Performing the Shakespearean Body: Tom Hiddleston Onstage and Online

Douglas Lanier argues that 'like all brand icons' Shakespeare is a 'signifier' open to 'appropriation, rearticulation, extension, even negation and parody' and, depending upon the user, ready for rebranding 'should the need arise' (2007, 94). Barbara Hodgdon states similarly her intention to challenge the myth of the definitive text and author to regard performances 'as cultural productions or even commodities' (1998, xi). In doing so, Hodgdon acknowledges that the creation of meaning is also firmly dictated by economic situations and the particulars of production. Lanier's and Hodgdon's recognition of the importance of contextual pre-conditions for a dynamic and adaptable concept of authorship is instructive: rather than possessing a single, pre-defined relationship to the playwright, the concept of the 'Shakespearean' actor should be viewed in remembrance of the nature of acting as an occupation. This is one which is driven and shaped by economic conditions and which is not distinguished by a couple of standout performances but by a career of different roles within an industry. The previous chapter of this book began to explore the significance of these conditions to the functioning of the Shakespearean actor in the pre-digital age and their influence over what culture valued as 'Shakespearean'. The task remains now, though, to reconsider the construction and circulation of 'Shakespearean' celebrity in an age of digital technological proliferation. In order to do so, this chapter will offer a case study of Tom Hiddleston as a paradigmatic 'digital Shakespearean' and explore how Hiddleston's Shakespearean celebrity

has been constructed actively through performance and, as already suggested in the Introduction, passively by other agents which include the mainstream media but most pertinently in this case, fans.

Tom Hiddleston

One of the founders of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, is famous for his configuration of identity in the contemporary moment:

> You have one identity. The days of you having a different image for your work friends or co-workers and for the other people you know are probably coming to an end pretty quickly… Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity. (van Dijck 2013, 199)

Zuckerberg is only partially correct. Whereas previously an actor was only invited to share themselves with the public and could limit the extent of this (bar unauthorised entries such as phone tapping or unofficial memorabilia), the Internet provides audiences with seemingly unparalleled access to their favourite celebrities' lives. The prospect of Zuckerberg's 'one identity' may seem an inevitability for many high-profile stars given the current expectation that they will share themselves in not only a professional capacity (by starring in films, singing, modelling, playing, etc.) but a personal one (sharing photographs or videos of holidays, family celebrations, domestic scenes, etc.). These social media avatars offer a performance of private life in a way that is meant to appear natural, intimate and authentic. As Anne Helen Petersen writes, one of the most 'beguiling' aspects of celebrities' social media is their ability to convince us that the star is controlling the narrative: 'that the images before us, and the overarching understanding they create, reflect the star's authentic self, or, at the very least, the way the star thinks of himself and his image, as opposed to the way a publicist and studio think of the star and his image' (2018). Hiddleston, for instance, details his run around Regent's Park—'A breath of freedom. Feeling so grateful' (@TWHiddleston 2014)—and permits his followers (of whom there were 3.47 million in June 2018) an insight into his 'everyday' life: his personal interests, pursuits and those institutions or individuals he supports. With a swiftness of speed that print journalism cannot rival, platforms and websites such as Twitter purport to capture the actor in the precise moment, detailing the minute (and sometimes even location) of publication. And it is a moment which his followers can

interact with, able to 'retweet', reply to Hiddleston directly, alert their own friends to, or 'favourite' it and thereby add it to their personal history to be viewed again. Zuckerberg's formulation of the singular online persona thus recognises the fact that Hiddleston's Twitter avatar offers the illusion of private actions and thoughts, bridging the gaping between his public, professional and his personal life (access of which would be denied by more conventional means of viewing their star persona). Rather than reducing his identity to a single, integral self as Zuckerberg asserts, however, Hiddleston's visibility online argues for the necessity of a multiple, composite self, as well as demonstrating another site of performance. After all, like most individuals his persona is constructed through a number of contradictory values; something which is only compounded by the multiple, self-conscious, performative and multiply located aspects of his Internet self.

Lewis Goodings and Ian Tucker argue that '[we] do not know online bodies from within, but as a projected body' (2014, 39). Hiddleston is a particularly fruitful example in this regard and will be employed in this chapter as a paradigmatic example of contemporary Shakespearean celebrity. As an individual who is frequently represented or framed as being 'Shakespearean' and as a confident social media user, Hiddleston's body is not just multiply performed or located. Because of active fan representation, it is also constituted on a scale unseen and by participants whose voices have hitherto been largely unheard. By taking Hiddleston as its focus, this chapter will attend to the construction of Shakespearean capital outside of the theatre in the reproducible texts of popular Internet culture. It will examine not only Hiddleston's performance in these texts and his representation in the media, but how he has participated in the construction of his social media avatar and how fans have, in turn, depicted him online. In doing so, the chapter will consider the role that individual actors have upon the popular understanding of Shakespeare and his works, as well as providing individual examples of Shakespeare's adaptation by online fan communities. To borrow from John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, what potentially 'confused, emergent values' could occur when the 'old identities and values' (2007, 1) that continue to be associated with Shakespeare, meet with the new cultural modes, creative practices or means of proliferation that characterise contemporary popular digital culture?

Hiddleston's somewhat old-fashioned aesthetic certainly contributes to the romantic allure which the world of upper-class privilege still holds

for many individuals. Bruce Babington argues that British actors 'give things to home audiences that Hollywood luminaries cannot – reflections of the known and close at hand' (2001, 8). Although undeniably the nature of Hiddleston's upbringing (Eton then Cambridge) separates him from many in contemporary society, his portrayal by the press and his early acting roles establish the values he embodies as an idealised, aspirational image, within which his Shakespeareanism constitutes an essential characteristic of cultural sophistication. Hiddleston represents a class-bound fantasy of white, male Englishness predicated upon qualities of eloquence, restraint and social privilege. It is worth noting that the press' focus upon these details of Hiddleston's upbringing is a phenomenon which has also occurred in reportage of actors who have come from similarly privileged backgrounds and who have risen to fame within a similar period such as Chapter 4's focus, Benedict Cumberbatch, as well as his *Shakespeare Live!* double, Eddie Redmayne.

Hiddleston's most famous role—Loki in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU, see Introduction)—exemplifies this practice. Having originally auditioned for the titular role in *Thor* and having bulked up suitably for the occasion, Hiddleston was urged to re-audition for the role of Loki, the hero's scheming malcontent brother. He won the part as, according to Branagh, Hiddleston couldn't 'turn off' (Raphael 2011) his intelligence and Loki's power in both mythology and the Marvel comics is predicated on deception and misdirection. By contrast, Thor's need for eloquence comes second to his impressive physicality; his character conforms to more traditional markers of masculinity which is, at times, coded as pertaining to a lower class than the pseudo-intellectualism of superhero villains. Thor, though an Asgardian Prince, is characterised by his adherence to a stereotype of Viking primitivism and coarseness. See, for instance, the humour derived from transposing his abrasive social etiquette from the Norse mead halls to a New Mexico coffee shop. Or witness a visual corollary of the distinction between Loki's intellect and Thor's force in the contrasting brute force wielded through Thor's hammer, Mjölnir, and the capoeira-inspired martial arts Loki employs which utilises speed and deceptive feints. That Hiddleston's perceived intelligence reinforces the Shakespeareanism of his star persona is further argument for the productive and deliberately employed interplay between theatre and popular culture, just as Branagh was chosen to direct *Thor* so that his skills as a Shakespearean adaptor could be applied to the relatively formal style of dialogue attributed to the Asgardians in

the comic series. It is perhaps unsurprising then that *Thor* has several Shakespearean echoes, the majority of which are conscious artistic decisions made by Branagh.[1] The contiguity between *Thor's* theatrical intertexts and Loki's appearances elsewhere in the MCU meanwhile underline both the thematic significance of the character's Shakespeareanism and Hiddleston's continued contribution to this effect.

Loki's second appearance in *Avengers Assemble* (dir. Joss Whedon, 2012) takes place at a Stuttgart concert hall, for instance. As the only non-American location in the film, the selection of Stuttgart suggests an association between Loki and Europe, or the Old World. This is a connection further enhanced by the mise-en-scène conveying the tenor of the classical music event through the architectural grandeur of the building, the upper-middle-class connotations of the guests', Loki's formal evening attire (complete with cane) and the accompaniment of Schubert's String Quartet in A Minor. In an ironic reference to this setting Tony Stark later notes that Loki is a 'full tilt diva' and it is Stark, whose sardonic voice often offers a postmodern, self-reflexive critique of the genre, who articulates a crucial distinction between the camp excess of the Earth superheroes and the Asgardians' overly formalised speech and dramatic costuming.

THOR: You have no idea what you are dealing with.
TONY STARK: Uh, Shakespeare in the park? Doth mother know you weareth her drapes?

Stark's cod-Shakespearean phrasing and bantering reply of 'Uh, Shakespeare in the park?' identifies the tempestuous relationship between Thor and his brother as the stuff of Shakespearean dramatic convention. A potential in-joke reference to Branagh's involvement in the franchise, Stark's feigned archaisms—'doth', 'weareth'—connect the Asgardians with what are perceived as outmoded cultural values. The description of Thor's outfit as his mother's 'drapes' indeed denigrates these values as old-fashioned and obfuscated, particularly in contrast with the sharply pop-culture infused vernacular of Stark. In a manner similar albeit exaggerated to *War Horse's ill-fated* Captain Nicholls and *The Deep Blue Sea*'s Freddie Page, Loki's 'high' cultural quality is at odds with mainstream modernity; it is a cultural and linguistic difference used to reiterate his alterity, even from Thor. Overt reference in dialogue to Nazism in the Stuttgart scene thus frame Loki's 'high' cultural values as not only irrelevant but dangerously dictatorial.[2]

Despite the character's villainy, however, Loki and Hiddleston continue to enjoy popularity both online and off-. A recent advertising campaign for the luxury car manufacturer Jaguar explores precisely the contradictory appeal of malcontents such as Loki, as well as their early modern antecedents. The advert asks, 'Have you ever noticed how in Hollywood movies all the villains are played by Brits?' Each of its stars (Mark Strong, Ben Kingsley and Hiddleston) contribute a hypothetical answer and, in doing so, confirm the qualities of this popular stereotype. Sat in an open helicopter cockpit Hiddleston proposes, 'We're more focused. More precise. … And we're obsessed by power! … Stiff upper lip is key'. Surrounded by a parodic microcosm of English gentility, Hiddleston is dressed in a three-piece tweed suit, seated next to a small lampshade and sips a cup of tea, even as he is buffeted by the wind. A later version of the advert even more explicitly summarises the traditional qualities of the British 'baddie', acknowledging Hiddleston's upper-class Shakespeareanism in statements such as: 'They say Brits play the best villains … But what makes a great villain? Firstly, you need to sound distinct. Speak with an eloquence that lets everyone know who's in charge'. An audio recording of John Gielgud performing John of Gaunt's speech from *Richard II* ('This happy breed of men' (1997, 2.1.45–50)) to the rousing strains of Edward Elgar's 'Nimrod' seemingly provides an example of this desired gravitas. The advert continues to then reinforce a cultural association between formal sophistication and Shakespeare as 'high' culture by reiterating the same speech, this time performed with relish by Hiddleston while driving the advertised car. Brand Vice President for Jaguar, Jeff Curry, explains that Hiddleston's recitation of the 'classic words of England's most famous playwright' advertises the coupe in an 'unforgettable manner' (No author 2014), demonstrating the importance of an idealised Englishness to Jaguar's brand identity and Shakespeare as a quintessence of this.

