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## Exploring the Visual and Performative Appropriation of Shakespeare in Pakistani Theatres

**Abstract:** This research paper examines the experimental nature of appropriation focusing on The National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) renditions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) and *Richard III* (1597). It investigates how these adaptations bring about changes in both dramatic structure and artistic expression, dissecting visual and performative elements to uncover diverse meanings within live performances. The research delves into how NAPA's creative choices offer new ways to examine Shakespeare's universal themes—jealousy, incest, ambition, and hatred—through unconventional theatrical presentations, viewed from a post-dramatic perspective. Using Hans Thies Lehmann's Post-dramatic theory (1960), it analyses alterations dramaturgical and aesthetical presentation such as plot construction, sign and symbol presentations. By bridging the gap between the art world and stagecraft, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how appropriation, aesthetics, and performance intersect. It also explores how these adaptations contribute to the global presentation of Shakespearean plays, offering insights from Pakistan's theatrical landscape.

**Keywords:** *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, sign and symbols, Pakistani Theatre, NAPA, Aesthetics.

### Introduction

The purpose of the study is to investigate how appropriation serves as an experimental tool in shaping the visual and performative elements of theatrical presentations. Specifically, it focuses on analyzing the dramaturgical mode of appropriation in NAPA's live renditions of the reworked versions of Shakespeares

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*Hamlet* (1603) and *Richard III* (1597). Established in 2005 by Zia Mohyeddin, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) stands as Pakistan's foremost institution in performing arts. Hosting international projects centred on Shakespearean plays, the institute emphasizes teaching and fostering creative expression, particularly in the performing arts (NAPA). Performances of the selected plays are integral to this initiative. This study uses Lehmann's post-dramatic theory to analyse the experimental techniques particularly the blurring of boundaries, musicality, presentness, displacement of the plot, interactive theatrical technique, plethora of signs, physicality and stage settings in the selected live performances of the appropriated versions of Shakespeare plays. Through an exploration of these visual and performative elements, this study aims to illuminate the artistic decisions made by Pakistani theatrical troupes and their impact on the overall aesthetic experience, revealing insights derived from the experimental approaches employed in these Shakespearean performances.

## **Appropriation**

Linda Hutcheon defines appropriation as "taking possession of for one's own; to take to one's self" (103), implying commandeering and controlling a desired object, as described by Marsden (1). Appropriation, according to Gemmel, is a purposeful and creative practice in art involving the reuse of visual materials or existing artworks. In Modern art, the focus is on experimentation, urging artists to challenge perceptions and present existing works uniquely. This valency for experimentation prompts artists, thinkers, and viewers to explore art's potential, experimenting with new techniques to rework source material. Michael Mandiberg argues that "Appropriation is a way to experiment with images and objects by shifting the context," altering their context, reframing their meaning in the process (Gemmel), thereby challenging the established nature of image production (Mandiberg). This involves challenging conventional dramaturgical modes or reconfiguring established norms of presentation, enhancing the aesthetic fervour to Shakespeare's original texts. In "The Empty Space," Peter Brook confronts conventional ideas of intricate sets and props, aligning with Lehmann's departure from Aristotle's unified model (Lehmann 10). This departure marks a significant shift in how theatrical performance is conceptualized, favouring an open and experimental approach that prioritizes immediate experience and visual dynamics over a linear narrative. Similar to Lehmann, Brook champions a universal and immediate approach to theatre (125), emphasizing the importance of the actor-audience relationship. His advocacy encourages directors to craft immersive, intimate, and accessible theatrical experiences, reinforcing the transformative power of live performance. In the context of NAPA's theatrical appropriation of Shakespeare's plays, such as

*Hamlet* and *Richard III*, this process empowers the Pakistani troupe with variant artistic expression, fostering a sense of creative ownership. This is consistent with Lehmann's vision, demonstrating how a departure from traditional norms can facilitate diverse and authentic interpretations in the field of theatre.

The term "aesthetics" stems from the Greek "aisthēsis," (Martin) meaning perception or sensation, and was modernized by 18<sup>th</sup>-century German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten. He coined it to encompass the study of sensory experiences, perception, aesthetics, and art appreciation. In performing arts, "aesthetics" relates to the principles guiding the creation, interpretation, and appreciation of live performance art, involving how artists use elements like sound, movement, gesture, text, and visual design to craft a meaningful and engaging performance for both performers and the audience. This paper explores the aesthetic elements in Shakespeare's appropriations by thoroughly examining the visual and performative aspects. Through various theatrical components in NAPA's renditions, such as settings, props, body language, and rearranged plot elements, these adaptations convey new meanings, establish aesthetic ambiance, and contribute to shaping Pakistan's artistic identity.

