

# Researching YouTube Shakespeare: Literary Scholars and the Ethical Challenges of Social Media

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## Abstract

YouTube as a site of research raises ethical issues that have yet to be addressed within Shakespeare studies. Complex debates about whether online communications are private or public underline concerns that previous ethical boundaries, guidelines, and applications of literary and performance research and citation methods may not sufficiently protect the researcher, study subject, or both. This essay examines scholars' responsibility in the research process and dissemination of YouTubers' information within published scholarship. Guidelines recommended by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) and the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP) offer matrices for deciding whether or not researchers' ethical priority is in protecting or publishing YouTubers' and/or their commentators' identities in academic publications. These rubrics are put to the test by two YouTube Shakespeare videos as case studies. New media makes it possible to contact Shakespeare video posters and adaptors, prompting the question of whether or not Shakespearians should cross into this brave new world of participatory research.

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*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*

*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*

YouTube, the world's most watched video website, reaches a broader, more diverse audience than any other Shakespeare performance medium in history. Although only a relatively small portion of YouTube's ever shifting repository of online videos actively plays a role in perpetuating Shakespeare's cultural legacy, the website marks an important shift in the appropriation and transmission of the dramatist's body of work. As Stephen O'Neill notes, "YouTube is now one of the dominant media through which Shakespeare is iterated, produced and received in the twenty-first

century" (O'Neill 2014, 3). Arguably, the Shakespeare artifacts YouTubers produce and view affect the future heritage of Shakespeare performance and reception, although specifically the changes that will arise are as unpredictable now as the advent of the website itself was ten years ago. At this juncture, the cultural phenomenon that is YouTube amasses an ever-shifting corpus of eclectic Shakespeare performances that challenge both existing academic assumptions about temporal and trivialized notions of Shakespeare performance and the fundamental methods of textual research long practiced by literary scholars.

While YouTube is a rich resource for Shakespeare performance and reception studies, this also opens a Pandora's Box of ethical issues that have yet to be addressed within Shakespeare studies. These questions 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 people responsible for, and visible within, these works.<sup>1</sup> Like many online social media networks (SMNs), YouTube is a public forum, available for open, non-response video viewing or, in other words, lurking. However, users who wish to interact — post videos and/or comments — on the website register for a YouTube account and agree to its terms of publication. Accordingly, the suggestion that researchers consider ethical obligations to individuals briefed on the public nature of SMN postings may already seem to be a defeated argument.<sup>2</sup> After all, many YouTubers agree to "broadcast themselves" publicly. Nevertheless, this raises a question that requires special attention: do YouTubers implicitly sign away all control of how their information is shared and used?

The issue at hand is not to entertain a discourse on the public nature of YouTube, but to deliberate researchers' responsibility in the research process and dissemination of YouTubers' information within research and published scholarship. The work herein builds on the distinct understanding that YouTubers' personal information and privacy is "less about the information itself and more about the *use or flow* of that information" in Internet contexts (Markham 2012, 335; emphasis added). As Charles Ess argues, "privacy can be minimally defined as the capacity to *control* information about oneself" (Ess 2010, 12; emphasis added). Therefore, this essay argues that even when using material from online public realms such as YouTube, researchers in the humanities have a moral obligation to honor individual participants' rights to privacy.

Although researchers' responsibility to protect their study subjects did not originate with Internet technologies, the human element of online SMNs raises distinctive ethical conundrums

for both social science and humanities research. Generally speaking, the rapid growth of SMNs 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). For the most part, Shakespeareans adhere to the ethical practices prescribed through traditional scholarly literary research skills — developing a research question (who is doing what to Shakespeare on YouTube?), close reading and critical analysis of the videos, and citation of the sources — as the major components of their own online research logic. Recently, however, some Shakespeareans have resorted to assembling customized methodologies and bucking publication protocols in consideration of the humans responsible for SMN artifacts. The issue I underline here is that we humanists may unwittingly place human subjects at risk if we forge ahead with our inquiries and publications, relying on our discipline's text-based citation criteria as our core ethical methodology. With all this ambiguity over Internet research ethics, where does the budding YouTube Shakespeare researcher begin?

