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"Reflections on Four Productions of *Hamlet* in the Digital Era: A Postmodern Perspective."

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Abstract

The paper aims at handling sample digital performances of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. They are tackled within the framework of the postmodern theory. The fact that *Hamlet* is a widely popular play helps to illustrate the tinge of distinction each production has-especially the digital one. Critical analysis of the performances handled is illustrated, with emphasis on each production's peculiarity. Laurel, Baudrillard, and Schechner are among the ones who have theories regarding the digital realm and are referred to in this paper. On the one hand, the paper attempts to display the somewhat correlation between the digital performances of *Hamlet* generally, and Aristotle's theory. On the other hand, it refers to the term simulacra in the digital realm with reference to Baudrillard. Naturally, one of Schechter's productions of *Hamlet* could not be but handled due to its novelty when it was performed. Cumberbatch's and Essiedu's performances of *Hamlet* are introduced as well, followed by a reference to the transformative nature of such productions. The Hamnet Players' performance of *Hamlet* is the last one illustrated to reveal that the text is no longer the entire focus of the players who may depend heavily on improvisation and wit. Stuart Harris has led the performance using IRC (that is: Internet Relay Chat) and the audiences should be well-informed of the IRC text-language and the original play's incidents. Such production can be regarded as a parody of the Shakespearean play. The paper ends with a conclusion that displays the further possibilities of the performance's theories.

Keywords: Hamlet's Digital Performance, Postmodernism, the Virtual, Transformation, Simulacra.

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Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization, there have been many attempts to present human lives in many facets among which, theatre is a distinguished one. Therefore; the correlation between man and theatre is a substantial one since the latter has been considered a forum for expressing one's ideas and thoughts. Theatre has always been and will be a fascinating, attracting, and illuminating form of entertainment as well.

As life develops rapidly, it undergoes vast changes in the forms and techniques of the plays presented on the stage. Huge developing standards and paradigms have corresponded with the era's transformational rhythms and the particular demands of the audience. Consequently, changes have extended to influence the actor-audience relation as well as the relation among characters on the stage according to the dramatist and stage production directors' views as well. Recently, the techniques of performance have developed in an unsurpassed way that even a decade can alter theatre as a whole and the way in which plays are presented.

Within such framework questions may be raised in an attempt to reach a reasonable conclusion: Can Shakespeare's plays, the greatest classics of all ages - and in the course of history - be performed variably? What are the forms of representation available nowadays? Do they correspond to the technological developments of the present era? Can the digital performances of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a model of the Shakespearean classical plays be true? If so, will the digital performance of *Hamlet* influence the audiences the same way regardless of the audiences' flair, culture and willingness to accept and interact with the performance presented before them? Will this be the perfect style? What is the theory that

can encompass such changes and varieties? I end my questions with Aldous Huxley's notable question: "Will the stories brought to us by the new representational technologies 'mean anything' in the same way that Shakespeare's plays mean something, or will they be 'told by an idiot?' (Huxley, 1953).

Shakespeare's Digital Performances

As Shakespeare's plays have been performed digitally, a reference is a must to the definition of digital performance which is essential to the present study. According to S. Dixon 'digital performances' include: "All performance works where computer technologies play a *key* role rather than a subsidiary one in content, techniques, aesthetics or delivery forms" (p.3). He goes further to enumerate a number of theatre forms such as live theater, dance and performance art that incorporate projections to enhance his idea. The use of computer sensing techniques as well as installations in the play's performance can demonstrate that it is a digital one according to him. He states that to have an access through the computer screen using internet can be regarded as a kind of digital performance. Dixon highlights the important role played by computers in performance. Likewise, S. Dixon further asserts that the computer becomes a "significant …agent of performative action" (p.3).

As such, a sort of vagueness in the traditional theatrical terms such as: scripts, acting, visual art, communication relative to theatre, video and performance art does appear nowadays. Theatre therefore can be considered a collective art form which may combine music, dance and other forms of art including sculpture for instance. J. Reaves advocates that one should be elastic in approaching theatre so as to erase the rigidity of distinction between disciplines which is based on specific terms. Gradually it becomes hard to distinguish them and the peculiarity of each has nearly collapsed as he contends. A call for widening the scope of the term 'theater' is perhaps present when J. Reaves poses the following question: "Why not claim all interactive art in the name of theater?

The plea, therefore, is for shedding light on the electronic or the digital performances or productions as they depend on interaction

and develop rapidly in our digital age. As M. Causey contends: "Theatre as a medium … subsumes or is subsumed by other media including television, film, radio, print and computer-aided hyper-media" (p.29). As such, the borders between theatre and performance will gradually vanish due to the previously- mentioned notion according to Causey, who considers the technology used in the digital world a tool of enchantment and experimentation rather than a means to reshape an artistic or social philosophy. Hence, "Performance has taken on the ontology of the technological" as he further asserts (p.29).

According to S. Dixon, with the internet spread "the digital performance is rationalized by many as being already ubiquitous, embracing multiple communicational and presentational aspects of electronic everyday life" (p.3). The term 'digital' is therefore an exceedingly potential technique of 'encoding sensory data' to convey them in a skillful way. The essential components of that term are multimedia and interactivity as stated previously. Both can precisely describe the world through the use of vast–scaled theatrical effects that may become characters on stage as Dixon explains (xi-xii).

Aristotle's Theory and the Digital Performances

It is said that the literary field is broad enough to embrace all disciplines and the novel techniques employed nowadays. Therefore; *Hamlet*'s digital performance may be interpreted in terms of Aristotle's old and well-known theory of drama – indeed the basis of any thorough investigation – and in the light of the post-modernism theory as well.

However, though Laurel handles the present dispute of how Aristotle's theory can be applied to our time, it must be said that it is not appropriate for application on all productions chosen.

Laurel's view is to consider the computer generally a forum for sharing one's activities and scenes. The playwrights are similar to computer designers within that context. According to Laurel, the central ideas of Aristotle can be applied to computers and therefore the context becomes generally identical with poetic interaction. One

can use the internet to achieve the required purgation effect of Aristotle accordingly. An action can be represented by a performer or by a player in the human-computer interactivity world. Within the digital realm, both mimic and internal representations are present and the internet can be regarded as the virtual performance of the self. For instance, mimic representation takes place in art as well as in human-computer interaction and that representation may be a real thing or a virtual one. Generally, two types of representations do exist: internal, and external. For instance, a page icon can be considered the external representation of a certain document. Both the icon and the document have internal representation through the code which governs how they look and behave. The internal representation is the potential that is revealed in the external representation.