While Curry praised the productive pairing of Shakespeare with two other ambassadors of Englishness, however, the website *Jezebel* took a slightly different tack. Observing the erotic overtones of the advert and its concessions to a significant aspect of Hiddleston's allure in America, Rebecca Rose remarked 'this video is probably the closest any of us are ever going to get to a real-life sex date with Tom Hiddleston' (2014). Hiddleston's purred instruction in the Jaguar advert to 'Brace yourselves' before beginning John of Gaunt's speech certainly seems chosen to maximise the erotic spectacle of watching the actor recite Shakespeare;

an association underpinned by the advert's pairing of the rhymic, rousing quality of the lines and its demonstration of the coupe's abundant horsepower and own throaty roar. Though the appeal of male, white upper-middle-class English performers to Anglophilic audiences has seen the international success of stars like Hugh Grant or Colin Firth, in Hiddleston's case his sexual appeal is closely tied to his Shakespeareanism. That Hiddleston's is the only advert in the campaign to reference the playwright, despite the transparency of the connection between Hollywood villains and a British theatricalism, only reinforces the point that his star capital originates from an explicitly Shakespearean source. Although Hiddleston's appeal (sexual or otherwise) takes form in different ways throughout his career—and, indeed, will no doubt continue to do so—it still appears in ways that speak to the first and greatest success he experienced as an actor: as a high cultural capital-wielding Shakespearean.

Hiddleston's broader, continuing relationship to Shakespeare thus perpetuates fan investment in his performer identity. As suggested in Chapter 1, it builds upon the old-fashioned allure that characterised his early career to confirm an association (onscreen and off-) between the playwright, meaning and romanticism, sincerity and inspirational sentiment. This is consolidated through Hiddleston's performances in *The Hollow Crown* (TV, 2012), *Coriolanus* at the Donmar Warehouse in 2013 and, later the John le Carré adaptation *The Night Manager* (TV, 2016), which express his characters' masculinity in both an increasingly conventional mode and in increasingly eroticised ways. All three texts indeed echo the scrutiny placed on Hiddleston or his characters by fan creative practices to present an image of the actor that complicates Laura Mulvey's split between agentive masculinity and passive femininity (1999, 837). The star's masculinity functions in these texts because of their acknowledgement of his increasingly muscular body as a legible and desirable, looked-at object.

Hiddleston's performance of Henry V (dir. Thea Sharrock, 2012) for the final instalment of the BBC's *The Hollow Crown*, for instance, emphasises the King's nobility. This occurs despite his earlier portrayal of Hal in *Henry IV* (dir. Richard Eyre, 2012) with a Loki-esque impishness and Hiddleston's own shared suspicion that contemporary politicians only ever 'reveal themselves after a time'. Perhaps tellingly, though, Hiddleston has also posited his belief in Henry's 'piety' and 'chivalric code' (*TimesTalks* 2013) and it this reading which maps onto Thea Sharrock's

direction and its framing of central narrative events in a manner that contributes to Henry's characterisation as a just, principled King. To wit, the violent speech at Harfleur is included in the film but Hiddleston's eyes are visibly moist as he delivers it, his tone aggressive but his face conveying obvious distress. Meanwhile, unlike Kenneth Branagh's 1989 interpolation of Henry's tacit involvement in the act, Bardolph's death occurs without Henry's knowledge and causes instant sorrow. Finally, when Henry prays to God before battle, the camera focuses in upon his clasped hands, revealing the mismatched gloves as evidence of the promise made to Williams in Act Four Scene One. At all points Hiddleston's Henry recognises his responsibility for his men's lives and the cost of violence that necessitates that his soldiers' deaths are meaningful.

The Donmar Warehouse's production of *Coriolanus* similarly affirms the rapid creation of Hiddleston's Shakespearean capital during this period. Under Josie Rourke's direction, the play's repeated concern with the (in)ability of Coriolanus' body to demonstrate martial prowess or honour, affirms the newfound potency of both Hiddleston's Shakespeareanism and his masculinity. After all, the actor's slimmer physique had been deemed appropriate for secondary characters or boyish romancers, but not conventionally muscular action heroes. The progression of Hiddleston's star identity towards more conventional markers of masculinity alongside the delineation of his upper-middle-class cultural value as 'Shakespearean' has therefore been cultivated both by his post-Loki stardom and very much because of it. For Rourke, as for Sharrock and Susanne Biers (director of *The Night Manager*), Hiddleston's masculinity is now performed gesturally through coded poses or strip-teases that reveal and revel in the newly visible power of Hiddleston's body. In *Coriolanus*, Hiddleston's newly muscled body functions as an interpretive nodal point for the play's thematic concerns and the production's wider ambition to produce a Shakespeare play with mainstream appeal and sexiness. *The Night Manager* meanwhile relishes in Hiddleston's to-be-looked-at-ness, providing viewers with scenes in which Jonathan Pine's body is framed as a central spectacle, such as Pine running bare-chested on a beach, or being measured for, and then dressed in a bespoke suit. These are moments which have little direct narrative significance and which function instead as examples of Mulvey's scenes of 'erotic contemplation' (1999, 837). Indeed, the next chapter of this monograph will consider how fan activity transforms the consciously framed bodies of Shakespearean stars on stage into readily shareable and

endlessly repeatable digital forms such as GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format or short, looped animated sequences made from static images).

The Shakespearean Online

Despite the negative values attributed to 'high' cultural capital by Marvel, the popularity of the association between Hiddleston and Shakespeareanism is therefore evident. Ironically, it is precisely Loki's marginalised status within the MCU—as an antagonist whose agency is repeatedly limited by the heroes and Hiddleston as an actor who remains relatively lesser known in comparison with stars such as Robert Downey Jr.—that inspires Hiddleston's popularity online. Fan-authored macros work to extend the dramatic lives of their fictional and non-fictional representations. Humour is created by positioning character as the result of conscious and artificial performance and by signalling the transparency between actor and character in a manner that the film text mostly seeks to elide. A recurrent theme of Hiddleston memes is thus their attention to Loki's surprising and sometimes contradictory appeal. In the characteristically succinct language of most memes, Hiddleston received lowest billing, is not even pictured on the poster, plays the villain but 'has more fangirls than the hero' (link no longer available).

A parody of the teen comedy, *Mean Girls* and its introduction of the tyrannical high school student, Regina George, revels in similarly exaggerated statements of Hiddleston/Loki's potent appeal. The series of macros depicting the *Avengers* characters' thoughts on Loki include the gossip that 'One time he met Scarlett Johansson on a plane… and she told him that he was pretty' and culminate with Tony Stark admitting, 'He threw me out of a window once… It was AWESOME'! Memes such as these repudiate the previous function of Shakespearean capital in the MCU. Instead, the Loki that remains in digital form is one whose emotional complexity and cultural alterity provides an appealing, even glamourous counterpoint to the Avengers' anodyne pop cultural world.

The refocusing of the audience's gaze by fan-authored texts onto secondary characters which has played such a crucial role in ensuring Loki's continuing popularity onscreen and online, also occur in different modes. The fan video (also known as a fanvid or songvid) *Seven Devils* by YlvaJo (formerly known as the user Malfoyinmyheart4ever) constructs a narrative that mirrors its titular soundtrack by Florence + the Machine, for instance. The song's ominous warning, 'for what has been done /

Cannot be undone/ In the evil's heart/ In the evil's soul', here provides an appropriate tonal framework for a video that dramatises Loki's increasing desperation and madness. When matched to stylised, edited excerpts from *Thor* and *Avengers Assemble*, the song's emotive lyrics create a new narrative from previously seen film footage, while its deliberately slowed-down pace allow viewers to linger over the minutiae of Hiddleston's performance. This mode is characteristic of songvids and much fan creativity, which often explore a character, pairing or aspect of a cultural text which they think has been under-appreciated—whether undeveloped by the text itself or marginalised by the dominant mode of its reception. YlvaJo's comment in the description box beneath the video reveals this sympathetic purpose: 'he's my poor little baby asdfghjkl. Why can't he just be happy!? *lies down in foetal position and drowns in my own tears*' (2012). YlvaJo's response is typical of much Loki-centric, fan-authored content, not just fanvids. In the lexicon of Internet culture, Loki's online afterlife represents the phenomenon of the 'woobie': a character who induces pity in his or her audience, sometimes despite their canonical morality.

As the subtext of countless other memes which similarly affirm Loki's popularity despite either Hiddleston's lack of fame or Loki's villainy reveal, Hiddleston's success in the role was in hinting towards the vulnerability that lay behind his character's Shakespearean ambition. Texts such as *Seven Devils* should be read, therefore, not only as expressions of desire for more content (and for more of Hiddleston) than the hypotext provides, but as creative solutions to the problems that Loki fans consequently encounter: Loki's relative lack of onscreen time in comparison with Thor as protagonist, but the character's perceived depth and complexity. Digital artefacts such as memes and social media texts thereby reveal the contradictions within but also potential flexibility of Hiddleston's Shakespearean celebrity and the role of fan creativity in remediating and extending not only his performances but his performer identity. Fan texts acknowledge Loki's framing as a villain but the inherent tragedy of his narrative as well as his appealing humourousness (and Hiddleston's own personable manner); Marvel's configuration of the Shakespearean as antiquated and obscure, but Loki's prevalence as a popular cultural figure; and perhaps most interestingly, Hiddleston's active engagement with Internet culture, but the conservatism of his Shakespearean associations.