## **Contribution**

This study highlights how the Pakistani theatrical landscape contributes significantly to engaging with Shakespearean studies through an appropriation lens. It facilitates a vibrant exchange between the art world and the craft of stage performance, emphasizing the significant role of Pakistani theatre in redefining Shakespearean adaptations within experimental frameworks.

## **Research Methodology**

To examine contemporary Pakistani theatrical renditions of Shakespearean works, a mixed-method research approach was utilized. Qualitatively, an in-depth analysis involved textual scrutiny and critical reviews of performances such as "*Richard III*" and "*Hamlet*." This qualitative exploration encompassed script evaluations, character developments, thematic appropriations, and semiotic assessments of visual elements, with a focus on artistic aesthetics. On the quantitative front, audience feedback and responses were gathered and scrutinized through surveys and discussions, shedding light on immersive experiences, perceptions of post-dramatic elements, and their impact on comprehending traditional and post-dramatic facets of theatre. This integrated mixed-method approach facilitated a profound understanding of the evolution of contemporary Pakistani theatre, revealing its innovative incorporation of post-dramatic elements in adapting Shakespearean plays.

## Theoretical Framework

Effectively applying Hans-Thies Lehmann's post-dramatic theory, the analysis scrutinizes the experimental appropriation of Shakespearean plays by Pakistani theatre, revealing insights into artistic decisions in theatrical performances. Hans-Thies Lehmann, a distinguished German theatre scholar in the field of performance studies, introduces the concept of "post-dramatic theatre," challenging conventional notions of dramatic structure and character development. Lehmann posits that contemporary theatre has transitioned from narrative-driven plays to a more fragmented and non-linear approach, embracing elements like presentness, musicality, and physicality (Bulman 129, 423, 581). His theory delves into the exploration of presence, embodiment, and theatrical possibilities beyond text-based dramas.

The paper adopts Lehmann's post-dramatic theory, which challenges the dominance of text and questions traditional mimetic or naturalistic representation in theatre. Post-dramatic theatre moves beyond strict categorizations of theatre work and may be produced as a contemporary experimental performance. Lehmann does not reject the logos of earlier dramatic traditions but rather engages with them to create a new theatre text. The present research examines performative renditions that depart from a coherent plot and loyalty to Shakespeare's dramatic texts. Instead, it uses Lehmann's idea of refusal to construct a fictive cosmos or plot and prioritizes performance based on the simultaneity of action and plot, rather than creating a linear plot and action. The paper examines the paratextual elements used in appropriating Shakespeare's plays in contemporary Pakistani theatrical performances and applies Lehmann's idea of simultaneity to move beyond the sequential synthesis of plot and action.

The implication of post-dramatic theory benefits contemporary performances by allowing for a more experimental and diverse approach to theatre, encouraging the use of physicality, space, and time, promoting multidisciplinary collaboration, and emphasizing the importance of the spectator's experience. And Contemporary Pakistani theatre is characterized by its inventive use of theatrical styles, which incorporate elements of post-dramatic theatres, such as "narrative fragmentation, heterogeneity of style, and expressionistic elements" (Lehmann 24). This is why the present analysis of Contemporary Pakistani live theatrical performances borrows from Hans G. Lehmann's Post-dramatic theory.

## Analysis

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* depicts a tragic tale of a young Prince Hamlet seeking vengeance against his uncle Claudius for murdering his father and marrying his mother. As Hamlet grapples with his desire for revenge and his sense of morality, he meets his tragic end.

In 2009, NAPA presented a theatrical performance of *Hamlet* in Urdu, following the same plotline as the original text. However, this appropriated version focused on the addition of musicalization and a unique display of expressionistic elements, employing techniques such as role reversal and blurred boundaries through innovative seating arrangements. These visual and performative techniques effectively express the thematic essence of Shakespeare's play.