According to Laurel, A play may be mimesis of events that are taken from history or that are entirely imaginative. Laurel enlists six structural elements in drama that correspond to human-computer interaction. The action or plot of a play - which is theoretically assumed to be the same within every performance - varies in every performance led by the designer and the one who interacts when using computers. The traits of characters or figures are deduced from the agent's choice in drama, whereas though they are the same as in drama, they entail a certain process of both human and computer basis within human-computer interaction.

Thought is the third element and it derives from inner progression through cognition, emotion and reason. As such it leads to the final decision or choice in drama. In human-computer interaction it derives from human and computer sources. Language is based on the variety and planning of words in drama whereas in human-computer interaction language is based on the signs as they include the verbal, the auditory, the visual facets as well as nonverbal ones if semiotics is considered.

As far as melody is concerned in drama, it includes what can be heard with special emphasis on speech. The interactive human-computer process involves pattern in a sensory way. The spectacle

is the final element and it includes whatever can be seen on the stage, whereas in human-computer interaction, as Laurel contends, the sensory aspect of the action represented includes the physical, the visual, kinaesthetic and auditory modes (p.58).

For instance, according to Laurel, the plot pattern in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* could be explained as the clash of forces that fluctuates between moral thinking, impulsive action and deceptive manipulation. Within such framework, the principal figures make their choices. *Hamlet* sways between over thinking and impulsive action in quest for his father's revenge. He even resorts to deception in assuming madness and in arranging the mouse-trap or the play–within-play (pp.101-2).

Claudius too is deceptive firstly. Then he is afflicted with temporary moral thoughts and finally he becomes impulsive in poisoning the swords. The audience knows something unknown to the characters. Therefore, there is a kind of arrangement made by a major character which is ruined suddenly at the end of scene. The pattern then involves parts that are reshaped through characters' reversal of roles in a particular manner (p.102).

Each scene has its own self-similarity in relation to the whole play though the pattern of the scene may seek to join parts. Therefore, the exposition of the play is made of a number of incidents while the rising action includes smaller incidents that have a greater value than those of the exposition. "The smaller components of a given type of action tend to reflect "self-similarity at scale". As such, "Plays can be seen to employ structural patterns in the same way that music employs themes and motifs" as explained by Laurel (p.101).

Though Laurel's argument appears reasonable, according to M. Causey, the author of *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture,* Laurel "makes a fatal error in using Aristotle's *Poetics* as a model for shaping narrative flow in interactive and virtual environments, thereby closing off any radical potential for virtual performance by relying on traditional narrative"(p.51).That is to say; for the sake of commercial game creation or story-telling Aristotle's theory may be

effective though for a metaphysical exploration of humanity, artists and playwrights are in need of a new aesthetics of the virtual as Heims argues (pp.146-7). They need to develop new ideas on narrativity and subjectivity, to reveal their ideological bases and call for social reshape as Causey further explains (p.61).

BODY AND SIMULACRA IN THE DIGITAL REALM

In the digital performance, the concept of *body* has always been the core of theorists' research. Their main task has been to answer the question: What is body? According to Ihde, the author of *Bodies in Technology*, the body can be classified into three categories; the physical, the cultural or the social, and the third one is called the technological which exists in a third dimension, and goes far beyond the others by using various technologies. Hence it is the 'virtual'. He further asserts that the main objective "of virtual embodiment is to become the perfect simulacrum of full, multisensory bodily action" (p.7).

Dixon contends that in postmodern interpretation, according to Baudrillard and others, the word *simulacrum* is used to mark a very precise, characteristic or distinctive creation of the technological age, a unique new shape of object or representation formed without "a real- world referent" (p.143).

This leads to Baudrillard's notable argument in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981: 1994) which handles the role of signs or images and explains their correlation to contemporary society. According to Baudrillard, the present reality has been substituted with signs and the human experience is a simulation of reality. Simulacra are not mere representations of reality in media. The simulacra of Baudrillard are culminated in the images of culture and media that create perceived reality and develop an understanding of our lives. Simulacra does not develop naturally from simulation. He explains: "The most beautiful allegory of simulation … has now come full circle for us and possess nothing but the discrete charm of second order simulacra" (p. 1). That is to say; they are not mere authentic representation of the original. Signs and images do not show us true reality but rather refer to the existence of a different reality that

cannot be summarized. Consequently, the meaningful has become meaningless. That is the precession of simulacra (p.1).

Baudrillard and Galser (1981:1994) handle four phases of the sign-order. The first phase is the authentic copy of reality at which the sign or the image is "a reflection of profound reality" (p.6). In the second phase the image "masks and denatures a profound reality" (p.6). That is to say; the image distorts reality in such a way that we believe it is unfaithful representation of reality. In the third stage, the image is devoted to appear as a faithful representation or copy of reality. However, it is without original. The reality is absent. The fourth phase reveals that, it is mere simulation, a pure simulation in which the sign or image reflects not reality whatsoever, but rather other signs. One cannot distinguish the real from the artificial as Baudrillard assumes. It is its own pure simulacrum (p.6).

Auslander in *Theory for Performance Studies* writes that "contemporary culture can no longer distinguish image from reality" (p.56). On the other hand, Dixon explains that the word simulacrum is applied progressively to cover any and all images related to media as well as mimic forms: "graphic, photographic, filmic, televisual and digital" (143). The term 'simulacrum' thus becomes applied to everything that is not "real" or relative to media as he elaborates (p.143). This asserts the previously handled argument by Baudrillard (1981:1994) in *Simulacra and Simulation*-translated by Glaser in which he argues that "simulation …is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (p.1). Mitchell goes further to trace the gradual erosion of the previous distinction between the digital and the physical bodies, the virtual realities and the real life. He asserts that we have been merged into computer networks and man has become part and parcel of the network.

Though the alternate body represented by the virtual one appears to be a new contrivance in the performance realm, it can be seen early in drama. According to Dixon "The virtual body's status as an alternate body is nothing new in the field of theater and performance" since, it can be seen in "masked representations of

Gods, spirits, demons in tribal dances and rituals… and the magical creatures of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" (pp.239-240). He writes that contemporary performance in many cases centres on "an abnormal, dysfunctional diseased or abject body" (p.240). Perhaps, the performance may be likened to the body since it has been extended gradually and has been altered due to its presence in the space of the digital.

