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## Abstract

### Medium Specificity and/as Medium Convergence in Kit Monkman's Green Screen *Macbeth* (2018)

I use specific features of Kit Monkman's recent "green screen" *Macbeth* (2018) to ask a series of questions about what I take to be a transitional stage in the evolution of screen Shakespeare, one poised between an analogue past and a digital future. Some of these questions are: What are the affordances of reproducing Shakespeare on screen when the reproductive apparatus unmoors the Shakespearean play from grounding in a conventionally realistic cinematic environment? How do—or should--actors and acting conform to the aesthetic of a floating world that not only lacks fixed framings and grounding but repeatedly calls attention to its discontinuities and constructedness? What practices are best suited to encourage the engagement and interactivity of such a film's viewers? If, as some media theorists contend, a work of art is successful insofar as it fulfills its medium specificity, how do we apply such a formula to an artwork clearly in an intermediate stage of development? May we legitimately derive from what the artwork lacks what it and successor artworks require in order to fulfill the promise of medium specificity? Or would we do better to resist the boundary-policing tendency of such "media scripts" in favor of exploring how "the traffic, recycling, and cross-pollination between screen and other arts"--which Katherine Rowe identifies with media convergence—"expand our sense of the formal properties specific to a given medium"?

Digital Shakespeare'Bakhtin, van Hove, and Digital Spectatorship'

In the 1940s, Mikhail Bakhtin compiled notes for revision of his major work *Rabelais and His World*. This book discusses French renaissance author Francois Rabelais and his comic grotesque novels *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Bakhtin's work on the carnivalesque and grotesque realism has been used in Shakespeare studies, but his critical canon has not been considered more holistically with regard to theatre. The *Rabelais* revision notes present a Bakhtin who engages substantially with Shakespeare and with drama more generally, and suggest that our perception of Bakhtin as a critic unconcerned with the stage is drastically incorrect. It is true that he is somewhat dismissive of the theatre at other points in his work, but this paper will read Bakhtin against himself to prove his worth as drama critic. I will consider Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* alongside discussion of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, the self and other, and outsideness. *Roman Tragedies* combines *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* in a single production which explores civic power in Shakespeare's Rome. It has been part of the repertoire of Toneelgroep Amsterdam since its 2009 premiere and has toured extensively worldwide. Van Hove's innovative use of staging, including various digital elements, complicates the perspective of the audience, questioning modern relationships with technology and the communication of news. I will explore the framework of the production and its treatment of the spectator, looking in particular at the live video footage which van Hove employs throughout to manipulate views of *Roman Tragedies*. I will also discuss van Hove's perceived influence amongst contemporary British theatremakers, and examine similar uses of video in recent Shakespeare productions, including Robert Icke's *Hamlet* and Joe Hill-Gibbins' *Measure for Measure*. The paper will conclude by making a case for Bakhtin's usefulness to us as critics of modern Shakespeare performance.

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## SAA - Abstract

### Shakespeare from Within Camera and Montage in Thomas Ostermeier's *Hamlet* and *Richard III*

Filmmaker Sébastien Dupouey, who worked with German director Thomas Ostermeier on his productions of *Hamlet* (2008) and *Richard III* (2015), describes Ostermeier's use of the camera as an "obsession". On stage cameras – Hamlet carried a medium sized camera with him for most of the play while a camera was built in a microphone for *Richard III* – served "as a sort of diary, as a means to create a direct connection with the character's inner feelings". Indeed, real-time video and projections of edited footage in both productions are key elements to understand the director's approach to storytelling and characterization. Interestingly, Ostermeier is fascinated with video as a way to bring small details of the production to the fore, details that could not have been seen by the audience without the focus of the camera. We will analyze how extreme close-ups allowed for hybrid characterizations, putting Hamlet and Richard in an in-between, at the crossroads between theatrical figures and television protagonists and how edited footage offered a reflection of the character's inner world. The use of videos and camera devices in both productions also draws a powerful parallel between the world of television and that of the theatre, attracting new audiences to Shakespeare theatre and allowing for a renewed experience during performance. Ostermeier's digital practices in his Shakespearean productions raise not only the question of how video serves the plays, but also how film technology contributed to the circulation and distribution of two German productions in a global context. The use of zoom-ins, background music, flashbacks and flash forwards contributed to a renewed theatrical form which is a reflection of its cultural environment.