The unusual seating arrangement in NAPA's production of *Hamlet* not only executes the reversal of roles technique for artistic exploration and experimentation but also provides the audience with a unique shift in perspective. In Shakespeare's original *Hamlet*, the play begins with the appearance of Hamlet's father's ghost (1.1.9), setting the stage for the narrative. However, with a little improvisation in NAPA's adaptation, the spectre appears a little later till Act 1, Scenes IV materializes among the audience/spectators, engages Hamlet and leads him towards the dim lit theatre towards the audience. The same act is repeated in Act 1 Scene V. In Act III, after identifying the ghost, Hamlet addresses the audience, pointing at the spectre. While interrogating the ghost's identity, he moves toward the audience, revealing the specifics of his father's murder. He requests the audience to notice a figure standing in the shadows among them, crafting a captivating and enchanting atmosphere that draws them into the scene, with Hamlet positioned amidst the spectators. As he directly engages with the audience and the ghost is present among them, the gradual disappearance of the ghost's presence becomes an experience for the audience. This involvement invites them to be part of the "moment of performance" (Lehmann 225). Similarly, in Act 1, Scene 1, Horatio approaches Hamlet, emerging from within the audience in a manner consistent with this theatrical performance, and later in Act 4, Scene 5, Ophelia addresses the audience about her bereft love for Hamlet, inquiring about a solution for a frail woman to live in a world without support. Such moments are when the usual power dynamics between performers and spectators are reversed, giving the audience agency and autonomy, ultimately enhancing the overall performance experience (Lehmann 225).

The audience forms a semicircle around the performing space, their seats at the same level as the actors (Gupta 65). By eliminating the traditional stage barrier and reducing the distance between them, the audience becomes integral to the performance, merging their respective areas (Kumar 43-46). This proximity lessens the gap between performers and audience, creating a vivid interactive experience, allowing spectators to immerse themselves in the play rather than merely observe (Citron et al. 95). According to Jacques Rancière, this approach "reshapes the area of the collective." As posited by Schechner, "Theatre is the domain of the performers; the performance is the domain of the audience" (70). The power of theatre lies in the theatrical "encounter" (Fischer-Lichte X) between performer and spectator. In this connection Peter Brook's his

book “The Empty Space,” call such a theatrical performance where immediate interaction or engagement between performers and the audience takes place as a “living confrontation” (124). In this context, the term “confrontation” (Brook 124-125) is not necessarily synonymous with conflict but rather with a direct, vivid encounter that can provoke a range of responses, emotions, and reflections from all those involved. This post-dramatic technique acknowledges the audience as an active participant by incorporating their response. The strategy encourages innovation in staging, movement, and presentation, enabling performers to engage with spectators unexpectedly. Consequently, the audience gains a unique perspective where the boundaries between spectators and performers strategically diminish through the merging of the proscenium/stage and the auditorium. Overall, this technique employed by NAPA emphasizes the importance of breaking traditional dramaturgical boundaries between performers and spectators, allowing the audience to play a more active and creative role in shaping the theatrical experience.

The smooth transition of *Hamlet*'s plot is disrupted by the introduction of a storytelling technique followed by “The play within a play” in NAPA's Shakespeare performance. A storytelling technique is appropriated to retell the *Oedipus Rex* story (3.2.142). Upon meeting Hamlet, the performers assure him that the audience will be entertained, emphasizing this point by incorporating the recitation of *Oedipus Rex*. This narrative provides the audience with a multi-layered and nuanced understanding of Oedipus, as both *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet* feature central characters destined for tragic ends, both experiencing themes of incest, infidelity, and their repercussions. The storytelling technique introduced in the plotline maximizes audience's engagement with various elements unfolding on the stage. The “narrative fragmentation” and heterogeneity of style” (Lehmann 24) in theatrical performance align with post-dramatic theatre, which disregards the traditional dramatic unity or consistency of style (Carlson 581). Consequently, in accordance with Lehmann's propositions, the introduction of yet another technique—a play within a play (discussed below)—intends to disrupt the smooth flow of the performance and, simultaneously, overwhelms the spectators.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the “Mouse Trap” (3.2.137) scene emotionally recreates the events of King Hamlet's murder through actors' dialogue and gestures. It aims to convey the story, emphasizing the reactions of characters, especially Claudius, who is tested by Hamlet's orchestrated performance. Unlike Shakespeare's traditional dramatic performance, NAPA appropriates it into a musical performance, presenting a mini Opera Seria. This form of serious opera typically involves tragic stories of heroes and kings (Opera 101). In NAPA's version, King Hamlet's tragic murder is dramatized through a song, heightening the dramatic effect with high notes and a dance between the actors. The term “dramma per musica” in Opera refers to creating drama through music,

