

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

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In *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (1997), W. B. Worthen had focused on "an explicitly institutionalized [Anglo-American] Shakespeare" (41) within an increasingly diverse society. *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* moves on to an even broader set of responses to the playwright and his body of work. In this 2003 study, "institutionalized" Shakespeare, represented by a 2000 performance of *Hamlet* at the reconstructed Globe Theatre in London, exists alongside films (such as Baz Luhrmann's 1996 *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*) and the public-domain texts of Shakespeare available under copyright law (Worthen 2003, 200-201). It also coincides with intercultural theatrical performances by companies from Brazil, South Africa, Cuba, and India and, not surprisingly, "living-history" sites such as Plimoth Plantation and the reenactment of Civil War battles at Gettysburg, as well as "themed" environments such as Disney World and New York City's Times Square.

To address this complex situation, Worthen's methodology extends beyond theater history and the schools of literary criticism that he drew on in *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*. It even extends beyond his earlier book's openness to cultural hybridity, which had inflected its approach to "the accents of authority that inform . . . Shakespeare *not* marked as contestatory, or resistant, or experimental, or political" (Worthen 1997, 42, emphasis in original) and facilitated his examination of Peter Sellars's controversial 1994 production of *The Merchant of Venice* alongside Anna Deveare Smith's more productive approach, in *Twilight: Los Angeles*, to exploring racial tensions in America. In *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*, Worthen's methodology encompasses cultural geography, Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy*, Richard Schechner's anthropological approach to performance, and twentieth-century speculation about hypertext's ultimate triumph over print. Worthen also engages aspects of J. L. Austin, Judith Butler, and Jacques Derrida, plus Sue-Ellen Case's theories of the performative, to the extent that they can be applied to dramatic performance (Worthen 1997, 151-91; 2003, 3-20). As Worthen notes, however, performative theories are grounded in print literacy and print culture, even as these

theories offer alternative approaches to students of the theater (2003, 13-20, 216). For instance, he notes J. L. Austin's explicit exclusion of theater from his definition of the performative, as well as the ahistorical and therefore limited understanding of theatrical performance evinced in Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's crucial discussion of this topic in *Performance and Performativity* (Worthen 2003, 5-8). Conversely, in Worthen's study print is only one technology among several, rather than the foundational technology that it so often is treated as, even in studies of the theater. As a result, his willingness to engage not only different theorists, but also different technologies enables him to provide readers with a rich sample of approaches.

Guiding his readers through what would have been diffuse and confusing material in less practiced hands, Worthen concentrates on three types of approach. The first involves historicity. Here, he discusses the process of restaging Shakespeare "at the intersection between the early modern experience of theatre that [the Globe Theatre in London] labors to restore, and the postmodern regimes of theatrical performance and of history-performance that are its means of production" (Worthen 2003, 83). This intersection, with "its rhetoric of [seeming] restoration" (74), is exemplified by, but not limited to, London's Globe Theatre, as earlier discussions of a California university's 1998 production of *Romeo and Juliet* and of Julie Taymor's 2000 film *Titus* suggest (72-77). Worthen's second approach draws on cultural hybridity as it is manifested by multiculturalism and intercultural performance; his examples are Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* and Grupo Galpão's 2000 performance of *Romeu e Julieta* at London's Globe. The multiculturalism of Luhrmann's Hollywood film imposes on Shakespeare's Verona "the characteristic landscapes of economic globalization . . . with all their typical placelessness" (Worthen 2003, 122). In these landscapes, raced actors from a wide range of traditions are jumbled together. This tactic aligns Luhrmann's casting with Sellars's, which Worthen had criticized for its imprecision and even opacity (1997, 76-84). This is not to say that Worthen calls for more traditional, monocultural casting. Instead, he finds it ironic that film critics appear much more comfortable with Caucasian stage actor Miriam Margolyes's performance of a stereotypically Latina Nurse than with the Latino actor John Leguizamo's portrayal of Tybalt, which plays on his physical "presence," much as contemporary acting would seem to require (Worthen 2003, 145-46; 1997, 100). The production by Brazilian theater company Grupo Galpão, on the other hand, epitomizes intercultural theater, which mediates between different cultures' traditions rather than imposing one upon the other. Consciously drawing on strategies from Brazilian, British, and European theaters, the company reworks both Shakespeare's play and itself (Worthen 2003, 157-63). Grupo Galpão, incidentally, is pictured on the cover of *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*, representing the production's centrality to Worthen's vision

of global performance. More importantly, the Brazilian company's performance is not the only intercultural performance that Worthen discusses in his book.

The third and final approach, moving from the local, physical stage to cyberspace and transforming text into hypertext, produces "Cyber-Shakespeares." All three approaches contribute to a multidimensional model of the relationship between Shakespeare and his twenty-first century audiences. The discussion of "Cyber-Shakespeares," however, is less useful than the rest of *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*. At the time when Worthen researched this topic, the Internet or, as it was then called, cyberspace, probably seemed more overtly "placeless" than the reconstruction of the Globe Theatre or the settings of Luhrmann's films. In fact, one of cyberspace's distinguishing characteristics seemed to be its ability to allow people to transcend such markers as place, race, and even gender. The 1998 composition reader, *Composing Cyberspace*, for instance, excerpts Sherry Turkle's 1995 *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, which emphasizes computer users' ability to "become authors not only of text but of themselves, constructing new selves through social interaction" (1998, 7). Yet, even in the same reader that contains Turkle's paean to radical self-determination, other authors offer competing visions. Glen Martin's "Internet Indian Wars" depicts Native Americans' success in battling one European-American who not only reinvented himself as a Native American, but also granted this identity to others via an online chat room (1998, 124-31). This battle was part of Native Americans' efforts to enable tribal members to go online despite economic and geographic barriers. Elsewhere in *Composing Cyberspace*, Yale University librarian Ann Okerson explores copyright issues and speculates about their ultimate impact on cyberculture (1998, 343-49). Australian feminist Dale Spender, in turn, discusses access to computers in more global terms than do Martin or Okerson; she considers how calls for universal access may complicate economic development for the poorest humans (Spender 1998, 266-69). More recent mappings of what used to be called "cyberspace" have followed in the directions suggested by Martin's, Okerson's, and Spender's essays.

