COMPLEX WORLDS
Digital Culture, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication

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Table of Contents

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CHAPTER 4

Gertrude Stein in QuickTime: Documenting Performance in the Digital Age

Jason Farman

OVERVIEW

This chapter investigates an interactive CD-ROM and a subsequent three-disc DVD video document created by the New York performance troupe The Wooster Group, interactive documents with implications for reinscribing the role of the audience in relation to performance. Comparison of the CD-ROM to the Group's live performance as well as to Gertrude Stein's text *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* illustrates how a digital mode of production gives rise to tensions between textual authority and reader agency.

Documents have traditionally maintained a specific trajectory, that being from event to record. A public meeting, for example, may take place at city hall and subsequently be written up for the local newspaper; likewise, in the music world, a band creates music in a live setting and later records an album, documenting the songs as they might have sounded if performed in concert. Documents typically attempt to represent or to re-create the live event as "accurately" as possible since documents seen as distant from live events often are considered "secondhand," or subordinate to them. Thus, as Philip Auslander (1999) notes in his book *Liveness*, few rock records "foreground the artifice of their studio construction; most are made to sound like [live] performances that could have taken place, even if they really didn't (and couldn't)" (p. 64).

With the advent of digital technologies, the relation between event and document (and the document's subordination to the live event) clearly is being troubled. This is especially true of documentation in live theater. Enthusiasts of musical theater often purchase the CD or DVD version of a show long before they see it live. And encounters with documents of a performance create in audiences a specific relation to the document that informs the way they later react to the live event, during which

any deviation from the CD or DVD (e.g., changes in lyrics, notes hit, tonal qualities of a singer's voice) is noted immediately and marked as "different from the CD." To this extent, the document is not relationally subordinate to the live; rather, the live is understood as referencing the document.

Digital documents also contribute to this reversal through their ability to involve the *spectator-user* (a term derivative of Augusto Boal's [1985] *spect-actor*, who is both a spectator of the theatrical piece and an agent in its interactive creation) by enabling him or her to alter a work's narrative path. Interactive alteration of narrative and visual structures by either shifting a story in a new direction or simply moving the mouse and scanning a QuickTime panorama is a feature that distinguishes digital from analogue documents. The interactive CD-ROM—in fact, any digital technology under the umbrella "interactive"—often is read as a medium that shifts authority away from the playwright/author and moves it into the hands of the spectator-user. Yet, as this chapter will explain in light of a discussion of the New York troupe The Wooster Group, the term *interactive* often is criticized by media theorists as nothing more than a reinscription of various modes of authority; for although the spectator-user is able to direct the narrative path, other individuals created the possible paths and coded the media to allow for interactivity.

One of the key questions that this chapter grapples with is whether digital documents offer greater opportunities for agency to the spectator-user than analogue documents do. Put another way, to what extent does the correspondence between event and document remain in place with digital documents, and to what extent might interactive documents allow for a new configuration of the relation between live event and document? For instance, can an interactive CD-ROM come "closer" to documenting a performance than a video recording does, perhaps by better representing the reality of a production by simulating the spectator's ability to look around the various parts of a stage at will? Additionally, the chapter considers the ways in which interactive interfaces inform the emerging roles of the audiences of artistic representations in the digital age.

The blurring lines between live and digitized events are a constant trope in the performances of The Wooster Group, who have made the incorporation of documentary technologies (cameras, televisions, recorded sounds, and movie clips) into live performance an essential part of their productions. In keeping with their goal of blending live event and digital document, they commissioned director Zoe Beloff to create an interactive CD-ROM document of their live performance of *House/Lights*, which was based on Gertrude Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938). The CD-ROM, titled *Where Where There There Where* (now available online at www.zoebeloff.com/where), reformats Stein's print text into an interactive interface that enacts the tensions between live and digital. As Beloff (n.d.) states, she wanted the project to "provoke questions concerning how we think about our mental space within the real world in relation to the virtual machines which we more and more substitute in its place" (para. 7).

The decision for The Wooster Group to create an interactive CD-ROM document of their *House/Lights* performance (1998), which was followed by a three-disc DVD video document of the performance (2004), has several consequences in terms of the

documentation of theater in the Digital Age and the reinscription of audience roles in performance. This chapter's comparison of the CD-ROM to the live performance as well as to the written text of *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* suggests how a digital mode of production gives rise to tensions between textual authority and reader agency and how readers can intervene in digital production of text. These tensions are troubled further when we consider differences between the CD-ROM and the DVD documents.