Although the latter contradiction is particularly exposed by the fan texts I will explore later in this chapter, it is also apparent in Hiddleston's online self-performance. While Hiddleston has stated his intention to present a 'vision' of himself that is authentic, the actor's online persona is characterised by a high degree of self-awareness and an 'innate understanding of what makes internet memes tick' (Beaumont-Thomas 2013). An illustrative example of this is the 'accidentally groping' meme. On 8 November 2013 YouTube personality Smooth posted an interview with Hiddleston in which he impersonated Natalie Portman's pose on the international poster for *Thor: The Dark World* (2013). The following day this coquettish pose was photoshopped onto the poster itself by the Tumblr user, The King Himself, gaining 35,000 notes in the first four days of being online (2013) (Fig. 3.1).

This spawned an Internet phenomenon with Hiddleston's pose pasted onto images from various media franchises in manipulations that mirrored the work of fan projects such as the Hawkeye Initiative.[3] Similarly, after the enormous success of a fan-made parody of the 2013 Daft Punk song 'Get Lucky', Hiddleston sang his own version of 'Get Loki' for YouTube (Pathé NL 2013). The star's performance of the Melbourne Shuffle on Korean television meanwhile gained 1.1 million views in its first month on Reddit. Particularly when viewed from an American or international framework, it is Hiddleston's performance of these latter qualities that demonstrate his awareness of the expectations of Englishness and which playfully speak back to the wider construction of his Shakespearean capital.

Writing on the relationship that British expatriates living in America have towards their national identity, Katherine W. Jones argues that our identities emerge from how we 'use' cultural practices in our daily interactions: 'what we say, what we wear, how we act and how others interpret our actions (2001, 7). Jones' description of the self-constructed nature of her subjects' identities is strikingly apt given Petersen's reminder that social media can be used to 'reflect the star's authentic self, or, at the very least, the way the star thinks of himself and his image' (2018). A retweet of the account VeryBritishProblems, for instance, epitomises the delicate balance Hiddleston strikes between earnestness and self-mockery (Fig. 3.2).

Hiddleston's promotion of the parody account demonstrates his identification with, and inclusion in, those shared values—an image of Britishness as restrained, eccentric, genteel and gently comic. These

Fig. 3.1   The first example of the 'accidentally groping' meme

Fig. 3.2   Screen capture of Tom Hiddleston's Twitter account (2014)

values are of course not static. Hiddleston's previous Twitter handle illuminates the increasing sophistication of his professional identity and the way in which the actor's attitude towards his Englishness has continued to change with his growing fame: 'Actor. Prince Hal/Henry V. Loki. Capt Nicholls. Fitzgerald. Freddie Page. Edward. Magnus. Oakley. Also: brother, son, friend, runner, dancer, prancer, loon'. With its etymological origins as early as the fifteenth century and Shakespearean employment ('The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!' (Shakespeare 1997a, 5.3.11)), the term 'loon' cultivates an effective sense of Hiddleston's idiosyncrasies. Its relative lack of use in modern-day parlance demonstrates his historical knowledge, while its employment simultaneously undercuts the implications of its use by creating a sense of foolishness and mischievousness. 'Prance' alludes similarly to an antiquated idiom that is offset by the light-heartedness of its definition. Perhaps tellingly, since moving beyond the genteel or aristocratic archetypes that made his name to the darker and more conventional heterosexual masculine characterisation of *Crimson Peak* (dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2015), *High-Rise* (dir. Ben Wheatley, 2015), *The Night Manager*, or *Kong: Skull Island* (dir. Jordan Vogt-Roberts, 2017), Hiddleston's handle has changed to the short affirmation of simply, 'Actor'.

An essential aspect of Hiddleston's star persona has nonetheless persisted, founded upon the understanding that his attractiveness resides in qualities regarded as being uniquely English and, by extension, uniquely Shakespearean. These qualities exist variously in terms of high cultural capital, a perceived mild eccentricity, politeness or the sometimes old-fashioned and courtly manner of his address (his fans' adaptation of the Ryan Gosling 'Hey girl' meme to 'Hello Darling'). Video content of Hiddleston draws similarly upon the actor's perceived probity and the

unwillingness to be 'dispassionate' (Barnes 2015) also evident on his personal Twitter account with its details of charity work and motivational comments. A viral video produced by the American network and home of *Sesame Street,* PBS, involves Hiddleston teaching Cookie Monster on the virtue of self-control (What's Trending 2013), for instance. A recurrent theme across memes of Hiddleston is thus the expression of his national identity as that which is restrained and deferential, with examples elaborating upon stereotypically British traits or pursuits, including compulsive tea-drinking or apologising. The framing of his identity and star appeal in this way by Internet culture appears to both influence media representation and to be influenced by it (as detailed in Chapter 1). To wit, commenting upon Hiddleston's public persona in an article on a date he shared during his brief romance with the global pop star, Taylor Swift, David Schilling described the star's behaviour as 'performative chivalry'. Echoing Ben Beaumont-Thomas' assessment of Hiddleston's 'innate' understanding of Internet culture in a somewhat more cynical tone, Schilling continued by describing the couple as the closest that popular culture will get to 'two memes dating' (2016).

Beyond revealing the issues that occur when the performance of star identity strains credulity or appears inauthentic to the understood value of that celebrity, the widespread opposition to Hiddleston's brief relationship with Swift illustrates the potential of fans to act as cultural gatekeepers. Swift's deemed inappropriateness indeed highlights the power that fans have in setting the terms and limits of Hiddleston's Shakespearean celebrity. Kelly Lawler questions astutely why the image of Hiddleston, perceived by many of his fans as 'the perfect Internet boyfriend' does not include Swift. A much more private individual, she writes that Hiddleston is not typically associated with Swiftian publicity opportunities, paparazzi or 4th of July parties with supermodels. His image, instead, has a 'kind of nerdiness, a passion for the creation of a certain kind of art'; he is in short, a man who 'does not date a woman as mainstream as Taylor Swift' (Lawler 2016). Even though most fans would have first seen Hiddleston in superhero blockbusters, Swift is apparently too déclassé. Although she may reference *Romeo and Juliet* in her songs, Swift is excluded from and deemed incompatible with the implicitly 'high' cultural associations of Shakespeareanism.

Performances of Hiddleston's stardom whether on Twitter or in the popular media thus seem to reflect fans' expectations and the *popular* association made in America between Englishness and the wielding of

a perceived, potentially exclusionary 'high' cultural knowledge. During a live Q&A with fans for the fan-interest website, the Nerd Machine, Hiddleston relates an encounter with Branagh.

> You know, Kenneth Branagh is a big mentor of mine and he said something the other day […] from *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, which is four words: "take pains, be perfect". And it's, I think, his way of saying, you know, don't be afraid of caring. (Nerd HQ 2013)

The line, delivered by the bathetic figure of Bottom, here becomes a site of meditation for Hiddleston: an invitation from the more senior Branagh to invest emotionally in his characters and performance. A later question from a fan on Hiddleston's favourite Shakespeare line provokes a similarly thorough response on the beauty of Shakespeare's language. Ultimately unsure, Hiddleston apologises to the audience, stating 'that wasn't a very good answer, was it?', to which to which his American interviewer, founder of the Nerd Machine and co-star, Zachary Levi, responds: 'it was a great answer. I've just never felt more uncultured in my life' (Nerd HQ 2013). Levi's relative lack of Shakespearean knowledge in comparison with Hiddleston is, for the American actor, a negation of all cultural capital. The frequency with which Hiddleston's fans return to the topic of Shakespeare during the hour-long conversation is also worth remarking upon. Despite the Nerd Machine's purpose (created to celebrate conventionally marginalised cultural modes such as science fiction) and despite Hiddleston's own involvement in the Marvel franchise, Hiddleston is asked about Shakespeare on two other occasions and references the playwright a further five times in total. This occurs to the extent that Levi responds to another characteristically fulsome answer from Hiddleston with the sardonic put-down: 'I've read all of Shakespeare, I've performed all of Shakespeare… I just didn't want to talk about it' (Nerd HQ 2013). Hiddleston's conversation with Levi and its insistent circling back to the topic of Shakespeare thereby enacts the process by which American anglophile sentiment 'reinforce[s] old distinctions between "high" and "low" culture' (Jones 2001, 78).

Memes that are predicated on the visibility of Hiddleston's Shakespeareanism speak to a similarly conservative iteration of the playwright's cultural capital as that which, as 'high' culture, requires expert decryption. One macro, for instance, pairs an image of Hiddleston listening alertly with the caption, 'Somewhere in the world… Someone

misquoted Shakespeare. I can sense it' (The Daily Laughs 2014).[4]
While another photograph of the actor looking at arthouse filmmaker,
Jim Jarmusch, features the interpolation, 'What did you say about
Shakespeare, Jim? Say it to my face' (Hello Darling 2013). The con-
tent of these macros (which are by no means unique) and their contin-
ued circulation in Internet spaces, affirm the definition of Hiddleston's
cultural value as 'Shakespearean'. But more significantly, perhaps, these
memes betray an implicit fear that the 'Shakespearean' is something that
requires specialist knowledge to unpack and which only Hiddleston as an
upper-middle-class British actor possesses the correct credentials to do.
Shakespeare's use in such memes evokes not simple enjoyment or under-
standing but, instead, concerns about correctness: who is the right per-
son to quote Shakespeare, or what is the right way? And yet, this concern
about accuracy is atypical or rather absent in other macro depictions of
Shakespeare, which instead frequently comment upon the compatibil-
ity of his works or his popular persona with contemporary popular cul-
tural modes; for example, pairing the Cobbe portrait with the statement,
'Think he has no swag… Invented the word' (The Shakespeare Standard
2013). Indeed, a repeated feature of Shakespeare macros is the juxta-
position of a historical Shakespeare (invoked through well-known rep-
resentations of the playwright such as the Cobbe, Chandos or Droeshout
portraits, references to his plays, mock-anachronisms or comparable sites
of 'high' culture) with modern vernacular or contemporary Internet
phenomenon. Similarly themed macros of the Chandos portrait pro-
claim, 'Oh you liked Macbeth?… I was freestyling' (Meme Generator,
n.d.), 'I killed most of my characters… before *Game of Thrones*' (Arcanda
Supreme 2014), or in a parody of Cartesian rationalism, 'I meme…
therefore I meme' (Meme Generator, n.d.).