A contemporary performance may be judged in the light of "the aesthetic gestures" as stated by Causey. The notion of material body has been enlarged and remodelled through technology. Therefore, what controls or rules the way of thought and communication as well as the culture is the "televisual". The latter is the basic shape of the technological or digital representation. Therefore, there is an inevitable point or moment when the human and machine unite within such context as Causey explains (p.16). Furthermore, he argues that the live incidents and the appearance of the now are what remain in the body of performance, which he regards as a dead one in the process of being driven in the body of technology (p.55)**.**

BAUDRILLARD AND SIMULACRA

Within the virtual realm, According to Baudrillard "a simulacrum is an image or representation of something" and in postmodernity, it has become to be known as the "image, semblance or appearance" as Pawlett states (p.196).

Baudrillard & Glaser (1991/1994) in *Simulacra and Simulation* demonstrate how in our postmodern world, the simulation is the corner stone of performance not the real. The term simulacrum derives from the Latin simulare meaning to 'make like' or simulate as defined in *the Baudrillard Dictionary,* (p. 196). As stated before, in *Simulacra and Simulation,* Baudrillard & Glaser (1991/1994) tackle four successive phases of simulacra. Baudrillard holds the view that the image firstly is taken as 'the reflection of a profound reality'. Then the image masks and denatures a profound reality'. Thirdly, Baudrillard argues that the image also 'masks the *absence* of a profound reality', and finally,

with simulation, the image 'has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum' (p.6). These stages are not historical but rather are regarded as tendencies within the images itself. Disneyland, According to Baudrillard, for instance, is no longer a false representation of reality but rather it conceals the fact that the real has become no longer real (p.12-13). That is to say; America is like Disney Land, in that, it is perceived and understood through simulacra (images) such as news and documentary images, tourist images, cinema and TV images, that are dealt with and consumed beforehand. Such images come first before visiting or living in America. In other words; the simulacrum becomes the 'real'. It denotes the fundamental absence of the 'real' that is obscured by the image or the simulacrum.

This argument may pave the way for the future examination of the dangers of the digital in an attempt to disclose them in a glaring light. The use of the digital in performance has proved to be entertaining and amusing. However, according to Baudrillard & Benedict in *the Transparency of Evil* (1990/1993): it threatens one's intelligence. Through the use of machines or computers, one tends to lose responsibility towards knowledge and stops thinking, relying on the machine. The use of the 'virtual' makes the actor's thinking delayed for a passage of time (pp.51-52).

Within this context, Richard Schechner's early production of Hamlet can be regarded as a substantial one that demands examination.

<div align="center">Schechner's Production of Hamlet (1999)</div>

Richard Schechner has a great role in the emergence and development of performance studies. He explains that the absolute recognition of particular theories has led to some sort of infertility within the performance studies as stated by Dixon (p.135). He calls for a new hypothesis in the way one approaches the performance of plays, as Dixon contends, since it is entirely needed within the digital performance (156). The digital is, therefore, according to (Bolter et al.,) the way to cross the borders between the physical and the virtual (p.123).

Simulation is a significant concept of Baudrillard's theory and can be applied to Schechner's production of *Hamlet.* The Latin meaning of simulation is simply 'to copy' and the modern usage of English has to do with falseness and pretense. Recently it refers to creating a copy of something that works through artificial or abstract environment to see how it works and get glimpse about its effect. It also refers to an audio-visual case that attempts to mimic reality though it has no connection with the reality it presents. Such experience can be seen for instance; in flight simulator or video games. That case or experience can heighten the senses and be more real than real: hyperreal. The distinction between reality and copy disappears creating what we call simulacrum – a representation produced by simulation. Such representation is a copy that has changed from the original reality. (Wernick, p.199).

One has to acknowledge that Schechner's direction of *Hamlet'*s production at the Shanghai Theatre: "*Hamlet: That is the Question"* is skilfully notable and can be interpreted in terms of the Baudrillardian theory.   Schechner's production is not simple imitation of reality but a simulation of that reality.

Part of the greatness of such performance is that the nature of the play is fused within the local culture of China in which the production has taken place presenting another type of reality or hyperreality.   Different cultures have been merged within that production despite the existence of clashes. As such, the frontiers or borders between the cultures have been crossed by Schechner. According to (Jiancan et al.) "the notion that cultural boundaries can be crossed, and that whatever the conflicts, different cultures can be fused" is presented (pp.103-4).

New methods are introduced in the production to help the audience reconsider it. Part of Schechner's technicalities is to present an intercultural perception using rich symbolism or images. He, therefore, presents the plot of Hamlet with a lot of mops at the back of the white stage. Obviously, he highlights the fact that the whole atmosphere should be cleaned of the confusion and perplexity of the Shakespearean play. Hence, such production motivates the

audience's imagination (p.104). Moreover, mops are used every now and then in Schechner's production. Perhaps the substantial example is when Hamlet says his great soliloquy 'to be or not to be.' As the lights fade, all the actors clean the dark palace with mops. Such action is symbolic of the fact that the world needs purity and transparency. Simultaneously, mop action satirizes the awful struggle for political influence and authority in the play. When Hamlet sends a mop as a present to Ophelia, the symbol's connotation is vague: Is it a barrier in the course of their love or a mere tool to clean their love path from corruption or does it have both implications? It is red which symbolizes good fortune in China and as such there is a tinge of intercultural significance to it (p.105). Different viewpoints are illustrated with regard to Schechner's production of which the following are representative ones. In *The Rise of Performance Studies,* (Jiancun et al.,) scrutinize Lv Xiaoping's criticism of Schechner's use of multimedia in *Hamlet* since they were similarly used at the beginning of the twentieth century. The production accordingly misses the 'aesthetic' quality and can be seen as a game rather than as art (p.103).

On the other hand, Gui Ying in *The Rise of Performance Studies* argues that she has encountered "the unpredictability of the theatre" in watching that performance. The production accordingly is full of excitement and vitality through "the use of experimental theater as a construction of social emotion" (p.103). Therefore, Hamlet must be performed between past and present; there should be a certain correlation between present realities and the temporal context of the work itself according to her.

"In the DVD edition of the play, Schechner offered some answers in a preface: "My Hamlet is different", as cited in (Jiancun et al., p.104). The whole stage is wrapped in white to emphasize that: "The royal family has nothing to do with purity" (p.104). As such, Shchechner embodies the strength of the struggle for authority and power. He further explores fresh spaces of performance and rediscovers the already established ones, assuming that: "containment is the enemy". Schechner asserts that when being

interviewed by Julian Beck and Judith Malina (as cited in Jiancun et al., p.104).

