YouTube Shakespeares

Encountering Ethical, Theoretical, and Methodological Challenges in Researching Online Performance

by

Valerie Fazel

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2013 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Ayanna Thompson, Chair
Bradley Ryner
Cora Fox

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2013

ABSTRACT

“YouTube Shakespeares” is a study of Shakespeare online videos and the people who create, upload, and view them on YouTube. Employing an interdisciplinary approach, this work is a remix of theories and methodologies from literary, performance, (social) media, fan, and Internet studies that expands the field of Shakespeare studies. This dissertation explores the role of YouTube users and their activities, the expansion of literary research methods onto digital media venues, YouTube as site of Shakespeare performance, and YouTube Shakespeares' fan communities. It analyzes a broad array of Shakespeare visual performances including professional and user-generated mashups, remixes, film clips, auditions, and high school performances. A rich avenue for the study of people's viewing and reception of Shakespeare, YouTube tests the (un)limitations of Shakespeare adaptation. This work explores the ethical implications of researching performances that include human subjects, arguing that their presence frequently complicates common concepts of public and private identities. Although YouTube is a "published" forum for social interactivity and video repository, this work urges digital humanities scholars to recognize and honor the human users entailed in the videos not as text, but as human subjects. Shifting the study focus to human subjects demands a revision of research methods and publications protocols as the researcher repositions herself into the role of virtual ethnographer. “YouTube Shakespeares” develops its own ethics-based, online research method, which includes seeking Institutional Board Review approval and online interviews. The second half of the dissertation shifts from methodology to theorizing YouTube Shakespeares' performance spaces as analogs to the interactive and imaginary areas of Shakespeare's early modern theatre. Additionally, this

work argues that YouTube Shakespeares' creators and commentators are fans. “YouTube Shakespeares” is one of the first Shakespeare-centric studies to employ fan studies as a critical lens to explore the cultural significance and etiquette of people's online Shakespeare performance activities. The work ends with a conversation about the issues of ephemerality, obsolescence, and concerns about the instability of digital and online materials, noting the risk of evidentiary loss of research materials is far outweighed by a scholarly critical registration of YouTube in the genealogy of Shakespeare performance.

I dedicate this work to the loves of my life:

my husband and partner in life, love, and laughter,

Abbas Fazel,

and our three children, Nadia Shirin, Natasha Eileen, and Aaron Abbas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The successful completion of this dissertation would have been impossible indeed without the encouragement and support of a host of supportive scholars and friends. I first thank my dissertation committee: Professors Cora Fox, Bradley Ryner, and especially Ayanna Thompson. In the past decade Professor Fox has served as a member of three of my academic committees: undergraduate thesis, Masters degree, and now my Ph.D. Her generosity is a model all professors should follow. Chapter four of this work is heavily indebted to Professor Bradley Ryner, whose course readings and discussions were the most challenging of my career. Nevertheless, they encouraged my theoretical thinking about both live and mediated performance. I dedicate chapter four to him. Finally, from the first moment I met Ayanna Thompson I knew she would have a profound impact on my scholarship, and in turn, my life. While her students mock-fear the "wrath of Thompson," we all adore her for her humor, grace, determination, and brilliant mind. She is a mentor *par excellence*, and will always serve as my touchstone.

Graduate school is paradoxically a tough, but wonderful experience. My good fortune was that I shared the journey with the most brilliant, caring, supportive colleages anyone could hope to find. Four amazing people deserve special recognition: Heather Ackerman, Geoff Way, and Jason Demeter. Our shared conferences, dinners, hall conversations, and writing boot camp days were always productive, lively bouts of whinging and laughter. To Elizabeth Lowry, I am deeply grateful for our talks and hikes. Finally, Demetria Baker's name should appear in every graduate student's acknowledgement. She has become more

friend than supervisor. Her sense of humor, and her generosity make graduate student teaching extra rewarding.

I am deeply honored to be awarded as the 2012-2013 recipient of Arizona State University's Department of English Katharine C. Turner Dissertation Completion Fellowship. I thank the Department of English and the selection committee for this prestigious award, one that funded a full year to focus exclusively on the completion of this dissertation. Many years ago I was Professor Turner's undergraduate student. She was a generous leader in the classroom and during office hours. Her legacy in the form of this fellowship serves as a wonderful testimony to her spirit and dedication to academia.

Not only am I a first-generation Ph.D, I am a first-generation college graduate. The child in me still finds delight in doing anything that makes my parents, William and Eileen Baker, take pride in me. Mom and Dad, I think I did you proud.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER .....Page

1 YOUTUBE SHAKESPEARES: PERFORMANCE REMIX 1

Goals and Organization..... 6

What is remix? 9

Distinctions: Film, Performance, and YouTube 18

Shakespeare Media Studies: Crux or Flux? 23

Chapter Overview 37

2 YOUTUBE SHAKESPEARE RESEARCH: ETHICAL ISSUES IN LITERARY CONTEXTS 42

"Crank that Shakespeare" travels the virtual globe 51

Weird (Social) Science?..... 57

To Participate or Not to Participate?..... 63

3 RESEARCH METHODS AND PUBLICATION PROTOCOLS: "TO ID OR NOT TO ID, THAT IS THE QUESTION" 71

A day in the viral life of Shakespeare Quarterly 61.3..... 78

Context Specific Ethical Approaches to Online Research..... 87

Fabrication as a methodology? 92

The Shakespearean as Ethnographer and Participant Observer..... 95

Methods..... 99

The Interviews 104

4 "THIS WIDE AND UNIVERSAL THEATRE": MAPPING YOUTUBE'S PERFORMANCE SPACES..... 123

YouTube Shakespeares as Performance: Why study space? 127

Bringing out the bodies: YouTube as Repertoire? 129

The EM Theatre, Spaces of Performance, Popular Tradition 133

Flexible Dramaturgy: Locus and Platea 138

5 "TELLING FICTIONS": YOUTUBE SHAKESPEARES AND FAN COMMUNITIES 165

And now, introducing Schlockspeare 165

Fan Studies: Theorizing the Melancholy Losers 172

Macbeth: "Assassin is Born" 182

6 CONCLUSION: VANISHING MOMENTS AND CURIOUS AFTERLIVES 205

References 215

APPENDIX

A SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER THREE: YOUTUBE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY INSTRUMENTS 231

CHAPTER 1

YOUTUBE SHAKESPEARES: PERFORMANCE REMIX

Every age creates its own Shakespeare.
Marjorie Garber[1]

A play, for all that it carries the rhetorical and ideological force of an enduring stability, is not an object at all, but rather a dynamic process *that evolves over time in response to the needs and sensibilities of its users.*
Margaret Jane Kidnie[2]

(My) Introduction to YouTube Shakespeares

"Much Ado About Nothing," a YouTube Shakespeare remix created by YouTube channel host Ty, came to my attention in the autumn of 2006.[3] Mashing together select scenes from Branagh's 1993 adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* with Meredith Brook's popular 1997 song, "Bitch," Ty portrays Beatrice as a multifaceted woman who is—in the words of Brook's tune—a bitch, lover, child, mother, sinner, and saint. Ty's paradoxically unpredictable and transparent Beatrice, whose mercurial moods are exquisitely performed through the face and body language of actress Emma Thompson, offers YouTube viewers a look at Shakespeare's Beatrice through 20th century vernacular culture. Using Brook's lyrics, Ty seems to suggest that Benedick—despite his confusion and frustration—"wouldn't have [Beatrice] any other way," translating, in a sense,

---

[1] *Shakespeare After All*. p. 3.

[2] *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation*. p. 2.

[3] At the time I was researching Shakespeare films for another project. Ty's "Much Ado About Nothing," was one of several YouTube links on the first results page of a google-search using the keywords "Branagh" and "Much Ado." Ty is a pseudonym for the video host; "Much Ado About Nothing" is a pseudonym title. For more on anonymity and identity see chapter three.

Benedick's declaration to Beatrice in Shakespeare's play, "I love nothing in the world so well as you" (4.1.266).

Uploaded on to YouTube in 2006, "Much Ado About Nothing" was one of several Ty YouTube Shakespeares creations archived on her channel. A 19 year-old female student from outside the United States, Ty comments that "she grew up on this much ado" and that "beatrice and benedick . . . are clearly fuller characters than any of [Shakespeare's] others!"; her motivation for the creations is rooted in fandom.[4] Her meticulous video editing, her portrayal of Shakespeare's characters, and her synchronization of song lyrics to film image demonstrate her critical engagement with Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Branagh's production, and Brook's popular song. Henry Jenkins' notes,

> Fan viewers watch [film] texts with close and undivided attention, with a mixture of emotional proximity and critical distance. They view them multiple times . . . to scrutinize meaningful details and to bring more and more of the narrative under their control. They translate the reception process into social interaction with other fans. (Jenkins 2012, 278)

In the new millennium global Internet economy, "the mash-up video becomes a key symbol of the engaged 21st-century media creator because it speaks to a media-literate and active audience" (Brook 1). Ty's "Much Ado About Nothing" fulfills all these criteria. All told, Ty's user-generated, popular culture Shakespeare (re)mediation and abridged retelling of one of the most endearing male-female relationships in

[4] See chapter five for more on fandom. User information accessed September—November 2006. This quotation comes from a response to a user's comment on another Ty YouTube Shakespeare, "Much Ado."

Shakespeare's oeuvre—Benedick and Beatrice's off- and on-again courtship of frustration, wit, and masked love—serves as the quintessential example of a YouTube Shakespeare mash-up.

"Much Ado About Nothing" is particularly memorable to me because it was my very first YouTube experience.[5] I watched it, and Ty's "Much Ado" several times before streaming through YouTube for more Shakespeare remixes. My initial hypothesis was that YouTube Shakespeares represented (what turn of the 21st century culture critics had come to theorize as) "hybrid" or "third" spaces. At the time, hybridity as a term and theory had gained momentum "in cultural studies to describe conditions in contact zones where different cultures connect, merge, intersect and eventually transform" (Bolter and Spielmann 106). A cultural intersection of high-brow literature, middle-brow cultural production, and street-crowd performance, YouTube Shakespeares represented hybridity's distinct "two-way process of borrowing and blending between cultures, where new, incoherent and heterogeneous forms of cultural practice emerge" (106). The intersection of literature, film, and social media on YouTube forms—theoretically—a third space that "creates an environment in which the cultural understandings of groups can interact and influence one another," sometimes in unpredictable ways (Lara 8). But thinking about YouTube Shakespeares' as hybrid space resulted in a slew of new questions: Who are YouTube Shakespeares users, and what is their attraction to Shakespeare, or YouTube, for that matter? Do YouTube Shakespeares inspire users to publish because of Shakespeare's cultural capital, Shakespeare's representation on film,

[5] My first YouTube viewing took place several weeks before YouTube announced google's acquisition of YouTube in October 2006.

or because of the celebrity stars who portray Shakespeare's characters in the original film? Do users publish because they seek to be recognized for their interpretations of Shakespeare or because they want to show off their remix skills? Do viewers watch YouTube Shakespeares because they are quick and accessible, as opposed to reading the plays? I was convinced that in YouTube Shakespeares I had discovered a new resource for scholars engaged in Shakespeare performance media.

YouTube Shakespeares, however, were slow to generate the significant critical attention from Shakespeareans that I anticipated in the potent, confusing days of the website's rapid assent to ubiquity. Despite (or perhaps because) of the consistently high yield—tens of thousands of videos—of Shakespeare film clips, performances, auditions, mash-ups, remixes, and other remediations a current YouTube search using the keyword "Shakespeare" aggregates, Shakespeareans struggled with ways to incorporate YouTube as a genre within the fabric of Shakespeare studies. The truth is that YouTube Shakespeares are often dismissed by Shakespeareans as trivial, and therefore they are fundamentally overlooked in Shakespeare studies.[6] This dissertation adds to the emerging body of Shakespeare criticisms that speak to the value of analyzing YouTube Shakespeares precisely *because* their trivial nature begs for critical consideration. It is their trivial-ness that places pressure on perceived prescriptions and limitations of Shakespeare adaptation.

[6] I have recollections of telling others about my interest YouTube Shakespeares, only to be rewarded with a grin or questions along the lines of, "YouTube. Yes. What is that all about?" One preeminent scholar warned me not to expend all my dissertation chapters on YouTube Shakespeares, but to be sure to include a close reading and analysis of a playtext or performance. (I chose performance, YouTube Shakespeare performance.)

Fortunately, the sort of questions that drove my own thinking back in 2006 has very recently spurred a number of critical works. To date, YouTube Shakespeare criticisms typically interrogate the video-sharing website 1) for its pedagogic potential; 2) as a Shakespeare digital video archive; or 3) as the next (indeterminate) wave in film or media studies, genres that provisionally inform some of the explorations within "YouTube Shakespeares." While some scholars have made bold strides to draw academic attention to Shakespeare on YouTube's "high-volume website broadcast platform [and] social network," none so far have established theories or methodologies that might inform, shift, pervade, and impact Shakespeare culture studies (Hodgdon 2010, 313). Though several researchers suggest YouTube Shakespeares warrant further investigation, too few publications have interrogated the larger, emerging body of (non-Shakespearean) YouTube scholarship to better analyze the social, economic, political, and commercial implications for Shakespeare's work in "the broadest repository of moving-image culture to date" (Snickars and Vondereu 11). What consequences do today's online video bring to the future of Shakespeare study?

Other disciplines have theorized YouTube's (dis)similarity to television, participatory practice as a new democracy in cultural production, and YouTube's role in Web 2.0. Unquestioningly, the number of scholarly works on YouTube outside of Shakespeare is greater than those within the field, nevertheless, the slow and small but welcome accumulation of articles and book chapters that explore YouTube Shakespeares as pedagogy, archive, performance, and more are encouraging indeed. They also suggest much more work needs be done. The fact remains that despite the volume and history of

YouTube Shakespeare representations, we still have no monograph that theoretically underpins—in their epoch—YouTube Shakespeares as (a space of) performance.

"YouTube Shakespeares" offers the first book-length examination of Shakespeare on YouTube. From the onset I want to make clear that this dissertation is not crafted around one pithy argument, but like its subject of study, is a remix of approaches driven by questions on YouTube Shakespeares' ontology. Although not comprehensive in theorizing YouTube Shakespeares, this volume seeks to address several concepts that will promote future studies. The chapters within this volume examine the role of YouTube users and their activities, the expansion of literary research methods onto digital media venues, YouTube as site of Shakespeare performance, and YouTube Shakespeares' fan communities. If I am to make any clear-cut assertion here then let it rest on this: a critical advance toward YouTube Shakespeares must stem from an interdisciplinary remix of existing theories and practices. "YouTube Shakespeares" synthesizes—remixes—theories distilled from the humanities and social sciences, particularly those that govern performance, and online media and its participatory culture.

Dissertation Goals and Organization

While popular culture and media Shakespeare studies are now *de facto* in most university English departments, "YouTube Shakespeares" seeks to expand the field through an interdisciplinary approach that bridges literary methods with Internet studies strategies. As a remix of fan, performance, theater, reception, ethnographic, and illuminated screen studies, this dissertation closely examines YouTube Shakespeare activity to better understand how users experience Shakespeare through online video and

social media.[7] The goals of this work are: 1) to capture as a resource for future study the first wave of YouTube Shakespeares; 2) to demonstrate a methodology that considers researchers' ethical and moral responsibilities to YouTube Shakespeares' (human) users; 3) to theorize, and develop a working terminology for, YouTube's performance and reception spaces; and 4) to examine Shakespeare's cultural legacy in the schema of 21st century fan culture practices.

Additionally, "YouTube Shakespeares" contributes significantly to the emerging body of generalized (non-Shakespearean) YouTube scholarship, itself situated within a larger corpus of Internet, communication, and social media studies. It considers the methodological and ethical implications entailed in digital humanities research on YouTube's "industry and user driven" platform at a time when such considerations are still under dichotomized critical speculation by online media scholars at large (Snickars and Vondereu 11). Furthermore, this dissertation formulates a cross-disciplinary vocabulary for non-literature studies derived from literary, performance, and Internet studies that identifies, defines, theorizes, and analyzes YouTube as a space of social media performance. As such, "YouTube Shakespeares" adds to the already existing movements to narrow the chasm between the humanities and digital technologies through a shared interest in social media culture studies.

[7]For the purposes of inclusion without repetition I conflate all screen media under the term "illuminated screen", a term borrowed from Bruster and Weimann who define the illuminated screen as "the cinema, television, computer, or various . . . handheld devices" (Bruster 2004, ix). In their *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen*, Cartelli and Rowe identify some of the platforms inclusive in the term screen when they argue, "To talk in a serious way about *screen* Shakespeare now . . . we have to include not just film, television, video, and DVD, domestic and global, but also web-based and cellular media, delivered via desktop, laptop, and hand-held means" (x).

This two-part dissertation is organized into two distinct but overlapping components of study. The first section argues that literary scholars working with social media websites like YouTube need to explore the issues entailed, and examine the methods used, in the research and publication on materials that implicate online human subjects. Part one also chronicles my experience as an online virtual ethnographer/ researcher, and the methodologies I use to gain greater insight into the activities and practices of YouTube users. The second part of this dissertation explores the conditions of performance engendered by the website and its interface. It includes evidence of the ways that YouTube, as a site of Shakespeare performance, functions as an analog of the early modern theatre. Chapter five incorporates fan studies and performs a close examination and analyzes the aesthetics of a YouTube Shakespeares' video mashup and its reception ("vidding").[8] Part two, and the dissertation as a whole, comes to an end with a discussion of YouTube Shakespeares obsolescence and ephemerality. Altogether, both the first and second sections work in tandem—the first half critically evaluates and augments current literary research paradigms, while the second half puts these considerations to the test.

"YouTube Shakespeares" proceeds on several empirical truths. First, YouTube Shakespeares reach a broader, more diverse audience than any other Shakespeare performance medium in history. Second, YouTube users are humans, individuals or groups, who engage socially (even those who lurk) through the website. Users warrant special consideration as study subjects that involve more than our mere recognition of

[8] The term vidding comes from the work of Francesca Coppa who defines the term "as a form of grassroots filmmaking in which clips from television shows and movies are set to music" (Coppa 1.1).

their activities as Shakespeare performance creators and audience members. Third, the artifacts YouTube Shakespeare users produce and view effects the future heritage of Shakespeare performance, just as Shakespeare on the early modern stage or Shakespeare on film and television have left their mark on YouTube Shakespeares. Even though only a relatively small portion of YouTube Shakespeare's ever shifting repository of online videos actively plays a role in perpetuating Shakespeare's cultural legacy, they mark an important shift in the transmission of Shakespeare since the plays were "created for [Shakespeare's] audience and time" (Howlett 1). Fourth, while YouTube Shakespeares' specific impact on the future of Shakespeare performance is open to question, we must bear in mind that the history of Shakespeare performance has been long built on unforeseeable outcomes. One only needs to look back at Shakespeare media forms of the past—happy endings and added female characters in Nahum Tate's Restoration era *King Lear* or the first filmed Shakespeare, *King John* (1899) (see below)—to recognize that "every age creates its own Shakespeare" (Garber 3).

YouTube platforms remix, YouTube's platform is remix. What is remix?

I want to pause here and focus for a moment on the phrase "remix." Although remix videos (also referred to by media critics as DIY video, mashups, and vidding) is a "decades-old artistic tradition," remix as a cultural practice, in addition to a cultural product (artifact), has come to dominate YouTube's archive (Coppa par 1.5).[9] Most current Internet culture scholars define remix as taking "data from two or more different

[9] In 2007 Lev Manovich argued that, "many cultural and lifestyle arenas - music, fashion, design, art, web applications, user created media, food - are governed by remixes, fusions, collages, or mash-ups. If post-modernism defined [the] 1980s, remix definitely dominates [the] 2000s, and it will probably continue to rule the next decade as well" (2007).

inputs and [mixing] them together in such a way as to create a unique, third form without loss to the meaning of the originals"; in essence, (re)newly created artifact (Booth 1).[10] Many also suggest that the cultural impact of mashups and remixes occurs in conditions when,

> On the textual level, the video and audio reference wildly different texts, but work as an art form . . . the viewer [recognizes] each element as well as what happens when they are mixed . . . ideally the mash-up highlights ideological similarities between the two texts. (1)

In this work I use remix synonymously with *bricolage*, hybridity, and synthesis.

Very much the term *du jour* in current digital media and online studies, remix signals the afore mentioned hybridity, which "works across and integrates a diverse range of modes of representation, such as image, text, sound, space and bodily modes of expression" (Bolter and Spielmann 106). As a term "most closely associated with the historical specificities of our contemporary moment at the level of technology, powerful personal computers, consumer digital media devices, and Web 2.0," I use remix rhetorically to bridge literary study with my investigation of YouTube's (re)workings of Shakespeare performance, the fans who create them, YouTube's interface, and the participatory culture of YouTube (Russo and Coppa 1).[11] In their assessment of the value of the study of hybrid and remix culture Bolter and Spielmann state,

---

[10] As I footnote on page eight, the act of video creation, posting, viewing, and response is commonly known by media users (fans) and media scholars as vidding.

[11] Henry Jenkins and Suzanne Scott provide some fundamental distinctions about participatory, fandom, and Web 2.0. In their view, participatory culture is "a broad movement which takes many different forms across history"; fandom is "a specific kind of participatory culture with its own history and traditions"; and

> It is important to examine hybridity [remix] in the arts, sciences and media cultures because hybrid practices are basic tools in collaborative research and in the emergent intersections of sciences and arts—for example in research in visual and cognitive perception, in the design of computer interfaces and their visualization, and in knowledge-based methods for understanding the transfer and transformation of information. (Bolter and Spielman 106)

As early as the 1970s, remix signaled the music-mix activities of "hip-hop and disco subcultures" (1). The term in the new millennium now refers to larger practices—cultural and technological—that take pre-existing materials and reassemble them to form new cultural artifacts and/or technological products (1). In *Remix Theory*, Eduardo Navas claims that "at the beginning of the twenty-first century, [remix] informs the development of a material reality dependent on the constant recyclability of material" (3). The long and rich history of Shakespeare performance certainly testifies to the "recyclability" of the dramatist's works. YouTube Shakespeares—Shakespeare on the world's most watched video website—testify to remix, the hybridity, and malleability of Shakespearean representations in the digital age.

While use of the vernacular "remix" may be somewhat uncommon in Shakespeare studies, its analog is found in the all-to-familiar acts of "reworkings," "revisions," appropriations, and adaptations of the dramatist's works (Foakes 85, 128). As Stephen Orgel reminds us, "it is a mistake to believe that our sense of Shakespeare is

---

Web 2.0 is "a business model which seeks to capitalize and commodify participatory culture" (Jenkins 2012, xxii). For a larger discussion of Jenkins and fan culture see chapter five.

not 'contaminated,' and indeed determined, by a myriad of other texts" (35). I take as a case in point the history of *King Lear* as a remix, beginning with Shakespeare's own remix of a previous narrative of "Leir" (Foakes 94). According to the R. A. Foakes, "It seems to be taken for granted that Shakespeare never invented where he could borrow . . . what [scholarly] research has made ever more apparent is that Shakespeare read widely and had a deep and lively engagement with the culture of his own and preceding ages" (93). Foakes emphasizes that it is likely Shakespeare used as his inspiration "Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Plutarch's *Lives*. . . [and] in the case of *King Lear* he certainly derived material or ideas from a few works that fed his imagination" (93). After Shakespeare first "wrote" his version, a reworking of his *King Lear* appears in the First Folio. Foakes notes, "the changes and revisions found in the text of the first Folio (1623) appear to have been made for a revival by Shakespeare's company after 1608" when the play first appeared in print in the first Quarto (5). Foakes notes that no records of performance for Shakespeare's tragedy exist from 1610 until "*King Lear* was revived after the restoration of Charles II in 1664" (5). A few years later, in response to shifts in cultural conditions of Restoration performance, "adaptations by Nahum Tate (1681), later revised by George Colman (1768), by David Garrick (1773) and by John Philip Kemble (1808), held the stage until well into the nineteenth century" (85).[12] The advent of film proved to be fecund site for *King Lear* reworkings. Screenplays and/or adaptations of novels based on

[12] According to Foakes, Tate "made many changes, but is best known for his alteration of the ending , which included a tableau of Lear asleep, with his head on Cordelia's lap; soldiers arrive to dispatch them , but Lear wakes and kills two of the attackers before Edgar and Albany arrive to rescue them. Edgar goes off in order to return with his father. Lear gives Cordelia to Edgar as his bride, and the old men (Lear, Gloucester and Kent) plan to retire to a 'cool cell' to mediate" (85). Tate also adds a female role, Arante, as a companion to Cordelia, a common revision in the restoration, according to Gary Taylor who notes, "new female roles were often added, and the original female roles fleshed out" (Foakes 85; Taylor 20).

Shakespeare's tragedy proliferated. According to Kenneth Rothwell's comprehensive *Shakespeare on Screen*, no fewer than 17 films based on *King Lear* were produced between the years of 1909 to 2002; these include Akira Kurosawa's critically acclaimed *Ran* (1985), Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather III* (1990), and Jocelyn Moorhouse's 1997 adaptation of Jane Smiley's novel, *A Thousand Acres* (1991).[13] While remix may seem all too colloquial a term for Shakespeare studies, its practices have long been at the heart of the body of work we think of as Shakespeare.

Just as Tate's Restoration remix of *King Lear* from tragedy to comedy was "hotly contested" and condemned three hundred years later by 20th century critics, so too, does remix have its detractors inside and outside of Shakespeare studies. In his essay, "Performing Shakespeare for the Web Community," Peter Holland states, "Shakespeare's place on the YouTube realms of the Internet is…clipped into fragments to share, parasitic rather more often than performed, existing as derivative" (2009, 257). For some media critics remix is "hotly contested on the basis of artistic merit, traditional literacies, and intellectual property" (Russo and Coppa 3). The embroiled debates about remix and "intellectual property" are fought everyday, both within and without academia. For Henry Jenkins, remix is a benign practice of "hunting and gathering" cultural materials that give fans and users a voice in cultural (re)creation (Jenkins 2012, xxiv). On the other end of the spectrum, cultural critic Andrew Keen vehemently argues that remix is tantamount to piracy (118).[14] Keen lambasts remix culture as "stealing . . . [that] is reshaping and

[13] See Rothwell pages 344-346.

[14]A former Internet entrepreneur, Keen proclaims that "video sites like YouTube . . . are already causing a decline in box-office revenue and DVD sales" (118). However, he provides scant evidence for the connection between the decline of sale and YouTube's ascendant popularity.

distorting our values and our very culture" (142). Likewise, Michel Serres' theory of parasitism offers food for thought about the ways products (and people) get exploited by consumers in a non-reversible, one-way system of consumption that eventually dilutes the value of the original product or obscures credit to the original producers.

In some ways remix evokes notions of parasitical practices, as Holland suggests above, particularly in the early days of YouTube's history when users' remixes appropriated dominant cultural materials in ways that frequently evoked Serres' model of the one-way, single arrow "cascade" of non-reciprocal parasitic consumption (Serres 4). Mainstream entertainment companies like Viacom, who felt that YouTube was profiting from their copyright materials, took YouTube to court demanding one billion dollars in compensation for lost revenue.[15] Although it is debatable whether YouTube was truly making a profit from user-generated mash-ups in those early days, I think it is important to address some of the ways the concept and practice of remix (bricolage, synthesis) in today's YouTube Shakespeares differ from YouTube's early days when Serres' theory of the parasite could have been more aptly applied.[16]

Since 2007, YouTube has taken steps to reduce copyright infringement and other illegal activities on their website. In order to honor a licensing agreement with several mainstream entertainment companies, YouTube implemented its Content ID program. To

---

[15] On the advent of Viacom's lawsuit in March 2007, the entertainment company distributed this press release: "There is no question that YouTube and Google are continuing to take the fruit of our efforts without permission and destroying enormous value in the process. This is value that rightfully belongs to the writers, directors and talent who create it and companies like Viacom that have invested to make possible this innovation and creativity" (Townes).

[16] To date Google has not released a statement indicating YouTube's running costs. As recently as July 2011, "Google said it still hadn't found a way to make YouTube a long-term revenue generator . . .five years after [Google's] acquisition, YouTube required more investment to be profitable" (Agnello).

some extent Content ID dismantles the applicability of Serres' theory of parasitical consumption to remix practice. Through "Content ID," YouTube videos are screened for material that is poached from the vast volume of mainstream film and television shows YouTube has archived in their system. If there is a match, then copyright owners can resort to several actions. They can have YouTube remove the video, or they can require revenue from advertising placed on the YouTube video's interface. Additionally, they redirect users to their own commercial sites. For example, iTunes or AmazonMP3 hyperlinks are provided on YouTube's interface to draw users to sites that sell the music used in the remix. For instance, YouTube Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet" by FLav, provides users links that enable them to purchase Barrett Waugh's 2004 version (remix?) of the 1968 song composed for Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet*.[17] In this scenario, the copyright holder makes use of FLav's Shakespeare mash-up as free publicity for Waugh's song.

Other examples show ways that today's updated YouTube use undermines the applicability of Serres' theory of parasitism. For instance, television programs, like the magazine show *Today*, frequently include YouTube videos as a part of their daily features. In 2009, the television show *The Office* scripted one episode of its series to parody one of the most popular user-generated videos in YouTube's history, "JK Wedding Entrance Dance."[18] These examples demonstrate that arguing that YouTube is

[17] For additional discussion on FLav's YouTube Shakespeares, see chapter four.

[18] "JK Wedding Entrance Dance" posted in July 2009 was originally intended for guests at Jill and Kevin Khein's 2009 wedding. The couple set up a fund for domestic violence in response to media and user-generate response criticism of their use of Chris Brown's song "Forever." (Chris Brown was arrested in early 2009 for allegedly abusing his then girlfriend singer Rhianna.) "JK Wedding Entrance Dance" has since become a meme, spurring copies, spoofs, and mimicry, most notably television's popular *The Office's*

parasitical—that is, implicated in a "one way" flow—is countered by YouTube's Content ID program, its inclusion of a direct means to purchase the video's poached song or featured film, and the ways that broadcast and mainstream media rebroadcast YouTube videos (Serres 5).

The early propensity to halt YouTube submission through copyright court cases has proven less financially effective than actually joining in on the game. In *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media*, Chuck Tryon suggests many mainstream studios now recognize "that fan creativity can be used to cultivate new audiences and create new meanings for popular texts, some…actively embrace video mashups" (160). Furthermore, as both online and broadcast media corporations vie for the attention of media users who are ever more lured towards interaction and self-selection, it seems that the practice of click, link and like, and participation by comment, choice, and submission of micro-data, is not only here to stay, but is rapidly becoming incorporated in television and film industry websites. Mainstream television channels like NBC and CBS, and subscriber channels like HBO and SHOWtime, now have their own online ancillary programming (HBO and SHOWtime programs online are free to cable subscribers). Even PBS, which has recently gained a wide audience following online due to their highly successful UK import, *Downton Abbey*, streams programs broadcasted on television. These online ancillary websites remix some YouTube effects, such as affordances where viewers can select, click, view, and comment on their favorite cable shows.[19] In short, the television

---

appropriation of the Khein's wedding dance. I can find no records that *The Office* producers donated to the Khein's fund. As of February 2013 the video has nearly 80 million hits, and has sparked countless memes.

[19] See chapter four for further discussion on "affordances."

and film industry, with "their financial and legal muscle" has been quick to learn from YouTube the potential ways that the social components of their websites generate "value" (Lovink and Miles 10).

Finally, I cannot overstate that when I speak of remix in this dissertation, I am not only referring to hybridized cultural art forms, but also to the development of technologies and software applications. A multivalent understanding of remix registers YouTube's videos as transforming the ways entertainment and knowledge is produced. The term also signals that the website and its interface are *bricolages* of prior technologies and their cultural uses. These include Internet chat rooms, the conditions of audience-interaction in the live theater, the "WYSIWYG" [20] technology of personal computers, the personal viewing/recording capabilities of home video, the concepts of channels and the small illuminated screen from television, and the attraction of the cinema (people "go to" YouTube). On the flip side, I interact daily with technologies that have been built to accommodate access to YouTube. My phone, iPad, AppleTV, and my large screen home television all have applications that ease my construction and uploading of videos, and make ready-at-hand my viewing of YouTube. In other words, my day-to-day technologies are shaped to interact with YouTube. All of these other phenomena influence or affect YouTube as a product, and YouTube influences the production of new technologies.

[20] WYSIWYG is the acronym for "what you see is what you get" a system that provides users with an accurate visualization of what the final document/on-screen output will look like. See chapter four for discussions on affordances.

Distinctions: Film, Performance, and YouTube

YouTube Shakespeares' emergence in the new millennium comes on the heels of several major waves of performance debate, the so-called doldrums of Shakespeare on film, and the dismantlement of the primacy of the playtext.[21] Akin to the problems of adaptation Margaret Jane Kidnie so eloquently outlines, or the theory of adaption explored by Linda Hutcheon, Shakespeare culture scholars are adapting, adjusting really, to a Shakespeare that is remote from, even as it is tethered to, the playtext. At the same time, Shakespeareans are adjusting to a Shakespeare absent from the big screen for a Shakespeare found on thousands of individual illuminated screens. These changes provoke a question of adaptation that has less to do with Shakespeare's body of work, and more to do with the body of scholarship. As more Shakespeare film and culture studies scholars turn their critical gaze towards YouTube Shakespeares, it is crucial to consider the practical and theoretical differences and similarities between YouTube's often capricious, amateur, and transitory small screen Shakespeares and the commercially produced, big screen film or medium screen televised productions that have spurred an exemplary collection of analytical studies.

Some Shakespeare scholars consider YouTube Shakespeares the "next wave" of Shakespeare film/media studies. This means they study YouTube Shakespeares using the same methodological close reading, scene-to-text comparisons, and critical analyses through various generic approaches (race, gender, queer, post-colonial, material, etc) that have long been applied to Shakespeare film studies. With a few exceptions, this form of

[21] For additional overviews of the history of performance debates see James C. Bulman (1996); Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (2007); Sarah Werner (2010).

seeing YouTube has typically excluded deliberation over remix as a genre, user subjectivity, and the significance of users' activity on YouTube's interface. To keep up with new Shakespeare constructs, we need to "reframe" our methodologies to consider the medium of delivery. Film study methods are used indiscriminately for most audio-visual deliveries. With YouTube Shakespeares, our deliberations must include, but extend beyond, the delivery form's intermedial content. We need to consider the medium's cultural and technological contexts—how, why, and for whom the platforms of delivery emerge—as well as the video performance. In their approach to Shakespeare on film, Cartelli and Rowe argue such Shakespeare manifestations require a "double-focus" approach, whereby the works are analyzed as meta-media (intermedial within the performance) *and* medium specific (enabled by the screen as tool) (Cartelli and Rowe x). In the words of Bolter and Grusin, "we need to consider the heritage of analogue technologies as well as the development and user of emergent digital technologies in the arts and sciences" (107). I reframe the words of Hodgdon and Worthen when I suggest Shakespeareans must "decisively mark a move from the essentializing orthodoxy of performance criticism to the theoretical heterodoxy of Shakespeare performance studies, a more encompassing, expansive, expressive and relational arena for rethinking performance" that includes consideration of the illuminated screen media at hand (6). Likewise, as a new art form, YouTube Shakespeares call for evaluations of older methods of consuming, reading, and analyzing online video. Bolter and Spielmann advocate that "digital media and media forms need to be examined for their incorporation of older techniques, aesthetic strategies and culture forms [to] consider what effects new aesthetic forms have on the understanding" of new/old cultural forms (107). In the case of

YouTube Shakespeares, new uses of previous art forms call for revisions in our understandings of their ontology as performance.

Notions of (what) performance (*is*) are frequently supplanted by new criticisms. Many Shakespeare performance and media scholars attribute the initiation of this long-standing debate to the emergence of motion picture technology. As Courtney Lehman reminds us, "It was 1899…when cinema first staked a claim to Shakespeare, beginning a series of battles in performance theory between theater and film" (195).[22] Other critics suggest the mid-20th century movement to study performance in order to "gain a deeper understanding of what the plays meant" was a move to either confirm or dismantle notions of textual authority over the works of Shakespeare (Werner 2, Orgel 1).[23]

Persistent tensions about the ontology of performance still abound. For instance, critic Peggy Phelan firmly argues that performance is reserved for the aesthetics of live, embodied presentations. Performance, she states, "cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (145, italics in origin). For Shakespeare critics who subscribe to Phelan's stance, performance is reserved only for the culture of the live theatre. In this context, performance is frequently understood as a lost theatrical event, a phenomenon that scholars attempt to, but can never fully, recover.

---

[22] See also Werner (2010); Hodgdon and Worthen (2005) for discussions on the history of performance theory.

[23] See also W. B. Worthen in Bulman, "Staging 'Shakespeare' Acting, Authority, and the Rhetoric of Performance." p. 12-28.

Yet "performance" is used frequently, and often passively, in the study of recorded media Shakespeares. What I mean is that a wide body of critical work that examines what performance *does* (to, and with, Shakespeare's plays) rests on presumptions about what performance *is*. These presumptions are built through a palimpsest of four centuries of Shakespeare representation through enactment on the stage, through audio and/or video recording/transmission, and through the strained tensions critical inquiry has wrought on the term itself. The point I am making here is that while the question of what defines performance continues to be heavily vetted and scrutinized in theory, an assumed, prevailing concept of what performance *is* appears liberally and frequently uncontested in many analyses of Shakespeare's enacted works in their various formats.

I contest Phelan's assertion that when "performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology [because performance's] being . . . becomes itself through disappearance" (146). While Phelan's arguments about what performance *does* usefully support some of the work elsewhere in this dissertation, I argue that YouTube Shakespeares challenge her assertions of what performance *is.* Like Phelan, Peter Holland argues that performances "belong to the past as soon as they are given," but I suggest YouTube Shakespeares' often appear immediate and present to YouTube users via their own actions/interactions with the video page as performance (2006, xix). YouTube Shakespeares' videos and their supporting interfaces stand in opposition to claims that the ontology of performance is limited to the live

experience and is dependent on its (degrees of) dematerialization.[24] If anything, as reproductions YouTube Shakespeares demonstrate the ways recorded "performances gain an extensive afterlife and are recycled, redacted, annotated, and re-purposed by viewers" many times over (Hodgdon 2010, 317).

YouTube Shakespeares *are* performance. I realize this oversimplified statement immediately invokes the tensions and uneasy truces performance discourses have generated in the past few decades. Yet rather than immediately suggest YouTube Shakespeares are analogs to the more specific performance paradigms of film, theater, television, or even home movies, I begin with this more generalized assertion because I believe such an open stance allows for flexibility rather than absolutism in my approach. Also, by stating simply that YouTube Shakespeares are performance I consider, and include in my deliberations, the various media that have platformed past modes of Shakespeare performance. Finally, arguing that YouTube serves as a medium for Shakespeare performance encourages a debate about what constitutes definitions of performance in digital contexts.

YouTube Shakespeares manifest illuminated screen forms that have attracted academic attention for decades, namely film, television, and DVD. At the same time YouTube Shakespeares, as an interactive online repository of user-generated videos and feedback, are somewhat alien. Like the ghost in *Hamlet*, YouTube Shakespeares are familiar yet distinctly different from prior forms. And like Horatio, we scholars recognize that this alteration "bodes some strange interruption to our state" (1.1.68). Singly,

[24] Ironically, Phelan's stance on performance and ephemerality does, in another way, apply to YouTube (and the website's ephemeral tendencies). See concluding chapter.

previous hard-won theories, methodologies, and definitions that platform studies of other Shakespeare screen media do not quite support the nuanced differences brought about by YouTube's videos, their users' influence on the plays, or the website's socially interactive capabilities and performances.

My point is that while it would be impossible to argue that *manifestations* (stage versus screen) of performance collapse via digital media, the distinctions that define live and mediated performance—"signification in action"—diminishes when participatory culture takes action through digital media (Weimann 1999, 427). As Hodgdon notes, YouTube Shakespeare users "imagine themselves as sharing a bodied space with performers" (Hodgdon 2010, 317).

Shakespeare Media Studies: Crux or Flux?

Registering YouTube Shakespeares under the umbrella of Shakespeare studies requires processing ideas that consider—at least in part—YouTube's many functional and fundamental similarities to, and differences from, other Shakespeare media forms and performance elements. By media forms I suggest not only screen media like film and television, but also the printed playtext and live theater. By performance elements, I mean the agents—or in Latourean terms, actors or actants—that play an active role or produce a specified effect in performance.[25] YouTube Shakespeare agents of performance include the playwright, users, actors, audience, the play, the venue and its spaces of performance and reception, and not least, the computer as "a significant tool and agent of performative

[25] Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT) postulates that "*any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor" (71, italics org.). Rather than explicating double meanings for the term actor, and for the sake of clarity, I use the term agents instead of Latour's actants/actors.

actions and creation" (Dixon 3). All these combine and define YouTube Shakespeares as performance as "signification in action" (Weimann 1999, 427).[26]

Dedicated to conversations on "Shakespeare After Film," the 2010 edition of *Shakespeare Studies* documents a critical call for theoretical and methodological shifts in order for Shakespeare studies to keep up with new ways technologies allow for the production and access to Shakespeare. For instance, Katherine Rowe cautions, "to decline to reflect critically on, reformulate, and reaffirm the value of our discipline [Shakespeare Studies] in an electronically networked world is to court irrelevance" (Rowe 2010b, iii). Rowe's "irrelevance" speaks to a mode of Shakespeare studies that fails to keep abreast with Shakespeare in real and virtual worlds. Adding to these concerns is Greg Colón Semenza's warning on the political implications of "our" relativity; his message is a little more direct: "Especially after the so-called Great Recession, levels of support for the humanities in higher education will have much to do with questions about the practicality or real-world applicability of the subject we study" (2010b, 19). The relevancy, it seems, of Shakespeare media scholarship hinges on demonstrating new methods that affirm the relevancy of Shakespeare's body of work in twenty-first century remediations.

