2019 Seminar Abstracts: Virtual Shakespeare
Rebecca Bushnell, University of Pennsylvania

Gina Bloom, University of California Davis

"Rough Magic: Motion Capture Animation and Glitch Performance"

This paper contrasts the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2016 motion capture production of *The Tempest* with the significantly lower budget productions of scenes from the play produced by users of the videogame *Play the Knave*, which Bloom co-developed with colleagues at the UC Davis ModLab. In this Kinect-based motion capture game, users design and then perform a scene from a Shakespeare play karaoke style, using their full bodies to control their avatars on screen. Raise an arm and the avatar mimics that action in what feels like real-time. The game's "mimetic interface" (Jesper Juul, A Casual Revolution) is both empowering and frustrating for players, who quickly discover limitations in their capacity to control fully their avatars. Experienced as glitches in the animation, these limitations are an interesting site for analyzing the politics of the human-computer interface. Unlike the RSC production, which used expensive technology to attempt to eliminate glitches in animation, *Play the Knave* cannot avoid them. Rather than see pervasive glitches as a bug, however, I have found them to be a feature. As the game stages users' bodies as beyond their mastery, it challenges the liberal humanist conceptions of technology and embodiment that loom large in RSC's *Tempest* and the rhetoric around

Amy Michelle Borsuk, Queen Mary University of London

"Technical Wizardry:
The Value of Digital and Human Labour in *The Tempest*"

When the 2016-2017 production of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Tempest* was staged at Stratford-upon-Avon and the Barbican Theatre, London, British theatre critics responded with anxiety about the dominating live motion-capture technology at the production's center. Although these critics attempted to dichotomize humanness and technology, and public marketing framed innovative technological wizardry as the production's central element, *The Tempest* production process and the ethereal motion-capture generated sprite Ariel were inherently reliant on an integrated relationship between human and digital performance. As Ann Wilson writes, 'As technology is an effect of human creativity, the inverse is true: humanity is an effect of technology…' ('Bored to Distraction' 1994). Given this dialectical relationship at the core of the production, and using the methodology grounded in Paul Rae's 'Workshop of Filthy Creation: The Theatre Assembled' (*TDR* 59.4 2015), I will examine the technical, material elements of motion-capture performance as part of a wider analysis of the relationship between human and technical labor in staging *The Tempest*. In highlighting the mechanics of the production's motion-captured performance, I aim to demonstrate how human and digital technological labor have been publicly valued and credited in varying ways as separate entities, in comparison to the reality of the rehearsal room.

Mariacristina Cavecchi, Università degli Studi Milano

"Faraway Shakespeares. Performing the absence"

My paper focuses on two recent productions of *Romeo and Juliet* that turn to video and Skype technology to fragment and infract the dramatic text and the characters' bodies, as well as to create "virtual spaces." In both cases the actors cannot be onstage together because they are either entrapped in the bombed-out city of Homs, Syria, or locked in a juvenile prison in Milan, Italy, and are therefore replaced by their virtual avatars.

In March 2015, Syrian playwright, actor and director Nawar Bulbul premiered his version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* with a cast of more than 100 children in the vast Za'atari refugee camp near the Syrian border. For three months he worked daily with children at the "Souriyat Accross Borders" center in Amman, Jordan, a rehabilitation hospice for Syrian refugees, where he imagined Romeo to be living. He also worked daily, via Skype, with Juliet and the group in the besieged city of Homs and with their drama teacher, who carried on with rehearsals even when an internet connection was impossible. The play was projected through Skype from Zaatari and Homs onto a screen in the theater in Amman so that the two groups virtually met via the Internet.

On 1 December 2018, Giuseppe Scutellà, actor and director of Puntozero Teatro, a small theatre company working with young offenders at Milan's juvenile detention institute "Cesare Beccaria" presented an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, where Romeo was put on trial for the murder of Tybalt, simulating the procedure of a real life trial of a young man accused of murder in 2018. The head of the prison did not allow the young offenders to take part in the performance that took place in the prison's 200-seats theatre and was also open to the general public, so that their parts had to be screened during the live performance.

My paper addresses the negotiation between the physicality and materiality of performance and the immateriality of its virtual replica, between the contingency of a precise location and the globality of the video/web dis-location. It aims not only to investigate the representational challenges created by modes of experimentation with narratives and interactivity, but also to question their ethical consequences as well as their role in process of negotiation between Shakespeare and marginal groups.