According to Baudrillard's theory, one is surrounded by images and symbols that are not connected to reality but rather they create a new reality themselves. Drawing on this theory, it is part of Schechner's technicalities to present an intercultural perception using rich symbolism. The production becomes a hyperreal world where the audience has his own experience thorough images and symbols. The latter have nothing to do with reality. Schechner, therefore, presents the plot of Hamlet with a lot of mops at the back of the white stage as stated before.

Herein Schechner makes use of four cameras working simultaneously with the director's instructions: a new way to "break the old frameworks ...in order to build new ones" (107). Two screens are placed on the theatre walls wherewith Schechner modifies the images of the cameras. Then he projects them on the two screens which is partly a film technique used within the theatrical production. As such: "the strategies and mechanisms of the production" reflect "the director's ideas" as well (p.107). The Camera shots according to Shi Hao are like "spy glasses" (Jiancun et al., p. 107). They are part of Schechner's way to underscore the want for privacy in the world.

Schechner is for the emphasis of the present on the incidents of the original play to create hyperreality. Ophelia for instance; appears as a modern figure full of passion and strength. As such Ophelia is completely different from the fragile passive Shakespearean one. That is Schechner's way of presenting the idea of gender's equality (p.108).

It can be said that Schechner's *Hamlet* is a simulation of reality not a representation of it. As such, the performance does not deal with historical events or present a specific time or place accurately. It presents a hyperreal that is more real than the real itself. The distinction between reality and simulation is blurred consequently.

Verily, Schechner's efforts in the field of performance help to enhance the notion that it is entirely transformative. Furthermore,

Schechner's performance puts into effect the postmodern approach which tends to highlight the endless ways ideas are reintroduced and represented on the stage.

Cumberbatch's *Hamlet* (2015)

Another important production which has its peculiarities is Benedict Cumberbatch's 2015 performance of *Hamlet.* It has been transmitted live across the U.K. and around the world. As explained by the Guardian critic L. Gardner, "the play may be the thing but in the era of NT Live, it's the cinema that is king." The production marks the integration of live broadcasting together with digital methodologies and technicalities whereby "Dynamic projections" are associated with live video feeds, as stated by Gardner.

According to the Guardian's critic *Hamlet*'s hero Benedict Cumberbatch is "an infinitely touching prince" and the performance has been shown to world audiences through the use of screens across the U.K. Moreover, the live screening of Hamlet around the world is perhaps a fresh technique in the domain of performance at that time. The British audiences have witnessed the production with an atmosphere of celebration. She contends that the target has been the audiences as "so many people across the country were sitting down at the same time to watch a Shakespeare's play". The production itself has been described as being "monumental", and "a feat". "Monumental scale and flourish" have their own effect through "the eye of the camera" as stated by Gardner, who explains that the production offers accessibility to many audiences who cannot afford to pay for the theatre. The childhood - playing is the recurrent image represented on the stage by Hamlet, who firstly appears wearing his soldier's uniform or the "cloak marked King" in confrontation with his old friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Such image helps the actor to have a bright looking. Hamlet is "touching" as his actions are understood in terms of "arrested emotional development" as Gardner explains. He used to be the fair boy of the kingdom and he attempts to be mature in that performance.

In this context, the cameras are also used tactfully to reveal Hamlet's inner struggle on his face and the swift changes of his mind. As such, Gardner argues that: it is "a rare production by a British director who knows that embalmed Shakespeare is dead Shakespeare. Hamlet needs to be seen and not just heard and that it must be reinvented for every generation". The production is therefore "distinctive and memorable" though it has been accused by several critics of being overly cinematic. However, "its visual swagger, with its indigo hues, comes into its own on the screen". Gardner goes further to defend it illustrating that the production is set primarily for theatre audiences and is not like previous shows that have concentrated more on the live screening and the global audiences.

Ophelia here appears before drowning playing the piano and seems to be a little "doll-like" character in a "grown-up" world full of violence and plots she cannot figure out as Gardner contends. On the other hand, Elsinore's residents seem dwarfed steadily by their neighbourhood, as if individual feelings have become prohibited in the cold public spaces.

As far as Baudrillard's theory is concerned, it can be applied to Cumberbatch's production. Baudrillard's attitude is a postmodern one and according to A. MOCANU, posmodernity can be understood as a process of discovery, as well as the way of judging things while they are transformed. The way the characters of *Hamlet* are immersed into multiplicity is used to reveal the tinge of Baudrillard's postmodernism. Transformation, and involvement in multiplicity and uncertainty are basic elements to the notion of postmodernism. The atmospheres of vagueness, anticipation of evil and tension illustrate the layers of hyperreality that the play presents. Generally, Cumberbatch's production can be perceived as a simulation. The audience is soaked into an unreal world. Within this process, the distinction between reality and the world of the play is not clear to the performer as well as the audience.

The costumes are of paramount importance in the production and help create the hyperreal atmosphere. The themes of the play

are reflected in the characters' costumes. That is to say; "for important occasions the dignitaries wore old formal military jackets decorated with medals and ribbons while for day- to -day wear, the older characters wore early 20th century clothing- a WW1 reference perhaps?" as (Atkinson) suggests. They reflect the themes of war and betrayal. They emphasize the appearance versus reality theme, adding new dimension to the play and suggesting new interpretation to the characters. The scene in which Hamlet plays at war and is surrounded by real war is enhanced by such costumes. The younger characters wear modern clothes relative to the 21st century, in stark contrast to everything around them. Such costumes help present the play within contemporary light and suggest that it can be applied to our world today.

The lighting is greatly manipulated by the director within this production. During Hamlet's soliloquies, "instead of leaving Cumberbatch alone on an empty stage, the lights dimmed and all of the actors in the background moved in slow motion while Hamlet's speech took the focus in the foreground" (Atkinson).

Other technicality appears in the second act where the atmosphere is so gloomy and the floor of the hall is hidden under piles of debris to suggest metaphorically the deterioration of both Hamlet's family and the kingdom as well. It is a powerful visual image in the hyperreality the audiences experience.

In addition to the technology used in the production which includes lighting and sound effects, video projection does exist as well. The setting is a rotating platform which helps the audience to see the whole players and as such to interpret the play within the hyperreal world of uncertainty.