The dichotomized tenor of Shakespearean critical response to YouTube Shakespeares in recent essays ranges from "negligible interest" to enthusiastic endorsements of YouTube Shakespeares in the classroom (Cartelli 2010, 26). For instance, Thomas Cartelli, in *Shakespeare Studies* (2010) "Doing it Slant: Reconceiving Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Aftermath," dismisses YouTube Shakespeare offerings

[26] In the process of parsing out his assertion that "the materiality of performance must not be opposed to the purely imaginary effect resulting from the (re)production of verbal and nonverbal signs," Weimann defines performance as "signification in action," arguing that "such action is both a medium of the script and an act in its own right" (1999, 427).

with words like "tedious" and "annoy," and argues, "I can't imagine doing much with [YouTube Shakespeares] other than pedestrian sociologizing on the democratic populism of the Internet" (26). While he graciously acknowledges Christy Desmet's efforts in her "Paying Attention in Shakespeare Parody: From Tom Stoppard to YouTube," (see below) and admits to an quasi-engagement with YouTubes that "challenge the Bard's authority," overall Cartelli's interest in Internet Shakespeares has less to do with participant-generated content than with the potential collaboration of "artists and scholars alike [in creating a] postnarrative screen Shakespeare" that Internet tools and technologies might engender (33). Such collaboration would truly be, as Cartelli states, "a consummation devoutly to be wished" (33). In order to better contemplate, participate, and eventually evaluate the kinds of collaborations Cartelli "wishes" for, it might prove fruitful to study the collaborations that already take place on the Internet, starting with the collaborations between YouTube users and their Shakespeare remixes.

Academic criticisms on YouTube Shakespeares have not as yet theorized the website in ways that speak to Shakespeare performance studies. To date most YouTube Shakespeares criticisms rely on the literary practices of close reading and analysis. While they range in genre, exploring, for example, YouTube Shakespeares as pedagogy, repertoire, appropriation, and as "a window to [Shakespeare in] pop culture," very few developed theories that speak to YouTube as a site of Shakespeare performance (Young). For instance, while nearly all incorporate textual analyses of YouTube Shakespeare videos and user commentary, none have actually developed a theoretical approach to YouTube's interface as spaces of performance. I am reminded here of Burt and Newstok, who in "Certain Tendencies in Criticism of Shakespeare on Film," argue that recent

criticisms of Shakespeare on film elide film theory. They suggest that Shakespeareans have settled into the practice of "reading films the *same* way [they] read texts, with little attention to cinematic form or to film theory" (89). They point out that most Shakespeare on film criticisms lack a "stronger" theoretical approach and therefore build critiques that center on "momentary scenes, often only adding up to predictably thematic attacks that argue by coincidence and associative implication" (89). Such practices, Bulman suggests, "risk an elision of the very historical and material contingencies which the return to [a critical, non-authoritative approach] to performance has sought to recover" (3). What I wish to avoid in this work is another critique of YouTube Shakespeares that lacks a flexible theoretical approach.

I do not mean to insinuate that YouTube Shakespeares have not been approached theoretically whatsoever. Quite the opposite it true. From addressing the website's archival practices to analyzing representations of race, Shakespeareans have approached YouTube Shakespeares conscientiously, developing and postulating theories that attest to YouTube's other characteristics. For instance, influenced by the works of Foucault and Derrida, Christy Desmet's "Paying Attention in Shakespeare Parody: From Tom Stoppard to YouTube," asserts that YouTube users' appropriations of Shakespeare materials is a ubiquitous, centuries-old phenomenon. The practice of "thrift and theft," she theorizes, was just as common to John Fletcher in early modern England as it is to YouTube Shakespeares users today (227). Another case in point, Ayanna Thompson's ethically-conscious exploration of the issue of race in *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America*, demonstrates Asian-American students' engagement with Shakespeares' *Othello* and *Tutus Andronicus*. Her work effectively incorporates

theories of race in performance. And Lauren Shohet's frequently cited "YouTube, Use, and the Idea of the Archive" evaluates digital technologies' (most particularly YouTube's) disruptive influence on traditional notions of the archive and the paradigms of archive activity. With YouTube Shakespeares, Shohet demonstrates, the "principles of selection are determined entirely by users and uses" (71).

Barbara Hodgdon, a self-proclaimed "digital neophyte," works through several YouTube postings and their audience responses in her *Shakespeare Bulletin* article, "(You)Tube Travel: The 9:59 to Dover Beach, Stopping at Fair Verona and Elsinore." As a preemptive gesture, Hodgdon informs her readers that Shakespeare "seems omnipresent" on YouTube and that YouTube is "simultaneously a library and laboratory for playing with Shakespeare" (327). "YouTube," she claims,

> Not only situates "Shakespeare" within a doubly powerful distribution channel that wrests power from media producers and puts commodities (and their cultural capital) more fully under users' control as material available for individual cultural production, but also provides a forum for interactive encounters that generate a wide range of discourses. (314)

Reading each video and the conversations it generates like a film text, Hodgdon's focus centers more on YouTube as "post-theatrical screening site where performances gain an extensive afterlife" (317). Her readings of both YouTube Shakespeare performance videos, and the interactive conversations that take place in YouTube's *platea* (see Chapter Four), gestures towards YouTube's hybridity, its composite of video and audience response that Shakespeare on film scholars seldom encounter in other media.

However, Hodgdon's use of quotation marks around "Shakespeare" in her assertion above ambivalently suggests YouTube Shakespeares are open to further exploration as to what vis-à-vis YouTube identifies as "Shakespeare".

These wonderful examples bring attention to an important feature of YouTube Shakespeares: the interactive praxis of the website's Shakespeare users. Yet, as thought-provoking as these varied, pioneering studies and critiques are, and as influential as they will surely prove to be in the genealogy of YouTube Shakespeare studies, overall they rest on general assumptions—the video plays in the video window, the audience responds in the comment section—about YouTube as a space of performance.

For many Shakespeare media scholars YouTube Shakespeares are familiar and alien all at once. As stated above, YouTube's video frame invoke dominant film, television, filmed and broadcasted stage performance, video and DVD products; in other words, the hegemonic consortium of screen media now subsumed under Shakespeare studies. Nearly all other parts on YouTube's interface—with its links, thumbnails, advertisements, and other miscellanea—resemble the sidebar-jumbled conversational web-boards, and the colloquy practices of listserves that some Internet-savvy Shakespeareans frequent. On the other hand, the unsettledness of YouTube Shakespeares' primitive energy, the sometimes crudeness of YouTube Shakespeares' productions, the disparities found in performance adaptations, and the unpredictability of YouTube's archive evinces anxieties tied to the "burden of fidelity" (Semenza 2010b, 21).

For example, YouTube Shakespeares eclectic repository spans from traditional, recognized studio and media company performances to a large body of "garage" (see below) productions, videos that manifest individual and diverse interpretations, talents,

and skills. These garage works are of sometimes-unreliable origin and questionable ethos. In terms of authority, how do scholars register, for instance, anonymous high school students' basement productions of *Hamlet* as a *Shakespeare* performance? In most circumstances, YouTube Shakespeare production postings do not bear the credential arsenal and stability of Shakespeare revisions and remixes as do, for instance, the BBC's *Shakespeare ReTold* or Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, nor are they under the auspices of archival professionalism like Luke McKernan's micromanaged *bardbox.net*.[27]

Additionally, YouTube Shakespeares, like all YouTube videos, are susceptible to unpredictable outcomes. While some YouTube videos become memes, viral and broadly disseminated almost within minutes of their original posting (sometimes even captured by and made captivating through mainstream—also referred to here as traditional—broadcast media), the majority fall into oblivion. Without question, YouTube Shakespeares are not immune to this mercurial kismet, susceptible as they are to high-riding popularity, virtual word-of-mouth, hyperlinking, and the potential to generate advertising, while at the same time vulnerable to copyright debacles, neglect, obscurity, obsolescence, contentious debates on aesthetics, and anonymity.

These circumstances foreground "YouTube Shakespeares'" greatest stumbling block as a site of academic study: for Shakespeare media studies scholars, whose hard work has only recently been, as Semenza astutely remarks, "assimilated—at least half-heartedly—by the scholarly Shakespeare industry," memory of the struggle for academic recognition casts a long shadow over the move to include the mostly amateur-content,

[27] Although most of the YouTube Shakespeares analyzed in this dissertation are amateur produced, it is important to recognize that some of YouTube's broader genres include "popular videos . . . contributed by a range of professional semi-professional, amateur, and pro-amateur participants" (Burgess and Green 55). For more on Bardbox, see chapter two.

short-duration YouTube Shakespeares as a site of analytical enquiry (2010b, 19). Shakespeare media scholars are not alone in the struggle for academic justification, as Michael Strangelove notes. "Amateur online video," Strangelove argues, "like many of the cultural practices of the masses, faces an uphill battle for legitimacy and significance among the intellectual and cultural elite" (23). Yet a critical multimodal survey of Shakespeare's inescapable presence on YouTube, the imaginative and insightful Shakespeare appropriations put forth, and the ensuing online discussions some YouTube Shakespeare renditions engender, and the provisional scholarly musings that are spurred occasionally by the provocative Shakespeare video or comment self-evidently demonstrate a powerful engagement with Shakespeare's cultural legacy on YouTube. With its supreme dominance as *the* video-sharing website on the Internet, no other medium in the history of Shakespeare performance has disseminated Shakespeare with as much speed, breadth, and diversity as YouTube.

"YouTube Shakespeares" proposes that the first decade of YouTube should be embraced as an important liminal period in Shakespeare media studies. As Internet historian Johnny Ryan astutely suggests, "a great adjustment in human affairs is underway;" this adjustment will inevitably include YouTube Shakespeares' assimilation into the cautiously expanding realm of Shakespeare media studies (2). After all, despite its brief lifespan, YouTube's overwhelming dominance as a community-driven platform on the Internet foreshadows "an unprecedented global media boom in the next decade" that is sure to bring other, unforeseen Shakespeare transmissions, remediations, and re-visions to academia's door (Ryan 158).

The dilemma the bulk of this dissertation addresses, then, is *not* should YouTube Shakespeares be subsumed as a subset of Shakespeare media studies, but how? After all, the responsibility of Shakespeare media scholars is to bring readers into the world of Shakespeare media makers. This dissertation is grounded in the belief that YouTube Shakespeares warrant close scrutiny because, for one, they manifest perceptions of Shakespeare in virtual communities. They also expand "our understanding of the public perceptions of value invested in Shakespeare" in the early twenty-first century (Rowe 2010a, 58). The questions, rather, are what methodologies, theories, considerations, and practices do we Shakespeareans need to appropriate, adopt, adapt, and devise when we absorb YouTube Shakespeares into the province of Shakespeare scholarship?

"YouTube Shakespeares" resurrects questions that have already swept the larger field of Shakespeare media studies—particularly Shakespeare performance and film studies—questions this dissertation adopts and adapts to suit the dynamics of YouTube's participant-generated producers, contributing audiences, and interactive interface. Substitute YouTube Shakespeares with Shakespeare on- "film," "the-stage," or "TV" and the queries are all too familiar: How do/should/can Shakespeareans respond to YouTube Shakespeare representations? How should these reworkings be classified/categorized in the broader range of Shakespeare studies? What does the user-generator's approach and creative style say about Shakespeare's adaptability? What does the translation of Shakespeare into the vernacular culture of YouTube say about the translation of Shakespeare's language for our time? Clearly the import of such queries is axiomatic; such self-evident challenges always seem to resurge whenever Shakespeareans wrestle with Shakespeare's relevancy in new media presentations.

Additionally, this dissertation puts forth the questions that specifically apply to YouTube Shakespeares. For instance, YouTube's platform encourages audience response: what do these user conversations tell us about a new kind of Shakespeare performance revival, so to speak, through the interactivity of YouTube's interface? How do we Shakespeareans grapple with the political, artistic, and, perhaps most importantly, the ethical entanglements the current "wide-spread social practice" YouTube Shakespeares evince (Hodgdon 326)? What crucial value(s) comes from the study of an ever shifting, ephemeral, (post) second-hand Shakespeare experience? What can/do we learn, gain even, through the analyses of YouTube Shakespeares' wide-ranging performances, appropriations, and remediations?

And finally, this project also acknowledges the elephant-in-the-room phenomena of YouTube Shakespeares' extraordinary amateur (fan) engagement, its heavy reliance on remix, pastiche, mimicry, poaching, and depending on one's political viewpoint, piracy. How do/should we shift our notions of Shakespeare's authority/fidelity in the face of user-generated performances that rewrite, revise, harmonize, parody, mock, or simply just play with Shakespeare's body of work? Such marginalized Shakespeares can readily be subsumed under Richard Burt's "Schlockspeare," a signifying term for marginalized "mass media" Shakespeares often denigrated as "trash, kitsch, obsolete, trivial, obscure, unknown, forgotten, [and left] unarchived," and that typically fall "beyond the usual academic purview" (Burt 8).[28] While Burt's excellent term and supporting theory underpins later work in this dissertation, and while I am not looking to "coin" a term

[28] See chapter five for an extended conversation on Burt's Schlockspeares.

specifically to describe YouTube Shakespeares, there is a historical precedent of belated recognition of one-time trivial, ephemeral cultural artifacts and activities that resides outside of Shakespeare studies: The American 1960s garage rock band.

Like the 1960s cultural phenomenon of young, often amateur, obscure "garage rock bands," so named for the "habitual practice spaces of the musicians," garage (and frequently basement) Shakespeare film clips, performances, auditions, mash-ups, and more are home-grown, filmed and/or produced in users' bedrooms, kitchens, basements, high school auditoriums, municipal playgrounds, derelict lots, and countless other ordinary locales that often appear far removed from the hegemony of mainstream productions (Bogdanov 1320).

Often a far cry from the recording studios of the bands they emulated, garage bands typically reproduced and covered "simple and raw" rock & roll music appropriated, mimicked, remixed, reproduced, and recorded from the works of then popular, mainstream music groups, and occasionally recorded their own original work (Bogdanov 1320). According to Vladimir Bogdanov of *The All Music Guide to Rock*, garage rock bands released "an enormous amount of (tiny local label) records" that were usually "only heard within a 50-100 mile radius if they were heard on local radio at all" (1320). The same could be said for the development and dissemination of YouTube Shakespeares: There are hundreds of new video-recorded YouTube Shakespeares, many homegrown, produced and posted for a multitude of reasons, that pop up on YouTube on a daily basis that barely attract double digit hits.[29]

[29] From August 2010 to January 2012 the average YouTube "Shakespeare" upload tally, using keyword "Shakespeare" and selecting "today" from search parameters, is between 125-150 "new" videos daily. The

On some rare occasions garage rock band music was "picked up for nationwide distribution [and occasionally] became bona fide hits" (1320). Likewise, in terms of YouTube's own rating systems, some YouTube Shakespeares are "bona fide hits" (see discussion below on FLav), amassing millions of viewers, and generating revenue for the posting participants. Yet, in reality most garage rock bands fell into oblivion, like many YouTube Shakespeares do now, subject, as Burt reminds us, to obsolescence and loss. As a phenomenon, "garage rock bands [were largely] ignored and even scorned by critics in its heyday but proved an influential inspiration for the punk movement of the 1970s" (1320). It is only through critical hindsight, and the remaining analog recordings that exist and are precious to popular music critics, scholars, and collectors, that this liminal and redefining movement in rock music history is now recognized as the impetus for a shift in rock's development.

Garage band rock is, however, only one example of missed opportunities to theorize popular culture in its present life. Echoed in the imagination of academics engaged in the analysis of early Shakespeare film is Lev Manovich's lament over the lack of critical attention emerging cinema generated in the late 19th century. Manovich writes,

> I wish that someone in 1895, 1897, or at least 1903, had realized the fundamental significance of the emergence of the new medium of cinema and produced a comprehensive record: interviews with audiences; a systematic account of narrative strategies, scenography, and camera

---

results include Shakespeare playtext performances, and all other use of the word Shakespeare in tags, titles, categories, etc. While not all hits are actually Shakespeare playtext performances (discriminating among the data is unwieldy and does not add value to this study), my empirical observation suggests that at least 80 percent are some manifestation of Shakespeare playtext appropriation.

> positions as they developed year by year; an analysis of the connections between the emerging language of cinema and difference forms of popular entertainment that co-existed with it. Unfortunately, such records do not exist. Instead we are left with newspaper reports, diaries of cinema's inventors, programs of film showings, and other bits and pieces—a set of random and unevenly distributed historical samples. (Manovich 2001, 6)

Manovich's observations that turn of the 20th century cinema has left only "bits and pieces" of itself sounds alarmingly familiar: the entire to-date catalog of YouTube Shakespeare criticisms is comprised of little more than "bits and pieces" of YouTube Shakespeare performances. While they address YouTube's intersection with Shakespeare as a cultural phenomenon, they mostly "contain speculations about the future rather than a record and theory of the present" (Manovich 2001, 7). In the "belatedness" that often characterizes studies of Shakespeare in performance and popular culture, future Shakespeare researchers will wonder why today's scholars paid so little heed to YouTube Shakespeares at the time of their emergence when Shakespeare migrated onto what was the single most popular video sharing site in the world (Burt 8).

Through these seemingly disparate analogies, I have been laboring to point out that today's YouTube Shakespeares are important liminal markers that challenge existing academic, scholarly, and cultural assumptions about temporal and trivialized notions of Shakespeare performance. What garage band's history and the gaps in early cinematic theory and reception study demonstrate is an imperative to chronicle new cultural forms as they emerge, when the elements still shaping their existence are still "clearly visible and recognizable" (Manovich 2001, 7). YouTube Shakespeares' users' very acts of

appropriation and *broadcast* incidentally change the course of Shakespeare's history. Despite subjectivity, quality, and authority concerns, Shakespeare studies has the opportunity to capture a technological and cultural shift that demonstrates what is happening to Shakespeare, as "new technologies . . . repurpose older ones, but also complicate the commonsense understanding" in the early 21st century (Auslander 39). Or as Strangelove works to reminds us, "the time will soon come when amateur videos on YouTube are treated as significant sources of historical insight" (Strangelove 24).

Shakespeare media scholars evidently relish the investigation of Shakespeare's relevance in any given cultural moment or manifestation (although much of this recognition occurs belatedly). The perusal of a handful of Shakespeare-media criticism book titles of the past decade bear witness to this enthusiasm: *Shakespeare after Mass Media* (2002)*, Selling Shakespeare to Hollywood* (2006)*, Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century* (2006)*, New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (2007)*, Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace* (2009), and Kenneth Rothwell's renowned *A History of Shakespeare on Screen* 2nd ed. (2004). While there is no doubt that academic political rumblings demand appeasement, Shakespeare media scholars' quest for relativity is most often spurred by their earnest, vigorous curiosity and insistent exploration. Given the history of Shakespeare media scholarship, the conditions Rowe, Semenza, Burt, and other like-minded Shakespeareans outline, and the earnest drive of Shakespeare media scholars, now seems the right time to challenge, adjust, and adapt existing paradigms for Shakespeare media study to include previously marginalized Shakespeare representations. In addition to YouTube, these might include blogs, games, social media

networks, and online video that self-consciously appropriate Shakespeare. Now is the time for "YouTube Shakespeares" as a Shakespeare studies remix.

Chapter Overview

The remaining chapters in this dissertation approach YouTube Shakespeares through a focus on social media: the experiences of user-user, user-content, and user-medium interactivity. As user activity is registered on YouTube's very visible space, I scrutinize YouTube's interface looking at the ways in which users actions, and their products, link to prior forms of Shakespeare performance media. YouTube Shakespeare users provide content; the content is made up of YouTube Shakespeare users.

Interactivity is the use and flow of information that occurs when people exchange information, communicate, influence, or affect others. For example, a YouTube Shakespeare mash-up of *Romeo + Juliet* may cause a heated exchange between two users about remix endings, or it may educate a middle school student to the language of Shakespeare. These overlapping modes of interactivity, I argue, drive the creations of, and responses to, the dramatist's works.

Chapter Two: YouTube, Human Users, and Research Ethics

As more Shakespeare film and culture studies scholars turn their critical gaze toward YouTube Shakespeares, it is crucial to consider the differences and similarities between these new, small screen, BETA-like Shakespeares and the Hollywood-powered big (and TV) screen or regional, (inter-)national, and commercial live theatre performances that have contributed to an exemplary collection of analytical Shakespeare cultural studies readings. Small screen, YouTube Shakespeare videos might seem to call for familiar patterns of praxis—methodological close reading, scene-to-scene

comparisons, and critical analyses through various theoretical underpinnings (race, gender, queer, post-colonial, material, etc.)—that progressively migrated from printed text to moving image. But such recycled practices overlook new risks, necessary interdisciplinary theoretical approaches, and myriad complexities interactive screen productions like YouTube Shakespeares engender.

Chapter Two examines the issues of privacy and the use and flow of YouTube users' information. It seeks to define ethical practices for human subjects research on published forums like YouTube. It takes as examples two YouTube Shakespeare videos and their comments. It employs and analyzes the algorithms designed by the Association of Internet Researchers and the Office of Human Research Protection. It asks the key question: how can literary researchers use online published videos in ethical and moral ways?

Chapter Three: Virtual Methods and Online Ethnography

In Chapter Three I go where very few Shakespeareans have gone before, into cyberspace to "speak" with YouTube Shakespeare users. This chapter chronicles my experiences as a virtual ethnographer on the quest to interact with the people who create and publish YouTube Shakespeares. It is a written account that begins with an overview of others' methodologies, and the pitfalls and strengths of those practices. It includes the steps I took in researching and designing a virtual study, applying to my institution's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (IRB), contacting YouTube users, and carrying out the interview process via email. I ask YouTube users questions about their engagement with Shakespeare that their YouTube channel cannot provide. Who do they think is their audience? What is the purpose of their video? How long do they plan to

keep their YouTube video on the website? What do they think of the comments other YouTube users have posted on their page? In short, I enter the space of YouTube Shakespeares as a virtual ethnographer and qualitative researcher. I become the observer participant who approaches her investigation of others' practices, as Norman Denzin states, "with hope, but no guarantees" (5). I become an actant who enters the action mantled with her own academic and cultural history. What problems do I face? What are the outcomes of conversing with the people who are personally invested in Shakespeare? With YouTube? With their own creations?

Chapter Four: YouTube's Places and Spaces of Performance

Switching from questions of ethics and research methodology, Chapter Four examines YouTube's interface as an interactive space analogous to the Elizabethan theater of Shakespeare's day. Furthermore, this chapter develops and demonstrates ways of thinking about the participatory elements of YouTubes interface. How does YouTube compare to public spaces in early modern London? How do YouTube users compare to the general public who attended Shakespeare performances in the Elizabethan theatre? What do these comparisons do for the current field of Shakespeare study? Applying the works of Andrew Gurr, D.J. Hopkins, Steven Mullaney, and Robert Weimann, this chapter demonstrates how YouTube Shakespeares serve as analog to Shakespeare's early modern theatre.

Chapter Five: Fan studies and Analyzing Trivial Pursuits

Shakespeare cultural scholarship currently faces a major remix of sorts, the dearth of Shakespeare on the big screen and adjustment to the proliferation of Shakespeare's body of work online. YouTube Shakespeare users upload a broad spectrum—in terms of

genre and quality—of YouTube Shakespeare videos on a daily basis. But how do we categorize these users and their activities? Many YouTube Shakespeare videos are fan created. Yet for the most part, fan studies has been omitted from Shakespeare studies, even during the heyday of Shakespeare film studies. Chapter Five illustrates how an approach to YouTube Shakespeares through the lens of fan studies might expand Shakespeare culture studies. It demonstrates that analogies to fan studies already exist in Shakespeare studies. It explores questions about how user-generated fan videos and activities on YouTube Shakespeare interfaces might have a role to play in perpetuating or dismantling Shakespeare's cultural legacy.

Conclusion: First Wave YouTubes and Obsolescence

In the past seven years YouTube has become omnipresent in people's everyday lives. YouTube videos of every genre pop up on television, mobile technology, Facebook, and blogs. YouTube has become a normal inclusion in cinematic film and in classrooms across the globe. Just as YouTube makes use of mainstream media culture, mainstream media incorporates YouTube. On the flip side, YouTube Shakespeares are subject to ephemerality: they simply disappear without warning. For instance, many YouTube Shakespeares I viewed in the period between 2006-2008 are no longer to be found.[30] Alas, in the intervening years between my first encounter with YouTube Shakespeares and the time of writing, Ty's "Much Ado About Nothing" and her channel

[30] Although YouTube developed "partnerships with Universal Music Group, Sony BMG Music Entertainment and CBS that let their artists' music and videos be included in original content posted on YouTube's site," entertainment giant Viacom's ongoing lawsuit against YouTube has caused a number of take-downs from YouTube (Lombardi).

with all her other videos vanished.[31] While these examples of YouTube's ephemerality might justify, for some scholars, reasons to bypass consideration of the website as a topic of study, I cannot help but be vexed by the missed opportunity to archive within our own criticism these rich, informative user-generated works.

Today's Shakespeare cultural scholar is challenged by a user-generated, adapted and appropriated, participatory Shakespeare who virtually reenters and exits here, there, and everywhere—legitimacy be damned—and hides, often too frequently for academic comfort. This activity spurs a number of questions: is YouTube an archive, repository, or depository of Shakespeare video performance? Unstable at best, YouTube Shakespeares, and, to a lesser extent, YouTube as a distribution mechanism are subject to obsolescence and ephemerality. What are the implications for studying material, a vast majority of which goes unarchived and unknown, and therefore subject to loss? Such loss is familiar when we think of the speculation and frustration that hover over the desire to recoup Shakespeare's lost plays, *Love's Labour Won* or *Cardenio*, or to perhaps have our hands on one single page, just one sheet from any work in the author's own hand, an artifact that in its own time was undervalued, ephemeral, and considered obsolete "now the play is done" (*AWTEW* 5.1 398). In addition to providing answers, they would lead us to ask more compelling questions, as do the chapters that follow.

[31] I return to "Much Ado About Nothing" in my discussion of YouTube Shakespeare ephemerality and obsolescence in chapter five.

CHAPTER 2

YOUTUBE SHAKESPEARE RESEARCH:

ETHICAL ISSUES IN LITERARY CONTEXTS

> *Despite the fact that users recognize the overtly public nature of their presentation of self via digital media, this has no universally agreed upon or* a priori *correspondence with the harm that might eventually be felt.*
>
> Annette Markham[32]

As a rich new resource for Shakespeare performance and reception studies, YouTube opens a Pandora's Box of ethical issues that have yet to be addressed within Shakespeare studies: questions that expand beyond previous ethical boundaries, guidelines, and applications of literary and performance analysis. The most prominent matter hinges not only on determining a minimally prescribed code of research ethics entailed in public versus private domains, but also on the moral decision-making literary scholars must now consider as they study "published" materials discovered online. This includes special regard for the humans (albeit most frequently represented through avatars and usernames) responsible for these works. Even when using material from public realms, this chapter argues, online researchers have a moral obligation to honor individual participant's rights to privacy, where "privacy can be minimally defined as the capacity to *control* information about oneself" (Ess 2010, 12 emphasis mine). Ess's definition of privacy suggests that for YouTube users, privacy might be "less about the information itself and more about the use or flow of that information" (Markham 2012, 335).

[32] "Fabrication as Ethical Practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet contexts." p. 337.

Of course researchers' responsibility to protect their study subjects did not originate with Internet technologies; nonetheless the human element of online social network sites (SNS) raises distinctive ethical conundrums for both social science and humanities research.[33] Generally speaking, the rapid growth of SNSs outpaces the establishment of research guidelines and recommendations, particularly in the pursuit of ethical qualitative research. Even for social scientists, leaders in online behavior studies, many Internet research decisions rest typically with "the individual agents who both make decisions and act independently of others" (Ess 2010, 17). Lacking formal training in online ethnographic research, most Shakespeareans resort to traditional scholarly skills—developing a research question (who is doing what to Shakespeare on YouTube?), close reading, and critical analysis of the videos—as the major components of their own online research logic. Coupled with some straightforward inclusions of Internet fan or social network theory, many Shakespeareans forge ahead with their inquiries. This auto-didacticism, I suggest, yields methodologies fraught with inconsistency, tension, and often a short-term view of the risks entailed for the subjects of Internet based study.

While efforts to develop shared rather than individual, global versus local, responsibility for ethical Internet research practices are underway, a number of ambiguities still abound. [34] Internet researchers commonly confront the daunting task of determining "how far traditional ethical frameworks may—and may not—successfully resolve the issues evoked by digital media and their new possibilities for communication,

[33] See chapter one for further discussion on copyright issues.

[34] Certainly the ethical issues of YouTube as *global* media require greater attention than the scope of this chapter allows. For more information on "distributed responsibility" see Ess, "Central Issues in the Ethics of Digital Media," for an in-depth discussion of Western and non-Western notions of ethics as culturally determined and ethnocentrically defined (re: individual versus collective responsibility).

human interaction, and so forth" (Ess 2010, 19). For instance, even when "multiple actors and agents" classify a website like YouTube as public (as many Internet scholars currently do), such designation does not necessarily efface the "complications associated with determining moral or legal parameters for protecting" some of YouTube Shakespeare's participants (Ess 2010, 17; Markham and Baym xviii). With all this ambiguity over Internet research ethics, where does the budding YouTube Shakespeare researcher begin?

This chapter illustrates some of the ethical complications Shakespeareans encounter when researching YouTube Shakespeares, and returns periodically to two particular YouTube videos, "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St," as test cases for these complexities. "Crank that Shakespeare," an original *Hamlet* performance video posted on YouTube in March 2008, features five students enacting, through rap and action, an abridged version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The students, white males dressed in an array of gendered costumes and wigs, dance, sing, and enact *Hamlet* both inside and outside of an American home. The video opens with a pair of two-second shots of a pocket watch and a Cadillac emblem followed by a medium shot of two young men seated in a car as they bop to the rhythm of non-diegetic rap music. The student closest to the camera, seated in the driver's seat, wears mirrored sunglasses, a winter jacket, and a striped ski cap: he performs the video's Hamlet. Further back in the shot, another student sits in the passenger seat, brandishing a miniature human skull in his right hand: this student, viewers soon discover, is Shakespeare (and several other characters throughout the video). The intertitle, reminiscent of MTV's music videos, pops up on the bottom left corner of the screen and reads:

Crank that Shakespeare

JCJB

AP English Production[35]

The rap's lyrics begin with a cacophony of rap-style barking, hooting, and "Shakespeare!" howled in a sport's-game chant. As the video runs through its two-minute rap performance—with the lyrics scrolling across the bottom of the screen—the students hyper-act Hamlet's surprise, fear, and uncertainty, as he encounters various characters from Shakespeare's play. In addition, the video returns twice to the students in the car as they rap, "Hamlet here—with my boy Shakespeare! Hamlet here—with my boy Shakespeare!"

"Hamlet St," an original *Hamlet* performance video jointly produced by high school performing arts student AB and budding filmmaker YZ, features AB performing Hamlet's Act 2 Scene 2 soliloquy ("The play's the thing") on an empty, derelict lot in Camden, New Jersey.[36] AB, an African American dressed casually in a baggy tee-shirt, plaid shorts, and canvas boat shoes, looks straight at the camera, grins beguilingly, and after introducing himself, launches boisterously into Hamlet's oft-quoted speech. YZ's full body shot of AB stays focused on the actor's movements, while the *mise-en-scene*—the abandoned "crackhouse" with boarded windows to AB's left, the weed and garbage strewn dirt lot, and non-diegetic sounds of vehicles and people behind the camera—speak volumes about AB's local circumstances. AB's YouTube Shakespeare has the

[35] Viewed consecutively from November 13, 2008 to February 14, 2013.

[36] Both the actor's and the uploader's names and the video title have been replaced with pseudonyms.

characteristics of a video audition, albeit one by an actor whose race, likability, and home turf is as much a part of the performance as Shakespeare's words.

"Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" are exactly the sort of YouTube fodder some Shakespeareans have been using in their cultural studies-based research.[37] That is, these videos reveal a great deal about the cultural work "Shakespeare" performs in contemporary, youth society and, thus, provides a rich text for humanities-based analysis. Like scholars of the humanities in general, Shakespeareans look at the ways the dramatist's texts have been read, interpreted, performed, and adapted socially, historically, and culturally, examining not only the particular context(s) of the text's original production and creation, but also its reception and recreations throughout history. Specifically, Shakespeareans focus on minuscule details of a text, paying particular attention to the detailed qualities, the nuances that make it unique. As such, "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" represent distinctive works that a popular culture Shakespeare scholar would adore: collectively the videos include a canonical text, colorblind and gendered performances, contemporary adaptation, "identity tourism," hip hop, documentable responses (participatory commentary), and contemporary pedagogical practices to name only a few of the cultural issues raised.[38]

This chapter features "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" for a number of reasons, beginning with the way they exemplify the potential viral nature of YouTube videos. As Michael Strangelove suggests, "YouTube videos rapidly migrate across the

---

[37] Currently, YouTube is the most watched video-sharing website on the Internet, but this discussion encompasses all user-generated (UGC) or consumer-generated media (CGM) video-sharing websites such as Vimeo, blip, metacafe, dailymotion, etc.

[38] The notion of online "identity tourism" is borrowed from Nakamura.

Internet population because Internet users tend to share what they find with their friends" (11). "Crank that Shakespeare" was uploaded to YouTube and labeled as the fulfillment of a school assignment, whereas "Hamlet St" was uploaded to YouTube and labeled as the onset of YZ's documentary series of young Americans. Both have been hyperlinked to multiple other websites, including one that is geared to Shakespeareans, BardBox, which is discussed at length below. To date, "Crank that Shakespeare" has been viewed over ten thousand times, whereas AB/YZ's production has reached nearly half a million viewings. Both videos have extended beyond their producers' expectations and have spread from site to site without their explicit approval.[39] In other words they each have become viral.[40]

The viral movement of both "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" highlights one of many quandaries for Shakespeareans interested in the intersections of cultural studies, performance studies, Shakespeare studies, and digital media studies. Are we Shakespeare scholars equipped to deal with what Henry Jenkins calls the "brains of individual [media] consumers" and producers (Jenkins 2006a, 3): that is, the real people who actually create, consume, and share Internet videos? What new skills do we need to develop in order to play a key role in the framework of evaluation, which is so important to the scholarly experience of YouTube Shakespeares? For the past few decades

[39] YZ reports the response through YouTube "was unbelievable" and the video brought AB unanticipated national and international exposure (Interview).

[40] "Crank That Shakespeare" was uploaded onto YouTube on March 31, 2008. The video was uploaded onto Bardbox on November 7, 2008. According to Jean Burgess, "the term viral video is use to refer simply to those videos which are viewed by a large number of people, generally as a result of knowledge about the video being spread rapidly through the internet population via word-of-mouth," though I would add that viral videos are also disseminated via broadcast media (Burgess 2008, 101).

Shakespeareans have enjoyed the luxury of Shakespeare film libraries, moving image performances that we have been trained to read as texts. Often online Shakespeares, like the countless number on YouTube, are not sheltered (and nurtured) under the same legal, moral, and publicity umbrellas that protect professionally distributed productions, i.e. "texts," on which many Shakespeareans were inculcated. Personal interviews with directors, actors, other Shakespeareans and the like are, for Shakespeareans, also viewed as "texts"; in other words, Shakespeareans have seldom worked under the guidelines that categorize human subject research. Herein lies the larger question: When should YouTube Shakespeares be considered "as 'text' and when as the communications of a 'living person' for whom a different set of ethical considerations apply?" (McKee and Porter 5). Even if YouTube Shakespeares are determined "published" texts—that is the works are viewable by everyone, not blocked to anyone, who has the technological means—might other considerations overrule certain generally accepted codes of research conduct?

While scholars in the humanities often treat Internet sources as texts, the young men in both "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" are not texts. In fact, the performers in the otherwise innocuous "Crank that Shakespeare" appear to be minors, under-age students creating a video for their "AP English" class. As the students are (possibly) still legally categorized as children, I have to wonder if they deserve special consideration beyond YouTube's published guidelines. Likewise, but in a different vein, "Hamlet St" generated thousands of viewer comments, overall a rich resource for reception studies. However, a number included racial insults, ethnic slurs, social slams, and degrading remarks about AB, his skill as an actor, and Camden. Susan Barnes notes

"Internet users frequently forget that their message can be accessed by others without their knowledge" (212). People who post comments may or may not be aware their remarks can be used as published material and therefore appear in other media. They may not even consider that their comment may also be read by thousands of YouTube users who merely "lurk or only read messages" (Barnes 207). While these messages or comments may or may not be traced to their "real" world identity now, what *later* risks might be generated *now* through the capture and archiving of their online identities in a scholarly publication? Clearly there are ethical and methodological issues involved in approaching YouTube Shakespeares' entire framework that literary and humanity discourses in general are not currently designed to address, but where specifically do we draw a line between permissible and permission-advised public research? As Carrie James writes, "ethics are tightly aligned with the responsibilities to and for others that are attached to one's role" as researcher and critic (James et al 9). "At the heart of ethics," she continues, "is responsibility to others with whom one interacts through various roles" (9). The remainder of this chapter interrogates whether or not this same "heart" of responsibility applies to *Shakespeare scholars* who are interested in Internet research.

As James notes, "the frontier-like quality of the new digital media [including YouTube as text] means that opportunities for ethical lapses abound," even as scholars willingly enter the ongoing debates (6). Although unintentional ethical lapses can occur in any research project, identifiable lapses confound even the most conscientious literary-based Internet researchers because our discipline has not fully developed and/or articulated research guidelines. In other words, even when the lapses are known, and even when scholars are sensitive to ethical obligations, Shakespeareans and other literary

scholars must employ the acts of remix and become *bricoleurs* as they forge ahead, "piecing together new research tools [and] fitting old methods to new problems," precisely because their methodologies are not entirely suitable for digital resources (Denzin 2).

The concern that Shakespeare scholars may be (un)wittingly implicated in ethical lapses propels a plethora of interrelated questions: Should, or can, Shakespeareans approach Internet research in the same manner as textual research, or do we need to develop new theoretical, methodological, and interpretative lenses to perform humanities-based Internet research? More specifically, if we read YouTube clips like texts are we effacing the rights of the individuals within the performance? What about the rights of those who post comments? Do YouTube texts fall into the category of "human subjects research"? How does, or how should, moral responsibility extend to the human subjects located on Internet sites? Should privacy, and therefore protection, be a concern when citing sources found on YouTube? If so, how exactly do we identify which materials we are *morally* obligated to protect in our work on YouTube? And, more importantly, how are issues of protection and privacy further complicated when the online subjects are minors? Finally, Shakespeare scholars need to address the burgeoning interactive capability of Internet research. This includes reading, analyzing, and including participant responses and exchanges in our work, as I demonstrate with "Hamlet St" below. Participant responses potentially offer reception study material—yet how do we define these YouTube comments? As public text? As public qualitative data? As intellectual material belonging to the commentators? More importantly, with the potential to practice as a participant—a commentator on YouTube's interface—the boundaries between the

researcher as reader and as actant become contested sites in defining research protocol. For instance, YouTube's interactive affordances create the potential to "interview" YouTube Shakespeare participants.[41] Should we Shakespeare scholars move beyond our propensity merely to analyze YouTube Shakespeares, or should we become involved in an exchange of information—in dialogues or, even, in collaborations—with Internet producers/performers as part of our research?

The remainder of this chapter looks at some common research ambiguities Shakespeare scholars face when encountering humans in YouTube videos. It begins with a particular focus on "Crank that Shakespeare" and the complications of researching minors and then moves to outlining some of the potential issues a YouTube Shakespeare reception study of "Hamlet St" might galvanize. It then overviews social science approaches to these dilemmas, leading to a discussion of the potential for humanistic participatory research.

"Crank that Shakespeare" travels the virtual globe.

"Crank that Shakespeare" first came to my attention through BardBox, a blog administered by Luke McKernan, recently known for his work on the British Universities Film & Video Council's International Database of Shakespeare on Film, Television, and Radio. Inaugurated on the 444th anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday, BardBox dismisses the notion that YouTube Shakespeares are "home only to facetious and repetitive parodies" and "contends that this is an exciting new departure for Shakespeare production, the best examples of which need to be identified, championed and studied" (McKernan "About"). Presumably, BardBox is aimed at scholars in the humanities who

[41] See chapter four for more on YouTube's affordances.

engage with pop-culture Shakespeares because it specifically collects "original Shakespeare-related videos," rather than the common, and popular, Shakespeare mash-ups derived from a whole host of other media (cinema, television, DVD) (McKernan "About"). McKernan's stated goal is to "look beyond YouTube as a distributor of pre-existing content (whether legally or illegally) and to uncover the best of the creative work that can be found there . . . a different kind of filmed Shakespeare" (McKernan "About"). The videos can be viewed on-site or through the YouTube link McKernan posts under each video window. As on YouTube pages, BardBox enables conversation about each of the videos, as well as the blog as a whole, through viewer response comments.

As administrator (or self-titled producer), McKernan is careful to cite and acknowledge the origin of each YouTube video he includes on the blog. He re-categorizes them for BardBox users, noting that each BardBox video:

> Is named either after the on-screen title of the video or the title it is given on YouTube, and comprises the video itself, date (the date of posting if actual production date not known), credits (where available), cast (ditto) and duration, description with comment, plus link to its YouTube (or other) page. Each post is described under a variety of categories and tagged under the name of the relevant play. (McKernan "About")

In addition to categorizing and cataloging, McKernan summarizes and very briefly analyzes each Shakespeare video he adds to BardBox. In his summary analysis of "Crank that Shakespeare," for instance, McKernan acknowledges the ubiquity, and often the banality, of American school projects on Shakespeare.

