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Shakespeare in Digital Games and Virtual Worlds[1]

Abstract: Shakespeare's plays have long flirted with using various artistic and medial forms other than theatre, such as cinema, music, visual arts, television, comics, animation and, lately, digital games and virtual worlds. Especially in the 20th and 21st century, a fascination with Shakespeare both as a historical and theatrical figure and as a playwright has become evident in screen based media (cinema, television and video), ranging from "faithful," almost documented performances of his plays to free style adaptations or vague film references. Digital games and virtual worlds carry on this tradition of the transmedial journey of Shakespeare's plays to screen based media but top it up with new forms of interaction and performativity. For the first time in the history of mankind everyone can enjoy firsthand from his armchair and for free the experience of taking part in a play by the Bard by entering a virtual world as if it was a stage and by assuming roles through avatars.

The article attempts first to introduce the reader to the deeper needs that gave rise to animation, a fundamental aspect of digital gaming and virtual worlds. It then tries to illuminate the various facets of digital performance and gaming, especially in relation to Shakespeare-themed and inspired digital games and virtual worlds, by putting forward some axes of classification. Finally, it both suggests some ideas that may be of use in rendering the Shakespeare gaming experience more "complete" and "theatrical" and ends by acknowledging the immense potential for the exploration of theatricality and performativity in digital games and virtual worlds.

Keywords: Shakespeare; digital games; virtual worlds; media and performance; computers and theatre.

The Journey Towards Digital Animation

During the Rennaisance, the quest for perspective spread from visual to theatre arts. The need to embed human physicality in theatre sets designed in perspective cropped up (Causey 68-90). In terms of spectacle, there were two major strategies used. In the one, there was an attempt to transform three

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dimensional human physicality into two dimensions, and, in the other, the incredible training of the human performer was believed to lead to extraordinary levels of movement expression and control.[2]

Animation can be considered as an answer merging the two strategies and giving a final solution both to the transfiguration of human three dimensional physicality onto two dimensions as well as to the quest of the performer extraordinaire, or the Über-Marionette (Olf 488-494). The word "animation" means giving life to inanimate beings by movement (Bell "Death and Performing Objects"). The designed performing agent may be a representation of a human being, of an anthropomorphised one or not; in any case it is artificial, man-made and can only move depending on the intention of its animator. It fulfills the longed for condition for the complete embeddedness of physical performance into its environment and the condition of the Über-Marionette at the same time. Without the animator's intention, the animated agent remains empty, dead, inert (Bell "Death and Performing Objects").

The creation of animated sequences by hand gradually gave way to the use of digital technologies and the animator's studio was replaced by digital software (White viii). Digital techniques offer the chance to both create digitally and move the animated agent, a function simulated in digital gaming when customising and navigating avatars in virtual worlds.

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[2] The former strategy was explored through painting, techniques of the observer, photography, cinema and animation and the latter through theatre and animation. Animation in fact "marries" the two strategies and provides a unified result. Photography managed to represent three dimensional indexical human physicality onto two dimensions, but, it failed to capture the present in its continuity. Cinema managed to capture the present in its continuity and render human presence and its environment "equal" by projecting the already captured moving image onto a two dimensional a screen. But, however fascinating human physical performance was, a "disobedient" actor always stood in the way of a director's vision. Theatre theorists and directors from their side shaped their theories and practices upon the need to make physically and psychologically the actor's ego disappear and create the perfect performer, the Über-Marionette. To name but a few major innovators, Stanislavski attempted to immerse actors into the role reality to such a degree that they would become marionettes in a fictional world. Meyerhold put forward his theory and practice on Biomechanics to train extremely articulate performers so that they would become marionettes in the hands of the director. Craig's approach is the most emblematic in the quest for the integration of human performance and physicality into the theatrical set. For a detailed account on simulation and embeddedness in theatre and digital media, see Causey, Matthew. *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: From simulation to embeddedness*, London, New York: Routledge, 2007. Also, for a better understanding of the position of iconicity and two/three dimensionality in Shakespeare's plays see Georgopoulou, Xenia. *Gender Issues in Shakespeare's Theatre and the Renaissance.* Athens: Papazisis, 2010. especially 183-198.

