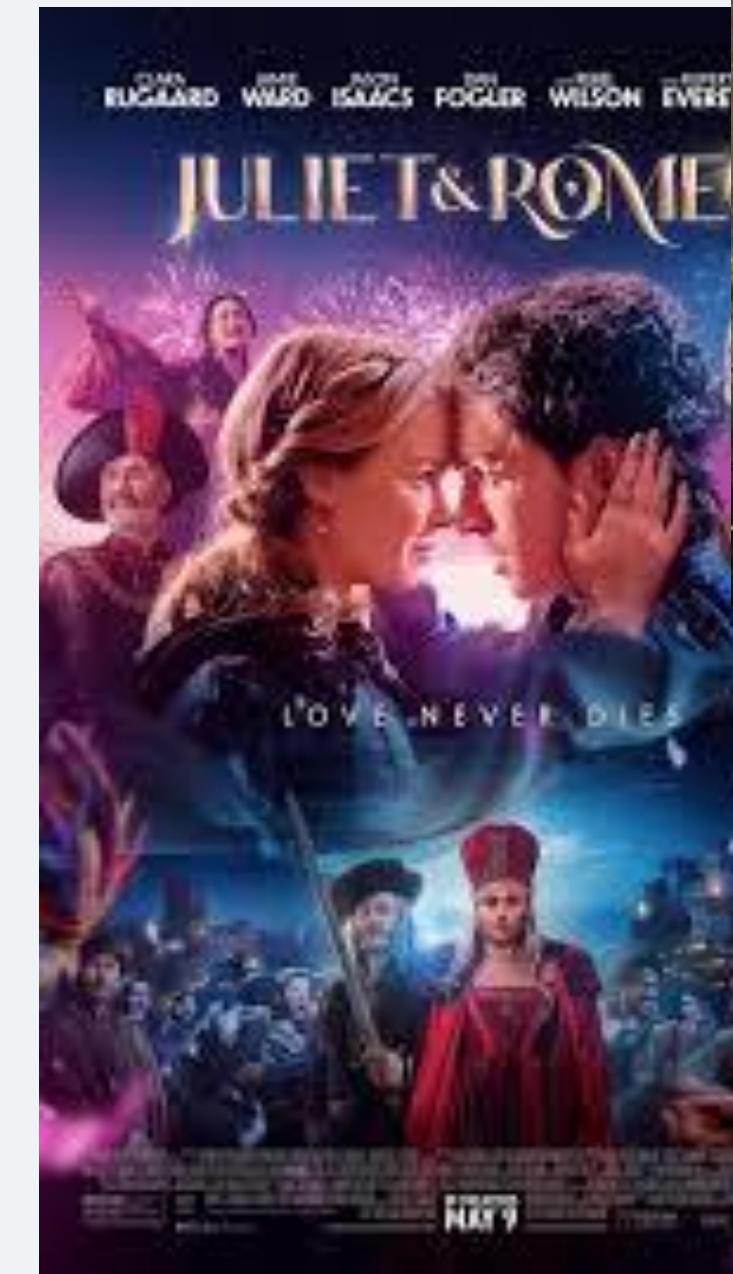


Illustrations of some Shakespearean works

Data Analysis

Key Trends in Non-European Shakespeare Adaptations

- The data clearly shows a "multi-center" pattern.
- Film and TV rise sharply in 20th century, visual media emphasize local cultural symbols.



Theoretical Reflections

- Postcolonial theory shows that adaptations are active cultural negotiations, not passive borrowing.
xxxxxxxxx
- These observations mirror Shakespeare's canonization: Western standards still define "legitimate culture."
- Theory becomes a tool to understand modern cultural inequality, not just a past colonialism.

Conclusion

- Non-European adaptations reveal how cultures absorb, question, and reshape “world classics.”
- Real-life inequalities (language bias, institutional expectations) echo the same power structures shaping Shakespeare’s global status.
- Data is obtained based solely on region.

THANK YOU

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