> It is all too easy to sigh at yet another American middle school English project where the class has been encouraged to demonstrate that Shakspeare [sic] can be fun by producing a YouTube video.
> (McKernan "Intro to 'Crank that Shakespeare'")

Yet he urges his blog audience to "[l]ook again" at "Crank," stating:

> This is a terrific video. It displays such enthusiasm for the task in hand, which is to make a rap video out of the story of *Hamlet*. The lyrics are sharp, the editing is good, the music is strong, and the performances are goofy but dedicated to the cause. . . . It's a fine English project that brings out such delight in recognizing the vitality of the play. (McKernan "Intro to 'Crank that Shakespeare'")

McKernan's fascinating blog brings into focus several pertinent issues related to the ethics of humanities-based Internet research. Like many Shakespeareans who have turned to the Internet, McKernan seems excited by the sheer potential of YouTube as a research resource. Like many humanities scholars he demonstrates a concentrated interest in details of the videos as cultural artifacts, as testimony to users' engagements with Shakespeare. Yet while he re-categorizes, summarizes, and critically comments on "Crank that Shakespeare" he makes no remarks about the ethics of using, viewing, and posting what appears to be the use and exposure of minors. Instead, like most conscientious humanities scholars, he carefully includes the names of all the artists who are credited on the YouTube site.

Herein larger and more specific questions are raised for all who use YouTube (and other Internet video) material in humanistic research. "Crank that Shakespeare" appears to be produced by minors, yet they list their full names on the original YouTube installation and they are repeated on BardBox. Should BardBox be responsible to get permission to cite this specific video (from the minors? from their parents or guardians?)? Because some of the producers are minors, is it ethical for BardBox to list their names? For that matter, is it ethical for this chapter to cite BardBox, citing their names? Furthermore, "Crank that Shakespeare" is labeled as a project that fulfills a school assignment; this illustrates (as mentioned above) that the producers had a specific audience in mind when they uploaded the video. Before BardBox (and others) "poached" it, the number of viewers who watched this video did not escalate at the rate it does now that it is featured on at least on other URL. In other words, what was once a fun school assignment became viral: "Crank that Shakespeare" has extended beyond its producers' expectations and has spread from site to site. At one point statistics on YouTube indicated this video is hyperlinked to five other websites, exclusive of BardBox, which does not show up on the "Crank that Shakespeare" YouTube page as a hyperlink.[42] I have even captured a copy of "Crank that Shakespeare" on my laptop for my own use via one of the free and ubiquitous downloading programs found on the Internet.[43] This all suggests that "Crank that Shakespeare" may be hyperlinked and copied to other unknowable, and perhaps untraceable, websites and personal computers. As Patricia Lange notes, "when a link to one's [YouTube] video is not displayed, a video maker may

[42] This information was accessed December 2009.

[43] If I have violated any ethical, moral, or legal standings, I am (ironically) unaware of what they might be.

not know where and in what context [his]/her videos are being posted" (Lange 89). What this also indicates is that even if "Crank that Shakespeare" disappears from YouTube, it could potentially reappear elsewhere someday. Therefore while BardBox functions to filter YouTube videos for researchers, and while the availability to locate this video on multiple sites potentially suggests its "public" status, does BardBox still have a moral obligation to inform the producers of the newly created, never imagined link?

At the risk of setting up "Crank that Shakespeare" on BardBox as a "red herring" (after all, most researchers, including me, would be compelled to ask, "what is wrong with BardBox's posting this hyperlink? It originally appears on a "published" website that allows minors to post!), this particular example illustrates the ease of Internet video appropriation (poaching), the alarming ways Internet videos are virally disseminated, and the ethical significance of these parasitical practices might have for minors. In addition, it reveals a more general question about genre and authorship: is a YouTube video merely a text—a product that is completely separate from its creator—or do its transitory properties, controllable *in some ways* by the producer, make it something more personal?[44] At the risk of overstatement, I reiterate that very few Shakespeare scholars have developed approaches for ethical YouTube research, and even fewer have specifically addressed the ethical issues related to minors.

[44] While zman, the video's producer, may choose to remove "Crank that Shakespeare" from his YouTube channel, a wide and unknowable number of digital tools and sites may have copies of the video like MIT's YouTomb project. YouTomb, "a research project by MIT Free Culture that tracks videos taken down from YouTube," illustrates how even producer removed video clips are never fully deleted from the Internet (YouTomb). While YouTomb's specific goal is to track YouTube clips deleted for "alleged copyright violation," countless other websites have the capability to capture and store/transmit myriad web materials that could circulate the Internet for indefinite lengths of time (YouTomb).

"Hamlet St" presents a different but related set of issues. While also part of Bardbox's collection, the ethical issues hinge on the sensitive content of some participatory responses (visible on YouTube but unseen on Bardbox).[45] Such comments could be valuable as research material because they illuminate audience responses to the cultural phenomenon that is Shakespeare's body of work as it is performed in informal conditions. Many participants use avatars, anonymous usernames, or pseudonyms, but have channel profiles that could potentially identify them in the real world. While participant comments are made public (one does not need to sign-in to view YouTube videos or the videos entire interface) by the posters themselves, the ethical dilemmas return back to the researcher. Should researchers protect participants who publish sensitive comments on YouTube? If so, what strategies do we use to protect these sources and still appear credible in our own work? After all, Shakespeareans publish their own studies under the conventions of peer review. As Ayanna Thompson notes, "Our work is often assessed by another's ability to verify such citations and to explore the text in question for him/herself" (Thompson 2011, 149). Not "providing full citations" makes resources that support the work unpeer-reviewable (149). On the other hand, if we have no obligation to protect participants (because of the public nature of YouTube's forum), then what future implications might Shakespeareans need to consider as we, in turn, republish and cite sensitive materials as they appear *now* on YouTube, risking that they might be later removed by the participants for their own protection?

[45] By sensitive I mean racialized, foul, and insulting language. Occasionally participatory comments include incriminating information.

Weird (Social) Science?

While Shakespeare and other humanities scholars have not yet addressed these types of ethical and methodological questions, they are addressed by social scientists, particularly Internet researchers, like Annette Markham, Nancy Baym, and Charles Ess. Markham and Baym argue that the rapid shift in media phenomena "brings into sharp relief previously assumed and invisible epistemologies and practices of inquiry" (Markham and Baym vii). How shall we begin to set up research guidelines for the specific humanistic practice of close, critical analyses of YouTube Shakespeare videos? What should we borrow from the social sciences, and of that, what should we alter? Clearly the paradigms that have governed our own literary theories will necessarily undergo reshaping—what can we afford to discard on the wayside (disclosure?) and to what must we hold fast (salient value of the research?)?

For a start, it is important to note that human performers are elements of many Shakespeare-based YouTube videos. When most social scientists work face-to-face with human research subjects, they recognize they have an ethical and often legal obligation to consider an individual's right to privacy, intellectual ownership, and informed consent. Because Shakespeare scholars work mostly with texts, and because we are equally diligent about selecting and citing those textual resources, we seldom critically engage with live human subjects. Therefore, the ethical issues that Shakespeareans have traditionally faced have been tied to an ethical responsibility to the text, even when the text is broadly conceived as image, word, sound, etc. In this approach, Shakespeare scholars do not have an ethical responsibility to the human subject(s) within the text. Little additional consideration about age, sexuality, and/or gender has been necessary

within humanistic analyses of texts. For instance, a number of critical evaluations of Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film *Henry V* commented on the character, Boy, performed by the then-pubescent actor Christian Bale, who was fifteen when the film was released.[46] In those cases, Bale as an actor in a public format was considered to be part of the film that could and should be analyzed (e.g., his role in the film, his performance, his appearance, etc.). Does this same freedom and impunity function for YouTube videos? A look at a couple of recent studies of minors' activities on the Internet illustrates how social scientists address the ethical dimensions of these practices.

In their 2008 publication under Harvard's GoodWork Project Report Series, a team of social scientists led by Carrie James examines the opportunities and risks young people encounter through digital technologies, including "uploading and sharing their own creations" (James et al 2). The five case studies examine how young people understand and practice ethical Internet participatory behavior. Within this work, James identifies the broad critical issues at stake as, "identity, privacy, ownership and authorship, credibility and participation" (2). While these same issues have been matters of concern for many researchers of offline materials, and while some of GoodWork's evaluation focuses on the participants' published Internet texts, the contributors neither cite the individuals in their reports nor in the works cited, even though only two of the five studies involve minors. This suggests that while the subjects were used for GoodWork's study, their identities remain protected by James and concealed from readers. Virginia Kuhn affirms this ethic of protecting identities by not citing them as sources. In addressing digital "fair use" citation issues in relation to copyright

[46] See Donaldson (1991), Crowl (2003), and Loehlin (1997).

specifically, Kuhn's comments validate James's move to protect the GoodWork participants. In the pursuit of critical evaluation or as a means to educate, Kuhn states, "If there is some kind of justification or rationale for why someone is doing what they're doing," then not citing the source is appropriate (Kuhn). In other words, both James and Kuhn suggest that new approaches to Internet research necessarily revise non-digital textual research methodologies. If it is in the best interest to override citation protocol for the sake of protecting a subject's identity, then superseding the protocol becomes the ethical solution. For many Shakespeare scholars, however, not citing sources goes against the traditional grain of literary research and analysis. Thus, it is important to develop new theoretical, methodological, and interpretative lenses to perform literary-based research of Internet texts on a case-by-case basis.

Anticipating ethical concerns, the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) published recommendations in 2002 (updated in 2012) on the ethics of Internet research in order to "clarify and resolve at least many of the more common ethical difficulties" by "providing general principles [that] algorithmically deduce the correct answer" (Ess 2002, 3).[47] In other words, the AoIR guidelines, while not advocating "ethical relativism," conclude that "doing the right thing, for the right reason, in the right way, at the right time" is matter of contextual and researcher judgment (Ess 2002, 4). Charles Ess terms this process *phronesis*, rather than a fixed formula or definitive and defensible

[47] Announcement of the updated ethics guideline included the following message: "This 2012 document does not replace the 2002 guidelines, but lives alongside and builds from it. We hope both documents continue to provide a useful resource for researchers, students, academic institutions, and regulatory bodies" (Markham Air-L Digest, v104.10). Hence both editions of AoIR's ethical guidelines, the 2002 edition helmed by Charles Ess and the 2012 update co-lead by Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, are quoted in throughout this dissertation.

stance (2002, 4).[48] The Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) offers a similar system of charts to help researchers determine appropriate and legal research methodologies. Despite the fact that Ess and company imagined the recommendations would be employed in the "social sciences and humanities," scholars in literary studies are not accustomed to applying methods "algorithmically" (Ess 2002, 1). There are no algorithms in humanities-based methodologies. Yet it is important for Shakespeare scholars to think through the AoIR algorithm and the OHRP chart to see if we can apply, adapt, and/or appropriate them to humanistic approaches to Internet research. As an example, I apply them below to "Crank That Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St."

The first question is of venue: Both "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" are available on YouTube, an open and public forum to all those who have access to online media. According to AoIR, "the greater the acknowledged publicity of the venue, the less obligation there may be to protect individual privacy, confidentiality, [and the] right to informed consent" (Ess 2002, 5). YouTube's terms of agreement confirm that viewers can watch videos on YouTube without registering for a YouTube account; it is a highly public forum.

Still, one must ask, even if YouTube is publicly accessible, should the postings (the videos, comments, and the people who make them) be read as texts? Or, are the individuals performing in "Crank that Shakespeare" or the participants responding to "Hamlet St" categorized as "human subjects research?" According to the complex charting system established by OHRP in 2004, "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet

[48] For AoIR's current (2012) full algorithm see the website: <http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf>.

St" are not categorized as human subjects research because most Shakespeare scholars who critically view and analyze the videos as sources are not interceding or interacting with the performers and producers. Yet, even though "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" are public texts and not technically categorized as human subjects research, using them in one's research (or, using them as research) is still ethically complicated because "Crank that Shakespeare" contains and is produced by minors, and "Hamlet St" contains sensitive responses that may someday implicate the participants or researchers in unpredictable ways.

Debates about whether online communications are private or public are necessarily complex; these debates are further complicated when one asks whether minors have the capacity to understand the public nature of the Internet. YouTube's own policy regarding children and minors is that no one under the age of thirteen can obtain a YouTube account, but this does not speak to children who are included in the accounts and postings of their legal guardians (or in anyone else's for that matter).[49] Things would be even more complicated if "Crank that Shakespeare" contained an eight-year old in the background; that is, an under-aged third party who could not control whether s/he is included in the online posting. OHRP's rubric suggests that research of minors like those in "Crank that Shakespeare" is legally permissible as the minors are, first of all, being observed participating in "public behavior," even though they can be identified by name

[49] YouTube's age requirements are as follows: "You affirm that you are either more than 18 years of age, or an emancipated minor, or possess legal parental or guardian consent, and are fully able and competent to enter into the terms, conditions, obligations, affirmations, representations, and warranties set forth in these Terms of Service, and to abide by and comply with these Terms of Service. In any case, you [must] affirm that you are over the age of 13, as the YouTube Website is not intended for children under 13. If you are under 13 years of age, then please do not use the YouTube Website. There are lots of other great web sites for you. Talk to your parents about what sites are appropriate for you" ("Terms of Service" 2009-2013).

or "identifiers linked to the subject" (OHRP). OHRP draws the line when citing a posting "that places the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or [is] damaging to subjects' financial status, employability, or reputation" (OHRP). None of the behavior exhibited in "Crank that Shakespeare" places the individuals at risk of legal liability (unlike, say, videos that include the consumption of illegal substances), and it is hard to imagine that the video could harm the participants' reputations (unlike, say, videos that include nudity, sexual acts, violent acts, etc.). But what about responder commentary on "Hamlet St"? Although it is decreed a "public" text, republishing racialized commentary seals the connection between comment and commentator, in ink, elsewhere other than the ephemeral setting of YouTube. In other words, Shakespeareans can *legally* use "Crank that Shakespeare" because it does not endanger the minors' status in either public or private realms. But should they? And do the same OHRP notions of protection and liability apply towards sensitive participatory commentary in "Hamlet St"?

Even though it is legally permissible to use minors in public texts under these conditions, and even though YouTube's participatory commentary is considered published material, AoIR notes that researchers have a "heightened" moral obligation to protect under-aged research subjects and those whose public postings may cause harm or embarrassment. Minors present "special difficulties as they inhabit something of an [ethical] middle ground" (Ess 2002, 5). Yet, they are "highly engaged" with digital media, often "uploading and sharing their own creations" (James et al 2).[50] In fact, they often appear more fully cognizant of web culture than their parents and teachers. James

[50] AoIR defines minors as ranging in age between 12 and 18.

notes that, "indeed, many young people are using the digital media in impressive and socially responsible ways" (James et al 3). Of course, this is precisely why so many Shakespeare teachers encourage their students to create performance videos for the Internet: these assignments are meant to entice students to connect canonical texts to the contemporary moment. If minors are using digital media in sophisticated and "socially responsible ways," then it is also likely that they are aware of the potential viral transmission of their work. zman, the producer of "Crank that Shakespeare," might very well have understood the potential viral dissemination of his YouTube posting. Yet how can researchers be sure without asking? And this takes me to the brave (but not so new) world of participatory research.

To Participate or Not to Participate?

My engagement with "Crank that Shakespeare" provokes a number of questions that I would like to ask zman, the YouTube poster. What exactly was the "AP English" assignment: a performance, a video, an online posting? Why did he post it on YouTube? Were all of the participants informed of, and agreeable to, this posting? Did the assignment encourage the students to update *Hamlet* specifically? Why is it a rap? What is it about *Hamlet* that invited a rap rendition? What feedback did the "AP English" teacher eventually give them? What feedback did their peers give them? What do they think about the online commentary their clip has generated? Are they aware that "Crank that Shakespeare" is posted on BardBox? Are they aware that YouTube postings can be viral—that they can be posted on myriad other websites through hyperlinks? Are they aware that digital tools enable YouTube users to capture the video on their own personal computers? How do they feel about researchers not only citing, but also analyzing their

video? What is their engagement with Shakespeare now? If they had the chance, would they create a different video (or not post it online at all)?

Of course, I have just as many questions for the teacher who taught this "AP English" class because s/he may play an equally central role in the production of this video. One might even refer to the teacher as another producer/author, one whose views and visions could be radically different from the ones presented in the online video. So what was the goal of the assignment? Why was it constructed in this way? How did the Internet figure into her/his construction of the assignment? What were the rubrics for grading? Is there a follow up to the assignment that addresses the (often) critical comments and questions posted to the videos? Teachers have an ethical responsibility to make students cognizant that their online and therefore "public posts may be taken up and analyzed in a variety of ways" and by a variety of people (like McKernan and me) (Black 23). Was this ethical responsibility considered during the planning of the initial assignment? I have a number of questions I would like to ask AB and his videographer YZ, who both *seem* open to interviews. In other words, I am interested in asking questions that would reveal a richer context not only for the videos' production and afterlife, but also for the producers/authors as individuals (even as individuals with potentially competing and conflicting interests).

Because interaction with producers/authors rarely occurs in literary-based research, I have no models to follow. I have scrutinized the spaces surrounding the video performance, including other hyperlinks. Like many thorough cultural critics, I hunted down leads and followed sources that took me beyond the video. For example, I found several AB and YZ television interviews posted by the duo's fans on YouTube that

further explain “Hamlet St’s” genealogy. I discovered that zman and several others in “Crank that Shakespeare” have myspace accounts, several of which are available for public viewing (zman’s is private). Through these sources I have been able to figure out the participants’ ages, hometown, and school. However, my more pressing questions about the context of the video are left unanswered. In other words, I know how to read and interpret the videos and their responses as texts—historical and social artifacts that both reflect and create their cultural environment—but these readings seem incomplete with the knowledge that the authors are not dead, literally or figuratively, and through the medium of YouTube, very likely contactable.

After all the very website zman and AB/YZ employ, YouTube, encourages interactivity. Viewers are invited to post comments and related videos, and YouTube categorizes and links certain postings precisely to enable interactivity. Likewise, BardBox’s poaching of both performance videos encourages interactivity (even though BardBox includes neither the textual nor visual responses or comments originally posted on YouTube: another methodological decision that has significant ethical dimensions). As Kathleen LeBesco notes,

> Historically, ethnographic researchers have been drawn to discourse communities in order to gain a better understanding of the meanings that community members, generate through conversation . . . critical ethnographers find themselves especially interested in the world of online discourse communities, where they have interpretive access to participants and conversations that might be otherwise restricted in the real world. (63)

Yet we Shakespeareans, as humanities scholars, hesitate to engage because we are not trained to do so. I have neither posted comments or questions on YouTube or BardBox, nor have I "befriended" zman through myspace. But should I? Could I? What is the protocol for conducting participatory work in the humanities?

Historically, studies affirm that participatory cultures found on the Internet are more democratic and less "top-down" than traditional media models. In addition, these studies reveal that a "collective intelligence" is created in participatory cultures. For instance, Henry Jenkins argues that a participatory culture has:

> Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). (2006b, 3).

Furthermore, James Gee argues that participation in digital practices, what he labels digital literacies, provides students (and others) the opportunity for "gaining *situated* rather than merely verbal (or literal) meanings for concepts, processes and functions" (quoted in Lankshear and Knobel 13). Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel argue that digital literacy practices, such as those manifested in "Crank that Shakespeare" and, to a lesser extent, the performance and production of "Hamlet St,"

> Mark the difference between merely being able to parrot back content (which may be good enough for passing school tests, but not for performing with distinction in real world tasks) and attaining sound theoretical understandings. (Lankshear and Knobel 13)

In other words, the assignment that zman and his classmates received may have encouraged a type of collective experience that could enable attaining "sound theoretical understandings." The assignment, after all, seems to bridge traditional and new pedagogical practices, like close reading, analysis, translation, and transference. For Shakespeare scholars to proceed as if Internet materials are merely texts for analysis is to deny the power of a participatory culture in which there is a "connection" to the producers and users, a sense of responsibility to their opinions about their creations, and a belief that intelligence is dynamic and collective. While some may be content with this denial, I suspect many others will be deeply uncomfortable with it.

As contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare, "Crank that Shakespeare" and "Hamlet St" illustrate the myriad ways this material continues and ruptures our understanding of Shakespeare performance-based methodologies. These videos exemplify the ways:

> This is a period of ferment and explosion. It is defined by breaks from the past, a focus on previously silenced voices, a turn to performance texts, and a concern with moral discourse, with critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation, freedom, and community. (Denzin 1)

Despite the fact that the videos can be read, interpreted, and analyzed in old and familiar literary discourses, their interactive medium constantly signals ruptures with the past: their interactive medium constantly reminds us that the producers, authors, and creators are not only alive, but also responsive to posted comments and direct communication.

Although it is clear that conducting participatory research changes the ethical concerns and methodological practices for Shakespeare scholars using Internet sources, it should also be clear that not interacting with the producers, authors, and creators of online material also impacts ethical concerns and methodological practices. While the concerns and practices may not be exactly the same, neither decision is a neutral stance: neither methodological practice is without complication. To engage with the producers of "Crank that Shakespeare" and/or "Hamlet St" would necessitate new methodologies, and not engaging with the producers also challenges and alters old methodologies. For those of us in Shakespeare culture studies who use (or are eager to use) YouTube and other potentially interactive texts as research materials, the course is not easy or clear, but we must be willing engage in such debates explicitly.

What must also be obvious from these few examples is that participatory research can be daunting for even the most willing Shakespeare scholar. The terms—algorithm, human studies research, IRB—let alone the processes themselves, are certainly enough to turn away the reluctant Shakespeare scholar from participatory research. It is clear that treating materials on the Internet as texts is easier than engaging the processes that allow one to interact with the producers, users, and consumers of these materials. After all, we know how to treat texts ethically. What this chapter seeks to convey, however, is that ethical lapses occur even when Shakespeare and other literary scholars do not engage in

participatory research. While Internet sources, like “Crank that Shakespeare” and “Hamlet St,” are clearly works suitable for Shakespeare-based research, they are also dynamic sources that are difficult to separate from their producers and creators precisely because of the interactive medium employed. While Shakespeare scholars may choose not to engage with these producers and creators, such a decision does not nullify the methodological and ethical complexities outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS AND PUBLICATION PROTOCOLS:

"TO ID OR NOT TO ID, THAT IS THE QUESTION"

> *Just as technology allows reporters to record sources without their knowledge, browser technology enables bloggers to use the text, images, audio files, and video available on many web sites without permission.*
>
> Martin Kuhn[51]

> *Concerns over consent, privacy, and anonymity do not disappear simply because subjects participate in online social networks; rather, they become even more important.*
>
> Michael Zimmer[52]

> *What may seem ephemeral or innocuous at one point in time might shift rapidly into something that causes real or perceived harm.*
>
> Annette Markham[53]

As the preceding chapter demonstrates, it is important to recognize that YouTube is socially and virtually occupied by human users. The word occupy has recently generated wonderful, evocative associations tied to power and empowerment. Its synonyms include to invade and colonize; to take possession of; to take control of; and to entertain. The key question here is whether or not YouTube's users' realize that their voices, images, gestures, and avatars could occupy digital space (in addition to YouTube) indefinitely. These markers of their identity could be shared in unanticipated ways and in unforeseeable media forms. For YouTube users who have aspirations to be employed in the entertainment industry or hope to benefit financially from YouTube views, their

---

[51] "Interactivity and Prioritizing the Human: A Code of Blogging Ethics." p. 23.

[52] "'But the data is already public': on the ethics of research in Facebook." p. 324.

[53] "Fabrication as Ethical Practice." p. 337.

public exposure may be a consumer-ation "devoutly to be wished." But others, like the teens in boyd and Markwick's study, occupy social media settings "not to *be* public, but choose to be *in* a public" (26). Finally some YouTube users seem (by their behavior) not to care about or understand the ease in which their identity can *be* occupied and colonized.

Straightforward textual analyses of the videos can be troubling as current research and publication methods frequently implicate the humans entailed in the video and/or its interface. Without communicating with YouTube users it is difficult for researchers to know for sure how users perceive these risks. This chapter argues that we can learn much about revising our methods to suit online studies that contain human subjects by looking at other discipline's procedures and protocols. Using these methods could help Shakespeareans craft their own ethical approaches to study of online video. YouTube Shakespeare users could have much to tell us about the context of the videos' creation: the nexus of the user-creator, his/her engagement with Shakespeare, the technologies with which they interact, and the cultural conditions in which the video was produced could prove illuminating in understanding not only why, but under what cultural conditions, Shakespeare continues to generate popular culture artifacts and fill classrooms. The videos alone, nor the audience responses to the works, can provide these rich, varied, and sometimes unexpected details of information.

Chapter three chronicles my attempt to navigate the ethical methods we Shakespeareans need to consider when we perform research and publish findings on online materials that include human subjects. What I suggest is that we need to start exploring practices typically not associated with literary studies: virtual ethnography,

online interviews, and engaging with institutional review boards. As I demonstrate in the previous chapter, humans in online contexts complicate deciding what is public and private, and prompt questions on how to make sense of the gray areas that fall between those binary lines. There is, however, one invariable truth about online video research—there is no single conformed method that suits all contexts. Each YouTube video presents its own set of ethical issues; each must be addressed distinctly throughout the planning, research, publication, and dissemination stages (Markham and Buchanan 5).

Therefore, chapter three is motivated by a central quest rather than a central argument: to develop and put into place an ethical research approach and publication protocol that protects the human users in my YouTube Shakespeares study. I say "my" because as I stress above, each study presents its own set of circumstances and requires its own protocol. Nevertheless, there are conventions and procedures used in other disciplines that can be of great assistance in developing rules of research and publication conduct. Rather than develop an uninformed approach, which I suggest in chapter two is fraught with inconsistencies, I suggest using flowcharts, rubrics, and examples from other disciplines to form customized, yet regulated protocols. My approach stems from several salient guidelines (AoIR, OHRP) and a small number of online ethnography criticisms that serve as examples. I examine these to discover if and how they complement and reconcile with procedures and expectations in my home field. Chapter three, therefore, illustrates my work as a research and publication methods *bricoleur*.

In this chapter I chronicle my experience as a virtual ethnographer and literary researcher of YouTube Shakespeares. My research of YouTube Shakespeares employs textual and visual analysis. It investigates *how* people use YouTube as space for

Shakespeare performance. Each case study in this dissertation requires that I assemble my methodologies from the ground up, which means that every video prompted the question: to what degree of veracity should I identify the user in my findings? To make such decisions I turn to preexisting published case studies and theories in fields outside of literary studies, examining them for their employment of virtual and face-to-face research methodologies. I explore institutional guidelines and consider the possibilities of user harm entailed in my research process and its outcomes.

This is a chapter about methodology, and one that depends heavily on my own reflection and deliberation. Organized in four parts, the beginning half of this chapter discusses virtual ethnographic and ethical online research methodologies employed by communication scholars and anthropologists. The second half walks through my own methods and experiences, and documents my encounters with my study participants. Part one begins anecdotally with an account of a behind-the-scenes event surrounding *Shakespeare Quarterly's* open review experiment for its Fall 2010 print issue. This narrative extends on chapter two's illustration on the viral nature of YouTube Shakespeare videos. It demonstrates how unanticipated viral dissemination and unintended hyperlinking can undermine published authorial intentions and even the most carefully calculated obfuscation of research subject identity. In part two I overview several virtual ethnographic studies to glean from them their authors' methods in researching Internet materials that contain human users. This review includes the most recent publication by Internet ethicist Annette Markham and her revisionist recommendations for protecting the privacy of research subjects. Part three of this chapter stages my experiences in developing my methodology and online research

strategy, in other words, my foray into virtual ethnography. This includes the criteria I use to select particular YouTube Shakespeares to study for this work and the procedures of seeking Institutional Review Board approval from my university's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. Finally, in part four, I provide excerpts from interviews with the YouTube Shakespeare channel hosts who participated in my research.

This chapter is driven by two goals. First is to explore the broader research potential YouTube and other online tools engender for literary scholars. While textual and visual analysis of YouTube Shakespeares' videos provides useful and telling clues to some of the ways people engage with the plays, there is more investigative work that can be done. We are only at the very beginning of learning, through our use of social media as an investigative tool, how people outside of academic study of Shakespeare occupy, and are occupied with, Shakespeare in media. YouTube offers Shakespeareans a rich opportunity to interact with the people who seem to have wide range of practical experience (no matter the quality of their outcomes) with Shakespeare in mediated performances. In this, I suggest that the opportunity to speak to YouTube users is akin to a post-theatrical performance talkback session in the sense that such conversations provide scholars and researchers with context for the performance's genesis. I argue that interacting with users provides Shakespeareans with a new avenue to understand how Shakespeare circulates in popular contexts. Specifically, YouTube allows us learn about a wide variety of information related to people's contacts with Shakespeare, the video's creation, its purpose, how the creator feels about the responses s/he has generated, and other YouTube Shakespeare viewing experiences. Interacting with YouTube users allows us to uncover rich details that the videos or the interface alone cannot tell us. Finally, and

perhaps most importantly, by interacting with the people who create the work, we give YouTube Shakespeares' users a voice in our work. Encouraged by the possibility of interacting with the real people behind YouTube's Shakespeare creations, I enter the brave new world of YouTube Shakespeare virtual ethnography and human subject research.

This chapter's second purpose is to interrogate publication protocols and the ensuing issues tied with the use and flow of YouTube users personal (albeit often YouTube-published) information. Social media and Web 2.0 participatory culture is enables people's self-publication. Nevertheless, many pick and choose where and with whom they wish to share their public selves. Just because users engage in practice on a particular online forum does not give researchers *carte blanche* to transfer people's personal information into their scholarly publications. As a literary researcher of online Shakespeares, I have had to grapple with the methodological and practical challenges entailed in online ethnography and publication (via this dissertation) of my findings. Learning online research requirements from my institution, designing online interview questions, selecting participants, setting up interview instruments, applying for permission (IRB-Institutional review board), and deciding how to identify participants in my work are some of the issues at hand.

As a scholar trained in Shakespeare literary and performance studies my responsibility is to scrutinize the Shakespeare cultural materials I select, carefully isolating details, highlighting connections with the dramatist's works, analyzing the complexities cultural artifacts like YouTube Shakespeares' engender, and providing a trail of evidence for my peers. Because all YouTube Shakespeares at some point involve

human users, my responsibility includes the protection (from harm) of the human users whose accidental (mis)fortune it is to appear in my work.[54] "To ID or not to ID?" that is question. Even though it is likely that my opus will not make the leap from the obscure depths of my library's archives to mainstream publication, from the outset I want to do what was morally sound for the people who were represented via my analysis of their YouTube creations and responses.

The most important consideration is on how the study subjects are identified in the published findings. Some decisions are clear: if the context and content of online activity *may possibly* harm the human user, all traces of his or her identity must be expunged from the publication. Other situations are far less clear, such as when the human user consents—desires—to have his/her information published in the researcher's findings, and yet the researcher perceives the risk of future harm. In this chapter, I use a case by case decision making that is underpinned by recommendations and guidelines I discuss in chapter two and from the examples I include below. In every case this approach takes as priority an avoidance of harm, a consideration of subjects' vulnerability, and an overarching respect for humans implicated in both in the research and the publication of my findings. While this chapter is about research methodologies as well as publication protocols, I begin with an overview of three published criticisms that incorporated human subjects in virtual environments as examples to consider in developing one's own methods.

[54] According to AoIR2012, "harm is defined contextually…through the application of practical judgment attentive to the specific context" (4)

A day in the viral life of *Shakespeare Quarterly 61.3*

Chapter two illustrated the ethical complexities of performing human subject research and the ways that online materials produced by YouTube users are subject to viral distribution. In this section I illustrate a similar experience of online dissemination, that of a scholarly publication intended as part of an online open review experiment for a discrete body of readers. While the viral scattering of digital materials is not surprising in these days of open resource sharing, a blatant disregard of—in fact, an active counterpoint to—the author's explicit intentions for her work serve as an eye-opening experience of the ways publications, even those that seem somewhat obscure and of interest to a niche audience of readers, are subject to redistribution, recontextualization, and broadcast. While such exposure can be positive, I contend that the potential for greater dissemination and broader audiences demands a re-attention to how and for whom the content within our scholarly work is presented. I begin my overview of three publications, all of which include case studies that involve human subjects. Each publication employed slightly different publication protocols. All three essays are open sourced. Two pertain to YouTube research, and one to minors' use of public, online spaces. The first is most salient to this dissertation as it chronicles the dissemination of an online publication of YouTube Shakespeares' study.

In the spring of 2010, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (*SQ*) guest editor Katharine Rowe helmed a digital, online peer-review experiment through *MediaCommons* in preparation for a special issue of the journal publication themed "Shakespeare and New Media" that

at the time was due to be published as print in Fall 2010.[55] A process more common to science and new media studies, open review encourages a broader, more transparent practice of peer reviewing an author's work than the publication's more traditional, blind methods. *SQ's* "'partially open'" experimental peer review was the first of its kind for the premier Shakespeare periodical, and was pronounced a rare occurrence for any "traditional humanities journal" (Rowe 2010, v-vi). Because it was facilitated through *MediaCommons*, a broader public arena of Internet users had access to the essays, which are normally limited to review by peers within the field of Shakespeare studies. Commenting was open to all registered reviewers who "self-identified" (vi).[56] The stakes for the essays' authors included a slot in the Fall 2010 publication of the special issue (print edition) of *SQ*.[57] The risk was that it placed authors in the vulnerable position of putting their work "out there," in manuscript form, for open criticism. Rowe explains the process of selection for the experiment and the print publication, stating that after a special initial screening of the submissions,

---

[55] In their "about" section, *MediaCommons* offers this abstract: "MediaCommons is a community network for scholars, students, and practitioners in media studies, promoting exploration of new forms of publishing within the field. MediaCommons was founded with the support of the Institute for the Future of the Book, and with assistance from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Through this network, we hope to refocus scholarship in the field on the communication and discussion of new ideas in the field. MediaCommons is at its root community-driven, responding flexibly to the needs and desires of its users. It supports the production of and access to a wide range of intellectual writing and media production" (*MediaCommons* about).

[56] According to *MediaCommons*, "registered users are able to blog freely within the site, to develop sophisticated user profiles including a portfolio that provides links to their scholarly work, and to discuss published project with their colleagues" (*MediaCommons* about).

[57] Participants of the experiment came from "a self-selected community of Shakespeareans and others with expertise in media history [who] leaned of the experiment via a call for papers, direct invitation, listserv announcements or word of mouth" (Rowe 2010, vi). Users, including me, registered for access if they chose to post comments—in other words, become interactive with the text, author, and medium of distribution.

> Authors whose essays passed…were offered a choice of the traditional blind review process or open vetting online, followed by a period of revision […] Whether or not an author chose the open review, the final decision to accept or reject an essay rested with the editor, as it normally does at *SQ*. (v)

The open review experiment ran from March to May 2010, featured four essays, and appears to have been successful in terms of site use and productivity. Rowe states, "author revisions in response to [responder] comments were meticulous and, in two cases, very substantial" (vi). I visited the site frequently during its two-month duration and noted that the exchanges between reviewers and authors were respectful and illuminating.

One of *SQ's* participating essays was Ayanna Thompson's "Race in Performance-Based Shakespeare Pedagogy: A Methodology for Researching and Teaching YouTube Videos." A study of youth culture and the performance of race in YouTube Shakespeares, Thompson's argument centers around a close reading of three YouTube videos created by "Asian American students [who] conceptualize, contest, and perform American "blackness" of *Othello* [which] is unmoored historically, linguistically, and narratively" (2010a , 21).[58] Mindful that the videos used in her study featured U.S. high school students (who were likely minors) at the time of the videos' creation, and that the videos include sensitive material with regards to race, sexuality, and gender, Thompson chose intentionally not to reveal information that linked her article with the online

[58] Thompson also examines YouTube *Titus* in this essay.

performances. In her essay, Thompson states, "aside from saying that the videos and commentaries were posted to YouTube, I do not cite specific URLs or usernames" (2010a, 22). She chooses instead to only quote snippets from the videos and several users' comments as evidence to support her assertions. She intentionally goes against literary citation protocol for the sake of protecting the identities of the students in the YouTube videos and their responders.

As a consequence of participating in *SQ's* experiment, Thompson's article not only earned a spot in the journal's Fall 2010 publication, her essay attracted the attention of several websites unrelated to the experiment or *Shakespeare Quarterly*. One blog in particular, *BF,* captured the essay, temporarily (re)published it on its interface, and provided a hyper-link to the *MediaCommons* publication.[59] While *BF's* attention was flattering—after all, the site is well managed and touts itself as a literary-intellect online magazine—the blog's editor either did not completely read the article or misconstrued Thompson's intentions. *BF* hunted down and published hyperlinks on his webpage for two of the three YouTube videos that Thompson purposely shrouds and makes anonymous in her work. Furthermore, he sent Thompson an email asking her to forward the link for one of the three videos that he could not locate on YouTube.[60] Thompson, Rowe, and *MediaCommons*' co-founder and co-editor Kathleen Fitzpatrick were all dismayed that *BF* linked the article to the very sources Thompson was careful to protect.

---

[59] I purposely choose not to name the blog site. At that time the blog was edited and operated by a single individual who is also an academic. It currently appears to be run by the same academic and a small staff of other individuals.

[60] Ayanna Thompson is the chair of my dissertation committee. At the time of these events she was aware that I was working on chapter two of this dissertation. She informed me of this event as it unfolded, kept me "in the loop," and granted permission for me to include these events in my dissertation.

Of course, *BF* did nothing legally wrong. As Martin Kuhn's epigram above indicates, Internet technology, protocols, and affordances allow, even encourage, *BF* to link "the very best new writing online" through his website.[61] Thompson's article was, and still is, housed under *MediaCommons*, which is registered through Creative Commons licensing. *BF* simply did a little additional research on YouTube using information he skimmed off of Thompson's essay to create search criteria, found the YouTube videos he was sure matched Thompson's research, and shared them with his readers. Again, I emphasize that *BF* did nothing illegal; his oversight was in not recognizing the importance of the methods Thompson employed.

Thompson emailed *BF* requesting he take down the links, explaining her rationale for deliberately concealing the YouTube's urls. Rowe's response to *BF*, and other potential poachers, was to post a header on Thompson's *MediaCommons* essay that (in part) reads:

> We must note that the author deliberately concealed the URLs for the three student videos on ethical grounds . . . the editors request that anyone linking to this article respect this ethically-based decision and likewise refrain from linking to the videos here discussed. (2010a, 20)[62]

[61] This quote is extracted from *BF's* website.

[62] At this point in this narrative I want to make clear that Rowe's editor's notes were not just in response to *BF's* link. During the review process some of Thompson's commentators, some who are our Shakespeare peers, queried the author's choice not to embed the videos or include the urls. This is not a surprising line of questioning because the medium employed, *MediaCommons*, seems the perfect avenue to do just this. Although Thompson responded to each commentator, Rowe's response to *BF* also served as additional information to those who may have wondered about the missing urls/embedded video links. These queries also serve to demonstrate how Shakespeareans are (were) not conditioned to think of the humans in the videos, but see the videos as texts to be read.

At the time, *BF* kept the *MediaCommons* article link live, but took down the copy from his blog, and all traces of the YouTube video links. Three years later, in the process of writing this chapter, I (re)searched through *BF's* archives. Thompson's *MediaCommons* essay is still linked through *BF's* blog. There are no YouTube links. However, the link to Thompson's *MediaCommons* article runs along side a small screenshot of one of the YouTube videos mentioned in Thompson's article. It is an image captured in 2010 when Thompson's link to *MediaCommons* was first created on *BF*.[63]

This narrative demonstrates that a little close reading and some online research experience can locate purposely-expunged information about online resources like those used in Thompson's YouTube Shakespeares research. (Likewise, I am well aware that an astute online researcher could locate the blog I strive to veil here.) Internet browsers and rapid search engines make retracing research and sources not at all difficult, and typically such searches yield—with a little sifting—fairly accurate results. This is the condition under which we researchers all work, even if and when our work is confined to traditional non-digital, non-Internet study subjects. What is important to take away from this anecdote is that the case studies' video titles, the YouTube user names, and the urls are not listed in the Thompson's publication. A future archival search would not connect Thompson's work to the YouTube Shakespeares, unless, of course, someone in addition to *BF*, someone unknown to Thompson or Rowe, has also linked—on an independent online publication—the YouTube videos with Thompson's essay. What I am trying to

[63] The YouTube interface captured by the screenshot is the style employed by YouTube in the spring of 2010. On *BF's* blog the image is rather small (although larger than a thumbnail) and somewhat unclear. Nevertheless, I was able to expand it, read the title of the YouTube page, and then locate the video on YouTube, where it is still available. (I was also able to locate the video in 2010). Search performed 12 Mar. 2013. I do not cite the blog *BF* nor the video in this dissertation.

emphasize here is that Thompson, Rowe, and *MediaCommons'* editor Kathleen Fitzpatrick came to know about this breach of ethics because *BF* contacted Thompson. If he had never sent an email requesting the title of the third YouTube Shakespeare, it is very unlikely that Thompson and her cohort would know that *BF* hyperlinked Thompson's essay on his blog and connected it to the YouTube Shakespeares' users she strives in her essay to protect.

The question this narrative generates then, is not how do we protect YouTube Shakespeare users, but what are the limits of our protective reach? Thompson goes against our profession's literary protocol to *not* cite her sources, and follows Virginia Kuhn's recommendations not to risk revealing the subjects' identities.[64] She chooses to protect them by a method that in the past would have been most effective: obfuscating their identities and the names of the video. Historically, this process of omitting the identity of sources worked well in social sciences and journalism. But the long tail effect of Internet distribution enables greater access to niche products, singular interests, and private individuals. An economic metaphor for marketing and sales distribution, the long tail signals online structures of consumer access to obscure products; this includes information. The long tail of the Internet provide a means to upload and retrieve specialized information that appeals to niche audiences, like Shakespeare scholars or, even more specialized, the scholars of race in the early modern period.[65] My point is that

[64] See Virginia Kuhn's interview on Patricia Lange's YouTube channel anthrovlog.