Digital animation has moved a step further. Instead of providing a strict sequence of action, as analog animation does, be it puppet theatre or animated film, it opens up towards programming artificially intellingent performing agents that are capable of performing in a virtual environment (digital game, virtual world) or physical reality producing non linear sequences of performing events.[3] So, not only the strings of the digital puppets are pulled invisibly, the actual puppets may exhibit signs of intelligence.

Digital Games, Digital Role Playing Games and Virtual Worlds

Digital animation, apart from being a tool for the creation of animated films, was quickly used in the design of digital games. Digital games are often called video games, electronic games or computer games.[4] Many different definitions and approaches have been provided in the gaming literature (Crawford 1982; Juul 2005; Aarseth and Calleja 2009; Salen and Zimmerman 2004, qtd. in Aarseth and Calleja 2009, to name but a few). A digital game may roughly be defined as an "interactive challenge on a digital platform, which is undertaken for entertainment" (Habgood 18).

Digital role playing games are a popular genre of digital games. These games seem to expand the horizons of theatre and performance and have been discussed as a "new performance art" (Mackay), and in relation to "cyberdrama," "internet theatre," "digital and networked performance" (Jamieson 23). Digital games are not predicated on the taking of roles and role playing, where as digital role playing games are based on role taking and playing, character control and/or embodiment through avatarial extensions in gaming fictional worlds. Digital role playing games run on various digital

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[3] Of course, animation in the form of analog puppet theatre always sought simulations of autonomous performing agents, e.g. in India, birds were put in puppets' mouths. See Pischel, Richard and Tawney, Mildred, *The Home of the Puppet Play*, Luzac and Co., Publishers in the India Office, London 1902, accessed at http://ia600302.us.archive.org/ 16/items/homeofpuppetplay00piscrich/homeofpuppetplay00piscrich.pdf [27/1/16], p. 4.

[4] The term "video game" signifies a game with graphics, an iconic game, as opposed to a text based one and refers to a result (icon) appearing on a screen. The hardware involved in the interface of the first video games was analog, so video games are not necessarily exclusively digital. In Latin, the verb «video» means "to see". Accessed from http:// www.archives.nd.edu/cgi-bin/lookit.pl?latin=video [20/1/16]. An "electronic game" again is not necessarily a digital one. Thus for example, the electronic game *Tennis for two*, created in 1958 and played on a monitoring screen was defined as analog. Accessed from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tennis_for_Two [20/1/16]. A "computer game" signifies a game running on a computer platform, and this excludes, strictly speaking for example mobile phone applications. The term "digital" is preferred as it refers to all digital platforms and not merely computer ones.

platforms and are classified according to certain criteria, some of them being network connection capability and potential,[5] interface result (Bowman 30),[6] camera perspective[7] and the number of players.[8] Several other criteria may be of use in making a classification of digital role playing games such as genre (war, strategy, adventure), platform, e.g. personal computers, game consoles and mobile game devices (King and Krzywinska 24) and aim (serious games, educational or advert games). The current analysis focuses on MMORPGs and MMOGs, as well as Virtual Worlds.[9]

MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE PLAYING GAMES (MMORPGs)

The dominant form of digital role playing games is Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs).[10] MMORPGs worlds appear to continue to exist and evolve even when players are offline. In MMORPGs, players from all corners of the world get simultaneously connected to the game system in real time and interconnected through the internet. Players interact with each other,

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[5] Two major categories are shaped through the use of this criterion, offline digital role-playing games, which may or may not offer potential for connection to a local network and/or internet, and internet digital games, such as Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs), in which the presence of the world wide web is necessary, because the connection and interaction between the players becomes possible through the internet and game servers.