The Shakespeare-related communities to be found on the social news
aggregator, platform for discussion groups and self-proclaimed 'front
page of the internet', Reddit, are similarly illustrative of this point.
Known as subreddits, these forums are dedicated to the discussion
of a particular topic and the sharing of links and they range from the
broad ('gaming' or 'pics') to the specific; the everyday to the obscure
and from eight figure subscriber numbers to single digits. A search
for Shakespeare-related content on Reddit thus returns the William
Shakespeare subreddit (/r/shakespeare) alongside communities dedi-
cated to the authorship question (/r/ShakespeareAuthorship), original
pronunciation of his plays (/r/OPShakespeare) and other literature of

the period (/r/EarlyModernLiterature).[5] Other subreddits such as /r/ fuckingshakespeare: Fucking Shakespeare, however, demonstrate the same broadly subversive basis for comedy as the macros discussed above. A spin-off of the much more popular and more active community, /r/ fuckingphilosophy, in which Redditors discuss the fundamentals of philosophy via the language of gangster rap, /r/fuckingshakespeare's mission statement claims: 'The usage of the words "fucking", "bitch", "bro" and idioms like "dat' shit's all retarded" are welcome in summarising and discussing William Shakespeare's work' (n.d.). /r/fucking Shakespeare is perhaps an idea best in conception rather than actualisation. Despite the 226 subscribers to the community, it has only been active on seven occasions and the most recent of these was in 2017. The intended humour of the subreddit is evident nonetheless. It shares its function with those Shakespeare-based memes which create comedy through the reader acknowledging an implicit disparity in cultural capital between Shakespeare and the popular cultural world with which he collides; the association of Shakespearean language (and its comprehension) with not only socially exclusive levels of education but predominantly 'white' cultural pursuits as emphasised through a comparison to a vernacular inspired by African American culture.

The memes, like the subreddit, create this incongruity while underlining the mutability of Shakespeare's online capital and its accommodation and assimilation of influence from popular Internet culture. Other memes of Hiddleston in character demonstrate a ludic relationship to Shakespeare, including a GIF of the star-as-Coriolanus, which shows Hiddleston endlessly thrusting towards the viewer with the caption 'Gurl ru ready for sum poetry!?' [sic] (I Fucking Hate Tom Hiddleston 2015). It is indeed no doubt as a direct result of stars like Hiddleston and his willingness to move between 'high' and popular cultural modes that we witness this potential flexibility of Shakespearean capital in contemporary culture, whether invoked in traditional sites of performance like *Coriolanus*, or in the multimedia exchange spaces of digital culture. There is a crucial distinction to make, however. The same flexibility is not apparent when Hiddleston's star persona, rather than his capacity as an actor, is used to express Shakespearean capital online. Then the playwright's works appear exclusive and restricted to those individuals who have sufficient knowledge to unlock them. The construction of Hiddleston's Shakespearean identity atop of pre-existing social and cultural capital thereby reveals the potential social, cultural and national exclusivity of Shakespearean

interpretation. Hiddleston's mediated online self is at once a purveyor of mainstream Shakespearean entertainment and Shakespeare-inspired culture but also its jealous gatekeeper ('Say it to my face'); a site where distinctions between 'high' and popular culture elide *and* an agent of their reformation, where the Shakespearean comes to denote a traditional or quintessential Englishness.

Creating Shakespearean Content Online

Having established Hiddleston's presence as a paradigmatic Shakespearean body which is at once institutionally approved and fan-constructed, it remains for the rest of the chapter to further delineate some of the ways in which the latter process occurs and in doing so, establish the variety of Shakespearean fan texts that exists online. These are consumers who are traditionally rendered anonymous by the very modes of cultural reception which have ensured Hiddleston's rapid ascent to fame. Users whose online activities—whether creating original posts or simply recirculating memes—have contributed to the understanding of Hiddleston's performer identity as Shakespearean and the determination of that Shakespeareanism as variously romantic, high cultural and 'quintessentially' English. Placed at a nexus between private and public, the unique means by which online communities and users consume and circulate texts offers valuable insight into the complex networks of meaning within which Shakespeare exists and through which the capital of Shakespearean celebrity is constructed. While Hiddleston's 'Shakespeareanism' exists online and offline, these communities produce and adapt Shakespearean texts on an almost exclusively digital terrain. Perhaps more than the stars who they so frequently represent, it is these communities and users who thus exemplify W.B. Worthen's argument that our understanding of the Shakespearean 'no longer oscillates dualistically between page and stage, page and screen, screen and stage'. Instead, the digital screen 'blurs' drama's traditional delivery system by representing 'text as *image*' (2008, 228).

It is worth noting first then that engagements with Hiddleston and Shakespeare more generally both take place across the Internet in different forms, on different platforms and, of course, in the service of different groups of fans. Shorter comments, pieces of writing and recommended links or videos are more typical on platforms that contain technical constraints, or which are habitually more short form such as

Twitter or Facebook in comparison with the longer text-based exchanges likely on Reddit, LiveJournal or Tumblr. Video content, meanwhile, is more frequently uploaded to YouTube but other online video platforms exist including Vimeo and Vine, where users can share six-second looping clips. Social media users, meanwhile, can embed and share videos on their profiles and create content through purpose-built programmes (Instagram and Facebook both have a 'Story' function). Social networking platforms thus work with the increased accessibility of digital technology (and advancements in mobile technology in particular) to allow fans to imagine their relationship to stars in new and distinct ways that are often inevitably shaped by the general function of the platforms they circulate on.

The capacity of the Shakespearean star body to inspire creativity in fans can be seen, for instance, in the images produced by the Tumblr user, pineapple-an-me. First shared on the 25 June 2015, the untitled post included five photographs of Tom Hiddleston, each of which were annotated and overlaid with anatomical terms and drawings of specific features. The post included a promotional image of Hiddleston as King Henry V from *The Hollow Crown* (2012) and four images from the Donmar Warehouse's 2014 stage production of *Coriolanus*: the widely circulated still from the play of Coriolanus showering, two of Hiddleston during sword-fighting training and a head shot from the same Spencer Murphy photoshoot that included the eventual poster image for *Coriolanus* (see Fig. 3.3).

Here, the very essence of Hiddleston's body is read, scrutinised and detailed in a manner that provide a literal illustration of the star body as a legible site of meaning and investment for fans. pineapple-an-me's annotations, the purpose of which they explain is 'how to revise for an anatomy exam', extend the typical fan gaze to inventory the valves of Hiddleston's heart or to detail the adduction of Coriolanus' arm as he showers (2015).

I have written elsewhere on the productiveness with which Josie Rourke's production focused on its star's body and pineapple-an-me's images certainly replicate the 'already richly symbolic nature of Coriolanus's body' (Blackwell 2014, 351) in both the play and the Donmar Warehouse production. pineapple-an-me's annotations highlight the capacity of the human body for agency, detailing not simply specific muscles, tendons or nerves, but their relationship to physical processes. Three of the five images, after all, depict Hiddleston in

Fig. 3.3   pineapple-an-me's annotated Coriolanus

movement and two of them show him training to perform Coriolanus' famous martial prowess. The images are pleasing in their detail and are certainly well-circulated—at the time of writing they have been either liked or reblogged 13,826 times since 2015 (2015). But this exposure of Coriolanus' body is, of course, problematic: he is unwilling to meet the citizenry's demands. The revelation of the innermost workings of Coriolanus/Hiddleston's body in pineapple-an-me's revision notes and their explanation of its muscular capability thereby echoes the production's ambivalent treatment of Coriolanus' body. Rather than the shameless appeal to Hiddleston's fan base assumed by some critics, Rourke orchestrated 'complex erotic spectacle[s]' that made the audience both 'complicit in the Romans' clamour to view and possess Coriolanus's body' (Blackwell 2014, 349) and required them to consider their own relationship to Hiddleston's celebrity. A scribbled note on the left-hand corner of one image listing curvatures of the spine—kyphosis, lordosis and scolosis (2015)—meanwhile provides a seemingly unconscious allusion to another Shakespearean protagonist for whom the vulnerability of their body to reading is similarly fraught.

As spectators of *Coriolanus* and potential fans of Hiddleston, we at once understand Martius' desire for privacy—his very literal discomfort at the prospect of exposing a body wearied and wounded by war—but we also relish the spectacle of his semi-nude body on stage and the play's deliberate eroticisation of vulnerability. The appeal of the 'woobie' strikes again. This is a point made more ironic for the context in which pineapple-an-me's images were consumed on Tumblr by fans of Hiddleston. Nearly two years after posting their revision notes on the 21 February 2017, pineapple-an-me reblogged the images again with the following comment: 'I released you into the wild 2 years ago and you've finally made to [sic] back to my dash T.T #proudmama'. Having been 'in the wild' (2017) for two years—that is, being shared by users outside of pineapple-an-me's awareness—the post was finally reblogged by a user they followed and returned to pineapple-an-me's 'dash' (the dashboard where followed users' posts are listed). The post had reappeared in a very different context, however: Topless Tuesday (the 'T.T' to which pineapple-an-me's comment refers), a weekly opportunity for users to post nude or partially nude images.

The example of pineapple-an-me's Tumblr post thereby illuminates digital technology's ability to complicate the seemingly singular nature of theatre spectatorship and Shakespearean celebrity of pre-digital periods.

Figures like Hiddleston more than ever now exist multiply, performed actively and personally in a variety of media forms and remediated passively online (something which will be pursued further in Chapter 4). Combined with the time-sensitive nature of social media functions such as Snapchat, Instagram Stories or Periscope, Internet texts may seem ephemeral. How often do you return to tweets favourited years ago, or even to posts written by yourself in the past? With only (micro)blogging platforms such as Tumblr or Livejournal offering user access to searchable archives of content, the prospect of rediscovering a post liked a year ago is daunting, even for a moderately active social media user.[6] The return of pineapple-an-me's post reminds us of the often-circular nature of Internet use, however, even though as users we perceive the social networks as relatively closed and attempt to enact separation with our 'eyes, our bodily and cognitive apparatus, our language, our memory and our technologies' (Kember 2012, 75). The potential familiarity of either individual online texts or practices (conventions such as regular events, challenges or memes which are adapted by users) indeed speaks to the interconnectedness of the Internet and social media's operation through the shared knowledge and participation of its users. The macros referenced already in this monograph are evidence of this fact: their potential humourousness relies on the observer's ability to correctly identify the cultural reference(s) they depict, and the meme being adapted, whether the latter is invoked through particular phrases or expressions or through the recurrence of certain images or situations.