A close look at a sample of recent scholarly publications on YouTube Shakespeare reveals several distinct ethical approaches in disseminating YouTuber's online identities. First, 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" (2010, 313). Her engaging analyses of both YouTube Shakespeare performance videos and the interactive conversations that take place on the video's interface follow the ethical guidelines of literary publication: she includes full citation of all her sources, albeit none of which arguably evince potential risk of harm *now* for the individuals cited. While neither the essay nor its paratext includes information about methodology in contacting the individuals she cites, by describing YouTube as a "public sphere" that offers "new frameworks of accessibility and circulation," the implication is that YouTube serves researchers as a public text in the same vein as Shakespeare on film or on the stage (Hodgdon 2010, 314). Alternatively, the methodology Stephen O'Neill employs in his book, *Shakespeare and YouTube: New Media Forms of the Bard*, practices a mode of informed consent by first sending via YouTube a message to the username "attached to the video [requesting] permission to discuss the video as part of an academic monograph" (O'Neill 2014, 240). In cases of no response from the YouTubers, or when the video featured minors, O'Neill omits usernames and video URLs within his work (2014, 241). Even though SMNs like YouTube fall under fair use, O'Neill's decision to seek informed consent

demonstrates his consideration of YouTubers' expressed permission in order to identify them or their work in his publication.<sup>3</sup>

Another case in point: Ayanna Thompson's 2010 *Shakespeare Quarterly* article, "Unmooring the Moor: Researching and Teaching on YouTube," intentionally excludes *all* video titles and participant names. In her work exploring minors' racialized adaptations of Shakespeare, she intentionally goes against literary citation protocol for the sake of protecting the identities of the students in the YouTube videos and comments she analyzes, stating clearly, "I do not cite specific URLs or usernames" (Thompson 2010, 340). This decision engenders a different set of ethical complications, including responsibility to other scholars who may wish to review her sources. Finally, the editors of this publication, *Borrowers and Lenders*, provide researchers with recommended "common sense" guidelines for the inclusion of videos within its publications and citations (see Appendix I). These guidelines take into consideration the legal implications that at present are more inclined to include all publicly available information, with the exception of the YouTube URLs and usernames of minors. These examples show that each Shakespeare researcher employs a mode of citation that exemplifies what Ess describes as *phronesis*. But is it possible or even necessary to establish more definitive guidelines?

Evoking Aristotle, Charles Ess uses the term *phronesis* to refer to this form of ethical decision-making, the practical judgment about how to respond best to specific choices in specific circumstances, whereby researchers make independent decisions about the ethical methodologies they employ in their research based on their own training and experience (see 2010, 25). *Phronesis* requires, as Ess argues, "experience — both of successes and failures — as these help us learn (often, the hard way) what 'works' (is relevant) ethically and what doesn't" (Ess 2010, 25). For those of us engaged in online humanities research, particularly in the study of SMNs, our literary-based training and our individual, albeit conscientious, experiences with online inquiries become the basis that informs our practical judgment or *phronesis*, our research ethics. Nevertheless, decisions based on our *phronesis* may contradict our ethical responsibility to make transparent our sources, and thus yield methodologies fraught with ambiguity, uncertainty, and inconsistency.

While academic bodies such as the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) strive to advance concrete methodological guidelines for ethical research practices, the above examples also demonstrate that, for humanities scholars, online research ambiguities still abound. Internet researchers in general 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, 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 2009, xviii). If anything, as the above epigram from Michael Zimmer suggests, concerns about Internet research that entails human participants are "even more important" because most online SMNs function as open spaces where the lines between private and public (sharable) information are especially blurred (Zimmer 2010, 324).