[6] According to this criterion, digital role playing games may be distinguished in iconic and textual terms, the former being defined as actualizing the virtual world through the use of the image, the latter through the use of text. Digital textual role playing games such as MUDs are considered precedent forms for the advent of almighty iconic MMORPGs. See also Tychsen, Anders, «Role-Playing Games - Comparative Analysis Across Two Media Platforms», accessed from http://www.researchgate.net/profile/ Anders_Drachen/publication/229019796_Role_playing_games_comparative_analysis _across_two_media_platforms/file/e0b4952322ce681505.pdf [19/1/16], p. 75.

[7] This criterion refers to the route through which the perception of the virtual environment as well as avatarial embodiment and/or control are apprehended. In the case of first person camera perspective, the perceptive horizon of physical reality is simulated, with the player and the avatar sharing the same perspective through the eyes of the latter, a perceptual strategy that may immerse the player in the belief that he/she actually is the avatar. In the case of third person camera perspective, the player is able to see the avatar he/she controls. Digital role playing games offering both options and switching at any time between the two are also available, not rare.

[8] In the case of one sole player competing with the game system, digital role playing games are called "single player," in the case of many, "multiplayer".

[9] Virtual Worlds may be just environments to navigate through, where as MMORPGs are navigable environments where gaming aims are sought (winning, gaining experience points, collaborating, learning a new skill e.t.c.) by the players.

[10] Referred to as MMORPGs.

with the game system and its Non Player Characters or NPCs, characters controlled not by other players but by the game system. Their interaction is rendered possible through avatars which players usually customize according to needs and tastes. MMORPGs usually belong to the war or adventure genre. Players have as their base neutral spaces, cities, villages which are considered safe, hence the term "safeholds" applicable to such places. It is from there that gameplay sets off and there where players return during gameplay in order to buy and/or sell equipment, socialize and heal themselves from a wound. Beyond these safeholds, life can be very dangerous. The acquisition of experience points, which leads to avatar progress and development, usually takes place by navigating through dangerous grounds and the accomplishment of missions. Characters in MMORPGs can be controlled by players (Player Characters or PCs) or by the game engine (Non Player Characters or NPCs). The former are co-players in the game universe, where as the latter's basic functions are to allocate missions to PCs, buy or sell equipment to them and to deliver useful information. Players may, within the framework of gameplay, develop written communication between each other, in the form of short text messages known as "chat," as well as oral one, through the use of microphone. In both cases, players may be involved in active role playing, in producing speech in roles e.t.c.

MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE SIMULATIONS OR MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE GAMES (MMOs, MMOGs)

MMOs or MMOGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Simulations or Massively Multiplayer Online Games) such as *The Sims* are also popular. Gameplay in MMOs and MMOGs resembles free play more closely than a rule-based game with a typical quantifiable outcome and partially overlap with presence, function, navigation and interaction found in Virtual Worlds, such as *Second Life* (Reynolds 24-28).

VIRTUAL WORLDS: SECOND LIFE

Virtual worlds are a networked cyberspacial phenomenon, spatially based depictions of persistent virtual environments, accessible by avatars, which represent the participants involved (Bell "Toward a Definition of 'Virtual Worlds'" 2-3); crafted places inside computers that are designed to accommodate large numbers of people (Bell "Toward a Definition of 'Virtual Worlds'" 2); and persistent, avatar-based social spaces that provide players or participants with the ability to engage in long-term, coordinated conjoined action (Thomas and Brown 37). To sum up, a virtual world is characterized by synchronisity, persistency, network of people, networked computers and avatarial representations. It may host perplex interactions between participants (Bell

"Toward a Definition of 'Virtual Worlds'" 2-3). One of the most emblematic cases of virtual worlds is *Second Life*, developed by Linden Lab and firstly launched in 2003.[11] Accessible through the internet, *Second Life* allows its residents to develop interaction between them by using avatars. Various everyday activities, like socializing, participating in public or private events, buy or sell products and services can be achieved through avatar representatives. *Second Life* also simulates the economy, with its Linden Dollars currency. Participants may embark on investments of various sorts or kickstart businesses. Artistic events such as visual arts exhibitions, theatre shows and workshops are organised and attended by participants through their avatars all over the world.

