

## INTRODUCTION\*

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The aim of this special issue on *Experiencing Shakespeare in Digital Environments* is to explore the new frontiers of textual and performative spaces opened up by digital media in Shakespeare Studies. The impact of the digital turn on the way we engage with Shakespeare has been investigated at length by recent scholarship. Introducing *Shakespeare and the Digital World*, Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan have remarked on the “mutual importance of the ‘digital’ as a context that influences the study of Shakespeare and, conversely, the importance of Shakespeare as a case study to understand the developing nature of the digital world” (2014, p. 1). Against the background of the ongoing scholarly debate, where the outcomes of digital culture and their far-reaching implications in Shakespearean studies have been examined from a variety of perspectives (Estill, Silva 2018; Gossett 2021; Greatley-Hirsch, Craig 2014; Jenstad 2018; Kidnie 2021; Massai 2021), this volume focuses on how Shakespeare is experienced today in the here and now of the cyberspace, with an eye to the specific cognitive, reading and learning abilities of so-called ‘digital natives’ (Prensky 2001, 2011; Thomas 2011).

Without disregarding the many overlapping spaces and the cross-connections within intrinsically related topics, the contributions included in the three sections of this special issue identify three main areas of investigation: namely the fields of textual studies, digital scholarly editing and pedagogy; the ongoing research on new forms of cross-mediality, trans-mediality, and inter-mediality that are reconceptualizing the notion of Shakespeare’s ‘performance’ in digital culture; the area of adaptation studies embracing the digital facets of appropriations and rewritings of Shakespeare’s plays.

\* The Introduction is composed of three sections, authored as follows: section one (pp. 7-11) is by Alessandra Squeo, editor of the first part of the volume; section two (pp. 11-15) is by Maddalena Pennacchia, editor of the second part; section three (pp. 15-17) is by Reto Winckler, editor of the third part.

The first section of the volume (**Part I**) illustrates how increasingly interactive and cross-networked digital environments affect our ways of approaching Shakespeare's textuality, touching on a variety of topics that are gaining prominence in the debate. Scholars have shown how the new forms of textual transmission and editorial mediation afforded by digital environments are transforming our reading habits, as well as the possibilities of understanding and engaging with Shakespeare's playtexts (Carson 2006; Desmet 2017). By overcoming the constraints of the printed page, the fluid materiality of the electronic medium has appeared to adapt to the natural instability of Shakespeare's texts (Kastan 2001). More importantly, owing to their capacity to store and allow access to a virtually unlimited amount of materials, hypertextual scholarly editions, multimedia archives and a growing variety of web-based editorial projects allow the reader to navigate across the diverse variants of Shakespeare's multiple-text plays in association with a broad, continually expandable range of supplementary materials, including sources, critical apparatuses, digital facsimiles of the early editions, audio and visual documents (Gossett 2021; Massai 2021). Although not entirely unchallenged, such a radical reconfiguration of editorial practice "providing a complete list of textual variants and editorial conjectures, along with access to discussions of the merits and demerits of those readings, has long been recognized as a means of empowering the reader" (Rasmussen 2015, p. 391). In this perspective, Shakespeare readers have been reconceptualized as 'users' (Fazel, Geddes 2017) in online environments that encourage diverse forms of creative 'appropriation' of the playwright's works.

From a broader perspective, the variety of digital resources and tools burgeoning on the Web have been shown to have a fundamental impact on diverse areas of textual studies (Craig, Greatley-Hirsch 2017; Weinberg 2021). Thus, along with sophisticated electronic instruments that have inaugurated new directions in authorship attributions studies (Craig 2021), the newly available tools for data text mining, concordancing, and computer-assisted text analysis have expanded the possibilities of 'quantitative' approaches to the playwright's works (Hope, Witmore 2004; Jenstad *et al.* 2018), in combination with more traditional reading (Drucker 2021). Also, the affordances of the digital medium and cross-networked environments have had a significant impact on sources studies, in line with recent research directions in this field that have marked a shift in focus from direct forms of 'linear textual transmission' to more complex processes of cultural influence, 'intertextuality' and 'interdiscursivity' (Bigliuzzi 2018). As Janelle Jenstad has pointed out, "linked digital editions enable us to represent Shakespeare as source and adaptor as well as originator", thus "destabil[izing] the canonical primacy of Shakespeare and to position his works in new ways: as sources for subsequent work *and* as adaptation of previous works" (2018, p. 280).