This essay illustrates some of the ethical complications Shakespearians 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.<sup>4</sup> "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 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 impersonating 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<sup>5</sup>

The rap's lyrics begin with a cacophony of rap-style barking, hooting, and "Shakespeare!" howled in a sports-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.<sup>6</sup> 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-scène* — 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.<sup>7</sup> AB's YouTube Shakespeare has the 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.<sup>8</sup>

"Crank That Shakespeare" and "Hamlet ST." serve as the kinds of vernacular YouTube Shakespeares that some scholars have been using in their cultural studies-based research. That is, these videos reveal a great deal about the cultural work "Shakespeare" performs in contemporary youth society and, thus, provide 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

This essay features "Crank That Shakespeare" and "Hamlet ST." for a number of reasons, beginning with the way they exemplify the potentially viral nature of YouTube videos. As Michael Strangelove suggests, "YouTube videos rapidly migrate across the Internet population because Internet users tend to share what they find with their friends" (2010, 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 geared towards Shakespeareans, BardBox, discussed at length below). To date, "Crank That Shakespeare" has reached nearly 12,000 views, 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. In other words, they each have become viral.<sup>11</sup>

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 (2006, 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, Shakespeareans have enjoyed the luxury of Shakespeare film libraries, moving image performances that we have been trained to read as texts.<sup>12</sup> 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. Shakespeareans also view personal interviews with directors, actors, other Shakespeareans, and the like as "texts"; in other words, a considerable range of excellent Shakespeare scholars have seldom worked under the guidelines that categorize human subject research.<sup>13</sup> 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 2009, 5). Even if YouTube Shakespeares are determined to be "published" texts — that is, networked digital objects of Shakespeare's works that are viewable by everyone, not blocked to anyone who has the technological means — might other considerations overrule established codes of research conduct?

While scholars in the humanities often treat Internet sources as digital objects or texts, subject to academic scrutiny and sharing, 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 legal guidelines. Likewise, but in a different vein, "Hamlet ST." has generated thousands of viewer comments, overall a rich resource for reception studies. However, a fair number include racial insults, ethnic slurs, social slams, and degrading remarks about AB, his skill as an actor, and his hometown. As Susan Barnes notes, "Internet users frequently forget that their message can be accessed by others without their knowledge"; therefore, people who post comments may or may not be aware their remarks can be used as published material and

therefore appear in other media (2004, 212).<sup>14</sup> 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 2004, 207).<sup>15</sup> 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? Internet researcher Carrie James argues that "ethics are tightly aligned with the responsibilities to and for others that are attached to one's role" as researcher and critic; "[a]t the heart of ethics," she continues, "is responsibility to others with whom one interacts through various roles" (James et al. 2008, 9). Analyzing the tasks entailed in YouTube Shakespeare research, the remainder of this article interrogates whether or not this same "heart" of responsibility applies to Shakespeare scholars who perform research on socially driven Internet platforms like YouTube.

Although unintentional ethical lapses can occur in any research project, identifiable lapses confound even the most conscientious Shakespeare scholar because, as demonstrated by the conscientious examples of YouTube Shakespeare research above, our discipline has not fully developed and/or specifically articulated Internet research guidelines.<sup>16</sup> However, it is important to note that these lapses are not uniquely Shakespearean or humanities-based. As James et al. note, "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 (2008, 6). Charles Ess points out that "our first efforts to grapple with difficult ethical issues that require *phronesis* do not always go well" (Ess 2010, 25). 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 2004, 2).<sup>17</sup> While *bricolage* is hardly a new phenomenon in literary study — intertextuality most saliently evinces this — what impact might individual assemblage of ethical approaches to research and citation protocols have on our field of study? Should our worries of adhering to systemic conventions outweigh our concern for the humans implicated in online artifacts?

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 as 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? When 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 important, 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? YouTube's community guidelines are relevant within the realms of SMNs, but they lack sufficiency in providing guidelines for literary research and publication.<sup>18</sup> More important, with the potential to practice as a participant — a commentator on YouTube's interface — the boundaries between the researcher as reader and as participant become contested sites for defining research protocol. For instance, YouTube's interactive affordances, such as the interface's comment boxes and the ability to send private messages to YouTubers, create the potential to "interview" YouTube Shakespeare participants.<sup>19</sup> 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 essay looks at some common research ambiguities that Shakespeare scholars face when encountering humans in YouTube videos. It begins with a particular focus on "Crank That Shakespeare" and the complications of researching videos that possibly include minors before discussing some of the potential issues a YouTube Shakespeare reception study of "Hamlet ST." might galvanize. It then overviews social science approaches to these dilemmas before 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 actively administered from 2008-2012 by British film scholar Luke McKernan.<sup>20</sup> Dismissing