Virtual Worlds partially overlap with MMORPGs and MMOs. Their main differences with MMORPGs are the lack of usual gaming aims like winning/beating enemies and that the MMORPGs game structure allows a vertical linear development of the avatar through upgrading and gaining experience points, where as avatar development in Virtual Worlds is horizontal, linear. As for the MMOGs, they are in essence Virtual Worlds, only more restricted ones.[12]

Role and Role-playing in Digital Role Playing Games and Virtual Worlds

The protocol for the gamer to participate in a virtual performance in MMORPGs, MMOGs and Virtual Worlds is common, to create and customize an avatar which interacts and performs with the avatars assumed by other players, write in chat form (text), play already recorded voice archives and/or perform live by speaking on a microphone. Avatarial performance contains potential for proxemics, body language, facial expressions and general movement capacities.

So, the double meaning of the term "role" (Pavis 317-318), role as dramatic persona and as text, speech, can be met in digital role playing games and virtual worlds. Role as dramatic persona is illustrated through the synergy of player and avatar and as text in the form of written text and oral improvisaion. The player in role produces written text and impromptu verbal utterances which other players receive and respond to. Through these multiple interactions active role gameplay may be constructed. The avatar, a form of our mediatized body, functions as a model acting on our behalf in the game universe (Klevjer 94). The

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[11] Accessed from http://secondlife.com/ [20/1/16]. See also Wikipedia, «Second Life», accessed from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life [20/1/16].

[12] For example, Virtual Worlds imply a never ending landscape, where as MMOGs usually take place in specific locations. MMOGs are also by nature more playful and game-like because they contain some obstacles for the player, e.g. avatars may get hungry and the player has to cater for that need.

avatar simulates the double nature of our body in any case, body-as-subject and body-as-object. We comprehend the virtual body of the avatar thanks to the comprehension we have of ours (Klevjer 89-93). The modes of embodiment in digital role playing games do not differ from those used for millenia in forms of dramatic representation, impersonation on one hand and personification on the other (Landy 14). Impersonation, the pretension to being somebody else, in digital role playing games occurs through the use of first person camera perspective where as personification, the dramatic use of objects in make believe play, occurs through the use of third person camera perspective.

The two modes of acting in role in drama representation, in theatre and performance get remediated in digital role playing games. They are transformed into analogous functions under the limits imposed by the digital platform involved. Man in digital gaming and virtual worlds moves from central stage, as actor, to the backstage where s/he becomes a director and playwright of digital marionettes in the case of third person games. In the case of first person games, s/he remains an actor but wears a mask s/he may actually sometimes see. Role playing is a distinct genre as well as a mindset, and it allows the players to play in role in any digital game they wish (Heliö 70). For example, even Packman may be experienced as a role playing game if the player projects some fictional reality other than the game system's, and invests it in the pursuing of the game goals.

Shakespeare in Digital Gaming and Virtual Worlds

Shakespeare and his plays in relation to cinema have inspired a rich literature. Examples including Ball (2013), Buchanan (2014), Jackson (2007) and Shaughnessy (1998). Various authors have preferred to examine Shakespeare's plays in relation to the screen in general, including television and video, such as Boose and Burt (eds.) (2005), Davies and Wells (1994), Holderness (2002), Rothwell (2004) and Rothwell and Melzer (1990). A key reference that has seen the opening up towards other arts and media, such as music, comic books, internet and digital media, though without extended reference to digital games, is Burnett, Streete and Wray (eds.) (2011), *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts,* which contains a chapter by Best dedicated to Shakespeare on the Internet and in Digital Media (Best 558-576). Another example of some specific interest in this subject is Ögutku's chapter on "Shakespeare in Animation" (Ögutku "Shakespeare in Animation"). The most relevant titles on Shakespeare and Videogames are Best's "Electronic Shakespeare: Which Way Goes the Game?" (Best "Electronic Shakespeare: Which Way Goes the Game?" 29, 37) and Bloom's "Videogame Shakespeare:

Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" (Bloom "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 114-127), which also appears in *Shakespeare Studies*, vol 43.[13]

Shakespeare and His Plays in Digital Gaming and Virtual Worlds

Before entering the realm of Shakespeare and his plays in digital gaming and virtual worlds, it should become clear that they have also offered inspiration to analog forms of gaming, such as board games or storytelling RPGs. For example, Uberplay launched in 2004 the board game *Shakespeare: The Bard Game,* which draws inspiration from the Shakespearean theatrical universe (Bloom "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 116). Another instance of analog RPG is Paul's and Rosvally's *Revenge of the Groundlings,* created for Game Chef, a game-design competition, the 2011 theme of which was Shakespeare (Bloom "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 118). So, in fact, the gamification of Shakespearean plays follows both analog and digital strands.

In an attempt at classification, Bloom ("Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 115) distinguishes digital games based on Shakespeare, his era and his plays into i) *theater-making games*, games that turn their player into a creator of theater (actor, dramatist, theater manager, or designer) ii) *drama-making games,* in which the player inhabits or controls a Shakespearean character and iii) *scholar-making games*, that turn the player into a student of Shakespeare and his theatre. Although Bloom's classification addresses successfully the frame criterion, it does not seem to take into account other equally important criteria, such as role-playing capabilities and the potential of the game and level of relevance to Shakespeare and his plays.

This article presents a rather narrative account of Shakespeare in digital gaming and virtual worlds. The underlying axes around which the current analysis is organized are i) interface result ii) the simplicity or perplexity of game mechanics, which may or may not encourage role playing practices and iii) the level of relevance to Shakespeare and his plays.

One of the first, relatively speaking, **digitally enhanced instances** of Shakespeare's plays are the the *BBC Shakespeare Animated Tales*.[14] These animated short films have been created in order to introduce children and young

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[13] Bloom, Gina, "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games", pp. 114-127, in *Shakespeare Studies,* vol. 43, Siemon, James R. and Henderson, Diana E. (eds.), Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Madison and Teaneck 2015, pp. 320.

[14] Accessed from http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006v9mm/broadcasts/2008/05 [4/2/16].

adults to some of Shakespeare's works. *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Twelfth Night, King Richard III, The Taming of the Shrew, As You Like It, Julius Caesar, The Winter's Tale, Othello* have been selected and various animation techniques, some digitally aided ones, like cel animation, were used for the creation of these twelve 26 minutes animated films (Ögutku 115).

In the field of **digital performance**, Shakespeare's plays have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Long before the advent of iconic MMORPGs and Virtual Worlds, they have inspired "cyberformance," "hyperdrama" and Internet Relay Chat Theatre sessions (Jamieson 25-26). Artists such as *Burk*, The *Hamnet Players*, The *Plaintext Players and Desktop Theatre* have contributed considerable sessions of performance in cyberspace (Jamieson 25-26). The *Hamnet Players* have actually "staged" in an IRC channel in 1993 their *Hamnet* (*Hamlet*) and, in 1994, *pcbeth,* their version of Macbeth.[15]

In terms of **digital text based-games**, such as MUDs and MOOs, but also playful questionnaires and chat games, Best names a few digital games inspired by the Bard and his plays (Best "Electronic Shakespeare: Which Way Goes the Game?" 29, 37). He refers to automated multiple choice questionnaires and Jeopardy format games that allow the player to type an answer rather than selecting it from a list. Such applications are: *Romeo and Juliet* Jeopardy Game from Quia.com; *Sea Of Troubles*, an interactive DHTML game; the *Playwright Game,* a Web-based choose-your-own-adventure by PBS; and the more recent *ilnsultThee* iPad mobile application, in which the player "generates Shakespearean barbs worthy of the bard" (Bloom "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 116).[16]