[65] Chris Anderson applied the long tail metaphor to online market models in 2004. Widely used in Internet studies to explain how information is diffused, long tail theory argues "culture and economy is increasingly shifting away from a focus on a relatively small number of 'hits' (mainstream products and markets) at the head of the demand curve and toward a huge number of niches in the tail" (Anderson About). See also the footnote below.

publishing Thompsons' essay in an online forum (especially one bearing a Creative Commons license) submerses it in the long tail economy of the Internet.[66] Although this accessibility is certainly a boon to a (niche) community of readers, the flip side is that it can and will appear in search results that uses tags closely related to the content of Thompson's work.[67] Its digital-ness makes it shareable; it also makes it copy-able. The essay in turn could move through the web. As a digital product it is open for remix—where bits and pieces could be added and subtracted—and hyperlinking. It could move from site to site without its author or editors' knowledge. It could occupy unintended places. In this movement, the original work could be augmented, changed, and sometimes taken out of context (as *BF* does when he links Thompson's essay to his blog).

The long tail distribution of scholarly works presents a new set of implications for researchers. Annette Markham notes,

> In decades prior to the Internet, [scholars] often claimed that their research would be published in obscure journals, unlikely to catch the attention of the participants, general public, or news media. The advent of the Internet, the rise of citizen journalism, and the possibility of global distribution of research findings have made this defense no longer viable. (2012, 336)

---

[66] My metaphoric use of the long tail, a theory derived from economics, suggests that the limitations of material space limited consumers' purchasing choices to the greatest common denominator; new technologies, like Amazon, effectively service niche markets. The effect of this is that more people actually get exposed to, and develop interests in, cultures that were formerly inaccessible or cost prohibitive. It also means that finding facts about obscure individuals is also very possible. Journals like *Renaissance Quarterly* online demonstrate how it has become economically viable, in fact desirable, to distribute intellectual works via digital means.

[67] My Google search: Shakespeare, race, and YouTube (no apostrophes) yielded first page results for Thompson's *MediaCommons* essay. 20 Mar. 2013.

Markham highlights one of the most important changes for all researchers, and this is that the skills we have as researchers are no longer in themselves limited to us as researchers. The wide body of Internet users can locate information and resources at will. Even when they are omitted from our work, some of our online research resources can or may be discovered by our readers.

Ultimately (and perhaps, ironically), in this *SQ* case, the people who are most protected are Thompson, Rowe, and Fitzpatrick. By excluding the students' names and the YouTube Shakespeare video titles, Thompson (and by association Rowe and Fitzpatrick) cannot be reproached for exposing these students to any possible future harm or face backlash from the students themselves should they "resent their use as a topic of research" (Elm 84). But the goals behind omitting subjects' identities include more than protection for the researcher and her institution, they include protection for their study subjects.

I want to be very clear that I retell this narrative not as a cautionary tale against online publications experiments. Personally and professionally, I think online experiments and publications like those on *MediaCommons* foretell a more open, democratic future for academic publishing and should be embraced. My description of the ways Thompson's essay moves through the long tail of information dissemination and retrieval serves two purposes: first, the most obvious, that of viral dissemination and therefore a inevitable diminishment of control over the author's work. Second, to illustrate analogously the ways a research subject's published personal information might move "out" of the publication. I also want to be clear that I recount this event not in criticism of Thompson's efforts, but to illustrate the complexity of issues in protecting

study subjects used in qualitative research of online sources. Thompson's conscientious work puts in place a mode of subject anonymity that in traditional literary research projects would have protected the study subjects. Furthermore, it seems like it should have been the most effective. But her efforts were subverted by the very system she attempted to negotiate.

This leads me wonder what other possibilities besides total anonymity might be employed in online qualitative research and publication scenarios that would minimize study participants' flow of personal information. Of course, I know how to follow the flowchart designed by the Office of Human Research Protections, and I understand the recommendations outlined in both the 2002 and 2012 versions of the Association of Internet Researcher's Ethical guidelines. And I certainly know how to omit information. Nevertheless, I think it is important to additionally survey how other researchers conduct and publish their online studies, examples where the practicalities of human subject research are put to the test. In the next few pages I survey two other published case studies and follow these with Markham's proposal for a shift in methodology to demonstrate how prominent scholars in other fields conduct their research and publish their findings. They serve as examples for the development of my own approach.

Context Specific Ethical Approaches to Online Research: A Review

Prolific developers, researchers, and publishers of studies on under-age minors, danah boyd and Alice Marwick demonstrate their approach in a paper presented at the Oxford Internet Institute in November of 2011.[68] The work, "Social Privacy in

[68] Other iterations of this paper are available through several public websites including the boyd's blog.

Networked Publics: Teens' Attitudes, Practices, and Strategies," explores the ways teens protect their privacy in public online spaces. As part of a four-year ethnographic study, the research for "Social Privacy" was conducted in both online and in face-to-face contexts. At the very beginning of "Social Privacy" boyd and Marwick footnote that, for the purposes of protecting the minors' identities, all participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms.[69] boyd and Marwick's process of pseudonym selection was as follows:

> Some [pseudonyms] were chosen by the participants themselves; others were chosen by the authors to reflect similar gender and ethnic roots as are embedded in the participants' given names. All identifying information in teens' quotes has been altered to maintain confidentiality (1).

The authors' research centers on minors' perceptions of privacy, a concept the researchers conclude is, for teens, more about "agency and the ability to control a social situation," than the information itself (2). It therefore seems fitting that the researchers allowed the participants to select their own pseudonyms as recognition and validation of the teens' desire to demonstrate control over their personal information. The pseudonyms range from generic: Abigal/Hunter/Alicia, to eclectic: Aarti/Mikala/Meixing. The names proved useful in the essay as they marked direct quotations with a specific, gendered speaker; therefore, they also served to build, throughout the analysis, a profile of that individual. On a practical level, it organized the transcribed content of the researchers' findings.

[69] boyd and Marwick state that they, "strategically worked to sample across gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, socio-economic background, political background, and school engagement level" (2).

My response to the use of pseudonyms in boyd and Marwick's work is that it is a good practical way to disguise subjects' identities in contexts that are unfamiliar to the researchers' audience (like me). However, in reading contexts where the audience has some familiarity with the study participants, choosing pseudonyms that "reflect gender and ethnic" roots might not fully disguise the participants. Small, seemingly innocuous inclusions in the findings, in particular subject-quoted speech acts, might also signal their identities. In such cases, another study participant (or a parent) may recognize the individual despite the use of pseudonym. In a way, this mirrors the ways a savvy reader and Internet researcher could trace an otherwise obfuscated YouTube video. One favorable strength of boyd and Marwick's use of self-pseudonym-making is their consideration of the study participant's desires in selecting their own alternative name. In this particular study it seems unlikely that the participants would want to be identified. (But this is not the case for all research: AB of "Hamlet St." is an example of someone who actively seeks publicity, nevertheless, I chose not to divulge his name.) Therefore in cases where pseudonyms cannot be decoded by the essay's readers, or traced to identities of those they are supposed to protect, they function satisfactorily.

The next case example is one of Patricia G. Lange's prolific works (theories) on YouTube as community. Known for her ethnographic research on YouTube, Lange also (at times) uses pseudonyms. In her 2009 essay, "Videos of Affinity on YouTube," Lange analyzes the ways people make use of YouTube to create feelings of connection to other people, "some of whom may already be a member of or wish to join a videomaker's

social network" (71).[70] In "Videos of Affinity," Lange highlights and analyzes the content of three videos. The first, a five-minute video "in which two college students wrestle each other in a dormitory," is bestowed (by Lange) the pseudonym, "Ninjas and Knights".[71] She does not include names of the two college-aged men in the video, but does provide the name (Brian1) of one of the people responsible for filming the play-fight and posting it onto YouTube. In the essay she interviews Brian1, reports his responses, but does not include a citation for him or the video. Lange also analyzes two more YouTube video examples. Unlike the anonymity she bestows on "Ninjas and Knights," these two additional YouTube videos each include three identifiers: the YouTube video names, the name of the YouTube channel hosts, and images of the users captured as screen shots.[72] Because each of the individuals in her/his video spends most of her/his time talking directly to the camera (as audience), the screenshots are nothing short of headshots. The vidders in each of these videos could be easily recognized elsewhere. The behavior of the people in each of their video *seems* innocuous, but as Markham's epigraph above suggests, some online sources that appear "innocuous at one point in time might shift rapidly into something that causes real or perceived harm" in the future (Markham 2012, 337). After watching one of the videos, I have to wonder how the vidder

[70] The essay is one of nine publications and presentations to emerge from her Catherine T. MacArthur funded, two-year larger study titled, "A Study of Video Sharing Practices on YouTube and Personal Video Blog."

[71] I spent some time tooling around with YouTube's search parameters to find this video with no success. Either Lange's pseudonym is effective or the video has since been removed.

[72] I found one quite easily, but no trace of the other. While I cannot be sure it has been removed, retagged, or renamed by the user, the fact that it is no longer available makes my point about long-term exposure through the auspices of print all the more compelling.

will feel about having her/his identification and images fixed in print publications indefinitely.

I am a little bewildered by Lange's two distinct methodological choices. She does not provide information about her research methodology in "Videos of Affinity" but she does fully explicate the methodology she used for the entire two-year project on the University of California, Berkeley, Digital Youth website where her work is archived via hyperlinks to the publications in which it appears.[73] On the Digital Youth website Lange describes her methodology (for the full body of work) as "an ethnographic, multi-method approach" including observation (online and face to face), interviewing (online and face to face), semiotic analysis of video, "discourse analysis of text about video," and participation whereby she created, uploaded and maintained her own personal YouTube channel (which I cite in chapter two) (2009). I can only presume she obtained informed consent for both the participants she identifies, as it seems to me that she would have otherwise also identified the students in "Ninjas and Warriors." Her mixed method of obscuring one video, but revealing all the public information the website has to offer for the other two, suggests a wide range of possible explanations. Perhaps "Ninjas and Warriors" users asked not to have their identity disclosed, or maybe it became impossible to contact them, or maybe they pulled out of the study mid-way. For the reader this essay presents methodological inconsistencies that are not clarified in the essay's content. However, one must presume, because of the larger research framework, that her work

[73] The Digital YouTube project is a multi-scholar multi-modal research project funded for three years (2005-2008). According to the website, the central project, "Kids' Informal Learning with Digital Media," was a jointly collaborated by University of Southern California and the University of California, Berkeley with a grant from the Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

falls within her institution's guidelines. Nevertheless, I also have to wonder how the participants now regard their exposure in Lange's publication.[74]

Fabrication as a methodology?

The third example of methodology I include here is not a case example, but a proposed theory of rather unorthodox research publication methods for Internet researchers who are concerned with ethics and privacy. Annette Markham's recent publication, "Fabrication as Ethical Practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet context," focuses on "innovative methods for protecting privacy" in the research of human subjects entailed in online contexts such as YouTube Shakespeares. Her goal is to provide a "much-needed framework" for qualitative researchers who seek to adequately protect study subjects' information (336). Concerned that traditional research methods and publications can no longer disguise online participants' details, Markham offers an alternative to current methods that she calls "fabrication." While she recognizes how the word "fabrication" spurs resistance as it is equated with "research misconduct," she explains that she chooses the term,

> Deliberately to interrogate and destabilize the mistaken and often unspoken assumption that invention necessarily represents a lack of integrity and likewise, that 'good' research includes no trace of fabrication. Using the term also helps to highlight the constructive aspects

[74] Of course I would like to ask the user how s/he now feels about Lange's publication five years after her/his inclusion, but this desire drudges up another ethical dilemma—stalking another researcher's work and interrogating her subjects. I could, of course, contact Lange, but while I think this information is relevant to the discussion in this chapter, I reserved this line of research for a future work.

> associated with interpretation, a crucial element and strength of qualitative inquiry. (2012, 336)

In her essay, Markham outlines two methods (and their subgenres) of fabrication. The first, is creating composite accounts, the second is the use of fictional narratives that convey data or findings collectively.[75] Responses to Markham's suggestions for fabrication, a term (as Markham acknowledges) fraught with notions of "lying," are still forthcoming, just as evidence of use of the methodology in practice has still not emerged. Fabrication is antithetical to literary research and publication protocols, where scholars' ethical responsibility is to accurately cite and make public their resources, but then again literary citation protocols have seldom put individuals at risk.

My initial response to Markham's "fabrication" was outright dismissal. In cases where human subjects are implicated in our work, anonymity through the omission of identifiers has a better chance of acceptance in the arena of literary scholarship than fabrication. But upon reconsideration, I became aware that the example of boyd and Marwick's use of pseudonyms seem to function in ways that are similar to Markham's "composite accounts." There are occurrences in boyd's and Marwick's essay when the researchers collapse, and therefore form a composite, of their findings. I was also prompted to reevaluate the virtues and instances of fabrication already present in Shakespeare studies publications, specifically when Shakespeareans critique live performances. Their published findings are based on perhaps one or two viewings of the live performance. A four-week run of *Macbeth* at the Globe, for example, is collapsed

[75] For additional details and examples see Markam's, "Fabrication as Ethical Practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet context" pgs 342-347.

into a single review, which is based on a small portion of the theatre run. In a sense the review of the *entire run* of *Macbeth* is inherently fabricated in a critique based on fewer than a handful of performances. Furthermore, because, as Robert Shaughnessy states,

> Writing about performance…is an activity that takes place after the event, and in this sense reflection, analysis, and theorization are conditional … performances change from night to night, sometimes incrementally, sometimes drastically; theatrical witnessing is notoriously suspect" (18).

Theatre review is constructed from memory; it is a narrative of recollection. Recollection and re-narration, as Markham suggests, is a practice of fabrication. Therefore, my initial refusal of fabrication was also tempered by Markham's matter of fact approach to the ways researchers filter results: "[our] research reports are partial accounts and snapshot versions of truth—our best effort to encapsulate for particular audiences the studied experience of everyday life" (341). Of course Markham's observation is more true for larger qualitative survey studies, whereas the work of literary studies very rarely makes use of big data. Nevertheless, if we Shakespeareans wish to advance our interests in Internet studies, a modified or tailored form of fabrication might necessarily be part of our future protocols.

At this I return to my opening chapter's call for theoretical remix—we Shakespeare scholars cannot approach Internet sources using only literary research methods and protocols. Anonymity, pseudonyms, and fabrication are all methods that Shakespeare scholars should add to their repertoire of Internet study approaches. These tools that may someday be called upon, especially in future studies of online materials that implicate the use and flow of human users' information. The above three case

examples demonstrate is that there is no singular methodology for online virtual ethnography. Markham argues that fabrication could ameliorate issues of use and flow of private information. The processes used by boyd and Marwick work in community setting where identifying individuals is arduous and unlikely. Kuhn's method seems to fall into two processes—obscure the identities of humans unless they (presumably) explicitly make clear they wish to be identified. Although her work does not identify the individuals "real" names, their images make them identifiable. The question remains: what methods should I employ in my study of YouTube Shakespeares?

The Shakespearean as Ethnographer and Participant Observer

Most influential to my thinking about methodology is an open accessibility to YouTube Shakespeares' user-generators. To take advantage of the affordances on YouTube, which in turn encourages contact with its users, I take on two roles: the lurker and the participant-observer. Both are virtual ethnographic processes, and both present their own complexities for literary scholars. Virtual ethnography allows the Shakespearean to inquire about context in online performance. In many ways, virtual ethnographers ask the same sort of questions scholars who study Shakespeare performance ask. Christine Hine, for instance, advocates beginning her research on online communities with questions such as, "Whom do [users] presume their audience to be?" and, "How are identities performed and experienced, and how is authenticity judged?" (8). Furthermore, a virtual ethnographic approach, Hine argues, reveals,

> Beliefs about the Internet may have important consequences for the ways in which we related to the technology and one another through it. Ethnography can therefore be used to develop an enriched sense of the

> meaning of the technology and the culture which enable it and are enabled by it. (8)

I suggest that virtual ethnographic procedures therefore align well with some practices Shakespeare performance scholars have employed in their research. The pointed difference resides in the technology of the Internet. It presents researchers with a means through which the study of the performance of people's behavior, whether the researcher is a Shakespeare performance scholar or an anthropologist, adds insight to cultural knowledge. Gaining insight occurs through two predominant research practices: direct inquiry (dialog) or lurking (silent observation).

Historically, "lurker" or "lurking" have been regarded as a derogatory term that characterizes users who consume, but do not contribute, to an online forum.[76] However, as Edelmann points out in her study of lurkers, "there are different types of users in the online environment, and assumptions made about one group of users should not be generalized onto other groups" (7). Recent studies have countered disparaging notions of the lurker, arguing that lurking is a form of positive engagement with the online community, and suggests that the figure of the lurker is better understood as: "a person who engages [actively] in some communities by contributing [but] also likely to engage in other communities by lurking" (Muller 2).[77] In my study I learn by lurking, taking notes about users' activities, analyzing what I see, and then redistributing my findings to

[76] Common characterizations of lurkers include "communicationally incompetent," abusive in their non-reciprocal, non-contribution use of freely available information, and "free riders" (Nonnecke and Preece 2).

[77] I am evidence of Edelmann's observations: I actively watch YouTubes although I do not comment; I actively participate on Facebook—frequently (almost daily) posting and sharing information.

my readers. This positive concept of lurking (where I align myself) comes from Edelmann:

> Lurking is not only not pejorative, it can actually be a positive and helpful behavior, to see whether participants [sic] concerns are relevant to this community, to receive help and support without having to disclose themselves…lurking can be seen as acceptable or beneficial…as it provides a way for potential new users to get a feeling for how the group operates and what kind of people participate in it. (Edelmann 5)

In other words, lurking is not an inactive/passive consumption, but an act of non-visible activity. As Edelmann notes, "there are different ways of lurking as well as different lurking strategies" (8). Lurking can and does enable the researcher to inform others in other venues. In this research study, I am a lurker who is also an enthusiastic YouTube Shakespeare scholar, one who functions as a participant observer. My task is to observe the behavior of the online (Discourse) communities and report it to my readers, another (Discourse) community. My lurking turns into a form of production of knowledge that contributes to a community that is apart from, but engaged by, the online communities of YouTube Shakespeares.

While the role of participant observer is complicated, often contested, and prone to criticism, skepticism, and questions of definition, I adopt (remix) the theory of real-time, non-virtual participant observation to define my position as virtual participant observer on YouTube from the work of cultural anthropologists Kathleen M. Dewalt, Billie Dewalt, and Coral Wayland who explain:

> Participant observation is a way to collect data in a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic setting by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied. (Dewalt 260-261)

Dewalt, Dewalt, and Wayland assert that "irrespective of the degree in involvement or participation," participant observation enhances the quality of "the data obtained during fieldwork" and the interpretation of that data (264). Participant observation's "advantage" is, then, that it is an ethnographic methodology that works both as "a data collection and an analytic tool"; a tool I believe works particularly well in the observable virtual world of YouTube Shakespeare performance (264).

In his own YouTube ethnographic study, *Watching YouTube: Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People*, social scientist and professor Michael Strangelove admits to his personal interest in both watching others' videos and posting his own, but he makes no claims about his other forms of participation with the YouTube videos he analyzes. However, he firmly views his YouTube study as "field research" as he explains, "an ethnographer's text . . . gain[s] its authority from the writer's personal experience" (Strangelove 9). I highlight Strangelove's ethnographic viewpoint to further draw attention to Dewalt's "degrees of involvement." Strangelove does not enter conversations with his study subjects, while I do not produce videos; yet our works are, in their own varying degrees, academically driven, participant observer ethnographies. Like Strangelove, I recognize "there are a multitude of online communities and experiences to be had within YouTube [and that] no one text can authoritatively represent the people, communities, and culture of the 'Tube in their entirety" (9). Lurker and participant

observer practices are two methods of study that are not typically articulated in Shakespeare studies, but in many ways executed in performance studies. We lurk at performances when we make observations of the performance (which we are supposed to do) and at the audience responses to the acts upon the stage (which we cannot help *but* to do).

In summary, I approach YouTube Shakespeares as a virtual media ethnographer, a participant observer immersed in a virtual performance medium that engages in YouTube Shakespeare remediations. I participate in YouTube Shakespeare communities as a lurker, and to those whom I interview, an openly revealed Shakespeare scholar and researcher. While I argue that YouTube offers Shakespeareans a fresh opportunity to research the ways the plays are perpetuated in contemporary media cultures, I also acknowledge that obstacles entailed in interactive, participatory studies exist. These include, but are not limited to, the procedures most Shakespeare scholars have been immune to: recruiting study subjects, Institutional Review Board approval, and adjudicating user-generator/scholar risk. Although these additional responsibilities might be viewed as hampering the spontaneity that the website engenders, any study that implicates human users must include these steps.

My Methods

In November of 2006 I began curating YouTube Shakespeare videos on my YouTube channel, organizing my finds into playlists as a way to keep track of what I

then perceived as the exponential growth in Shakespeare-specific original videos.[78] All but one playlist—titled "Dissertation"—are public; my "Dissertation" playlist is where I archive videos that I (then) hoped to include in my interview process and therefore private. My intention has always been to perform a qualitative study of videos (and their users) that are representative of YouTube Shakespeares' most ubiquitous subgenres: original performances, "audition" films, film clips, and mashups.[79] Other than their invocation of Shakespeare, the videos were selected based on five criteria: narrative structure, continuity, coherence, visual and audio clarity, and transformative potential. I categorize those that evince all five of these criteria as "successful" even if the video genre or contents do not align with my personal taste or have had very few viewers stop by.

Of course, these criteria demand more detailed explanation. In order to be selected for study each video had to demonstrate a full narrative arc (which is not the same thing as the full play or even a full scene from a play); it needed to function like a short story or a rhetorical argument, with a beginning and a conclusion. Each video also needed to stay on topic; while an explanation of this criterion is elusive especially because YouTube Shakespeares are remix, it might help to point to one example of a video that does *not* exhibit continuity. For example, the YouTube Shakespeare video that begins with a mashup of Beatrice and Benedick from Branagh's 1993 *Much Ado About*

[78] My categorization of original videos includes user-generated video performances, auditions, mashups (although they are remixes of mainstream products), animations, Lego performances, puppet shows, and more.

[79] Of course each of these subgenres has its own subgenre—the original performance can be high school students' class assignments, Shakespeare's language performed in original songs, or high-school plays for example.

Nothing, but then shifts focus to "star-power" shots of Keanu Reeves. This video's lack of continuity disqualifies for my study. The next, coherence, refers to the full connectivity of meaning in the narrative and/or the acts in the video. A high school classroom performance of *Twelfth Night* that marries references to *She's the Man* is fine as long as the in-class performance is still maintains the logic and consistency of the play's narrative. Coherence is similar to continuity, and that both indicate the vidder's ability to maintain a clear-cut focus on the narrative. Fourth, if the visual or audios were not clear, I dismissed the video. As a researcher, I have to watch each video multiple times over the course of months or even years. In my view, the work of the vidder includes content as well as technical clarity; if her work is visually or audibly fuzzy, I dismiss it. There are plenty of other Shakespeare videos on YouTube that fit the genre. And finally, transformative potential means that the video must evince a potential to transform the playtext, or viewers notions of Shakespeare, or provoke the reluctant Shakespearean's acquiescence towards YouTube Shakespeares. I ask myself: Does this video have what is takes to make those Shakespeareans who are sitting on the Tube or not to Tube fence pay attention to YouTube? Does the video encourage a second look by fans, me, or other Shakespeare scholars? Is it popular with its viewing audience? I look for videos that I think have the potential to make scholars and fans think again about its content, and its value as a Shakespeare artifact.[80] These are my five criteria for selecting

[80] Along with my criteria for inclusion comes my list for exclusion. For instance, I chose not to include videos that I believed would embarrass (or incriminate) the individuals, whether their identity was attached or not. I did not include videos in this dissertation that I believe or learned implicated minors. While I think there are a number of excellent theoretical lenses that could be employed in YouTube Shakespeares' research, such as gender, race, or sexuality studies, I avoided entering those conversations in this already complex work. This dissertation argues for research methodologies; those interested in studies of gender, race, and sexuality would produce far better work than I in those very necessary conversations.

YouTube Shakespeare videos; another Shakespeare researcher may have her or his own selection process or characteristics that s/he believes offer hermeneutic value. While there are thousand upon thousands of other video possibilities, the scope of this work meant that each video I selected had to meet minimum criteria to make it worth including in the narrow confines of this study. The next step after selecting videos for the study was applying to my institution's review board for permission to conduct my research.

One of the questions I frequently field from literary colleagues asks why we literary researchers need to apply to Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), when we have a history of interviewing actors, directors, and other personnel related to our field. Technically, interviews such as those I list in the preceding sentence are required to be vetted through institutional review boards, though many seldom are. Institutional review boards require that all studies that implicate humans in our research need to meet IRB approval. This requirement is the repercussion of historical biomedical (mis)treatment of human subjects in the first half of the twentieth century. After a history of medical misconduct in the name of research, the U.S. Congress passed the National Research Act, which in turn created the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. Eventually this guideline was published in 1979 as the *Belmont Report* (Johns et al 106). In the language of the report the term "behavioral," extended the scope of research "beyond the biomedical community to social research," mandating that colleges and universities establish IRBs to protect "the rights and welfare of human subjects" (Johns et al 106). Most IRBs demand the employment of three ethical principles established by *The Belmont Report*: respect (individuals have a right to decide

whether or not to participate in a study), beneficence (the study should not harm the participants), and justice (the participants should be treated equally and fairly throughout the study) (Johns et al 108).

In the first decade of Internet research, many IRBs struggled to regulate Internet research guidelines. Johns, Hall, and Crowell's 2004 survey of "veteran online researchers" reveals a number of unresolved issues involving internet research, such as a lack of an "agreement as to whether messages found online constitute human interactions or published texts . . . whether lurking is a defensible research technique, or whether seeking consent is required in all venues" (Johns et al 109). With this information in hand, I was at first intimidated by the process of applying for permission to interview YouTube users. Furthermore, because my institution does not allow graduate students to conduct their own research, my dissertation chair was required to commit to my work and sign on as primary researcher. In preparation, I met with a representative of ASU's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance to gather as much information as I could about their requirements for research conduct and application. Ultimately, the process proved to be quick and efficient. Other than a few minor changes in the informed consent document to be presented to interviewees, the study was granted exempt status, with the following restrictions:

> The federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or

> be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. (Documentation excluded from works cited)

The approval included permission to ask for permission from YouTube users to include their channel names and screen shots in my work. To include YouTube users in my study who did not reply to my request for an interview, I was required to not include identifiers that could link non-consenting YouTube users virtual names/avatars with their real world identities.

Ultimately any video that linked the dissertation with the video's real world creator was assigned pseudonyms (see table, Appendix A). The only users whose identities are traceable and whose videos titles and channel names I cite are the two participants who granted permission for me to do so. Most other videos and channel hosts in this entire dissertation have been given pseudonyms. I was reluctant to assign fabricated names to those individuals whose online performance overwhelmingly suggests a desire for publicity. As Annette Markham notes, "while some media-savvy participants…may prefer that their publicity be protected and that researchers cite them accurately and fully, many more want the reverse" (Markham 2012, 337). In alliance with my IRB approval, I chose to create pseudonyms for any individual whose name, face, or other marker will produce a direct or indirect link to his or her identity—even the person, who by all accounts, has since become recognized for her/his YouTube work and therefore a public celebrity since her/his video performances first appeared on YouTube in the website's early days. I do use the YouTube title for videos that do not link the uploader or user's personal information with the video (see for instance my analysis of Machinamom's "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin" in chapter four). Additionally,

when I transcribe user comments, I substitute the full avatar with first four letters of the avatar's name. While I do not create composite identities, posts, or narratives, I do fabricate the titles and names of the videos and the individuals who did not respond to my request for an interview if their images, name, or other personal information is available on YouTube.

The Interviews

I began by selecting twelve YouTube Shakespeare users based on the criteria for the videos I list above. Five of the YouTube videos openly reveal users' identities through image or text, while the remaining seven that did not contain users' personal information on either the video, its interface, or their channel page.[81] My ambition was to interview all 12, although I knew from the outset this would be unlikely. Nevertheless, I felt that if I were to include them in my dissertation, I needed to at least attempt contact with them. I sent each individual a message through her/his message box on YouTube (see sample letter Appendix A). In the end, four replied. Three completed the online consent form. Two continued through the end of the study, and one withdrew before answering the first round of questions.

Those who replied offered their email address right away. I then sent each respondent an email that included a link to an online consent form that I designed through surveymonkey.com. Once each person completed the online consent, I then emailed the first round of questions. Five people responded to my YouTube inbox request. Three interviewees completed the informed consent survey. One individual asked to be

[81] Channel pages, just like YouTube's interface, have altered significantly since the website's inception. Previously, channel pages revealed host's gender, age, location, and other personal information. See figure 3-1 for a current channel shot.

withdrawn from the interview after receiving the first round of questions. One replied after the completion of my research. The remaining two interviewees remained in the study throughout its duration. They were each asked two rounds of questions tailored to complement their video and the information they provide on both the video's interface and their YouTube channel page. They were also asked to view three individual YouTube Shakespeare videos and fill in a surveymonkey.com form that asked questions about each video. The two channel hosts who remained in the interview are TheSonnetProject (TSP) of "TheSonnetProject," and zman of "Crank That Shakespeare."

Interview with TheSonnetProject (TSP) of "TheSonnetProject"

In the pages that follow I transcribe my questions and each participant's answers. While I do not analyze their responses, I do see the potential of doing so, as many of their answers are richly nuanced with details and insights that affirm or illuminate my hypothesis on YouTube Shakespeares' use. I begin with "TheSonnetProject" and TSP. Starting January 15, 2013, "TheSonnetProject" uploaded 154 videos over the course of three days, one video for each of Shakespeare's sonnets. Each video follows the same format: TSP stands slight off-center and to the right of the video frame, where the camera captures a close-up of his face. The background of the set is black, and TSP wears a black tee shirt. He is a white man; therefore the combination of black shirt and backdrop contrasts with his expressive face. His readings are clear, precise, and animated. His intention, as his responses to his interview questions affirm, is to help students better understand Shakespeare's sonnets. The following is a direct transcript on my online interview with him over the course of two email sessions.

Valerie M. Fazel: What spurred you to create your YouTube sonnet channel?

TheSonnetProject: Jonathon Miller, the British theatre director, has said that Shakespeare's plays are "promissory notes with a view to a subsequent performance" and that they only have a "provisional existence" while they are page-bound. The same applies to the sonnets, in my opinion. Being a fan of them, and also an actor who values the virtues of *performing* heightened language over merely reading it, I was disappointed that no major video performance of them had ever been made available as anything other than a commodity. I was, and remain, keen to spread a bit of free Shakespeare love in the world. The two videos I had made several years ago, and which appear on my private YouTube Channel have had such positive reactions from students, fans, and amateur scholars alike, that I became aware of a gap in online resources for students of Shakespeare, specifically vis-a-vis video performance (or "online recital" as I've taken to calling it).[82] The sonnets in particular struck me as being particularly underrepresented on YouTube, and I felt that something cradled within the most used video website in the world, given for free as a resource for those interested in the material, would be a nice bit of karma to put out there, and a fun first to have to my otherwise fairly obscure name.

VMF: Can you tell me a little about how you organized this project. In other words, did you record all the sonnets over the course of a specific time frame? Did you have someone to help you film the videos? Design the set? (I think the visual feel of

[82] I do not include the user name of TSP's other account, even though he has granted permission to do so. I have also deleted his other YouTube Shakespeare video links, which he included in his original reply.

your videos is compelling; the black on black background encourages viewers to focus on you and the language.) Feel free to add anything else that might offer me some additional insight to the process (I've read your information on TheSonnetProject).

TSP: The videos were all shot over a concentrated four day period in the games room of my house. I draped a sheet of cheap black cloth I had bought at a haberdashers over the front of a large bookshelf, held it in place with a couple of dumbbells, positioned my camera (Sony Z1P HDV), microphone (Sennheiser), lights (one cheap worklight bought from a hardware store), etc., in front of me, and after a few test runs, I simply started straight in, filming every sonnet a minimum of three times (not including outtakes, of which there were plenty) until I was content I had at least one usable take of each. I then sat and packaged them into, and out of, Final Cut Studio 7 over about a week before uploading them to YouTube. The entire project was executed - start to finish - entirely on my own, with exactly zero help from anyone, on any level.

VMF: Who do you imagine is your audience? (Do you have a target audience?) Who do you hope will view your performance of the sonnets?

TSP: Honestly, I think the audience will be mostly students. I am already receiving feedback that secondary school English and Drama teachers are using my videos as resources for their classes in poetry, Shakespeare, performance-related disciplines, and English generally, as well as other areas. While some regular Joe fans of the sonnets will doubtless find the project intermittently engaging, the ones that I suspect will gain the most from the recital will be the serious students

of - as I say in the info on the videos - poetry, Shakespeare, performance poetry, and heightened language in general. It's a niche audience, which makes the accessibility - both technologically and financially (what with being free) - highly apposite, in my opinion.

VMF: It seems to me that you are an active YouTube channel host. What I mean by this is that you are conscientious about responding to comments posted on your YouTube interface. I want to direct some of my questions towards how you see your role as an actor and as a YouTube channel host: Do participant comments make you think about altering your future performances of either Iago or Macbeth? If so, can you think of an example of how a comment posted on YouTube to any of your Shakespeare-related performances made you consider how to perform the character/sonnet? Have you ever deleted participatory comments from your YouTube feed?

TSP: I find them interesting, and I value the feedback and take on board a lot of what is written, but the circumstances of creating a character in a rehearsal room are a completely different dynamic to the online one. In building a character and making choices within it, I find myself relying more on the immediate interaction of my colleagues in a rehearsal room than anything else. I tend to take the comments/criticisms as reviews, and reviews are best taken with a grain of salt. And yes, I had a cocky and incredibly arrogant young actor (around 18 or 19) telling me... TELLING me, mind... that I was doing everything wrong, that I was an "amateur" because I didn't follow "the rules", and that his teachers at whatever drama school he was attending were all "experienced professionals" who knew

more than me. It didn't seem to matter how much professional experience I had as an actor, director, and teacher, I was wrong and he was right. He started getting abusive, and other users/subscribers were beginning to "feed the troll", and things were quickly deteriorating, so I deleted his comments and blocked him.

VMF: Last question session you answered that you see your videos serving a pedagogical role. Most (US) high schools tend to teach what we call the big four plays: Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, and Hamlet. (Interestingly enough, A Midsummer Night's Dream is the most frequently performed high school Shakespeare play.) Do you know what plays are typically taught at the high school level in your country of residence? If so, have you considered performing key roles from those plays and them posting them on YouTube?[83]

TSP: The big four feature prominently here, too. And yes, I have thought about online versions of elements of all of them (and others), but they are projects I am developing with other actors as well as myself, as future, bigger projects for online consumption.

VMF: I know you've completed TheSonnetProject only recently, but do you have another Shakespeare performance for YouTube dissemination in the works?

TSP: I have a number of ideas I'm toying with, but nothing concrete. My focus at the moment is on collaborative group work, and mostly in a live theatre context, but now that the Sonnet Project is out there and being used in schools, future digital content is definitely something I want to explore further.

[83] TSP lives and works in Australia

VMF: YouTube has been around since 2005, and since then has rapidly become the "world most watch online video" repository. Tens of thousands of Shakespeare performance adaptations have come (and some have gone) in the intervening years. I make the assumption that you have viewed a sufficient number of YouTube Shakespeares (you stated that you looked at sonnets in your previous reply). Do you think now that YouTube has made Shakespeare performances more accessible that people have changed how they regard/think of Shakespeare?

TSP: I certainly think that having such ready access to a multiplicity of styles, eras, interpretations, etc. is extraordinarily useful to students of the canon, whether they be formal or informal students, or actors searching for inspiration. Such as with the rest of the internet, being able to access vast amounts of knowledge in such a relatively short amount of time and with such comprehensive sweep cannot be anything but helpful.

VMF: Can you recall any instances when you thought a YouTube user misappropriated a Shakespeare play/sonnet?

TSP: Nothing springs immediately to mind, alas.

VMF: Do you think Shakespeare performances should adhere strictly to the play text/ lines?

TSP: I think the occasional "unauthorised" contraction or abbreviation is acceptable, as is the helpful and clear reworking of punctuation, where appropriate; words that are either entirely antiquated and out of use, or whose meaning has changed (like "luxury", which used to have a strong sexual meaning), are also fair game for the

use of alternatives ("lechery" generally does as a substitute for "luxury", since it scans).

VMF: Have you viewed any YouTube Shakespeare mash-ups? What is your opinion of these and other YouTube Shakespeare remixes?

TSP: I've watched a few. I'm afraid they don't do it for me.

Interview with zman of "Crank That Shakespeare"

Valerie M. Fazel: Did your classmates view the video while you were all together in class? If yes, what was their response?

zman: Yes. I vividly remember the moment "Crank that Shakespeare" debuted in class. I was both excited and nervous. I recall thinking to myself, "What have I done … producing a video in which I am singing, dancing and acting (with no real experience in any of these forms of artistic expression) and then presenting it to my entire English class?"

Once the video concluded, I recall a period of silence that seemed much longer in my mind than in actuality. The look on the face of many of my classmates seemed to suggest to me that they were quite surprised by the video, and perhaps somewhat concerned that my group had exceeded expectation and just raised the bar for the rest of the class. In fact, my teacher confided as much to me after class. My group definitely took the assignment seriously; we invested significant time and effort into our final product, not only to earn a high grade but to challenge our creativity and produce something that our audience would enjoy. Ultimately, the class enjoyed the video as much as we enjoyed making

it. We received many positive comments. One student remarked, "Simply awesome".

VMF: How did your teacher respond to the video?

zman: As I already mentioned, the teacher appreciated our extra efforts in the creation of the video. She complimented the choreography in the brief dance scene and the MTV-esque editing techniques. Her only criticism was that certain parts of the original work were missing from our adaptation. Personally, this was a criticism I was willing to accept. In the process of converting the original work to a 2:10 rap video, selective omissions were inevitable. Our goal was to convey the major plot elements, in the time frame and in an entertaining fashion.

VMF: How long did the video take to produce?

zman: We were allowed only one week to produce the group project. For our video, the lyrics were written over the course of two class periods, while the music was composed over the course of a few days. The lyrics and music were created separately, by different group members, which made the collaboration and pairing of the two difficult. Recording the vocals in one evening was, by far, the most difficult task. I still can recall recording multiple tracks over and over again, attempting to sing/rap in a voice that was clear, but sounded different from my own, as I was nervous about how my classmates would react to me performing lead vocals (my first public singing). The video component was shot over three days, at the convenience of the other group members who would typically be available only for a few hours in the afternoon, during which time we would film

as many scenes as possible. The video was edited and rendered the evening before presentation in class.

VMF: Were you aware that your video would be viewed by people other than your classmates (and family)? Are you aware it went viral in 2008 and was (reposted) published on a video blog dedicated to original YouTube Shakespeare videos?

zman: I was aware that once published to YouTube the video would be viewed by other people, presumably stumbled upon in a related-videos category on YouTube. I assumed that the majority of views would be from family and friends.

I was unaware, until this moment, that it was published on a video blog … I hope that the site had mostly positive comments to say about the video.

VMF: Were you 18 years old when you published your video on YouTube?

zman: Yes, I was 18 at the time.

VMF: Do you feel you have "ownership" and control over "Crank"?

zman: The notion of ownership that I had felt toward the work has changed over time. When the project was first completed, I felt a strong sense of ownership over it. Once the video was burnt to DVD and I held the original in my hand, I knew that I held the only copy of it in existence. It was quite fulfilling to know this; it made the work feel special and intimate.

However, once the video was posted to YouTube, the sense of ownership changed for me. The video has, in some ways, taken on a life of its own. Anyone with an internet connection is able to view the work at any time of their choosing; they can react to it in many ways that I will never even know. But it is satisfying simply to know that it is being experienced.

VMF: Do you plan to leave your video on YouTube indefinitely?

zman: As long as YouTube is online, the video will likely be on it.

VMF: What is your response to seeing your video archived on Bardbox?

zman: After reading your explanation of the goal of Bardbox, I am very flattered to have the video posted on the site. It is always fulfilling to receive recognition for a creative work. Knowing that the work is admired on some level by scholars who are interested in Shakespeare is certainly a high compliment to all the members of the group who contributed their time and talents to the production. Frankly, it was unexpected to see it posted on the site, as it was certainly not a presumption of mine that the video would receive such recognition. I am sincerely proud of its inclusion on Bardbox. It is satisfying to know that the production is appreciated, and to have it recognized in this way is very rewarding.

VMF: How you feel about seeing your full name (and the names of your acting partners) and your work (re)published without your knowledge or permission? Would you prefer that your name not appear directly on Bardbox's website, or do think it is McKernan's responsibility to credit you (and your colleagues) for your YouTube Shakespeare creation?

zman: Of course I can only speak for myself and not the other group members on this matter, but I personally take no issue with my name appearing on the site. Had I wished to remain anonymous, I would not have posted the video on YouTube in the first place, nor my own name nor group members' names. Also, I do not take issue with the video being posted without permission on Bardbox because it was not done in an exploitative manner. From my perspective, after viewing the site,

McKernan seems to be using the video as a catalyst for critical analysis and discussion. Lastly, I do not feel that it is McKernan's responsibility to give credit for the video. However it is appropriate for him to do so.

VMF: What (if any) experience of Shakespeare have you had since 12th grade English?

zman: Since 12th grade, my experiences of Shakespeare have been primarily through the film medium, which is an interest of mine. In experiencing Shakespeare, beyond the original works, I've often discerned that Shakespeare's ideologies and themes are present in many older and contemporary films that I have viewed.

VMF: From what I can see, "Crank that Shakespeare" is the only video you posted in the history of your YouTube zman15601 account. Do you have more than one YouTube account? (You need only answer yes or no).

zman: No.

VMF: How frequently do you watch videos on YouTube? Do you/did you watch other Shakespeare videos?

zman: I view videos on YouTube often. Yes, before producing "Crank" I viewed other Shakespeare videos produced by students, to gain perspective on the quality of products being posted. It helped in guiding my group's project development, particularly as to what kind of goals we could realistically set in the time frame of one week.

