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Performing *The Book of Esther* in  
Early Modern Europe

Edited by Chanita Goodblatt

# SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

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PETRA BJELICA \*

## The Role of Digital Storytelling in Educational Uses When Staging Shakespeare: a Case Study of a Lecture Performance – *Gamlet (Hamlet)*

Abstract

This paper investigates the utilisation of digital storytelling in theatre, specifically focusing on its application in staging and adapting Shakespearean plays. By examining the definitions of digital storytelling and lecture performance, the paper explores how an autobiographical approach present in both these genres, can be relevant in today's educational contexts and remediation of Shakespeare's works through digitally mediated narratives. The analysis of a lecture performance called *Gamlet* (a Russian name for Hamlet), that incorporates elements of digital storytelling, illustrates their various applications in theatre. Furthermore, the paper presents arguments that can serve as guiding principles for future student work in this field that might enhance the critical abilities and enrich the sense of self of these students, as it constitutes an educational model that goes against the commodification of knowledge.

KEYWORDS: digital storytelling; lecture performance; Shakespeare; *Hamlet*; Shakespeare in education

“Who's there?”  
(*Hamlet*, 1.1.1)

The narrative that might unfold when we respond to Shakespeare's famous opening line would indeed be relevant to the central inquiry pursued in this paper. However, in this particular paper, the question of 'who is there' is directed not towards the analysis of the text of *Hamlet*, but towards the students engaging with Shakespeare and utilising digital storytelling to convey their own encounters with his works. Specifically, the focus lies on exploring how digital storytelling can serve as an effective and innovative approach to reading and staging Shakespeare. Considering educational practices when it comes to the genre of the lecture performance, this essay will analyse how digital storytelling participates in the process of meaning-making using as a case study *Gamlet*, a lecture performance that I wrote, performed in, and co-directed.

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## 1. Digital Storytelling as a Theatre Practice with Educational Purposes

In the broadest sense, digital storytelling is a way of telling stories by using digital media. More precisely, it “is the practice of creating a short movie by combining digital artifacts such as images, text, video clips, animation, and music using a computer-based program” (Robin and Mcneil 2019, 2). It is characterised by traditional storytelling, revolving “around a chosen theme, often contain[ing] a particular viewpoint”, and most importantly, according to Robin, its essential element is an “emotional viewpoint” of the story (2016, 19).

In Megan Alrutz’s opinion, digital storytelling is defined as a practice “of making and sharing of personal narratives through recorded voice-overs, digital photography and video, music and/or digitally composed multi-media collages” (2013, 4), but also “video games, content designed for the Internet, mobile apps, social media, interactive cinema, virtual reality, augmented reality, and even intelligent toy systems and electronic kiosks . . .” (Handler Miller 2020, 4). Alrutz draws a distinction between “a wide range of self-produced media such as blogs and podcasts that employ story and digital technologies for personal expression” (2013, 45-6), including social media (Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok and others), and a narrower use that is of more interest to her work. In the latter case, “digital storytelling refers to the creation of two to three minute personal stories performed through a combination of first person, narrated voice-overs, still and/or moving images and music or sound” (46).

This paper relies on a definition of digital storytelling that combines digital video, recorded voiceovers and digitally composed music, used in theatre for the adaptation and remediation of Shakespeare’s text. Alrutz emphasises that many of these practices are already present in contemporary theatre-making while little examination has been carried out in terms of how they can intentionally create critical performance (2013, 4). Although Alrutz is focused on applied theatre and work with young people, her analysis and comments are highly valuable to any theatre practice that involves digital storytelling. More precisely, in insisting on the fact that digital storytelling can rethink and negotiate the ways the young are represented and engaged in society, she opens the path to consideration of digital storytelling as a self-conscious theatre praxis providing a tool for rethinking our own (meta)narratives as subjects, creators and society members. By quoting the scholar of applied theatre, Helen Nicholson, who “argues that in theatre, *knowledge or meaning making* is inherently ‘embodied, culturally located and socially distributed”, Alrutz illuminates the ways digital storytelling creates a space “of creating *new knowledge*, around self, others, and society” (ibid., emphasis mine).

