

Transformative Works and Cultures, special issue: Materiality and object-oriented fandom, No. 16 (June 15, 2014)

Editorial

Bob Rehak, [Materiality and object-oriented fandom](#)

Theory

Matt Hills, [From Dalek half balls to Daft Punk helmets: Mimetic fandom and the crafting of replicas](#)

Lincoln Geraghty, [It's not all about the music: Online fan communities and collecting Hard Rock Café pins](#)

Dorus Hoebink, Stijn Reijnders, & Abby Waysdorf, [Exhibiting fandom: A museological perspective](#)

Ian M. Peters, [Peril-sensitive sunglasses, superheroes in miniature, and pink polka-dot boxers: Artifact and collectible video game feelies, play, and the paratextual gaming experience](#)

Praxis

Benjamin Woo, [A pragmatics of things: Materiality and constraint in fan practices](#)

Matt Yockey, [The invisible teenager: Comic book materiality and the amateur films of Don Glut](#)

Luke Sharp, [The heterogeneity of maid cafés: Exploring object-oriented fandom in Japan](#)

Matthew Ogonoski, [Cosplaying the media mix: Examining Japan's media environment, its static forms, and its influence on cosplay](#)

Symposium

Forrest Phillips, [The butcher, the baker, the lightsaber maker](#)

Bethan Jones, [Written on the body: Experiencing affect and identity in my fannish tattoos](#)
wordplay, [Fitting Glee in your mailbox](#)

Interview

Matt Yockey, [Interview with Mark Racop](#)

Dana Sterling Bode, [Beyond souvenirs: Making fannish items by hand](#)

Francesca Coppa, [Interview with Kandy Fong](#)

Review

Michael S. Duffy, [Cult collectors: Nostalgia, fandom and collecting popular culture](#), by Lincoln Geraghty

Brandise Monk-Payton, [Anime's media mix: Franchising toys and characters in Japan](#), by Marc Steinberg

Sun-ha Hong, [Send in the clones: A cultural study of the tribute band](#), by Georgina Gregory

Editorial

Materiality and object-oriented fandom

Bob Rehak

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Editorial overview of TWC No. 16, special issue, "Materiality and Object-Oriented Fandom."

[0.2] *Keywords*—Analog; Commodity; Craft; Gender; Manufacture; Toy; Transmedia

Rehak, Bob. 2014. "Materiality and Object-Oriented Fandom" [editorial]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0622>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Approaching fandom through an explicitly materialist lens may at first seem redundant: haven't fans always been defined, for better or worse, through their relationships to objects? Consider the notorious 1986 *Saturday Night Live* sketch in which William Shatner mocks his audience at a Star Trek convention, exhorting them to "Get a life." Framed in Henry Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* (1992) as a condensation of the worst stereotypes of media fans—excessively devoted, commercially overinvested, and trivia obsessed—the sketch is equally significant for the way its mise-en-scène inventories a set of (apparently authentic) Trek-themed materials: posters and blueprints adorning the walls, action figures, coffee mugs, garbage cans displayed on a vendor's table, buttons, uniforms—even prosthetics (think Jon Lovitz's Spock ears) worn by conventiongoers. In doing so, SNL's production design simultaneously demonstrates a comical perspective on and insider's knowledge of science fiction fandom, reminding us not only that franchise and fandom alike exist in concrete practices and artifacts but also that this very "thinginess" straddles sincere embrace and parodic commentary, or in current parlance fandom's affirmational and transformational extremes.

[1.2] Fast-forward some 40 years to find the San Diego Comic-Con operating in much the same way, if on a massively amplified scale, to spread the signifiers of fandom in media coverage that similarly walks a line between tongue-in-cheek exoticization and earnest celebration: cosplayers strike poses amid merchandise-

packed halls while artists, actors, and directors hold panel discussions before standing-room-only crowds. The symbiotic interdependence of studios and audiences crystallizes in costumes and collectibles, shrines and pilgrimages, whose choreography is far more complex than any reductive notion of culture industries and their willing dupes/resistant reworkers can fully capture. Studying the physical habitus of contemporary fandom means moving beyond such binaries—along with those separating the "software" of media content from the "hardware" of their physical incarnations, or indeed the animate from the inanimate: close encounters with celebrity "objects" like Joss Whedon or William Shatner, indexed in an autograph or snapped in a selfie, become yet another kind of artifact, fandom's manifestations spawning and respawning in an endless chain of items.

[1.3] Although these opening examples focus on the visually outré genres of science fiction, horror, and fantasy—and the media of animation, video games, and special-effects cinema that give them their most detailed expression—materialities of fandom encompass a much larger field of cultural forms and hierarchies of taste and legitimacy: sports memorabilia, music collectibles, and theatrical props all constitute meaningful bridges between the abstract semiotics of the screen and the lived, tactile experience of audiences. What these objects offer us as scholars is a window into specific configurations of place, purpose, and performance—contexts of usage that invite investigation through an inherently interdisciplinary array that may begin with the obvious Marxist critique of the commodity form, but branches rewardingly into anthropology, ethnography, psychology, transmedia studies, and more.

[1.4] This issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* appears at a moment when the "things" of fandom are more prominent than ever, offering a window into our present while revisiting the past with a freshly object-oriented historicist eye. Exploring these relationships has too often been discouraged within fan studies that privilege textual over tactile engagement. With these factors in mind—the changed role of objects in fandom, new modes of both fan and professional industry, the display and record constituted by the objects of fandom hiding in plain sight—the essays in this issue aim to explore the material practices of fandom through craft, commodity, collection, and curation.

2. Theory and Praxis

[2.1] Matt Hills's "From Dalek Half Balls to Daft Punk Helmets: Mimetic Fandom and the Crafting of Replicas" opens the Theory section with a theoretical challenge to the recent academic tendency to divide forms of fan engagement and fan creations into transformative versus affirmative activities. In its stead, he proposes the term *mimetic fandom*. He uses several case studies of crafting replica props to argue that these

examples of "mediated lifeworld" (a term borrowed from Mark Deuze) transcend the text/reality boundaries. Dorus Hoebink, Stijn Reijnders, and Abby Waysdorf's "Exhibiting Fandom: A Museological Perspective" continues this discussion of the complex merging of ideas and materiality in their case study of the EMP Museum in Seattle, Washington. By using museum studies to look at the various physical demands of curating material objects, they present a fannish space that brings together the imaginary world of science fiction with the material manifestations of these ideas.