Some of the **early digital games, rather simple, with no potential for elaborate role-playing, but exhibiting some iconic ambition** include: *Design a Postcard* – Shakespeare's Globe (Bloom "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 117); Shakespeare's Globe theater online game *Hemmings' Play Company,* in which players pretend to be Elizabethan theater managers;[17] *William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Murder Mystery* from E.M.M.E. Interactive (1997), which included interaction with Branagh's film of *Hamlet*, puzzles, and some action scenes (Best "Electronic Shakespeare: Which Way Goes the Game?" 29); the University of Guelph's Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (CASP) *Speare*, based on the play *Romeo and Juliet,* in which gamers score by capturing 'knowledge spheres' from enemy spacecraft and successfully put them into lines from the play (Best

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[15] Accessed from http://www.marmot.org.uk/hamnet/ [4/2/16].

[16] Such as "Thou clouted folly-fallen maggot pie" or "Thou artless urchin-snouted fustilarian".

[17] Accessed from http://playground.shakespearesglobe.com/aurochdigital/gameone/ [4/2/16].

"Electronic Shakespeare: Which Way Goes the Game?" 37); *Romeo: Wherefore Art Thou?* ("Shakespeare in Videogames"); and *Hamlet, The Video Game,* award-winning indie adventure game based on William Shakespeare's Hamlet.[18]

More ambitious and elaborate in its conception as well as graphic designing and role-playing potential is the **MMOG** *Arden, the world of William Shakespeare,* developed by Castronova at Indiana University (Best "Electronic Shakespeare: Which Way Goes the Game?" 29, 37). The game is inspired by Shakespeare's plays, mainly by *Richard III* (Huang and Ross 9-10).[19] Players assume avatars, navigate through a virtual Elizabethan setting called Illminster, "interact with the characters from Shakespeare's plays, play card games with other players, and answer trivia questions on Shakespeare to level-up" ("Shakespeare in Videogames"). Players of the MMOG *Arden* are actually required to collect soliloquies and speeches and exchange them in order to receive goods and conditions suitable for the upgrading of their characters. In terms of educational intention and impact, the game setting is said to promote learning of Shakespeare, but, on another level, it serves as "a venue for experiments on economic behavior" ("Shakespeare in Videogames") or as a "virtual laboratory for research on macro-level social phenomena" (Huang and Ross 10). *Arden* is often seen as a truly innovative online project, with a high degree of user participation, but, in fact, it fails to inspire original user interpretations (Huang and Ross 10). Although Castranova was aiming to provide a "realistic Wars-of-the-Roses-era economy," he admits that the project was "overly ambitious" (Lehman 18). Another version of *Arden* was envisioned, *Arden II: London's Burning,* in which the Bard gave way to omnipresent monsters, hence no real attachment to Shakespeare could be perceived anymore.

In terms of elements of Shakespeare's plays imposing on the gaming universe in **already existing digital games**, the most prominent cases are a real-time strategy video game called *Empire Earth*, the 6th scenario of which is based on *Henry V*,[20] and the MMOG *The Sims*, with *Veronaville* as one of the three pre-made neighborhoods in *The Sims 2* base game.[21] *Veronaville* is divided into two areas. On the right, there is the "Italian" side, with Mediterranean-style architecture and on the left the "English" side, vaguely inspired by Stratford-upon-Avon. The two main families in *Veronaville* are the Capps and the Montys,

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[18] Accessed from https://taigame.org/en/game/hamlet [4/2/16].

[19] Castranova, the developer of Arden argues that "*Richard III* fits easily into MMOG conventions, because of such elements as battles 'knights in shinhing armor, and peasants and woodworkers' in the play."

[20] Accessed from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_Earth [4/2/16].