combining various elements like art, words, music, drama, and dance to convey an entire story or plot. The performative technique creates a visually striking atmosphere through vivid lighting, dynamic movements, and expressive music, capturing the essence of a captivating theatrical performance. In this specific segment, Gertrude and Claudius, illuminated by red light, engage in a dance to celebrate King Hamlet's demise. Positioned on the stage, a group of musicians accompanies the scene, with a singer dramatizing the death of King Hamlet. Hamlet's dialogues interject, momentarily affecting the scene's momentum. The stage is bustling with various activities during this sequence. The performance space is filled with performers, dances, and musical interventions embodying a "living moment of presentness" (Fischer-Lichte 41). A significant correlation exists between the immediate experience on stage and the perception of duration, both representing a submission to the influence of time. In this mode, audience members are encouraged to engage fully in the distinctive unfolding of the performance in both spatial and temporal dimensions (Gough 3), particularly showcased through dance and music. This aesthetic approach in performance with "itself in the present" and "disturbing" (Brook 122). This post-dramatic approach incorporates physical movement, music, and stage design to generate meaning in the "performance text" (Schechner 85). Schechner labels such performance: as "the whole constellation of events," involving performers, audience, technicians—"anyone who is there" (Schechner 85). Another noteworthy performative aspect of NAPA's *Mousetrap* is that it begins with the smooth style of an opera seria presentation but transforms into an aleatory performance. The term "aleatory" is derived from the Latin word "Alea," meaning "dice," (Dahn) and it emphasizes the role of unpredictability and randomness in the creation or execution of the performance. The scene's pathos is further enhanced by a striking red lighting scheme, rhythmic movements, and crescendoing music, transforming the performance space into a tumultuous "superimposition of the sonic world" (Lehmann 87-88). The high notes do not sync with the dance performance as though everything presented on stage tends to move in a different direction. Such a performative approach challenges traditional notions of control and predetermined outcomes, providing a unique and unpredictable artistic experience for both performers and the audience. In NAPA's version, the inclusion of musicians, dance, and a non-verbal soundscape further enriches the multifaceted experiential moment for the audience.

In NAPA's appropriation of *Hamlet*, the innovative stage design, lighting, and props converge to present a striking craft of a visual and a performative spectacle. The stage incorporates a "plethora of visual signs" (Lehmann 89, 91) on the stage, creating a visually immersive environment. The stage is transformed into a grand chessboard, becoming a powerful sign that metaphorically embodies the characters' strategic struggles and complex

decisions. The metaphor of the chessboard extends beyond a mere visual spectacle; it carries variegated meanings, resembling a battlefield or a dynamics of a chess game. Adorned with alternating black and white squares, the stage floor becomes a visually impactful sign, offering a unique representation of the characters' intricate moves and strategic battles. Life within the play is compared to a game of chess, where strategic decisions determine outcomes, seen in the tragic consequences faced by characters such as Ophelia, Hamlet, and Gertrude. Each step Hamlet takes reflects his strategic maneuvers against Claudius, emphasizing the chessboard as a symbolic representation of the characters' lives. The parallel between chess and life highlights the pivotal role of strategic decisions, where each move can lead to advantageous or disadvantageous consequences. This thematic connection is exemplified in Ophelia's loyalty to Petrutio, Hamlet's procrastination leading to his demise, and Gertrude's misplaced trust in Claudius, resulting in her tragic end. Hamlet's deliberate, slow pace on the chessboard becomes a poignant manifestation of his internal struggles and indecisiveness. The metaphorical stage setting becomes an "incomplete," "open" (Brook 125) canvas for contemplation, inviting multiple interpretations. Peter Brook explains that such concept of theatrical designs serve continually dynamic and interconnected with the evolving actor-driven scene, emphasizing the stage's role as a metaphorical battlefield where strategic narratives unfold.