[2.2] Lincoln Geraghty's "It's Not All About the Music: Online Fan Communities and Collecting Hard Rock Café Pins" also presents a group of fans that challenge easy categorization of their fannish investment as well as the role of their material fan objects. The Hard Rock Café pins at the center of Geraghty's study are a twice removed symbol of the place, and by extension the music played and materialized in the objects displayed. Geraghty's analysis of pin collectors brings thus together a variety of fannish investments that move beyond music and tourism as well as beyond merely virtual or material. Ian M. Peters likewise discusses the material manifestation of what we normally think of as a digital fan arena in "Peril-Sensitive Sunglasses, Superheroes in Miniature, and Pink Polka-Dot Boxers: Artifact and Collectible Video Game Feelies, Play, and the Paratextual Gaming Experience." Through a study of the external material object accompanying video games, he argues, as he notes in his abstract, that "feelies allow scholars to gain further insight into how screen media operate away from the screens themselves."

[2.3] Benjamin Woo continues the focus on the complex meanings with which fans imbue material fan objects in "A Pragmatics of Things: Materiality and Constraint in Fan Practices." Woo, reading these objects' complex and affective meanings for their owners against the real-life material constraints of domestic and personal spaces, argues for the importance of studying and understanding not only the objects and their meanings but also "the affordances and constraints they entail" (¶8.8). Matt Yockey's specific case study of "The Invisible Teenager: Comic Book Materiality and the Amateur Films of Don Glut" offers a detailed account of many of the subcultural teen fans in whom Woo is interested. Don Glut, however, moves from fan and amateur creator to professional, never losing his strong understanding of unstable identity and teen rebellion, which Yockey delicately traces to his own fannish teen affect.

[2.4] Continuing the theme of place that threads through this issue, Luke Sharp looks at Japanese maid cafés in "The Heterogeneity of Maid Cafés: Exploring Object-Oriented Fandom in Japan." Countering a sense that all maid cafés function similarly and serve the same purpose, Sharp details their complex heterogeneous aspects. Matthew Ogonoski discusses cosplay and its specific Japanese origins. "Cosplaying the

Media Mix: Examining Japan's Media Environment, Its Static Forms, and Its Influence on Cosplay" uses a variety of theories to address the relationship between the static image that dominates the source mediums' ontological character and its transformation in embodied cosplay.

3. Symposium, interview, and review

[3.1] Symposium essays and interviews allow a wide range of approaches and topics, and the essays in this issue illustrate the range in both. Forrest Phillips analyzes the merging of commercial and fannish interests through his discussion of lightsaber makers in "The Butcher, the Baker, the Lightsaber Maker." Bethan Jones's "Written on the Body: Experiencing Affect and Identity in My Fannish Tattoos" offers an intimately personal yet highly theoretical discussion of fannish tattoos and the emotional resonance her own fannish body art has for her. Likewise, wordplay presents a deeply personal account of her fannish affect as she traces her journey through Glee fandom in "Fitting *Glee* in Your Mailbox."

[3.2] The interviews present our readers with various fans creating a diversity of fan objects. Matt Yockey offers an in-depth interview with Mark Racop, a lifelong Batman fan whose fascination with the Batmobile led him to found "Fiberglass Freaks, an auto body shop dedicated to making replica Batmobiles" (§1.2). Like wordplay's personal recollection of her negotiation of virtual creations and material object in her fan engagement, Dana Sterling Bode's "Beyond Souvenirs: Making Fannish Items by Hand" collects several interviews with different fans for whom their material fan objects tend to be part of their general fan engagements. Thus, cakes, scarves, paper models, and game sets not only offer yet another medium to engage in fannish creation but also allow fans to merge physical creativity and fannish passion. Francesca Coppa's video interview with the foremother of vidding, Kandy Fong, is part of OTW's oral history project. It offers an important historical overview of vidding through the eyes of one of its early practitioners.

[3.3] The three book reviews that conclude the issue likewise illustrate an increasing interest in the materiality of fan culture. Lincoln Geraghty's *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture*, reviewed by Michael S. Duffy, clearly establishes how collecting and curating fan objects are central fannish modes of engagement that function as emotional and nostalgic symbols of fannish investment. Looking at the specific transmedia marketing, Marc Steinberg's *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*, reviewed by Brandeise Monk-Payton, theorizes anime's specific cultural and artistic role in terms of its central role as a media commodity. Finally, Sun-ha Hong's review of Georgina Gregory's *Send in the*

Clones: A Cultural Study of the Tribute Band revisits the relationship between fandom and nostalgia in its discussion of tribute bands.

4. Acknowledgments

[4.1] It is not possible to properly acknowledge the depth of appreciation we feel toward everyone who has helped make this issue of TWC possible. They have suffered hard deadlines, late nights, and short due dates. As always, we thank the authors in this issue, whose original work makes TWC possible; the peer reviewers, who freely provide their time and expertise; the editorial team members, whose engagement with and solicitation of material is so valuable; the board members, listed in the journal's masthead, for their support; and the production team members, who transform rough manuscripts into publishable documents.

[4.2] The following people worked on TWC No. 16 in an editorial capacity: Bob Rehak (guest editors); Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson (editors); Cameron Salisbury (Symposium); and Louisa Stein (Review).

[4.3] The following people worked on TWC No. 16 in a production capacity: Rrain Prior (production editor); Shoshanna Green, Karen Hellekson, and Christine Mains (copyeditors); Rrain Prior (layout editor); and Carmen Montopoli, Amanda Retartha, and Vickie West (proofreaders).

[4.4] TWC thanks the journal project's Organization for Transformative Works board liaison, Andrea Horbinski. OTW provides financial support and server space to TWC but is not involved in any way in the content of the journal, which is editorially independent.

[4.5] TWC thanks all its board members, whose names appear on TWC's masthead, as well as the additional peer reviewers and Symposium reviewers who provided service for TWC No. 16: Lucy Bennett, Alexandra Edwards, L. A. Fricke, Patrick Galbraith, Lincoln Geraghty, Sara Howe, Nicolle Lamerichs, Drew Morton, Benjamin Woo, and Matt Yockey.

