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Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace

Edited by

Alexander C.Y. Huang and Charles S. Ross

Purdue University Press

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**Appropriation and the Design of an Online Shakespeare Journal**

Christy Desmet and Sujata Iyengar

In Shakespeare studies, online journals have been part of the landscape of new media scholarship for some time. *Early Modern Literary Studies*, for instance, launched its first issue in April 1995 and the first issue of *Renaissance Journal* appeared in March 1996. At least through the 1990s, however, scholars of early modernity envisioned the internet largely as a vehicle for creating and accessing electronic versions of familiar print artifacts such as refereed journals, scholarly editions, bibliographies or collection of resources, and repositories of syllabi. A survey by Ann Lancashire in 1998 revealed that scholarly users of online resources wanted electronic media primarily to speed up and simplify traditional reading tasks (see similar findings in Dorothy Marie Hett’s annotated bibliography for secondary school teachers). Since then, Shakespeare online has ventured deeper into cyberspace. Although a keyword search on 21 July 2007 on "Shakespeare" and "cyberspace" in the online version of the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America still yielded only five entries, Shakespeare has a robust second life, for instance, in the popular discourse spaces of the blogosphere (Presley). On a more theoretical level, Yong Li Lan has analyzed "Shakespeare as Virtual Event" in terms that help define Shakespeare’s place in cyberspace: she discusses ancillary internet spaces (such as the National Theatre’s Talkback website) that supplement theatrical events and thus extend their life in time and space and she examines the ways in which so-called live theater is itself re-mediated, both in a practical sense by the incorporation of digital media and, more philosophically, by blurring the boundary between "live" and "mediatized" performance. As Philip Auslander has argued, such a distinction proves to be historical and contingent rather than ontological or essential (Yong 57).

The term cyberspace entered the common vocabulary by way of William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984), which offers this allusive definition: "Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts. A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthink-
nable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding" (51). Gibson's definition in his novel *Neuromancer* re-appears on the next page in a voice-over for an imagined "kids' show" (52). In this context, cyberspace is an unfenced playground, an infinite, "unthinkable . . . non-space" of the mind. Perhaps the key to cyberpace's character lies in the optimistic, oxymoronic phrases, "consensual hallucination" and "unthinkable complexity." A shadowy hallucination and yet impossibly palpable in its complexity, cyberspace is both nowhere and everywhere, a disembodied space whose seeming reality is defined, maintained, and destroyed by human consensus. A Google search on "cyberspace," even today, yields predominantly sites that center on virtual worlds, both recreational and educational. And yet the root of the word imposes order upon this nonsensical, non-specific "non-space," and so builds a Foucauldian panopticon in the playground. The word "cyber" derives from the Greek word for a hetman, which also gives us our English words "governor" and "gubernatorial." Norbert Wiener alluded to this sense of the word in 1948 when he defined the then-new science of cybernetics as "the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal" (Oxford English Dictionary Online). Communication and control go together, as do machine and animal. Going back even farther, James Clerk Maxwell employed implicitly the metaphor of the steersman sailing his vessel in his 1868 essay "On Governors," the first mathematical analysis of the theory of systems of continuous-control (see Mayr). Wiener cited Maxwell's paper as the first account of feedback mechanisms, returning to the term "cyber" in preference to the Latinized "governor" (Mayr 425; however, the Oxford English Dictionary and Mayr remind us that the Hellenized form "cyber" had existed in French, as la cybernétique, to refer to government since 1843; thus the new science "had not coined a new word!" [Mayr 425] but revived an old one). This, then, is the genealogy of cyberspace: not unfettered nonspace but communication governed by the continuous control of code and the mechanisms of feedback.

In this article, we consider the feedback (or we could say, the dialectic) between playground and panopticon in one example of digital Shakespeare that re-mediates the by-now familiar phenomenon of the online journal. Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation (B&L) is a new, online, peer-reviewed journal that combines texts delivered through XML (Extensible Markup Language) with multimedia. We explore tensions inherent in the journal's position between old and new media: first, its status as a publishing archaeology, one-half print artifact, one-half website and second, the way in which the combination of its underlying mark-up structure and use of the web as a display medium at once expand and restrict the reader's and writer's agency—hence, constructs a panopticon in the playground.