Similarly, light has been shed on the crucial effects of the digital turn on higher education and university teaching (Greatley-Hirsch 2012), where an apparently boundless range of possibilities are revolutionizing Shakespeare pedagogy, “a pedagogy that is at once appropriative of new digital tools (allowing us to improve what we already offered) and generated by those tools (opening up things previously impossible)” (Kirwan 2014a, pp. 58-59). Along with the newly available possibilities of displaying digital facsimiles of original quarto and folio editions in the classroom and using video clips of digitalized performances and multimedia materials available online, “blogs, wikis or social media” are inaugurating new teaching and learning environments, “tak[ing] advantage of the relatively natural use of these media by Web 2.0 ‘natives’ both to encourage critical reflection on personal development and to introduce students to a discursive environment that may, in some ways, reflect the cultures of orality” (Kirwan 2014b, p. 110).

The essays included in the first section of the volume illustrate different aspects of the digital turn in Shakespeare textual studies in line with this wide range of perspectives. In the light of the scholarly debate that has triggered new interest in a radical rethinking of the ‘materiality’ of the text (Squeo 2019), the first essay by **Alessandra Squeo** addresses the potentialities, as well as the challenges and prospects of the ‘hyperediting’ model (McGann 2001, p. 57) in the digital scholarly editions of the playwright’s works. Identifying the *Internet Shakespeare Edition of King Lear* by Michael Best as a remarkable case in point, the essay explores the new possibilities afforded by the digital turn in textual transmission and editorial mediation. After briefly outlining *King Lear*’s complex editorial history in print, and the diverse solutions adopted by editors in coping with some of the problems raised by a play that has come down to us in different textual versions, the essay sheds light on what appear to be both the promises, and the potential perils, of letting the reader access the Q1, Q2 and F versions of the tragedy along with a huge amount of multimedia materials available at the click of the mouse. Considering the ongoing paradigm shift from ‘editing’ to ‘archiving’, the second part of the essay dwells on the increasing development of interoperable digital resources and tools, including the sibling projects of the *LEMDO* platform (*Linked Early Modern Drama Online*), *LEME* (*Lexicons of Early Modern English*), and the *Global Shakespeare Video and Performance Archive*. In this perspective, the essay eventually conjectures on the possible development of a new generation of editorial projects as multi-layered, collaborative, and flexible ‘knowledge-sites’ (Shillingsburg 2006), designed to allow access to networked digital resources and to offer new insights into Shakespeare’s textual heritage, meeting the needs and interests of different readerships.

The second essay by **Silvia Silvestri** deals with the crucial transformations brought about by the digital turn in Shakespeare source studies. Exploring the

manifold theoretical background that has witnessed a new surge of interest in the complex forms of circulation, transformation and adaptation of Shakespeare's playtexts (Bigliuzzi 2018; Britton, Walter 2018) in what has been labelled as source studies "in the Google Age" (Greatley-Hirsch, Johnson 2018, p. 254), the essay considers how the digital is transforming the way scholars identify, visualise, and analyse Shakespeare's diverse sources, thus dovetailing "'old source study' and more contemporary approaches to textual and cultural analysis" (Britton, Walter 2018, p. 1). The two digital archives of Shakespeare's classical (SCS) and European narrative sources (*SENS*) of the *Skenè* Research Centre directed by Silvia Bigliuzzi at the University of Verona are taken into account as pioneering instances in this respect. The essay illustrates how, in line with this model, the author has created a corpus of significant scenes taken from sixteenth-century English and French translations of Ariosto's *Suppositi* – a play that famously filtered into *The Taming of the Shrew* via Gascoigne's *Supposes* – as part of her PhD project. Along with hyperlinks that favour internal crosschecks, the digitalized texts included in the corpus contain cross-references to a variety of tools and resources, embracing the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana (GDLI)*, and *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé (TLFi)*. After showing how digital environments can improve the visualisation and analysis of Shakespeare's long-known source texts, the second part of the essay dwells on how digital tools can prove equally useful in laying bare yet-unidentified forms of intertextual exchange. Taking into account the controversial case of McCarthy and Schlueter's computational analysis of George North's *A Brief Discourse of Rebellion and Rebels*, the essay considers both the potentialities and limits of digital tools in this research field.