Next, the spectators are engulfed in a surreal atmosphere created by the combination of stage design, theatrical and lighting, and props. The entire stage and the audience are bathed in a blue hue, with draped white curtains casting an ethereal illumination over the entire set. This intentional use of lighting and colour contributes to the mood of the performance, creating an otherworldly ambience from the outset, preparing the audience for the journey they are about to embark on. While maintaining the psychological depth and motives of the original play, NAPA performance of *Hamlet* emphasized exceedingly on the visual signs.

The display of visual props transforms the stage into a performance-based environment, complementing the aesthetically pleasing nature of the theatre (Hinda 49). The strategically placed portraits and a large mirror serve a dual purpose, acting not only as concrete, performative, and communicative signs but also as elements of a shared language between the spectators and the performers. At first, the portraits draw the audience's focus to the persistent absence of characters, notably the late King Hamlet, whose physical presence is replaced by virtual representations through the portraits. However, the arrangement of static images, along with a large mirror facing the audience, delivers a visually stimulating experience of self-realization (Lehmann 10), complemented by various other signs on the stage (Lehmann 142). The mirror remains on stage throughout the performance, positioned next to portraits of the



murdered king. Unrelentingly, it gazes back at the audience, creating what Edwards describes as a “double self-portrait” (3). This unsettling effect occurs as spectators peer into the mirror, prompting self-reflection akin to the proverbial “Know thyself” (Edwards 7). This experiential technique operates as an evaluative medium, compelling the audience to ponder their past sins and urging them to reflect on prior events before moving forward. The audience’s reaction to their reflection in the mirror is disquieting, deliberately engaging with the visual elements of the scenery and prompting introspection about their identity as human beings during the performance, thus inviting various interpretations. Lehmann argues that in post-dramatic theatre, meaning is created not only through dialogue and plot but also through the use of “signs” (72). These signs allow the audience to engage in a more active and participatory experience with the performance. In this manner, The boundaries or possibilities of artistic expression are explored or widened. As a result, Pakistani theatrical troupes are experimenting by appropriating new ways to incorporate elements related to the “abject” (something repulsive or unpleasant), the “corporeal” (related to the body), and the ‘affective’ (emotional or expressive) into their artistic endeavours (Ventzislavov). The process may involve pushing the boundaries of what has traditionally been considered acceptable or exploring ways to convey emotions or bodily experiences in an unconventional and impactful manner.

Shakespeare’s history play, *Richard III*, was staged in English during NAPA’s International Theatre and Music Festival in 2018. The original text adheres to traditional structural elements and employs various dramatic devices, such as soliloquies, dreams, and symbols. *Richard III* revolves around Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as he navigates a web of deceit and murder to claim the English throne, culminating in his ultimate downfall at the Battle of Bosworth Field. His direct engagement with the audience occurs in Act 1, Scene 1 (247). In this scene, Richard reveals his ambitious plan to seize the throne of England and subtly attempts to gain sympathy from the audience. Through his statement, “That dogs bark at me as I halt by them” (247). Richard aims to elicit empathy from the audience. This connection between Richard and the audience persists throughout the play, with Richard frequently addressing the audience through asides and soliloquies, sharing his thoughts and revealing his true nature. These interactions serve to heighten suspense, create an ironic tone, and establish a pervasive sense of bloodshed and evil in the course of the play. The audience becomes increasingly aware of Richard’s lies and manipulations as the play progresses (Shakespeare). In addition, in the original version, various supernatural elements are present in the play: Margaret’s curses, Clarence and Stanley’s prophetic dreams, Richard’s accusations of witchcraft, his association with devils, his comparison to Proteus, and the Princes’ discussion of ghostly uncles. Dreams, symbolic imagery, and the subsequent occurrence of tragic events

showcase the intricate interplay among dreams, symbolic imagery, and behavior in the play.

While NAPA borrows Shakespeare's title, its performance is far from conventional. This highly experimental rendition transforms into a dynamic exchange between performers and audience members, defied traditional norms and resulted to be a highly unintelligible one. Because in a conventional Shakespearean play, using scenes and the actions on stage help the audience understand the plot, even if they don't speak the language, making the performance more engaging. However, *Richard III* was less familiar to the Pakistani audience compared to other tragedies, and its historical context may have posed challenges for viewers.