early notions that YouTube Shakespeares are "home only to facetious and repetitive parodies," McKernan aggregated over 150 Shakespeare-related videos, arguing that the best examples needed "to be identified, championed and studied" (McKernan 2008a).<sup>21</sup> Specifically collecting "original Shakespeare-related videos," rather than the common, and popular, Shakespeare mash-ups derived from a whole host of other media (cinema, television, DVD), BardBox clearly targets as its audience scholars in the humanities who engage with pop-culture Shakespeares. 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 2008a). 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 2008a)

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 2008b)

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

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 . . . [i]t's a fine English

project that brings out such delight in recognizing the vitality of the play. (McKernan 2008b)

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 expresses his excitement about 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 may 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 are raised larger and more specific questions 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 those names are repeated on BardBox. Given that YouTube videos are networked digital objects that frequently get shared across multiple social media platforms, 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 may be minors, is it ethical for BardBox to list their names? For that matter, is it ethical for me 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. 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.<sup>22</sup> At one point, statistics on YouTube indicated that 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.<sup>23</sup> 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 not know where and in what context [his/]her videos are being posted" (Lange 2008, 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 Shakespeareans, and while the availability to locate this video on multiple sites potentially suggests its "public" status,

does BardBox (do I?) still have a moral obligation to inform the producers of the newly created, never imagined link?<sup>24</sup>

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 aged thirteen to eighteen years old to post!"), this particular example illustrates the ease of Internet video appropriation or poaching, the alarming ways Internet videos are virally disseminated, and the ethical significance these sharing practices might have for the human participants in the videos. 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?<sup>25</sup>

"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).<sup>26</sup> 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 by the posters themselves (one does not need to sign in to view YouTube videos or the videos' entire interface), the ethical dilemmas return back to the researcher. Should researchers protect participants who publish sensitive comments on YouTube?<sup>27</sup> 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 and also runs contrary to the logic of Web 2.0; after all, the hyperlink as digital object (and citation) can be distributed across devices and platforms, a potentially exciting prospect for online Shakespeare researchers (Thompson 2011, 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?

Weird (Social) Science?

While these types of ethical and methodological questions are not yet addressed by Shakespeare and other humanities scholars, they have been the focus of Internet researchers since the 1990s. Annette Markham and Nancy Baym, for instance, argue that the rapid shift in media phenomena "brings into sharp relief previously assumed and invisible epistemologies and practices of inquiry" (Markham and Baym 2008, vii). Markham's collaborations with Baym, and her continuing solo inquiries on Internet ethics, serve as examples of the kinds of concerns — for instance, the protection of privacy and personal information — that the Internet researcher community has addressed for over a decade. Shakespeareans, however, have a shorter history of Internet scholarship. Nevertheless, the same concerns that Markham, Baym, Ess and others tackle should be echoed by Shakespeareans in their analyses of literary adaptations and appropriations found online. 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. 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. 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, and his appearance). 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, Carrie James's team of social scientists examines the opportunities and risks that young people encounter through digital technologies, including "uploading and sharing their own creations" (James et al. 2008, 2). In five case studies, James and her team examine how young people understand and practice ethical

Internet participatory behavior. Within this work, James's group identifies the broad critical issues at stake, such as "identity, privacy, ownership and authorship, credibility and participation" (James et al. 2008, 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 cite the individuals neither 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 et al. 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 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, "[i]f 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 2008). 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 that as scholars, we begin to develop (and accept) new theoretical, methodological and interpretative lenses that enable us to undertake literary-based research of Internet texts, and to do so on a case-by-case basis.

Anticipating ethical concerns, the Association of Internet Researchers published recommendations in 2002, which were 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).<sup>28</sup> 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, or *phronesis* (Ess 2002, 4).<sup>29</sup> The Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) offers a similar system of decision charts to help researchers determine appropriate and legal research methodologies. Despite the fact that Ess and company imagined that 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). To my knowledge there are no algorithms or ethical flow charts in humanities-based methodologies, although it is likely that they will develop as increasingly more digital humanists explore SMNs. For now it is important for Shakespeare scholars to think through the AoIR algorithm and OHRP decision charts 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." (see Appendix II).