TURNING ON THE ELECTRIC LIGHTS

Though many studies examine the *form* of interactive art and performance (e.g., how the piece involves the audience, how interactivity is staged, how tools are used to trouble the relation between material and virtual space), the works I study here rely on an interdependence of content and form. Stein's work is famous for the intimate relation between these categories. Her *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* was scripted as an operatic libretto derived from many earlier Faust stories, including those of Christopher Marlowe (1604) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1808). Though the play is founded on widely familiar narratives, the content and the form deviate significantly from previous stagings. Traditionally, the story follows the character of Doctor Faustus, who famously sells his soul to the devil (here, the character of Mephisto, or Mephistopheles) for power, knowledge, and fame. In Stein's retelling, the title character sells his soul for electric light. After the deal is made, he initiates several debates with Mephisto regarding the metaphysical status of the soul, arguing that he actually had no soul to sell. The debate continues throughout the piece and becomes as old and tiresome to Faustus as the electric lights do. Nothing seems to interest him any longer, including the presence of a woman under the dual name Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel, who comes to Faustus seeking help after a viper has bitten her. Nothing has meaning to Faustus because everything around him seems to have exited the realm of the "real." Instead, it seems to him that all he comes in contact with may be a simulation of something real, just as the electric lights are. By the end of the play, as Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel becomes more and more the central protagonist of the piece, Faustus begs Mephisto to take him to hell if such a place exists.

The form of the play is also not left to the traditional textual styles of Marlowe or Goethe. Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* contains no obvious stage directions, nor is it always clear which character is meant to be speaking. Stein offers up her text to various interpretations by eliminating the typical structure of a dramatic piece, removing most of the punctuation, and blending dialogue and stage direction. Stein explains that she was attempting to evoke concepts without referring to their linguistic signs, which come attached to the audiences' mental schema. She says, "I was trying to name objects without using their names" (Adato, 1970). Insofar as the dialogue in the text is disconnected from actors and their actions, her enigmatic use of language complicates the process of signification. Moments in the text collide and conflate—dialogue becomes stage direction, and vice versa. Stein's text becomes one in which oppositions are broken apart and questioned.

It thus functions perfectly as the source for performances that question the divide between event and digitally produced document, such as The Wooster Group's production of *House/Lights* (including the CD-ROM and DVD subsequently produced from this performance).

The Wooster Group and its director, Elizabeth LeCompte, premiered its interpretation of Stein's text in 1997 at the Wexner Center in Columbus, Ohio and brought it to New York's Performance Garage in October 1998. *House/Lights* is an amalgamation of *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* and a 1964 B-movie by Joseph Mawra called *Olga's House of Shame*. These two sources commingle and reflect each other throughout The Wooster Group's performance. *House/Lights* stages various characters—such as Faust, Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel, and Mr. Viper— through a single actor, Kate Valk. She speaks the text for these characters through a "dictaphone-like receiver/amplifier" that modifies the pitch and tenor of her voice (Callens, 2002, p. 128). Through the use of video displayed on the television screen in front of her (one of four televisions on the set), Valk splits the lines of Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel. She speaks several lines, after which a still shot of her face is displayed on the television screen in front of her. Valk then tilts her head to the side and continues speaking the lines of Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel, while the still image and the live-feed image of her are simultaneously displayed on the screen. This technique, used throughout the production, allows Valk to embody several characters at once. Her "live" video image interacts with the recorded still video image frozen on the television screen (Figure 1). This technique simultaneously forces a multiplicity of characters to exist in digital form on the four televisions. By being located primarily on the screens (rather than on the material, live stage), characters are distanced physically from the actor's body. Thus the tension between the "live" and the "mediated" is foregrounded.