The final two essays of the first section draw attention to the impact of the digital turn on Shakespeare pedagogy within a context in which "the number of digital initiatives designed to support teaching – from e-books to virtual learning environments, open-access online courses to tablet devices in the live classroom – has proliferated" (Kirwan 2014a, p. 58). Starting from the assumption that the myth of the digital natives being 'naturally' fluent in the use of ICT has been repeatedly rehearsed, revised, and eventually challenged (Prensky 2001, 2011; Thomas 2011) but not yet comprehensively explored on the basis of empirical evidence, the third essay by **Maristella Gatto** reports the results of a teaching experiment carried out at the University of Bari with a corpus linguistics/stylistics approach to *The Merchant of Venice*. After outlining the paradigm shifts brought about by the digital turn in reading practice – from 'qualitative' to 'quantitative', from 'horizontal' to 'vertical', and from 'close' to 'distant' reading models – the essay illustrates the outcomes of the classroom activities carried out with a group of post-graduate students in Specialized Translation who were encouraged to explore a digital version of Shakespeare's playtext using a selection of tools and resources for corpus-based analysis. Focusing on 'bond' as one of the most

‘resonant’ words in the comedy, students were guided to see how digital tools can help lay bare the play’s deviation from a common lexicogrammatical pattern in early modern English that associated ‘bond’ with the affective and moral fields, thus shedding new light on the play’s exclusive use of the word in its emerging economic meaning. In broader terms, using *The Merchant of Venice* as a case study, the essay reflects on how teaching activities based on digitally-enhanced critical reading can improve the students’ comprehension and critical appreciation of the playwright’s text by also honing their digital reading skills.

The fourth essay by **Michela Compagnoni** addresses the issue of the digital turn in Shakespeare pedagogy from a different but related perspective. With a view to assessing the didactic potentialities of Shakespeare digital editions in Italian secondary schools, the essay illustrates the aims of an experimental template that will be made available on the website of the Silvano Toti Globe Theatre Archive in Rome as part of a broader research project on “The Potentialities of Shakespeare’s Theatre for L2 Learning” directed by Maddalena Pennacchia at Roma Tre University. Choosing *Cymbeline* as a working example, the essay shows how a digital edition of the play, supported by critical apparatuses and including guided learning activities, could be used to meet the needs of a target group of students. With the aim of improving specific linguistic, cultural and digital skills, the template will include linguistic exercises on the modernised text of *Cymbeline*, guided activities of translation and comparison between Shakespeare’s play and its sources, as well as web-based research activities on a selection of topics, using provided links. The project is in line with the aims of an increasing variety of virtual and blended learning environments that are designed both to help students use digital technologies and to enhance awareness of their own digital competences. The availability of the template on website of the Silvano Toti Globe Theatre Archive acquires particular relevance in the light of what the current Covid global health crisis has shown to be the huge potential of online open-access resources in learning environments.

The second section of the volume (**Part II**) investigates from different points of view the changing notion of performance in relation to the practices of inter-mediality and the related concepts of cross-mediality and trans-mediality. Intermediality can be considered as an umbrella term (Rajewski 2005) whose prefix is suggestive of the blank space opening between media (inter-media), a blank space which stands for their material and/or conceptual difference (media specificity). ‘Inter’, however, is also suggestive of the necessary ‘relation’ between media: in fact, the blank space of difference is also a paradoxical space of convergence, a space of participation without belonging, in which new hybrid cultural products can be generated. Shakespeare’s writing foreruns such dynamics and presents itself as a particularly poignant case of early modern intermediality (Pennacchia 2012), being ‘suspended’ between two media which