Currently, I rarely view videos pertaining to Shakespeare on YouTube. I will occasionally view such videos if I am reminded (as I have been with this interview process), or just to see if students are still being encouraged to recreate the works of Shakespeare in a contemporary context.

VMF: Do you watch Shakespeare on film (movies)?

zman: I have seen and enjoyed various screen performances and adaptations of Shakespeare's works. Performances I have seen include: *Romeo and Juliet* (1968); *Romeo + Juliet* (1996); *Coriolanus* (2012). The adaptations I have viewed include: *The Lion King* (1994), adapted from *Hamlet*; *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride* (1998), from *Romeo and Juliet*; *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), from *The Taming of the Shrew*; and *Warm Bodies* (2013), from *Romeo and Juliet*. I have also seen the fictionalized love story of Shakespeare's romance with a noblewoman, as depicted in the film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998).

VMF: Do you have a lingering interest in Shakespeare?

zman: No… not necessarily in the original works of Shakespeare. I am more interested in the various ways in which creative individuals contextually interpret, adapt, or recreate the ideologies of the original works, to reach contemporary audiences.

In addition to the above transcript I asked each of the participants to respond to three YouTube Shakespeare videos. I do not include their responses here, but pepper their remarks throughout the other sections of this dissertation where appropriate. After they completed the surveys on each video I then sent each an email that read as follows:

> Thank you for completing the YouTube Shakespeare survey on the three videos I asked you to watch. From your prior responses I know that YouTube Shakespeare mashups are not of particular interest to you, so I do appreciate that you took the time to view and respond to the (sometimes repetitive) survey questions.

At this time I do not have any more questions for you.

I am, however, very interested in hearing anything you might wish to share about your experience as a Shakespeare performer (stage or camera) or YouTube channel host; your interests in Shakespeare pedagogy or Shakespeare in general; and/or this interview process and any other general thoughts you would like to share for the record (dissertation).

In other words, I would like to create a profile of you and your activities in my dissertation based on what you would like readers to know about you.

If you have further comments you wish to share, please email these to me at your earliest convenience.

TheSonnetProject did not reply but zman of "Crank" did. The following is his final response:

Hello Valerie,

The following are my brief comments to add to this interview process:

I am certainly not a Shakespeare scholar, nor am I overly interested in Shakespeare's works within their classical or historical context. However, I do appreciate the various ways in which Shakespeare's works have been re-interpreted, adapted, or modernized for contemporary audiences. This

appreciation can most likely be attributed to my own interest and experience with film work. For several years now, I have dabbled in amateur filmmaking. It is an avocation for which I have passion but not nearly enough time to pursue. I am fascinated by the filmmaking process, and I have great respect for writers, producers, directors, and the many individuals involved in the process. I truly enjoy how stories are conveyed on film; how words on a page are brought to life on film; and how our knowledge or notions of a past time or event can be distorted for the sake of the current media's narrative. YouTube provides an excellent outlet to achieve the latter, as many individuals upload modern interpretations, even parodies, of classic works. In doing so, they often revitalize the original, even perhaps bringing it to an audience with limited to no knowledge of the original work.

In my own experience, I have found YouTube to be an excellent platform to have one's "voice" heard by a relatively large audience, although this does have its benefits and detriments. Depending on the video's subject matter, productive conversation or debate sometimes take place within the comment section. However, inappropriate comments are often registered, as the veil of anonymity online allows people to state opinions without "real world" implications. Whether this controversial aspect of YouTube is good or bad is rather subjective. However, to me, I find that engaging in conversation, whether in agreement or disagreement, ultimately produces

> a positive outcome, as it encourages one to think.
>
> On a personal note, Valerie, I have greatly enjoyed this interview process. The interview questions were not too personal or intrusive, and I have been happy to share my thoughts with you. Although "Crank" is relatively "old" at this point, I still note thematic consistency within it, and I do appreciate it for its production value… pretty good work for a small group of high school students. I can still recall the fun that I and my friends had throughout the completion of this video. Thank you for inviting me to participate in your own "production." I wish you the best of luck in the completion of your dissertation.

My final email to each participant reads as follows:

> Thank you for participating in my study of YouTube Shakespeares. Your responses were very helpful in my research. On a personal note, I enjoy your [YouTube Shakespeare(s)], and was delighted by your enthusiastic and illuminating responses to my interview questions.
>
> The interview process is now closed. If you have questions about your participation in my research, or on any other matter, please feel free to contact me at any time.

TheSonnetProject replied to my final "thank you" email. He expressed support for the research project and wrote that he was delighted to be included in the research.

I transcribe these interviews for multiple reasons. First and foremost, to demonstrate one way an interactive virtual interview can be designed. In my view, it brings scholars closer to the people whose interests in Shakespeare deserve our scholarly attention. Too often we make presumptions about public audiences and public engagement on Shakespeare's works that are precariously underpinned by our own experiences. Second, my belief that interviews would yield information about the videos that their interfaces and the user channel information cannot produce. Third, to give YouTube Shakespeares' user-creators a chance to voice their experiences. Collectively, TheSonnetProject and zman express an interest in what people think of their work—TheSonnetProject wants to appeal to teachers and students, and zman expressed delight at learning his video is archived on Bardbox. While we might hypothesize on these facts, or we might presume them to be true, the testimony of people's activities is far more satisfying.

Throughout this dissertation, I advocate for an expansion of our literary methods and an immersion into the fields that have already laid some paths that traverse Internet exploration. The work in this chapter demonstrates how important it is to think outside the blackbox that is Shakespeare studies, particularly at a time when more of our publications will surely appear in digital format, and therefore online. Once there, they are subject to unpredictable mobility. As zman states, once something is online it takes "a life of its own." This is true of study participant's personal information in our publications. While there is not one methodology that will work for all human subjects included in our sources of study, and while our protective reach is limited, methods and

practices exist that we should begin to embrace in order to prevent the unbridled use and flow of personal information.

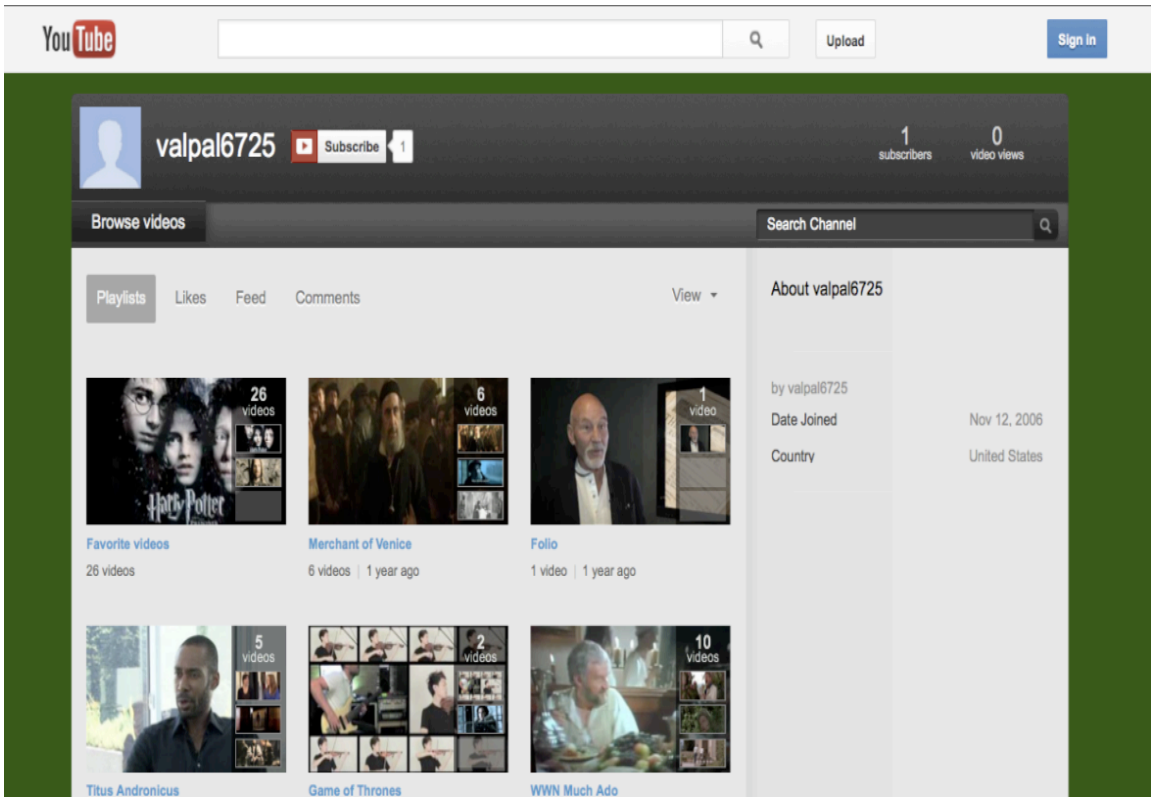

Figure 3.1 Channel shot (2013)

CHAPTER 4

"THIS WIDE AND UNIVERSAL THEATRE": MAPPING YOUTUBE'S PERFORMANCE SPACES

Shakespeare excelled as a playwright precisely because of his ability to relate the dramatic vitality of a still living past to the drama of contemporary life. This relationship between originality and tradition resulted in a supreme balance between experimentation, innovation, and revitalization.

Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*

Dramatic performance is conditioned not only from within the theatre, requiring an understanding of the conventional performance practices of a given culture, but also from without: the institutions which define the categories and meanings of performance. One sign of this negotiation is the way live and mediated performance are now often implicated in one another.

W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*

The right space for Shakespeare…is always going to be the right space for a specific culture.

Dennis Kennedy, *The Spectator and the Spectacle*

The montage of scenes from Franco Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) streams by as British countertenor Barratt Waugh croons his classically arranged 2000 rendition of the film's theme song, "A Time for Us." Within moments I relegate Waugh's affected, androgynous voice to the background, upstaged by my interest in the audience's response ("he's incredible, I always thought it was a woman singing!"). Remarks about *Romeo and Juliet*, actor Zac Efron as a Leonard Whiting lookalike, 32 year-old Waugh, his version of Nino Rota's song, and the nostalgic pulse of people's past experiences with Zefferelli's adaptation of Shakespeare emerge one by one. I register statements such as, "Still the absolute best *Romeo and Juliet* movie of all time", "Why did they change the

original lyrics of 'What is a Youth?' They spoiled it!", and "This is my favorite play by Shakespeare." Not everyone in the audience recognizes the tune, nor has everyone seen Zefferelli's film. Many have never heard (of) Waugh before this experience, while others express their annoyance with other people's remarks. Everyone in this space of performance seems compelled to be a critic, a pedant, and/or an actor of sorts. All this I note as I lean forward from the best seat in the house—in front of my laptop—scrolling through the comment section of FLav's YouTube Shakespeare mashup, "Romeo and Juliet."[84] Although I am merely a lurker situated in FLav's "diffused audience," one of countless unknowable and dispersed spectators who in today's media-saturated society is "continually surrounded by representations," I feel as if I am part of a shared, collective audience experience (Kennedy 7). The comments posted by users on FLav's YouTube's interface influence my thinking about the film, and leave me with the remarkable sensation of sharing the performance with a public audience, albeit within the privacy of my home.

YouTube Shakespeares has so far addressed the ethical issues and methodological processes entailed in digital humanities-based research. Narrowing the focus to concentrate on matters more specifically aimed at Shakespeare studies, the remainder of this dissertation explores YouTube through the bifocal lens of Shakespeare performance and cultural studies. Given YouTube's noteworthy resemblance to film or television Shakespeares, subscribing to the theories that underpin these more conventional media seems the logical approach, yet I turn my theoretical gaze elsewhere: I compare YouTube

[84] All direct quotations extracted from the comment section of FLav's "Romeo and Juliet" interface. I have replaced the name of the YouTube user and the video title with pseudonyms. See chapter three for details.

Shakespeares to Shakespeare's early modern (or in Weimann's terms, the Elizabethan theatre). In this chapter I examine the spaces of performance in both Shakespeare's early modern theatre and YouTube, seeking to underline analogies between both performance media. My contention is that YouTube Shakespeares evince some of the cultural phenomena critics argue were unique to early modern theatre conditions. My intent is to demonstrate how YouTube's interface frames function as analogs of the spaces of performance and reception in the professional theatre of Shakespeare's early career. The goals of this chapter are threefold. First, to theorize YouTube as a Shakespeare performance website. Second, to label the website's various activity frames in terms that speak to Shakespeare studies. Third, to parse out the ways that interactivity between author, actor, and audience influenced theatrical performance during the dramatist's own lifetime, and then illustrate how a similar kind of interactivity, and influence, takes place via YouTube Shakespeares' interface. While these three goals are designed to encourage Shakespeareans to critically evaluate the performance space of YouTube Shakespeares, I also hope the outcomes of this work will appeal to my colleagues in the larger realms of digital humanities and Internet studies.

Shakespeare's oeuvre is unconditionally linked to the Elizabethan theatre, a purpose built venue where early modern performance evolved through a combination of place, space, and the vestiges of a postmedieval, early modern popular tradition. YouTube Shakespeare videos, likewise constructed largely for and by a popular audience within a framework of virtual place and space, are frequently linked to the domain of Shakespeare kitsch. This split in most academic thinking and therefore reception—a respect for the body of Shakespeare's work born of a now quasi-venerated Elizabethan

playhouse versus the frequent dismissal of the seemingly unlimited adapted, appropriated, and remediated Shakespeares on YouTube—makes it unsurprising that academic study of YouTube Shakespeares mostly extend only as far as critiquing the website's numerous Shakespeare-related videos.[85]

I wish to complicate this limited focus on YouTube Shakespeares' videos in order to expand academic interest in the website by suggesting that YouTube functions as a site of performance. As Peter Holland suggests, "[YouTube] can also allude to more conventional performance, invite connection with live theater, suggests the possibilities of different and more traditional communities of consumption" (257). This chapter theorizes YouTube's interface as analogous to the spaces of performance in the Elizabethan playhouse. I make this analogy to bring a greater awareness to the ways performance presentation and representation in virtual space are formed, like in Shakespeare's playhouse, via a remarkable correspondence "between experimentation, innovation, and revitalization" of Shakespeare's plays and an emerging 21st century popular "tradition" that "relies on older cultural forms [and] new media" (Weimann 1978, xvii; Manovich 8). As social-cultural venues for performance, both the Elizabethan theatre and YouTube emerged during liminal periods of technological change. In the early modern period this technological change is represented by the purpose-built construction of professional playhouses designed as spaces for profitable entertainment. In the 21st century this technological change is represented by the widespread engagement with digital tools and the prevalence of social media on the Internet—namely

[85] As I argue in the first chapter, most academics focus on the audio-visual performance, not the technology that yields these appropriations.

Web 2.0—with an eye towards future profitability. These analogously corresponding thresholds, where performance and reception straddle old and new paradigms, encourage thinking about their points of connection.

YouTube Shakespeares as Performance: Why study space?

At the outset the goals to analogously map the performance spaces of Shakespeare's early modern playhouse onto YouTube generate a number of critical questions. How might a theoretical approach to YouTube as a space for performance help us reevaluate the website's mark in the genealogy of Shakespeare media studies? How might a theorization of space be useful for a broader (non-Shakespearean) analysis of YouTube? Why compare YouTube to the early modern playhouse, rather than the 19th century theatre or 20th century cinema? Why explore the interaction of amateur producers and their audience responses rather than solely remain focused on the video? How does a study of YouTube Shakespeares through the lens of performance space(s) broaden our critical understanding of Shakespeare in other "new" media?

A theoretical reading of YouTube Shakespeares' interface as a space of performance draws critical attention to the website as a venue for popular interpretations of Shakespeare's plays.[86] A comparison of performance space offers Shakespeareans an analytical method to interrogate similarities and differences in the traits and functions of Shakespeare's early modern theatre with those of YouTube Shakespeares. A critical approach to space offers a rich opportunity to analyze, *in situ*, Shakespeare popular artifacts *and* their reception in the moments of their emergence. The study of YouTube

[86] My use of venue comes from two modern etymologies, "the site of a theatrical performance," and "the scene of a real or supposed action" (OED).

Shakespeares as a venue for user-generated performances also tells us something about how technological conditions in the age of the Internet bring to users a kind of immediacy to Shakespeare performance that differs from, or is non-existent, in other mediatized Shakespeares. Finally, evaluating YouTube as space of performance underpins a critical engagement in people's cultural activities, and their related Discourse[87] communities, as they partake in active Shakespeare remediation and narrative intervention through YouTube's interface.

To support my argument that YouTube is a Shakespeare performance venue, I incorporate approaches not just from literary and performance studies, but also from disciplines outside of Shakespeare scholarship. First, however, I begin with a thorough review of Barbara Hodgdon's 2010 *Shakespeare Bulletin* essay "(You)Tube Travel: The 9:59 to Dover Beach, Stopping at Fair Verona and Elsinore." Of all publications to date, Hodgdon's critical work most represents an approach to YouTube as a performance venue. At the same time it reveals several critical gaps, some of which I address in this chapter. Second, I define for my use language common to Shakespeare studies—performance and the popular tradition—and several terms less familiar to Shakespeareans: interface and affordance. These latter terms are commonly used in Internet and digital media studies; their application in this dissertation brings them to attention of Shakespeare scholars. Following this, I employ several critical treatises on the early modern theatre and its audiences, particularly those by Andrew Gurr, Steven Mullany, Alfred Harbage, and, most prominently, Robert Weimann. Throughout this

[87] See chapter five for discussion on James P. Gee's theory on small (discourse) and big (Discourse) d/Discourse communities.

chapter I examine several YouTube Shakespeare videos and the user responses posted on their interfaces to support the claims I make about YouTube Shakespeares' connection to Shakespeare's early modern theatre.

Bringing out the bodies: YouTube as Repertoire?

I turn at once to Barbara Hodgdon's 2010 *Shakespeare Bulletin* essay, "(You)Tube Travel: The 9:59 to Dover Beach, Stopping at Fair Verona and Elsinore." Like many who stumble through the Internet looking for Shakespeare, Hodgdon positions herself as "an accidental tourist" whose "point and click" travels across online "space and time" lead her to YouTube Shakespeares (314). Her stated goal in her "highly selective case study" is discerning how YouTube's "frameworks of accessibility and circulation . . . shape users' interactions with past performances" (314). Hodgdon's inquiry, I suggest, evokes Lev Manovich's question about new media: "What new aesthetic possibilities become available to us [via YouTube Shakespeares?]" (8). Her rethinking about the "critical distinctions between liveness and mediation and between the archive and the repertoire" rightly downplays notions of YouTube as merely a repository for the broad range, in terms of numbers and genre, of YouTube's Shakespeare videos (314). Rather, she highlights the acts of posting and responding to Shakespeare remediations as a transformation both in the ways the public plays a role in the creation and dissemination of Shakespeare *and* in the ways Shakespeareans should come to think of YouTube as a performance medium.

Hodgdon more specifically asserts that via their interactivity on YouTube, users function as transient, "privileging bodies," the kinds of bodies associated with live performance theatre (319). Anticipating potential debates over virtual versus "live"

bodies, she cites Philip Auslander's assessment that "physical bodies may be a sufficient cause for liveness, though not a necessary one" (Auslander qtd in Hodgdon 2010, 319). In this same argumentative vein on embodiment, Hodgdon argues that YouTube Shakespeares exhibit the essential qualities of the repertoire as defined by Diane Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (314). In her landmark work, Taylor claims that the repertoire "requires presence—people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being part of the transmission" (Taylor qtd in Hodgdon 319). In theorizing YouTube as a performance venue, Hodgdon remixes Taylor's work to address YouTube interactivity.

For Hodgdon, Taylor's definition of repertoire is evinced by the ways YouTube viewers respond to the video *and* interact with other users:

> Viewers see themselves as present and as perceiving (embodied) performances as they take place but they also . . . imagine themselves as sharing a (bodied) space with performers. However much they may know that they are engaged in second-hand experience, viewers *behave* as though they are witnessing live performances and participate in the kinds of knowledge-making associated with having 'been there.' (Hodgdon 2010, 319 Italics and parentheses original)

Hodgdon's assertions that YouTube "shares characteristics" with the repertoire of live performance usefully places pressure on notions of YouTube Shakespeares as merely a new wave in the genealogy of mediatized (and archival) Shakespeares—print, film, DVDs—"items supposedly resistant to change" (Hodgdon 319; D. Taylor 19). This remark signals a reading that emphasizes the dynamics of YouTube Shakespeares, the

ways—as with performance—YouTube Shakespeares interfaces are characterized by constant change and activity.[88] Furthermore, her emphasis on YouTube Shakespeares as repertoire conjures up notions about the "structure and codes" of live theatrical performance and reception by placing emphasis on users as bodies in YouTube Shakespeares' "knowledge-making community" (D. Taylor 20). Yet this refocus on YouTube Shakespeares as embodied performance, I wish to point out, calls for a conceptual and theoretical understanding of where those bodies are represented on YouTube's interface as an analog of live theatre.

Hodgdon rightfully points out that YouTube Shakespeares are interactive, placing as she does particular emphasis on the website's audience engagement, but like many critics she analyzes YouTube holistically. By holistically I mean Hodgdon largely refers to YouTube's "frameworks" without parsing out and theorizing YouTube's various organizational frames, their affordances and their effects on the viewing experience (314). For example, she mentions the "Netflix-like queue on the right-screen side-bar," but she does not interrogate how this "side-bar" serves to influence viewers' interaction with the more immediate Shakespeare video performance (315). She surveys and cites user commentary, noting how the commentary functions like a critical interpretation but does not theorize the spaces where these comments take place. She speaks about bodies that define YouTube as repertoire without theorizing where or how those bodies are represented on YouTube Shakespeare's interface frames. Are bodies represented only via the video? User comments? How does Hodgdon's notions of the repertoire function (or

[88] By changes I mean when users comment, or upload response videos. However, do not dismiss the kinds of changes, updates really, that takes place on YouTube's interface. YouTube is BETA, therefore always subject to shifts in affordances, frames, visuals, capabilities, uses, and more.

not) in each of the frames? Do each of YouTube's individual frames afford different repertoire acts? Is a video response more "embodied" than a text comment? Do hyperlinks fall in Hodgdon's register of repertoire?

Furthermore, Hodgdon suggests YouTube's interactivity is similar to the acts and interactions that occur between performer and audience in live theatre without specifying the kind of theatre she has in mind. What theatre? When? Where? Most theatre scholars agree the dynamics of actor and audience interaction in theatrical performance have radically altered since Shakespeare's day. As Andrew Gurr points out in *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, "the technology of the theatre in the centuries since Shakespeare has aimed to turn audiences into passive watchers invisible to the actors, and silent except for occasional bursts of laughter" (258). In Hodgdon's view how is YouTube like (or not) Gurr's postulations on theatre's cultural shifts? And finally, Hodgdon's invocation of Taylor is not without issue. Taylor's work is influenced by performance critic Peggy Phelan, a position Hodgdon seems to elide in her reading of Taylor (146).[89]

In spite of these issues, I think it is important to recognize that Hodgdon speaks not of the Shakespeare video as repertoire *per se* but as repertoire in the post-production, post-viewing interactivity that takes place on YouTube's interface. That is, the interactivity between users as audience members who comment on the video, who use YouTube's interface to make claims, offer comments, and critique the video performance *after* the video is constructed. Yet, as I argue throughout this chapter, the ontology of user

[89] See chapter one for discussion on Peggy Phelan.

interactivity, the way it evinces itself—albeit subject as it is to dissemination, reproduction, ephemerality, obsolescence, and unpredictable temporality—suggests that the actions that take place on YouTube's interface (in its individual frames and in its entirety) *are the performance*. The video, plus every comment, every link, every image on the interface influence the viewing audience in some intangible way, much the same way as laughter, applause, grumbling, cracking nuts, and shuffling, smelly bodies effected a viewer's response to the performance within Shakespeare's early modern theatre.

The Early Modern Theatre, Spaces of Performance, and the Popular Tradition

In this chapter I invoke Weimann's terms "early modern" and "Elizabethan" theatre to demarcate a very specific period when the professional theatre and its performance paradigms emerged. These paradigms included the vestiges of a medieval popular dramatic tradition, a condition—as Norland and Weimann argue—that was markedly influenced by a history of dramatic performance that stems from the classics, and that developed through medieval performances, including morality plays and folk drama (see below). Although D. J. Hopkins uses the term "postmedieval" to politically inscribe this same time period, the postmedieval is a term I eschew as it is fraught with notions of regression, a sense of holding onto historical modes of dramatic construction rather than remixing the old with the new in the creation of the early modern's new dramatic paradigms. Nevertheless, Hopkins' reading of this period's cultural shifts is useful to bear in mind. For my use in this dissertation I borrow his definition of the postmedieval and remix it to underlie my use of the terms early modern and Elizabethan, which from my vantage signify:

> A period of cultural change [that] serves to periodize the overlap located at the end of the medieval and the beginning of the early modern periods in London, a period marked by uneven emergence of [early modern] cultural forms, and the continual recurrence of medieval spatial practices. (6)

Ultimately Hopkins' assertion that London's early modern theatres "incurred a debt to medieval practices of performance" aligns with Weimann's notions that Shakespeare recognized, related, and wrote his plays with an eye on the "dramatic vitality of a still living past" (Hopkins 2, Weimann 1978, xvii).

The term interface used in this chapter rests on two concepts. First is its familiar 21st century use in technology: YouTube is an interface, a program that enables users to communicate with one another through the computer. YouTube's screen is also an interface that allows users access to myriad YouTube's activities. Weimann explicates a broader understanding of interface by suggesting the activities of that took place in the early modern theatre signify interface as signaling "something that enables separate and sometimes incompatible elements to coordinate or communicate" (2000, 6). In this, Weimann refers to "the degree to which dramatic writing and theatrical performing in the English Renaissance found themselves in a socially and culturally precarious state of both cooperation and confrontation, interaction and interface" (2000, 6). In this chapter, the term "interface" provides critics with a language that marks how (the use of) space—in the Elizabeth theatre and on YouTube—intersects or functions as discrete concepts.

I map the affordances of YouTube's interface frames using Weimann's postulations about the imaginary and interactive spaces of performance in the liminal, early period of Shakespeare's theatre. Extrapolated from Donald Norman's work

Psychology of Everyday Things, the term affordances has recently found ground in digital game theories, but also serves to define the self-explanatory, self-apparent use of YouTube interface frames. Affordances are understood as "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used…affordances provide strong clues to the operation of things" (9). (Of course, the "things" that interest me here YouTube Shakespeares' interface frames.) Norman argues that "when affordances are taken advantage of, the user knows what to do just by looking: no picture, label, or instruction [is] needed" (9). While YouTube does provide minimum instructions, i.e. the "click to leave comment" overwrite message that appears in the comment box, the affordances of YouTube's interface are made apparent by their framed context—the "principles of organization which govern events"—within YouTube's website, and perhaps equally importantly, by the ways other users operate the frames within YouTube's interface (Goffman 10).

I expound on this understanding of affordances because I think YouTube's affordances (obvious uses) encourage users to post their (cerebral and visceral) responses to the video and/or to one another, so much so that response posting becomes second nature. Take, for instance, the grisly humor of user responses posted under the YouTube Shakespeare video, "Cannibalism in Titus Andronicus": [90]

> Solt: i love the dance that Hopkins does when he tells jessica lange that she just ate her sons

[90] "Cannibalism in Titus Andronicus" posted Oct 29th, 2007 is a 5:36 film clip from Julie Taymor's film *Titus* (1999) (the banquet scene from *Titus Andronicus*, approximately 5.3.22-70). For the sake of clarity, brevity, and protection, all (non-interviewed) commentators in this dissertation are identified by my use of the first four letters only of all users' names. All comments—including misspellings, punctuation anomalies, etc.—are transcribed intact from in the original postings. See chapter three for more details on my use of anonymity in citing YouTube videos and their users.

TehK: For some reason…after watching this scene in the movie…I wanted some pie.

Vars: Quite frankly, I find the entire concept rather hard to swallow.

jeny: that meat pie looks good! if i didn't know it was made of people i'd tear it up!

bayl: 'whereon their mother hath daintily fed, eating the flesh that_ she herself hath bred'...credit to Hopkins....credit to Billy Shakespeare

The placement of the comment box below the video, with the message "click to leave a comment," serve's as one example of affordances.[91] Use of the comment section is easy to grasp and responses eventually become second nature for users, so much so that participant exchanges on YouTube's interface are comparable to the informal exchanges between audience members in Shakespeare's early modern theater. [92]

Finally, Weimann's "the popular tradition," signals an interrelatedness between the folk-influenced performance practices strained through other medieval dramatic traditions and the theatre, actions, and language of Shakespeare's time. I think it is very important to emphasize Weimann's assertions about folk-drama and the popular tradition because Shakespeare's dramatic construction is indebted to the concomitant practices of medieval performance, and Shakespeare's incorporation of them is analogously evinced on YouTube. Although Weimann makes clear that the popular tradition and "the theater

[91] As I argue below, YouTube comments function in YouTube's *platea*. I wish to point out in anticipation of my argument, that the tenor of this line of conversation invokes Weimann's assertions that the *platea* was usually marked by a type of prose that was typically "entirely different" from the language used to mark *locus*. "It was a language close to the ordinary word and the native language of the jesting, riddling, punning 'mother-wits,' serving the immediate five and take of unstilted, possibly 'unrefined' perceptions of status, conduct, and idea, and deeply aware of ordinary, every objects and relations among people" (194).

[92] Second nature practices signal an acquired behavior or trait that is so long practiced it seems innate.

of the folk" are not identical, he emphatically states that "the quasi-dramatic culture of the folk is so important because it remained close to those forms of later ritual that the popular stage turned into effective conventions of dramatic speech and action" (1978, xvi). While Weimann cautions that it is "never fully possible to trace the popular tradition in its various aspects of growth, adaptability and decay," he asserts that the popular tradition hails from a non-literary,

> Oral tradition [that] insured great flexibility and hence great adaptability in the structure and function of both late forms of ritual and modern modes of representation—a flexibility that allowed for the endless assimilation of new subjects, themes, and modes of verbal and mimetic expression. (xvi)

Weimann's language from the above quote could, in many ways, address the ways written and visual language allow for the "great adaptability" of YouTube Shakespeares' representations. Weimann's popular tradition is noteworthy for its consideration and inclusion of the cultural practices of audience members, who were, he states, "engaged in labor and production that were in closest contact with the physical world" (xviii). Weimann notes,

> For this concrete reality they had a concrete idiom that was reflected in the gestic dimension and the physicality of verbal expression and communication, as well as in the capacity for sensuous action and spectacle that the purely literary drama could never achieve. (xviii)

Remixed for a discussion about YouTube Shakespeares, I argue a similar sort of cultural experience takes place for users who are in close contact with performance in both the analog and digital world.

Essentially, Weimann argues that the early modern theatre connected an elevated early modern literary culture with the vulgar and vernacular gestures of everyday customs through performance. This is particularly evinced through the performance practice of audience interaction with the actors in the theatre. While there exist many distinctions between Weimann's notions of the early modern popular tradition and early 21st century definitions of "popular culture," [93] their mutual cultural practices of intervening in the performance leads me to suggest that the genealogy of 21st century remix culture is an analog of genealogy of early modern popular tradition. [94]

Flexible Dramaturgy: *Locus* and *Platea*

Most Shakespeare critics agree early modern dramatic performances were predicated on a shared authority (over the scripted text) by early modern theatre actors

---

[93] See chapter five for a larger discussion on Shakespeare in popular culture.

[94] Arguing for similarities between YouTube Shakespeares and Elizabethan theatre immediately raises a number of issues that call for critical unpacking. In particular is the recognition that a 21st century understanding of theatre's cultural conditions does not mirror those of the Elizabethan tradition. Stephen Mullaney's warnings on "approaching another culture" are salient reminders that "we need to exercise certain basic cautions as we set about defining, interpreting, reconstructing or deconstructing the utterances and symbolic configurations of the past" (Mullaney 10). I am attentive to not substituting radical thinking in place of conservative understanding, but to find the points where traditional notions and upcoming ideas develop a logical awareness of "what's past is prologue." Suggesting that YouTube Shakespeares and Elizabethan theatre share, analogously, particular characteristics in not the same as an argument for YouTube Shakespeares as an imitation of Elizabethan social conditions and practices. Nor does this chapter's argument mean to suggest that YouTube Shakespeares are Shakespeare's stage resurrected as virtual space. Yet there are some key points where the social conditions of both the virtual spaces of YouTube and the representational and presentational spaces the Elizabethan theatre metaphorically make contact. The words of Robert Weimann remind us that, "The difference between Shakespeares world and ours is obvious enough, but this does not exclude some kind of concurrence" (1978, xiv). Therefore, while YouTube and postmedieval playhouses demonstrate a "kind of concurrence" vis-à-vis a complex economy of performance space, I am careful to argue for an analogy, a likeness rather than a sameness, between the two.

and the playwright. In his analysis of the professional early modern theatre Gerald E. Bentley notes,

> The impact of the author's creation [was] determined by the playwright's cooperation with his colleagues in presentation. The tailoring of the literary product to the qualities of the actors, the design of the theatre and the current conventions of production is of vital importance in achieving the effects which the author planned. The production of plays…is always a cooperative art. (8).

Performance as a "cooperative art," vis-à-vis a shared authority over the text, also depended on audience interaction and direct audience address. Nearly all of Shakespeare's plays feature modes of performance representation and presentation that Weimann labels in his 1978 work as "flexible dramaturgy." Weimann's flexible dramaturgy signals a concept of performance activity aligned to the spaces of playing in the early modern theatre. These conceptual spaces were defined by their function, rather than by a physical location. Representational aspects of the performance evoked imaginary locations and situations, and presentational modes encouraged audience interactivity with the actors. The interactivity between Shakespeare's "socially, economically [and] educationally heterogeneous" audiences and his actors enriched and made more relevant the performance experience (Harbage 162). As noted by Susan Bennett, in the early 17th century "there was a flexibility in the relationship between stage and audience worlds which afforded, in different ways, the participation of those audiences as actors in the drama" (3). In Shakespeare's lifetime flexible dramaturgy

effectively yielded (re)performances that often manifested small shifts in each rendering, shifts that have continued throughout the history of the plays' performances.[95]

Although Weimann distinguishes early modern conceptions of the popular tradition from 21st century perceptions of "popular culture," his concepts on the ways the popular tradition shaped performance echo through the modes YouTube users, participants in a digital rendering of popular culture, employ to create their Shakespeare remixes. By adapting the plays to suit online video performance, YouTube users take on a kind of shared authority with the scripted text. For example, in reshaping *Hamlet* for his high school English AP class, zman, from "Crank that Shakespeare," states "in the process of converting the original work to a 2:10 rap video, selective omissions were inevitable. Our goal was to convey the major plot elements, in the time frame and in an entertaining fashion" (zman interview). Zman felt no compulsion to include more than the "major plot elements," yet asserts that his work aligns with Shakespeare's play.

In addition, YouTube Shakespeare producers like zman and TheSonnetProject, scrutinized YouTube samples of the genre they planned to reproduce as part of the process for creating their own YouTube video. In other words, vidders who plan to (re)create Shakespeare videos look at YouTube Shakespeare users as peers, fellow performance creators who remix Shakespeare for their own uses. TheSonnetProject's creation of a YouTube channel devoted entirely to Shakespeare's sonnets resulted because, as he states, "the sonnets in particular struck me as being particularly underrepresented on YouTube" (TheSonnetProject Interview). Likewise, in preparation

[95] These shifts account for, as Foakes notes, variations between the Quartos and the Folio.

for his production of "Crank that Shakespeare" zman explained that his Shakespeare remix resulted from sifting through other YouTube Shakespeares:

> Before producing "Crank" I viewed other Shakespeare videos produced by students, to gain perspective on the quality of products being posted. It helped in guiding my group's project development, particularly as to what kind of goals we could realistically set in the time frame of one week.[96] (zman interview)

As these comments from both zman and TheSonnetChannel suggest, YouTube video creators scout the website for information that influences their Shakespeare reworkings. This mode of research can be described as the active reception of others' performances and the comments they engender. As such, this practice of viewing other YouTube Shakespeares interfaces (performances) echoes the construction of drama in Shakespeare's theatre. As Bentley notes, "The production of plays, in whatever era, is always a cooperative art" (8). YouTube Shakespeares' users activity evinces a shared authority with the text, a consideration of other productions, and desire to understand and play to audience response. The activity of viewing the video and user comments connects, analogously, to Weimann's theory of dramaturgical spaces.

Weimann maps his theory of flexible dramaturgy in the early modern theater using the terms *locus* and *platea*. In his assessment of the mystery plays, Weimann determines that the "spatial differentiation" that occurred via the use of scaffolding and pageant wagons in medieval performances had a lingering influence on staging, that is,

[96] See chapter five for the full transcript of my interview with zman.

the spaces of performance designated through language in Shakespeare's plays (1978, 77).[97] "The related convention of the [medieval] pageant wagon…suggests some basic principles of staging that continued to be meaningful and effective" in Shakespeare's theatre (77-79). Arguing that Shakespeare's professional theatre inherited a flexible and spontaneous relationship of actor-audience interactivity that predates the "traveling Tudor plebeian stage," Weimann demonstrates—through his close reading of *Hamlet*—the theater's interactive and imaginary performance spaces. In these conceptual spaces, he argues, different "purposes of playing" and the "function of (re)presentation …suggest certain parameters of interaction" during a play's performance (2000, xvi, 11). His definitions of *locus* and *platea* are as follows:

> The *locus* as a fairly specific imaginary locale or self-contained space in the world of the play and the *platea* as an opening in *mise-en-scene* through which the place and time of the stage-as-stage and the cultural occasion itself are made either to assist or resist the socially and verbally elevated, spatially and temporally remote representation. (2000, 181)

From the onset of his discussion on flexible dramaturgy, Weimann argues for a distinction that designates "presentation" and "representation" as functions linked respectively to *locus* and *platea*. Presentation is understood as a mode of acting whereby the actor acknowledges the audience through word, gesture, look, or other sign. In contrast, representation is performance whereby the actor remains in character, focused

[97] This assertion stems from Weimann's reconstruction (through textual analysis) of the blocking of a particular performance of the mystery play, *Passion Play II*, in "'N-town'" circa mid-16th century (76).

completely on the dramatic action/location of the play as if a fourth wall separated him from the viewing audience. However, while Weimann reminds us that *locus* and *platea* are abstract spaces with distinctive purposes, he also insists "the imaginary play-world and the material world of Elizabethan playing constitute different, although of course partially overlapping registers of perception, enjoyment, and involvement" (2000, 10). With this, Weimann points out one salient fact about the Elizabethan theatre's spaces of performance: "there is no given unified code in uses of space" (2000, 12). All told the principle points to bear in mind are that *locus* is "the purely imaginary images of locations in the story" (for instance, Macbeth's dining room), and *platea* is the "space of the open stage, not isolated from the audience" (the porter scene from *Macbeth*).[98] Furthermore, the threshold between these spaces is oftentimes fluid even when the spaces themselves have distinctive functions (2000, 12).

Likewise, YouTube's interface is both continuous and discontinuous. Therefore, even though "no single window [on the computer screen] dominates the [participant's] attention" indefinitely, I suggest that each Shakespeare YouTube interface manifests both *locus* and *platea*, representation and presentation, continuity and discontinuity. The computer screen contains, holds, and encloses the YouTube interface as a space for the video, as spaces of response (and viewing), and as an interactive tool (Manovich 29).[99]

---

[98] See *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (2000), pages 196-207, for Weimann's excellent analysis of *Macbeth's* invocation of *locus* and *platea.*

[99] See figure 4.1. YouTube is BETA, therefore its interface subject to frequent revision and updating (the interface has undergone four major and dozens of small revisions since 2006). Nevertheless, in an attempt to put my points in context it is useful to at least minimally describe key features of its interface. For a start each YouTube Shakespeare video has its own Uniform Resource Locator (URL) and each video is situated on its own interface page. Each page contains common information parameters: A video viewing screen and a number of frames below and to the right of the video screen. To the left of the video screen several pop-up buttons open additional interactive features. The first pop-up button opens a YouTube "guide,"

These spaces are intersected, (re)viewed, and scrutinized by the viewer. Concomitantly, they *perform* for the viewer, the Shakespeare play.

The *mise-en-scene* on the YouTube Shakespeare screen can be divided between the video performance box and the surrounding text boxes. In this mode yet another manifestation of *platea* surrounds the "self-contained space" of the video (Weimann 181). It is within this secondary *platea*, where the video plays automatically, that the YouTube interface is absolutely loaded with information choices—the title, the video's content, the names of the performers, hyperlinks to other related videos, hyperlinks the advertisement on the page, etc., that all become part of the "extemporal" performance space on YouTube. Within this secondary *platea* lies the space, below the video, where the participants post their responses.

Conventions of *locus* and *platea* on the Elizabethan platform stage were highly complex and occasionally complicated the modes of scripted performance. As Weimann notes,

---

essentially a selection of YouTube genres (sports, movies, etc.). The second pop-up opens a small scale collection of hyperlinked thumbnails to other YouTube videos of a similar genre to the selected video. To the right side of the video is an advertisement box on the upper right side of the interface. Below this is a selection of "related" YouTube videos, usually led by a thumbnail size advertisement video. Each of these spaces are hyperlinked and their affordances are clear. Their task is to take the viewer elsewhere on the YouTube website rather than to participate in the specific YouTube Shakespeares' video's interactive experience. Directly below the video screen is the one space that is the least interactive: the channel host's information box. This contains the channel host's name, date the video was posted onto YouTube, and the channel host's brief written abstract describing the video and acknowledging performance artists according to YouTube's guideline. Within this space there is an assortment of tabs, tags, and hyperlinks for sharing or embedding the video on other websites such as Facebook or a blog. Each video has a statistic button that can be disabled by the channel-host. FLav, for instance, has (vexingly) disabled statistics on "Romeo and Juliet." Below the poster's box is the comment section. Sometimes, YouTube overlays a transparent advertisement on the video that can be closed by clicking the "X". Another advertisement mode is forced viewing; users are forced to view an advertisement video for a minimum second count before they can watch the YouTube Shakespeare that drew them to the channel in the first place For the most part, each feature has user activated functions.