Figure 1. The *House/Lights* DVD. Pictured: Kate Valk. The split character of Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel exists only on the stage-front television screen, as the live-feed image of actress Kate Valk is layered over a still image of her taken moments earlier. (© The Wooster Group)

The distance created here between actor and character and between digital space and material space is a technique often used in theatrical performances seeking to draw performers and audience members into an awareness of the mediated nature of production. The technique was made famous by playwright and director Bertolt Brecht, who termed this the "Alienation Effect" (1957). This style of performance is in direct contrast to that which seeks to immerse the audience through realistic representations of daily life. Instead, the Alienation Effect, achieved by distancing actors and audience from immersion, places demands on the audience to interact with the narrative of the piece by coming to understand its plot and characters as constructed elements. One example of The Wooster Group's application of this technique can be seen in its positioning of the computer console that runs the sound and lighting effects of the performance. A computer such as this one typically would have been hidden in the back of the theater but instead takes a prominent stage front location. This foregrounding of the technology, usually used to create an aura of verisimilitude, immediately creates a visual tension over who or what is the artistic and authorial agent. If the character of Marguerite Ida/Helena Annabel exists only through technological means, does the staged technology (and its technicians) have more control over the performance than the actors do? Johan Callens (2002) notes that Valk's role

> was visibly contested by Tanya Selvaratnam [another actor in the performance], whose almost permanent bodily presence behind a laptop computer, suggested a greater directorial control (over some video images, effects?) than that of the Macintosh's vocal intrusions with which she was credited in the program (animal-like sounds, the announcement of the intermission, the voice-over calling Faust, a countdown). Last but not least, when the computer flew off at a tangent, offering other "words that rhyme with *bright* with *light* with *might*" than ones a bored Faustus recited, any vested authorial control was further challenged by language and technology, as in Stein's motoric experiments. (p. 128)

Jim Findlay's set design places Selvaratnam and the computer stage front, next to the television screen on which we are presented with Valk's image (Figure 2). These technologies frame the entire performance, de-emphasizing "the presence of the performers by pulling our attention away from their physical bodies and toward their images on the video screens" (Gendrich, 1998, p. 380). The co-presence of Valk and Selvaratnam may lead the audience to wonder which takes the dominant role in the performance: The live body of the actor, or the computing technology that allows the mediation to occur. The important role that computers and other digital technologies play in The Wooster Group's stage performance carries over into the translation of *House/Lights* onto CD-ROM format.

TURNING ON THE COMPUTER

By constantly reorienting the focus away from live bodies toward their representations on screen, The Wooster Group highlights technology's role as the

Figure 2. The *House/Lights* DVD. Pictured (l–r): Kate Valk and Tanya Selvaratnam. The stage focus is pulled from Valk's live presence during the performance of *House/Lights* to the computer station on stage, in which Selvaratnam controls several of the stage elements of the performance. (© The Wooster Group)

metaphorical equivalent of Faustus's electric lights, as a simulator or representer of "the real." What is more, in the Wooster Group's interactive document of *House/Lights*, the video and computers that had been onstage objects become the stage itself. The interactive CD-ROM performance *Where Where There There Where* includes QuickTime virtual reality (VR) panorama interfaces through which spectator-users can scan 360 degrees, look up and down, and zoom in on objects in the field of vision. Spectator-users exercise agency primarily through interactions with these VR panoramas, as they can click on spots on the interface and then enter a new panorama. The movement between QuickTime panoramas changes the narrative and visual progression of the performance document.

The CD-ROM's beginning black and white panorama is an abandoned factory under a cloudy sky (Figures 3 and 4). Embedded in the panorama of the factory are actors carrying out simple actions that loop and repeat, such as Roy Faudree's continuously writing on a chalkboard. Also against the backdrop of the factory are clips from the Krazy Kat cartoons of the 1930s.

The scene of the next interface is similar to that of the previous one—a spectator-user can scan the scene and click on various spots. The spots clicked on by the spectator-user will either activate a new QuickTime VR panorama—with actors and cartoons acting within the theatrical space—or take the spectator-user to a short movie clip. These small QuickTime movies (160 × 120 pixels—the standard size for embedded QuickTime files at the time the CD-ROM was produced) display The Wooster Group cast repeating simple movements, often in relation to a movie

Figure 3. Panorama of the abandoned factory that spectator-users first encounter in the interactive CD-ROM *Where Where There There Where*. The spectator-user, through new media technologies, can scan this scene virtually and travel through the corridors of the abandoned factory. (© Zoe Beloff and The Wooster Group)

Figure 4. QuickTime movie frame from *Where Where There There Where*. The inside of the abandoned factory that spectator-users first encounter in the interactive CD-ROM. The spectator-user can pan 360 degrees and click on various spots. (© Zoe Beloff and The Wooster Group)

clip from Stein's era, such as the aforementioned Krazy Kat cartoons, war footage, films on electricity, a Soviet film on Ivan Pavlov, and lesbian erotica ("because Beloff [the director of the interactive CD-ROM] thought that Stein would enjoy 'some lovely lesbian pornography from the 30s'" [Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 72]).