However, her most far-reaching insight for the discussion in this paper

is that “digital storytelling, as both a devising process and a performance product, functions as a *political act of cultural production*” (Altruz 2013, 45, emphasis mine). Following that perspective, the idea that personal is always political becomes more obvious in digital storytelling. Altruz comments:

. . . performing one’s personal story can and does constitute *the making and disruption of systems of power*. To tell your story for a public, to share your (perhaps marginalised, new, unpopular or uncomfortable) narratives, has the potential to affect how each of us sees the past, participates in the present and imagines the future . . . *disrupt hegemonic narratives* . . . To perform/tell our stories is to refashion existing ideology, identity and truth. (44-5, 51, emphasis mine).

These features are far from exclusive to digital storytelling (one might even rightly say that they add up to rather a banal conclusion) but they open the space for discussion about how digital storytelling can be a “framework from which to critique discourses and systems of power” (51). Especially because, as Esther Maloney notes, digital innovation in self-expression in young people is vast (2021, 3). From her experience of work in applied theatre and of digital storytelling with students, Maloney draws another relevant yet opposing point. Some of them seem frustrated and inhibited from creating new content and are reluctant to express themselves since in their opinion “everything has essentially already been made or will be made ‘way better’ than what they could ever do, so ‘what’s the point?’” (ibid.). Altruz sees a solution for encouraging students in theatre. She suggests that “it is the living, breathing, embodied work of theatre that can *disencumber* young people, somewhat silenced by the digital gloss and perfection that surrounds them, to share their stories through an interdisciplinary praxis” (2013, 55, italics mine) – something that seems alarmingly needed at many universities today.

However, Altruz only touches the surface of what Mark Fisher, in his book *Capitalist Realism: Is there No Alternative?* (2009) has masterfully illuminated. While working at Goldsmiths College in London he had a chance to encounter and observe the generation of students who seemed to him politically disengaged, depressed, with learning difficulties, characterised by what he calls *reflective impotence* and *depressive hedonia*<sup>1</sup> (Fisher 2009, 21, emphasis mine). He sees the cause of these symptoms in the “students’

<sup>1</sup> “Depression is usually characterized as a state of anhedonia, but the condition I’m referring to is constituted not by an inability to get pleasure so much as it by an inability to do anything else except pursue pleasure. There is a sense that ‘something is missing’ - but no appreciation that this mysterious, missing enjoyment can only be accessed beyond the pleasure principle” (Fisher 2013, 21).

ambiguous structural position, stranded between their old role as *subjects of disciplinary institutions* and their new status as *consumers of services*" (22, emphasis mine). In contemporary society, students are subjected to:

indefinite postponement: Education as a lifelong process . . . Training that persists for as long as your working life continues . . . Work you take home with you . . . Working from home, homing from work. A consequence of this 'indefinite' mode of power is that external surveillance is succeeded by internal policing. Control only works if you are complicit with it. Hence the Burroughs figure of the 'Control Addict': the one who is addicted to control, but also, inevitably, the one who has been taken over, possessed by Control. (22)

And although Fisher's analysis pointed to a deeply alarming situation concerning education and mental health, his legacy can be followed in addressing a condition that has progressively and disturbingly worsened. One of the most common symptoms in students is the inability to focus, or, as Fisher puts it, "their inability to synthesize time into any *coherent narrative*" (24, emphasis mine). This paper opens the discussion on whether digital storytelling might be a strategy to engage the students in a more compelling and profound way. This claim is perhaps supported by the research that claims how

teachers' use of multimedia helps students retain new information and aids in the comprehension of difficult material. Students who create digital stories learn to organize their ideas, ask questions, express opinions, construct narratives, and present their ideas and knowledge in an individual and meaningful way. (Ohler qtd in Robin and Mcneil 2019, 3)