Baudrillard's key concept of simulation can be applied to Cumberbatch's production on the basis of the different realities it presents through the various kinds of technology and media. *Hamlet*, here is a type of simulation which is a contrived representation of reality based on mixed various technologies and cultural traditions. The production is not a real one but rather, a constructed one depending on various elements. Our own

experience of the production varies according to the set design, the lighting, the sound effects as well as Cumberbatch's own performance of the character and how he presents it. Such production affords different styles for the audience to watch the play. As such it reaches wider audience and puts into effect Baudrillard's ideas of hyperreality and simulation.

PAPA ESSIEDU'S *HAMLET* (2016) AND THE POLEMIC

Most notably presented is Paapa Essiedu's performance of *Hamlet* by Royal Shakespeare Theatre. The performance has been excessively reconsidered and reassessed both by critics and audiences as well.

M. Billington of the Guardian argues that Hamlet is shown in a novel atmosphere that is "spiritually refreshing". He leads a predominantly black group of actors within "Technicolor brightness". Though the text has not been modified completely, it is quite clear that the performance is entirely different. Billington contends that the choice of the opening scene in which Hamlet receives his degree in German and ponders in a moral way, has an overtone with Ghana's first president (Kwame Nkrumah) who returned home to Africa from London in 1949, after studying and now speaks in excessive morality. Hamlet's grasp of Time magazine with Claudius' image on the cover page reveals that he is either "a western puppet" or a "dangerous despot". However, the main message of the play is not political as one may expect, rather it is the predicament in which Hamlet has found himself in the court. One may note that Claudius has hurt Hamlet's feelings and has caused him a lot of suffering and insult that "the highly expressive" Paapa Essiedu turns to his mother saying "I shall in all my best obey you, madam" even before knowing the truth of the murderer as explained by Billington.

Hamlet here is different. He is "palpably isolated and bereft" according to Billington who contends that: what characterizes Essiedue is the sportive flair he has. For instance, "he dons a paint-daubed suit and goes around doing subversive graffiti and big, splashy canvases in order to reveal his antic disposition".

Ophelia through madness has turned to a threatening creature when she "lunges at the onlookers with undisguised menace" as illustrated by Billington. Moreover, Claudius is presented as notably self-possessed and Gertrude's presentation is very impressive especially in the closet scene when she cries out of repentance.

Laertes arrives at court by helicopter and "has a speech of fire that fain would blaze". Though the leading characters are black, "a white Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive at court with patronising tourist gifts" to reveal a sort of misleading intimacy.

The gravedigger plays two roles, one of them is that of the ghost, earlier in the performance. Though the audience anticipates silence of the gravedigger, Walters – the actor- and his helper begin their daily practices or rituals with a calypso. That is to say; the music "makes a vital contribution to a production that makes you feel, even if you are seeing Hamlet for the 50th time, that you are experiencing it anew" as Billington comments.

Finally, Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation could be seen in many ways within such performance. For instance; the production relies on specific images of Hamlet that have substituted the original ones. That is to say; the image of Hamlet while holding the skull of Yorick has become prevalent to the extent that it approaches the cliché. The production reveals the new reality or hyperreality of Hamlet who appears in modern light. The performance itself is a simulation or copy of other previous ones. Such production reveals Hamlet in the light of hyperreality by presenting and highlighting certain images that are associated with Hamlet's character over time. The production depends entirely on the soliloquy of Hamlet "to be or not to be" to the extent that such a speech comes to represent Hamlet's character. Paapa Essiedu's presentation of Hamlet is a mirror of the hyperreality he symbolizes. He has been praised for his unique presentation of Hamlet's speech. Essiedu's presentation of Hamlet's character depends on the image that he is young and sensitive. It is different from the traditional presentation of Hamlet as a discreet and thoughtful figure. Esseidu's performance emphasizes the fitness and athleticism of Hamlet

beside his intellectualism. He asserts Hamlet's youth through a number of physical movements and gestures. In this way he presents Hamlet with new perspective different from the image usually presented.

Essiedu's presentation of the famous speech 'to be or not to be' is unique and original. Using slow pace, with great stress on some words, overlapped with physical gestures, movements, and dance, he suggests that Hamlet is completely desperate and adds new layer to the character's role. Thus, he succeeds in presenting the original Hamlet within new image. As such, Hamlet can be considered a product of the hyperreality of culture nowadays. He contributes to the same culture as well with images or signifiers unique in their own. Simultaneously, the emotional and psychological states of Hamlet are marvellously presented. Essiedu displays wit and humour while tackling Hamlet's despair and loneliness.

HAMNET PERFORMANCE (1993)

One may gloss over further performances of *Hamlet* to show how their digital nature changes the way the play finally emerges. In the production of 1993 *Hamnet,* the players have relied on script partially and improvisation as well in the digital culture, that give the classical play new tint and flair. Such performance demands the knowledge of how to handle computers as well as the acquaintance with the pre-demands of the performance. Among the requirements that can be regarded as characteristics of the performance also are "irreverence, Net slang, and carnivalesque wordplay associated with collaborative online textual environment" as Dixon demonstrates (p.486).

Stewart Harris has created the Hamnet Players to perform virtual theatre or the (cyberformance) using an internet program to initiate conversation among participants. The Performance is a perfect example of how the audiences have participated in the performance briskly. Since interaction on the part of the audiences has become a necessity, therefore the director has carefully instructed them before

the performance. One should take into consideration that the participants were Westerners who have responded enthusiastically to the director's meticulous set of instructions before the performance takes place as Dixon asserts.

The concept of interactivity in virtual environments has broken down the viewer-actor's isolation and redefines the theatre. Therefore, the play's performance can be considered a fresh type of genre that relies on text primarily as well as on interactivity on the part of the audiences as well. The question that is perhaps raised is that, why there should be a script. The script is essential as it is used for the sake of improvisation. Hence; the need to watch Hamlet on the part of the audiences has turned to the tendency to become Hamlet himself within the digital environment as assumed by many among them is Jaron Lanier. The audience himself will be the other in effect. Likewise, it is notable that such performance "assert(s) postmodern hybridity" as Dixon suggests (p.488).