Beloff is heard speaking the entire dialogue of the performance. She recites lines from *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* and often intermingles them with accounts of figures such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Alan Turing (a key developer of computer coding and artificial intelligence), or Pavlov—referencing readings that operate outside the *Doctor Faustus* text, to comment on the human-machine relations explored in the text and the *House/Lights* performance.

The disconnected quality achieved through the spoken text, the actors' movements, and the Stein-era film clips (each highlighted in *House/Lights*) reinforces the aesthetic agenda of The Wooster Group's style of performance, an agenda that includes exploring the relation between live and digitally mediated performance. Bethany Haye (1984) identifies four prominent features of The Wooster Group's aesthetic, which can be seen in the examples of *House/Lights* and the interactive CD-ROM: Iconographic references to worlds created in earlier pieces, textual condensation, distancing of character and text through filtered dialogue or unique casting choices, and recontextualization through theatrical ambience or physical

environments that distort and dislocate (p. 166). In its CD-ROM, The Wooster Group's use of Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* uses all of these features. *Where Where There There Where* stages Stein's text in a performance that creates a theatrical space appropriate to Stein's aesthetic, a space in which "the text is as important as the video image is as important as the sound, and nothing has dominance" (Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 73).

INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCE ON THE DIGITAL STAGE

An ability to interact with the CD-ROM by panning across QuickTime landscapes or clicking elsewhere seems initially to offer the spectator-user an authority unparalleled in other forms of documentation (e.g., video documents in which the camera angles and narrative paths remain static). Given the history of theatrical interactivity, such agency cannot be called new. The seeming advantage of using this form of media in documenting performance, however, is its ability to alter the traditional narrative structures of sequentially linear texts and to place the ability to do so in the hands of the spectator-user. As Beloff writes, "Unlike film or video, [The Wooster Group CD-ROM] is a work that is designed to be experienced more than once, since each time it is played, the user can choose a different route and discover new ways to interpret the characters" (n.d., para. 4). This medium differs greatly from other forms of theater that allow the audience to choose narrative paths—such as Ayn Rand's *Night of January 16* (1934), which allowed audience members to choose the ending of the play—in that it dislodges the necessity for a sequential narrative structure.

That the spectator-user can participate through such acts in disturbing the narrative sequence demonstrates how interactivity is a central component of emerging forms of digital documentation. To fully interrogate *interactivity*, though, it is helpful first to examine the initial promise of this concept to enable diverse narrative forms, including the scholarly enthusiasm accompanying this promise. The interactive CD-ROM has complicated the reasons for "the sequential development of ideas," as Sue-Ellen Case (1996) writes, in narratives developed out of a technologically focused culture rapidly becoming populated by a "click elsewhere" audience (p. 30). Sequentially dependent narratives, according to Case, connect politics and place via "patriarchal mechanisms" (p. 30). In a critique of linearity and "the play of vertical and horizontal as inscriptions of gendered, hetero-social constructs," Case quotes Luce Irigaray:

> We need to proceed in such a way that linear reading is no longer possible: That is, the retroactive impact of the end of each word, utterance, or sentence upon its beginning must be taken into consideration in order to undo the power of its teleological effect. . . . That would hold good also for the opposition between structures of horizontality and verticality that are at work in language. (p. 30)

Dislocated power is one discernable consequence when technology fragments linear narratives and other structures conventional to print documents (see "Retracing the Footsteps from Print to Digital" in this collection). Digital documents—as exemplified in The Wooster Group's CD-ROM—allow spectator-users to create narrative paths that are not "sequentially dependent" and thus can work against the "teleological effect," or the organizing structure that determines the set purpose for and outcome of narrative.