[21] Accessed from http://sims.wikia.com/wiki/Veronaville [4/2/16]. See also "Shakespearean Sims", accessed https://transmedialshakespeare.wordpress.com/2015/11/20/shakespearean-sims/ [7/2/16].

echoing respectively the Capulets and the Montagues. Summerdream family is another option for the player, influenced directly by *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* with characters names such as Titania, Oberon, Puck and Bottom. In *The Sims 2 Veronaville*, gameplay is encouraged, organised around the main conflict at the heart of *Romeo and Juliet* and attempts to remediate most aspects of the story. But the ending is not predestined. Some fragments of the introductory narrative are here provided: "Patrizio Monty never forgot Consort Capp's broken promise. But now his grandson Romeo has fallen for the Capp heiress. Will the Elders live to see the two families united?...Juliette Capp has fallen for Romeo, golden child of the rival Monty clan. Can the Capps set aside their grudge and put Juliette's happiness first?...The Capps and Montys have been feuding for years, but that hasn't stopped the younger generation from crossing boundaries and falling in love. Will their actions lead to ruin or bring the families together?" ("Shakespearean Sims"). Other plays of Shakespeare having seen the gamelight of *The Sims* MMOG are *Othello*,[22] *Hamlet*[23] and *King Lear*.[24]

Apart from digital theatre-making themed gaming instances, there is also the option to explore theatre-making in already existing virtual worlds such as **Second Life** (see 3.2.)**.** The most obvious connection between Shakespeare and *Second Life* is *SL Shakespeare Company*,[25] which developed a replica of the Globe Theatre in the virtual terrains of *Second Life* and run live performances of Shakespeare's plays. The company organises virtual auditions in cyberspace, in which everybody may take part. Their productions include *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*.

And, last, but not least, come some **digital games that contain some sort of reference** to the Bard ("Shakespeare in Videogames"). For example, in *The Simpson's Game* for the PS3 in the final level you have to fight William Shakespeare along with Benjamin Franklin, Buddha and God; in the *Medal of Honor* for the PSX if the player succeeds in entering a cheatcode he/she is then allowed to play as Shakespeare in the multiplayer mode; and in *Mario's Time Machine*, where Mario has to restore some stolen goods to the rightful owners, one of the "eras" the player may visit thanks to the time machine is 1601 Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Some digital games contain reference to Shakespeare's characters ("Shakespeare in Videogames"). Such examples are the MMORPG *World of Warcraft*, where Ophelia, William, Mortimer and Randolph Montague may be

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[22] Accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0mmtsL6Oyc [4/2/16].

[23] For a "contemporary" version of Hamlet, see relevant video accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqpLBn8GEOE [4/2/16]; for a medieval one, see video accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSV7_8Q_VKQ [4/2/16].

[24] Accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymTg6n7PqIY [4/2/16].

[25] Accessed from http://slshakespeare.com/ [4/2/16].

found in the zombie family; Puck, Edgar, Duncan and Cordelia characters star in *Final Fantasy* series; and Hamlet in *Nexon* and *Mabinogi Theater Missions*.[26]

Finally, quotes from Shakespeare's plays may be found in the several digital gaming occasions ("Shakespeare in Videogames"). Dr. Pickman from *Manhunt 2* at one point utters "*What Seest thou else in the dark backward abysm of time*," one of Prospero's lines from *The Tempest*; Mei Ling quoting *Richard II* in *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*, "*The tongues of dying men enforce attention like deep harmony. Where words are spent, they are seldom spent in vain*"; the Council of Loathing from the MMORPG parody *Kingdom of Loathing* states that they "*don't suppose you'd bugger off this mortal coil*" in reference to *Hamlet*; in one of the ads for the PS3, a dramatic voice narrates a version of a *Henry V* famous speech.

