

**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

*Abstracts and Bibliographies*

**Seminar Conveners: Professor Maurizio Calbi (University of Salerno) and Dr Stephen O'Neill (National University of Ireland Maynooth)**

Email: [socialmediashakespeare@hotmail.com](mailto:socialmediashakespeare@hotmail.com); [mcalbi@unisa.it](mailto:mcalbi@unisa.it);  
[Stephen.oneill@nuim.ie](mailto:Stephen.oneill@nuim.ie)

.....  
**1. Dr. Christy Desmet (University of Georgia)**  
**The Economics of (In)Attention in YouTube Shakespeare**

[cdesmet@uga.edu](mailto:cdesmet@uga.edu)

Economic metaphors have been long used as shorthand for the aesthetic, literary, cultural, or rhetorical value of Shakespearean appropriations: Shakespeare possesses and confers cultural capital; he is "big-time" art. Economic metaphors, of course, are also central to discussion of the cultural dynamics of Web 2.0: we live in an information economy, are driven by an economics of attention. I would like to revisit the construction of cultural capital in YouTube Shakespeare in the application's second phase, where amateur productions exist side-by-side with what Michael Bristol called "big-time" Shakespeare. For amateur Shakespeareans, in particular, the mutation of cultural capital in YouTube Shakespeare is more accidental, less culturally over-determined, and less subject to the largely unseen influences of YouTube's database, with its "real" economic influences, than our discussions of Shakespearean adaptation/appropriation have considered. This paper examines the effect of an economics of (in)attention in fostering creativity among amateur YouTube Shakespeareans.

**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

***Abstracts and Bibliographies***

**2. Dr. Kyle DiRoberto (University of Arizona South)**

**“Oh teach me how I should forget to think”: The Critique in Remediation, Pleasure in Performance, and an Uncanny Puritanism in the Teaching of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream***

**droberto@email.arizona.edu**

In this paper, I investigate the anxiety exhibited by some academics over the use of multi-media, and especially social media, in teaching Shakespeare and the claims that this drains academic studies of its “cognitive elements” by introducing the pollution of the market and the opinion of the masses into a profession that has prided itself not only on the quality of its ideas but also on its being “largely non-instrumental” and “not-for-profit” (O’Dair). I question the bias that rejects the easy (suggestive of erotic) pleasure of new media, paying particular attention to laments about the decline of academic authority into “edutainment” and “infotainment,” and I argue that these biases are suggestive of new media’s importance to gender and class, as the pollution represented by the market has not only been used to marginalize both the lower classes and women, through associations with a negative representations of the feminine body, but has also long been a source of potential liberation (Burt). Drawing on my recent experience teaching Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and my students’ use of YouTube to contest my own academically informed representations of feminine desire and the body, I argue that the destabilization of social media is a potential site of liberty, creativity, and new truth. These tools offer a proving ground that is more capable of inspiring higher thinking and requiring rigor of the academician and the student than the traditional passing down of quality ideas that are never put to the test of a popular audience.

**3. Dr. Ruben Espinosa (University of Texas At El Paso)  
Immigration, Identity Politics, and YouTube Shakespeare**

[respinosa2@utep.edu](mailto:respinosa2@utep.edu)

In this paper, I examine how YouTube dramatic adaptations of Shakespeare often reveal the weight of Shakespeare's cultural capital, in both overbearing and empowering ways, when engaging in representations of Mexican identities. In the process, this essay interrogates how the venue of YouTube allows for the open exploration of Mexican identities—insecurity, apprehension, celebration, xenophobia, racism and all—within adaptations of Shakespeare. Through YouTube Shakespeare adaptations that include *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, I aim to demonstrate how Latina/o actors negotiate perceptions of Mexican identity, and how non-Latina/o actors often don Mexican identities to mitigate the sobriety of Shakespeare's work (i.e., insert a "Mexican" theme for comic relief) and sometimes reveal explicitly racist attitudes about Mexican Americans. To this end, one can see how the venue of YouTube allows for a dialogue about cultural identity, immigration, and Shakespeare's place within this debate to materialize. By examining how perceptions of Mexican identities are being explored in this particular medium, I not only hope to draw attention to the value of YouTube Shakespeare, but also to the value of Latina/o attitudes, apprehensions, and appropriations of Shakespeare as a means of gaining a better understanding of the attitudes and apprehensions that shape perceptions about the Mexican immigrant's role in American society. These issues reflect the larger cultural attitudes and anxieties surrounding the current immigration debate in America. But what these particular adaptations also show is the promise behind a venue like YouTube that allows for otherwise non-traditional, Latina/o perceptions and appropriations of Shakespeare to be performed, scrutinized, and discussed.