Memes certainly act in the service of online fandoms, utilised by their creators and circulators to forge a shared vernacular or understanding between members. One meme which invites literary responses from participants, for instance, is referred to variously as 'Imagine', 'Imagines' or related hashtags—all of which refer to the hypothetical quality of the fiction and its depiction of an imaginary relationship with a chosen star (for instance, #Tom Hiddleston x reader). The 'Imagine' format is popular. At the time of writing the user-generated fiction website Wattpad returns 314 stories to the search 'Tom Hiddleston + Imagine'. Of these a significant proportion have received over a thousand views and a number of these many more such as Acefury's 'Tom Hiddleston/Loki Imagines' which was viewed 695,000 times and received 26,500 positive votes (Wattpad 2017). 'Imagine' scenarios are almost exclusively written

in second person narrative, with the use of 'you' pronouns or brack-
eted instructions of '[Y/N]' (your name) to allow the reader to insert
themselves into the narrative. The scenarios constitute a form of flash
fiction because of their relative brevity but there are differences across
social media platforms. On Wattpad, 'Imagine' stories tend to be slightly
longer than their counterparts on Tumblr, for example, where stories
vie with image-based content and where users pursuing their dashboard
may be disinclined to scroll through a large amount of text.[7] Indeed,
'Imagine' stories are often accompanied by GIFs or static images on
Tumblr, presumably intended to inspire the reader to their own recollec-
tion. Other strategies can be used to encourage participation, although
in removing ambiguity, these can have the side-effect of fixing what is
purposefully open about the challenge. In the series of 'Imagine' stories
entitled 'Dinner with a Stranger' (2017), for instance, the Tumblr user
Shanna depicts the 'reader' as a petite, determined-looking woman (the
use of third person rather than second person perspective fixes the lat-
ter point). Shanna also provides images of Hiddleston in character and
a screencap from Pinterest of the 'reader's outfit, including her blouse,
trousers, shoes, bag and earrings (2017).

The example of the 'Imagine' meme provides further insight into
the nature of Shakespearean celebrity. The fiction created by fans of
Hiddleston reveal that online representations of stars are not simply iter-
ative. They participate in the performance of key romantic tropes. Like
his fellow stars who are similarly imagined across Tumblr, Instagram,
Wattpad or other platforms living out almost exclusively romantic exist-
ences, Hiddleston is a character. Most commonly appearing as himself
(i.e. as a professional actor), he is written into situations which drama-
tise the qualities already associated with him: the dutiful boyfriend, the
gentlemanly stranger, the sophisticated lover. The reader, meanwhile,
is required to be both active and passive; active in imagining the sce-
nario and placing themselves into the situations described and passive
in accepting the cues and behaviours already proscribed in the fiction.
For fans, the Shakespearean star body as a site of meaning can thus be
accessed not only through observation and analysis of the star's perfor-
mance but through acts of engagement. It is a polysemous site capable
of carrying multiple associations from a variety of texts, genres and mul-
timedia modes.

Shakespearean Community Online

It was the popularity of Shakespearean celebrities like Hiddleston and later Benedict Cumberbatch that provided the inspiration for one of the largest mobilisations of Shakespeare fan energy online: the Hollow Crown Fans (HCF). A multiplatform group founded in 2012, the Fans were initially motivated by their shared admiration for the BBC's adaptation of Shakespeare's Henriad plays of the same name. Their (largely inactive) WordPress site provides set reports alongside interviews with minor cast members and promotion of their more significant Twitter activity. Their Facebook page, too, typically displays information already posted on Twitter, namely the community's weekly event: #ShakespeareSunday. Regularly appearing in Twitter's trending list with upwards of two thousand participants, #ShakespeareSunday is the Fans' most prolific and popular contribution to Shakespeare's digital presence.

#ShakespeareSunday presents an opportunity to rethink communality, participation, creativity and cultural value through the study of one iteration of what Jenkins et al. describe as the many and varied 'affordances of digital media' (2013, 3).[8] Through metadata tags like the #ShakespeareSunday hashtag, Twitter facilitates the coalescing of a high volume of short-form creative responses under one agentive aegis. The ubiquity of any one hashtag extends both laterally and vertically, used by individuals, groups and companies; consequently, not only can the reception and circulation of #ShakespeareSunday be varied, but its content is quite diverse, too. In addition to 280 characters (the limit was only increased from 140 in late 2017), Twitter permits the simultaneous pairing of text with images and animated GIFs of up to 5 MB, or videos of 30 seconds in length. The short but plentiful bursts of information that has characterised both Twitter's content and its delivery system since its invention thereby creates a uniquely serendipitous mode of engagement. Submissions to #ShakespeareSunday or, indeed to Twitter in general, may appear through the Fans' main account or by chance according to the make-up of an individual's followed accounts—appearing as original entries, retweets, sporadically, unobserved or not at all. Fans' content, meanwhile, can exist in any combination of an infinite variety of intertextual relationships, functioning as independent information, linked through shared hashtags or common discussion of an event or phenomena, or in a more collaborative mode through replies to authors, quoted

retweets, or 'mentions' (a subset of Twitter's replying function, in which interested parties can be directed to a post or invited to comment).

Jenkins et al. acknowledge that the model of participatory culture they present in their conceptualisation of a 'spreadable' media is not unique, existing beyond the 'life span of specific technologies or commercial platforms' (2013: 160). Nor is its content or modes of expression restricted to native digital forms such as Internet memes. What a study of individual social media platforms such as Twitter and its users does enable, however, is a framework through which to view instances of everyday engagements with Shakespeare's creative legacy as well as his broader cultural capital. Indeed, a far greater quantity of tweets are produced by the Fans in comparison with much larger and more-followed Shakespeare-centred accounts, and the texts they product represent a distinct, micro-adaptive creative mode. And although there are exceptions, the Hollow Crown Fans are not exclusively scholars nor theatre folk—indeed, this point is essential to the group's identity as I will continue to demonstrate. A recognition of the creative facility made available by social media and practised by online communities such as these has the potential, therefore, to alter our understanding of the traditional means by which Shakespearean meaning is received and circulated in contemporary culture. The Fans, as an example of digital adaptors, should be understood as a community of participants and active remediators of Shakespearean celebrity, not merely observers or even audience members.

Michelle K. Yost concludes her chapter on the adaptation of Shakespeare by online fan fiction writers with the following observation on the digital form's significance:

> Shakespeare has been taken down from the plinth, removed from the ivory tower, reformed and reused outside the expensive textbook. Both the author and his work have been (re)claimed by a collective that does not recognize the highbrow, academic dominance of Shakespeare, generating a twenty-first century form of folk art that requires nothing more than computer access and an Internet connection to be shared with other individuals of similar interest and inclination. (2018, 209)

Shakespeare's presence in spreadable media whether in fan fiction, fan art, memes or other remediated forms is not without complication, however, as this chapter has already suggested. Although, as Yost argues, participatory culture and fan labour theoretically levels the cultural

playground—paying equal attention to more obscure cultural texts alongside those that dominate the mainstream—digital Shakespeare and his embodiment in figures like Hiddleston is no less freed from the traditional cultural hierarchies and judgments of taste that often persist 'in real life'. This is because, as critics such as John Fiske (1992) and Roberta Pearson (2007) have identified, fandom originates in a place of cultural lack. It is, Fiske argues, 'a form of cultural labour to fill the gaps left by legitimate culture' and which works to 'provides the social prestige and self-esteem that go with cultural capital' (1992, 3). Fiske continues, 'fan cultural knowledge differs from official cultural knowledge in that it is used to enhance the fan's power over, and participation in, the original, industrial text' (43). In his already mentioned example, a *Rocky Horror Show* fan's knowledge will allow them to engage with and potentially rewrite the text, while a Shakespeare buff's understanding would not allow them to participate in the performance but to 'discriminate critically between it and other performances' (43). To act as a fan of Shakespeare in a conventional manner would therefore require renouncing his pre-existing capital. It can be done, though. The potentially contradictory nature of a Shakespeare fandom is apparent in its framing by individuals and communities as an act of discovery, or as a recovery of something only previously accessed by those with socially or culturally privileged knowledge of Shakespeare. The website for the free digital magazine, *Shakespeare*, for instance contains the tag line: '*At last!* A magazine with all the Will in the world' (Reid n.d., emphasis added). This sentiment is carried over into the editor's note, written by the magazine's founder, Pat Reid, who expresses his wish to 'give a *new* voice to Shakespeare fans everywhere [emphasis added]'.

Imagining Shakespeare's marginalisation risks the continued obscurity of those playwrights and authors who are not well-known enough to be consciously forgotten in the first place, however; this applies particularly to those contemporaries of Shakespeare who are doubly overshadowed by their proximity to the bard. Vimala C. Pasupathi (@Exhaust_Fumes) is castigated by the Twitter account for the aforementioned *Shakespeare* magazine (@UKShakespeare) for using the hashtag #ShakespeareWeek in order to draw attention to her own research on Shakespeare's collaborator, John Fletcher, for instance. *Shakespeare* challenges Pasupathi, 'While we're on the subject of staying classy, @Exhaust_Fumes, maybe you could stop trolling Shakespeare to get attention for your research?' (2015). The research to which *Shakespeare* refers is Pasupathi's

#NotShaxButFletch bot: an adaptive, automated script which searches out tweets about Shakespeare that mention his name or his plays and retweets them with Fletcher-related information. A tweet on *The Taming of the Shrew* is retweeted with a reference to Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed*, a tweet on Shakespeare's Kate to Fletcher's Maria and Shakespeare to Fletcher. As an intellectual project, Pasupathi (an associate professor at Hofstra University, USA) seeks not only to draw attention to the works of a truly marginalised literary figure but to examine the differing cachet owned by Shakespeare and Fletcher, as well as the different sounds of their writing. Although the provocative nature of these authorial interventions on the part of both Pasupathi and the Fletcher bot may warrant its description as trolling, *Shakespeare*'s combative response articulates its distaste for an academic perspective in which Shakespeare's greater cultural capital is side-lined for a lesser-known (and apparently inferior) author. Pasupathi's perceived failure to be 'classy' is aligned with her lack of deference to Shakespeare's cachet, both generally and on the occasion of a dedicated #ShakespeareWeek in which the playwright presumably should have been assured uncompromised publicity. One response to *Shakespeare*'s criticism from Emily WeNNceslas articulates the incompatibility of this logic, stating: 'Shakespeare's fine. The popular kids don't need your help' (@battielove 2015).[9]

Although *Shakespeare*'s attitude towards academic interventions in Shakespeare's ongoing social media life might seem counterintuitive (dismissing as it does a resource that draws attention to the connectedness of Shakespeare to his contemporaries), it expresses a feeling also shared by the Hollow Crown Fans. In a 'keynote speech' intended to garner support for the group at the Shorty Awards (a competition celebrating the best social media producers) the founders of the HCF, Lis and Rose, explain their rationale for the community. The authors argue that the Shakespeare familiar to most of us is the one from school: A 'dry, boring and tedious experience that belongs only to academia or those with a considerably advanced education. We choose to reject that notion. […] Shakespeare is not the property of academia. He belongs to you, to all of us, together' (Admin 2015b). This refutation of academic Shakespeare continues with a specific creative outcome in mind. The Fans posit that the Shorty Awards present an opportunity to demonstrate to the media industry that there is a mainstream 'hungry' for more Shakespeare and that the playwright deserves a 'place at the head of the table with other pop-culture icons' (note that in the category of best fansite the HCF

lost to one of these 'icons' and Hiddleston's former girlfriend: Taylor Swift). 'We try to show, on a daily basis', Lis and Rose explain in a later interview with *Shakespeare*, that the playwright 'can be part of pop culture' (Reid 2014, 14). And, just as the authors argue for their popular Shakespeare, they invoke the inherently popular and connected nature of the Internet platforms they have chosen, calling on their followers to 'click the link or make the tweet to vote', because, 'we stay silent and no one hears us' (Admin 2015b). The physical gesture of clicking a link is thus aligned with catching the attention of 'key players in the world of media and advertising' to highlight the contemporary relevance of Shakespeare.