Hence, digital storytelling, as a unique approach that utilises personal narratives created through digital tools, offers several notable advantages, particularly in the educational engagement of students with Shakespeare's works. The use of digital media, which students are already familiar with, might facilitate the articulation of complex concepts and ideas with more ease. Then again, digital storytelling serves as a valuable starting point for individuals to make their own stories visible, while simultaneously recognising that the construction of a personal narrative is influenced by the performative nature inherent in various media. Lastly, in the collaborative process of theatre-making, students have the opportunity to create, express, and take ownership of their own stories, thereby establishing a deeper connection to Shakespeare's text, and hopefully progressing from their existing media literacy to a more highly developed competence in close reading and the critical evaluation of texts.



Moreover, it could be a way of dealing with the second important issue Fisher raises when discussing his students – their mental health. As Robin and Mcneil also claim, “in health sciences, digital storytelling can be a tool for patients and health science professionals to share experiences, cope with illnesses, and add a human element to health problems” (3). By adopting a confessional tone, the use of digital storytelling encourages individuals to approach Shakespeare’s texts from a personal perspective and contribute something new and unique.

## 2. What is *Gamlet*?

The aim of this essay is to demonstrate the *disencumbering* role of digital storytelling in Shakespeare adaptations on the example of *Gamlet*, a lecture performance premiered at the Verona Shakespeare Fringe Festival in August 2022. It was created by *The Brew Company*, a group of artists and scholars

devoted to interdisciplinary, multimedial and experimental contemporary theatre, with a focus on the dialogue between academic research and artistic practice; more precisely . . . the mixture of literary and critical theory, comparative literature (Shakespeare and Dostoevsky studies) and directing, acting, scenic movement, music, video and scenic design. *The Brew Company* draws inspiration from the genre of lecture performance, as a contemporary form of *performative criticism*, aesthetics and discursive practice. One of our aims is to offer a fresh approach to adapting and staging Shakespeare and create an enchanting, immersive experience for the audience. (Bjelica 2022)<sup>2</sup>

As the founder, author of the performance text and one of the performers, I participated in the collaborative process of staging and creating *Gamlet* by this newly formed collective from Serbia.<sup>3</sup> *Gamlet* is based on the research done as part of my doctoral thesis and “on Dostoevsky’s interpretation of Shakespeare’s character, including a wider discursive field of references to *Hamlet* and Russian Hamletism. The text is a pastiche of criticism and literary interpretations and it is a parody of the theoretical and critical inquiry of

<sup>2</sup> This is the Facebook page of the company: <https://www.facebook.com/TheBrew-CompanySerbia> (Accessed 1 May 2023).

<sup>3</sup> The following group of people participated in the production of *Gamlet*. Performer: Marta Bjelica; author and performer: Petra Bjelica; director: Ana Pinter; producer: Marija Milosavljević; video artist and editor: Ivana Rajić; video editor: Tamara Krstanović; stage designer and lightning technician: Marija Varga; music designer and sound technician: Anđelina Mičić; costume designer: Stevan Stevanović; technical assistant: Nenad Pinter.

answering the question ‘Who is Hamlet?’” (Bjelica 2022). Dostoevsky’s reading of *Hamlet* is urgently relevant today in the context of topics raised in this paper, because he deals extensively with the question ‘what is to be done’ by the youth.

### 3. Lecture Performance

In order to understand better how the tools of digital storytelling functioned in *Gamlet*, we should take into account the genre of lecture-performance since it regulates the codes of communicating the digital tools that were used. Both digital storytelling and some features of lecture performance, as we will see, have similar aims and mechanisms. As Landar clearly puts it:

Lecture performances incorporate elements of both the *academic lecture* and of *artistic performance*. They function simultaneously as *meta-lectures* and as *meta-performances*, and as such challenge established ideas about the *production of knowledge* and *meaning* in each of the forms to which they refer. . . . As a hybrid format, the lecture performance always participates *in more than one context*. (Qtd in Frank 2013, 7, emphasis mine)