Valerie M. Fazel, Arizona State University

"The Shakespeare Fan as Ethnodramaturg and the Affective Use of Fragments in YouTube Shakespeares"

Most fan-created work on Web 2.0 platforms are constructs of remixed textual fragments, often mined from diverse, sometimes alien, post-production sources. Emerging critical attention to textual fragments invites renewed consideration of the fan-creator as (re)interpreter of Shakespeare's dramatic work. Gunnels and Cole argue that the fan-creator evinces the simultaneous dramaturgy Boal conceived in his Theatre of the Oppressed, whereby viewer is

transformed into participant in the dramatic process. They position fans as ethnodramaturgs navigating a state of "in-betweenness" as both producer and consumer of cultural forms who select, detach, and transport cultural fragments elsewhere, often privileging sources that speak to their special interests. The concept of ethnodramaturg dovetails nicely with Desmet's approach to tiny ontologies and the notion that people and things (whole or fragmented) are autonomous, yet open to relationship formation with other things. My essay brings ethnodramaturg and tiny ontologies in conversation through a close reading of the rowdy and rambunctious YouTube video, Machinamom's "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin." A remix of Warcraft III avatars performing *Macbeth's* key characters, the video uses the play's language and is notable (for better or worse) for its synchronized, remixed visual and linguistic fragments, set to Muse's "Assassin." Like many fan-creations, it represents an acting interpretation of Shakespeare that speaks to the ethnodramaturg's interests in *Macbeth* and the cultural fragments assembled to form the video's deeply personal interpretative narrative. Fan-creations may or may not leave a lasting impact on Shakespeare's drama (we Shakespeareans are, after all, tricked into looking for appropriation homogeneities and hermeneutic amplitude), but represent the ethnodramaturg's affective cultural life through his/her familiarity with Shakespeare. While fan work like "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin" may seem alien and fragmented to us, they also encourage us to embrace the broad diversity of Shakespeare's tiny ontologies to better understand the human individuality invested in Shakespeare cultural use.

Matthew P. Harrison, West Texas A&M University

"Shakespeare And Immersion: Gaming the *Comedy of Errors*"

Recent announcements for a virtual reality *Hamlet*, funded in large part by Google, draw repeatedly on the idea of "immersion," the notion that VR may "transport you," "plunge viewers into Hamlet's harrowing journey," and "fully envelop them in each scene." If the technology is new, the metaphors are ancient, resounding through rhetorical theory since at least Quintilian's account of *enargeia*, that vivid quality of style that allows a rhetor to "exhibit the actual scene," stirring emotion as "if we were present at the actual occurrence. For both Quintilian and the Commonwealth Stage Company, metaphors of presence conflate sensory immediacy and aesthetic absorption. Thus Paul Smith describes enargeia as a "rhetoric...of presence": "an ingenuous and impassioned desire for the union of language and concept which will transcend both terms and embody a primal, linguistic plenitude." The fantasy of total immersion in *Hamlet* shares this fantasy with Sidney's dream of poetry that instantiates a golden world, not "imaginative" but "substantially." One imaginative end-point of such thought might be Star Trek's Holodeck, as theorized by Janet Murray: the artwork as vividly real, totally immersive, completely responsive, and experientially pleasurable.

Hamlet has been a test case for this idea before: early video game studies regularly imagined Shakespeare video games as more immersive versions of the classic. Yet as the play itself reminds us, even the most vivid presence retains a kind of alienated distance. (The Player's evocative account of the fall of Troy echoes a passage in Quintilian that Erasmus picks out as an example of enargeia. Hamlet is moved but not transported.) Indeed, video game theorists like Rob Gallagher now consider immersion-breaking as fundamental to the medium as immersion

itself. To game is to move back and forth between moments of intense absorption and of frustrated encounter with the boundaries of the experience. Indeed, some of the complexities currently being theorized in Shakespeare studies through the lens of glitch might better be thought of in terms of the dialectics of immersion.

One natural location for such argument might be the later romances, particularly *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*, which both stage and question the dream of a multisensory, supremely satisfying and transcendent art. Instead, I want to turn to Shakespeare's earliest engagement with these questions, in the proto-romance *Comedy of Errors*. For Antipholus of Syracuse and Adriana both, immersion is closely connected to alienation:

I to the world am like a drop of water
That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself. (1.2.33)

In Ephesus, Antipholus experiences a dynamic fundamental, I think, to new media attempts at immersion: he is constantly hailed by an accommodating world but also bewildered by the mismatch between that world and his own expectations. It is no accident, I take it, that his metaphors for this mismatch—cozenage and sorcery—have a long history in anti-theatrical and anti-poetic writing. Responding to this long tradition, from Plato to Stephen Gosson, Shakespeare imagines aesthetic immersion not as presence but as feeling out of place.