Moreover, NAPA's performance further deviates by featuring a shifted plot, minimal stage designs, English dialogue and a solitary performer (Richard). NAPA's performance of *Richard III* challenges traditional elements such as unity of action, plot, and space. Shakespeare's play initiates with Richard's soliloquies, introducing his brother Edward's victory at the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471 and foreshadowing future events (Act 1, Sc 1, p 13). The plot then unfolds through scenes in five compact acts. Conversely, NAPA's rendition maintains Richard's constant presence on stage, eliminating shifts in scenes or actions. The focus squarely rests on this singular character throughout the play, making it solely his story—Richard's story. This portrayal creates a sense of unchanging time and space within a vast, empty theatrical environment. The bare stage, where Richard remains on stage from start to finish, emphasizes the character and his dialogue. Moreover, the presence of a bare stage symbolically transforms into an artistic space, akin to a blank canvas for an artist, where the story unfolds. Spectators are encouraged to use their imagination to fill in the details, witnessing a deformed character limping from one extreme to the next, addressing them through a monologue. *Richard III*, in NAPA's performance, becomes the exclusive presenter of his version of actions, establishing a static temporal and spatial orientation within the expansive, empty theatrical space, leaving spectators to interpret what lies ahead.

In contrast to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the rendition by NAPA depicts Richard without any royal affiliations, thus accentuating the malevolent desires inherent in an ordinary man. Unlike the titular character in William Shakespeare's historical play, where Richard's corrupt nature taints his association with royalty, Throughout Shakespeare's play, Richard manipulates and schemes his way to the English throne, portrayed as a deformed and ambitious man relentlessly seeking power, determined to eliminate anyone in his path. The character in NAPA's performance there is a deliberate choice to show Richard's lack of direct royal connections.

NAPA effectively engages the audience by relying on Richard's physicality and bodily presence as the primary performative tools. Unlike

traditional techniques, such as asides, soliloquies, or dreams, which intensify emotions, these are omitted in this performance. Richard assumes a central role, continuously delivering a speech while executing physical actions like running, shouting, falling, and pleading with the audience. Throughout the performance, he remains ordinarily dressed, deviating from Shakespeare's Richard, who typically represents royal connections through attire or disguises. Instead, NAPA's protagonist embodies the inner recesses of the human mind, revealing the hidden aspects true to the individual. In plain attire on a bare stage, he symbolizes inherent evil present in every person, mirroring the super-ego of each audience member. During his monologue, Richard questions the audience about the correctness of his actions, mirroring the way humans justify themselves in solitude, portraying the inherent evil within. Standing alone, he becomes a symbol of the audience's subconscious desires, fears, and conflicts. As he approaches and interacts with the audience, many nod in affirmation or respond quietly, merging with Richard as he mirrors their inner selves. He acts as a "mirror character" or an "alter ego," embodying their inner thoughts and desires. His intention is to reveal what he believes they all desire—power. In this portrayal, Richard becomes a reflection of the audience, whether achieved through fair or unfair means. Lehmann argues that the essence of post-dramatic performance lies in the concept of "presence," (Power 228) which engages and maintains the audience's attention throughout the entire show. In post-dramatic theatre, the performer's body and actions become essential, acting as the conduit through which the performer communicates, and the audience deciphers these actions. This approach to theatre underscores the importance of live performances, emphasizing the unique connection between the performer and the audience in the creation of meaning. In this performance the deliberate use of Richard's body movements, gestures, posture, and physical presence enhances the theatrical impact, making his physicality an integral part of the character and the play (Edwards 18).

Richard's adept use of language as a strategic tool empowers him to manipulate and control others effectively in Shakespeare's play. His skillful manipulation through language, seen in instances such as wooing Lady Anne (1.2.23) and orchestrating Hastings's execution, showcases the strategic power of his words. Clarence's imprisonment, eludes the Woodvilles and shifts the blame to the king for Clarence's death (1.4.73). His linguistic prowess allows him to navigate and shift blame successfully, while the eventual turn to violence highlights that, in the face of linguistic defense, aggression becomes the ultimate resolution.

In NAPA's appropriated version of the play, the performance strategically becomes an extension into interactive theatre. This is achieved by forsaking traditional soliloquies in favor of interactive monologues, where a single performer actively engages with the audience. *Richard III* maintains

a constant presence on the minimalist stage, deviating from the original play, where dreams and omens symbolize impending events and the consequences of Richard's actions. Apart from directly addressing the audience, he initiates dialogue, seeks responses, and fosters interaction between the audience and those on stage.