Moreover, apart from exploring the way knowledge is generated and questioning “hegemonic narratives”, in Landar’s opinion, many lecture performances are autobiographical because they use autobiographical narration and a form of storytelling that directly addresses the audience (8). In that sense, the audience is invited to participate in the performance and is an integral part of it. Rike Frank describes lecture-performance “as a self-reflexive format . . . suggesting that, at its best, it creates conversational spaces that interrogate the social conditions and processes of knowing” (2013, 5). Lecture performance, in Frank’s view, enables another very important possibility, to “experience knowledge as a reflexive formation that is as much aesthetic as social” (5), which might be of inspiration to students who are not used to engage creatively with educational content. Nevertheless, in its usual form, lecture performance is “a commentary directed against (neoliberal) approaches of economisation and commoditisation of knowledge production” (8). As such, it can be a very important tool in developing critical thinking among students, and a way for them to always have in mind our opening question – who’s there? To use Frank’s words, lecture performance is “an analytical form that turns attention to the way we experience information as a twofold transaction: as an act of structuring controlled by a subject and as an act of subjectivisation – that is, of becoming structured” (8). When applied in conjunction with digital storytelling in theatre, this genre might

prove highly effective in making intricate concepts easily understandable and relatable for students. Digital storytelling can leverage the established assumptions and framework provided by lecture-performance to explore the staging of subjectivity and the portrayal of diverse identities, encompassing factors such as neoliberal economy and its influence on education.

#### 4. *Gamlet*



Fig. 1: *Gamlet*, beginning of the second act at Teatro Campoly. Photo by Ivana Rajić

In the following section of my essay I focus on how we used the genre of lecture performance and what were the examples of digital storytelling in *Gamlet*, both as personal narrative choices in the process of creation and the concrete use of digital tools in the performance.

Firstly, I incorporated digital storytelling into my adaptation as a means to express my personal narrative which encompassed *Hamlet*, Dostoevsky's works, the process of academic writing, the conditions of academic education, and trends in contemporary adaptation and staging of Shakespeare's plays, particularly *Hamlet*. Through digital storytelling, I aimed to explore these themes more intimately, using visual imagery to supplement and enhance the narrative beyond text. It allowed me to delve into the intricate aspects of my subjectivity, and to examine my personal connection to performance, creativity, writing, theatre, arts, femininity, and masculinity. Given that my sister Marta Bjelica portrayed Hamlet in the production, and we extensively employed digital video making in the show, digital storytelling provided a

means to explore our intertwined personal and professional relationships. Lastly, digital storytelling can be observed in its relation to the text of *Gamlet*, which was a collage of dramaturgical choices influenced by personal associations with the topics at hand. The performance text was devised as a combination of my lecture segments and voiceovers, while the character of Hamlet on stage remained silent.

The underlying narrative that drove the creation of *Gamlet* revolved around the challenges and complexities of staging an original performance based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. On a personal level, this endeavour posed numerous daunting questions across methodological, theoretical, ideological, aesthetic, and political dimensions. These questions included considerations about whether there were more pressing themes/plays that deserved to be staged and what approach was suitable for tackling the play in the first place. Essentially, the creative process involved a complete transformation of the academic dissertation into a spectacle employing post-dramatic theatre techniques, digital storytelling, and elements of lecture, dance, and movement. The resulting cultural product assumed the form and genre of a performative political act. The political aspect of *Gamlet* was inspired by above mentioned opinions of Mark Fisher and many authors of similar ideological position. In an interview conducted by the *Persona Theatre Company*, which was later published in Greek translation, I made an effort to pinpoint several sources and influences that shaped the performance. In addition to excerpts from my thesis and poetry, the production incorporated various elements:

Everything we saw, worked on, or read certainly left a trace; by principle of taste, some things were more important than others, sometimes in manner of unintentional references. But we mostly draw inspiration from other genres, arts and media. We were inspired by puppet theatre, circus, *commedia dell'arte*, Meyerhold's biomechanics, Derek Jarman's and Maya Deren's work, Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* and *The Sacrifice*, Bergman's *Persona*, the music of Orthodox chants and hymns, electronic, dance music and noise music, just to give some examples. We dealt with references very freely. The whole text is in fact a pastiche of quotations from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, critical literature about *Hamlet* and Russian Hamletism, paragraphs from Dostoevsky's *The Man from the Underground*, *The Double*, *Demons*, and quotations from a long list of works that could only analogously be connected with the phenomenon of *Hamlet*: Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*, an interview with John Berger, Lacan's, Foucault's, and Althusser's ideas on power and subjectivity, Borges's short story, Rilke's and T. S. Eliot's poems, etc. (Bjelica 2023)

In line with the lecture performance genre, the beginning of *Gamlet* consists of an introductory segment delivered by the lecturer (Fig. 2). As the lights illuminated the stage, a suit of armour rested in the foreground

before I made my entrance to deliver the prologue. Drawing inspiration from Shakespearean prologues, I introduced myself, provided a summary of the plot, and offered the audience a glimpse of what lies ahead. This prologue served as a paratext, hinting at an interpretative perspective, and reflected my complex and contradictory relationship with *Hamlet*, as well as the challenges I faced during my PhD. My performance style embraced humour, infusing a comedic atmosphere that tempered the provocative and ironic nature of my remarks. It could be argued that I appropriated Hamlet's rhetoric, employing a metacommentary on my role as both performer, director, and spectator in my own production.



Fig. 2: the beginning of *Gamlet*. Photo by Ivana Rajić

In order to showcase the pertinent themes within the lecture performance genre and establish an ideological framework for the remainder of the analysis of *Gamlet*, I include the entire prologue in this paper. It serves to highlight not only the significance of digital storytelling as one of key elements, but also to emphasise the dynamic of the relationship between myself and the main performer on stage, my sister, portraying the character of Hamlet.

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

I am Dr Petra Bjelica. Tonight you will watch *Gamlet*.

It is a practice-as-research, experimental adaptation of my PhD thesis called "Let the other be: Hamlet-ideologemes in Dostoevsky's *Demons*". It is a form of a lecture performance based on Dostoevsky's interpretation of *Hamlet*, a

theatrical use of critical references to Shakespeare's play and Russian Hamletism. The performance is called *Gamlet*, but it doesn't follow the plot of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at all.

Luckily.

I cannot stand to see yet another Hamlet on stage.

Being a Shakespearean scholar I am drowned in critical evaluations, uncountable texts about *Hamlet*, and so many views and interpretations of *Hamlet*. Every performance is almost always on the verge of superficiality and banality.

My knowledge stands in the way of my enjoyment and immersion.

Every line of the play invokes numerous references.

My perception is constantly layered, interrupted, kaleidoscopically broken and multiplied.

But also why suffocate you, the audience, with yet another *Hamlet*.

Didn't we have enough of Hamlet?

Hamlet. Hamlet. Hamlet...The name itself stands for pure annoyance and pretentiousness.

And the question "Who is Hamlet?" is even a bigger cliché.

Indeed, it is in the core of Western culture, meandering around the notions of truth, rationality, justice, revenge, melancholy, action, subjectivity, productivity, freedom...

The genre of lecture performance can help us approach the topic in a fresh way.

My thesis is adapted, played, recorded and directed by seven women from Serbia. But we are not giving a feministic reading of *Hamlet*. Our Hamlet is not a female Hamlet. Although you can see it like that. It was not our intention but you can project your desires as you wish.

Whatsoever, you are invited to do so.

The performance was produced by the INVITE project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 754345, under region of Veneto Decree nr. 193 of 13/09/2016 and under Università degli Studi di Verona. The INVITE project is guided by the principles of innovation, intersectionality and interdisciplinarity.

The plot of *Gamlet* consists of three acts. The first act includes surveillance, interrogation and prosecution of our Hamlets, by characters from the play, by critics, by me.

In the second act we encounter Dostoevsky's Hamlets.

The third act ... is a mystery.

Please, if you do have any questions, feel free to interrupt.