**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

***Abstracts and Bibliographies***

**4. Ms. Valerie M. Fazel (Arizona State University)**

[valerie.fazel@asu.edu](mailto:valerie.fazel@asu.edu)

**YouTube Shakespeares: Ethical Issues in Humanities and Literary Research Contexts**

Ethical research strategies and practices in the use and flow of personal information in both private and public domains has recently preoccupied a growing number of internet (lower case “i” intentional) researchers. In this paper I explore how the use of literary research methods in the study of social network sites (SNS) like YouTube opens a number of ethical fissures that have yet to be addressed by Shakespeareans and the humanities at large. Most literary-based, scholarly works approach YouTube Shakespeares’ videos and comment areas in the same manner as texts. As with the book, film, television, and a plethora of other Shakespeare works, we “read,” we analyze, we critique. Yet YouTube’s human element raises distinctive ethical conundrums for these traditional humanities methods. For instance, critics often include user information in research findings and scholarly publications. This method of disclosure does not take into consideration the ethical use and dissemination of YouTube Shakespeares’ human users’ personal information. Traditionally, ethical responsibilities in the study of literature involve accurately citing resources that help shape our work. In so doing, we acknowledge the producers of the materials while also providing others with information on useful resources. It is in this traditional scholarly practice of demonstrating our own research *ethos*, I argue, that ethical and moral dilemmas often arise. This paper highlights some of the ethical issues implicated in humanities-based research of YouTube Shakespeares. It also calls for a reexamination of current research methods and publication protocols.

**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

***Abstracts and Bibliographies***

**5. Dr Kirk Hendershott-Kraetzer (Olivet College)**

**Prosuming Juliet**

**khendershott@olivetcollege.edu**

This essay asks how concepts of prosumption, ensemble performance and “pack production” (Jones 448), and online identity construction and the “digital collective subject” (448) can be used to understand the proliferating and somewhat fractured representations of Juliet in Facebook, where she exists in a variety of personal, community, interest, and book pages. Of particular interest is how Juliet’s Facebook persona(s) relate to her more traditional, popularly understood identity as an icon of pure, youthful innocence.

**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

***Abstracts and Bibliographies***

**6. Professor Grace Ioppolo (University of Reading)**

**#Shakespeare @Twitter: Transforming Shakespeare, and Shakespeareans, through Twitter**

**g.j.ioppolo@reading.ac.uk**

Abstract: In this paper, I will argue that Twitter feeds of Shakespearean academics, librarians, archivists, theatre organizations and practitioners, critics, journalists, archaeologists and others have transformed the ways in which we share Shakespearean links, resources and analyses with each other and, particularly, with non-specialist and general audiences on Twitter. After two years on Twitter @ProfShakespeare, I want to argue that the fastest, most immediate and rewarding way to reach audiences is through Twitter, rather than online, in print, or in person. I especially want to suggest that the general fear of Twitter among Shakespearean academics has kept them from recognizing the cultural theory and history that Twitter has created in the last 5 years.

**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

***Abstracts and Bibliographies***

**7. Dr. Jessica McCall (Delaware Valley College)**

**Who's Your Shakespeare?**

**[mccallj81@gmail.com](mailto:mccallj81@gmail.com) [whosyourshakespeare.tumblr.com](http://whosyourshakespeare.tumblr.com)**

Fandom appropriation often functions to remythologize canonical texts with a result that demystifies and repackages a previously unapproachable tale. The "stories" of Shakespeare and the story of "Shakespeare" continue creating a world of ancillary myth which shapes a reader's approach to the text. In the commodified world of autobiographical criticism the benefits of this type of appropriation are clear. Think *The Tudors*: there's money, intrigue, and sex to be found in the rewritten history of premium television.