Theory

From Dalek half balls to Daft Punk helmets: Mimetic fandom and the crafting of replicas

Matt Hills

Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, Wales, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—Mimetic fandom is a surprisingly understudied mode of (culturally masculinized) fan activity in which fans research and craft replica props. Mimetic fandom can be considered as (in)authentic and (im)material, combining noncommercial status with grassroots marketing or brand reinforcement as well as fusing an emphasis on material artifacts with Web 2.0 collective intelligence. Simply analyzing mimetic fandom as part of fannish material culture fails to adequately assess the nonmaterial aspects of this collaborative creativity. Two fan cultures are taken as case studies: Dalek building groups and Daft Punk helmet constructors. These diverse cases indicate that mimetic fandom has a presence and significance that moves across media fandoms and is not restricted to the science fiction, fantasy, and horror followings with which it is most often associated. Mimetic fandom may be theorized as an oscillatory activity that confuses binaries and constructions of (academic/fan) authenticity. This fan practice desires and pursues a kind of ontological bridging or unity—from text to reality—that is either absent or less dominant in many other fan activities such as cosplay, screen-used prop collecting, and geographical pilgrimage. Fan studies may benefit from reassessing the place of mimesis, especially in order to theorize fan practices that are less clearly transformative in character.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Affirmational fandom; *Doctor Who*; Material culture; Replica prop building

Hills, Matt. 2014. "From Dalek Half Balls to Daft Punk Helmets: Mimetic Fandom and the Crafting of Replicas." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0531>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Fan practices have often been approached as transformative, but what of fan communities that may not fit so readily or tidily into this bracket? Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst's (1998, 150) taxonomy of fandom actually denies the label of fan to those who engineer physical objects, instead dubbing them enthusiasts who engage in "material production" more than, or rather than, the "textual productivity" characterizing fan fic writers, vidders, and so on (see also Fiske 1992; Pugh 2005; Williamson 2005; Gray 2010; Thomas 2011). Displaying less taxonomic zeal or exclusionary logic, Bob Rehak (2013) refers to the object practices of fans creating garage kits and material artifacts of fandom rather than texts per se. Yet the separation of material and textual production is itself far leakier than Abercrombie and Longhurst allow; Francesca Coppa

(2006, 243) convincingly argues that fan fiction can be conceptualized not as "authoring texts, but making productions—relying on the audience's shared extratextual knowledge of sets and wardrobes, of the actors' bodies and...movements." Although it may be analytically possible to distinguish between textual and material fan productivity, their intersections and connections should nevertheless always be borne in mind.

[1.2] Given Rehak's turn to object practices, I want to consider a related and undertheorized mode of fan activity, one that I'll call mimetic fandom. This mode is focused on the creation of highly screen-accurate prop replicas (see also Hills 2010, 2011). Transformational versus affirmational fandom (obsession_inc 2009) has increasingly become an influential binary in fan studies, with transformative and "female-centered fandom as a site of resistance to the mainstream media" being potentially contrasted with "masculine forms of fan culture" (Jenkins and Scott 2013, xix). However, by introducing and elaborating on the concept of mimetic fandom, I want to emphasize, like Henry Jenkins, "the kinds...of transformation that occur" within types of male-centered fan production that "may operate in relation...to patriarchy" (Jenkins and Scott 2013, xix–xx). At the same time, my interest in mimetic fandom challenges the overt or shorthand gendering of fan practices. Mimetic fandom begins to deconstruct the binary of fan productions that either transform or imitate mainstream media content, just as textual/material productivities can also blur together, thereby complicating scholarly narratives seeking to clearly separate out these tendencies.

[1.3] Despite excellent recent work such as Rehak's, fandom's predominantly material cultures seem to have gone missing in much scholarship, perhaps because they are assumed to be too close to the commodity fetish of merchandise, but also perhaps because these communities tend to be thought of as culturally gendered as masculine or dominated by male fans rather than corresponding to the purportedly feminine cultural spaces of many media fandoms and fan studies, where academic work has typically focused on female-centered media fandoms for a variety of positive reasons (feminist critique among them) (Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins 1992; Jenkins and Scott 2013; Bury 2005). We should remain wary of these assumptions: object productivities of fandom can be both masculinized and feminized. For example, Cherry (2011, 140) has studied the feminine handicrafts of knitters on Ravelry (<https://www.ravelry.com/>), pointing out that "although fandom per se is not necessarily gendered...specific fan interests, activities and communities are often marked out as feminine or masculine." Thus, although the fannish object practices of replica building that I address here might be male-centered, other specific communities and activities of material fan culture most certainly are not.

[1.4] This special themed issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* can no doubt contribute in part to the recovering of mimetic fandom, and we should also remain wary of a priori explanations for the academic invisibility of sites such as the replica prop

forum RPF (<http://www.therpf.com/>), with its "craft your fandom" slogan, or the Dalek Builders' Guild (<http://dalekcity.co.uk/>), with its language of workshops and craftsmanship. Indeed, Thomas Morawetz has observed a similar centrality of craft vocabularies among those working on character makeup and alien/monster prosthetics:

[1.5] Most [artists] affirm that they spent their high school years often alone in garages and at kitchen ovens, sculpting and curing rubber...For the most part, they are self-taught. Or, rather, their preparation combines solitary investigation, trial-and-error experimentation, and apprenticeship. The last of these stages is the most distinctive. The maturation of a modern makeup artist mimics the career of a medieval artisan, who served an apprenticeship in one or another guild, participating increasingly in the work of the master craftsman and refining his art communally. (2001, 36–37)