In the beginning was the page

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin have argued that new media begin by modeling both their *ethos* and *techné* on existing media. Not until practitioners discover different capacities (or "affordances") of the new medium do they break out of existing paradigms for representation. B&L's genealogy traces itself to both the printed book and the World Wide Web. Learned journals, of course, are artifacts of the print era, when, according to scholars and critics ranging from Walter Ong to Elizabeth Eisenstein, the move to regularize typography made printed text transparent, directing the reader's eye to "meaning" beneath the page's surface. Like many e-Journals, B&L mimics the printed book self-consciously, even nostalgically, in the design of its web interface. There is, however, a touch of the hypertext in designer Bill Reeves's cultivation of color and simulation of the material page's curving surface and even in the crispness of the journal's Garamond typeface (figure 1). The virtual page of B&L achieves its ostensible "reality" through a painterly illusion that, like cyberspace, reveals at the same time its status as an evanescent "constellation of data."

B&L's second structural paradigm, the World Wide Web, also works as "a graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks" of myriad computers. As theorizing about hypertext has emphasized repeatedly, the web's ability to move around and link data can liberate readers from the linear modes of reading encouraged by the printed book—making every act of reading a rewriting of the text, a perpetual demonstration of the contingent relation between signifier and signified. While the scholarly article remains B&L's basic structural unit, we had originally planned to capitalize on the fluidity of electronic text by providing a dynamic Table of Contents for the journal, so that readers could move from one essay to another without returning to the home-page. Bolter and Grusin argue that new media can teach us to view anew how we in fact engage with existing ones, and surely enough, it turned out that this capability is latent in the print medium itself. As we developed B&L, we recognized that one of the pleasures of browsing a print journal is to flip from one article to another, without feeling compelled to return first to the Table of
Contents, perhaps without having made a conscious decision to read a particular article. Leith Price's assertion that novel readers are compilers perhaps comes into play here, too. Just as many fiction readers, especially when rereading, skip over or linger over certain parts of the text of a novel, not necessarily in order, so, perhaps, print journal readers compile mentally their own anthologies of scholarship as they browse a particular issue, pausing over certain pages, skimming others, annotating still more. This is a facility that, paradoxically, many online remediations of print articles (such as those housed by JSTOR or Project Muse) remove from readers and that we would like, eventually, to return to readers of B&L. But in the journal's present state, the Table of Contents still acts as a panoptic in the playground of unregulated reading, keeping in check the pleasure of clicking, the sensual diversions provoked by inserted media, hyperlinks, and the scroll bar.

The inclusion of multimedia content in B&L also works against the static, two-dimensional quality of the paradigmatic journal "page." In B&L, digitized versions of photographs, engravings, screen shots, cartoons, and other kinds of visual illustrations familiar from print publication are included. The ability to include sound and music clips, plus occasional video clips, however, dissolves the printed surface to give the journal a more personal illusion of virtual realism. In some cases (for example, in Yu Jin Ku's review of "Honolulu Theatre for Youth's Rap Othello"), the artists themselves provide the video footage and there are no copyright issues—and therefore no practical—restrictions on length. In the case of sound clips under copyright, by contrast, University of Georgia's legal advisors believe that fair use covers only thirty seconds of material. Thus, to include a sound clip to accompany a screen shot of Clause Danes in the balcony scene of Baz Luhrmann's Romeo+Juliet, we began with the bit of text quoted from an essay by Angela Keam: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other word would smell as sweet. / O Romeo, would / Were not Romeo called / Retain that dear perfection which he owes / Without that title." Having seconds to spare, however, we continued recording beyond the printed excerpt, concluding the MP3 of Juliet's soliloquy with the splash and scream that signals Danes's plunge into the family swimming pool when Leonardo DiCaprio, playing Romeo, suddenly declares his presence (this aural moment anticipates the textual treatment of the swimming pool kiss in Keam's ensuing sentences, which is illustrated by yet another screen shot). The conjunction of static screen shots and brief sound clips therefore governs toward, but does not quite achieve, the degree of immediacy familiar to viewers of DVDs on computer screen or of Quicktime films; what we get instead is a hybrid fashioned from two different media.