> The uses of space on sixteenth-century English stages resonated with partially resolved, partially persisting tensions between a literature-oriented, humanistically inspired poetics of imitation and the presentation order of performance practices associated with displays of extemporal wit…and exhibiting. (2000, 181)

So too, the notions of *locus* and *platea* are repeatedly in tension within the YouTube frame, where on occasion the performance shifts from the video (*locus*) to the audience commentary (*platea*) (see below). While some viewers ignore comments altogether, for others comments in the *platea* can potentially regroup the audience's attention to, or divert the audience's conversation from, the video performance. Occasionally, YouTube users' comments evince a similar kind of "extemporal wit" that Weimann suggests occurs occasionally in the *platea's* "rather unfixed space…marked by its openness towards to the world of the audience" (2000, 194). The interaction between users in YouTube's *platea* often can make up a performance of its own. Spontaneous conversations may springboard from the YouTube video, or they may occur in retaliation—a form of talk back—to the video or its uploader. Take for example the comments that appear on the trailer interface intended to publicize SonyPictures' 2011 pro-Oxfordian film *Anonymous*.

Uploaded onto Sony's YouTube channel on April 7, 2011, "Anonymous – Trailer" has so far garnered over 3 million views and over three thousand comments. While perhaps one-third of the comments are about *Anonymous* and the Shakespeare authorship debate, and perhaps another one-third discusses the trailer's soundtrack (which features a song by British band, Radiohead), a great many are tangential to the video trailer. One line of conversation in particular demonstrates user's "extemporal wit":

The comments that connect the film's title, *Anonymous*, to the Internet vigilante hacker/activist ("hactivist") group, Anonymous.[100]

This coincidence (which many find ironic as Anonymous was rumored to have hacked into Sony's PlayStation website) caused a backlash of comments that have less to do with responding to *Anonymous*' film and text and more focus on mocking its parent company. While most of the barbs are aimed at Sony, some also implicate Shakespeare, as these few samples from the several hundred that appear on *Anonymous' platea* demonstrate:

> Behi: I thought this was gonna be about the hackercollective Anonymous.. That would have been one fast movie then…
>
> unna: lol at anyone who thought this was about the modern 'anonymous.'
>
> TheM: Damn, I thought this movie was about the hacker group ANONYMOUS, and how they hacked Playstation Network. Anyway, this movie looks good.
>
> Izul: Anonymous is not amused…Just wait until 4Chan gets their hands of this.[101]
>
> apoc: whats in a name?
>
> Cobb: Anonymous on a Sony Youtube Channel IT'S A TRAP!
>
> steB: so ironic that sony are making a film called anonymous LOL
>
> wiz: so Shakespeare took down PSN?
>
> Doct: Looks interesting. Though I'm surprised noone is saying the 'we never forget. We never forgive' thing.[102]

---

[100] For more information about Anonymous the "hactivist" group see Wikipedia entry "Anonymous (group)". In this case, I feel confident that Wikipedia is a sufficient resource.

[101] 4Chan is reputedly one of the founding Anonymous activists.

TheK: Shakespear does not forgive, shakespear does not forget.[103]

While Sony intended to publicize *Anonymous* using YouTube (and I would argue they achieved their objective), it seems as though a substantial number of YouTube users landed on the interface accidentally. Although they were not expecting to find Shakespeare (and of course, the Shakespeare authorship debate), they have taken over the role of actor and chose to express their (dis)pleasure through wit and puns. "'We've all been played' lol puns" jokes YouTube user only. Nevertheless, Sony's film title drew a number of viewers who "pictured the guys with the masks," rather than film about Shakespeare.[104]

In addition to conceptualizing the *platea* as "iconographically and symbolically" fluid in Elizabethan theatre, Weimann argues that this abstract space was an "'un-mediated' space of [speech and language] delivery [where] the responsiveness of spectators was implicated" and anticipated as part of the overall performance (2000, 22). Furthermore, the *platea* was the abstract, theoretical, and physical space where postmedieval theater audiences watched actors and other audience members interact and respond, and where the actors responded to and often intentionally enfolded their audience into the performance. In *platea* mode, spectators "interacted with the performers" to create a new and unique performance experience for the remainder of

---

[102] Reputedly, Anonymous' motto is, "We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us."

[103] These random samples are transcribed out of chronological order.

[104] Coincidentally, members of Anonymous reportedly wear Guy Fawkes' masks to prevent revealing their identity when they appear in public such as at protests like Occupy Wall Street. This quote comes from YouTube user WWEi.

Shakespeare's audience (Norland 54). The *platea* "implicated a number of material functions that derived from its downstage physical proximity to the audience" (Weimann 2000, 195). As is suggested above in my examples of "Cannibalism in Titus Andronicus" YouTube user comments on the *platea* evoke "the visceral world of ordinary living" (195). Taken all together, these characteristics manifest themselves on YouTube Shakespeare interfaces as performance.

Via YouTube's interactive frames, users explicitly and implicitly participate in several *modi operandi*.[105] Once the explicit participatory mode of uploading the YouTube Shakespeare video is achieved, the interface is ready for audience scrutiny.[106] Second to the video upload is the use of the comment boxes, where registered users are encouraged to post responses.[107] Less frequently, users will post a video response, typically of the same topic and genre.[108] Often video producers and viewers will use the comment section

---

[105] Mirko Schafer breaks down social media participation into two overlapping practices: implicit and explicit participation. "Explicit participation reflects conscious, voluntary, often intrinsically motivated activities…implicit participation depends on the formalization of user activities as default functions in the technological design" (120). In other words, explicit participation is performed by those who actively contribute in sharing content, software development, and participate in "fan culture [and] writing blogs, posting and creating content" (51-52). Implicit participation is a little less creative, it involves the uploading of files (like photos) to user-created content platforms (like Flickr), adding tags to existing uploads, rating platforms, clicking "like," etc. (52). Explicit participation "mostly refers to the appropriation of technology by users and the development of technical skills" (52). Implicit participation draws on user habits, such as sharing information and sending each other copies of films and music files. Just by watching a video on YouTube, users participate in generating data" (52).

[106] Of course, the primary mode of explicit participation is—like the authoring of a playtext for stage performance—the behind-the-scenes activity of creating the video.

[107] In 2006, Jakob Nielsen, a social media user advocate, published his theory on social media participation inequality that argues that "90% of [online] users are lurkers who never contribute, 9% of users contribute a little [example: click a like or dislike button], and 1% of users account for almost all the action" in social media sites like YouTube (Nielsen). Seven years later Nielsen's 90-9-1 rule is still considered the maxim for online social media use.

[108] Users can also click on the channel host's name and the hyperlink will lead them to the channel host's home channel where, once again, users can leave comments for the channel host. This form of interactivity

to enter into an exchange of dialog, in other words, a brief conversation. For instance, TheSonnetProject host frequently responds to comments on both his channels. To illustrate this, I transcribe a conversation that takes place about his performance of Iago's soliloquy from *Othello* 2.1.273 with YouTube user Robb. Both participants move from discussing Iago's motivations and ways to perform the character onstage.

> Robb: This is really effective and powerful!!! Any Tips on the motivation of the character etc.?
>
> Keks: When I played the role on stage, my director and I went with the idea that Iago is not a highly intelligent super-villain (Evil Hamlet), but rather a profoundly bitter, deeply angry nobody who lucks into-and shrewdly exploits-a series of useful events/people. I played him as a brusquely charming, rough-and-ready professional soldier…a vulgar but endearing "bloke", who everyone likes, and whose rage and malevolence only surfaced in soliloquy, or with the easily manipulated Rodrigo.
>
> Robb: that's great, I especially like the idea that he is a 'nobody' In your opinion what is the most important emotion in this soliloquy that iago is trying to convey to the audience?
>
> Keks: I think he is trying to make us-the audience-sympathise with him…he is offering us a rationale for what he is doing and what he is about to do. But what he actually provides is an insight into his weakness. Losing the promotion has confronted him with his own expendability. He has been rendered obsolete and it infuriates him. He wants us to understand his anger, and he ends up rambling his way through a series of paranoid delusions about his own wife's supposed infidelities.
>
> Robb: You sir are brilliant! Any advice for an actor using this monologue?
>
> Keks: I'm a bit old school. ;o) 1- Know your words. An amateur learns until he remembers; a professional learns until he can't forget.

---

does not manifest on the video page, and therefore I discount it as influencing the ways viewers receive the Shakespeare performance.

> 2- Speak clearly. It's a text-based medium, if the audience can't hear the words clearly, everyone may as well go home.
>
> 3- Know what the speech means-every single word, sentence, beat, turn, change, key word, and motivation.
>
> 4-Tell the story. This is vital! Don't get so caught up in 'acting' or 'becoming the character' that you forget to talk to us.
>
> And lastly…have fun! It's not call a 'play' for nothing. Break a leg. :o) [109]

As this lengthy exchange between TheSonnetProject and his audience member demonstrates, the conversation—visible to all who view the video—makes use of YouTube's social media affordances. Keks and Robb engage in a dialog that resounds familiarly like the kinds of conversation that could take place face to face between theatre spectators, between an actor and his audience, or anywhere else where people gather. The tenor of the conversation suggests the two user only know one another through Keks' "Othello" YouTube interface.

The point I am trying to underline is that Keks and Robb's conversation employs YouTube's very visible act of messaging, either as written language or video response, which in turn becomes part of performance experience for sequential viewers of the video. Such rich conversations on YouTube's *platea* may cause laughter, anger, boredom or may spur pedagogical, philosophical, or practical discussions about Shakespeare, the users, the images, the soundtrack, and other banal or unpredictable remarks. In the case of YouTube Shakespeares, the conversation could be about Shakespeare performance, as Keks and Robb demonstrate. Other times conversations and responses could be about the

[109] Keks is the channel name for TheSonnetProject's other YouTube channel. Keks, a professional actor, performs Iago in his YouTube video titled: "Othello—That Cassio loves her."

materials used in a YouTube Shakespeare mash-up. I return here to FLav's "Romeo and Juliet" to examine what happens when a 40-plus year old film employs an actor to play Romeo who bears an uncanny resemblance (in the minds of some fans) to a pop icon of the 21st century.

With 1,147,500-plus views and 656 user comments, FLav's 2009 upload is modestly successful in the broader scheme of YouTube Shakespeares, very popular in the genre of *Romeo and Juliet* mash-ups, and by far the most watched of her three uploaded videos.[110] With such attention-getting numbers FLav's work often appears on the right sidebar whenever I watch (non-FLav) videos featuring Shakespeare's "star-crossed lovers" (1.1.6).[111] I examine the full *platea* of "A time for us" about once a week, looking for new responses and reactions to Flav's "creatively redacted" and redeployed Shakespeare remediation (O'Neill 64). Recently, as with many Zefferelli-inspired YouTube *Romeo and Juliet* mash-ups and film clips, what I note is a reoccurrence of one particular conversation: the striking resemblance between popular twenty-five year-old heart-throb, Zac Ephron and Zefferelli's 1968 Romeo, then seventeen year-old Leonard Whiting. A few of such comments from FLav's *platea* are transcribed below:

---

[110] The information on FLav's home channel reports she is female (I purposely exclude other details). When I first encountered FLav's video in July 2012 it had been viewed around 750,000 times. From then to now the video's view-count has escalated rapidly (August 21, 2012 view-count was 810,030). Current viewcount and comment numbers date: February 20, 2013. FLav did not respond to my interview request, and it appears as if she has not been active on her account since she posted a comment on her channel site one year ago. In the meantime, her "Romeo and Juliet" video hosts google placed advertisements, which according to Web.com should be generating an income for her through YouTube Partners' plan.

[111] YouTube's algorithm presumes that when I watch one version of Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, I will be interested in a similar mash-up and makes selections for its viewers to purview. This is a result of YouTube metrics; the website takes my choices into consideration and then selects for me videos of similar genre. Hodgdon called this list a "Netflix-like queue," in that it seems to present viewers with unlimited digital selections in the same manner as online DVD streaming (315).

nicl: Zac Efron was born to play Romeo

Kail: omg he looks lyk zac efron!

aish: I like him better than Zac Efron though, his hair is different :] . . . Romeo is the dude from Austin Powers, right?

kari: yes, he does look a little like Zac. Zac's eyes are a little more radiant

feew: I think it's more unfortunate that Zac Efron looks like Leonard Whiting

FinF: Romeo and Juliet is a great story but I hate that the fact that the actor who plays Romeo looks like Zac Efron

lysj: no way that's not zac efron. Hollywood must have some secret time machine stashed away [112]

While it might seem irrelevant within the scope of Shakespeare studies to record audience conversations about Zac Efron's resemblance to Leonard Whiting, I include them here not only to demonstrate the vernacular nature of comment posting via YouTube's *platea*, but to also suggest the sense of community the *platea* surrounding the YouTube video engenders.[113] For instance FLav commentator/user abib asks: "does anybody else think romeo looks like Zac Efron?" an inquiry that presumes an answer. Furthermore, these examples demonstrate how the world outside of YouTube (and Shakespeare) is superimposed on viewers' experiences of a YouTube Shakespeare performance. Weimann argues that performance spaces in Shakespeare's early modern theatre always navigate the threshold of representation and presentation not just *in* but *of*

[112] All comments posted under FLav's "Romeo and Juliet." 24 February 2013.

[113] I also include comments about Zac Efron and Leonard Whiting's resemblance to one another because they record current popular culture conversations, which could be of interest in future cultural studies projects. See chapter six for a discussion on the curious afterlives of cultural phenomena.

the real world, as he demonstrates in his discussion of three overlapping discursive thresholds in the *platea* that I outline below.

Just as the *platea* in the early modern theatre was all other non-imaginary space on, off, and about the stage, including, as Weimann reminds us, "the visceral world [of the] outside as well as inside the gates of the playhouse," a world superimposed "with all sorts of display and distraction," YouTube Shakespeares' *platea* not only is the space on the interface that surrounds the video, it is also the space outside and beyond the computer screen's frame. The *platea* is the space where the viewer's body dwells. It is the space where videos get replayed in media, like television, apart from the Internet (2000, 195).[114] The *platea* is also implicates the space around the source screen where voices from the video can be heard. In other words, all else beside the video itself that YouTube Shakespeares' participants experience: the desk their laptop rests on, the voices of people who occupy the same place they do, the smells around them, and the *mise-en-scene* visible in their line of sight outside of the screen. These phenomena all effect viewers "seeing" of the play, and often their understanding of the performance. YouTube's *platea* is the real world surrounding the user, because just like in Shakespeare's early modern theatre, the real world effects viewers' perceptions of the performance (video).[115]

---

[114] See chapter one for a discussion on the ways mainstream broadcast media "poach" YouTube videos.

[115] During my research process, I encouraged a colleague to view a YouTube Shakespeare video titled "Romeo & Juliet-Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre pt 1". As the title implies, Romeo and Juliet are performed through sock puppetry. The eight-plus minute video is updates Romeo and Juliet, and includes a Cole Porter song that creates lyrics built on plot summaries of several Shakespeare plays. The performance is thoroughly kitsch, but clever. Twenty seconds into the video she shuddered, turned to me and said, "It's puppets. I don't watch puppets. Not even Shakespeare puppets on a computer [screen]." Somehow, the virtual reality of the YouTube performance slipped out of the screen and into the real world. Although the

So even though video producers cannot see the viewing participants during the performance, I suggest that surrounding space influences the performance in often intangible ways. Counter-critics might argue that the outside-the-illuminate-screen space is not truly the *platea* if the user-performers cannot act to their audience's immediate and ongoing responses the way actors did in the postmedieval theatre. Yet it important to remember that (in the *platea*) the early modern audience was (and YouTube Shakespeares producer-users are) aware they were an interactive part of a Shakespeare performance as part of a larger, "open stage" world outside of the imaginary, or in the case of YouTube, the imaginary audience standing in a real world outside the virtual world of the YouTube interface. Furthermore, as many critics have argued, in Shakespeare's time the emphasis was placed on hearing over seeing staged performances. Gurr reminds us that,

> Elizabethan and early Stuart playgoers were raised to listen rather than to watch, which meant that being with hearing distance was far more important than seeing something . . . [m]odern audiences are conditioned to be passive and to be mute, and to use their eyes more than their ears. (196-197)

Likewise, the performance may be heard in the outside-of-the-screen *platea* by passers-by, other people in the room, or by just the solitary audience member. In this scenario, the responses of others who occupy public spaces could possibly intervene in the viewing experience, or not. Actions and responses that occur in the off-screen *platea* may have no

---

puppets are held hostage within the world of the video, her knee-jerk response, in the *platea*, indicated a sense for her of presence with the puppets.

impact on the performance but it could well effect its reception. The *mise-en-scene* of the off-screen *platea* could influence how individuals receive and digest the video content. Likewise, the off-screen *platea* may have implications for *how* one watches the video. Whether viewers are alone, with a friend, in the classroom, in public, wearing headphones, silencing the performance, expanding the video, after (or before) a high-school/university Shakespeare class, and more. Each of these circumstances effect the viewing experience. In short, the outside-the-screen platea invokes the second of Weimann's three discursive thresholds, acknowledgement of the "adjacent cultural landscape" (2000, 195).

In *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice* Weimann argues for "three discursive and nondiscursive [threshold] areas" of the Elizabethan *platea*. In brief they are 1) recognition of the irreducible "human animal"; 2) acknowledgment of the "adjacent cultural landscape"; and 3) the apparent transactive "dis(continuity)" between actors' real life and performing roles. My thinking about YouTube leads me to hone in on the second of these three, the function of the *platea* that represents a threshold—the transition, really—between playacting and the "visceral world of ordinary living"; the space and function of performance, Weimann claims, that presented the liminality between the world of the theatre and the world just outside the turnstile (195). These downstage performances were designed to transition theatregoers who physically, and in their imagination, moved from their every day world into the theatre's "marginal regions in contemporary London" (195). In other words, authors, actors, and audience were fully aware that the performance extended—often as word-of-mouth—into the social-economic-political-cultural environment outside the world of the imaginary, and the

place of the theatre, and the place of the theatre represented the world "beyond the gates of the playhouse" (195).

In a similar vein, YouTube Shakespeares user-performers are fully aware that they *are* performing for the camera as surrogate for a body of viewers—the imagined audience—and that the camera precedes the anticipated audience response and interactivity many YouTube user-performers hope will occur from their YouTube Shakespeares' production and their potential fans. As Michael Wesch notes, when YouTube producers are performing in front of a web camera, "the [producer] doesn't know the viewer" but only knows, and hopes, that viewers are "out there" (Wesch). It is not uncommon, for instance, for producers to post comments such as "I hope you guys like it" or "any feedback would be greatly appreciated" in their production information box. This reaching out by YouTube producer-users to YouTube Shakespeares' user-viewers is reminiscent of postmedieval performance interactivity, as we see with these familiar lines from *Twelfth Night*:

> But that's all one, our play is done,
>
> And we'll strive to please you every day (*TN* 5.1.394-95)

Like the Fool's direct address to the audience in Shakespeare's postmedieval theater, YouTube Shakespeare producers directly address their users through text messages, or in their performance (see discussion on AB below). Besides an obvious request to the YouTube Shakespeares interactive community, I think these YouTube Shakespeares user appeals are compelling intertextual moments that call attention to themselves as they express anxieties about their performance, and perhaps about (re)appropriating

Shakespeare's cultural works, which are for many actors—professional or otherwise—are markers of high culture performance.

As YouTube videos are occasionally broadcasted on television and frequently hyper-linked to other media, YouTube users could hope for even greater dissemination of their work. AB's "Hamlet St" was broadcast on New Jersey television news broadcasts in the summer of 2007. Both he and filmmaker/producer YZ were interviewed about the event. Both YouTube and broadcast media exposed AB's talents to a broader audience than AB could have hoped for as a high-school Shakespeare performer in the town of Camden, New Jersey.

So far this chapter has expanded on YouTube's similarities to Weimann's *platea*; arguing for the ways YouTube Shakespeares evince the functions of the less apparent *locus* is a little more challenging, and unsurprisingly so as the website is designed for explicit and implicit participatory practices. But I want to examine what happens when YouTube users choose *not* to engage with YouTube's interactive on-screen *platea* by simply clicking on video's the "fill the screen" button.[116] When this occurs, the expanded video hides YouTube's interactive affordances. In this mode, the expanded video functions analogously like the imaginary space of Weimann's *locus*. Users are often momentarily captivated by the acutely visible video. The video content functions in ways that are similar to viewing film or television. Users simply watch. Or do they? As twentieth century reception studies have shown, watching is a complicated *activity*. As E. Deidre Pribram argues, each viewer brings with him/her to the viewing experience

[116] Something similar can occur in the *platea*; one click on "show all comments" removes all else but the trail of participatory responses addressing the YouTube performance and the entire interpretative community (slide forthcoming).

information that informs the viewing experience, "the spectator [of film] is the result of various discourses put in play by the text, but also the subject of social economic, and political practices beyond the text, which are brought to bear at the moment of screen/viewer interaction" (159). This, Pribram argues, "may render the spectator as anything along a barometer of viewership from passive imbiber of pre-packaged ideology to active and successful resistent [sic] of these same oppressive, psychic, discursive, and socio-historical forces" (162). Metaphorically speaking, what takes place on the screen is the unreachable; it serves as the space of imagination. But watching the video in YouTube's space of the imaginary, just as viewing scenes performed in the dramaturgical *locus* of the early modern theatre, does not preclude activity. The video is, of course, the uploader's imagination brought to fruition through the creation and the uploading of the video. The levels of activity in the reception of the video are dependent on users' cultural history. Nevertheless, the video is a performance that is fixed no matter how many times the user stops, starts, and re-watches the video. In this, user interactivity does not change the video's content, but it may effect how the viewer receives and perceives performance.

Arguing that the expanded video functions in the space of the imaginary is also complicated by the video's content. For example, when I watch Machinamom's "Macbeth Music Video: Muse Assassin" in full screen mode, I am fully engaged in the imagery and imaginary space of the video's graphics as *mise-en-scene* for the narrative.[117] I've watch "Macbeth—Assassin" dozens of time, scrutinizing each frame, watching carefully how the text within the video matches the images, listening to how

[117] See chapter five for a larger discussion on Machinamom's "Macbeth Music Video: Muse Assassin."

Muse's lyrics synchronize with the narrative, and simply watching for the pleasure of enjoying the mash-up's images and sound. For the four and one-half minutes that the video plays, I am fully engrossed in the viewing experience. I am so immersed by the ways the content invokes Macbeth as performance, I forget that I am watching YouTube. "Macbeth--Assassin" is a video experience situated in YouTube's *locus.*

However, when I view AB performing "Hamlet St," I am always aware of the medium of performance. Although I suggest the video is the space of the imaginary, the *mise-en-scene* in YZ's video makes me aware that I am watching a young actor performing in an urban U.S. city. There is, using Weimann's phrase, a kind of doubleness evinced in AB/YZ's production. It invokes the *platea* and *locus* at once. The video as a fixed performance evinces YouTube's *locus.* Yet the video content, complete with the empty and derelict spaces that surround AB, distract me from his performance and from imagining the spaces of Denmark. At the same time they cause me to imagine the urban spaces of a stressed U.S. city. It is within the *locus* that is "Hamlet St" as video that I encounter an awareness of overlap between the imaginary and the interactive elements that Weimann argues occur in the early modern theatrical performances.

This overwhelming awareness that both AB and the *mise-en-scene* are incongruent to Shakespeare performance means that AB himself needs to forge connections not only between the *Hamlet* narrative and the stage-as-(not-)a-stage, but also between himself as the performer and his YouTube viewers. He attempts to create this link between himself and his audience users by speaking directly to the camera, introducing himself at the beginning of the video: "Hi," AB exclaims in a rush, "my name is AB. I'm from [a U.S. city] and I will doing the part of Hamlet from the play

Hamlet written by Mr. William Shakespeare." This direct mode of address is typical of the postmedieval *platea*, where the actor speaks directly to the audience. AB is compelled to situate his viewers because the video performance (as an analogy of *locus*) cannot—complicated as it is by its *mise-en-scene*—dismiss that it is situated very much in the real world.

The video "Hamlet St" registers another version of *platea*. AB begins the performance in a *platea*-like mode by directly speaking to his YouTube users, similar to the way Weimann argues *Henry V's* Chorus strives in that play's Prologue to overcome the Elizabethan's audience's "heightened awareness of the gaps . . . between the narrative of history and the stage-as-stage [with a] positive appeal to the cooperation on the part of the spectators" (2000, 71). Through his performance, AB strives to create the imaginary space of *Hamlet's* Denmark. He recites and enacts Hamlet's lines with such sincerity and gusto it is both impossible and possible to *see* him as Hamlet. While the video is fixed, and is in the video space of YouTube interface (*locus*), the *mise-en-scene within* the video is the imaginary that is not the imaginary AB tried to create of Shakespeare's *Hamlet's* Denmark. It is the imaginary created by the viewing users, in other words, the imaginary (and real) location most viewers have in mind of his U.S. city and its disparity from the imagined space (and [high] cultural setting) of the stage (and the court of *Hamlet*).

"Hamlet St's" video's *mise-en-scene*, and AB as the overzealous performer, may rupture users' imaginary conceptions of Hamlet in Denmark, but it conjures an imaginary of his home city as a space of danger for a young (underprivileged?) actor performing Shakespeare. This evidence comes from YouTube users, many of whom believe that AB

has “something special, something Shakespeare” going for him, something that will get him a ticket out of his hometown.

> phil: You are such a wonderful actor!!! I’m your number one fan!!! Heal [U.S. city]
>
> utub: that was awesome…i seeu on broadway
>
> TheD: I just wish I had the courage to go out and hold forth like that. You Have real stage presence. I shall certainly l look out for your other work. A beautifully acted soliloquy. Develop your craft and the stage is yours. Excellent advertisement for [your hometown] too. Well done.
>
> chiq: You not only have talent, you have the nerve to show it in a great atmosphere. All jokes aside, I love your soliloquy. Next time do it in front of a street gang and video their reaction. I’ll wager they will join you. Or kill you one or the other

They see in the video a crime-ridden urban landscape, but AB’s performance of Shakespeare is seen by many commentators as a force that can elevate AB out of his environment. This notion of Shakespeare as an elevating force, one that should be performed on the stage, speaks to the ways in which AB’s users view Shakespeare’s work as a form of cultural capital—a notion that in itself, conjures another kind of imaginary and one that is well covered by Graham Holderness. My point behind discussing these comments to AB’s performance is to support my stance that YouTube’s video space functions similarly to the postmedieval theatres’ *locus.* While the video content—“a more or less fixed and focused scenic unit”—complicates this reading of the video space as *locus*, it also reminds scholars, actors, and critics alike, that “the relationship between *locus* and *platea* was [is] complex and variable”; any preset limitation of these two conceptual spaces of performance “does not do full justice” to the early modern and YouTube renderings of Shakespeares’ works (Weimann 1978, 79).

Conclusion

In his opening chapter of *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice* Weimann ruminates over the shifts in the ways the "majority of people" today encounter Shakespeare "not through reading what he wrote, but through watching certain electronically processed images of filmed performances" (3). He voices concerns about the appropriation of Shakespeare's playtext in media as "bringing forth 'representative modes' of reception that are even more remote from cultural 'intervention, participation, direct action'" of live theatre (3). Though he did not, perhaps could not, have anticipated the particular interactivity of Shakespeare YouTubes, he did speak to the potentiality of "textual assimilation of the classic [as a] new poetics of cultural response" (3). In this chapter I have strived to make clear that YouTube Shakespeares evinces a "new poetics of cultural response." While he does not embrace this "new poetics" precisely because he rejects "the analogy between early modern and late modern shifts in the accessibility and authorization of communicative media," Weimann's theories on the uses of space, of *locus* and *platea*, and the implicated interactivity between actor and audience help us to think about the significance and the impact of YouTube Shakespeares as performance spaces. This includes the ways user participation is manifested on YouTube and Shakespeare as a subject of user-generated performances. Weimann's theoretical underpinnings of *locus* and *platea* offer Shakespeareans a platform for investigating the interactivity of YouTube's interface. In thinking about the forces of intersecting Shakespeare's postmedieval theatre and YouTube Shakespeares I remix and offer this my paraphrasing of the following quote by W. B. Worthen:

> The analogy between the computer's hardware and the theatre's material structure and personnel, between the computer's operating system and the theater's basic conventions of training, production and performance, and between the computer's software and the text, the dramatic script that directs the operating system to undertake a specific set of activities, is hardly exact. (2008, 61)

If we substitute "computer" with YouTube, then Worthen's iteration serves to remind us of all the ways in which digital communication and interfaces are not replacements for live or, even though I have so heavily relied on Weimann throughout this essay, the Elizabethan theatre. However, what the activity found YouTube Shakespeares' interfaces make explicit is that ordinary people still want to talk and engage with the Shakespeare performance—and how much different is that desire from Shakespeare's Elizabethan audiences?

I suggest Shakespeare interactive and interpretative communities on YouTube share a common bond with an Elizabethan audience in their desires to be part of "something special" *vis-à-vis* the Shakespeare performance. Weimann's evaluation of Elizabethan performance spaces and audience reception speaks to the specific ways that Elizabethan actors and audience responded to the [Shakespeare] performance as text. While YouTube Shakespeares put forward "a different way of thinking about Shakespeare," they also reclaim Weimann's terms, *locus* and *platea*, in ways that are useful as they map YouTube's interface. While this mapping is often complicated by the some videos' *mise-en-scene*, as we see with "Hamlet St," in many other ways the terms define YouTube's interface as critical spaces for performance. In this they spur future

scholarly interrogations of YouTube through other theoretical lens commonly and exclusively associated with Shakespeare literary and performance studies. This chapter has offered one theoretical re-visioning of a seminal theoretical approach to traditional Shakespeare studies and illustrated its analogous relationship to YouTube Shakespeares.

CHAPTER 5

"TELLING FICTIONS": YOUTUBE SHAKESPEARES AND FAN COMMUNITIES

> *For media producers, [the] shift in technology and practice has created a wide range of new methods for generating, monitoring, and communicating with audiences. For fans, it has empowered them as never before to band together, engage creatively with content, and have their voices heard.*
>
> Jeff Watson[118]

> *Shakespeare's cultural authority, appropriation, and adaptation in print, cinematic, and digital communications technologies may be usefully theorized in terms of loss: new technologies are always about speed, and therefore are always already about belatedness.*
>
> Richard Burt[119]

> *Drama is a territorial art…of space as well as words, and it requires a place of its own, in or around a community, in which to mount its telling fictions and its eloquent spectacles.*
>
> Stephen Mullaney[120]

And now, introducing Shlockspeare

If Richard Burt's provocative edited collection, *Shakespeare After Mass Media*, first appeared in 2012 rather than 2002, this collection of fourteen critical essays focused on mass media "Schlockpeares" would have undoubtedly included a chapter or two on YouTube Shakespeares.[121] Calling attention to icon-laden (where icon is image, language, or other signifiers) artifacts that exploit Shakespeare's cultural capital, Burt's non-derogatory Schlockspeares bestows credence on Shakespeare manifestations that are

---

[118] See "Fandom Squared: Web 2.0 and fannish production," p. 1.

[119] See *Shakespeare in Mass Media*, p. 8.

[120] *The Place of the Stage*. p. 7.

[121] Burt, reputed for his neologisms, remixes "Shakespeare" with the colloquial phrase "schlock" to form Schlockspeares, a moniker for the myriad marginalized, trivial, and kitschy Shakespeare adaptations and appropriations in mass media that seldom find their way under the academic microscope (8). See Burt, page 5 for examples of schlock Shakespeares.

frequently dismissed as "trivial, obscure, unknown, forgotten, unarchived, and beyond the usual academic purview" (8). Noting that the "Shakespeare canon itself is becoming enlarged and fragmented," Burt urges Shakespeareans with a particular interest in select schlocky Shakespeares to salvage marginalized works from irretrievable and inevitable loss vis-à-vis theorizing and analyzing Schlockspeares *as* schlock (13). I interpret this as a call for the examination of schlock that at once interrogates Shakespeare's (in)stability, the ephemerality of the Shakespeare object, and recognizes the forces that either uphold or overturn the iconicity that many assume "Shakespeare"—in all its manifestations—elicits. While Burt acknowledges that it is "impossible to archive all examples" (5), he insists that Schlockspeares call for,

> A different way of thinking about Shakespeare and mass media, one that focuses on both communications technologies as obsolete, ephemeral, dated, and schlocky, and on the personal collection rather than on the politics of exclusion and public access. (7)

I suggest that YouTube Shakespeares would have been included in Burt's collection because the online videos provoke us to wonder, as Laurie Osborne does in "Harlequin Presents: That '70s Shakespeare and Beyond," "what purpose Shakespeare serves in cultural productions that eschew 'high art' aspirations and often celebrate their own specialized, even topical appeal to small transitory audiences" (2002, 128).[122] While some users *may* consider YouTube Shakespeares as "high art,"—after all, the many YouTube Shakespeare high school performances suggest a student-based reverence for

[122] Osborne's essay is included in Burt's *Shakespeare After Mass Media.*

the dramatic works—the subgenres of mashup, parody, animation, and more suggest the majority of YouTube Shakespeares appeal to a popular aesthetic and niche audiences, not unlike the audience that is Osborne's assumed readers.[123]

In this chapter I examine YouTube Shakespeares as schlock. By this I mean I examine YouTube Shakespeares' video performances as "trivial" artifacts of "communication technologies" and as human practices that appeal to the "personal" collector. I suggest YouTube Shakespeare users (including me as the user-lurker/user-critic) fall under, in varying degrees, Burt's notions of the "melancholic loser . . . who happens to be both a reader of Shakespeare and a reader/viewer of media and subgenres in which Shakespeare is adapted and cited" (8). My interests in Shakespeare, and its reception, and YouTube as a site of performance and user interactivity, lead me to think critically about YouTube as site for critical inquiry. Burt's call for the development of theoretical frameworks to address Schlockspeares valorizes an academic pursuit of trivial, marginalized, and (dare I suggest it?) "Othered" Shakespeares. In response, I approach YouTube Shakespeares through a critical lens that I have so far alluded to, but

[123] I prefer the term popular culture over mass culture or mass media. Burt's mass media Schlockspeares are, for the most part, inert Shakespeares; they are produced within an economic model that presumes a market economy built on profit through consumption. They fall under the paradigm of push media (see chapter one). Mass media consumers may be "immersed" in a Shakespeare cultural experience of sorts, but they never truly move into an interactive mode of communal response and (re)creation (Hutcheon 23). Shakespeare YouTubes, however, are interactive Schlockspeares that speak of niche culture(s) and their (re)productions. There are, for instance, innumerable "bottom-up" Shakespeare performances posted on YouTube that are created by fans and equally a vast number of YouTube Shakespeare videos that are produced and uploaded by mainstream production companies. YouTube Shakespeares also move latterly—distributed from user to user such as from YouTube to Facebook, where thereafter the video may move repeatedly. Because of people's YouTube Shakespeare activities—as creators, users, sharers, commentators, for instance—I use consider YouTube Shakespeares as products of, and for, popular culture.

not yet applied with the vigor YouTube Shakespeares deserve: fan studies.[124] In my opening chapter I state that fans are the "elephant in the room" of YouTube Shakespeares study. They are an element of YouTube Shakespeares that some critics acknowledge in their own analyses, but sidestep theoretically in favor of more traditional approaches. Fans studies are to Shakespeare studies what YouTube Shakespeares would be to New Criticism: outliers on the spectrum of serious scholarship. This is not surprising; a substantial number of criticisms in fan studies literature demonstrate that even though the field of fan studies is gaining recognition in scholarship, and mass media is beginning to value fan activity, "it is all too common for fans to be dismissed as Others" (Gray k157). This is especially true, I claim, in Shakespeare studies. To my knowledge there are no publications that explicitly link fan studies to mediatized Shakespeare performances or, for that matter, Shakespeare studies at large.

In this chapter I argue that YouTube Shakespeare users are fans whose conversations and artifacts (the videos) are both responses to mainstream mass media Shakespeares, and a force that participates in the (re)creation and reception of Shakespeare. As such, they warrant our critical attention. Furthermore, I contend that the concomitance of YouTube Shakespeare fans, their activities, their cultural artifacts, and the website in its entirety places pressure on the (perceived) limitations of Shakespeare performance. A phenomenon of social, cultural, and media intersection, YouTube Shakespeares call for a reconsideration of our understanding of Shakespeare in social settings, our definitions of performance, and for greater critical attention to popular

[124] While I value the conjecture of Burt's descriptor, "the melancholic loser," I avoid his esoteric descriptor in favor of one that is rhetorically more complementary and theoretically underpinned: the fan.

interpretations of the work that is Shakespeare. In this chapter I demonstrate that an approach through fan studies provides an avenue for Shakespeareans to examine the ways people interpret, receive, and produce Shakespeare via YouTube's participatory affordances. This includes user-generated mashups, remixes, adaptations, performances, and other interpretative forms that encourage conversation, debate, and public musings about Shakespeare, its performance, its performers, the videos, and authenticity. These discursive activities continually (re)shape, for the YouTube Shakespeare community, an understanding of Shakespeare.[125] In the study of YouTube we see Shakespeare influence and inform audiences, and audiences influence and inform YouTube Shakespeares.

I choose fan studies as my analytical method to study YouTube Shakespeares for two reasons. First, the theories and methods of fan studies underpin an approach to YouTube Shakespeares as a study of user production and reception in online culture. Although audience studies is only one part of fan studies, it helps us understand how and why people watch and interpret Shakespeare, and the effects of their watching. Reception study is often an elusive endeavor in Shakespeare performance contexts, as well as the wider field of theatre studies. Theater/performance reception studies, narrowly focused through the prism of fan theory, are particularly difficult to locate. John Tulloch notes,

> Despite a powerful theorization of performance in recent years, audience studies within theater/performance analysis have tended to remain a

[125] My use of the term community comes from van Dijick (who refers to Antoine Hennion's arguments about communities and taste and) who defines online communities like those that occupy YouTube as follows: "[T]he term 'community' relates to groups with a communal preference in music, movies, or books (a so-called 'taste community'); building taste is an activity that necessarily ties in individuals with social groups…in relation to media [community] refers to a large range of user groups, some of which resemble grassroots movements, but the overwhelming majority coincide with consumer groups or entertainment platforms" (45).

> marginal activity, and where these have existed…they have not engaged with theories of fandom. (k2099)

Additionally, while academic criticisms of Shakespeare in media performance are ubiquitous, I know of no academic audience study of Shakespeare media performance. In 2005 Janet Staiger bemoaned the lack of approaches for the study of media stating, "although scholars of media have called for critical methods that would address the special qualities of moving images, none has appeared" (13). Staiger's publication arrived just on the cusp of Web 2.0, a period of technological change that enabled the widespread growth of participatory culture.[126] In the intervening years, however, as websites related to mainstream and user-generated moving images in their various subgenres found a home on the Internet, online participatory culture has spurred a number of ethnographic qualitative studies that focus on media audience reception and participation. These are nearly all conducted through a fans studies approach.

In their pursuit of online ethnographic studies, researchers gain insight on how fans construct their own texts, participate in discursive communities, evince their analytic skills, and make sense of the objects of their passion.[127] Fan studies scholars call this "making meaning," a term that is so overused it has become a referent practically (and ironically) devoid of meaning. I think it is more useful to think of YouTube Shakespeare

---

[126] As Michael Mandiberg summarizes Tim O'Reilly's definition of Web 2.0 " as an upgraded computer-programming model that has enable a set of participatory website built on lightweight server-based applications that move rich data across platforms" (k176). Mandiberg cautions, however, that it is important in social media studies to be aware that Web 2.0 "describes the tools for making this new media; it does not address the process, product, author, or audience" (k176).

[127] Examples of subjects that have been the focus of online fan video studies range from fan-made film trailers to user-generated fan videos (remixes, mashups) on television shows like *Hawaii-Five-0, Highlander,* and *Buffy*.

users as acting interpreters, and their products as acting interpretations. To my way of thinking, these terms—acting interpreter and acting interpretation—signal the influence of cultural contexts, and recognize that Shakespeare is always subject to nuanced fluxes in performance adaptation. More importantly it signals the fan as agent of production and reception, two integral elements of Shakespeare in performance, a particularly important element of YouTube Shakespeares. As part of the ever ongoing adaptive processes of Shakespeare, Shakespeare fans as acting interpreters turn their engagement with mediatized Shakespeares "into some type of cultural activity, by sharing feelings and thoughts about [it] with friends, by joining a community of other fans who share common interests," creating and then posting their interpretations on YouTube for other Shakespeare fans' viewing pleasure (Jenkins 1998, 88). YouTube as a fan study offers scholars an avenue that traverses the world of user-generated Shakespeare performances.

The second reason I choose a fan studies approach to my study of YouTube Shakespeares is that it supplements my literary-based textual analysis training. A focus on the text, as I have previously stated, involves detailed attention to YouTube's videos as text. This includes examining the details that construct the performance, registering allusions to the plays, and noting myriad and minute ways the video performance evokes Shakespeare. But a literary studies approach alone pays little heed to the humans, the fans, who are responsible for the video. YouTube Shakespeare videos and their interfaces as sites of performance cannot be analyzed fully or critically understood as separate entities from their users. YouTube Shakespeares' hermeneutic value lies not only in the videos, but in their connections to the people who create them. A literary studies approach of close reading intersected with fans studies creates an analytical force that

provides scholars of YouTube Shakespeares a double-pronged approach to the study of both the videos and the people who create and respond to them. Throughout this dissertation I have been striving to point out that an almost absolute attention to YouTube as text marginalizes the people for whom, and by whom, YouTube Shakespeares is produced. I contend that through fan studies, we give a voice to the people who create and interpret Shakespeare for themselves and others, and for whom Shakespeare on film, television, and other visual media are intended.