## **“Adapting Shakespeare for Animated Documentary and Virtual Reality”**

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### **Abstract**

This paper will provide an overview of the Shakespeare-centric research-project *From Print to Digital: Re-Defining Narrativity for Interactive Digital Media*, which will see completion in January 2020.

This investigation is carried out by the author at Nanyang Technological University Singapore in close collaboration with the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon and its director Prof. Michael Dobson. The research aim is to discover and test new methods for Shakespeare education and research by using digital animation as a research tool: The ultimate goal is to attract younger audiences of digital natives to the classic works of the Bard by embracing modern modes of mediated delivery.

For this purpose, the research project investigates Shakespeare-related topics through the means of practice-led research, which consists of 2 main components:

1.) An investigation into the relevance of Shakespeare for millennials in Singapore through an animated documentary that combines live-action-documentary interviews with animated layers.

This hybrid approach delivered new insights into Shakespeare-perception in Singapore that carries relevance beyond its local implications, Singapore being one of the digital leaders worldwide.

It also demonstrates, how animated layers can enhance the authenticity of a filmic documentary through a variety of methods, which will be defined in the talk.

2.) An adaptation of three major Shakespeare plays (*Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) in the form of an animated mash-up in VR. The examination here focuses on the challenges of transforming Shakespeare's classic works for a fully immersive digital environment like animated VR.

The innovative aspect of this research project can be seen in the idea to employ animation itself as a tool for research that can serve to open new channels of communication towards modern audiences.

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#### ABSTRACT SAA 2020: Towards a Phenomenology of Spectatorship in the Digital Age

Shakespeare's engagement with popular culture in the current Post-Web 2.0 environment ensures that experimental theatre adapters apply the full range of technologies to modes of Shakespeare production. The shock of the new, or not-so new, lays claim to actors' bodies and slices, dices, replicates, enlarges, deforms, edits, uses CGIs, thereby fragmenting, disassembling, speeding up time, freezing time, and promoting the spectator's remaking of the parts into a whole, integrating the audience into the meaning-making process. I am interested in exploring here the notion of "fragments" and "wholeness" and concepts of speed, time, and space as they influence the spectator's phenomenological experience of "liveness" and the "virtual," of real bodies and their simulacra, of the thingness of actors and of the concrete artifacts of theatre. How can we, as theorists in the twenty-first century, recognizing that texts are unstable and Shakespeare as cultural myth is now multiple and dispersed, reconcile liveness and presence, virtual and real, and allow for audience substantiality, however fictional and elusive this concept or its sense of community might be?, I shall refer to the RSC's 2016 *The Tempest*, a postdramatic rendering of *Othello*, *Othello C'est Qui* (2016, Sydney, Australia), and an immersive fusion of art (Klimt) and digital technology (*Manifesto*) in order to interrogate the implications for audiences of digital performance.

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SAA Abstract 2020

### Of Timeloops and Sandboxes: Reparative Reading in Digital Shakespeares

This paper seeks to interrogate both filmed versions of Shakespeare theatrical performance and digital narrative games that take Shakespeare as a topic of exploration under the banner of “digital Shakespeares”. Filmed productions of Shakespeare remove the particular captured performance from its context in repertory, preserving only one version of what games and interactive media scholars have termed the “story volume” of possible outcomes. However, digital performances also afford opportunities for intertextual Shakespeares, allowing productions separated by years or decades to speak to each other, and, as in the case of the RSC’s 2014 pairing of *Love’s Labours Lost* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, to create a new argument for how the plays could be “read”. Digital interactive narrative also provides new arguments for how Shakespeare can be read, in these cases by offering a divergence point. *Elsinore* (2019) contains the events of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, with a significant number of additions as well, but both the game’s narrative framing perspective of Ophelia as narrator and its time-looping mechanics offer a divergence point, which is further underscored by the agency the player can take in deciding what version of *Hamlet*’s events will become the canonical one. In *We Are Not All Alone Unhappy* (forthcoming, 2020), players pair characters who received tragic endings in the Shakespeare canon with similarly tragic characters from other plays in order to explore a variety of different “happy endings”. I argue that these sorts of digital Shakespeares can offer various forms of reparative reading as Sedgwick defines it; as the category of “digital Shakespeare” widens and blurs to incorporate multiple game genres that ask the audience to occupy varying roles, interrogating a digital text’s relationship to multiplicity and the space it makes for reparative reading may be a useful method of analysis.