And don't forget to enjoy.

Unlike me.

(Bjelica 2022)

While these insights hold a degree of truth, the prologue takes a radicalised, parodic, and hyperbolic approach to highlight interpretative strategies,

reading regimes, the politics of adapting Shakespeare, paradoxes within academia, power dynamics in projects such as the INVITE, the identities of scholars and artists/performers, as well as the juxtaposition of theory and artistic practice. In this prologue, my intention was to convey the conflicts between the quantitative measurement of knowledge and success in academic discourse on one side, and types of more productive learning that imply playfulness, creativity and qualitative understanding of Shakespeare's work on the other side. Unfortunately, the pressures created by the utilitarianisation of knowledge often create a situation where one excludes the other. My experience in teaching revealed that students' fear of not comprehending Shakespeare often discouraged them from exploring his works.

However, it is important to note that this opening does not serve as a conclusive statement on the subject. Instead, it is completed with a different, confessional tone that outlines my personal beliefs and philosophies regarding theatre-making, pedagogy, academic work, and the creative process.

## **5. Digital Storytelling as Digital Video Making**

As previously noted, alongside my role as the lecturer in *Gamlet*, I also appeared as a performer in the video footage projected during the first act. This video material followed its own distinct narrative trajectory, resolving the plot surrounding the dynamic between myself, acting as Hamlet's (Marta's) surveillant - a representation that could be associated with critics and scholars - and Hamlet (Marta), the subject of their inquiry. However, the uncanny similarity between the two of us aimed at pointing at the fact that Hamlet is in fact spying on himself; that we represent one split identity. As Altruz notes, "digital video and photography become creative modes for expressing and interrogating one's experiences and perspectives for seeing one's self, others and the world reflected in a framed and valued space/screen" (2013, 47). Utilising the striking resemblance between my sister and me, we explored various perspectives on self-interpretation, the notion of the other, duality, the choices we make and actions we take. Adopting a surrealistic aesthetic, the video, crafted by Ivana Rajić, was accompanied by hauntingly atmospheric music and sounds created by Anđelina Mičić. Additionally, different voice-overs were integrated into the video.





Figg. 3-6: frames from the video shot by Ivana Rajić







The second act concludes with my departure from the stage after pronouncing:

The possible answer to the 'to be or not be' dilemma is to embrace the paradox of to be and not to be at the same time. A decision that will define one's identity cannot be a rational one. It must be a product of madness, or a leap of faith, or an act of love. It involves a leap beyond logic, maybe even beyond logos.

I let go of scientific discourse and let the theatre take over. (Bjelica 2022)

In the last, third act, Hamlet takes off his golden armour, renouncing his external identity that represents the Symbolic law of the father. In the process of transforming into a bare performative body, the actress multiple times without success struggles to climb the aerial silk on the stage. This action symbolises the last attempt of the character to cling to and raise up the phallogocentric hierarchy. However, the character is invited by a voice over (a 'poem' I comprised of selected uses of the verb *let* from *Hamlet*) to let go of that attempt, mirroring the claim that identity should not be grounded only in rational, measurable and controllable principles.

Let him go.

Let him go.

Let him demand his fill.

Let come what comes.

Let this be so.

Let Him bless thee too.

Let him come.

Let's further think of this.

Let me see.

Let shame say what it will.

Let's follow.

Let's follow.

Let Hercules himself do what he may.

Let a beast be a lord of beasts.

Let me wipe thy face.

Let the door be locked.

Had I but time – but let it be.

Let go.



Fig. 7: the performer, Marta Bjelica, climbing the silk. Photo by Ivana Rajić

The performer transits into a feminine identity, into a semiotic realm in contrast to the domination of the masculine principles that governed the action, questions, scope and the plot of the first two acts. The digital storytelling in the last act follows a plot of letting go and freeing oneself beyond the symbolic order towards the feminine and semiotic, expressed in

a liberating ecstatic dance as pure *jouissance*. The parallelism between the live choreography that mimics the movements of the digital double implies that the identity is no longer split, but unified yet multiplied, and that the body of a woman dancing dominated over subjection to knowledge.