[1.6] It may simply be that replica prop builders (and related fan practices such as sculpting) are sufficiently small scale—marginal in the cultural field of fandom, if you like—compared to the vast range of textual productivity that takes place elsewhere. However, even if we are dealing with subcommunities here, there can be no doubting the distinctiveness of these fan activities. As the Project Dalek Web site proudly announces, "We are 'hardcore' Dalek builders. We don't 'do' general Doctor Who topics and we don't 'do' Dalek fiction. For us, it's the actual Dalek props that matter" (<http://www.projectdalek.co.uk/mainsite/>). This group focuses on the alien Daleks and their "virtuosically stylized designs," which are taken from the BBC TV series *Doctor Who* (1963–89, 1996, 2005–) (Britton and Barker 2003, 134). Raymond Cusick's 1963 Dalek design "established the benchmark for spectacle in the series" and has been periodically updated, revised, and reworked across the show's cultural life (134). Against Camille Bacon-Smith's argument that fans' material culture, such as cosplay, can represent a "ritual of inclusion" (2000, 57, 60) that binds together diverse factions of a fan community, such as literary/media SF fans, it appears more likely that at least some replica prop building acts as a specialized fan practice rather than a unifying ritual. The assertion from hardcore Dalek builders that they don't do fiction or even general discussion, instead focusing solely on the goal-oriented activity of Dalek construction, implies this potential division of fan labor. At the same time, Morawetz's observation that guilds often involve apprenticeship also raises the issue of community-specific hierarchies: the Dalek Builders' Guild is likely to involve a variety of participants, including both highly skilled builders and novices seeking advice and guidance. In this sense, the crafting of replicas is a specialized fan activity involving its own discrete "status passage...[and] social career" (Crawford 2004, 39), against David Gauntlett's rather utopian view that "the meaning of everyday craft" (2011, 76) has been, or should be, disarticulated from hierarchies of expert evaluation.

[1.7] I want to consider in more detail the provocative binary set out by fan theorist obsession_inc (2009), that of transformational versus affirmational fandoms. The transformational/affirmational binary strikes me as problematic, despite having been picked up by a number of fan studies scholars (Jenkins and Scott 2013; Pearson 2012; Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013). Critiquing this polemical stance, as well as addressing whether material culture approaches downplay certain aspects of replica prop making, will enable me to set out a fuller definition of mimetic fandom, drawing primarily on examples of Dalek building. I will conclude by exploring mimetic fandom in relation to Daft Punk devotees, noting that prop building is not restricted to science fiction, fantasy, or horror fandoms, even if these represent its most lively (sub)cultural arenas. My closing focus on fans' creation of Daft Punk helmets is intended to bring into sharper focus the extent to which mimetic fandom is typically linked to the fannish construction and shaping of an ontological unity between media texts and everyday life. Mass mediated content is here remade as physical matter, tangibly manipulated and brought into a "mediated lifeworld" (Deuze 2012, 185).

2. Oscillatory mimetic fandom: Pursuing authenticity and materiality?

[2.1] Contrasting types of fandom always presents the danger of implicitly or explicitly valorizing specific versions of fan practice while denigrating others. Although fan cultures themselves may wish to make value judgments—indeed, subcultural capital and fan distinction/identity are premised on these—such assessments arguably have a rather more awkward place in scholarship, especially in work indebted to cultural studies approaches and thus seeking to investigate power relationships rather than (knowingly) reproduce them. As such, obsession_inc's (2009) analysis of affirmational fandom defines it strongly against its transformational other. Where affirmational fans restate the source material, the alternative "is all about laying hands upon the source and twisting it to the fans' own purposes." Where affirmational activities supposedly reinforce the official author's power and control over their own works, the alternative is a democracy of taste with intended meanings being made over and retooled. Where affirmational fans are "*sanctioned*," attending cons where they can hang out with creators, on the other side of the fence, "there's a central disagreement there about Who Is In Charge that's very difficult to ignore...These are, most definitely, the *non-sanctioned* fans" (obsession_inc 2009).

[2.2] Sections of fan studies have seemingly assumed that fan works that are not self-evidently transformational are simply of no interest, that they have nothing new or exceptional to tell us, as fans or scholars, because all they do is restate canon. In short, this "all tends to coalesce toward a center concept; it's all about nailing down the details" (obsession_inc 2009), and hence there's no real cultural analysis called for.

Alternatively, it might be suggested that the sanctioned fandom characterized as affirmational is culturally privileged—it is not at all at odds with forms of industrial power—whereas nonsanctioned, transformational fandom is disempowered and marginalized, and thus deserves academic attention and valorization on precisely this basis. The affirmational/transformational binary may well have become influential within cultural studies—indebted fan studies as a result of directing critical attention toward the operation of cultural power and privileging.

[2.3] However, in such scholarly narratives, affirmational fandom reads like a type of degree-zero fandom, one where cultural politics are suspect (reinforcing a cult of auteurist personality rather than opening out onto fan democracy) and whose practices are predictable. Indeed, it is notable that when Rehak studies the object practices of material fan culture, he reenacts "the category of transformative works that would later come to dominate discussions of fan creativity" by not only aligning the "multivalent potential of object practices—material 'mash-ups' in which characters and settings were reconfigured into novel situations" with theories of transformative fan work, but actually suggesting that kit-making and fan sculpting foreshadowed and preceded the likes of slash fiction or vidding (2013, 34). It would seem that fans' material production can be reclaimed as an object of scholarly value by virtue of being disarticulated from the taints of mimesis, affirmation, and replication (Jenkins and Scott 2013, xix—xx). A similar move occurs in work on cosplay, where we're told that there is a

[2.4] continuous dialectic among costume artists about how strictly they should adhere to the specifications of a uniform as it is seen in a *Star Trek* show, and how much of their own tastes can be used in costume making...The general view...is that the more a clothing item looks like one in the shows, the more authentic it is. (Joseph-Witham 1996, 16).

[2.5] Regardless of this fan-cultural drive toward authenticity, equated with normative seen-on-screen imitation and accuracy (Joseph-Witham 1996), there remains space for transformative creativity here. Yet the crafting of material artifacts by fans can take on a further taint connected with mimesis—that of coming too close to the brand and its network of commodities. My own previous discussion of *Blade Runner* (1982) prop makers pondered whether part of this practice's appeal was that the film itself never had substantial merchandising. Fans could thus craft what might be called DIY merchandise to supplement "the relative lack of official" product (Hills 2011, 58). Rehak's study of fan-made garage kits, or grassroots fabrication, similarly reads this as a model-making practice carried out in the 1980s "in answer to a blockbuster landscape whose products... confined themselves to the subject matter of a handful of dominant brands...To fill this need, a new class of fantastic-media object emerged: the garage kit...which marked the passing of the means of production from professionals back to fans" (2013, 40).