It is by detailing this practical purpose that the Fans thereby distinguish the community's adaptations from what they regard as academia's monopoly on Shakespearean interpretation and its prohibitive requirement of 'considerably advanced education' (Admin 2015a). Indeed, the authors repeatedly align the Fans on one side of a binary between automated slickness and self-generated industry; 'high' and popular culture; clickbait and journalistic integrity; academic Shakespeare and Shakespeare 'for everyone'. Though it is carried out online, theirs is not an abstract endeavour. It is a task that requires 'incredible effort and commitment' and 18-hour days (Admin 2015a). Both the Hollow Crown Fans' and *Shakespeare* magazine's engagement with the playwright thereby mobilise the tools of mass culture to recover Shakespeare's inherent cultural capital. This is done in part by separating the apparently under-appreciated mainstream Shakespeare from the institutionally and socially legitimated realm of academia in which Shakespeare receives presumably adequate attention but at a level which is prohibitive to general enjoyment.

Roberta Pearson's account of the behaviour of fans of 'high' cultural figures such as Shakespeare and J. S. Bach demonstrates that this suspicion cuts both ways. Pearson argues that while fan studies have extensively focused on the enthusiasts of popular and middle-brow materials, it has 'almost entirely refused to engage with the high'. She recounts the suspicion her younger colleagues expressed when she mentioned wanting to study Shakespeare as well as *Star Trek*. These colleagues viewed the study of the academically ensconced Shakespeare as a kind of 'dangerous apostasy' that threatened to 'reinstate ideologically invidious cultural hierarchies' (2007, 99–100). In *Shakespeare* this position is articulated through the reinforcement of Shakespeare's high cultural hegemony, but

the Fans' call for outspokenness from the Shakespeare community challenges traditional modes of reception assigned to the playwright, aligning him instead with popular cultural practices. Compared to Swift's supporters who are not only able to but are expected to vociferously display their fan identities (shouting, screaming, buying merchandise emblazoned with their star's name and image), a more muted response is associated with theatre or cinema-goers. The HCF thus invite their community to vocalise their Shakespearean fannishness; first, through participating in a competition that could recognise the Fans' (and by extension Shakespeare's) compatibility with mainstream culture and second, through creative engagements with Shakespeare that prioritise both text *and* image.

A submission by C. S. Sinclaire (@CSessee) to #ShakespeareSunday demonstrates not only the potential creative facility of fan practices but their adaptive autonomy and their freedom to engage with different multimedia forms.

Figure 3.4 sees Lucas Cranach the Elder's images of Judith with Holofernes and Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist edited onto a grey, black and red background, accompanied by the Ambassador's lines to Horatio and Prince Fortinbras at the end of *Hamlet*. The severed heads held by the two women do not represent the only act of cutting that has taken place in the post, however; adaptation here is also transposition, with Judith and Salome severed from their original context. The effect of this recontextualisation and its juxtaposition with the text from *Hamlet* is transformative: the heads displayed become the hapless Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The bloody handprints on the scroll underline this act of adaptation, working to connect and intensify the violence explicit in the severed heads but which is so vaguely described by the Ambassador. The image presents further nuance to the text, moreover. The portraits exist in an artistic intertext with other representations of biblical women; indeed, unlike the more complex emotions rendered in Caravaggio, Gentileschi, or del Piombo, Cranach's (anti)heroines regard the world outside the painting coolly, with detachment. Cranach's aristocratic women thus readily align with the English Ambassador who, both figuratively and narratively, bluntly delivers Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's bodies. That Twitter's short-form structure lends potential abstruseness to such creative submissions—resisting definitive interpretation—is in keeping with the community's purpose of returning Shakespeare to the mainstream:

Fig. 3.4 C. S. Sinclaire's creative interpretation of the First Ambassador's lines from *Hamlet* Act 5 (2015)

an unwillingness to dictate a single path for the reader is congruent with the fan's desire to disrupt traditional cultural hierarchies and challenge an authoritative interpretation.

As Yost recognises, the Shakespeare that appears online in fan texts is 'infinitely malleable' and his use limited only by the participants' imagination. Yost argues that this is encouraged by a 'world of professional adaptation [which] continues to expand' and to provide grist for the fan

mill in lieu of a canon which will likely remain closed, baring the discovery of a lost Shakespeare play. Films like *Shakespeare in Love* certainly do provide new material for fan fiction in her examples and equally for the smaller adaptive works studied in this chapter. But Shakespeare adaptations are often few and far between in a popular cultural landscape dominated by other forms of remediation (sequels, franchises, reboots, etc.). An extension of the #ShakespeareSunday exercise, the hashtag #BardBond thereby provides a further qualification of the collaborative adaptive practice in which social media users such as the Fans engage. This process is, crucially, not simply creative but frequently meta-adaptational in its deliberate framing of the adaptive act. #BardBond is also significant because it reveals the foundational role of Shakespearean celebrities like Hiddleston who emblematise a version of the playwright which is easily communicable and reproducible online. While there may be tweets which include only a fan's chosen quotation or some which call upon idiosyncratic sources such as *Game of Thrones, Ab Fab* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, more typically #ShakespeareSunday entries are articulated through a combination of text and image and through high-profile adaptations like *The Hollow Crown* and *Coriolanus*. Hiddleston's performances, or the approximation thereof, are thus a regular appearance on Sunday Twitter feeds.

In this case, however, #BardBond was originally inspired by the news that that James Bond star Daniel Craig would be starring in *Othello* on Broadway. The HCF posted an appropriate pairing of an image from *Casino Royale* of Bond and love interest, Vesper Lynd (Eva Green), alongside Cassio's warning to Othello (with a wry insertion): 'Look to her, Bond, if thou hast eyes to see: She has deceived her father, & may thee (2015)'. The pairing is certainly a productive one, with adaptations of both figures characterised by their relationship to Britishness (culturally and commercially). Whether because of this, or potentially because of the frequent and reciprocal exchanges between the action film genre and Shakespearean performance (whether in terms of cast or tone more generally), #BardBOND exemplifies the same productive 'whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, […] recycling, transformation and mutation', identified by Robert Stam in contemporary film adaptation (2000, 66). Contributions to #BardBOND certainly work to reveal the potential visibility of the adaptive process. Julie Bausman (@JuiyCakes), for instance, posts a still from *Skyfall* in which Bond and Q (Ben Whishaw) inspect a new gadget. It is accompanied by the line from *Coriolanus*: 'You are never without your tricks: you may, you may' (2015). Delivered in the

play by the Second Citizen its recontextualisation here refers to Q's technical expertise. Its adapted context does, nonetheless, retain some of the antipathy of the original statement for a scene in which a surly Bond informs his youthful advisor, 'youth is no guarantee of innovation'. And as Graham Holderness (Holderness 2014, 90–91; Blackwell 2014, 344–52) and myself have noted, *Coriolanus is* a productive intertext to the contemporary action film. The argument Holderness makes—comparing the play to *Skyfall* and other action films in its representation of military masculinity—is even echoed by the HCF. Kirsten (@Kirsten_STR) pairs Coriolanus' admission 'Look, sir, my wounds! I got them in my country's service' with an image of Bond, bruised by his latest endeavour for MI6 (2015). Paul Booth's (2010, 12, 18) summation of the fan as an individual who does 'more than passively view media' illuminates the irony of this point: 'Fans make explicit what we all do implicitly: That is, we actively read and engage with media texts on a daily basis'. Despite their critique of an academic Shakespeare, the fan community created by the HCF engage in a similar practice of exegetical reading; their insights, however, are expressed in 140 characters.

Shared Digital Spaces

In spite of the potential for ambiguity because of the inevitably curtailed nature of posts, Twitter's immediacy as a social media platform enables one to reply to specific posts or individuals.[10] With the exception of locked profiles (a relatively rare occurrence in which a user closes their profile to public view), one is encouraged to engage with the platform and its model of plentiful and spontaneous information by chasing links or profiles and using hashtags. In contrast to platforms such as Facebook which are instead typically predicted upon the assumption of familiarity, interactions on Twitter can (and frequently are) made with virtual strangers. Tellingly, its 'Who To Follow' function extrapolates information from your browsing history and followers in order to recommend profiles that might match your interests rather than necessarily your social network. For the most part individuals are thereby permitted to engage with profiles that they follow as well as those that they don't and, unlike the conversational threads common in chatrooms, interested parties can be drawn to conversations or posts that they might otherwise not have seen. This is a function also shared on Facebook and Instagram and it can occur either directly (tagging an individual in a retweet or

reply in order to draw their attention) or indirectly (happening across an exchange that someone on your list has engaged with or retweeted). The serendipitous chance of viewing a particular tweet at a particular time by a profile that you have chosen to follow can thus be shared and become a collaborative experience of reading and engagement. The parody account @PopShakespeare, for instance, posted a Shakespearean parody of Meghan Trainor's song, 'All About That Bass' ('For I am solely about thy bass, bout thy bass, no mischief' (2016)). The tweet was replied to by hazzzzz♡ (@harrietbwhite) who, evidently amused by the post, copied in her friends' Twitter handles to ask if it was an appropriate example for their school work (2016). Once alerted, her friends indicated their agreement and general enjoyment of the tweet.