Though many have lauded the ways in which emerging forms of interactivity have substantially restructured our understanding of narratives and of the role of authors and readers, there are, of course, disadvantages to this restructuring. According to David Saltz (1997), interactivity must provide, in real time, a "sensing or input device" that can "translate certain aspects of a person's behavior into digital form." Thus the computer is made to generate output data according to a person's behavior and actions. The computer subsequently translates the data "back into real-world phenomena that people can perceive" (p. 118). Janet Murray (1997) identifies a key outcome of the responsiveness that digital media offer spectator-users: "When the things we do bring tangible results, we experience the second characteristic delight of electronic environments—the sense of agency" (p. 126). Consumers' desire for empowerment through interactivity—a symbol "of freedom and of progress" (Callens, 2002, p. 113)—relies on an uncritical utopian vision much like Faustus's desire for electric light.

The perplexities inherent in such a technologically utopian vision are exemplified by the spectator-user's relation with the CD-ROM performance document, as seen in Beloff's directorial choices. The entire composition of the CD-ROM focuses on the tension between notions of progress and agency. While computer technologies have been touted as bringing progress (including the ability to connect with people and places on a global scale), such progress is questioned when it begins to limit the amount of embodied interaction it affords its users. For example, at one point in the CD-ROM, there is binary code shining on one of the actors (signifying the rise of the computer), whose movements are stilted and restricted. This moment suggests that the computer—and by extension, the interactive CD-ROM—pushes humankind toward a *limited* type of freedom through a relation with technology. Interacting with The Wooster Group's CD-ROM involves the body to the extent that eyes scan the monitor, ears listen to the voice of Beloff, and fingers click on the mouse. Most of the physical body of the spectator-user is eliminated or marginalized in relation to its correspondence with the interactive document. The notion of freedom of movement is paradoxically inverted in the computer user, who moves very little as he or she clicks on the mouse to navigate virtually and connect globally. The CD-ROM, at every turn, raises questions concerning the amount of human agency we have in the face of technological determinism. We feel that we can connect across vast distances, yet we do not move anywhere. Thus, in one sense, the digital document, which seems to involve the audience more fully than the live event does, can give rise to an even more inert audience member.

Is "interactivity" nothing more than a masking of the authority of narrative sequence and authorial agency—that which places the spectator-user in a more or

less passive mode of receiver instead of meaning maker? Marsha Kinder (2002) observes that although interactivity is at the core of many artistic forms (digital or otherwise), it remains illusory because it reinscribes the roles of author/reader:

> While all narratives are in some sense interactive in that their meanings always grow out of a collaboration between the idiosyncratic subjectivities of authors and audiences and the reading conventions of the respective cultures they inhabit and languages they speak, all interactivity is also an illusion because the rules established by the designers of the text necessarily limit the user's options. Interactivity thus tends to function as a normative term—either fetishized as the ultimate pleasure or demonized as a deceptive fiction. (p. 4)

Kinder's understanding of the binary (fetish or demon) implicit in the term *interactivity* is an insightful appraisal of the current cultural imagery surrounding interactivity and interactive media. While I do agree with Kinder that interactivity is illusory, I also think that such theories must take into account Murray's notion of the aesthetics of interactivity, which not only look to interactivity as a tool of agency for the spectator-user, but also offer the spectator-user "an aesthetic pleasure . . . to be experienced for its own sake" (1997, p. 128). Murray develops this idea further: "Because of the vague and pervasive use of the term *interactivity*, the pleasure of agency in electronic environments is often confused with the mere ability to move a joystick or click on a mouse. But activity alone is not agency. . . . Agency, then, goes beyond both participation and activity" (p. 128). Although interactivity is often confused with agency, interactivity might better be understood as involving an interface that offers spectator-users a *sense of* agency and thus an aesthetic pleasure. This variety of agency, the key to which is the possibility of interactivity, is framed by the constraints of an author, director, or code writer and is necessarily limited by the strictures of script and medium.