Fan Studies: Theorizing the acts and actions of Burt's "melancholy losers."

Most media scholars recognize that fan theory's prominence arose thanks to Henry Jenkins and his transformative work, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992).[128] Although one of my goals in this chapter is to demonstrate how fan studies has expanded since Jenkins' now canonized work brought fan studies into the mainstream, it would be remiss of me not to turn to both his 1992 and his updated 2012 editions as they remain the cornerstone of fan theory. In these, Jenkins identifies "at least five distinct (though often interconnected) dimensions of [fan] culture" that are evident in YouTube Shakespeares (2012, 1). They are:

> [The fan community's] relationship to a particular mode of reception; its role in encouraging viewer activism; its function as an interpretive community; its particular traditions of cultural production; its status as an alternative social community. (1-2)

[128] As Suzanne Scott, Jenkins collaborator on the 20th anniversary edition of *Textual Poachers* (2012) states, "you would be hard pressed to find a contemporary scholar of fan culture who couldn't tell you with fannish precision when they first encountered" Jenkin's non-canonical book (Jenkins 2012, vii).

Although these five criteria were established in the first wave of fan studies, in many ways they still hold true today. However, it is important to bear in mind that a number of excellent critical works in the domain of fan scholarship demonstrate that "the field of fan studies has become increasingly diverse in conceptual, theoretical, and methodological terms, and has broadened the scope of its inquiry" (Gray et al k256).[129] Where Jenkins' five dimensions would have been sufficient to theoretically underpin a study such as this in 2007, recent changes in communication technologies—media tools and platforms—impact and "reflect the increasing entrenchment of fan consumption [and creation]" in the structure of everyday life (k242). The distinctions between people's ordinary interactions with culture via media and those that mark fan practices are becoming increasingly blurred. For instance, sharing, via Facebook, a news article of Joss Whedon's adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* is a form of cultural activism, and by implication assumes that others in one's Facebook economy are engaged in a social community interested in Whedon, *Much Ado*, or Shakespeare. Is this a fan activity or a social activity? What distinguishes these activities from one another? New fan criticisms illustrate that the one-time firm boundaries between what does and does not constitute fannish enterprises are less important than a focus on the study of fan genres and their myriad functions—affect, activism, creativity, community, conversation, learning—within their chosen Discourse communities and the wider body of popular culture.[130] This erosion of distinct boundaries is due to the fact that our cultural and scholarly concepts of fandom have undergone

[129] See Tisha Turk, Paul J. Booth, Francesca Coppa.

[130] The terms fannish, vidders, and vids comes from Tisha Turk. I expand on the concept of big-D Discourse communities below.

revision, mostly thanks to a wider (albeit still selective) acceptance of fan studies in academic criticisms.

Prior to Jenkins' 1992 work, fan culture was associated with a number of negative connotations. Denigrating profiles of the fan included, "psychopathic killer, neurotic fantasist, or a lust-crazed groupie" (Jenkins 2012, 15). Further common connotations associated with fandom caused scholars to be wary of the validity of fan culture studies. Jenkins makes this observation:

> The term 'fan' was originally evoked in a somewhat playful fashion and was often used sympathetically by sports writers, [but] it never fully escaped its earlier connotations of religious and political zealotry, false beliefs, orgiastic excess, possession, and madness, connotations of fans in contemporary discourse. (Jenkins 2012, 2)

In 1992, *Textual Poachers* spoke back to the dominant representation of fans as unstable and argued for their empowerment through their De Certeauean appropriation and remix of dominant mass media entertainment products. In the past twenty years, and in the advent of Web 2.0, fan studies have gained critical ground in departments and disciplines in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. In many institutions it has become a study genre in its own right in academic disciplines such as Communication, Anthropology, Sociology, and Language Arts. As Michael Strangelove argues, "fans have moved form the edges of culture and are now accepted as a significant and serious aspect of society" (114). There is a small but growing body of academic journals dedicated to fan studies (as the bibliography to this dissertation attests). Altogether, fan studies is assimilated by broad

array of disciplines that recognize the ways that fan studies interrogates, theorizes, and makes sense of the complex relationships between people and the cultural products they read, (re)create, disseminate, and discuss in both private and public forums, both online and offline.

My employment of fan studies strives to dismantle an unspoken, but in many ways practiced assumption that Shakespeare "media and cultural studies closes its seminar room doors on the figure of 'the fan' as an imagined Other, thereby constructing what is to count as 'good' academic work" (Hills 2). It seems to me that while Henry Jenkins' work, for instance, is validated in some Shakespeare media and cultural analyses, the growing body of more complex fan theories are elided in most Shakespeare media and cultural criticisms. Those that acknowledge the presence of fan cultures seem to approach fan studies as static, mostly invoking what fan studies critics now argue was the first wave of fan studies when the dominant argument rested on the assumption that fan practices "constituted a purposeful political intervention that sides with the tactics of fan audiences in their evasion of dominant ideologies" (Gray k140). In this chapter I employ (what critics refer to as) third wave fan studies' in order to forge a stronger critical link between YouTube Shakespeares, fan theories, and literary scholarship. Through this updated approach, I analyze a YouTube Shakespeares video to demonstrate how the intersection of fan studies and literary studies might provide fertile ground for future YouTube Shakespeare studies.

The integration of fan studies into Shakespeare media studies is especially vital when now, in the second decade of the new millennium, Shakespeare in media is nowhere more prevalent than in the user-driven fora of Web 2.0. An elision of fan studies

in the study of YouTube Shakespeares "Others" fans and their related YouTube texts. By implication, eliding fan studies situates this genre of study as counter to "'good' academic work" (Hills 2). An exclusion of fan studies dismisses the works of fans and fan scholars, and relegates them as trivial. It silences the voice of the non-academic; it devalues ordinary peoples encounter with Shakespeare. In short, a preclusion of fan studies is antithetical to Shakespeare cultural studies and its goals "to turn our attention towards broad questions about Shakespeare's place, past, present, and future, in the politics of culture" (Lanier 2002, 20).

Likewise, because fan studies has "almost entirely refused to engage with the high" culture that Shakespeare registers, fan studies passes over the possibilities of developing fascinating inquiries that center on the cultural production and consumption of so-called "high culture and high culture fandom" practices (Pearson k1918-2079). As John Tulloch argues, "there is little comparable analysis of fans of high-culture entertainment forms like theater" (k2095). Tulloch's argument that a lack of fan studies' engagement in high culture literature is similar to my point about Shakespeare fan studies: there is little (or no) comparable analysis of Shakespeare fans in any context (k2095).[131] In her reflection on fan identity and middle-brow/high-brow fan cultures, Roberta Pearson argues,

> Studying high culture and high-culture fans is seen as a back-door method of reintroducing debates around cultural value long abandoned in favor of orthodox adherence to cultural relativisim and textual instability…[but]

[131] Tulloch refers to Chekhov as his subject of "high-culture" entertainment form.

> fears of such ulterior motives should not preclude questions of cultural value being at the center of cultural studies project. (k1891)

To date, Shakespeare media studies makes trivial (schlocks) fan studies. Fan studies scholars avoid Shakespeare, fearing a reinstatement of "ideologically invidious cultural hierarchies" (Pearson k1891). What I wish to do in this chapter is force these disciplines to speak to one another through a shared interrogation of YouTube Shakespeares. Bringing together both disciplines folds fan studies' theories into the study of YouTube Shakespeares.[132] It establishes a triangulation of fan studies, literary analysis, and online media studies as a remixed methodology that enables a rich and diverse critical analysis of YouTube Shakespeares.

Of course, the full overview of the wider development of fan studies theories is impossible given the scope and focus on this chapter. I want, however, to include this informative quotation from Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington, whose collaborative work centers on the current (third) wave of fan studies. I believe it answers the most frequent and ubiquitous questions fan studies scholars face: "Why study fans?":

> Studies of fan audiences help us to understand and meet challenges far beyond the realm of popular culture because they tell us something about the way in which we relate to those around us, as well as the way we read the mediated texts that constitute an ever larger part of our horizon of experience. Fans, for better or worse, tend to engage with these texts not in a rationally detached but in an emotionally involved and invested way.

[132] At the same time, it demonstrates ways that Shakespeare studies can be folded into fan studies.

> This form of engagement with media and our fellow audiences…shapes the way in which many of us read the news, choose which plays we see at the theater, listen to Bach, or make sense of social theory…studying fan audiences allows us to explore some of the key mechanisms though which we interact with the mediated world at the heart of our social, political, and cultural realities and identities. (k282-295)

Third wave fan theories takes into account that social and cultural change in fan practices is inherently entailed in new millennium technologies. While Web 2.0 evinces the most prominent shifts, it is merely one form of technology that has wrought new fan practices, fan purposes, and fan effects.[133] As Gray states, "the practice of being a fan has itself profoundly changed over the past several decades…as we have moved from an era of broadcasting to one of narrowcasting" (k176). Furthermore, the third wave extends the already existing body of scholarship to accommodate critical evaluations of people's activities with technologies that are persistently in flux.[134] While older theories and hypotheses, namely Henry Jenkins' seminal arguments about fan empowerment through appropriation of media, (for the most part) still hold true, fans studies have not remained

---

[133] Mobile media, digital cameras, and software applications with sophisticated editing affordances serve as a few examples of technologies that enable active fan participation.

[134] I realize that while I briefly discuss first wave fan studies (Jenkins, for example), and focus sufficiently on third wave studies, I have elided mention of second wave studies, which is largely significant in the third wave movement. I once again quote from Gray's overview, who explains a key defining shift from first wave fan studies, and has now become marked as the second wave of fan studies, "fans are not seen as a counterforce to existing social hierarchies and structures but as agents as maintaining social and culture systems of classification and therefore hierarchies." While I do believe these conditions are evident in YouTube Shakespeares, they are also built into a critical understanding of third wave fan studies. To avoid repetition and redundancy in this chapter I passed over any discussion of second wave ideologies, but wish to make clear that it is embedded in third wave fan studies.

stagnant. If anything the literature of fan studies continues to be revised as people's practices, and the technologies that enable and effect behavior, change.

YouTube Shakespeare User-fans

In my viewpoint, YouTube Shakespeare users behave like fans of Shakespeare, YouTube, YouTube Shakespeares, the performance texts (or the performers) used in the videos, and/or the other myriad phenomena that allude to the dramatist and his works. I therefore register user activity on YouTube as manifestations of fandom behaviors. Fans form communities, even though as an entity they are amorphous and meet asynchronously. Nevertheless, they function as a Discourse community (see below) when they intersect on each YouTube Shakespeares' interface. Shakespeareans who look to YouTube Shakespeares through the critical lens of literary or performance studies make a similar suggestion about YouTube Shakespeares as a community. Peter Holland, for instance, argues the YouTube Shakespeares' users form a "community of people indecipherably to be designated producers and receivers," each time they access and view Shakespeare on YouTube (Holland 2009, 256).[135] Barbara Hodgdon argues that YouTube Shakespeares' videos and clips generate, "knowledge-making communit[ies]…[where] users reveal various degrees of expertise" (2010, 318). For Shakespeare fans, YouTube provides an "alternative form of cultural production" within "a *community* that is highly motivated to watch and share videos" (Jenkins 2012, 154 my emphasis).

[135] Holland also states: "At the very least, the comments turn viewers into producers of an ongoing text of reception reaction" (256).

I argue that YouTube Shakespeares' fans form communities that align with "(big-D)" Discourse communities, James Paul Gee's concept of (learning and) identity through everyday practices (7). Discourse communities are made up by individuals who share the same interests, partake in the same kinds of clothing, food, language, cultural interests. They share the same 'affinity' spaces and share or make contact with others who interact with the same kinds of materials, texts, etc. YouTube, for instance, is an affinity space where people's informal learning through experience takes place. Another example of Discourse communities are the Muse fans I discuss in my analysis of "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin," below. The concept of Discourse communities explains how people learn about the world in which they interact with others in "often unconscious and taken-for-granted" modes (Gee 72). Since the advent of online communication, fan communities have evinced this model in obvious ways. Their "many forms of participation and levels of engagement" have become more broadly recognized by scholars, including those who are part of that community and those who study them (Jenkins, 2012, 2). Jenkins' study of *Star Trek* fans, for instance, is one example of a Discourse community, and the ways the participants in that community expand their understanding of *Star Trek* and its surrounding discourse.

In this, the final chapter of *YouTube Shakespeares*, I analyze a YouTube Shakespeare video that is, unequivocally, Schlockspeare. While there are many more I could have chosen, I select this one because it represents the kind of personal investment fans make to the their productions. While it may not conform to everyone's taste, it fulfills the interests of like-minded fans to whom the producer hopes to appeal. It is

neither the most popular, most viewed, or most liked of its YouTube Shakespeares subgenre, but as Gunnels and Cole explain,

> Some fan artists have achieved a higher level of status than others…[yet] such means of evaluation seem arbitrary at best. Even with the acknowledgment that some fan material has a higher level of quality, given the sheer volume of fan-produced media in any one franchise, these are better seen as exemplars of a type as opposed to an aesthetic. (8)

The purpose of showcasing my select YouTube Shakespeare is threefold. First, as I argue throughout this dissertation, I believe it is important to curate, through written language at least, a sample of YouTube Shakespeares from the period that I am now coming to regard as the website's first wave. Second, I use this example to interrogate the boundary, as described by Burt, "between hermeneutic and post-hermeneutic" Shakespeares found on YouTube. My findings demonstrate how users' YouTube Shakespeares manifest their Shakespeare-ness, and that their Shakespeare creations challenge academic claims of YouTube Shakespeares' critical insubstantiality. And third, I analyze this example to demonstrate how fan communities function *in situ*, and therefore support my stance that YouTube users interact, learn, and create vis-à-vis Discourse communities.

Finally, I wish to point out that the wide schema of the Internet has promoted a broader awareness of, and greater participation in, fan communities by fans *and* scholars. Kristen Pullen, for example, argues that "the [Internet] has opened up the boundaries of fandom, allowing more people to participate in fan culture, and designate more television programmes, celebrities and films as worthy of fan activity" (80). The study of fandom illustrates how fans "function [precisely] as an interpretive community [and are] active

producers and manipulators of meaning" (Jenkins 2012, 23). Their conversations and their cultural artifacts prove to be powerful and hermeneutically rich media sources for scholars. Their role as consumers of media text rearticulates that text in "unique and empowering ways" creating modes of audience response and participation that have been absent in other forms of Shakespeare performance (Pullen 82). Finally, I include one more quotation to forge the connection between literary studies and fan studies. Kim Middleton argues that remix culture and humanities' share "certain core competencies" (3). These "core competencies," she argues, include:

> [T]hrough knowledge of primary source materials; close attention to their contextual nuances and the opportunities to revise those contexts to make new meanings; analysis of the original and the newly created work; and an attention to how that new work will circulate in and across multiple subcultures…and audiences. (Middleton 3)

In the section that follows, I include an analysis of "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin" because while I believe it is important to theorize fan practices, I think it is equally important to witness fan communities—Shakespeare Discourse communities—in action. I hope the work of Machinamom, and my own analysis of her remix video, "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin," evinces the hermeneutic potential that arises when the Shakespeare scholar intersects with the remix culture of YouTube Shakespeares.

***Macbeth*: "Assassin is Born"**

In this chapter section I analyze Machinamom's "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin," a mashup that brings together the animated images from the real-time strategy

(RTS) video game Warcraft III, the plot and lines of Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* and "Assassin," a song by the alternative-rock band, Muse.[136] I select "Macbeth—Assassin" as a case example for multiple reasons, some of which are made self-apparent in the analysis that follows. Nevertheless, I wish to first underline a few salient reasons. To begin with, "Macbeth—Assassin" is representative of the three criteria I list in the above paragraph. In addition, it is exemplar of YouTube Shakespeares' as schlock: it serves as the stand-in for thousands of mashups and remixes that, because they use transitory popular culture phenomena, are often marginalized and therefore intentionally disregarded as subjects of Shakespeare critical study. I also choose this video because it represents the quintessential early-era YouTube Shakespeare mashup in that it manifests "self-referential instances of Shakespearean intertextuality and…the gadgeteering ethos and DIY culture associated with YouTube" (Hodgdon 2010, 320). As more recent YouTube Shakespeares appear to be entailed with professional business entities, this video represents the first wave of YouTube Shakespeares. It is the consummate user-generated, multi-genre original YouTube Shakespeares remix.

The following analysis focuses on the first half of the video as representation of Machinamom's entire video mashup, demonstrating in the process the analytical potential of YouTube Shakespeares.[137] I start with a brief description and interrogation of the video's visuals by examining actions on the screen's *mise-en-scene*, which include the

[136] I sent Machinamom a request to participate in the interview process. She (I am not sure she is female, but for the sake of compositional clarity I gendered her) did not respond and the most recent activity reported on her channel appears to be one month ago. Machinamom is her actual YouTube channel name. I saw absolutely no risk for her involved in citing her in this work.

[137] I choose the first two minutes as representative of the entire video; the entire video would extend beyond the space limitations of this chapter.

space of the video animation, the character thumbnail, and playtext lines that appear in the caption box. I move through the first two minutes of the performance somewhat chronologically, demonstrating Machinamom's various discursive practices.

I argue that in the fan construction of videos such as "Macbeth—Assassin," user-generators like Machinamom undertake the role of dramaturge. That is, they examine the play, choose the most salient lines, decide which aspects of the work to include (and which to forego), evaluate how to create and use their spaces of performance, and create and cue their characters.[138] Constructed (I suspect) especially for YouTube, and posted on November 27, 2006, "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin," is a four-minute and twenty-nine second frenzied performance of *Macbeth*. Employing game animation visuals, Machinamom artfully crafts her interpretation of Shakespeare's play of usurpation, murder, and magic by transcribing the plot and language from *Macbeth* onto Warcraft III's platform. [139] Making use of Warcraft III's affordances, Machinamom creates her cast from Warcraft III figures, and bestows them with characters' names from Shakespeare's play. The *mise-en-scene* of each narrative frame—the heath, the castle,

---

[138] My thinking of Machinamom as dramaturge is indebted to Jen Gunnels' and Carrie J. Cole's argument that the fan producer functions as *ethnodramaturg*, a fan who not only is the subject of online virtual ethnography, but is also "an ethnographer proper, mining ethnographic fragments from the source material in order to explore and explain the workings of a fictive culture within a fictive universe" (1 italics original). While I am intrigued by Gunnels' and Cole's approach, I also believe it is worth deeper exploration in future YouTube Shakespeares' criticisms as it's theoretical application deserves greater attention than this analysis can afford.

[139] By game mode I mean Machinamom uses the playing screen, imagery, and characters from Warcraft III. Like many real-time strategy (RTS) interfaces, Warcraft III's game screen is constructed in three parts: the play-screen, the thumbnail image box, and a text box. The play screen is where the player sees and controls the characters' actions; it's where the game's visual action takes place. The thumbnail image box below the playing screen highlights the character who is performing the action or speaking. The text box located next to the thumbnail box writes out the speaker's words. Typically RTS games' sound effects are limited to the background soundtrack, and the noise of weapons or blows. Most RTS animated characters do not communicate via vocals. In Machinamom's mash-up, the only sound is Muse's song "Assassin." For an example of the visuals see figure 1.

Duncan's bedchamber, the dining hall, and more—are thoroughly Warcraft III in design; they effectively reflect the play's scenes and situate the viewer in the visual world of the play. To concomitance of plot, language, and imagery, Machinamom adds Muse's equally frenzied song, "Assassin." Altogether the video represents an acting interpretation of *Macbeth* that stems from Machinamom's diligence and desire to create works that "speak to the special interests of the fan community," a fan community I assume is comprised of Warcraft III, Muse, and/or Shakespeare fans (Jenkins 2012, 279). Her decisions, her timing, her character positioning, and her choice of music demonstrate her interpretation of the play and her understanding of the limitations and affordances of her stage, which is, of course, the world of Warcraft III's screen space; in this she evinces her role as dramaturge.

Like many fan videos, "Macbeth—Assassin" requires its creators and viewers to process many different kinds of information, "including the visual content of the clips (what's happening in the frame), the context of clips (what's going on in the original source), and the juxtaposition of clips" within the video to understand the video's narrative (Turk 7). Viewing the images and reading the caption calls for a particular mode of reception. The viewer not only interprets the action on the screen, but must also interpret the language of the text. Paul J. Booth suggests that "mashup videos represent one particular type of remix and require an intricate base of knowledge to understand and appreciate the complex reworking of the textuality engendered by the form" (1). To engender comprehension in the viewing experience, Machinamom functions dramaturgically as both a reader of her source material and as a producer of a new text. She parses out snippets of succinct text from each of her source media, then splices them

together to create for the viewer a narrative arc, or in the language of Gunnels and Cole, "a performative story line" (2).

In "Macbeth--Assassin," Machinamom follows the same trajectory established in the playtext, beginning with the three witches and ending with MacDuff's famous lines, "Hail the King of Scotland" (5.8.59). Working within a fictive universe, Machinamom's first task is to establish the opening narrative for her viewers. In this she chooses to begin as Shakespeare's play does, with the three witches planning to meet with the title character. In "Macbeth—Assassin" they appear in the opening *mise-en-scene* of a rain-drenched heath, hovering above the ground, blocked in a semi-circle with burning torches behind them, and conferring around a cauldron (figure 4.1). The first words the witches "speak" are lines 6 through 11 from *Macbeth's* first scene. As each character speaks in turn, her headshot appears in the thumbnail, while her animated performing body in the *mise-en-scene* is encircled by a halo-like white circle at her feet to further indicate to viewers which actor is speaking:

First Witch:	Where the place?
Second Witch:	Upon the heath.
Third Witch:	There to meet with Macbeth.
First Witch:	I come, Grimalkin.
Second Witch:	Paddock calls.
Third Which:	Anon.
All:	Fair is foul and foul is fair,
	Hover through the fog and filthy air. (1.1.6-11)

Figure 4.1: Machinamom's "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin"

The visuals, coupled with Shakespeare's lines, (re)form the opening scene of *Macbeth's* dramatic narrative. As quickly as the images and the play lines come, they go. While part of this rapid fire imagery is the nature of mashups, in this open scene the whirlwind movement of the witches also coincides with the eerie and expeditiousness of Shakespeare's scene. The video's next scene brings viewers to first of many violent scenes in Shakespeare's play and "Macbeth—Assassin," act one scene two when the Captain recounts Macbeth's actions to Duncan.

As with many YouTube Shakespeare remixes, and with Shakespeare throughout the history of the plays' production, Machinamom alters her presentation of *Macbeth* to accommodate the affordances of the space of performance. For instance, speaking in this video is not auditory; it is visual. Voices appear as text, as captions, below the performance space. Because of Warcraft's III inability to vocalize language,

Machinamom substitutes some of Captain's speech to Duncan with additional video images, images that are not presented as performance in the playtext. This occurs when Captain (identified as Sergeant by Machinamom), recounts to Duncan "brave Macbeth's" valiant battle against the Thane of Cawdor (1.1.16). In Shakespeare's play, Captain's lines, "till he faced the slave . . . and fixed his head upon our battlements," serve to tell of Macbeth's efforts off-stage and to provide audiences a mini-profile of Macbeth's character (1.2.20-23). But in Shakespeare's play, the action recounted by Captain happens off stage; it is evinced in the performance as Captain's testimony, a testimony based on Captain's memory.

Machinamom's complicates the play performance by providing visuals that represent Captain's memory, perhaps to compensate for Warcraft III's inability to articulate spoken language. While viewers see Captain's face in the thumbnail, the *mise-en-scene* on the performance screen relays, through imagery, a form of flashback or visual narrative based on Captain's report of Macbeth's battle glory. In other words, Captain's images on the screen function in the video like a mute voiceover. This serves as another instance where words alone cannot suffice in the world of Warcraft III to convey narrative. In addition, while Shakespeare did not script Macbeth in this scene, as dramaturge, Machinamom chooses to do so through her staging of Macbeth's killing of Macdonwald. In Shakespeare's play this occurs off stage and presumably before *Macbeth* begins. This mode of staging the visuals of memory functions analogously to narrative flashback in film.[140] In other words, flashback in film is often employed to visually

[140] Samuel Crowl defines flashback as "the modification of a storyline in returning to event prior to that time depicted as present in the chronological development of a film" (2008, 198).

represent a character's memory. We see this, for instance, in Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*, when the title character recalls his childhood memories of Yorick to Hortatio beginning with his famous lines, "I knew him Horatio" (5.1.186). Branagh uses an otherwise unseen character in the film to recount (for his viewing audience) his memory of his father's jester. Likewise, Machinamom visualizes Captain's memory for her viewing audience, altering the playtext to accommodate the affordances and limitations of Warcraft III.

In this scene, the world of the play built through Captain's narration is typically invisible to theater audiences; it occurs offstage in the script and more often than not, in live performance. In the theater, Captain's memory requires language to conjure the non-scene's actions. But in the world of Warcraft III, viewers see what Captain claims to have seen, so they become witnesses to a performance that in the world of the play was never actually performed in Shakespeare's dramatic text or, we can presume, on the early modern stage. Machinamom's "reworking" (recalling Foakes from chapter four) of the play does not revise the narrative arc, but it does signal her recognition that Warcraft III's scant linguistic transcription is not enough to convey a reason for Duncan's trust in Macbeth, or a rationale for his presence later in Macbeth's castle, where he will be assassinated. In this she manipulates the video screen to accommodate what the game interface affordance cannot generate: the voices of the animated performers, the spoken language of Shakespeare. Like most dramaturges, Machinamom manipulates her source texts to her own satisfaction. In this she functions as the acting interpreter, she inserts material she feels is necessary for her viewers. The flashback is designed to flesh out Shakespeare's language with imagery, to aid viewers in the reception of this video.

Immediately after viewers see (Captain's retelling of) the image of Macbeth battling Cawdor, the visuals shift to a five-second shot where the *mise-en-scene* pans across a horizontal line of (de)animated, decapitated warriors. Behind them stands Macbeth; these are the dead from Macbeth's battle, again another scene not performed in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It does, however, add to Macbeth's character profile: He is the consummate assassin. Like all Machinamom's "bite-size" scenes, it goes as quickly as it comes (Miller). The visuals shift to yet another frame where three large, translucent, animated guitar players (presumably representing Muse's three band members), surrounded by speaker stacks shaped like glass rocks, mime the soundtrack as it picks up new chords. The guitar players, viewers soon come to realize, partially, and occasionally, function as transitions from scene to scene in Shakespeare's play, and partially function to denote the musical shifts in "Assassin."

As I state above, "Macbeth—Assassin" is a performance where the written word is read and not heard by viewers—Warcraft III's apparatus does not include speech production affordances—which means that auditory speech must be substituted with a speech act of a different kind. In this case, Machinamom employs "Assassin," a song by the alternative-rock band, Muse. For most Shakespeareans new to the world of Warcraft III, the figures of the witches, gendered as female and wearing flowing, violet gowns are easier to distinguish than the battle-geared Macbeth, Banquo, and Captain. Therefore Machinamom must be sure to align her characters with the language of Shakespeare's text and/or the lyrics of Muse's song. In most fan-made mashups, the song and "song lyrics, amplify" the narrative in the mashup (Jenkins 2012, 227). Muse's "Assassin"

functions to "amplify" the breakneck frenzy that drives the narrative force both in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Machinamom's interpretation of the play.

Released in 2006, "Assassin" opens with a guitar riff that sounds remarkably like the sort of electronic-bleating music used as a soundtrack for many RTS games. When the visuals switch from the witches to Captain at the video's l5-second mark, the guitar is joined by a heavy bass line and hammering drums that evoke a sense of urgency and chaos. In place of hearing Shakespeare's spoken language, the sound of the music throughout the video functions as the auditory signifier, much the same way non-diegetic music functions in film; it creates for audiences the mood of the narrative and signals shifts in the story line to indicate moments of tension. For instance, when Macbeth arrives at the video's 32-second mark, the song's lyrics have not yet begun, but the thrashing sounds of the guitar, bass, and drums in Muse's song marks this as a turbulent, take-note scene. His first words are to the witches: "Speak, if you can. What are you?" (1.3. 45). The witches' reply foretells his prophesy:

> First Witch: All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis.
>
> Second Witch: All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.
>
> Third Witch: All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter! (1.3.46-48)

It is here, as many Shakespeareans know, that Macbeth is not only challenged by disbelief in what he sees (the witches), he is also perplexed by what he hears (that he will be Thane of Cawdor and "king hereafter"). While in the playtext, Macbeth muses over these words, in the video, he is all action. Machinamom cannot afford to let her lead character wonder over this for too long. She has a song to catch. At this, the 46 second-mark, "Assassin's" first verse of lyrics begin,

War is overdue.

The time has come for you

To shoot your leaders down

Join forces underground. (Muse)

In my view, the synchronization of music to images to narrative pace is impeccable. For it is here in the play that audiences are made aware that Macbeth's reported valorous and honorable character is weakened by his greed and desire for power. A visual narrative that moves in rapid fire through four different scenes accompanies the four lines of "Assassin's" first verse. The song's lines provide "additional interpretive guidance" (Turk 7) for the viewers as they watch, in quick succession: 1) Ross' approach to Macbeth, declaring "He bade me from him call the Thane of Cawdor" (1.3.103); 2) Lady Macbeth's speak the lines, "Like the innocent flower/ But be the serpent under't" (1.5.63); 3) Duncan's (and his entourage's) approach to the castle, "This castle hath a pleasant seat" (1.6.1); and Macbeth's question, "Is this a dagger which I see before me?" (2.1.33) (Figure 4.2). The fevered pitch of the song and quick succession of video images suggests that Macbeth's world is rapidly shifting from order to disorder, organization and control to chaos and disarray. The song's music and lyrics replace Shakespeare's language, but the meaning is clear. Through the tune and lyrics of "Assassin" Machinamom provides for fans a "type of coherence," a clarity that depends on the integration of text, images, and song; the lyrics of "Assassin" work to explain the chaos in the narrative that are initiated by both the witches and Macbeth's actions (Kuhn 2012, 17).

Figure 4.2: Machinamom's "Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin" (Macbeth sees the dagger.)

From the beginning of the video Machinamom makes assumptions about her viewing community, that they are familiar with at least one of the "wildly different" texts, and can make sense of her video (Booth 2). By the time the video hits the one minute mark, nine scenes displaying a wide variety of images, a few words from Shakespeare's playtext, and music and lyrics from Muse have performed the play's first act. Readers of *Macbeth* will recognize the interpretive reciprocity that occurs in the juxtaposed image and song: the language of the song reflects the actions that take place in the world of the play and visa versa. *Macbeth* readers can recognize the *Macbeth* narrative within the world of Warcraft III, with its images of witches, warriors, and battle. For those viewers who are less familiar with *Macbeth* but are a fan of Muse, and know the song lyrics well, the song helps supplement their understanding of the plot. As Tisha Turk notes,

"understanding the contextual meaning of clips…requires considerable familiarity with the source" (7). While I agree, I also suggest that when viewers understand one or two of video's source texts' contextual meaning, they can then parse out for themselves the larger narrative.

Warcraft III gamers who may not be familiar with *Macbeth* have a slight advantage over non-gamers who are also not familiar with the play because as part of Warcraft III's Discourse community, they understand the ways Warcraft III creates narratives. Turk notes that making sense of the video "requires viewers to recognize whether a particular sequence of clips is intended as a narrative, a plot summary, a comparison… or any of the other functions the sequence might serve within the vid" (7). Likewise, James Paul Gee argues that, the key to Discourse is through recognition of "language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places together…[they] are always embedded in a medley of social institutions, and often involve various 'props'…words, symbols, deeds, objects, clothes, and tools" coordinated at the right time and place (27). It is this combination of factors that causes recognition of social identity, and by extension, a recognition of shared social narratives. Warcraft III gamers, therefore, can most likely piece together *Macbeth* through Machinamom's video. They are accustomed to the frenetic pace. They know how to look for clues on the screen. They know how to create narrative through gaming. They know how to fill in auditory and linguistic gaps by analyzing visuals.

User responses to the video provide a few clues to the video's capability as a narration of Shakespeare's play, and most responses seem to suggest that a working knowledge of two of the texts used in the video are necessary in order to make sense of

the video. The video has been on YouTube for over six years, it registers a respectable (for YouTube Shakespeares) 5300 views and 14 user comments. Most responders find the video humorous. No one has commented adversely, although YouTube user "swil" remarks, "this is what happens when you like literature and video games :p but still very well done." A less-enthusiastic viewer does not seem to quite grasp the *Macbeth* element: "this just looks like someone playing warcraft with muse playing in the background."[141] I asked zman of "Crank that Shakespeare," to view the video and respond to several questions. His response to "do you think people can learn something about Shakespeare through this video?" was as follows:

> Perhaps viewers can learn something about Shakespeare's plot, characters and dialogue if they can follow this frenetic video. I think that those already familiar with the World of Warcraft game and the play Macbeth would have a greater appreciation for this video than the uninitiated. (zman Interview)[142]

The content of zman's response aligns with Tisha Turk's evaluation that "meaning-making [in video reception] is not purely individual; rather, it involves a certain amount of collaboration and consensus. Recognition of context requires familiarity with the source" (11). My interviewee, TheSonnetChannel was a little less optimistic, replying to the same question I posed to zman with a brief and succinct, "I doubt it." What I think is clear through the commentators in the *platea*, and my interviewee's responses, is that

---

[141] "Macbeth Music Video—Muse: Assassin" YouTube user ghos.

[142] World of Warcraft is the next phase after Warcraft III; zman demonstrates his unfamiliarity by misnaming this RTS game.

recognition of more than one of the texts remixed in this video is important in order to understand the narrative in remix. Whereas zman thinks recognizing and learning something about *Macbeth* is possible, TheSonnetChannel emphatically states he does not see that possibility.

Jenkins argues that the "fan video is first and foremost a narrative art…the videos mirror dramatic structures in their organization and are structured from the point of view of specific characters" (2012, 233). In this case, I suggest the "specific characters" are Machinamom's viewers themselves. In other words, I suggest Machinamom positions viewers of her videos to feel as if they are participating in the performance. For instance, after viewers see Macbeth speak to the dagger, the soundtrack moves into the song's chorus. Not only do viewers hear the lyrics (below), they are situated within the *mise-en-scene* as point of view shifts to follow Macbeth running into Duncan's large chamber where in the center the kind sleeps in his bed. Machinamom crafts the scene so that the point of view mimics that of a tracking shot as it follows Macbeth running, and then is positioned behind him when he hacks away at Duncan. Machinamom positions her viewer is an invisible character who follows Macbeth in these actions. This point of view creates a troubling, doubled experience for the video's viewers as it places them in the position of eye witnesses to Macbeth's actions, while it also positions them to seem to move along *with* Macbeth. I pace the song's lyrics to the actions on screen to demonstrate the ways in the which the song's lyrics function to relay the narrative, and, in some way, address a kind of viewer immediacy with the character of Macbeth (the song lyrics are on the left; the screen action is in parenthesis):

Muse: Lose control (Macbeth runs in the room)

Muse: Increasing pace (Macbeth Slays Duncan)

Muse: Warped and bewitched (Macbeth runs out of the room)

Muse: And time to erase (Macbeth pauses outside the bedroom entry and speaks the lines "I am afraid to think what I have done" (2.2.48).)

Machinamom captures in this set of fast-paced scenes and through this particular quote, that Macbeth is, as Stephen Greenblatt points out, "fully aware of the wickedness of his deeds and is tormented by this awareness" (Shakespeare 2557). Because of the intersection of all three texts (the play, Warcraft III, and "Assassin") and the camera's movement, viewers are—for a few brief moments—implicated in the scene as participants and accomplices.[143] I am not a gamer, but it seems to me that these four rapid, violent movements implicate viewers as more immersed than mere spectators. Machinamom seems to want to position viewers as players, as invisible actors, in the game that is the performance of *Macbeth* in this video. It also seems to me that this is the nature of RTS gaming, in that the shooter—the gamer, but in this case we presume the cinematographer—is directly behind her avatar. In "Macbeth—Assassin" viewers follow Macbeth; they function as avatar in the game that is the dramatic performance of Shakespeare's play.

Marjorie Garber notes that MacDuff's discovery of Duncan's dead body, and Banquo's words in *Macbeth's* are important markers of both "Macbeth's ascendancy and his decline" (712). Machinamom captures his rise and fall in two consecutive scenes. In

[143] I wish to note that I recognize these scenes are not the work of cameras per se, but use the language of film analysis to explain the actions of Warcraft III's visual affordances.

the first, the camera pans away from Macbeth back into the room where viewers see MacDuff standing over the slain Duncan, shaking his head, shield in one hand, sword in another. In the second, viewers see Banquo lament over Duncan's death and confront Macbeth. Machinamom matches these two scenes with the chorus of "Assassin":

Muse: Whatever they say /These people are torn

Video: (MacDuff speaks: O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee") (Figure 4.3).

Muse: Wild and bereft /Assassin is born

Video: (Scene shifts to outside the castle where viewers see Macbeth running towards Banquo, who cries out: "Thou hast it now. King. Cawdor. Glamis. all…thou play'dst most foully for 't" (3.1.1-3).

Figure 4.3: Macbeth Music Video—Muse Assassin. (MacDuff discovers Duncan's assassination.)

The connections between Muse's lyrics, the video images, and the language of Shakespeare's play work in tandem to provide viewers with these two pivotal moments in the play: discovery of the slain king and the accusation of his assassin. MacDuff's language and the song's lyrics, mashed together, illustrate the cause and effect of greed and murder. In the next scene, the three texts work together to illustrate Macbeth's moral decline. At this point, most Shakespeareans agree that play leads to its only acceptable end: the death of Macbeth and restore to order. The song, the images, and the lyrics of "Assassin" combine to illustrate the implications of political greed, decay, and ultimate penalty.

As the scene I analyze above suggests, the video underscores how the narrative of *Macbeth* (and Macbeth) points towards the play's inevitability. The remaining two and half minutes work along these same patterns. The video's frenetic motions continue to move through quick shifts in scenery, with violence and mayhem present in nearly every one. The screen images capture, in "bite-size nuggets," *Macbeth's* narrative (Miller). While I am not arguing that it serves as a replacement for *Macbeth*, I want to emphasize that Machinamom perceives that the images she creates for the visuals match Muse's song, both of which address anarchy and chaos, which she then ties to Shakespeare's play. Machinamom functions as an acting interpreter—a dramaturge—who analyzes all the three of these texts to assemble a new acting interpretation of Macbeth. She accomplishes this to match the images to both Muse's song and text from Shakespeare's play. She demonstrates her knowledge of *Macbeth* through the lines she chooses, no small task even for this, the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies. She demonstrates her

skill at reediting the video game to suit the narrative world she creates through the Warcraft III's images. And both Shakespeare's language and Warcraft III's images must synchronize with Muse's "Assassin" as it is the only text she does not alter or edit.

Machinamom functions as dramaturge in that she seems aware which *Macbeth's* scenes and lines are important to capture, and which will best suit the scope of Warcraft III. Muse's song is raucous, lively, and thoroughly the opposite of an early modern madrigal, but it complements the narrative in ways that place additional emphasis on the play's violent scenes, and Macbeth's regrettable choices. Through her close reading of the song's lyrics and *Macbeth*, and her creative skills in using Warcraft III's game platform, she creates an intertextual narrative that displays her fannish pleasure at creating a "particular juxtaposition" between the cultural materials she uses (Jenkins 2012, 37). Because her materials "can't get much farther apart" in terms of genre; remixing them requires an astute familiarity with them all (Booth 10).

While this may be a mashup of popular generic conventions, in that it uses wildly different text sources (*Macbeth* and Warcraft), it appeals to a collective of specialty audiences whose interests are in Shakespeare, Warcraft III, and/or Muse. The video evinces "the accidental and particular" interests of the fan as "melancholy loser[s]" (Burt 8). As a Warcraft III luddite, I do not pretend to be a member of Warcraft III's Discourse community, but I cannot help but be intrigued by Machiamom's skills at shaping the game to suit the narrative. The video's images are violent, frenetic, and uncanny in that they capture the essence of the play in ways I have never encountered anywhere outside of YouTube. She creates scenes that mimic cinematographic strategies, including crane, panoramic, high and low angle, match-cut, long, and tracking shots. She employs brief

establishing shots before characters enter the scene to show the spatial relationships between the characters and the *mise-en-scene*. As a Muse fan, I am delighted that Machinamom uses the "Assassin" lyrics. Brief though they are, "Assassin's" lyrics seem to render the *Macbeth* narrative in a few stanzas that hauntingly parallel the play.

This animated video *seems* in every way dedicated to the cause of crafting the Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as an abridged video performance. While I posit this YouTube video as a remix of *Macbeth*, Machinamom's intentions seem to be more focused on using Warcraft III and *Macbeth* to propagate meaning in Muse's song. In the "About" box in the "Macbeth—Assassin's" *platea*, Machinamom describes the video as: "A Warcraft III music video for Assassin, based on the play MACBETH, by William Shakespeare" (Machinamom). Her prioritizing of "Assassin" speaks more to her connection with other Muse fans as an alternative social community, than with Shakespeare. In 2006, Muse was known to a smaller, more niche-like audience than to the broader, more mainstream audience they can boast of now. Their early fan-following audience remains fiercely loyal; even now early-Muse fans typically wear their circa mid-2000s tee-shirts to Muse concerts to demonstrate their long-time allegiance with the band.[144] In Machinamom's world, *Macbeth* is the "accidental" interest: Warcraft III and Muse appear to be the interpretative communities that she targets (Burt 8).