[2.6] Just as these material fan cultures seem to oscillate in and out of affirmation, emphasizing mimetic imitation yet simultaneously permitting elements of transformation when examined close up (Rehak 2013), so too does their type of manufacture carry an oscillatory relationship to authenticity. From the perspective of a simplistic but deeply ingrained "binary link between commercial and inauthentic, and noncommercial and authentic" (Banet-Weiser 2012, 11), fan-made props are readable as authentic precisely because they are not official, mass-produced commodities. Instead, these items are either one-offs, or they follow patterns/templates yet display greater variation than would be tolerated from a standardized commercial product (Joseph-Witham 1996, 16). However, by so intricately and precisely seeking to "nail the details," as in obsession_inc's (2009) formulation, such prop building intimately resonates with the branded story world that it prompts or points to by way of coordinated imagining (Lancaster 2001; Rehak 2013). Marc Steinberg has argued, drawing on the work of sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato, that "contemporary capitalism is characterized not so much by the creation of products but by the creation of worlds...Lazzarato contends that the contemporary enterprise 'creates not the object (the merchandise) but the world where the object exists.'...Capitalist valorization thus depends on the development of worlds" (2012, 183).

[2.7] Despite resisting commercial and inauthentic production, then, fan prop building is simultaneously premised on an attempt to create "the object," which has meaning in relation to an "overdesigned" and hence copyrightable, reproducible, and recognizable franchise (Johnson 2013, 119). The means of production might shift from professionals to fans, but both production cultures appear to be engaged in the same process, regardless of whether one profits and one does not: "We can say that capitalism [today] is not a mode of production but a production of modes, a production of worlds (*une production de mo(n)des*)" (Lazzarato in Steinberg 2012, 183).

[2.8] The fan who creates and cherishes a Dalek casing or a TARDIS police box demonstrates how, within "contemporary brand culture the separation between the authentic self and the commodity self not only is more blurred, but this blurring is more *expected and tolerated*" (Banet-Weiser 2012, 13). Consequently, fans who build their own props can become part of a grassroots promotion for a brand, whereas in the past they would perhaps have been more immediately stigmatized for blurring the line between fantasy and reality (Hills 2002). Replica prop builders' desire for screen-used accuracy also makes them a likely target market for niche sellers: the London Prop Store (<http://www.propstore.com/>) sponsors part of the Replica Prop Forum, for example (<http://www.therpf.com/screen-used-movie-props-wardrobe/>). As Melissa De Zwart has pointed out, cosplayers "serve as a kind of marketing device for the items they present" (2013, 173; see also De Kosnick 2013), and the same can certainly be said for amateur prop builders. This is especially so where their creations are linked to popular flagship brands such as *Doctor Who* and are spectacularly photogenic, as in the case of Alan

Clark's Dalek Storm, whose Web page records various media appearances (<http://www.projectdalek.co.uk/storm/>). The Dalek builder himself has also featured in local press coverage:

[2.9] "When the new series started I was very disappointed in the Red Supreme Dalek they decided use in the last episodes...It...was a bit of a let down to be honest." After discovering a sketch on the internet of the never before seen Dalek Storm that was designed in the 1980s by BBC artist Rocky Marshall, Mr Clark set about building his very own model...Mr Clark said: "...I'm hoping that the BBC will take notice and maybe use it in the new series." (<http://www.wakefieldexpress.co.uk/news/local/more-wakefield-news/doctor-who-fan-s-dalek-goes-down-a-storm-in-stanley-1-970553>)

[2.10] This story implies that the fan builder can do better than *Doctor Who's* professional producers; it offers a critique of televised *Doctor Who*, but only in pursuit of a commonsensically incongruous story hook. In place of "man bites dog," the piece offers a kind of "fan beats pro" narrative, with Clark nonetheless represented as desiring the validation, the authentication, of the media center and its symbolic legitimacy (Couldry 2003).

[2.11] If SF/fantasy and horror specialize in the generation of what Umberto Eco has referred to as "completely furnished worlds" that fans can learn about and memorize (1995, 198), then this furniture can itself be built in the "Primary World" (Wolf 2012, 135), like Alan Clark's Daleks in his back garden. However, these objects necessarily remain divided, split between physical instantiation and an immaterial story world that is affectively or mnemonically carried for the fan. As Steinberg notes,

[2.12] On one hand, the world is consumed through...material instances of the character—character goods or commodities, whether they appear through episodes of a TV series or as merchandise, like a toy...On the other hand, it is the immaterial entity of the character as an abstract, circulating element that maintains the consistency of the various worlds or narratives and holds them together. (2012, 188)

[2.13] Although the material, crafted object might proffer "haptic-panoptic control over images (and perhaps feelings) that formerly sped past...during...viewing" (Lancaster 2001, 102), viewing this physicality in isolation—as a matter of being able to "participate in that [narrative] universe through the sense of touch" (Lancaster 2001, 103)—reduces relations of (im)materiality to mere presence. Rather than rushing to contrast material object practices to digital fandom (Booth 2010), or "physical" to "imaginative" fantasies (Lancaster 1999, 17), it is important to note that the fan-made replica is both immaterial and material, both authentic and inauthentic: it is a physical product that nonetheless relies on an absent or noncoincident media text for its meaning, and it is

necessarily fan built rather than genuinely hailing from the terrain of official media production. As Elizabeth Wilson remarks, fans occupy an "inter-space between the material and the spiritual: they depend upon concrete aesthetic objects and experiences, but these are given an intense...meaning" (2013, 198). Fans share and collate information online in support of "grassroots fabrication," studying screen grabs and utilizing Web 2.0 platforms to facilitate the manufacture of artifacts (De Zwart 2013, 175). Just as fans may debate textual meanings and perform narrative mastery via "collective intelligence" (Jenkins 2006, 26), so too can the object practices of replica crafting hinge not only on individual skills but also on shared knowledge (Kozinets 2007; Mittell 2013). Guild Dalek plans are available to people once they have "applied and been accepted for membership of the Guild" (<http://dalekcity.co.uk/>), for example, while the Dalek Project likewise makes a "Dalek Builder's Workshop Manual" available to those who join its forum (<http://www.projectdalek.co.uk/mainsite/index.php/workshop-manual>). Different build projects can involve specific skills; for example, constructing a budget voice modulator (to create a Dalek-sounding voice) might mean learning how to etch a printed circuit board layout, whereas building a Dalek casing can involve emulating construction methods used in the original prop manufacture as much as possible—casting the dome section in fiberglass, or using MDF (medium-density fiberboard) and woodworking skills for the Dalek's skirt.