As seen in the CD-ROM, The Wooster Group and Beloff dramatize the tensions inherent in the term *interactive* and in the attempt to create an "interactive" performance. These tensions are performed on the digital stage of the CD-ROM. Though the interactive CD-ROM seeks to move beyond the authority of the text, it is in many ways still founded on the text of a play and at its core is controlled by a computer text limiting user choices and governing the results of those choices. Could the digital world of *Where Where There There Where* mirror the material world, which offers only limited choices mapped out by structural boundaries? As Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) writes, "On the map of narrative, as on the map of the world, boundaries are everywhere: Boundaries within the representing discourse, and boundaries with the represented system of reality; boundaries with gates to get across, and boundaries with only windows to look through" (p. 175). What happens to our understanding of progress when these structures and boundaries are exposed rather than veiled behind modes of production?

From the outset of the digital production of *Where Where There There Where*, precisely this question is staged as the spectator-user is posited onto the theatrical space of an abandoned factory. It is on this stage (with all its boundaries, from

limited clickable spots to limited visual navigation) that The Wooster Group explores contradictions in our notions of progress and technology. Faustus sells his soul for electric light (represented in the CD-ROM by the factory, symbol of industrial progress). For Faustus, perhaps, there is no soul and there is no heaven to be damned from; there is no industrial or technological utopia that we can progress toward with our advancing technologies; instead, we are left with abandoned factories. Thus the tension between progress and obsolescence is staged in this document (which intentionally presents itself as a product of technological progress). Yet without fetishizing or demonizing interactivity, Beloff and The Wooster Group present an interface highlighting the discord between both approaches, situating spectator-users in a place where they are able to enter the scene of discord as a key character. Kinder notes that this entrance of the spectator-user onto the scene of the medium allows for an alternative view of interactive media: "One productive way of avoiding these two extremes [of fetishizing or demonizing interactivity] is to position the user or player as a 'performer' of the narrative" (2002, pp. 5–6). Put differently, if the aesthetic of The Wooster Group and Beloff constantly works to keep the spectator-user aware of the CD-ROM's status as a mediated document rather than as an immersive, interactive environment, in what way are spectator-users supposed to react to this constant reiteration of the medium? Through their inability to immerse themselves in this environment, spectator-users are meant to respond to the cultural expectations of interactivity and their inability to enact those expectations. The felt gap between expectation and actualization highlights the deeper authorial texts that script all our media, especially those forms in which authors seem to disappear, such as highly immersive and interactive media.

RESISTING IMMERSIVE INTERACTIVITY

The spectator-user whose interaction with the CD-ROM performance document actually alters the outcome of the performance is at once connected to the interactive document while distanced from it through the platform on which it is presented. That is, although the spectator-user is involved directly in creating the narrative structure of the document, he or she is always aware of the mediating platform of the CD-ROM and the QuickTime environment. The QuickTime movies and panoramas are nested into the user's computer screen and constantly highlight the framing nature of the performance. The CD-ROM constantly calls attention to the way it is produced, and each choice the user makes refers back to the mediating nature and binary logic of the computer system the performance is presented through. The Wooster Group's document resists "immersion" at every turn in a manner that evokes Brecht's Alienation Effect. This CD-ROM document does not allow the spectator-user to experience the piece as an "interfaceless interface"—a term used by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) in their work *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Theorizing the "logic of immediacy," which defines immersion across media forms, Bolter and Grusin write, "The logic of immediacy dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented: Sitting in the race car or standing on a mountaintop" (p. 6):

> Our culture wants to both multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation. . . . What designers often say they want is an "interfaceless" interface, in which there will be no recognizable electronic tools—no buttons, windows, scroll bars, or even icons as such. . . . Virtual reality, three-dimensional graphics, and graphical interface designs are all seeking to make . . . technology "transparent." (1999, pp. 5, 23)

Because the spectator-user of *Where Where There There Where* is never so immersed in the piece that he or she forgets that the computer is the tool mediating the digital document, there is little transparency here, little illusion of reality or totality in Faustus's digital world. High resolution is replaced with obvious pixilation and reduction in scale (as seen in the very small QuickTime movies that take up only a portion of the computer screen). The Wooster Group's choice of low-tech applications is intentional, designed to achieve an effect very different from that sought by Rudy McDaniel and Sherry Steward (see "Technical Communication Pedagogy and the Broadband Divide," in this collection) and by their colleagues in flight simulation and other high-tech industries. Vivian Sobchack (2003) notes that QuickTime's low-resolution aesthetic is rhetorically appropriate within a context that privileges, not immersive virtual reality, but the frame:

> Specific to the particular medium [QuickTime], such compartmentalization and grid work points not only to the larger order and framework of the surrounding "desktop," but also the smaller, hidden, and thus more "secretive" orders of the computer: Microchips, bits, and bytes. . . . Boxed fragments of photorealist images are compartmentalized further into smaller boxes yet—dissolving the personal meaning and contours of human memory and resolving them into the visible and controlled geometry that in-forms the underlying memory and structure of the computer itself. (p. 68)

The movies included on The Wooster Group CD-ROM, which seek to document an event and thus operate as a proxy for human memory, demonstrate how gaps in human memory cannot be filled satisfactorily through documentation. The nested character of the QuickTime movies makes it difficult for the spectator-user to watch the performance, for images are unclear and constant flicker and evident pixilation accompany each movie. In short, the CD-ROM document highlights its own inability to replicate the material world visually or to create a virtual reality—an inability to create a document that is just as "real" as the live event. Instead, the medium allows viewers to explore the tensions surrounding the notions of agency and interactivity in an age of progress (questions central to Stein's play), constantly framed.

To distance the spectator-user from immersion in the document, the interactive CD-ROM uses, in addition to low-resolution images, low-fidelity audio. Dialogue is difficult to hear and resembles the spoken word as heard on a very old, scratchy record. The piece also uses the image of the RCA dog that sits in front of the record player and listens to "His Master's Voice," a voice replicated, one is meant to infer, perfectly on the audio recording. In *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*,

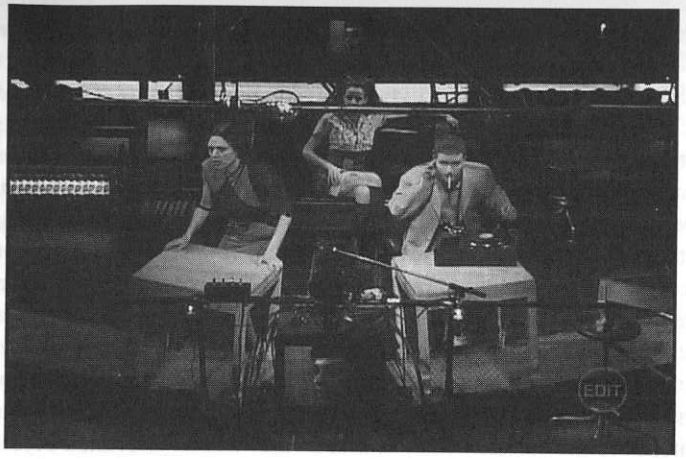

Figure 5. The *House/Lights* DVD. Pictured (l–r): Kate Valk, Suzzy Roche, and Ari Fliakos. The Wooster Group brings a Victrola phonograph on stage, as actor Fliakos plays the role of the dog listening to his master's voice. The interactive CD-ROM plays off this scene by creating a piece with low-fidelity audio mixed with low-resolution imagery, pointing toward the impossibility of bridging the gap between live event and digital documentation through high-definition or high-fidelity documents. (© The Wooster Group)

Stein stages the character of a dog that constantly says "thank you" and barks at the electric lights. This character translates into The Wooster Group's invocation of RCA Records' "His Master's Voice" dog. The image of the dog listening to a Victrola phonograph, recognizing the sound of the master's voice reproduced in high fidelity—used in the live performance of *House/Lights* as well as on the CD-ROM (Figure 5)—problematizes, as Callens (2002) notes, the "analogy between the dog's proverbial loyalty to his master and the phonograph's technical faithfulness to the human voice ('high fidelity')."