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### Potentials for Digital, Bodily, and Pedagogical Immersion in *Hamlet 360*

Our techno-culture is obsessed with connection, authenticity and polysensorial experiences, and this obsession surely extends to contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare. In particular, *Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit*, a virtual reality film adaptation made by the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, places viewers in the center of the play from the vantage point of the Ghost. Moreover, the creators of *Hamlet 360* sought to democratize Shakespeare with this VR adaptation by giving audience members relatively easy access to the technology: the film is available at no cost and viewers can tap into the VR technology on their phones with a \$15 Google Cardboard viewer. As such, *Hamlet 360* demonstrates the potentials to join physical and digital immersion at a far lower price tag than ever before. And, as educators, these potentials to put our students inside *Hamlet* relatively inexpensively and from the confines of our classrooms are beyond exciting. But VR is still in a relatively nascent developmental stage... is the genre effective? Does it appeal to audiences of all ages? And does it achieve the goal of democratizing Shakespeare? In addition to discussing the *Hamlet 360* as a VR adaptation for entertainment, I will additionally bring in the voices of my students who studied *Hamlet* alongside *Hamlet 360* to shed light on pedagogical potentials of VR from a student perspective.

## “Speaking Thoughts: Insights and Questions from a Digital Shakespeare Content Creator”

My path to this topic is somewhat unusual, since ‘Shakespeare performance studies’ has not been a part of my formal training. I come at this topic as someone who has 1) taught freshman humanities courses for the past couple of decades, and 2) has become a content creator for the digital editions of Shakespeare plays that can be found at myShakespeare.com. In creating the content – which includes hundreds of performance clips – I’ve had to follow my own instincts as a filmmaker, teacher, and humanist. I’m now anxious to fit my experiences into Shakespeare performance studies more generally, and I’m particularly interested in two broad and interrelated topics, both of which have been dictated by the particular nature of embedded, digital performance clips: 1) the limitations of performance-based approaches to teaching Shakespeare, and 2) the positive potential of construing Shakespeare performance as a support for teaching Shakespeare as certain kind of literature rather than as a bridge to a full performance of the play. More specifically, the performance clips created for the website are done almost exclusively as direct camera address and typically with only one character, even if that character is in conversation with other characters. This technical choice has led to a heightened sense of Shakespeare’s language as *thinking*, and to performance as the speaking of thoughts. Does digital performance help us approach Shakespeare’s language as inhabiting some more liminal space between words on a page, on the one hand, and full-blown performance on stage or on screen, on the other hand?

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Abstract: Performance as Media Archaeology

Although the intermedial dimension of theatre is often understood in terms of the implication of digital forms of production onstage, theatre is, and has always been, richly intermedial: theatrical performance involves the densely conventional remediation of a variety of genres and instruments of social performance, from the representation of the bodily genres of social performance to the fashioning of critical practices of spatialization, and the construction of a technical armature for performance. And yet, from the perspective of media archaeology, theatre is not only obsolescent, but so obsolescent as to vanish from the field of mediation altogether. In this paper, then, I want to consider the function of obsolescence as a dimension of theatrical performance, developing a reading of theatre in dialogue with emergent work in the field of media archaeology. I will make some reference to the work of the Wooster Group *Hamlet* as a means of engaging the fortunes of Shakespeare performance as a site of inquiry.