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The Shakespeare User: Critical and Creative Appropriations in a Networked Culture by Valerie M. Fazel and Louise Geddes. 257 pp. ISBN 978-3-319-61015-3, ISBN 978-3-319-61014-6. \$89.00 (ebook); \$119.99 (hardcover). Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

The Shakespeare User, edited by Valerie M. Fazel and Louise Geddes, includes numerous references to Douglas Lanier's "Shakespearean Rhizomatics," but the following quotation from Lanier's article — appearing in Jennifer Holl's contribution "Shakespeare Fanboys and Fangirls and the Work of Play" — offers an introductory statement for the collection: "Shakespearean meaning" Lanier writes, "is available in the present only through processes of appropriation that actively create, rather than passively decode, the readings and values we attribute to the Shakespearean text" (Lanier 2014, 25). The emphasis on active creation over passive reception, on transformative dialogic relations — on flux and becoming — gives rise to the collection's central and titular figure, that of the "user."

The Shakespeare user may be a critic, a corporation, an internet enthusiast, or an algorithmic process. An actor among other actors, an individual agency within an animated network, the user often operates on the periphery of the academic or scholarly purview. The overarching mission of Fazel and Geddes' collection is fairly unified in theoretical terms (in addition to rhizomatic structures, Latour's suggestion to follow the actors — in this case users — is devotedly and systematically obeyed), but where the collection excels is in its individual explorations of some of the strangest, most intriguing, or most unexpected sites in which Shakespearean activity and creativity takes place. The collection is firmly engaged with the present, with what is unfolding — on the laptop screen or in the classroom — right now.

Contributors examine social media, YouTube, online games, fanfiction, the bilingual classroom, the community outreach program, the corporate seminar, all of which emphasize experimental use of Shakespeare, and how this use takes part in a process of continual flux. The editors, discussing textual and cultural flux, explain that "digital culture allows us unprecedented access to this process as it occurs, animating Shakespeare and opening the Shakespeare network up to a variety of transformative practices" (7). Matthew Harrison and Michael Lutz head off the collection with a discussion of several mostly text-based game adaptations of *Hamlet*. Player choice and variability are of primary interest, especially when looking at games based specifically on *Hamlet*, whose protagonist is himself alienated by choice and action, freedom and constraint.

Harrison and Lutz state "Videogames — and Hamlet games in particular — reconfigure the relation between the Shakespeare user and the Shakespeare network itself" (24).

From games, the collection branches into different forms of appropriation, and how they offer or question the legitimacy of Shakespeare's ubiquity in academia and other realms of education. Ruben Espinosa's "Beyond *The Tempest*: Language, Legitimacy, and La Frontera" focuses on Shakespeare's cultural currency for Latinxs, specifically those who live on the US-Mexico border and thus negotiate a fraught cultural, linguistic, and social identity. The problems of Shakespeare's assumedly universal accessibility similarly appear in Laura Estill's "Shakespeare and Disciplinarity," which focuses on Shakespeare references in "Non-Shakespearean yet academic use of Shakespeare" in venues such as the *Journal of Urology* (167). Shakespeare, when quoted out of context and in widely different fields, may seem like a kind of interdisciplinary lingua franca. As Estill explains, however, the assumption that everybody *gets it* is problematic: such use "bolsters Shakespeare's cultural capital" but also "reinforces English and Western hegemony" while further potentially compromising the objective discourse of scientific writing (182).

Also problematic is the appropriation of King Henry V as a model for Machiavellian corporate leadership. Nicole Edge's "Circum-Global Transmission of Value: Leveraging Henry V's Cultural Inheritance," looks at the Shakespeare user as the proverbial man. Looking at texts such as Norman Augustine and Kenneth Adelman's *Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide to Leading and Succeeding on the Business Stage*, Richard Olivier's *Inspirational Leadership: Timeless Lessons for Leaders from Shakespeare's Henry V*, as well as Adelman's leadership seminar "Movers and Shakespeares," Edge argues that "the effect of mythologizing H5 as a successful leader has led to the selective uptake of H5/H5 to disseminate and reinforce business habits of speech and behaviors that privilege a commitment to end-goals and individual gain" (82).

A different kind of training, and different kind of manipulation, but a similar breach of ethics, finds its way into Courtney Lehmann and Geoffrey Way's "Young Turks or Corporate Clones? Cognitive Capitalism and the (Young) User in the Shakespearean Attention Economy" which examines youthful users of interactive digital content — online quizzes, language guides, pedagogical tools — provided by outreach groups such as Shakespeare's Globe Playground, Playing Shakespeare, or the RSC School's Broadcast program, while also turning its attention to the corporate values and consumer training possibly embedded by big business sponsors. Lehmann and Way question, without definitively rejecting, the presence of big-money in the arts.

The Shakespeare user's intersection with fan culture ties several other works in the collection together. Jennifer Holl, focusing on Shakespeare fanboy and cultural icon Joss Whedon's "fan film" version of *Much Ado About Nothing*, shot in his house with his actor friends. To Holl,

Whedon's Shakespeare fan-boyishness "provides a particularly legible illustration of authority enacted through everyday fan-play," a form of play which, she argues, does important cultural work despite what may appear as unrefined exuberance (112). Novelist and critic Graham Holderness' "Shakespeare and the Undead" discusses what he labels as fan-fiction, such as *Black and Deep Desires: William Shakespeare Vampire Hunter*, or his own recent work *The Prince of Denmark* as works which offer their own form of creative criticism, injecting passion into "informed and judicious" academic objectivity (226). These fanfics "share a common concern to juxtapose wildly discrepant cultural materials into a heterogenous unity" (224).

A different form of fan and celeb culture finds its way into Stephen O'Neill's "Theorizing User Agency in YouTube Shakespeare," a portion of which is devoted to a kind of case study on the YouTube personality The Geeky Blonde, whose somewhat widely subscribed channel features commentaries and renditions of Shakespeare, as well as politically charged indictments of cyber bullying. In addition to the idea that YouTube "extends the bardic function" (133) to potentially any user (with access to the internet), O'Neill is interested in YouTube itself as a user: the algorithmic functions invest the Shakespeare network with nonhuman agency, yet, as O'Neill explains, the machine can be just as socially or politically normative, as normatively compromised, as the human user. Eric Johnson's narration of his development of Open Source Shakespeare, for which he serves as director, also gestures toward the emergent possibilities of the communal platform.

Danielle Rosvally engages with the strangeness of a twenty-first century Shakespearean projection in the form of a social media presence. "The Haunted Network: Shakespeare's Digital Ghost" focuses on Twitter's @Shakespeare, a mysterious figure who interfaces with current events using Shakespearean quotations. To Rosvally, the participation of this ghost/construct in contemporary society works to "humanize the phantom of Shakespeare and allow users to align Shakespeare with their lived existence while simultaneously demonstrating Shakespeare's direct engagement with this user's present reality" (157). The notion of direct engagement, of two-way transformation via manipulation and creation, are fair points with which to conclude regarding this collection's portrayal of contemporary Shakespeare use as vital and thriving, especially in cultural and social sects which may have escaped prior academic notice.

References

Lanier, Douglas. 2014. "Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value." In *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*. Edited by Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 21-40.