are not commensurable: print and theatre. As David Scott Kastan puts it “the printed text and the performed play are not related as origin and effect [...] they are dissimilar and discontinuous modes of production” (2001, p. 7). As a playwright working for the Elizabethan entertainment industry, Shakespeare’s relationship with the printing press has always raised controversial issues in the specialised scholarship. The writing ‘by’ Shakespeare which actually reached us through print transmission has got a history of its own which should never be forgotten when thinking of its intermedial quality. W.B. Worthen, in introducing his study about “the stage performance of scripted drama” (2004 p. 1), contends that “taking print as synonymous with ‘writing’ [...] ignores the densely mediated ways in which written language gains public status” (p. 20). Historically, Shakespeare’s texts have been fixed on the page only (and luckily) thanks to the commitment of Shakespeare’s fellow actors, Heminge and Condell, who curated the First Folio in 1623: by apparently leaving others the task of editing his plays, Shakespeare created texts that do not want to ‘govern’ the performance. That is why, I believe, his writing has gained an extraordinary amount of what Worthen calls the ‘force’ of dramatic performativity. It is perhaps this intrinsic force that allows for the exceptional transformational drive of Shakespeare’s play-texts, and their adaptability to every and each new device that appears on the communication scene. The digital turn, whose sway we are still far from having thoroughly ascertained and acknowledged, has therefore deeply impacted on the way we experience the performance of Shakespeare’s textuality. It is a truism that every director, every actor, every theatre practitioner who participates in the production of a play co-creates the show, but the point is that with the digital turn, the performative force inscribed in Shakespeare’s texts has dizzyly increased; today every individual in the audience can actually experience new forms of actual co-creation. Against a rapidly evolving technological background, and within a culture where users of social media are also producers of contents and constantly encouraged to perform their own reception and interactive reaction to the wealth of materials at their disposal in the cyberspace, the Shakespearean reader/ spectator’s agency has been acquiring more and more relevance. If live and recorded productions of all kinds are available on the internet as has never happened before, Shakespeare can be ‘performed’ by prosumers through all sorts of new media: FB, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and whatever is coming next, up to the point that the ‘corpus’ of the ‘inventor’ of human communication, as both a biographical and textual myth, has increasingly acquired the status of an international marketing booster to sell all kinds of merchandise, especially, and quite ironically, high-tech communication devices such as smart phones. While Shakespeare’s writing travels through and across the media circuit adapting to all sorts of new digital environments (trans-mediality and cross-mediality), theatre scholars have begun to rethink the space of performance. On one side, that space is marked by the presence on stage of several media and by

increasingly explicit and dramatically significant intermediality (Chapple, Kattenbelt 2006); on the other side, though, the actual walls of theatres as we used to know them have fallen down. Suffice here to think of the National Theatre Live project where cinema and theatre converged for the first time. Launched in 2009, the project deeply impacted *the* theatre as an institutional space and discourse, also creating new models of spectatorship and participation. We are now fully aware of how digital communication and the internet have changed our understanding of space and time, but since those kinds of experiments, the concept itself of theatrical performance as an ancient human practice of people meeting ‘here and now’ to see other people acting ‘here and now’ has been utterly questioned, together with the concept of ‘liveness’ (Aebischer *et al.* 2018). The essays in this section exemplify and demonstrate how the notion of what ‘performing Shakespeare’ means today has deeply changed and been put to the test by digital culture.

This section opens with an essay which explores the reactions of Shakespeare’s online community to the cultural politics of the Globe in London. Taking its cue from the public controversy born from Emma Rice’s resignation as Artistic Director – due to her ‘excessive’ penchant for contemporary sound and lighting technology – the essay offers a broader reflection on the negotiations that theatrical institutions engage in today with the current digital environment. Since its opening, in 1997, the Globe has been promoting its mission as a popular theatre venue and an educational institution, refusing accusations of being mainly a tourist attraction, and presenting itself as a place where memory of the past and national identity can be fostered and preserved. This has led, according to **Orlagh Woods**, to a dangerously illiberal claim on what performing Shakespeare should truly mean, which ultimately denies the value of what is abundantly produced in Shakespeare’s multiverse, including the manifold reactions to performances circulating through the online fan-communities. As Woods makes clear, referencing a crucial critical debate, a contradiction seems to lie at the heart of the London Globe: the theatre has boosted its website and social media in order to establish a brand identity and to foster a strong commitment to historical accuracy in new audiences; however, such celebration of multimedia in the digital environment clashes with the reprobation of new technologies inside the theatre. Such tension signals a deeper and unsolved question, namely “who is Shakespeare for?”