In the case of the previous example, cyberlaw functions as the panoptic constraining the virtual realism of B&L's multimedia effects. Once again, however, the repression is not complete, as the slippage between static sight and dynamic sound foregrounds the medium through which the sensory experience of the moment is communicated. Even in the simplest examples of visual illustration, the relation between image and text moves in a continuum from denotive illustration to metonymic allusion. In the most striking example, the scientific illustrations of DNA strands and protein molecules that accompany Graham Holderness's essay in B&L 2.1 refer only allusively to his argument for a material continuity between Shakespeare and appropriations of Shakespeare:

Protein may take many forms, but it's still protein. However broad the range of his permutations, Proteus remains Proteus. Like an elemental metal, the changes he undergoes are changes only of shape, not of identity or internal structure. If Shakespeare is like Proteus, then all his manifold and plural forms remain permutations of the same singular entity. All these permutations should, of course, carry, if this conceit holds, a DNA code that can be traced back to the biological parent. Just as the Human Genome Project has specified the sequence of amino acid beads along a protein chain, so it should be possible to identify even remote and dissimilar products of Shakespeare as nonetheless Shakespearean. (Holderness)

In this case, the visualizations of DNA dance symbolically with the author's rigorously logical argument, functioning as points of aesthetic wonder more than anything else. We have returned once again to the digital playground.

The DTD, or code is law

In contrast to its lushly visible web displays, B&L's document structure is governed by unseen XML markup that tells the style sheet how to display textual data. XML identifies elements of a document according to what they are, not how they should look. Instead of a tag called &lt;tag&gt; for italics, for instance, we have a tag called &lt;titleOfLongWork&gt; for italics, but a different style sheet might call for a different display of book titles, for instance (eventually, this thick or dense tagging will allow B&L to construct a database of Shakespearean appropriations, searchable according to genre of appropriation, title of Shakespeare play, author, and so on). Because XML is human as well as machine legible, it puts the power of critical definition in the hands of the user—or more precisely, in this case, the software coder. Part of the editorial enterprise involves determining ahead of time what items in a document of the B&L genre can be marked (and therefore displayed). That list of items, which in turn conditions what is important and not important, visible and invisible, in the journal, is governed by the B&L DTD (Document Type Definition). The DTD determines what elements are "legal" for B&L documents and their logical relation to one another. XML tags, like those of the more familiar display language HTML, are hierarchical, with some tags nested within other, more general tags. For instance, the &lt;titleOfLongWork&gt; can be tagged within a &lt;paragraph&gt;, within a &lt;worksCitedItem&gt;, or an &lt;essayTitle&gt;. A &lt;titleOfLongWork&gt; cannot be tagged within, say, an &lt;image&gt; or even a &lt;foreignWord&gt; tag (figure 2).

In the fully free spirit of cyberspace, these forbidden relations might become real if the author of a particular DTD deemed it appropriate, but the sheer mental
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had omitted from that list the term "screen shot," or "film still," and essays about film have been the most frequent submissions the journal has received so far. In this sense, B&L's contributors, by virtue of their interpretation of the journal's mission and of the parameters of "Shakespearean Appropriation" as a field of critical endeavor, have exerted significant backpressure on this. This is to be expected.