The first question is one 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 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" maybe is performed and 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, and YouTube video participants at large, 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).<sup>30</sup> 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 or "identifiers linked to the subject" ("Decision Charts" 2013). 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" ("Decision

Charts" 2013). 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 is this equally true about responder commentary on "Hamlet ST." ? Although commentary is decreed to be "public" text, republishing racialized commentary seals the connection between comment and commentator elsewhere other than the ephemeral setting of YouTube. In other words, Shakespeareans can legally use "Crank That Shakespeare" because it does not endanger the participants' 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 and others 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. 2008, 2).<sup>31</sup> In fact, they often appear more fully cognizant of web culture than are their parents and teachers. James notes that, "indeed, many young people are using the digital media in impressive and socially responsible ways" (James et al. 2008, 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 (James et al. 2008, 3). 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 its uploader, zman. 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, including McKernan or me (Black 2008, 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). Clearly, such inquiries move more precisely into mode of human subjects research.

However, 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 researchers, 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 the genealogy of "Hamlet ST." 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, YouTube, the very website zman and AB/YZ employ encourages interactivity. Viewers are invited to post comments and links to related videos on YouTubers' walls, and YouTube categorizes and links certain postings precisely to enable interactivity. Likewise, BardBox's curation 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. (LeBesco 2004, 63)

Yet, as humanities scholars, we Shakespeareans may hesitate to engage with YouTubers precisely because we have not been trained to do so. I have neither posted comments or questions on YouTube or BardBox, nor have I "friended" 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). (Jenkins 2006, 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 2008, 13; emphasis in original). 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.,"

[m]ark 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 2008, 13)

In other words, the assignment that zman and his classmates received may have encouraged a type of collective experience that could enable attaining the "sound theoretical understandings" that Lankshear and Knobel argue occur. The assignment, after all, seems to bridge traditional and new pedagogical practices, such as close reading, analysis, translation, and transference. For Shakespeare scholars to proceed as if Internet materials are merely digital objects to be shared or 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 in which this material continues and ruptures our understanding of Shakespearean performance-based methodologies. Despite the fact that the videos can be read, interpreted, and analyzed in old and familiar literary discourses, their medium of access constantly signals ruptures with the past: their interactive interface 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 Shakespearean 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.

Ultimately, I decided to reach out and engage in dialogue with the producers of the Shakespeare performance videos that serve as case studies in this essay. I first developed an

interview strategy, then sought (and was granted) approval from my institution's IRB, The Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, to contact a selection of YouTube Shakespeare channel hosts. My goal, beyond seeking answers to the pressing questions that Shakespeare production in social media engender, was to explore the potentiality of developing a dialogue about Shakespeare production with the YouTube Shakespeare video participants. In addition, I felt the need to test what online ethnographic research might yield in terms of knowledge production. Using YouTube's message capabilities as the locus for first contact, I sent emails to the channel hosts of the two case studies I include in this essay. The uploader of "Hamlet ST." did not reply. Almost immediately, zman of "Crank That Shakespeare" consented to participate in my larger study (results forthcoming). Exchanging dialogue with zman proved rewarding on many levels, not least because I feel comfortable in including, with impunity, the hyperlink to "Crank That Shakespeare" within this publication.

What emerges 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, involve a complex set of negotiations for the researcher. It is clear that treating materials on the Internet as digital objects subject to viral movement or texts in their own right is easier than engaging the processes that allow one to interact with the producers, users, and consumers of these materials. After all, we already know how to treat texts ethically. What this essay seeks to convey, however, is that ethical lapses occur even where 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 of researching social media Shakespeare.

### Appendix I: *Borrowers and Lenders* Guidelines

1. While you do not need legal permission to include citations, URLs, and clips from YouTube Shakespeare examples, we have some common-sense guidelines that we have been following.
3. You have permission to discuss these producers' work. If you can reach them and get permission for linking or, or better, reproducing their work, that would be great. Just collect all the permissions together for us.