That said, determining the immediate past's impact on the near future is often tricky, as anyone who has read the end of a contemporary anthology will agree. Worthen compensates for this uncertainty, as his analysis of Jay David Bolter, Stuart Moulthrop, and others' writings from the 1990s and his juxtaposition of hypertext with print and performance indicate. But in some sense, the "Cyber-Shakespeares" that Worthen depicts through his discussion of The Internet Shakespeare Editions, About Shakespeare, and even the College of the Holy Cross's multi-dimensional site, the Interactive Shakespeare Project, belong more to the public library or the college classroom than to the theater. One wonders as well what Worthen would make of sites like that of the American Repertory Theater, which complements its performances of Shakespeare and has been available

since the late 1990s, or of the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare (CASP) project. In any case, given the discrepancy between his sources' mapping of cyberspace and more current sources that present a more diverse and contested Internet, this section awaits revision.

Despite this weakness, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* certainly is successful as a whole, and I attribute this success to Worthen's readiness to choose among theoretical approaches and his sensitivity to cultural hybridity. These qualities, moreover, are complemented by the author's willingness to make his criteria clear and to work through his ideas over time. For example, as I have noted, Worthen's chapter on multicultural and intercultural performances continues a discussion begun in *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, where Worthen argues that Peter Sellars's use of politicized discourse about race in his 1994 *The Merchant of Venice* makes his production a Shakespearean analogue to plays such as Anna Deveare Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles*. This discussion, in turn, is grounded in Worthen's 1997 outline of directors' approaches to Shakespeare. In the book I am reviewing here, both previous discussions inform how Worthen presents Grupo Galpão's reworking of *Romeo and Juliet* as a response to Shakespeare and as a product of modern, global theater. Together with a judicious citation of Homi Bhabha's "Of Man and Mimicry" (1994) and some recent theater history, these discussions also enable Worthen to respond to British critics' dismissal of *Romeu e Julieta* as marginal and derivative and to support his argument for the production's centrality to his vision of global performance (2003, 166-67). This is only one thread that firmly binds the two books.

I was also intrigued by the author's insertion of his immediate responses to Mark Rylance's 2000 performance of *Hamlet* at the Globe. These sections serve significant purposes. First of all, they enable Worthen to engage more directly with theater critics' responses to this and other productions. This is essential because the use of immediate criticism is an important part of the author's research and rhetorical methods, perhaps as important as his use of performative and postcolonial theories. Second, these sections link the experience of being in the audience at the Globe to that of being a tourist, whether one is "doing" Disney World, Plimoth Plantation, or even London. Without this imaginative link, the act of attending a theatrical performance at the Globe becomes uncomfortable, as Worthen's readings of British critics show. With this imaginative link established, on the other hand, a reader's understanding of historicity and culture becomes that much more nuanced, revealing what it means to restore and perform the past (Worthen 2003, 82-83). Even though the Globe is not alone among "the efforts to restore Shakespearean drama to its original mode of theatrical production" (Worthen 2003, 83), it still embodies the conflict between past and present in a way that productively challenges what Worthen, following Freddie Rokem, calls "the rhetoric of restoration . . . a rhetoric that we accept as plausible, persuasive, forceful,

even when we understand its purely theatrical provenance" (2003, 74). This tension between what we accept and what we understand becomes even more productive when we read Worthen's notes from Mark Rylance's performance alongside his reading of Suzan-Lori Parks's *The America Play*. Written in the register of African-American social satire, Parks's drama comments on humans' ability to represent the past just as much as Worthen's commentary on Rylance's Hamlet does. As "extremes," Parks's representation of "the Great Hole of History" (Parks 1995, 159, quoted in Worthen 2003, 79) and Rylance's transformation of Shakespeare's play into a comic "dialogue with the audience" (2003, 106) illustrate the "pastness" of the past to the reader much more effectively than could a more mainstream and more equivocal performance. And, finally, Worthen's immediate responses to Rylance's performance of Hamlet provide a textual analogue to the online journals and blogs that have allowed individuals who are not affiliated with print media or academia to respond to similar performances. Perhaps this is a direction to explore in future mappings of Shakespeare's place in contemporary culture.

### Online Resources

About Shakespeare [cited 9 September, 2005]. <http://shakespeare.about.com/>.

American Repertory Theater [cited 9 September, 2005]. <http://www.amrep.org/>.

Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare (CASP) [cited 9 September, 2005]. <http://www.canadianshakespeare.ca>.

Interactive Shakespeare Project [cited 9 September, 2005]. <http://www.holycross.edu/departments/theatre/projects/isp/>.

The Internet Shakespeare Editions [cited 9 September, 2005]. <http://ise.uvic.ca/>.

Plimoth Plantation: Living Breathing History [cited 5 October, 2005]. <http://www.plimoth.org/>.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre [cited 5 October, 2005]. <http://www.shakespeares-globe.org/>.

Walt Disney World Resort [cited 5 October, 2005]. <http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/wdw/index>.

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