Within the rather promising field of mixed-reality technologies, which do often integrate physical performance to digital environments, such us Wii, Machinima and Kinect, *Play the knave,* a playful application of University of California may be encountered (Bloom "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 119-123). Bloom describes *Play the knave* as a Kinect "enabled game for Windows, *Play the Knave* offers users an immersive, embodied experience of staging a scene from a Shakespeare play... the screen shows a three-dimensional image of the theater stage the players have chosen...each player's avatar (i.e., the costumed actor) appears on the stage ready to perform. Shakespeare's script lines scroll at the bottom of the screen, and in a kind of theater karaoke, the players perform, their gestures and voices mapped onto their avatars" (Bloom "Videogame Shakespeare: Enskilling Audiences through Theater-Making Games" 120).

Conclusion

The article has attempted to clarify theatre and performance in digital gaming and virtual worlds and the terms under which the remediation of physical performance and puppetry is actualized in digital environments. Furthermore, it traces the impact of Shakespeare as a theatre persona, historical figure and playwright as well as of his plays on digital games and virtual worlds. Three axes for the classification of digital games connected in some way to Shakespeare are suggested, i) the interface result (text, icon, mixed reality) ii) the simplicity or perplexity of game mechanics, starting from simple games to more elaborate ones such as MMORPGs, MMOGs and Virtual Worlds, which allow extensive role playing practices and iii) the relevance or ambiguity of

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[26] Accessed from https://mabinogi.nexon.net/News/Announcements/60/00Abt/mabinogi-hamlet [7/2/16].

connection to Shakespeare and his plays. A further evaluation of each example of digital gaming based on Shakespeare is still pending. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that although the spectacular side of digital gaming has being given a lot of attention by game designers, the lack of innovative and well supported ideological functions in these games fails to complete an effective transmedial journey of Shakespeare's plays. Although theatrical and performative, first and third person digital games not only have a long way to go to simulate analog communication between avatars (Vallius, Manninen and Kujanpää 74-82),[27] they also lack the fundamental artistic urge to rephrase universal important issues. In terms of aesthetics, the lack of historical accuracy in costumes and sets as well as the mixing of architecture and fashion styles (pseudo-tudor and suburbian cheap contemporary architecture, for example) renders flat the aesthetic dimension of most games. In terms of game mechanics, the customization of an avatar may resemble the building of a role in theatre, but still has a long way to go, with life goals such as "Rock Star" or "Swimming in Cash".[28] In order to have some really interesting samples of digital gaming inspired by Shakespeare's plays, their creators need to contemplate also the political dimension of the Bard's plays and find ways to get it through to the players. Modding is a practice that may be of use in the development of interesting approaches towards Shakespeare's plays.

However, digital games and virtual worlds may not be of relevance to Theatre Studies just because of the remediation of theatre plays, as in the case of the Bard. They respond to the deeper quests in the philosophy of the spectacle, theatre and performance. Although certain theatrical and performative criteria in digital games and virtual worlds such as dramatic text, role and audience are present, the extent to which these games and worlds are theatrical and performative transfigurations remains to be clarified. First person digital games and virtual worlds could be considered as mediatized forms of theatre and performance, where as third person ones of puppet theatre. Even if they cannot be considered strictly speaking theatrical and performative phenomena, they tend to contribute to a theatrical and performative discourse. Of course, theatre and performance draws from make believe play through impersonation, and specifically from role playing, where as puppet theatre draws from playing with toys through personification. In fact, digital games and virtual worlds, by providing a platform to act on as a virtual stage and avatars to play with, respond in their unique mediated way to the rather Shakespearean certainty that "all the world is a stage". In addition, by means of digital animation and avatarial control, they

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[27] For example, there is space for the improvement of chronemics, kinesics and oculesics in MMOs/MMOGs.

[28] Accessed from http://sims.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_Lifetime_wishes#List_of_Lifetime_ Wishes [7/2/16].

actually rephrase the man/marionette debate (Olf 488-494) and offer their own alternative to the *Über-Marionette*, one of the most emblematic quests of the 20th century avant garde theatre and performance.

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