5. Consider whether you might ask for permission not simply to link, but for the journal to download and host a copy of the clip. That way we would not be at the mercy of the vagaries of YouTube video lifespans.
7. In any case, 30-second clips are considered fair use.
9. A practical consideration: whether linking or embedding videos, if you include too many, the loading time gets burdensome. So pick and choose which ones you really want. Exemplary screen shots work well also and selecting 30 second bits to focus readers' attention on what you discuss is often helpful.
11. Are any of your authors minors or even just young people? If so, in our own work we are extra careful about these. Unless I have the author's explicit permission, I don't include clips with young people acting (again, unless they are in a sanctioned school production or something like that) or especially include their faces.
13. But we can check all these things on a case-by-case basis. The first task is to figure out a selection of which clips — either full-length, or 30-second snippets you'd want to use — and/or screen shots would be good for your essay.
15. In the end, we'd prefer to have the URLs but not real names, and any clips you reference that are not in the essay proper can be listed separately in the "Online Resources" section of your essay.

## Appendix II: Reconsidering Research Methodology in Online Contexts

Human subjects in online contexts complicate deciding what is public and private in social media settings, and prompt questions on how to make sense of the gray areas that fall between those binary lines. While scholars need to check with their home institution, the following questions — although not intended to be comprehensive — may be of value and prompt reflection on process and publication of literary scholars' social media Shakespeare research in ways that reconsider, rather than reinvent, methodologies that implicate the living, versus the textual, human subject.

1. Are there human subjects identifiable in the research?
3. To what degree should the human subjects be made identifiable in the research?
5. How will participants become involved in the research project?
7. What formal recruitment procedures, or criteria for inclusion/exclusion are in place for these participants?
9. What is the nature of their participation in the research? (In other words, will their participation involve one-time, short-time, longer-time commitments?)
11. Will the participants collaborate with the researcher or research institution?

13. Do the participants include the researcher's own students or employees? Explain how the possibility of conflict of interest will be minimized.
15. Describe what possible risks to research participants may be entailed in their participation in the study. (These risks may include, but are not limited to, physical stress, threats to their safety, psychological or emotional distress, risk of other repercussions beyond the research context such as loss of employment, licensure, leisure, etc.)
17. Will the research include participants under the age of 18?
19. Will the research include participants who are members of tribal communities in the U.S. or First Nations of Canada?
21. Will the research include participants who are in prison?

### Notes

1. In social science research contexts, these individuals are commonly referred to as human subjects; nevertheless, the term "human subject" is fraught with tension. The Association of Internet Researchers notes in its 2012 Ethical Guidelines that human subject "has long been critiqued for being ill-suited for models of inquiry that follow non-biomedical procedures . . . (I)n internet research, 'human subject' has never been a good fit for describing many internet-based research environments" (Markham and Buchanan 2012). I employ "human subject" in this work to remain consistent with the term used by my home institution's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. I also use Stephen O'Neill's term "YouTubers" to refer specifically to human subjects located on YouTube.
2. See YouTube's Terms of Service (section 6) for additional information on YouTube's waiver of confidentiality, available at <https://www.youtube.com/t/terms>.
3. I refer to fair use principles in the United States; these principles vary in different countries. For more information, see <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/>.
4. I have the video channel host's permission to cite "Crank that Shakespeare." Although I know this YouTuber's name, age, and location, and have his permission to use this information in this publication, I have chosen to exclude traceable markers of his identity herein and refer to him as zman. I believe there exists very low risk of future harm to any of the video's participants; nevertheless, I still have reservations about creating a potential identity trail in this work. This decision is not without its own ethical complications: zman is proud of his YouTube work and informs me he was over the age of eighteen when the video was made and uploaded onto YouTube. Am I denying zman explicit recognition for his work? I do not think so. After all, the YouTube title is intact; anyone who views the video will learn both zman's YouTube name

and his real identity. I have, as I have stated above, made anonymous the true identifier of the video title and the producer and the actor in "Hamlet ST."