In the second essay of the section, **Maria Elisa Montironi** sifts through the numerous profiles which have been opened under the name of Katherina Minola on Facebook – a social medium which she regards, with the help of critical theory, as a staging space for the self – in order to examine how *The Taming of the Shrew* has been adapted and appropriated. As Montironi makes clear, the perlocutionary prompt provided by Facebook (“what is on your mind”) determines the specific approach to performing the famous Shakespearean

character in such a medium. Kate's thoughts are confidentially shared with the community of Facebook, taking a small number of renowned situations in the plot as a cue to elicit Katherina's personal reactions. Moreover, Kate's language is most often than not contemporary English, and mostly the net-speak, with its abbreviations, hyper-links, hashtags, and emoticons; rarely precise quotes of the play-text occur, while a mock Elizabethan language is used mostly to a farcical or comical effect. By examining Facebook profiles devoted to the *Shrew* in the context of current theories on the creative potentialities of the Web 2.0, Montironi also highlights grassroots reactions in comparison to the professional critics' and adapters' reception, showing insights into the way the Web changes how we receive Shakespeare, yet also and surprisingly does not modify some conservative attitudes.

The third contribution to the section is by **Cristina Paravano**, who investigates the myth of Shakespeare as a successful brand which can help selling any kind of merchandise and in particular communication devices, such as cell phones with their many gadgets and services. The Bard's 'faces' (as creative reinterpretations of the Chandos and Droeshout portraits), as well as all kinds of famous quotes from his works, are reproduced on the cover of cell phone cases and covers, while in advertisement campaigns his characters become the spokespersons of the firms' messages. The essay focusses in particular on the use of *Romeo and Juliet* to promote mobile communication providers in a series of commercials which were produced in different national contexts (American, French, and Italian) to be broadcast on television. These ads perform the story of the two famous tragic lovers, leaving aside the actual words of the play-text and taking their cue, instead, from already existing popular adaptations for cinema and television. In those commercials cell phones are presented as the greatest invention of the age of digital interconnectivity, showing, by a wink to young consumers, how such devices could have even avoided the gloomy events of the most famous tragedy in the history of modern theatre.

*Romeo and Juliet*, as a tragic story of separation and death, is again the play under investigation in the essay which closes the section. **Maria Cristina Cavecchi** devotes her engaging contribution to two bold experiments that integrate theatre and digital media: Nawar Bulbul's 2015 *Romeo and Juliet* in Amman, Jordan, and Giuseppe Scutellà's 2018 *Romeo Montecchi: innocente o colpevole?* in Milan. In both productions the actors could not be onstage together, for war reasons in the case of bombed out Syria, and for lack of personal freedom, in the case of an Italian juvenile detention centre. Live theatre had to be integrated with Skype interaction and videotaped reproductions so that some of the actors were replaced by their virtual avatars. While acknowledging how problematized the issue of liveness has become in contemporary theatre productions which make use of digital communication technologies, the essay is passionately concerned with ethical issues that compels the audience to participate actively in a



performance which asks for reflections and answers about what constitutes essential Shakespeare, as well as why and how his work is so relevant for specific communities with local social and political concerns that have to rely precisely on those digital technologies which have created the phenomenon of globalisation to become visible and be heard outside their locality.