The performance depends on the creation of wordplay and puns together with parodies of Shakespeare using IRC (internet relay chat) software within the digital realm. Computers here become the media of the audiences' participation through which satirical parody and exaggeration are provided. The line that separates reality from simulation here is blurred. The distinction between reality and representation disappears. What remains is the simulation of Hamlet's performance and the originality becomes meaningless in such virtual world. Here, the performance corresponds to the fourth stage of simulation which bears endless copies of suggested reality. Following is a clarification of the four stages of the Baudrillardian simulation.

As Wernick states, according to Baudrillard we are in the age of simulation. There are four stages of creating simulation. The first one is made by man; an example does exist when we refer to a handmade copy of painting. The second is the one in which the mechanically reproduced copy is made and all copies are the same but still have somewhat relation to the original. The third stage as in the case of movies, is the appearance of a mechanically reproduced

copy which has no original except that within the studio of production. Here is a change takes place from the production of serial copies to the mechanically produced copies. That is the change from the second to the third order of simulation. The fourth stage is when the mechanically reproducible product is not a unique series but rather infinite possibilities do exist out of model generation. Here simulacra become viral with no referentiality (p.200). In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard & Glaser (1991/1994) assert that: "Simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false', the 'real' and the 'imaginary' (p.3). Virtual reality thus can be regarded as simulation of space and objects in space. Baudrillard points to a number of phenomena to explain this loss of distinctions between 'reality' and the simulacrum:

Within the Media environment, contemporary media such as (television, film …, the Internet) are not mainly concerned with conveying information or relating stories but rather with "interpreting our most private selves for us making us approach each other and the world through the lens of these media images" as Felluga states. It can be said, that according to Baudrillard the world is replete with simulations: "he sees a world so intensely theatrical that theater has passed over into itself" and we can no longer distinguish the theatrical from the real (Fuchs, p.151). Thus, simulation can be regarded as a mode of such performance.

DIXON AND CAUSEY AND THE CONCEPT OF TRANSFORMATION OF REALITY

The concept of reality according to Baudrillard has been developed by Causey and Dixon. Causey argues that: the integrative use of the theatre, performance and computer networks within the framework of virtuality has created new philosophical entity. The immediate performance is mixed with the transformative nature of time, space and subjectivity. They become interrelated (p.56). Herein "sensory immersion" makes such medium inherent that is to say; the vitality becomes natural and the overall process becomes entirely "experimental" (p.61) as he contends.

On the other hand, Dixon holds the view that many prolific critics miss the point that *the real has changed*. The computer and the web now are essential parts of the real. One's notion or consciousness of what is real has been consequently transformed. (p.144)

Worth mentioning is the fact that the post modernism of virtual realities should not be according to representation strategies that have already been defied by modernism. Causey is for exploring new areas whose virtuality is different. That is to say; such virtual realities will alter one's awareness of reality itself. He explains that the latter will be the experienced, unattainable "complex metaphor" of reality (p.61).

THE ALUREMENT OF THE NEW

When handling *Hamlet*'s performances, notable is the fact that even the older performances of *Hamlet* in the Elizabethan age had their own new techniques or strategies for the audiences of that time. For instance, Hamlet's soliloquies were considered new forms or technical innovations through which he embodied the Renaissance obsession with both thinking and individuality. Hamlet is alone and his speeches reflect such sense of alienation. The audiences were not accustomed to such type of soliloquies from a hero like Hamlet though they might have expected them from a villain or revenge seeker. According to Murray, Hamlet's "particular expression of meditative self-consciousness is both original and universal" (p.259). In this sense, Shakespeare presented new art form in Hamlet's soliloquies different from the usual ones of the Elizabethans.

Likewise, "the technologies of virtual realities, from avatar-assigned chat-rooms to interactive immersive virtual environments, can allow the performer/operator to explore a host of disembodied performance games and interactions" as Causey explains (p.53). Both man and the machine are considered "coded texts" that attempt to explore the world.

Nonetheless, Kantor (1993) describes the moment of change or transformation from the concept of live theatre to the virtual one, as lacking the shock of presence, death consciousness, physical temptation and the thrill of time passing as it is essentially deficient in the latter (p.114). Baudrillard & Turner (1998) go further to describe "the coming of the virtual is itself our apocalypse, and it deprives us of the real event of the apocalypse" (p.23).

As (Heidegger & Lovitt , 1954, 1977) assert earlier, one has a bond to technology whether he admits it or not. "Everywhere we remain...chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it" (p.4). According to Dixon, Baudrillard agrees with him arguing against self- denial of this fact (p.140).

Ryan argues that one enjoys images since they are not real and one's appreciation of them is based upon the skill with which they are contrived. In other words; one knows that the text is to be performed in a different way from reality and is prepared to accept the fresh image that is presented. She links the idea of imitation with simulation, and contends that Aristotle in his *Poetics* calls for "universal pleasure in imitation" (p.40). Aristotle enlists six elements in drama in his *Poetics* so that it can be meaningful and full of significance, that is to say; successful. These elements include the plot, the characterization, the diction, the style, the spectacle and the thought or ideas of the play.

Aristotle's ideas are still shared and somehow applied nowadays though he is a classical philosopher. The most important aspect to be considered is his plot and the ideas provoked in the mind of the audience by the performers' words and actions. The plot helps to enhance the progress of the play by binding the lines of the play with each other towards its final end. The plot according to him is the sequence of incidents within the play. He stresses the fact that it has a beginning, a middle and an end. This is typical of the Shakespearean tragedy of *Hamlet* which reveals Polonius murder by Hamlet in the middle of the incidents.

According to Aristotle, the major character in a play is of a high rank as it is in case of the current productions of *Hamlet*. Hamlet is

the major figure in the play and a tragic one, he is too the Prince of Denmark. The characters in a play should develop reasonably and be able to excite the audience's pity and fear. Though recently, "what Aristotle meant by catharsis has been the subject of much disagreement, but in contemporary usage the term usually implies a state of mind in which the powerful and conflicting emotions generated by the spectacle of great suffering are reconciled and transcended through artistic representation, so that a condition of exultant but grave understanding remains" according to McAlindon (p.2).

This is typical of Hamlet who excites our pity and fear. We pity him because we sympathize with his plight and fear that we may meet the same fate he finally faces. Being tragic, his traits, feelings and incentives help the audience sympathize with him and have a certain impression. He is "wildly likable and emotionally accessible" as described by Henley.