But in academia the uses and functions of fandom are more dubious. Is fanfiction a viable pedagogical choice and, if so, is the acknowledgment and use of fandom in the classroom a fundamental betrayal of fandom itself? The first rule of fandom is—as every fan knows—you don't talk about fandom. It's a strongly guarded realm with signs beckoning all who enter "Welcome!" But burly guards stand guard, demanding the password before they lop off the heads of interlopers. How can such a powerfully paradoxical place be wielded for pedagogical and academic purposes?

In an experimental attempt to pursue these questions I have created a blog, [whosyourshakespeare.tumblr.com](http://whosyourshakespeare.tumblr.com) and hope to make use of the thriving online community of Tumblr. Tumblr presents a unique opportunity to explore fandom with an academic eye; boasting over nine million registered users, Shakespeare is but one canonical author whose texts are being remythologized, reconsidered, and discussed. What's more, the exploration and discussion of figures like Shakespeare and his works has led to greater involvement, critical understanding, and genuine appreciation. In exploring the role of new media and Shakespeare studies I am consciously using new media to consider the Shakespeare fandom. My hope is to witness students beginning their own journey with the Bard, to interact with Shakespeare lovers outside academia, and to explore possibilities of fandom alongside more typical approaches to the text.

Fandom Shakespeare is an exciting Shakespeare precisely because it invites conversation, critical thinking, and rereading of students' own free will—is that not the holy grail for teachers?

**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

***Abstracts and Bibliographies***

**8. Dr Jennifer Roberts-Smith (University of Waterloo)**

***Staging Shakespeare for Middle-School Students in Social Media: Towards a Rhetoric of Virtual Experience Design***

**j33rober@uwaterloo.ca**

*Staging Shakespeare* will be the first of a suite of Shakespeare-based games to be released by the Gamifying Shakespeare project, a collaborative education-outreach initiative of the Stratford Festival (the largest theatrical institution in Canada), the University of Waterloo Games Institute, and Industry Corp (a commercial game development company in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario). The goal of the larger project is to increase Shakespeare literacy in 11-15-year olds through game-based social media, as a means of continuing the Festival's historical role as a developer of future audiences for its own and other theatres' productions. *Staging Shakespeare*, which is scheduled for release as a mobile app on February 13, 2013, specifically explores the theatricality of Shakespeare's language by allowing users to virtually stage excerpts from scenes of *Romeo and Juliet* using artifacts from the Festival's archives, and then view and rate one another's virtual productions. Throughout the development process, I have been attempting to design a critical virtual experience, one that participates in some of the core elements of theatrical experience (especially as it is understood and practiced at the Stratford Festival) but still falls within the traditional parameters of game design. In this paper, I will describe the resulting "rhetoric" of the virtual experience we have created, in the hope of engaging some of the seminar's larger theoretical questions about the interplay between the academy and the cultural mediascape, the consequences of remediation, and the possibilities and limitations of social media pedagogy.



**SAA Toronto 2013**

**Seminar 46: Social Media Shakespeares (Saturday 30 March)**

***Abstracts and Bibliographies***

**9. Mr. Geoffrey Way (Arizona State University)**

**Shakespearean Institutions, Social Media, and Access**

**gway1@asu.edu**

As social media have increased in both prevalence and popularity, it comes as no surprise that Shakespeare institutions, particularly theaters and festivals, have established a presence on popular social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. These social media outlets have been utilized by theaters and festivals in both performance and marketing practices, and their integration of social media into such practices is accompanied by a number of questions: who is the intended audience in these online spaces; what affordances and limitations shape communications through social media; and ultimately, how effective are social media as marketing tools? These questions are important to any study of social media Shakespeares, but they are questions all rooted in a larger concept: access. With this in mind, the paper addresses Shakespeare institutions' use of social media as a means of access, discussing the role of technologies, institutions, and audiences in generating and controlling access to Shakespearean institutions and their work. Using the concepts of presence and persistence, two aspects of digital media that shape social media user experiences, I argue that accessing Shakespearean institutions through social media is a complex and continued negotiation between the technology and the users on both sides of the institution/audience divide. It is through the examination of such negotiations that we as scholars can understand how both user practices and technologies play a role in creating, maintaining, and controlling access to the cultural materials of Shakespearean institutions.