The third section of this special issue (**Part III**) is concerned with a broad spectrum of ways in which digital technologies impact the performance, adaptation and transmission of Shakespeare's works. Including discussions of Shakespeare DVDs, internet memes, televisual hacks, Virtual Reality (VR) installations and a live streaming broadcast from a prison, the contributions contemplate how the digital, in its myriad guises, permeates and updates both the production and reception of Shakespearean codes. While the five articles in this section cover a wide area, they share an interest in how the digital remediation of Shakespeare's works demands a redefinition of the identity, experience and function of what used to be the spectator or reader in Shakespeare's day. The DVD provides the "Shakespeare user" (Fazel, Geddes 2017) with the power to personalise her access to the previously pre-determined flow of the cinematic Shakespeare experience and to look 'behind the scenes' of the movie's production process, while the Shakespeare-themed internet meme invites users to not only consume snippets of Shakespeare but also participate in the creation of new "Shakespeare" themselves (Voigts 2018). The viewers of the live-streaming broadcast of a theatrical performance and a television series might seem closer to the traditional audience member, but in both cases the user's experience is modified by the medium in question to the effect of demarcating a clear distinction. The audience of a live-streamed theatrical performance is subject to a geographical displacement effect which draws the liveness of the experience into question at the very moment in which it enables it (Stone 2016). Television series, meanwhile, have evolved a level of complexity which demands the viewer's intense engagement with the show and its characters (Mittel 2015), in addition to incorporating the audience into the action by various forms of voice-over, direct address and fourth wall breaks. Finally, the VR technology arguably presents an even more radical break with the previous separation of actors from spectators and consumers from producers of Shakespeare. The digital technology enables the spectator, who now becomes an immersant, to experience the world of a Shakespeare play in a virtually simulated environment which the immersant enters both mentally and physically, losing all distance to, and therefore arguably truly becoming part of, the Shakespearean story which is playing out all around her. What the papers in this section illustrate, therefore, is the potential of digital technologies to bring Shakespeare closer to his audience by making his works interactive, by transforming Shakespeare from a product to be consumed to an ongoing process in whose creation we all participate.

In his article about the DVD version of Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film of *Romeo+Juliet*, **Pierpaolo Martino** investigates how the format of the Digital Video Disc transforms the experience of watching the film from passive exposure to active, arguably political engagement. The digital format enables the emergence of an enhanced sense of agency on the part of the user by enabling her to exert some control over how the film is played, and by providing apparently intimate access to the production process in the form of various extras, breaking the cinematic illusion. Yet it is the DVD menus themselves which give rise to particularly astute and pertinent observations in Martino's contribution. In detailed discussions of the semiotic relationship between the visual aspects of the title menu and the loop of an instrumental fragment of the Radiohead song "Talk Show Host" which plays in the background but also features in the film, as well as of the significance of the Radiohead song "Exit Music (for a film)" whose lyrics become readable thanks to the DVD's digital technology, Martino outlines how new meaning is created in a series of complex interactions between visual, auditory and interactive elements, as well as between these elements and Shakespeare's text. Ultimately, Martino locates in the Digital Video Disc technology "a semiotics of the unpredictable and unexpected" which, in subjecting the cinematic narrative to viewer control, potentially subverts established hierarchies of form and content.

Moving from the DVD to the internet, **Carlotta Susca**'s timely contribution outlines the emergence of Shakespeare-inflected internet memes during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Building on Limor Shifman's theory (2013), Susca analyses a number of Shakespeare-related memes to make a strong case for her thesis that Shakespeare's classic status can itself be understood as founded on the "meminess" of his works – "a unique combination of elements which favours its time travelling in the form of memes, even if this results in modifications and distortions". Setting the internet memes into dialogue with other modernising forms of adaptation which likewise contribute to Shakespeare's continuing survival, Susca tackles the seeming tangentiality of Shakespeare adaptation in internet memes head-on, proving that internet memes indeed provide an excellent example of how Shakespeare's works remain relevant in the digital age. Not only do they link Shakespeare to themes with urgent and universal contemporary relevance, like the need to wash one's hands during the pandemic or the desire (and social pressure) to do something useful while in quarantine, but they also bring an element of interactivity to Shakespeare adaptation which fits in with many of the other digital adaptations discussed in this section.