Jennifer R. Holl, Rhode Island College

"Shakespeare-by-GIF"

In 2010, the online magazine *Slate* proclaimed a "glorious GIF renaissance," as the decades-old, pre-Flash era Graphic Interchange Format had re-emerged to become a vital component of such varied digital landscapes as social media, news sites and fan forums. In recent years, the ubiquity of the animated GIF has attracted critical attention from film and new media scholars, as well as in robust online discussion by proponents of the form's artistic merit and capacities. There, "atmosphere, not action" has become both a reigning mantra and the form's defining feature. The artistic aims and applications of the GIF, online proponents claim, lie in its ability to capture and evoke aura, empathy and/or emotion rather than relay a sequence of events.

This paper explores Shakespeare plays told through GIFs as a form of non-narrative, digital Shakespeare production—productions concerned with "atmosphere, not action." Shakespeare-by-GIF takes many forms, but this paper will focus on three of its most prominent: the careful curation of seconds-long moments taken from Shakespearean film, television or filmed theater; collections of non-Shakespearean GIFs put to Shakespearean ends; and the collapsing of Shakespeare plays within single GIFs. What each form has in common is the GIF's singular capacity to simultaneously freeze time and exist in perpetual, repetitive motion, preventing linear storytelling in favor of endless loops that can never reach narrative fruition but only conclude with a lingering possibility that demands (variously defined) interaction.

As James Ash argues in his work on digital affect, GIFs "modulate forces into either sensations or affects" just as they "contest narrative." Building upon Ash's work and the "atmosphere, not action" refrain of online enthusiasts, this paper explores the ways that Shakespeare-by-GIF reframes Shakespearean production as a layering of affective exchanges between users, forms and memories, where, for example, *Hamlet* and *Titus Andronicus* become extended, often intertextual, wordless meditations on desperation and smug indulgence, respectively. I will also discuss what Michael Z. Goodman has called both the "vernacular criticism" and "vernacular creativity" at the heart of the GIF, as Shakespeare-by-GIF allows online users to critically distill various resources into analyses of Shakespearean affect while simultaneously recreating plays in non-narrative forms.

Emily Rose Lathrop, George Washington University

"Engaging Audiences: Digital Ethics and Shakespeare on Social Media Platforms"

Social media is a vital part of the theatre industry: theatres use it to post behind the scenes videos, announce seasons and ticket sales, engage with other artists and institutions, and interact with their audiences. Not only do theatres produce social media across various platforms, but they also bolster other accounts than their own. A theatre can help get the word out about a charity event, a new troupe in the area, and can link production photos to the respective photographer, designers, and actors. Theatres also engage with their audience's accounts, liking, retweeting, regramming, and sharing their reception before, during, and after a performance. Sometimes this is explicitly asked for by tweeting out a request for feedback ("Let us know what you think!") and by providing a specific hashtag for the production, talkback, and/or theatre. Outside of these parameters, theatres can and do still retweet/share/like audience responses on social media, even if these accounts have not tagged the production, tweeted directly at the theatre, or used specified hashtags.

While journalists have started creating best practices models for engaging with people via social media, most notably at NPR , there does not seem to be a consensus in performance, Shakespeare, and reception studies on best practices for citing and interacting with audience members. This paper, then, explores potential ethical frameworks for engaging with audiences in the digital sphere. What is at stake in scholars, theatres, and practitioners engaging with audiences on social media? Does this engagement change when an audience member has not participated in digital feedback mechanisms, like hashtags, tags, digital surveys, or has not responded directly to posts by a theatre? Should academics, practitioners, and theatres ask permission to republish an audience member's response to a production? Whose voices get amplified on digital platforms and in scholarship grappling with these questions? Whose get ignored?