5. Viewed intermittently from 13 November 2008 to 30 September 2013.
6. Uploaded July 2007, viewed intermittently from 13 November 2008 to 30 September 2013. The video title "Hamlet ST." and all names associated with this YouTube posting are fabricated. See Markham 2012 for additional details on fabrication as a theory and methodology.
7. Additional information about "Hamlet ST." was acquired through a secondary YouTube video, in which videographer YZ answers interviewer questions on the production of "Hamlet ST."
8. For additional discussions on YouTube Shakespeares and race, see Thompson 2011.
9. Christy Desmet notes that YouTubers frequently attend closely to details and minutiae of a play. See Desmet 2008, 237.
10. The notion of online "identity tourism" is borrowed from Nakamura 2002.
11. "Crank That Shakespeare" was uploaded onto YouTube on 31 March 2008. The video was uploaded onto BardBox on 7 November 2008. According to Jean Burgess, "the term viral video is used 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 (2008, 101).
12. See, for instance, Global Shakespeares (<http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/>) and the British Film & TV archive (<http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/>).
13. Shakespeare organizations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company use social media sites like Twitter for their pedagogical initiatives, such as the RSC's work for children that features children, "Stand up for Shakespeare." Nevertheless, as Gitelman notes, for most humanities based scholars "research and publication . . . are so far persistently individual" practices (2010, 31). For examples of RSC practices, see <http://www.rsc.org.uk/sufs/>.
14. With regard to YouTuber comments, YouTube's community guidelines state, "We encourage free speech and defend everyone's right to express unpopular points of view. But we don't permit hate speech (speech which attacks or demeans a group based on race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, age, veteran status, and sexual orientation/gender identity)." For more information, see [http://www.youtube.com/t/community\\_guidelines](http://www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines).
15. In his YouTube video presentations, anthropologist Michael Wesch discusses YouTube, its use, and, as of 2008, discusses YouTuber cultural practices such as trolling and viral dissemination, and offers his empirical observations on YouTube community cultures:

see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09gR6VPVrpw> and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-IZ4\\_hU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-IZ4_hU).

16. Once again, one example of an exception to this statement are *Borrowers and Lenders's* recommended guidelines.
17. The term remix in the new millennium refers to larger practices, cultural and technological, that take pre-existing materials and reassemble them to form new cultural artifacts and/or technological products. I use the term remix to designate the combination of various disciplinary research methodologies. See also Lawrence Lessig's theory of remix culture in online environments: <http://remix.lessig.org/>.
18. See endnote 15 for link to YouTube's community guidelines.
19. At the time of writing, YouTube is changing its email function. For additional information, see <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/3523594?hl=en>.
20. McKernan's curatorship and archiving involves a kind of work — categorizing original videos specifically for the Shakespeare community — for instance, by play — that YouTube itself does not undertake. McKernan discontinued archiving YouTube Shakespeares on [Bardbox.wordpress.com](http://Bardbox.wordpress.com) in September 2012; however, in March 2016, he reactivated and relaunched the site as [Bardbox.net](http://Bardbox.net).
21. Viewed intermittently October 2008-March 2014.
22. See Jenkins 2013 for additional discussion of the nature of viral dissemination and participatory culture.
23. Accessed December 2009.
24. The practice of curating and archiving YouTube Shakespeares is not unique to McKernan's. In addition, many YouTubers (including me) curate/archive playlists on YouTube; some, like mine, are marked private, while others, like Stephen O'Neill's, are open to viewers. See O'Neill's collection at <http://www.youtube.com/user/Shakespeareonutube?feature=mhee>.
25. 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, such as MIT's YouTomb project, may have copies of the video. YouTomb, "a research project by MIT Free Culture that tracks videos taken down from YouTube," illustrates how even producer video clips removed by the producer 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 through the Internet for indefinite lengths of time (YouTomb).



26. By sensitive, I mean racialized, foul, and insulting language. Occasionally participatory comments include incriminating information.
27. See Lovink 2013 for further information on comments as "mass hermeneutics."
28. The 2002 publication accessed intermittently September 2008-March 2013. The 2012 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-led by Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, are quoted throughout this article.
29. For AoIR's current (2012) full algorithm see the website: <http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf>.
30. 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 and 2013).
31. AoIR defines minors as ranging in age between 12 and 18.

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