Schechner's production of "*Hamlet That is the Question*" at the Shanghai Theatre Academy in China though presenting a novel multicultural interpretation of the play leans on the general notions and ideas presented by Aristotle. Though the production combines elements of Chinese and American or Western culture generally, one has to acknowledge that it has an Aristotelian touch. Aristotle depends on the presentation of a plot that has a beginning, middle and an end. The characters, especially the major ones, illustrate personal and external motivations and are entirely developed. Finally, the spectacle includes auditory as well as visual elements. Schechner's production, though presented before the Chinese audience and is tinged with Chinese details, cannot be said to be isolated from Aristotle's theories. The plot is well contrived by Shakespeare and the motivation of the characters are glaring and clear to the audience. Such production draws on certain performance theoretical ideas advocated by Schechner who develops "performance studies" to handle cultural, social and historical contexts and simultaneously is somewhat Aristotelian in concept. The pivotal elements of performance such as the plot, the

spectacle and the complex characters of Aristotle's theory are presented by Schechner within the broader cultural context of China where the production takes place.

Such production is innovative and inspiring. The ways in which the performance provide transformative experiences in both performers and audiences are handled skilfully by Schechner. The emotions provoked by Hamlet increase the audiences' sympathy with him and help them interpret his motivations.

Part of the intercultural perspectives employed in the production is the heavy use of symbolism and contrast. For instance, Schechner presents the plot of murder and betrayal against the setting of a white clean stage using mops that are symbolically connotative. They have the implication of the need to clean the whole corrupt atmosphere and simultaneously to refer to the mess of the Shakespearean play. The whole theatre appears to be overwhelmingly white. As such it stirs the audience's thinking and questions. As such Schechner wants to display the whiteness of the stage in contrast to the play's theme of revenge and murder. "(T)he purity on the surface is in ironic contrast to a dark inner world" as (Jiancun et. al) explain. (p.104). The Royal family suffers from corruption basically in contrast to the purity displayed beforehand and as such, it is Schechner's way to emphasize the severeness of their conflict. This interpretation is a political one in which he uses traditional dramatic devices such as symbolism and irony in order to present his political perspective. The mop is a genuine symbol which reveals the need to clean the impure atmosphere associated with the political struggle for the throne. The gestures with the cleaning mop help illustrate the plot. Mops appear four times in the production. The first is when Hamlet says his famous soliloquy "to be or not to be" when all the actors in the back sweep the dark palace as the light faints. Another one is at the climax of the play when the performers clean the stage in order to relieve the audiences and bring them out of their depression. Hamlet sends present to Ophelia and surprisingly it is a mop too. It suggests the need to clean their path of love of wickedness. The mop is coloured in red

which symbolizes good luck in China -his own unique way to reveal a multi-cultural interpretation of the play as stated previously. Here the use of colour is a visual element that enriches the spectacle. Finally, All the props are removed from the scene after the play ends except for the mops. They are part of the techniques used by Schechner to intensify the ideas or thought presented on the stage.

Another successful symbol used by Schechner is the placement of tomb under the throne - his unique way to reveal that the struggle for the throne is a fatal one. As such it has a tinge of reality which is enhanced by the shovel hold by Claudius's guard instead of a sword. He is a gravedigger who accompanies the king and prepares the audience for his death. Schechner understands well what is meant by tragedy. He believes that any production echoes the playwright's ideas as well as the director's own interpretation of the work of art. As this time is governed by media, it is not strange that he uses four cameras to reveal the atmosphere of spying prevalent in the play and the lack of privacy as well.

A group of children from Beijing Opera take part in the production – Schechner's way to emphasize their innocence in contrast to the corrupted atmosphere presented before the audience. It is his way of interweaving different cultures within the production.

In the other production of *Hamlet* by Cumberbatch, Atkinson believes that "Cumberbatch completely threw himself into the role of Hamlet and he fully inhabited the character for those three hours". The character according to Aristotle has the ability to create suspense and as we sympathize with, we are able to distinguish what path he will follow naturally and perhaps what action he will do as well.

Aristotle refers to diction or style of the play as a means of illustrating the meaning. Poetic devices and metaphors do embellish and enhance the meaning of the play and add to its worthiness. They create the rhythm of the play. The style refers to the arrangement of words and sentences, as well as paragraphs within the plot to motivate the reader and the audience. It helps in illustrating the theme of the play.

Aristotle defines spectacle as the use of visual or audial elements to reveal an idea or theme of a play. The components of the spectacle can include the costumes of the performers, the division into scenes, the settings and the music. They all help create a vital image of the plot and incidents within a play.

Atkinson argues that Cumberbatch's production of *Hamlet* reveals that "the set was absolutely spectacular". The wide stage has been used adequately. The designers have built "a dual level grand hall". The extra details employed are impressive within that production". For instance, "the areas behind the doors were as heavily furnished as that main set though no scenes take play in those area". Another detail is in the letters and papers used in the play which have had writing on them instead of being left blank.

Tragedy and war, as well as, loyalty and betrayal are themes within the play that appear every now and then and are illustrated by the characters' costumes. Atkinson goes further to assert that for the grave occasions the elder character wear old formal military uniforms whereas for less serious occasions, they wear modern clothes suggesting the early twentieth century style and the reference could be to the First World War.

Thought is a major element in the construction of *Hamlet*. It can be seen in the soliloquies of Cumberbatch which help stir the audiences' thinking and reveal their preconceived ideas in a new light. "Hamlet's speech took the focus in the foreground" as assumed by Atkinson. The silent space between the dialogues has comic effect. Hamlet's feigned madness is also manipulated skilfully in the play. He plays being at war while he is actually surrounded and threatened by war. As such, they contribute to the play's ideas and the message of the play "still resonate (s) today" as stated by Atkinson.

Likewise, Howes in her review of *Hamlet* by the Royal Shakespeare Company asserts that "Essiedu's Prince is a complex creature, sometimes angry, sometimes witty, sometimes furious with himself for his lack of action". He seems to be "tortured" inwardly

especially when he scolds Ophelia and when he typically at times "brandishes a gun".

As stated previously, the spectacle consists of some visual and audial elements. According to Aristotle they are of great importance in the structure of drama. In a comment on Paapa Essiedu's performance of *Hamlet,* Howes states that: "Shakespeare's language is breathtaking. The power of the music is heightened by the recurrent beating of drums, and the riot of colour which engulfs the stage throughout". The music of the performance is refreshing and vital. The ghost appears in majestic way and his voice adds to the spectacle when he thunders demanding revenge. The drums are spectacular, as she states, the percussion sets a unique beat which moves the action forward.