[2.14] Banet-Weiser (2012, 9) argues that brands create a "structure of feeling, an ethos of intangible qualities," again stressing the immaterial aspect that pervades our relationships with material products, merchandise, and the brand resonances of prop building. In an exploration of related terrain, Condry (2013) adopts a rather controversial term through which to approach the matter, noting that in spite of "problematic connotations" (205), he wants to deploy "'soul'...to focus on *that which is most meaningful...what matters to people*, a kind of shorthand for deep meaning" (30). For Condry, *soul* refers to "a kind of energy that arises...out of collective action [and] the power of ideas manifested in material production" (30). In this argument, production is not at all restricted to media professionals but instead involves a "collaborative creativity [that] aims to bring into focus the multiplicity of modes of production...who is collaborating with whom?...Whose creativity is valued; whose is recognized and within which spheres?" (206). In terms of Dalek building, the officially licensed book *Doctor Who 50 Years: The Daleks* recognizes *Doctor Who* fans as collectors of screen-used props such as the Genesis Ark, bought for £5,100 at a 2006 Children in Need auction (Hearn 2013), and it recognizes the company This Planet Earth (<http://www.thisplanetearth.co.uk/>), granted a license to make and sell Dalek replicas:

[2.15] Many of the replicas are created using moulds taken from the original props seen on television. [Says This Planet Earth's Ian Clarke:] "We've had two original Daleks from the '60s that we took moulds from. We were able to

borrow an original bronze new series Dalek for a week or two...and moulded from it, so it's exactly as it was seen on screen." (Wright 2013, 109)

[2.16] Yet within this sphere—that of a licensed product from the makers of *Doctor Who Magazine*—only other licensed products are recognized within the stable of brand objects and promotions. Fans collect, or they make once-in-a-lifetime purchases of life-size Dalek commodities (Wright 2013). However, according to these accounts, they don't build. Communities like the Dalek Guild and the Dalek Project are excluded from reportage, and fannish modes of production (as well as production of worlds) are therefore silenced here.

[2.17] Mimetic fandom can thus be defined as a matter of oscillatory distinctions that vary at different levels of analysis and appreciation. It appears to be affirmational from a distance, but transformational details are evident when viewed closely. It seems authentic by virtue of noncommerciality, but it indicates inauthentic brand extending and so-called grassroots marketing when considered from a commercial perspective. It centers on material culture and haptic presence but indicates the value of a framing immateriality, namely the cult world that "can never be apprehended in toto but only approached through...continuous, participatory consumption" (Steinberg 2012, 200; see also Jones 2000). More than simply a part of fans' material culture, mimetic fandom thus occupies an interspace between materiality and what might be termed *soul*, building and branding, imitation and individuation. In addition to pervasively in-between positions, however, mimetic fandom also performs a desired bridging of text and reality. It is this element of mimetic fan practice that I turn to next.

3. Intermediary mimetic fandom: Pursuing ontological unity across media and popular music fan cultures

[3.1] Although collaborative creativity could be taken to characterize fan fiction and vidding as much as replica crafting, its notion of soul nonetheless provides a significant corrective to assumptions of the physical versus the textual, or material culture somehow set against a world of readings and meanings. As Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf point out, "The concept of mimesis has repeatedly provided the ground in which disputes could be carried on about questions of the relation of a symbolically generated world to a second world that has been claimed to be the fundamental, exemplary, significant, or real world" (1995, 309).

[3.2] By desiring to move across these lines—thereby supposedly rendering the textual as material—mimetic fandom is, like all mimesis, "intermediary" (Gebauer and Wulf 1995, 317). However, by positioning mimetic fandom as concerned with reproduction, and by nailing down the original (Dalek plans, screen-used Dalek molds, best possible screen grabs, *Star Trek* uniform patterns), the productivity of mimetic fandom is thus

contained and foreclosed. To the extent that it refuses this gesture, Derrida's (1981) notion of *economimesis* is helpful because "the connection between mimesis and production" is restored; "mimesis should no longer be limited to the imitation of objects; that is, to reproduction. For mimesis also encompasses the imitation of processes and the production of processes and objects" (Gebauer and Wulf 1995, 302). As Derrida states, "'True' mimesis is between two producing subjects and not between two produced things" (1981, 9; see also Stacey 1994 on imitation/copying). This could also be said of the craftsmanship carried out via replica props: fan prop makers are not only seeking to imitate what they've seen on screen, but they are also aiming to understand and replicate techniques of manufacture.

[3.3] Above all, mimetic fandom stands for the intermediary. Unlike artworks created from artworks, texts extrapolated from texts, and videos reedited from videos, prop replicas inspired by media texts convey a sense of boundary crossing, of moving from textuality to reality. Unlike fan fic and vidding, prop making represents an ontological bridging of the branded story world or hyperdiegesis and the fan's everyday life (Hills 2002, 2013). Unlike cosplay, which also potentially represents this kind of ontological unity, prop replicas are far less likely to be contradicted by issues of embodiment (where a cosplayer has the wrong build to be a character, or doesn't look sufficiently like the character meant to be portrayed). Although replicas can be customized, personalized, and stylized—Dalek Storm is very much a pimped-up interpretation of the Dark Dimensions design artwork, for example, replete with lighting effects—fan-made props promise an objectivity and an ontological bridging that are less dominant in almost all other fan practices. Even cult geography has to contend with changes between the now of witnessing and the then of filming, as well as the fact that real-world locations are likely to have been set dressed and shot in particular ways (Brooker 2005). What might be viewed as the very apotheosis of fans' material culture, screen-used props acquired via auction (Stenger 2006), can present problems of physical condition, exhibiting wear and tear or the deterioration of perishable build materials (Morawetz 2001). Although these items carry historical authenticity, they may no longer convey visual authenticity. In short, screen-used props can threaten to diverge from their own on-screen appearance. Against Walter Benjamin (Lancaster 1999; Rehak 2013), this means that the original's aura may be compromised for the fan seeking to replicate elements from a hyperdiegetic world. For example, Dalek collector Mick Hall owns an original Movie Dalek from the 1960s that is in poor condition, but he displays it beside a pristine replica made from measurements taken of the original (Hearn 2013). By supplementing the bashed-up, aged Dalek with its re-creation, Hall's collection announces the doubling of fan authenticity, recognizing and enacting a fan-cultural value system that is split between historical and (tele)visual authenticities. However, prop replicas—like the Dalek made from Hall's own screen-used prop—hold out a promise of achieving the best possible transition from screen to what Urry and Larsen (2011, 199) call a "performed gaze." Even here, however, the transition may be imperfect on occasions: how a prop is lit in