Michael Lutz, Independent Scholar

Amazon's Shakespeare:
The Work of the Bard in the Age of Algorithmic Reproduction

Searching "Shakespeare" on Amazon.com's storefront returns "over 30,000" results. This is not the highest number – "Harry Potter" returns "over 40,000." But narrowing for electronic texts (available only on Amazon's proprietary e-reading service, Kindle) reduces the *Harry Potter* search results to a mere 2,000; for Shakespeare, there are at least 10,000. Outside subscription services, the cheapest *Harry Potter* ebook is $9 USD; the cheapest Shakespeare ebook is free. Given the texts' respective copyright statuses, this is not surprising. But I want to think more extensively about what the proliferation of Shakespeare on the Kindle marketplace means.

Often drawn from public domain transcriptions of printed texts with no editorial or notational apparatus, and sold by independent publishers with variable quality control, these cheap digital editions might appeal to undergraduates with limited finances and shelf space (if they're willing to put up with the formatting errors). But I further argue that Amazon's marketplace – built on an algorithmic foundation prioritizing not only keyword relevance, but likelihood of sale – tells us something about "Shakespeare" in the early twenty-first century, where the name comes to simultaneously invoke historic genius and low-cost (and low-effort) investments for digital publishers. Looking to experimental dramatist Annie Dorsen's *A Piece of Work*, an algorithmically rewritten *Hamlet*, I find an aesthetic model for theorizing how Amazon's Shakespeare indicates what N. Katherine Hayles calls a hybrid culture of reading, where human and nonhuman readers – from algorithms to the ruthless logic of platform capitalism – collaborate in producing, consuming, and propagating the Shakespearean corpus.

Márcia Amaral Peixoto Martins, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (co-authored with Sagres)

"Shakespeare checks into the digital world: rewriting his plays using emojis"

The purpose of this study is to analyze the OMG Shakespeare series aimed at bringing Shakespeare's works to the youth universe through the use of digital language. The series, focused on young readers, features rewritings of Shakespeare's plays into WhatsApp-message format. The texts are full of emojis, symbols, acronyms, abbreviations and hashtags. These adaptations are published in book form by Penguin Random House. There are four titles available so far: *srsly Hamlet* and *Macbeth #killingit*, adapted by Courtney Carbone, joined by *YOLO Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night #nofilter*, adapted by Brett Wright. The analysis seeks to determine: i) the general concept of the series; ii) the main strategies and means used in the process of adapting the plays; iii) to what extent main Shakespearean characteristics in relation to themes, plots and characters' profile are preserved; iv) the relationships between verbal and visual languages in the texts; and v) what image of the playwright and his works is conveyed to the intended readership. The theoretical framework relies on Irina Rajewisky's (2010) and Werner Wolf's (1999) theoretical concepts of intermediality, Charles Peirce's (1998) theory of

signs, Lars Elleström's (2010, 2013) theoretical framework on modality and media, and on Linda Hutcheon's (2013) concepts of adaptation.

Valerie Clayman Pye, Long Island University Post

"I have thee not, and yet I see thee still":
Virtual Rehearsal and the Actor's Imagination"

The recent death of voice and verse pioneer Cicely Berry recalled the profound impact that Berry had in the training of actors for Shakespeare. Along with Kristin Linklater and Patsy Rodenburg, Berry's work centers around the initiation of a highly-personalized experience of Shakespeare's text in the actor's body. The methodologies of these "three sisters" of voice aim – both independently and interdependently – to instill in the actor a sense of "authority", a fusion between the actor-instrument and Shakespeare's text. *Unearthing Shakespeare: Embodied Performance and the Globe* (Pye) builds on that foundational premise at the heart of the current landscape for actor training, to explore how a close examination of both the architectural configuration and the performance paradigm for which Shakespeare wrote can instill a heightened sense of embodied performance in the contemporary actor.

In this paper, I will explore the intersection between technology and actor training for Shakespeare by examining how actors can use the technology they carry in their pockets to personalize their connection to the text and create dynamic performances of Shakespeare. This latest piece of Practice-as-Research expands upon the methodology in *Unearthing Shakespeare* to offer actors a practical, virtual rehearsal experience that expands the actor's imagination. I will draw upon the fields of sports psychology, cognitive science, and somatic research to interrogate how the use of imagery can enhance and support the actor's creative process.

This paper asks the following: if virtual reality can enable users to experience actual spaces, how can the use of that technology foster the creative process and help deepen the connection that actors make with Shakespeare's texts? By pairing the virtual reality app, Globe 360 with Shakespeare's text, actors can cultivate a relationship to the performance dynamics at Shakespeare's Globe and forge a deep connection to 16th century language through 21st century means.