Fig. 8: final scene of *Gamlet*. Photo by Ivana Rajić

## 6. Digital Storytelling as a Theatre Practice with Educational Purposes in Staging Shakespeare

In the context of this discussion, the decision to stage Shakespeare carries inherent political and ethical implications, and should not simply be driven by a desire to appropriate his cultural prestige. For the occasion of the premiere, the audience primarily consisted of students attending the Shakespeare and Mediterranean Summer School in Verona, as well as Shakespearean scholars. The project aimed to elicit reactions from students, provoking them to contemplate alternative approaches to interpreting and staging Shakespeare, reconsider their roles as academics and researchers, and adopt a critical perspective towards teaching ideologies, particularly in relation to Shakespeare. In other words, letting go of ‘control’ in the sense Fisher understands it.

I was deeply humbled by the responses of some students whom I had the opportunity to converse with after the performance. They expressed a freedom to openly share their opinions and impressions, without fearing to admit if they were bored or frustrated with *Hamlet*, or Shakespeare's text whatsoever. Moreover, it was important to discover that some scholars themselves harboured similar doubts, fears, suspicions, and challenges, while simultaneously sharing a profound passion for Shakespeare and theatre – pointing out to a shared need for a fresh approach both to Shakespeare and theatre-making. It became evident to me that this impact would not have been possible without the confessional tone established at the beginning of the performance, creating a sense of urgency to depart from the weight of familiar information and clichés. Ultimately, the well-known story about Prince Hamlet served as a vehicle for sharing our own narratives, with the intention of inspiring others to open up and share their experiences.

How do all these elements connect: *Hamlet*, my personal struggle between an academic and artistic career, the current political and historical circumstances and our ethical responsibilities towards them, the adaptations of Shakespeare, and the work with students? The initial question of 'who's there' resurfaces on multiple levels: who is in the audience, who is speaking or performing, who is producing and showing interest in Shakespeare and for what reasons, whose identities might be transformed in this process? Digital storytelling and lecture performance offer formal opportunities for staging Shakespeare, while attempting to address the question of why *Hamlet* remains relevant to students and whether it can evoke a deeply moving and inspirational experience. It raises the critical inquiry of whether the institutionalisation, commodification, and appropriation of *Hamlet* within a conservative production framework undermine its ability to resonate with contemporary young audiences. I hold a profound belief that if contemporary Shakespearean productions fail to connect politically, emotionally, and psychologically with the experiences of young people in the audience – by engaging in meaningful dialogue with their modes of communication – they risk becoming yet another representation of institutional power or conforming to economic trends.

## 7. Conclusion

In analysing *Gamlet*, I selected certain aspects of digital storytelling that I believed were most apt in highlighting the role it can play in theatre, particularly in the context of Shakespearean adaptations and appropriations. This form of digital remediation offers a valuable tool for students to delve into questions surrounding their own identity, drawing inspiration from

Shakespeare's works.

Putting the focus on the question 'who is the storyteller' in digital storytelling made by students, implicates a defying political act because one refuses to commodify students but rather to offer them space for exploration of themselves while educating them in critical thinking, performance and Shakespeare studies. By embracing the diverse range of digital tools available to when staging Shakespeare, digital storytelling has the potential to expand creative processes and foster the development of innovative performances. Simultaneously, it provides a critical space for young audiences to engage and comprehend the myriad possibilities of staging Shakespeare in more familiar ways for them. By applying digital storytelling as an additional tool for adaptations and staging, Shakespeare scholarship is not disregarded or detached from younger students, but rather integrated into their sense of themselves, nurturing a more engaging kind of knowledge in comparison to mere use of information. Moreover, digital storytelling can be effectively employed for educational purposes, facilitating the exploration of intertextuality and interdiscursivity between Shakespeare's plays, subsequent reinterpretations, texts inspired by his works, or texts that are otherwise connected to them.

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