the studio or on camera might cause it to look different within the *mise-en-scène* source when compared to its replica's appearance to the naked eye. Although Kendall L. Walton uses the term *prop* in an idiosyncratic manner, he argues that props represent "an independence from cognizers and their experiences which contributes much to the excitement of our adventures with them" (1990, 42), and it can be argued that prop replicas hold out this promise of objectivity and independence from subjective evaluations.

[3.4] By drawing on a framing discourse of materialization—crossing from text to physical artifact—replica props testify to and reinforce the value of their originating cult/narrative world and brand. Once more, this indicates the oscillatory nature of prop making. It might appear to disrupt "the boundary between performers and spectators" (Karpovich 2008, 215; see also Lancaster 2001), but as an object practice, it simultaneously reinforces the imaginative primacy and brand value of the cult world. For example, whether created noncommercially as fan projects or made commercially by This Planet Earth, Dalek building remains framed by notions of screen-accurate manufacture. The Dalek Builders' Guild mocks the initial Dalek plans made available to the public in 1973 by the BBC, noting how these were drawn up especially rather than using production plans, a move that resulted in overly "conical" and incorrectly proportioned Daleks (<http://dalekcity.co.uk/>, The DBG History). Commercial Dalek builders similarly emphasize discourses of screen accuracy, thus proposing an implicit ontological unity between text and material object:

[3.5] To start from scratch on a modern bronze Dalek, if you broke it down into individual parts it's well over 100, starting with 56 half balls. And we want to get it absolutely right...I've maintained this over the years, when somebody gets something from us, it's as close to going down to Cardiff and wheeling one out of the door. (Ian Clarke of This Planet Earth, in Wright 2013, 109–10)

[3.6] Although Clarke's self-promotional commentary remains grounded here in the nontextual primary world rather than referring to *Doctor Who*'s hyperdiegetic world, it is notable for its use of a boundary-crossing trope. The idea of "wheeling one out of the door" from *Doctor Who*'s Cardiff production studio represents the concept of screen-used accuracy, recirculating fan-cultural values of exaggerated visual continuity between textual and material objects.

[3.7] Having defined and argued for the oscillatory, intermediary qualities of mimetic fandom, I will now relate this approach to fans' prop building beyond the territories of fantasy, science fiction, and horror, considering Daft Punk fans and their helmet-making activities. Even where fans are engaging with objects that are not themselves diegetically framed—and that may therefore appear not to belong to a furnished cult world—discourses of screen-accurate creation continue to predominate, and a similar fan

work is carried out to secure a form of ontological unity in this musical case, as mediated images are again relocated into fans' everyday, material cultures.

[3.8] Daft Punk, a French electronic music duo, has been credited with popularizing a musical movement termed EDM, or electronic dance music (Perry 2013). Their 2013 album release, *Random Access Memories*, has been discussed as a return to the 1970s–1980s tradition of blockbuster album releases that emphasize production detail and the use of live session players rather than lo-fi or computer-based production (Richardson 2013). Although the Daft Punk members used brand-based graffiti early on their career, articulating their music with a sense of anticommercial street culture (Alvelos 2004), by the time of *Random Access Memories*, there could be little doubt of the band's commercial success and marketed omnipresence. However, Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo have cultivated a cult fan following in part as a result of their 2001-onward sporting of elaborate, retrofuturistic helmets composed of chromed surfaces, minimalist curves, and inset LEDs. By refusing to reveal their faces, Daft Punk created a cultish gap in their media profile, opposing them to logics of celebrity while simultaneously boosting their branded distinctiveness as "anonymous icons" (Weiner 2013, 58). There has also been relatively little Daft Punk merchandise and very little touring—decisions that have helped to reinforce the band's mystique by setting them against standard music industry practices.

[3.9] Katie King notes how "differing communities of practice work to center their own fabrication, conventions, and explanations of reenactment, and there are more and more such communities and practices" (2011, xv). Daft Punk fans, served online by the Daft Club forum (<http://www.thedaftclub.com/forum/forum.php>), could rightly be defined as a different community of practice to the Dalek builders I've considered thus far, and as such, we may expect them to draw on differing conventions of reenactment or mimetic fandom. Yet viewed analytically, the Daft Punk devotees who seek to acquire their own replica helmets demonstrate marked similarities with sections of *Doctor Who* fandom as well as with genre fans who congregate at, say, the Replica Prop Forum. Each of these fan groupings appears to be committed to bridging media texts and their everyday lives, pursuing and producing a kind of ontological unity in the "mediated lifeworld" (Deuze 2012, 185). In pursuit of screen-used accuracy, Daft Punk fans contacted the company that had worked on the band's original helmets: "Kevin Furry, whose former company, LED Effects Inc., installed the electronics, said...fans called incessantly...requesting duplicates, but he refused, putting a notice on the company's website to warn...it wouldn't make replicas without Daft Punk's permission" (Karp 2013).

[3.10] Likewise, the "Hollywood special-effects shop" that manufactured the latest models "signed a nondisclosure agreement regarding the helmets' exact specifications" (Weiner 2013, 58), meaning that the fannish accumulation of specs and plans can only amount to best guesstimates. Akin to prop manufacturing in the film/TV industry, where

hero props will be more detailed or functional than stunt versions that are only meant to be seen on screen rather than directly used by actors, there are also variant versions of Daft Punk helmets, some built for stage use and others intended for photo shoots (Weiner 2013). As a result, there is of course no singular original against which Daft Punk helmets (or Dalek casings) can be evaluated; professionally constructed props are always multiple (to allow for damage) and varied (to allow for different filming needs), before one even considers the development of designs over time.