Moreover, NAPA's experimental approach, engages the audience in innovative and unexpected ways. The audience's interpretations and responses are assessed in a unique game-like dramatic manner. In this distinctive performance, conventional character roles are discarded as participants stand on stage facing the audience without engaging in performative actions. Some don name tags borrowed from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, featuring names like Hastings, Clarence, Elizabeth, Anne, Vaugh, and Buckingham. Unlike traditional performances where characters and dialogue propel the plot, these tags and physical presence contribute minimally to conveyed information or plot progression. A row of participants extends at the rear side of the stage, facing the audience behind Richard. While he continually recites extended monologues, establishing one-on-one interaction with the audience, those seated behind him remain silent and inactive. When Richard decides to "kill" a character, he either randomly approaches an audience member off-stage, hands them a "chit," and instructs them to go to a particular character on stage with a name tag, declaring them "murdered." Alternatively, Richard personally walks toward the character, tagging them with their name and the label "murdered." In one instance, Richard interacted closely with an audience member, inquiring about his name, pointing at Hastings, and offering him chits labeled "Murdered." Some of the audience members declined, stating they would not participate in the act of murder. This deviation from Shakespeare's play signifies a departure as the enactment, resembling a game, creates an intimate and immediate connection with the audience. It pulls them into the on-stage events, setting the overall tone for the entire production. According to Lehmann (137), this novel approach not only entertains but also educates the audience, stimulating their creativity and encouraging deeper reflection on the play's meaning and implications. Moreover, these unexpected gestures and audience involvement add an element of surprise, providing an opportunity for spectators to draw upon their own experiences and engage with a highly subjective and transient reality. NAPA's approach demonstrates an innovative take on appropriation, challenging traditional norms in Shakespearean performances. A collaborative and dynamic experience is fostered when the audience is encouraged to participate and interact with the performer. Through the use of the performative technique employed, the audience is allowed to interpret the themes of the play in their way. The entire presentation becomes a unique blend of dramatic interactive monologues and a game-show format, showcasing NAPA's innovative and experimental approach to Shakespearean works.

The final scene of the performance takes an intriguing turn, deviating from Shakespeare's play where the audience experiences pity and fear. In this rendition, the protagonist's lone death by an illusionary character starkly contrasts with the expected gravity of the situation. Richard's dramatic lines like "Slave, I have set my life upon a cast, / And I will stand the hazard of the die" and the iconic "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" (5.5.303) are followed by his fall on stage. Notably, there are no other characters present on stage, unlike Shakespeare's original where Richmone, Catsby, and soldiers witness Richard's execution. This unconventional portrayal turns Richard's demise into a spectacle of dark humour, offering a unique engagement for the audience, even if it may appear awkward or disconnected from the rest of the performance. For a receptive mind, this scene carries significant performative and receptive value, hinting that if Richard is a manifestation of a human mind, it signifies the eruption of jealousies, ambitions, impulses, and greed within an individual. The portrayal underscores the idea that if the mind can generate such impulses, it also holds the power to take control and bring about its own destruction. Furthermore, the play's precise prompting challenges preconceived notions and encourages the audience to think critically through unexpected presentations.

## Conclusion

The paper explores the reversal of roles technique, interruptions to the normal flow of the plotline, visual display of signs, and the blurring of barriers between the spectators and the performers are some of the theatrical techniques in appropriating Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Richard III* in NAPA's live theatrical performance. The emphasis is placed on visual and performative elements, highlighting aesthetic values that prioritize immediate experiences and human connection (Crossley 153). These modes of appropriation serve as a powerful means of challenging established performative norms and creating a more immersive and interactive theatrical experience. By breaking down the traditional boundaries between spectators and performers, this technique encourages active participation and challenges the established power dynamic between the two.

In conclusion, this analysis explores the significance of visual and performative elements used to underline the thematic appraisal in the performing arts through the lens of Hans Lehmann's post-dramatic theory. Overall, Lehmann's theory expands the possibilities for expression, promotes diversity, and enhances the audience's experience by creating a more engaging and immersive performance environment. As such, it is a valuable framework for understanding the evolution of theatre and its potential for the future. Ultimately,

the analysis has shed light on the ongoing evolution of Pakistani theatre and its capacity to engage audiences in innovative ways. include choices made by the theatre artists regarding how to adapt, reinterpret, and present the plays in a way that reflects their artistic vision.

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