Callens continues this analysis:

> At first sight the HMV [His Master's Voice] dog's confusion of natural sound with its technological simulation, presumably because of the latter's alleged quality rather than the animal's (male-gendered) stupidity and servile devotion, simply signaled the confusion of Stein's dog between natural and artificial light, already conveyed in the stage production by its barking indiscriminately at video images of light bulbs and the moon. The transition between these images, though, was effected not by any illusion-enhancing montage but by a diaphragm-like cover manually swung from the top and bottom of two small monitors. Their resulting resemblance to magical boxes or high-tech devotional shrines, spelled overt deception more than realism, recalling once more the early days of cinema and the medium's primitive evocation of movement by a succession of stills thanks to the persistence of vision. (2002, pp. 124–125)

CONCLUSION

After the issuing of the interactive CD-ROM *Where Where There There Where*, which foregrounds the theme of access and comments constantly on its status as a document, a DVD document was produced of the staged version of *House/Lights* (presented on a digital platform that typically privileges high-resolution imagery). This three-disc DVD set, which includes the live performance on two discs and documentary footage of the tour of the performance on the third disc, presents the user with a much closer estimation of what the audience may have "actually" seen when attending the Performance Garage. For instance, viewers are allowed to change screen views, and thereby elements of the interactive nature of the CD-ROM performance are mirrored. The first view is a wide shot of the entire stage, which remains stationary. When the angle button on the remote control is pressed, the DVD switches to the second view—a mix of the various television screen displays. When *enter* is pressed, the viewer is taken to the third view—an edited version of the performance from various angles.

Still, we might question whether this DVD document, released 6 years after the interactive CD-ROM, is "closer" to documenting the performance of *House/Lights*. For instance, might it better represent the reality of the performance by simulating the spectator's ability to look around the various parts of the stage at will? Auslander argues that the notion of a "referent" in performance has become blurred. Documents and elements of performances (i.e., instant replay at football games or video monitors at concerts), initially designed to operate as "secondary elaborations of what was originally a live event, are now constitutive of the live event itself" (1999, p. 25). Although, as Peggy Phelan (1993) terms it, the "ontology of live performance" (p. 143) seems to reside in the live event itself, Auslander argues for a new understanding of the term *live performance* that is inextricably bound to the process of digitization. To assume that The Wooster Group's DVD operates as a secondary elaboration is to assume that there is a one-to-one, sequential relation between the live theatrical performance and the document conceived out of that performance. But the document is always embedded in the live performance, and the line between the live and the digitized is constantly blurred.

In the instance of the CD-ROM, the mode of production alters consumer expectations—the consumer does not merely buy a record of a performance but buys the platform on which the performance is produced. And in fact the user interface of the document can at times be just as important as the performance content of the document. This performance, presented on a platform meant to be viewed only on a Macintosh, is altered in the way it is received and "read" in an age—following Edison and Ford—of consumer loyalty as well as tensions in the face of progress and obsolescence. The QuickTime format points not only to the computer system, but much more specifically at the time of creation, to the Macintosh system. In fact, it can even be said that The Wooster Group's interactive CD-ROM performance was designed to be a performance by the Macintosh. The specificity of the platform, continually highlighted and framed by the performance, troubled the notion that such a document might be eternal or even long lasting in an age when computer

platforms and files become obsolete as the engine of progress produces emerging machines and new formats. The Wooster Group's CD-ROM *Where Where There There Where* is a performance experienced not only *in* but also *with* a very specific platform in a very specific moment in technological history. Continually foregrounded is the role that these media play in our interactions with documents. Users engage the digital with the keen understanding that they, fully aware of the mediating interface and structure's specificity, are always distanced and removed from any true sense of control over the document.

The relation between the two performance documents of The Wooster Group becomes a performance of its own—challenging the idea that the document operates as a proxy for the fleeting live performance and attempting to anchor it in some way to a repeatable and consistent format. Instead, as seen in the relation between *House/Lights* and *Where Where There There Where*, the "live" performance does not take primacy over the document, but instead the document creates a new theatrical space. This is true not only with The Wooster Group's performance of the document through use of digital media, but with all forms of documentation. Documents always create space into which new interpretations will be applied. That is, documents always constitute a new performance. The Wooster Group, playing off this understanding, creates a CD-ROM that operates as a performance of the document, rather than as a document of the performance. Beloff goes so far as to say that *Where Where There There Where* is not to be understood as a document of the play, but as a satellite work. Despite differences between the "live" performance and its documentation on CD-ROM and DVD, any transparency between "live" event and digital production is an illusion. The Wooster Group exploits this inherent slippage, creating a document that troubles the notion of documentation, a theatrical product that shifts noisily into the realm of commodities available through the media of CD-ROM and DVD. For The Wooster Group, the line between live and digitized must be understood as unstable, and authority as perpetually under construction.

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