Lessig says that when such ambiguities occur, "it will be a question of how best to go on. We have tools from real space that will help resolve the interpretive questions by pointing us in one direction or another" (25). In a more adventurous vein, as Willard McCarty reminds us, the computer fulfills its most important function as a "modeling machine," making failures as illuminating as success. The disorientation that ensues when code, code, and user face off against one another or even collaborate in problem-solving—as when editors and software designer look for "work-arounds" to display particularly difficult eighteenth-century typography or to deal with a font irregularity that shows up only in the Safari browser—is, in McCarty's view, healthy, and even progressive. Once again, the electronic playground makes its presence felt in the midst of the panoply of code.

What allows code to become a "modeling machine" and therefore destabilize the regime of code as law is the status of modeling as "embodied code" (McCarty 38). N. Katherine Hayles critiques the earlier, more utopian visions of cyberspace in terms of their denial of the inextricable relation of body and mind. Hayles's own definition of a posthuman subjectivity is embodied; unlike the "liberal humanist subject" lurking behind the machine-as-man that she sees as dominating the thinking of early cybertheorists, the "emergence of the posthuman as an informational-material entity is parallel and reinforced by a corresponding reemergence of the deep structures of the physical world together" (11). In this way, our inevitably idiosyncratic iconicity becomes evidence of what an earlier, less technologically sophisticated Shakespeareans might have called the compiler's hand (we are thinking of Charles Babbage and the so-called New Bibliography). We can also turn to Richard Lanham, whose interest in varieties of embodied subject/object encounters helps us to chart the rhetorical dynamics of a digital artifact/event such as B&L. Lanham's analysis of attention structures in digital rhetoric helps to explain the vitality of B&L as an online artifact and vehicle for scholarly communication.

Oscillating wildly at or through

While the page remains the basic unit of organization for B&L, its web interface allows for some interesting movement within that format. Lanham reminds us in his The Economics of Attention of the distinction between reading through an interface (typography, screen) and looking at an interface (seeing the frame of the picture, the buttons on the screen, the type of the print, a phenomenon that he calls "oscillation." In Lanham's exemplary matrix, this oscillation can occur along four parallel spectra: those of the signal, perceiver, motive, and life (figure 3).

If we look at B&L through Lanham's perceptual matrix, we can find encouraging fissures in the smooth page of print that remains the paradigm for scholarly
of *B&L*, the deliberate enrichment of the environment of "sensory denial" found in traditional print media (46). Such enrichment allows an "electronic text [to] liberate a shape and motion buried deep in a text designed to marmorealize fixity" (86).

We can now return to the images that accompany Holmestress's theoretical paper on the term "appropriation," which refer allusively to his argument by calling on scientific discourse rather than illustrating either content or argument in a directly referential manner. We might say that the dominant motive here is *play*; the article can be read in the PDF version without significant loss of meaning. In some articles that rely heavily on images to make their argument, by contrast, the restriction of media to the web document proved problematic for both author and reader. Dan Juan Giara's article on asocial sex in Shakespeare and Welles employed necessarily over forty screen shots to argue for the perverse erotics of the shot/reverse shot. These images helped the essay transcend the tendency of much recent criticism of Shakespeare on film simply to narrativize or describe moments or scenes from films—the images made the argument—but the experience of reading the PDF lacks the immediacy and sense of innovation one gets from the web page. Here, the perceiver's contribution is quite "purposeful." And in one of our favorite examples, Stephen Buhler's voice articulates Shakespeare's text (*Sonnet 18*) and Duke Ellington's music ("Sonnet to Hank Cinq") in a fusion of form and content that would be impossible in another medium. *Play*, competition with both the bard and duke, and purposeful illustration are present in equal proportions.