  The costumes are part of the spectacle as stated by Aristotle. In this Paapa Essiedu production, "Claudius wears a much-decorated uniform" and the huge portrait behind him refers to fact that he is the status-quo ruler of Denmark.

  The setting of the first scene is the University of Wittenberg, where Hamlet receives his degree. Then we move to Elsinore where the guards appear to reveal that it is the centre of a military dictatorship. The court-setting is "a large, dark castle with long narrow windows" as Howes contends. Denmark is presented as "a modern state influenced by the ritual, traditions, and beauty of West Africa" according to Howes. The atmosphere of the play is a "carnival-like" and the characters of the king and queen are "vividly drawn" and "their costumes are extremely elaborate" as Howes comments. All elements of the spectacle including music, costumes, sound design add to the excellence of the performance.

In tackling the Hamnet Player's performance of *Hamlet* (1993) worth mentioning is the fact that Aristotle does not affect the performance directly though he is the corner stone of drama in general nowadays and since many centuries. Aristotle has become part and parcel of the English theatrical traditions and thoughts. However, that modern performance can hardly be interpreted in terms of Aristotle's theory since there is great change in the medium used within that production exemplified in the digital atmosphere. The traditional plot with its

beginning, middle, and end has been reduced to mere lines said by performers who depend on improvisation and slang language to parody the Shakespearean great tragedy. As such, it is difficult to speak about characters' development or the spectacle since the production has merely turned to internet screen displaying the chat. Its language is not poetic at all but rather slang depending on the wit of performers. Any attempt to interpret that performance in terms of Aristotle's theory will lead to a gap in the production presented since the digital world has its own unique rules. Lacking the development of characters as well as the spectacle, it could hardly be applied to Aristotle's theory. The only element that can be seen representing drama in general is the interactive environment between performers as well as performers and audiences. Though *Hamnet* is a leading experiment of performance in the digital medium, Aristotle's theory of drama cannot be applied to such production.

Between the Past and the Present

Dixon disagrees with Baudrillard and any postmodern philosophy that can be applied to digital performance theories. He argues for the severe breakdown from preconceived notions of "technology, society, the self, the body, consciousness and the real" and finds it debatable that the simulacra have substituted entities (p.142). He asserts that technology cannot be compared to humanity at any rate as the latter is full of emotion and appreciation of other human beings. Technology if presented in zombies for instance is a mere deformed image of human beings and nature is much more appreciated than media as Arthur Kroker (pp. 80-1) asserts. Consequently, Baudrillard's idea of the infallible attraction to seductive technology has missed the resentment associated with such feeling. Human reason and common sense reject this lure.

Merleau-Ponty is for the view that the image is not the real since real and virtual bodies are not the same. Electronic or monocular images of the body are too far from having its density to enter into competition with it...we cannot compare the two accordingly. (pp.7-8).

In *Hamlet on the Holodeck,* Janet H. Murray is for regarding simulations as images of the world with its multiplicity (p.255). She

contends that: "The real literary hierarchy is not of medium but of meaning" (p.254). She anticipates that the pattern of the forthcoming dramatists will be so attracting and variable. Not only will they be able to control the "words and images" of the story but "the roles by which the words and images would appear" as well (p.256). Therefore, "Shakespeare's plays are still performed and read" (p.257). Cyberdrama combines both older and new modes of performance with the masterfulness of the author according to Murray. Role playing atmospheres whether "electronic or live action" depend on improvisation which in its turn relies on a printed text or material (p.257) according to her.

In a word, there is a sort of similarity between old and new modes of performance in the interaction aesthetic. There is a tendency towards improvisation as "cyberdrama ...in all its variations (is) an essentially collaborative art form." (p.258). For instance, *Hamlet* by Hamnet Players can be regarded as a cybeformance.

Though the traditional performances have their own charming effect, one cannot but admit that computers do not ruin the performance wholly as one may expect but rather present other fascinating effect relative to the modern technological world.

CONCLUSION

One has to acknowledge that every age has its own peculiarities that cannot be comprehended if being examined in another age. One cannot judge or criticize the performances of a play nowadays by the same traditional theories of many centuries ago.

The paper attempts modestly to present four specific productions of *Hamlet* within the framework of the theories of Baudrillard and Aristotle. The three key concepts of the Baudrillardian postmodern theory are handled and applied to the productions chosen. The ideas of simulacra, simulation and the hyperreal are displayed just to prove the need of one's flexibility when handling the digital realm. Moreover, Aristotle's ideas of drama which include the plot, the character, the spectacle, the thought and the diction are traced in three of the productions selected. Aristotle's theory cannot be applied to one of the four productions handled within this paper, that is *Hamlet* by the Hamnet

Players as it lacks some of the elements of drama and has its different rules as well.

As every age seeks out the appropriate medium to confront the unanswerable questions of human existence, we cannot limit ourselves to the Elizabethan or Victorian forms any more than Shakespeare could have written within the conventions of the Aristotelian tragedy or the Medieval play.

Though the digital manipulation of *Hamlet* has taken various forms, the aesthetic quality of the performances needs to be reassessed. The question concerning the viability of *Hamlet*'s digital performances might not be appropriate in the near future. There is a gradual, simultaneous extensive transformation of performance towards the digital in all literary fields and in theatre in particular. The question that might remain is that: will the digital performance be satisfactory to all types of audiences? If not; will such audiences be nostalgic for the old-used techniques of the performances on the basis of their charming effects?

Though the answers of the previously mentioned questions appear to be challenging, there is still a room for all tastes and tendencies in the literary canon that includes fresh renewable ideas. One cannot and should not be firm in his attitude towards the unusual. On the contrary, every audience should be a critic by himself with an elastic power to accept what is worthy and simultaneously to reject what is unworthy.

Within this context, this paper attempts to prove that the theatrical effects of *Hamlet*'s four productions may be better apprehended through the juxtaposition of performances with the text rather than by reliance on written text solely. The Baudrillardian concepts can be applied within the productions though they use highly technological technicalities and depend entirely on the digital. They have their own rules within the virtual world and the cyberspatial realities. As such, the digital performances may clash with one's preconceived notion of the theatre and call for elastic ways of assessment. Perhaps, Baudrillard's postmodern theory is appropriate to cross the borders between what is real, and what is

virtual as it paves the way for further attempts on the part of theorists to disclose the complicated variable relations between man and technological advancement. As such, it can be the real key for future research based on the interrelation between disciplines which is growing rapidly nowadays.

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