A fuller indication Twitter's potential for collaborative acts of engagement and reading is supplied again by #ShakespeareSunday but in an example that reveals the potential failure of the platform's abstruse format. Cynthia Sykes (@cynsykes) posted a GIF of Marvel's *Avengers* alongside the Countess of Rousillon's counsel to her son from Act One, Scene One of *All's Well That Ends Well*: 'be able for thine enemy rather in power than use, & keep thy friend Under thy own life's key' [*sic*] (2016). The quotation, though sharing some of the dramatic context and aphoristic sentiment of Polonius' famous (and often misquoted) instructions to Laertes in *Hamlet*, demonstrates #ShakespeareSunday's circulation of lesser-known Shakespearean content alongside more famous works. To wit, the very play and the quotation's relative obscurity was questioned by Citizen of Whoville (@Mamabear0772) who, directing her reply in a '*whisper*', asked what it meant. Citizen's confession of incomprehension and later admission of the difficulty of reading Shakespeare as a dyslexic was met with not only a suggested reading of the line by Sykes but also her recommendation of Open Source Shakespeare, referrals to Cliffs Notes from DirtyGirlLucille (@TWDTwerp) and the No Fear Shakespeare series from Adam's_Vamp (@adamsvamp). Meanwhile, a further admission from Citizen in the same conversational thread that she had only understood *Coriolanus* 'when someone made it a weekly cartoon here' was met with Sykes questioning, 'even after watching that BRILLIANT production?' and posting a meme of Tom Hiddleston as Loki (2016). This reference to Hiddleston articulates the nature of Shakespearean celebrity for this group of Fans as that which is culturally non-specific and essentially interlinked. Hiddleston is Loki just as much as he is Coriolanus and the evocation of one aspect of

his acting career does not preclude the possibility of the other; indeed, his stardom provides invaluable entry points into the text.

Such co-operative readings of Shakespeare are not limited to platforms like Twitter or communal events like the Hollow Crown Fans' #ShakespeareSunday. Posting on the Shakespeare subreddit (/r/shakespeare), for instance, Steppinthrax asks, 'Is Hamlet scared of going to Hell for killing Claudius? And if revenge murders send you to Hell, why does the moral code that requires revenge murders exist in the first place?' (2017). This particular Reddit thread contains nine original responses, all of whom provide thoughtful answers to Steppinthrax's question. TomBombomb and centaur questions question the significance of the shift in thinking about purgatorial spirits during the Reformation, with the latter Redditor concluding, that although Shakespeare's audience was 'officially Protestant, […] there was a strong institutional memory for Catholicism'. A coherent discussion of Hamlet's remorse (or potential lack thereof) at the murder of Polonius also ensues, with dmorin posting an excerpt of the dialogue from Act 3 Scene 2 of Laurence Olivier's film adaptation of the play ('Do you see yond cloud…').

dmorin is a useful example of the varied textual offerings of Shakespeare fans online. He is not just an active contributor to this subreddit but one of the four moderators of /r/shakespeare. His relative authority over the rest of the group is inferred by the systems that regulate subreddit communities and which encourage goodwill among users. His Shakespeare fandom is displayed elsewhere online at the Wordpress blog, *Shakespeare Geek, The Original Shakespeare Blog* (subtitled: Shakespeare Makes Life Better). In the 'About' page that explains the conception of the blog and its life over the last twelve years, dmorin identifies himself as Duane, a software engineer and 'a big Shakespeare fan'. Musing on the apparently surprising pairing of a career in technology with an interest in the early modern, Duane notes, 'Weird combination, huh? At least it gave me the cool name. A geek who likes Shakespeare. A Shakespeare Geek. Or am I a geek *about* Shakespeare? I was never quite sure which I liked better'. Though Duane seems unable, or perhaps unwilling, to determine which aspect of his identity is more foundational—his geekiness or his Shakespeareanism—his tautological phrasing is apt. As Duane continues to explain, to pursue his 'geeky' ambitions in technology, he had to first study humanities subjects for two years and he 'latched on to Shakespeare' after a failed

software project on Shakespeare trivia. But the Shakespeare Geek's fan interests were not being met. While there were 'plenty of places where I could find the works of Shakespeare and various translations', Duane lamented that there were no sites online where 'somebody with a love of the subject could post things like, "Hey did anybody notice that the new PS3 commercial does a voiceover from Henry V's "band of brothers" speech?" [sic]' Much as the Hollow Crown Fans articulate a binary between their nonacademic endeavours and the elitist practices traditionally associated with the consumption of Shakespeare, Duane draws a distinction between traditional textual incarnations of Shakespeare's work and the multimedia versions he was encountering in everyday life. He argues that Shakespeare has limited appeal outside of 'the big ivory towers', scoffing 'Try bringing up Iago over beers after work. Nobody wants to talk about it'. Duane assets confidently, however, 'We do. Bring it'. *Shakespeare Geek* thus charts some of the intersections between Shakespeare and popular culture, including reviews of young adult book adaptations and games and advertisements of forthcoming films and television programmes.

The work of individual fans such as Duane and wider fan communities assist in ways both discursive and interpretive to remove Shakespeare from 'the wild', as it were, and to absorb him (back) into popular culture. A key facilitator of this process is, of course, figures like Hiddleston whose careers straddle the Shakespearean and the popular and thus argue for Shakespeare's potential place in mainstream culture. Hiddleston's popularity among fan communities like the Hollow Crown Fans is indeed no accident and tellingly he has appeared on two of the thirteen front covers of *Shakespeare* magazine (only Cumberbatch and Shakespeare himself have bested Hiddleston with three covers each). And while for every/r/shakespeare there is a less successful/r/fuckingshakespeare, the effort is nonetheless valuable for what it represents: a refutation of the notion that Shakespeare can only be consumed at appropriate times (in educational establishments or theatres) or by appropriate people (the educated middle classes). Or, importantly, that there is only one correct way to decipher Shakespeare—pass/fail. When Steppinthrax addresses the Shakespeare subreddit with a particular interpretive query, their question is met not with definitive solutions but with a variety of potential answers that introduce what centaurquestions tellingly calls 'wrinkle[s]'.

The response of one LiveJournal user, Sophia_Sol, on watching the livestream of the Donmar Warehouse's *Coriolanus* also demonstrates the productiveness of fan practices as a way of addressing the attendant difficulties of Shakespearean interpretation. Sophia recounts that their initial attraction to the production was as a fan of Hadley Fraser's (the Aufidius to Tom Hiddleston's Caius Martius).[11] But while Fraser was their primary identification point, Aufidius's seemingly opaque motivations was the cause of Sophia's dislocation from the play, with the user expressing their difficulty in parsing his character and their frustration that they didn't have 'any previous knowledge' to 'hang' their understanding on. Sophia continues in the blog post to propose some readings of Aufidius's and Coriolanus' relationship but ultimately admits, 'idk [I don't know], maybe I'm reading things wrong'. Unlike Steppinthrax or the visitors to Shakespeare Geek who turn to the rest of the online Shakespeare community, however, Sophia proposes a slightly more creative way of resolving their lack of interpretive knowledge:

> [M]aybe I should just go read through the Aufidius/Martius tag on ao3 [*Archive of Our Own*]. Gay fanfiction always has the best Shakespeare meta, right? Right (2014)

With their reference to the 'Aufidius/Martius' tag including an imbedded link to the appropriate location in the independent fan fiction repository, *Archive of Our Own*, Sophia not only resolves to gain more insight into the relationship between the two characters by reading fan fiction of them, but to facilitate the same process for other readers and potential *Coriolanus* audience members. This statement is also not without logic. Of the thirty-nine pieces of fan fiction organised under the pairing Sophia linked to, thirty-five were written after the Donmar Warehouse production was first broadcast live. It thus does not strain credulity to imagine that these thirty-five pieces of fiction are written with Hiddleston and Fraser's performances in mind; an assumption further bolstered by the fact that of the seventy pieces of fan fiction listed under the category 'Caius Martius (Coriolanus)', only three were written before December 2012. Indeed, of those seventy, a further fourteen were also categorised under the fandom 'British Actor RPF [Real Person fiction]' and contained identifying tags relating to Hiddleston. Sophia determines, therefore, to take these pieces of fan fiction as meta; that is, to read their characterisation as an analytical tool to forge

an interpretive pathway into first, *Coriolanus* the play and then the Donmar's production.[12]

Sophia's decision illustrates the nature of Shakespearean celebrity in the digital moment. Hiddleston's and Fraser's performances are the first and most conventional entry point into the play for the user: she attempts first to understand Martius and Aufidius' relationship through the two stars who play them. When her reading of the performance fails to explicate the dynamic between the two characters, though, Sophia turns to fandom. And it is fandom, rather than the conventional, institutionally approved origins of Hiddleston's Shakespearean celebrity, which answers. Just as there always has been, there are inevitable limits to a star's control over their performer identity and equally reliable are the efforts of fans to fill in or imagine those gaps. But thanks to the proliferation of digital technology and the development of Internet culture, what has changed in the dynamic between star and fan is the scale on which the latter can occur. This chapter has been an effort to chart the variety of ways in which fans construct Shakespearean meaning and, more specifically, Tom Hiddleston's Shakespearean celebrity. It has explored a textually rich world in which Shakespeare is subject to remediation to an extent hitherto seen and in which Hiddleston's ability to actively perform and determine his Shakespeareanism is subject to the agency of the digital fan to interpret, create and adapt.

Notes

1. For more detail on *Thor*'s Shakespearean intertexts and Branagh's own Shakespearean identity, see Blackwell (2013).
2. Loki's instruction to the public to kneel is met with an elderly German man getting to his feet and retorting, 'Not to men like you'. When answered by Loki's boast, 'There are no men like me', the man states: 'There are *always* men like you'.
3. Created in December 2012, the Initiative uses Hawkeye and other male comic characters to illustrate how 'deformed, hyper-sexualized and impossibly contorted women are commonly illustrated in comics, books and video games' (n.d.).
4. This macro was first inspired by the Tumblr user, templeofloki, who posted two GIFs of Hiddleston looking intently with the commentary: 'What is with the look on his face he's like "Somewhere in the world, somebody is misquoting Shakespeare. I can sense it"'. Although templeofloki's account is no longer active, The Daily Laugh's 2014 repost of

the original entry is still available. In an indication of the meme's popularity, The Daily Laugh's post has been engaged with by 142,527 other Tumblr users to date (whether liked or reblogged) and it has inspired not only the meme described above, but at least two other variations with the same wording.

5. The/r/Shakespeare subreddit is the most prominent community dedicated to the playwright on Reddit, having existed for 7 years with 6366 subscribers listed at the time of writing.

6. Despite being first released in 2006, Instagram only introduced an archive feature to its apps in June 2017. Other platforms such as Twitter do offer archiving functions; however, this is a downloadable extra-feature rather than part of their standard user interface.