The final three articles in this issue deal with digitally mediated version of *Hamlet*. **Anita Orfini**'s contribution consists in a detailed description and careful consideration of the meanings of the Virtual Reality (VR) installation *Hamlet Encounters* (CREW, 2018). Situating the work in the context of both the

Shakespeare play and other VR installations, Orfini focuses chiefly on the implications which the combining of Virtual Reality and theatrical play have for the experience of the user. Even though both share the feature of liveness, the two media differ fundamentally in VR's dissolution of the "binary separation of meaning and experience" which holds in most forms of theatre. In the digital illusion created by VR, the distance between actor and spectator is nullified; more than that, both are free to move around as they please in the same virtual environment. This, as Orfini stresses, leads to a loss of critical distance on the part of the experiencer, which to her mind ultimately persists in spite of CREW seeking to counteract it through providing the immersant with a number of opportunities to look behind the scenes and appreciate the real-life process that is necessary for the creation of the illusion. The most innovative part of Orfini's discussion, however, is the way in which she links the immersant's experience of disorientation in the virtual world to the unmooring of Hamlet's mind and world in Shakespeare's text. Understanding the ontological re-orientation which VR forces the immersant to adopt as a metaphor for Hamlet's time out of joint as well as for his madness, the digital technology is re-conceptualised by Orfini not as yet another medium into which the play has been transposed, but as a tool whose very mediality contributes to enriching the meanings of Shakespeare's tragedy by literally putting the spectator into Hamlet's shoes.

**Valeria Brucoli** recounts how the digital technology of live streaming enables the transcendence of solid prison walls in her account of *Hamlet in Rebibbia*. Reading the production comparatively against the earlier film *Caesar Must Die* (Taviani, Taviani 2012), which was produced by the same creative team and likewise featured inmates of Rome's Rebibbia prison as its actors, Brucoli contemplates the differences between staging a theatrical performance, making a film around scenes from such a performance, and broadcasting the performance itself from the prison's stage to other venues via live streaming. She stresses how the format of the live broadcast allows for a combination of the liveness characteristic of theatrical performance with the ability of technology to overcome spatial distance, giving rise to a simultaneity of experience among geographically separated audiences which acquires particular poignancy in a production in which the live performance takes place in a space defined as limiting and immovable. In a manner which dovetails with Anita Orfini's thoughts on the confluence of the meanings of *Hamlet* with the experience of the spectator who is immersed in VR, Brucoli also shows how this transcendent quality is reflected in the language of the production, for which Shakespeare's text was translated into the local dialects of the performing inmates, aligning Shakespeare's question of "Who's there?" – Hamlet or the prisoner who plays the role? – with contemplations about the simultaneous, digitally enabled presence and absence of the performance outside of Rebibbia's walls.

Finally, **Reto Winckler** analyses the television series *Mr. Robot* (Esmail, 2015-2019) as a hack of the Shakespearean source code of *Hamlet*, repurposing a process from the world of computer programming as an intellectual tool for grappling with the complex interrelations between literary, cinematic and televisual texts. After a theoretical section which, based on previous work by Winckler (2021), makes a case for understanding artistic adaptation as computer hacking through conceptually aligning adaptation with legal varieties of hacking and appropriation with illegal ones, Winckler proceeds to show how *Mr. Robot* can be understood as a complex update, port and fork of the Shakespearean source code. The process of artistic hacking is traced through a focus on two themes central to both *Hamlet* and *Mr. Robot*: the manipulation of the audience by the protagonist and the portrayal of the hero's madness. Winckler argues that *Mr. Robot*, by means of televisual as well as computer technology, radically intensifies the unreliability of the hero's mind and the ambiguous nature of the Ghost already prominent in *Hamlet*, achieving a thematic updating of Shakespeare's code by means of porting of the play to a new medium, and thereby forking an independent work of art out of the Elizabethan code. In the final section of the paper, Winckler then uses the perspective provided by the analysis of *Mr. Robot* as *Hamlet*-hack to double back to the Shakespearean source code, arguing that the plot and character inconsistencies which characterise the final act of *Hamlet* can be reconciled if we think of *Hamlet* in terms of a modern-day television series.

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