Turning to the fourth spectrum of Lanham's matrix, we see a new vector, from "Life as Information" (the genetic or mechanistic codes of DNA and neurochemistry) to "Life as Drama" (*theatar mundi* or world-as-stage trope). In between is "Life as Stuff"—"stuff" being the term not just for the information that surrounds us, but also for how we organize and engage with it, at once grossly corporeal, Falstafian matter and the metaphysical stuff that dreams are made on. The Life as Information/Life as Drama mix perhaps coheres most easily in an article that mingles critical approaches (ecocriticism, social science research on games, and pedagogy) with media (print, text, film, images, music) in an account of a project that introduces Shakespeare to Polish middle-school students through a Live-Action Role Playing Game (*Deszcz-Trybiczak and Zarzycka*). The students received plenty of information in preliminary lectures, played their games, and turned Shakespeare into their own material. *B&L*'s readers also get a workout, oscillating along the Life spectrum as charming film clips of the students' playlets—sung and spoken in Polish and filmed sometimes with the uncertain focus of a home video—offered at once a look through the medium to the school life of fifteen-year-olds and a playful, dramatic look at the educational theories that undergird the essay's scholarly argument. The inability of many readers to understand literally the Polish dialogue adds a further opaque dimension to the interaction. We peep into an intimate environment where we understand the emotions and gestures of the Shakespeare being performed, but not the words.
"As the spiral grew"

Lanham's matrix of rhetorical motive for digital artifacts, like McCarty's notion of code as a modeling machine, depends on the manipulation of structures of attention (McCarty 18). Such structures function, as cyberspace and virtual reality do, by way of recursive feedback loops. In response to the aporia between the governing DTD and markup needs of accepted essays, R&L has adopted a spiral model of development. This model is particularly useful to a publication that documents the evolution of Shakespeare and Appropriation as a discipline. The journal's content—its substance, if you will—must respond to the scholarly "markup" just as its display options, or style, must respond to contributors' and readers' exigency. This whole mixed bag of motives and participants, from scholarly perspective to the fatally flawed panopticon at the heart of the XML playground, makes sense if we understand Lanham's perpetual oscillations along the rhetorical spectra as part of R&L's developmental spiral. We imagined this spiral at first as a playground slide—perhaps like the one Micros children's water parks—that would gently offer "the long slide / To happiness, endlessly" (Larkin, lines 8-9), away from the prison-house of code. But the slide hits the ground with a bump. The spiral model of development to which we aspire finally owes more to forms of nature than to the artificial (figure 4).

The Emperor Nautilus grows in a logarithmic or equiangular spiral. As the cephalopod inside grows and develops, it moves from its cramped quarters into successively larger chambers. Or, as Oliver Wendell Holmes put it: "as the spiral grew, / He left the past year's dwelling for the new, / Stole with soft step its shining archway through, / Built up its idle door, in his last-found home, and knew the old no more" ("The Chambered Nautilus," lines 17-21).

Figure 4. The Chambered Nautilus.

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The nautilus's growth is subject both to mathematical certainty (the logarithm underpinning the spiral) and to environmental uncertainty (its growth rate varies considerably; this is one of the reasons why, contrary to popular accounts, the logarithmic spiral so often found in nature is rarely the so-called "golden ratio"). R&L's spiral growth is also subject to the vagaries of funding, submissions, reviewers, and other external factors. Just as the shell of the Nautilus allows the cephalopod to remain "the same shape as it grows" (Vermetie 16), so R&L allows scholarly essays to retain the basic shape of traditional journal essays, even down to the appearance of the website, while including (and hiding, like the Nautilus's chambers) its growing database of Shakespearean appropriations and its ubiquitous tagging. When we become discouraged at our progress, we can think comfortably of the mollusks again: "all evidence currently available suggests that Nautiluses take years to grow to full size" (Boyle and Rodhouse 59). Finally, the Chambered Nautilus seems a fitting metaphor not only for the process of editing in cyberspace or for the development of software, but also for the evolution of scholarship about Shakespeare and appropriation. Increasing by accumulation from within itself, the logarithmic spiral grows wider, with the distance between its 'coils' increasing, as it moves away from the source, known as the pole." (Livio 117): we find that as we seem to move farther away from Shakespeare—the source or pole—with videos of Polish students, photographs of beehives and metals, and essays on Chinese state theater (Huang)—we nonetheless circle around him, drawn by some irresistible logarithm, "the great will that animates [the Nautilus] to sea" (Coleridge, line 39), or scholars to Shakespeare.

Works Cited

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