7. The general brevity of 'Imagine' stories even on Wattpad is no doubt in large part because of the dominant way in which the platform is consumed: 85% of its traffic and usage comes from mobile users (Ingram 2014).

8. In the week of September 21–28, for instance, #ShakespeareSunday was referenced in 2219 posts, with 9885 in the month before (according to figures from www.topsy.com). Arguably the platform best suited to the HCF's circulated format of images and text, Twitter ascribes the HCF 78,9000 tweets and 12,600 followers as of October 2015. By contrast, Shakespeare's Globe has 129,000 followers but produced only 29,200 tweets since joining the platform in 2008.

9. Similarly facile was @UKShakespeare's response to a news story in which it was reported that Canadian officials were increasing the amount of native writers on the school curriculum. This item was contorted by @UKShakespeare into the rumoured removal of Shakespeare from the syllabus and the account tweeted glibly: 'Canada's education officials are banning Shakespeare in schools. So we're sending them a book by another British writer they may prefer' (2017). Shakespeare Magazine included in their tweet an image of the book, *Peppa's First 100 Words*, a 'fun lift-the-flap book' based on the popular preschool animation series about the titular Peppa, a pig, her friends and family.

10. In 2018 Twitter introduced 280 character limits.

11. Please note that Sophia identifies as gender queer and specifies the preferred pronouns 'they/them'.

12. A term used particularly in reference to LiveJournal, meta is a style of critical writing within fandom which is preoccupied by the 'meaning and historical, theoretical and conceptual issues of fandom' (Derecho 2006, 61).

References

Admin. 2015a. EXCLUSIVE to Hollow Crown Fans …. *Hollow Crown Fans.* http://www.hollowcrownfans.com/the-hollow-crown/exclusive-to-hollow-crown-fans-the-hollow-crown-succession.

Admin. 2015b. Shorty Campaign 2015. *Hollow Crown Fans.* http://www.hollowcrownfans.com/fans/shorty-campaign/.

Arcanda Supreme. 2014. L'influenza di Shakespeare su George Martin e le Cronache del Ghiaccio e del Fuoco. Blog, March 10. https://voxcalantisindeserto.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/linfluenza-di-shakespeare-su-george.html.

Babington, Bruce (ed.). 2001. Introduction: British Stars and Stardom. In *British Stars and Stardom: From Alma Taylor to Sean Connery.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Barnes, Henry. 2015. Tom Hiddleston: It's Impossible to Go Through Life Without Experiencing Its Random Cruelty. *Guardian*, October 8. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/oct/08/tom-hiddleston-interview-crimson-peak.

Beaumont-Thomas, Ben. 2013. Tom Hiddleston's Thor PR Antics Are a Lesson in Mischief as Marketing. *The Guardian*, November 20. http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/nov/20/thor-tom-hiddleston-publicity-social-media.

Blackwell, Anna. 2014. Adapting *Coriolanus:* Tom Hiddleston's Body and Action Cinema. *Adaptation* 7 (3): 344–352.

———. 2013. "Yes, I Have Gained my Experience" (*As You Like It*, 4.3.23): Kenneth Branagh and Adapting the "Shakespearean" Actor. *Critical Survey* 25 (3): 29–42.

Booth, Paul. 2010. *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Derecho, Abigail. 2006. Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History and Several Theories of Fan Fiction. In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, ed. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 61–78. Jefferson and London: McFarland.

Duane. n.d. About Us. *Shakespeare Geek.* http://www.shakespearegeek.com/about-us. Accessed 5 Oct 2017.

Fiske, John. 1992. The Cultural Economy of Fandom. In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis, 30–49. London: Routledge.

Fucking Shakespeare. n.d. Reddit. https://www.reddit.com/r/fuckingshakespeare/. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Gaffney, John, and Diana Holmes (eds.). 2007. Introduction. In *Stardom in Postwar France*, 7–25. New York: Berghahn Books.

Goodings, Lewis, and Ian Tucker. 2014. Social Media and the Co-production of Bodies Online: Bergson, Serres and Facebook's Timeline. *Media, Culture, Society* 36 (1): 36–52.

Hello Darling. 2013. Watch This Video if You Dont Get It. Tumblr, May 25. http://hellodarlinghiddles.tumblr.com/post/51299904158/watch-this-video-if-you-dont-get-it.

Hodgdon, Barbara. 1998. *The Shakespeare Trade*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Holderness, Graham. 2014. *Tales from Shakespeare: Creative Collisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

I Fucking Hate Tom Hiddleston. 2015. Have a Look Insight My Mind When I Look at Tom. Tumblr. http://ifuckinghatetomhiddleston.tumblr.com/post/75716260126/have-a-look-inside-my-mind-when-i-look-at-tom. Accessed 15 July 2016.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. 2013. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Jones, Katherine W. 2001. *Accent on Privilege: English Identities and Anglophilia in the U.S.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Kember, Sarah, and Joanna Zylinska. 2012. *Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Lanier, Douglas. 2007. Shakespeare™: Myth and Biographical Fiction. In *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, ed. Robert Shaughnessy, 93–114. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lawler, Kelly. 2016. Your Fave Is Problematic: Why Taylor Swift and Tom Hiddleston's Romance Angers, Confuses His Fans. *USA Today*, July 5. https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/entertainthis/2016/07/05/tom-hiddleston-taylor-swift-why-hiddleswift-angers-fans-hiddleston-ers/86724770/.

Meme Generator. n.d. I meme therefore…. https://memegenerator.net/instance/65680797/william-shakespeare-i-meme-therefore-i-meme.

Meme Generator. n.d. Oh you liked Macbeth…. https://memegenerator.net/instance/53544979/william-shakespeare-oh-you-liked-macbeth-i-was-free-styling.

Mulvey, Laura. 1999. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 833–844. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nerd HQ. 2013. Conversation with Tom Hiddleston—Nerd HQ. YouTube, July 21. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLX-tdqEjUg.

No Author. 2014. Jaguar Continues British Villains Storyline. *PR Newswire*, April 2. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/jaguar-continues-british-villains-storyline-with-new-film-starring-tom-hiddleston-and-the-f-type-coupe-253533651.html.

Pathé NL. 2013. Tom Hiddleston Sings Get Loki. YouTube, October 30. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU-MLOh6YME.

Pearson, Roberta. 2007. Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies and Sherlockians. In *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, 98–109. New York: New York University Press.

Petersen, Anne Helen. 2018. How Taylor Kitsch Is Fixing His Broken Movie Star Image. *Buzzfeed*, February 27. https://www.buzzfeed.com/annehelen-petersen/taylor-kitsch-is-the-most-charming-man-on-instagram?utm_term=.oxJjw941Dj#.mq4BoWrNRB.

Raphael, Amy. 2011. Tom Hiddleston: From Theatre to Thor. *The Guardian*, April 24. http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/apr/24/tom-hiddleston-thor.

Reid, Pat. 2014. Game of Crowns. *Shakespeare*, April 23. https://issuu.com/shakespearemagazine/docs/shakespeare_magazine_01/10.

———. n.d. About *Shakespeare* Magazine. *Shakespeare*. http://www.shakespeare-magazine.com/about/. Accessed 26 Apr 2017.

Rose, Rebecca. 2014. Tom Hiddleston Recites Shakespeare for You in Latest Jaguar Ad. *Jezebel*, April 7. http://jezebel.com/tom-hiddleston-recites-shakespeare-for-you-in-latest-ja-1559768182.

Schilling, Dave. 2016. Tom Hiddleston and Taylor Swift Pictures: As Close as We'll Get to Two Memes Dating. *The Guardian*, June 16. https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/jun/15/taylor-swift-tom-hiddleston-dating-rumors-photos-beach.

Shakespeare, William. 1997a. *Macbeth (The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series)*, ed. Kenneth Muir. London: Bloomsbury.

Sophia (Sophia_sol). 2014. No title. A Fan's Playground. Livejournal, February 10. http://sophia-sol.livejournal.com/206385.html.

Stam, Robert. 2000. Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation. In *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore, 54–76. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Steppinthrax. 2017. Getting Confused About Religion/Morality in Hamlet. r/shakespeare. Reddit thread. https://www.reddit.com/r/shakespeare/comments/6621m3/getting_confused_about_religionmorality_in_hamlet/.

Teen Wolf Meta. n.d. What Is Meta? Tumblr. http://teenwolfmeta.tumblr.com/meta. Accessed 25 Apr 2017.

The Daily Laughs. 2014. What is with the look…. Tumblr. March 24. http://thedailylaughs.tumblr.com/post/77767195278/templeofloki-what-is-with-the-look-on-his-face.

The Hawkeye Iniative. n.d. About THI and FAQ. Tumblr blog. http://the-hawkeyeinitiative.com/faq. Accessed 11 Nov 2015.

The King Himself. 2013. So I Made a Thing. Tumblr. November 9. http://the-king-himself.tumblr.com/post/66450388581/so-i-made-a-thing.

The Shakespeare Standard. 2013. Memento Merry I Really Random Shakespeare I Shakespeare Memes for the Week of August 16, 2013, August 16. http://theshakespearestandard.com/memento-merry-really-random-shakespeare-shakespeare-memes-for-the-week-of-august-16-2013/.

TimesTalks Madrid. 2013. Tom Hiddleston. YouTube, August 6. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lD-E-ddTp8E.

van Dijck, José. 2013. "You Have One Identity": Performing the Self on Facebook and LinkedIn. *Media, Culture, Society* 35: 199–217.

What's Trending. 2013. Tom Hiddleston Teaches Cookie Monster Self Control I What's Trending Now. YouTube, September 5. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3mJDpQomn0.

Worthen, W.B. 2008. Performing Shakespeare in Digital Culture. In *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, ed. Robert Shaughnessy, 227–247. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

YlvaJo. 2012. Loki—Seven Devils. YouTube, August 26. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrvGbRpvTQY.

Yost, Michelle K. 2018. Stratford-Upon-Web: Shakespeare in Twenty-First Century Fanfiction. In *Shakespeare and Millennial Fiction*, ed. Andrew James Hartley, 193–212. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Twitter Accounts

Bausman, Julie (@JuiyCakes).

Citizen of Whoville (@Mamabear0772).

hazzzzz♡ (@harrietbwhite).

Hiddleston, Tom (@TWHiddleston).

Hollow Crown Fans (@HollowCrownFans).

Kirsten (@Kirsten_STR).

Pasupathi, Vimala C. (@Exhaust_Fumes).

Shakespeare [magazine] (@UKShakespeare).

Sinclaire, C.S. (@CSessee).

Sykes, Cynthia (@cynsykes).

WeNNceslas, Emily (@battielove).