Ofelia Da C. Machado Sagres, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (co-authored with Martins)

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by *YOLO Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night #nofilter*, adapted by Brett Wright. The analysis seeks to determine: i) the general concept of the series; ii) the main strategies and means used in the process of adapting the plays; iii) to what extent main Shakespearean characteristics in relation to themes, plots and characters' profile are preserved; iv) the relationships between verbal and visual languages in the texts; and v) what image of the playwright and his works is conveyed to the intended readership. The theoretical framework relies on Irina Rajewisky's (2010) and Werner Wolf's (1999) theoretical concepts of intermediality, Charles Peirce's (1998) theory of signs, Lars Elleström's (2010, 2013) theoretical framework on modality and media, and on Linda Hutcheon's (2013) concepts of adaptation.

Laura Turchi, University of Houston

"Teaching Shakespeare in 21st Century High School Classrooms: Reconciling "Personalized Learning" with Collaborative Meaning-Making"

 Shakespeare plays, especially at the secondary level, are best taught with active and collaborative performances integrated into the classroom instruction. These approaches are already risky for teachers nervous to have students out of their seats and independently engaged in meaning-making. The current educational movement towards increased classroom "personalization" further complicates instruction of the plays. In the quest for personalization (sometimes called differentiation; often assuming extensive virtual learning management systems), classrooms may isolate students as they utilize e-connectivity and digital tools (e.g., *WordPlay Shakespeare* or *MyShakespeare*, discussed in this paper). 21st century teachers also confront their students' common belief that truly important learning is elsewhere, outside of school (e.g. how to jump into Fortnite, how to impress your crush, which artists to stream, and more). This paper argues for good teaching in the use of digital tools, and helping students access affinity spaces (Gee, 2017) and other opportunities for networking around points of interest related to Shakespeare texts and productions. *Social activity networks* support student collaboration in and outside of school. They also support the spread of improved pedagogical practices among instructors, each in turn making innovative adaptations. Secondary school literature teachers can develop strategies that work best for their own students, making the Shakespeare texts more accessible, and the benefits available, for more students, not just the "bright" ones. And within networks, instead of an individual teacher having to manage innovation alone, associations of teachers and scholars and researchers can support one another in arts-based innovative pedagogy.

Garry Walton, Meredith College

"Playing with Shakespeare: Reflections on Game Chef 2011"

Sparked in part by the acknowledged shortcomings of the elaborate Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game *Arden* (released 2007), in July 2011 an experienced RPG designer and a professor of early modern drama invited low-tech developers to design analog games based on the theme "William Shakespeare." A mere ten days later, 76 creators had given birth to 66 different Shakespeare-inspired games. This essay reflects on that process of Shakespearean re-

interpretation and re-creation from start to finish, and what it reveals about the meaning and use of "Shakespeare" at the present moment. The article assesses the 2011 games as revelatory of "Shakespeare" as a locus of familiar characters, stories, lines and performative acts, and then considers what it means to play with Shakespeare in this way.

Nora J. Williams, Independent Scholar

"Public and Private Selves: the RSC's *Volpone* and @LadyP_W"

This paper focuses on the RSC's use of Twitter in their 2015 production of Ben Jonson's *Volpone* in order to analyze the ways in which public and private selves are activated on social media, and how these extra-theatrical performances affect interpretations of early modern plays staged in the present. The character of Lady Politic Would-Be had her own Twitter account for the duration of the run (@LadyP_W) where she posted selfies with audience members, updated us on her daily activities, and retweeted inspirational quotes and fashion memes. In addition to interacting with audience members and reinforcing the on-stage performance of Lady Politic Would-Be's over-the-top character, @LadyP_W also engaged with @netsymac, the personal Twitter account of actor Annette McLaughlin, who played Lady Politic Would-Be in the RSC production. Through meta-theatrical interactions with McLaughlin – both on Twitter and in the offstage spaces of the RSC – @LadyP_W succeeds in stretching the boundaries of the performance event, adapting McLaughlin's onstage persona as Lady Politic Would-Be to the "spreadable" space of social media. The connections between the public, polished, performative self represented by @LadyP_W and the more private (but still performing) self represented by McLaughlin and @netsymac will be explored through fan studies and digital culture; in doing so, I will suggest that @LadyP_W represents an apt case study through which to examine the performances of public and private selves in early modern plays staged in the digital age.