

PLAYING WITH THE PAST: AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN THE SHAKESPEARE-SCAPE

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Abstract: *The interest in theatergoing has decreased exponentially in the past decades among young consumers of entertainment, as video-games propose a more attractive alternative, in which the player has to make certain decisions in order for the story to move forward. The player participates in the action through the digitalized version of the play, which creates duality and confusion between the person outside the computer who clicks the mouse and the actor who voices the character in the game. Moreover, the text is re-staged every time another player starts the game – he or she can become the playwright as well. The play Hamlet by William Shakespeare has been adapted into two video-games that were announced in 2010 and 2019 respectively and one downloadable content (DLC) that was integrated into a larger game. They were not extremely popular at the time of their release, but were among the projects that shifted the way in which the audience views and engages with the theater-scape. In this sense, I argue that video-games make canonical texts available to a new level of audience, while maintaining their self-standing independent unity, regardless of their adaptation nature, and that theater is transformed by these digitalized self-involving interactive fictions.*

Keywords: *Hamlet, adaptations, video-games, theatrical space, new historicism, new media*