"Macbeth Music Video: Muse—Assassin," like Ty's "Much Ado About Nothing" quintessentially invokes Margaret J. Kidnie's notions of Shakespeare as "the work,"

---

[144] Muse rapidly shot to fame with advent of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, when the author of vampire romances acknowledged Muse as her favorite band. Many hard-core and long-time Muse fans who have stayed loyal to the band proudly wear their pre-*Twilight* Muse shirts at concerts to distinguish themselves from the post-*Twilight* Muse neo-fans.

where the "work" is "an ongoing process rather than a fixed object" (6). Machinamom's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* creates a new reading of video games as having narrative value in the reworking of Shakespeare, and Shakespeare as a the work, open for adaptation, underpins a narrative that fits into the violent fantasy world of Warcraft III (and perhaps other similar RTS games). Furthermore, "Macbeth—Assassin" creates for viewers a renewed experience with the independent texts used to make the video. As Booth notes, "Remixing to change the genre of a particular work is a practical application of the de Certeauean notion of tactical reading, where alternate readings become externalized" (14). While Muse's "Assassin," was never intended to function as a sound track for any visual media except perhaps its own hegemonic MTV-style video, I know I can never hear this song again without thinking of Machinamom's video. Therefore I will always make a connection between "Assassin" and *Macbeth*. While its brevity may cause it to *seem* to lack hermeneutic density, I argue that this video demonstrates the ways digital media technology enables users to express Shakespeare in their own way through their own original, representative narratives that articulate Shakespeare in ways that are distinctively the YouTube users' own. In this works like "Macbeth—Assassin" analogously harks back to early modern concepts of dramatic construction. I turn to Hodgdon who observes YouTube's users' acts of re-authoring and re-possessing Shakespeare, "In the early modern period, as on YouTube, the question of possession turns not one who first made a play or part of a play but on who last re-made it" (2010, 318).

What I have tried to demonstrate through my analysis of "Muse—Assassin" is how the connection between literary, fan, and media studies formulates a tri-angulated

theoretical approach. Machinamom's YouTube video represents the antithesis of traditional (scholarly and mainstream entertainment) Shakespeares, and yet I find myself returning to it repeatedly. Of course, the scholar in me must return, for if I am to analyze this video conscientiously, I need to watch it over and over, looking for details that connect the visuals, lyrics, and sound to *Macbeth*. In this, the scholar in me functions like a fan—or as Jenkins suggests, the fan functions like a scholar. Although it may seem very remote from the traditional notions of Shakespeare in performance, I hope my brief analysis illustrates that "Macbeth—Assassin" conveys the analytical viability of YouTube Shakespeares.

While I am not at all familiar with Warcraft III or similar games, I can appreciate and see how video games as tools function to (re)create narratives like *Macbeth*. I am also prompted to believe, though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to address, that videos like "Macbeth—Assassin" also urge an understanding of video games that highlights the ways they can "take the form of performances," a stance that talks back to the dominant discourse in popular thinking that video games merely lead to "aggressive and violent behavior" (Crawford and Rutter k5026, k5134). Machinamom as the video creator functions as a dramaturge, the narrative's acting interpreter, and her video is an acting interpretation in that both aspects, the creator and product, are aware that the video is a representation of Shakespeare for a particular time, audience, and venue. It performs a close reading of a song its many fans might not have considered as politically charged; although with such incendiary lyrics surely Muse intended this song in response or accusation of someone or something—but of course my reading on this score is merely speculative.

What is not nearly as speculative is that this video test the limits of Shakespeare as performance. While some YouTube viewers recognize its literary and performance elements, some did not. While one of my interviewees felt that people could learn something about Shakespeare from watching the video, the other emphatically did not. And at the risk of sounding repetitious I restate that as schlock, this video—as representative of mashups of animated texts—calls for our critical consideration. It is the kind of work some people who are engaged in Shakespeare video interpretations, as fans, as students, and as scholars should value. We can presume it is the work of a fan of Warcraft III, Muse, and Shakespeare. Its artistry—although not mainstream or dominantly produced—speaks to a popular engagement with Shakespeare that evokes tensions of high and low culture and therefore is situated in a discourse common to Shakespeare studies. Although "Muse—Assassin" is by no means a comprehensive *Macbeth* narrative, it is clearly a Shakespeare narrative that affords scholarly reflection in that it both interrogates the work and its interpretation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: VANISHING MOMENTS AND CURIOUS AFTERLIVES

> *Studies of forms like radio and the vinyl LP indicate that obsolete media forms have always had curious afterlives.*
>
> Kathleen Fitzpatrick[145]

> *We are today as far into the electric age as the Elizabethans had advanced into the typographical and mechanical age. And we are experiencing the same confusions and indecisions which they had felt when living simultaneously in two contrasted forms of society and experience.*
>
> Marshall McLuhan[146]

> *No other earthly creature tries to keep something of its own vanishing moments.*
>
> Maria Bustillos[147]

YouTube's transition into the mainstream happened when *everyone*, as opposed to no one, seemed to be looking. Whether via desktop, laptop, television streaming (Apple TV, for instance) or handheld media such as smartphones and iPads, YouTube users upload 72 hours of video every minute and watch over four billion hours of video every month.[148] YouTube's social statistics report that "500 years of YouTube are watched every day on Facebook" and "over 700 YouTube videos are shared on Twitter per minute."[149] Furthermore, YouTube reports that "100 million people take a social action on YouTube every week" and that over 50% of all YouTube videos have received at least one comment. YouTube's annual view count last year topped over one trillion, which

---

[145] *Planned Obsolescence* p. 3.

[146] Quoted in Worthen, W.B. *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*. p. 169.

[147] "Not Fade Away: On Living, Dying, and the Digital Afterlife." n.p.

[148] YouTube statistics retrieved from the website February 5, 2013.

[149] YouTube statistics retrieved from the website February 5, 2013.

(according to their statistics) equals over 140 views for every person on earth.[150] These numbers are staggering when we remember that YouTube has been around for less than a decade, and its nearest competitor for audience shares—commercial television—has been a mainstay medium for nearly four generations.[151]

But these YouTube statistics tell us very little about YouTube's content. They tell us equally as little about the future of the website. In her introduction to *Video Vortex II*, Geert Lovink notes that numbers still reign as the marker of establishment. In the academic study of online video, she laments, "there is no evidence of a dialectical turn from quantity to quality" (9). While "the 'most watched' logic" still dominates the broader scope of YouTube study, *YouTube Shakespeares* eschews any focus on volume and instead moves forward under a qualitative logic based on the aftereffects of Web 2.0: people's normalized daily interaction with technology. Nowadays "media without response seems to be unthinkable" (Lovink 2011, 12).

By critiquing YouTube Shakespeares through the lens of remix this dissertation examined YouTube as social media. In the process it generated a complex and multi-layered discussion that explored research ethics, methods, spaces of performance, and fan studies. On the outbound the goals of this work were to develop a handbook of sort for YouTube study, generating a methodology and theory to enable others interested in the

---

[150] YouTube statistic retrieved from the website April 1, 2013.

[151] The following is an example of the kind of information on numbers/statistics dominate economic and scholarly interest: A November 2010 *InformationWeek* article, YouTube director of product management, Hunter Walk, reported in an interview that YouTube uploads 35 hours of video every minute. Comparing this figure to mainstream production Walk states, 2,100 hours [of video are] uploaded every 60 minutes, or 50,400 hours [are] uploaded to YouTube every day . . . If we were to measure that in movie terms (assuming the average Hollywood film is around 120 minutes long), 35 hours a minute is the equivalent of over 176,000 full-length Hollywood releases every week (Alison).

website as a source for Shakespeare study. At this juncture I suggest *YouTube Shakespeares* is best understood as an archive of user practices, with users defined as both those people whose videos and activities I register in this work, and me, the Shakespearean who performs a virtual ethnographic study on YouTube Shakespeare performances and the people who use them. In this, I strive to theorize and create a methodology that captures YouTube Shakespeares and user behaviors in their liminal moment. I draw attention to the people who are the impetus for YouTube Shakespeares' first wave, always bearing in mind that "people may operate in public space but maintain strong expectations of privacy" (Markham 2012, 336). I examine YouTube's interface as a space of performance, creating an analogy between the 21st century digital screens and late 16th century theaters. I incorporate the most recent wave of fan studies to provide recognition where it is due: the YouTube Shakespeares included in this work are all, with the exception of Sony's *Anonymous*, fan created. This I accomplished realizing all the while, as Burt suggests is true with Schlockspeares in general, such work is always about belatedness and loss. As a study of online digital media, the findings in this volume are already on the path towards obsolescence.

While most Internet and digital media scholars agree that "it is a fact that digital spaces nowadays play a fundamental role in the daily lives of millions of people," they also agree that all things digital are subject to ephemerality and obsolescence (Leurs 263). There can be no denial that YouTube Shakespeares' have broadened the dissemination and reception of mediatized versions of the dramatist's plays on a global scale. Yet as "a creature of the moment," YouTube Shakespeares raises questions of ontology, particularly with regard to future of online Shakespeare performance (Uricchio 24). This

dissertation illustrates what happens while researching digital and online technologies. What started out as a study of YouTube Shakespeares in their current moment has now become resituated as a study of what I have come to consider as the first wave of YouTube Shakespeares. In the past seven years the genre of YouTube Shakespeares (and perhaps YouTube as a whole) has shifted from mostly user-generated content to a mix dominated by commercially produced video. Film studios, Shakespeare festivals and theaters, and websites touting Fear-not Shakespeares all take advantage of YouTube's low-cost, wide-spread reach. Not that the user-generated video is dead; home-grown videos still proliferate on the website. There is, however, a decline of user-created Shakespeare performances in the past two to three years. While there are still plenty of YouTube Shakespeares that beg for analyses, I am a little anxious that they may disappear before we can register them. If this all sounds rather melancholy then let me share this little anecdote that may, at first, seem to have nothing at all to do with YouTube Shakespeares. In fact it has much to do with the sentiment behind these words by Alfred Harbage, "Shakespeare obviously had elected to write not for all time but for the moment" (11).

One morning, ousted from my usual dissertation writing haunt due to its remodeling, I relocated to a study carrel in the university's science library. Opposite the tiny rooms stand massive shelves crammed with texts on computer and internet technologies: thousands of volumes on virtual private networks, Cisco systems of operation, local area networks, internet security, coding Windows 2000, and countless other digital and Internet-related topics. A very small percentage was of the "dummy" variety, i.e. *MORE Internet for Dummies* ("the fun and easy way to learn MORE about

the Internet") (Levine, cover). Most, however, are designed to educate computer science majors. In reaching over to remove a few books, I stepped physically and metaphorically into the domain of the "other." That is, the computer scientist—scholar, techie, geek—whose focus is on the machine and its mechanisms (both hard and soft) that afford me, the digital humanities scholar and virtual ethnographer, my study of online Shakespeare users. The books before me represented an uncanny sort of scholarly digital divide. Nevertheless, intrigued by the familiar terms that made up the books' titles ("Community," "Performance," "Digital"), I pulled a random sample from the shelves (caveat: the film person in me purposely selected John S. Quarterman's 1990 book for its title, *The Matrix*). I was instantly struck by three sequential realizations. First, the majority of the collection appears to be published in the 10-year span between 1994 and 2004. Second, 3 out of 4 of the works on the shelves are utterly obsolete. Third, these works came into being already grappling with their own obsolescence. With, technically and technologically speaking, such short shelf-lives (actually, these books will probably spend a great deal of their lives on the shelf), I had to wonder what purpose they had left to serve. Why, for that matter, would an author tackle a digital topic using analog methods when her work will surely be obsolete almost on the doorstep of its arrival?

What does this anecdote have to do with YouTube Shakespeares? My experience with these books, and the books themselves, serve as an analogy for this dissertation. While on one hand I realize the work herein serves a steadily growing interest in Shakespeare in the digital humanities and Internet Shakespeare study, on the other hand I am already anticipating methodological and theoretical shifts. This dissertation places emphasis on YouTube Shakespeares as *social* media. In other words, my study is about

how ordinary users *use* YouTube, and how YouTube engenders users' engagement with Shakespeare. But users are fickle. New technologies are forthcoming, and new practices will come with them. Michel De Certeau's theories serve to remind us that the arrival of new structures will always bring about new behaviors (and subversions). Therefore this work registers YouTube Shakespeares in a very specific moment. Like the technology books in Nobel Library, *YouTube Shakespeares* serve as testimony to the practices (of performance) that were, full stop. It chronicles a small bit of YouTube Shakespeares' history. In the years since I began my research I have kept one eye on YouTube Shakespeares and the other one on emerging theories and studies about users' activities on YouTube. Always in the back of my mind were the words of Lev Manovich, included in my opening chapter but worthy of short repetition here: "I wish that someone in 1895, 1897, or at least 1903, had realized the fundamental significance of the emergence of the new medium of cinema and produced a comprehensive record" (2001, 6). If any sentiment can be acknowledged as the driving force behind my goals for this work, then Manovich's grief about the lost opportunity to understand people's practices and reception of cinema in the moment of its emergence is it.

While this dissertation is not a comprehensive record, it serves to curate a special kind of Shakespeare performance, and to record people's engagement with Shakespeare in a very particular moment in performance history. Engaged by research quandaries brought about by the impermanence of digital media products, I analyze YouTube Shakespeares' as "already" subject to ephemerality and obsolescence. In other words, this dissertation anticipates its own obsolescence and ephemerality, and the obsolescence and ephemerality of its subjects of study. As I have stated throughout, this entire dissertation

serves as one more entry into the burgeoning, and what will be eventually outmoded, archive of YouTube analyses. Nevertheless, I approach this study with the belief that, despite a current paucity of academic engagement with the website as a venue for Shakespeare performance, YouTube Shakespeares will enjoy "curious" afterlife (Fitzpatrick 2). This assumption is not without grounds. Who would have guessed, back in 1895 as Lev Manovich's "wish" illustrates, that cinema would generate the impact on culture and academia that it has? I am not suggesting cinema is the same mechanism as YouTube, in fact I have strived throughout this dissertation to demonstrate that while the two media share points of contact, people's engagement with each is different. The study of each also has its distinctions. I therefore seek to register "the fundamental significance of the emergence" of YouTube Shakespeares during the era of their occasion (Manovich 2001, 6).

I want to return briefly to the thousands of technology books that will spend much of their remaining days in Nobel library languishing, ignored, on the shelves. The materiality of print culture suggests a sort of permanence not found in the shifting, digital landscape of online video. So what can a partially obsolescent print collection tell us about digital media's ephemerality and obsolescence? Perhaps it seems better if I should return to my analogy of garage band music or borrow Fitzpatrick's example of "curious afterlife" of the LP or recount any other products or processes that have become outmoded or withered away in the wasteland that is obsolete technology. I prefer instead to bring back my experience with the obsolete books (and do we literary scholars not always return to the book?) to illustrate that obsolescence occurs no matter the medium. Even when the physicality of text may endure, the subject matter may become obsolete.

That does not make the book invaluable, but it does relegate it to the space of the curio, where someday it may once again be examined, explored, and analyzed as part of the history of technological development. In that it will relive its value—as a curious artifact of a curious historical moment. YouTube Shakespeares may have the same fate, only where they will be found, if at all, is the cause of no small anxiety for people who share the same concerns about digital photos, emails instead of letters, the minute and seemingly frivolous tweets on twitter (which must not be insignificant at all if the U.S. Library of Congress archives tweets). It is the task of Shakespeareans to record Shakespeare cultural phenomena in their epochs—the volumes of criticisms on individual live Shakespeare theater productions is testimony to this responsibility. This is why, despite its path towards obsolescence, this dissertation matters.

No one can deny that what little information gleaned from diaries, playtexts, and the scant assorted textual trails from the early modern period are valued by Shakespeare scholars. These bits of evidence tell us something about the effects a performance had on its respective social/political/cultural environments and how social/political/cultural conditions affected an understanding of the performance. Shakespeareans, for instance, have built performance theories and cultural profiles of the Elizabethan playhouse from Shakespeare's playtexts, on the words of Shakespeare's contemporaries as circumstantial evidence, and the literal archaeology of theater space. Although such "Elizabethan records are fragmentary [with] opinions more abundant than facts, and the most willing [early modern] witnesses not the most credible," Shakespeareans embrace this traces as sources of study (Harbage 6). My point here is the evidence we hold from the postmedieval period forward has been painstakingly scoured from the midden of early

modern textual (and in the case of the theater spaces, cartographical) resources. In this work, I shifted through the flotsam and jetsam of YouTube Shakespeares for traces of people's engagement with Shakespeare performance in the early 21st century. Again, these YouTube Shakespeares matter.

The concept of approaching my study of YouTube Shakespeares as a future past owes much to Lisa Gitelman's work on the history of recorded sound and its comparison to digital technologies. Gitelman's work, *Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*, is underpinned by the following conviction:

> The truism that all media were once new as well as the assumption . . . that looking into the novelty years, transitional states, and identity crises of different media stands to tell us much, both about the course of media history and about the broad conditions by which media and communication are and have been shaped. (1)

Of course YouTube Shakespeares' history is so far brief. Predicting the long term consequences of Shakespeare in the hands of online video participatory culture is impossible. But such clairvoyance is not the purpose of this dissertation. There can be no denial that now, in the early decades of the new millennium, a full seven years after YouTube's inception, YouTube overrides the popularity of all other visual media. The goal here is capture at least a small part of the cultural phenomenon that is YouTube Shakespeares in a specific historical moment. YouTube Shakespeares mark a historical moment, as Stephen O'Neill suggests, when "Shakespeare studies is entering a brave new world as it begins to explore the implications of YouTube" (63). Signs of YouTube's "impact" on the field suggest "a need to reorient the study of Shakespeare and mass

media" (Burt 3). A reorientation towards embracing YouTube as ephemeral and obsolete helps to think of YouTube Shakespeares as a current performance phenomenon that, like other mediatized Shakespeares, brings with it its own kind of relevance in the history of Shakespeare performance and online technologies.

Theorizing YouTube Shakespeares' performances spaces now, within the time span of YouTube's supremacy over nearly all early 21st century audio-visual media, curtails the risks of exchanging a kind of current short sightedness for future hindsight remorse. YouTube Shakespeares opens up opportunities for Shakespeare scholars to critique, analyze, and theorize the significant ways popular culture as well as electronic and digital mass media, persistently "conceptualize Shakespeare and his writing" (8). Burt's argument for a theoretical approach to the study of marginalized Shakespeare media is one this dissertation has strived to accomplish. While there will always be issues of ephemerality, obsolescence, and concerns about the instability of digital and online materials, the risk of evidentiary loss of research materials is far outweighed by a current and ongoing scholarly registration of digital and online venues and artifacts like YouTube as part of the genealogy of Shakespeare performance. As I close this chapter and the dissertation, I recall the advice Lisa Nakamura provided during her talk at the Oxford Internet Institute Summer Doctoral Program in July 2010: "Internet scholars are always expected to predict the future. Our real responsibility is to record the present for the future." This is YouTube Shakespeare's present. It is written "for the moment."

WORKS CITED

Alison, Diana. "YouTube Uploads 35 Hours of Video Every Minute." *Information Week.com*. 12 Nov. 2010: np. Information Week Business Technology Network. Web. 12. Nov. 2010.

Agnello, Anthony John. "How Google Will Finally Make YouTube Profitable." *Investor Place*. 16 Sep. 2011. *InvestorPlace Media*. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Anderson, Chris. "The Long Tail." *Wired*. 12.10 (2004): 1–5. *wired.com*. Web. 24 Feb. 2013.

Auslander, Phillip. *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Barnes, Susan B. "Issues of Attribution and Identification in Online Social Research." *Online Social Research: Methods, Issue, & Ethics*. Eds. Mark D. Johns, Shing-Ling Sarina Chen, and G. Jon Hall. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 203–222. Print.

Bennett, Susan. *Theatre Audiences*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Bentley, Gerald Eades. *The Professions of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. Print.

Black, Rebecca. *Adolescents and Online Fan Fiction*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. Print.

Bogdanov, Vladimir, ed. *All Music Guide to Rock: The Definitive Guide to Rock, Pop, and Soul* (3rd Ed.). Ann Arbor: All Media Guide, 2002. Print.

Bolter, Jay, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2000. Print.

Bolter, Jay, and Yvonne Spielmann, eds. "Hybridity: Arts, Sciences, and Cultural Effects." *Leonardo* 39:2 (2006). 106-107. *Project Muse*. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Booth, Paul J. "Mashup as Temporal Amalgam: Time, Taste, and Textuality." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 9 (2012): 1-25. *transformativeworks.org*. web. 11 Jan. 2013.

boyd, danah and Alice Marwick. "Social Privacy in Networked Publics: Teens' Attitudes, Practices, and Strategies." A Decade in Internet Time: Symposium on the Dynamics of the Internet and Society. Oxford Internet Institute. Oxford, UK. 22 Sep. 2011. Paper presentation. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/444972/

Brook, Michael. "Shakespeare on Screen." *bfiscreenonline*.

Bruster, Douglas and Robert Weimann. *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama.* New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Bulman, James C., ed. *Shakespeare, theory, and performance*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.

Burgess, Jean. "'All Your Chocolate Rain Are Belong To Us'? Viral Video, YouTube and the Dynamics of Participatory Culture." *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*. Eds. Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2008. 101–109. Print.

Burgess, Jean and Joshua Green. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Malden: Polity, 2009. Print.

Burnett, Mark Thornton and Ramona Wray. *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2006. Print.

Burt, Richard, ed. *Shakespeare After Mass Media*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Print.

Burt, Richard, and Scott L. Newstok. "Certain Tendencies in Criticism of Shakespeare on Film." *Shakespeare Studies XXXVIII*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2010. 88–103. Print.

Bustillos, Maria. "Not Fade Away: On Living, Dying, and the Digital Afterlife." *theverge.com*. VoxMedia. 11 July 2012. Web. 12 Feb. 2013.

Cartelli, Thomas. "Doing it Slant: Reconceiving Shakespeare in the Shakespeare Aftermath." *Shakespeare Studies: Volume XXXVIII*. Eds. Susan Zimmerman and Garrett Sullivan. Cranbury: Associated UP, 2010. 26–36. Print.

Cartelli, Thomas, and Katherine Rowe, eds. *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen*. Malden: Polity, 2007. Print.

Cartmell, Deborah. *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen*. London: Macmillan, 2000. Print.

Coppa, Francesca. "Women, *Star Trek*, and the Early Development of Fannish Vidding." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 1 (2008):1–25. *transformativeworks.org*. Web. 12 Jan. 2013.

Crawford, Garry, and Jason Ritter. "Playing the Game: Performance in Digital Game Audiences." *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. Eds. Jonathan Gray, C. Lee Harrington, and Cornel Sandvoss. New York, New York UP, 2007. k5017–5240. Kindle.

Crowl, Samuel. *Shakespeare and Film: A Norton Guide*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008. Print.

---. *Shakespeare at the Cineplex: The Kenneth Branagh Era*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2003. Print.

Dennis, Alan. *Networking in the Internet Age*. New York: Wiley & Sons, 2002. Print.

Denzin, Norman K. "Prologue: Online Environments and Interpretive Social Research." *Online Social Research: Methods, Issue, & Ethics*. Ed. Mark D. Johns, Shing-Ling Sarina Chen, and G. Jon Hall. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 1–12. Print.

Desmet, Christy. "Paying Attention in Shakespeare Parody: from Tom Stoppard to YouTube." *Shakespeare Survey* 61 (2008): 227–238. Print.

Dewalt, Kathleen, Billie Dewalt, and Coral Wayland. "Participant Observation." *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Ed. H. Russell Bernard. Plymouth (UK): Altamira P., 2000. 259–300. Print.

Dixon, Steve. *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation.* Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007. Print.

Dobson, Michael. *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. Print.

Donaldson, Peter. "Taking on Shakespeare: Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.1 (1991): 60–71. Print.

Edelmann, Noella. "Lurkers as Actors in Online Political Communication." *Comunicazione Politica: Il perimetro della democrazia in rete. A che punto e il dibattito* (2012). 26th SISP Convention. Web. 30 Mar. 2013.

Elm, Malin Sveningsson. "How Do Various Notions of Privacy Influence Decisions in Qualitative Internet Research?" *internet inquiry: conversations about method*. Eds. Annette N. Markham and Nancy Baym. Los Angeles: Sage, 2009. 69–87. Print.

Ess, Charles. "2002: Ethical decision-making and Internet research: Recommendations from the aoir ethics working committee." *Association of Internet Researchers.* 2002. Web. Accessed Sept. 2008–Mar. 2013.

Ess, Charles. *Digital Media Ethics*. Malden: Polity Press, 2010. Print.

Fitzpatrick, Kathleen. *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*. New York: New York Press, 2009. *mediacommonspress.* Web. Nov. 2009–Mar. 2013.

Foakes, R. A., ed. *King Lear*. London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997. Print.

French, Emma. *Selling Shakespeare to Hollywood: The Marketing of Filmed Shakespeare Adaptation from 1989 into the New Millennium*. Hatfield: U of Hertfordshire P, 2006. Print.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Anchor Books, 2004. Print.

Gitelman, Lisa. *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

Gray, Jonathan, C. Lee Harrington, and Cornel Sandvoss, eds. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York, New York UP, 2007. Kindle.

Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis*. Lebanon, NH: Northeastern UP., 1974. Print.

Gunnels, Jen, and Carrie J. Cole. "Culturally mapping universes: Fan production as ethnographic fragments." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 7 (2011): 1–20. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Gurr, Andrew. *The Shakespearean Stage: 1574–1642*. 4th ed. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Hamlet. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. Perf. Kenneth Branagh and Julie Christie. Castlerock, 1996. Film.

Harbage, Alfred. *Shakespeare's Audience*. New York: Columbia UP, 1941. Print.

Henry V. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. Perf. Kenneth Branagh, Emma Thompson. Renaissance, 1989. Film.

Hills, Matt. *Fan Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Hine, Christine. *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*. Oxford: Berg P., 2005. Print.

Hodgdon, Barbara, and W.B. Worthen, eds. *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*. Malden: Blackwell P, 2005. Print.

Hodgdon, Barbara. "(You)Tube Travel: The 9:59 to Dover Beach, Stopping at Fair Verona and Elsinore." *Shakespeare Bulletin* 28:3 (2010): 313–330. Print.

Holderness, Graham. *Cultural Shakespeare: Essays in the Shakespeare Myth*. Hertfordshire: U of Hertfordshire P., 2001. Print.

Holland, Peter. "Performing Shakespeare for the Web Community." *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace.* Eds. Alexander C. Y. Huang and Charles S. Ross. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 2009. 252–264. Print.

---. *Shakespeare, Memory, and Performance*. Ed. Peter Holland. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006.

Hopkins, D. J. *City/Stage/Globe*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Howlett, Kathy M. *Framing Shakespeare on Film*. Athens OH: Ohio UP, 2000. Print.

Huang, Alexander C. Y. and Charles S. Ross. *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace*. Purdue: Purdue UP, 2009. Print.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

James, Carrie, Katie Davis, Andrea Flores, John M. Francis, Lindsay Pettingill, Margaret Rundle, and Howard Gardner. "Young People, Ethics, and the New Digital Media: A Synthesis from the Good Play Project." *GoodWork Project Report Series*. Harvard Graduate School of Education. 22 Feb. 2008. Web. November 2008–February 2011.

Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where New and Old Media Collide*. New York: New York UP, 2006. Print.

---. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

---. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture: Updated Twentieth Anniversary Edition.* New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Johns, Mark D., Shing-Ling Sarina Chen, and G. Jon Hall, eds. *Online Social Research: Methods, Issues, and Ethics*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. Print.

Keen, Andrew. *The cult of the amateur: how today's internet is killing our culture.* New York: Doubleday, 2007. Print.

Kennedy, Dennis. *The Spectator and The Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.

Kidnie, Margaret Jane. *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Kuhn, Martin. "Interactivity and Prioritizing the Human: A Code of Blogging Ethics." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality* 22:1 18–36. *Taylor & Francis online*. Web. 15 Oct. 2012.

Kuhn, Virginia. "Video interview: Fair Use." *Anthrovlog.* Prod. Patricia Lange. YouTube. 13 May 2008. Web. 9 Dec. 2008–20 Mar. 2013.

---. "The Rhetoric of Remix." *Transformative Works and Cultures* v.9 (2012). Web. 12 Feb. 2013.

Lange, Patricia G. "(Mis)Conceptions About YouTube." *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*. Eds. Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer. Amsterdam: Institute of Cultures, 2008. 87–100. Print.

---. "Videos of Affinity on YouTube." *The YouTube Reader*. Eds. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009. 70–88. Print.

Lanier, Douglas. *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.

Lankshear, Colin, and Michele Knobel. "Introduction: Digital Literacies–Concepts, Policies and Practices." *Digital Literacies: Concepts, Policies and Practices*. Eds. Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 1–16. Print.

Lara, Maria Pia. *Moral Textures*. Berkeley: U of California P., 1998.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Kindle and Print.

LeBesco, Kathleen. "Managing Visibility, Intimacy, and Focus in Online Critical Ethnography." *Online Social Research: Methods, Issue, & Ethics*. Ed. Mark D. Johns, Shing-Ling Sarina Chen, and G. Jon Hall. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 63–79. Print.

Lehmann, Courtney. "Performing the 'Live': Cinema, Simulation, and the Death of the Real in Alex Cox's *Revengers Tragedy*." *New Directions in Renaissance Drama and Performance Studies*. Ed. Sarah Werner. New York: Palgrave, 2010. 195–221. Print.

Leurs, Koen L. *Digital Passages: Moroccan-Dutch youths performing diaspora, gender and youth cultural identities across digital space*. Diss. U of Utrecht, 2012. Print.

Levine, John R., and Margaret Levine Young. *More Internet for Dummies*. Boston: IDG Books, 1994. Print.

Litt, Eden. "*Knock, Knock.* Who's There? The Imagined Audience." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electric Media*. 56:3 (330-345). Web. 2 Aug. 2012.

Loehlin, James N. *Henry V*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997. Print.

Lombardi, Carole. "YouTube Cuts Three Content Deals." *CNET.com*. CBS Interactive. 9 Oct. 2006. Web. 10 Dec. 2012.

Lothian, Alexis. "An Archive of One's Own: Subcultural Creativity and the Politics of Conservation." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 6 (2011): 1–7. *transformativeworks.org*. Web. 11 Jan. 2013.

Lovink, Geert, and Rachel Somers Miles, Eds. *Video Vortex Reader II: Moving Images Beyond YouTube*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011. Print.

Lovink, Geert, and Sabine Niederer, eds. *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2008. Print.

Mandiberg, Michael, Ed. *The Social Media Reader*. New York: New York UP, 2012. Kindle.

Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2001. Print.

---. "remix_2007_2." *levmanovich.net*. levmanovich website. Web. Jan. 2013.

Markham, Annette. "Fabrication as Ethical Practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous internet contexts." *Information, Communication, & Society* 15:3. New York: Routledge, 2012. *tandfonline*. Web. 25 Oct. 2012.

Markham, Annette, and Elizabeth Buchanan. "2012: Ethical decision-making and Internet research 2.0: Recommendations from the aoir ethics working committee." *Association of Internet Researchers.* 2012. Web. Accessed Nov. 2012–Mar. 2013.

Markham, Annette N., and Nancy Baym, eds. *internet inquiry: conversations about method*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2009. Print.

McKee, Alan. "The Fans of Cultural Theory." *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York, New York UP, 2007. k1664–1860. Kindle.

McKee, Heidi, and James E. Porter, eds. *The Ethics of Internet Research: A Rhetorical, Case-Based Process (Digital Formations)*. New York: Peter Lang, 2009. Print.

McKernan, Luke. "About." *BardBox.* Web. October 2008–November 2012.

Middleton, Kim. "Remix video and the crisis of the humanities." *Transformative Works and Cultures* v.9 (2012): 1–18. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Miller, Nancy. "Manifesto for a New Age." *Wired* 15.3.2007. *wired.com.* Web. 7 Mar. 2013.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1988. Print.

Muller, Michael. "Lurking as Personal Trait or Situation Disposition? Lurking and Contributing In Enterprise Social Media." White Paper, IBM (2011). Web. 30 Mar. 2103.

"Assassin." *Black Holes and Revelations*. Muse. Lyrics by Matthew Bellamy. *musewiki.org.* Web. 25 Oct. 2012

.

Nakamura, Lisa. *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Navas Eduardo. *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*. New York: SpringerWien, 2012. Print.

Newstok, Scott L., and Ayanna Thompson, eds. *Weyward Macbeth: Intersections of Race and Performance*. New York: Palgrave, 2010. Print.

Nielsen, Jakob. "Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute." *Nielsen Norman Group*. 9 Oct. 2006: n.p. Web. 28 Feb. 2013.

Nonnecke, Blair, and Jenny Preece. "Why lurkers lurk." *Americas Conference on Information Systems* (2001). Web. 30 Mar. 2013.

Norland, Howard B. *Drama in Early Tudor Britain 1485–1558*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P., 1995. Print.

Norman, Donald A. *The Psychology of Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books, 1998. Print.

O'Neill, Stephen. "Uploading *Hamlet*: Agency, Convergence and YouTube Shakespeare." *Anglistica* 15.2 (2011): 63–75. *academia.edu.* Web. 10 Aug. 2012.

Orgel, Stephen. *The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Osborne, Laurie. "Harlequin Presents: That 70s Shakespeare and Beyond." *Shakespeare After Mass Media*. Ed. Richard Burt. New York: Palgrave, 2002. 127–149. Print.

Pearson, Roberta. "Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, and Sherlockians." *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. Eds. Jonathan Gray, C. Lee Harrington, and Cornel Sandvoss. New York, New York UP, 2007. k1864–2083. Kindle.

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge, 2003. eBook.

Pribram, E. Diedre. "Spectatorship and Subjectivity." *A Companion to Film Theory*. Eds. Toby Miller and Robert Stam. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 146–164. Print.

Quarterman, John S. *The Matrix: Computer Networks and Conferencing Systems Worldwide*. Digital Press, 1990. Print.

Rothwell, Kenneth S. *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

Rowe, Katherine. "Crowd-Sourcing Shakespeare: Screen Work and Screen Play in Second Life." *Shakespeare Studies: Volume XXXVIII*. Eds. Susan Zimmerman and Garrett Sullivan. Cranbury: Associated UP, 2010a. 58–67. Print.

---. "Gentle Numbers." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.3 (2010b): iii–viii. Print.

---. "Medium Specificity and Other Critical Scripts for Screen Shakespeares." *Alternative Shakespeares 3*. Ed. Diana Henderson. New York: Routledge, 2008. 34–53. Print.

Russo, Julie Levin, and Francesca Coppa. "Fan/remix video (a remix)." *Transformative Works and Cultures* v. 9 (2012): 1–20. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Ryan, Johnny. *A History of the Internet and the Digital Future*. London: Reaktion, 2010. Print.

Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. Trans. Lawrence R. Schehr. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982. Print.

Schafer, Mikos Tobias. *Bastard Culture! How User Participations Transforms Cultural Production*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2011. eBook.

Semenza, Greg Colón. *The English Renaissance in Popular Culture: An Age for all Time.* New York: Palgrave, 2010a.

---. "Introduction." *Shakespeare Studies: Volume XXXVIII*. Eds. Susan Zimmerman and Garrett Sullivan. Cranbury: Associated UP, 2010b. 19–25. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. Print.

Shaughnessy, Robert. "One Piece at a Time." *New Directions in Renaissance Drama and Performance Studies*. Ed. Sarah Werner. New York: Palgrave, 2010. 15–29. Print.

Shohet, Lauren. "YouTube, Use, and the Idea of the Archive." *Shakespeare Studies: Volume XXXVIII*. Eds. Susan Zimmerman and Garrett Sullivan. Cranbury: Associated UP, 2010. 68–76. Print.

Snickars, Pelle, and Patrick Vonderau, eds. *The YouTube Reader*. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009. eBook and Print.

Staiger, Janet. *Media Reception Studies*. New York: New York P., 2005. Print.

Strangelove, Michael. *Watching YouTube*. Toronto: U of Toronto P., 2010. Print.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.

Taylor, Gary. *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present.* New York: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1989. Print.

Thompson, Ayanna. *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.

---. "Race in Performance-Based Shakespeare Pedagogy: A Methodology for Researching and Teaching YouTube Videos." *Shakespeare Quarterly: Open Review "Shakespeare in New Media."* Ed. Katharine Rowe. *MediaCommons*. Mar. 2010a. Web. Mar. 2010–Mar. 2013.

---. "Unmooring the Moor: Researching and Teaching on YouTube." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61:3 (2010b): 337–354. Print.

Townes, Frederick. "Viacom Sues YouTube for $1 Billion . . . The End of the Tube?" *Mashable.* Mashable.com. 13 Mar. 2007. Web. 12 Jan. 2013.

Tryon, Chuck. *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2009. ebook.

Tulloch, John. "Fans of Chekhov: Re-Approaching 'High-Culture.'" *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. Eds. Jonathan Gray, C. Lee Harrington, and Cornel Sandvoss. New York, New York UP, 2007. k2083–2329. Kindle.

Turk, Tisha. "Towards and Ecology of Vidding." *Transformative Works and Cultures*. v. 9 (2012): 1–25. *transformativeworks.org*. web. 11 Jan. 2013.

Uricchio, William. "The Future of a Medium Once Known as Television." *The YouTube Reader*. Eds. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009. 24–39. eBook and Print.

van Dijck, José. "Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content." *Media, Culture & Society* 31.41 (2009): 41–59. *sagepub.com*. Web. 30 Jan. 2012.

Watson, Jeff. "Fandon squared: Web 2.0 and fannish production." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 5 (2010): 1–6. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Weimann, Robert. *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare Theatre*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

---. "Playing with a Difference: Revisiting 'Pen' and 'Voice' in Shakespeare's Theater." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50:4 (1999): 415–432. *Jstor*. Web. 10 Jun. 2011.

---. *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978. Print.

Weimann, Robert and Douglas Bruster. *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge UP, 2008. Print.

Werner, Sarah, ed. *New Directions in Renaissance Drama and Performance Studies*. New York: Palgrave, 2010. Print.

Wesch. Michael. "An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube." *YouTube.com*. YouTube, LLC, 26 July 2008. Web. 12 Oct. 2008.

White, Rob. "Treasure Tube." *Film Quarterly* 60:2 (2006): 3. *jstor*. Web. 11 Nov. 2011.

Wong, William. *Windows 2000 DNS Server*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2000. Print.

Worthen, W. B. "Shakespeare 3.0: Or Text Versus Performance, the Remix." *Alternative Shakespeares 3*. Ed. Diana Henderson. New York: Routledge, 2008. 54–77. Print.

---. *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2003. Kindle.

---. "Staging 'Shakespeare' Acting, Authority, and the Rhetoric of Performance." *Shakespeare, theory, and performance*. Ed. James C. Bulman. New York: Routledge, 1996. 12–28. Print.

Young, Alan R. "Essay on Ophelia." *The Death of Shakespeare's Ophelia, Popular Culture, and Web 2.0*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Sept. 2012.

Zimmer, Michael. "'But the data is already public'": on the ethics of research in Facebook." *Ethics, Information, and Technology* 12 (2010): 313–325. *springerlink.* Web. 11 Nov. 2011.

APPENDIX A
SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER THREE
YOUTUBE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY INSTRUMENTS

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUTUBE SHAKESPEARE RESEARCH

PhD Candidate performing research on YouTube Shakespeares
Hello [YouTube channel host name],

My name is Valerie M. Fazel. I am a Ph.D. student working under the direction of Professor Ayanna Thompson, Associate Dean of Faculty and Professor of English, at Arizona State University (USA). I am conducting a research study that explores YouTube as a site for Shakespeare performance and reception. I would like to interview you via email or YouTube messaging for my dissertation entitled: "YouTube Shakespeares: Encountering Ethical, Theoretical, and Methodological Challenges in Researching Online Performance."

I am inviting you to participate because I see you are an active YouTube user. [Reference to the user's channel or videos] Your responses to my interview questions will help add to the observations I make about the public use of YouTube Shakespeares. The point of this study is learn about YouTube production and reception from people like you who create and post their materials on YouTube. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you should you choose to participate.

Here are more details about the interview process for your consideration:
• You must be 18 years or older to participate in the interview.
• Your participation in this interview is voluntary.
• You have the right not to answer any question.
• You have the right to discontinue the interview at any time.
• Your "real-world" identity, i.e. your real name, will not be asked or included in this study (of course, you already reveal yours through the title of your YouTube channel).
• You will be asked to (electronically) sign (using your YouTube channel name) an informed consent form. The form will be made available to you via surveymonkey.com. You will be asked to insert your YouTube channel name twice as your signature.

When you "sign" the informed consent form (survey) you will have to option to choose:
• To have your YouTube user name obscured and replaced with a fabricated user name.
• To have the title of any YouTube videos posted by you obscured and replaced with a fabricated title.
• To have your responses at all times made anonymous through the use of fabricated user name, channel name, and video title.

If you agree to participate I would like to take screenshots of your YouTube channel—I will obscure your channel name and your identity in the screenshot if you prefer. If you choose to participate you will have the opportunity to let me know if you do not want your YouTube posting image to be captured. If you agree to screenshots now but change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me or Professor Ayanna Thompson at Arizona State University. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study through your response to my email address at valfazel@asu.edu or via return message via my YouTube messaging/inbox. My YouTube channel name is XXXXX

Sincerely,

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ASSURANCE
IRB: EXEMPT STATUS GRANTED

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Ayanna Thompson LL
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	02/12/2013
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	02/12/2013
IRB Protocol #:	1302008791
Study Title:	YouTube Shakespeare Research

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

YOUTUBE VIDEO LIST

All entries are listed in the order of their appearance in the dissertation.

Name of Video	**Channel Host Name**	**Pseudonym?**
"Much Ado About Nothing"	Ty	Yes.
"Romeo and Juliet"	FLav	Yes
"Crank that Shakespeare"	zman	No (informed consent)

“Hamlet St”	AB/YZ	Yes
“TheSonnetProject”	TheSonnetProject	No (informed consent)
“Romeo & Juliet-Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre pt 1”	No channel name used	No (puppeteer is a public figure)
“Macbeth Music Video”	Machinamom	No: Subject not identifiable