[3.11] Fans' subcultural capital includes the collective intelligence of compiling, correcting, and circulating information on all the helmet modifications and revisions that have cropped up over the years—an activity much like the Dalek builders' compilation of every alternative Dalek design across *Doctor Who's* history, again supporting the creation of ontological unity between source text and prop replica. Although to the nonfan or the casual consumer both Daleks and Daft Punk helmets may appear to have remained fairly constant, fan knowledge is distinguished by its precise attention to the details that other consumers are unlikely to focus on (Scott 2013), let alone catalog into a design database:

[3.12] Hayes Johnson, 23,...is...updating a chart he published in 2010 entitled "A Visual History of Daft Punk Helmets," which diagrams the subtle evolution of helmets worn by the band. "To the naked eye, it looks like Daft Punk helmets haven't changed in recent years. I feel really dorky when I talk about this stuff, but they are actually very different," said Mr. Johnson, noting shifts over time in color and style. (Karp 2013)

[3.13] Just as Dalek builders form small-scale communities to share plans and workshop manuals, giving rise to "networks of influence" (Morawetz 2001, 37), Daft Punk fans also have a dedicated Daft Punk Helmets subsection as part of Daft Club (<http://www.thedaftclub.com/forum/forumdisplay.php/72-Daft-Punk-Helmets-Tutorials-Tips-and-your-Helmets>). The forum's founder, Kevin Sanders, has reported "a 365% jump in the number of members seeking helmets" between May 2013 and the year before (Karp 2013). Given the absence of official products, a range of craftsmen and prototypers has supplied replica helmets to the fan market. Again like the Dalek-building community, helmet constructors can also study online tutorials (video 1). Although it is tempting to analyze these helmets as "outside of...merchandising...[their] authenticity anchoring [fans]...to real world contexts of production and reception," rather like masked cult stars (Scott 2013, 93), fans' normative pursuit of screen-accurate imitation also acts in the same way as the reenactments studied by Barbara Klinger, helping "to build a legend around" Daft Punk (2011, 207). Akin to Elvis's look and costumes before them, the helmets have become a pure sign system instantiating Daft Punk visuals in a multitude of fan photos and everyday contexts as well as official images and performances. This look is also synesthetically linked to Daft Punk's sound because their

use of vocoders to create robotized vocal harmonies and effects blends the human and the electronic, connoting a type of dance music that is human after all—to cite the title of their third studio album (Dickinson 2001). Furthermore, Bangalter and Homem-Christo have discussed their approach to dance music as one of humanized activity rather than the easy use of computer software such as Ableton Live (Perry 2013).

How to make a Daft Punk helmet in 17 months

Video 1. *YouTube video documenting "How to Make a Daft Punk Helmet in 17 Months."*

[3.14] Daft Punk's helmets therefore appear to intrigue their fans in a series of overdetermined ways, and not just as a result of the cultish gap of perpetuated hermeneutic that they participate in (Hills 2002). The helmets function within subcultural currency as a kind of Daft Club sign value, demonstrating the importance what Paul E. Willis (1978, 191) calls "homological" objects, articulating musicality, visuality, and group identity. At the same time, the synesthetic blend of robot helmets, music, and fan experience invites a fannish "'performed'...gaze" that "involves other sensescapes; gazing is multimodal. People are never disembodied...eyes...[and] often have a burning desire to touch...and even collect the...objects that they lay their eyes upon" (Urry and Larsen 2011, 199). Urry and Larsen refer to this as the "multifaceted social relations of gazing" (199), although I might also add the multifaceted social relations of listening through which sections of Daft Punk fandom display a mimetic stance.

[3.15] Suzanne Scott has wondered "what types of fan production can flourish or founder under emerging convergence conditions" (2008, 210). Scott is rightly worried that transmedia supplements and podcasts might rule out the creative spaces, gaps, and puzzles that the feminized spaces of fan fic writing have historically wrestled with (see also Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013). Set against these concerns, however, what has problematically been termed Web 2.0 (Booth 2010) very much facilitates the collective intelligence and collaborative creativity of hard-core replica prop building. It may seem paradoxical that social media and networked cultures have sustained and amplified

mimetic fandom premised on the pursuit of ontological unity between immaterial media and materialities of everyday life (Deuze 2012). Yet this is only a paradox if material object practices and digital fandom are cleaved, somewhat absurdly, into two distinct realms of theorization.

[3.16] Perhaps the most significant aspect of mimetic fandom for fan studies is the manner in which it challenges and begins to deconstruct any strict affirmational/transformational binary (and accompanying genderings) at the same time as displaying a series of practices where imitation of textual content remains the "normative" or "normalform" activity (Joseph-Witham 1996, 17). Scholars of fandom may benefit from taking seriously the prototyping, engineering, and craftsmanship of mimetic fan spaces (Morawetz 2001; obsession_inc 2009) as well as domains of textual productivity, rather than positioning these fan specializations as wholly distinct, good/bad theoretical objects. Furthermore, by considering Dalek builders alongside Daft Punk helmet makers, I have sought to demonstrate that homologous practices of mimetic fandom are in operation across what might otherwise be positioned as highly diverse (cult TV; dance music) fan cultures. At the very least, this suggests that mimetic "energy" (Condry 2013, 30) can be studied empirically across a range of fandoms—something that is also supported by the existence of transfandom sites such as the Replica Prop Forum. As I've argued elsewhere, mimesis has frequently been philosophically and culturally devalued (Hills 2002). It would be a pity if the undoubtedly vital significance of fans' transformative works and cultures also led to a partial occlusion of mimetic fandom. Having said this, the value of the affirmational/transformational binary has undoubtedly been related to its capacity to flag up the operations of cultural power and privilege. It is not my intent here to suggest that already marginalized and disempowered fan practices should be further marginalized in favor of academically stressing sanctioned or potentially male-centered modes of fan productivity. Rather, I intend to argue for the value of a concept—mimetic fandom—that partly deconstructs the separation of supposedly female-centered transformational and male-centered affirmational fandoms. Mimetic fandom can draw on conventionally and problematically masculinized practices of craftwork as well as feminine handicrafts; this is an empirical question, and a question of specific communities, rather than a matter of fannish mimesis per se (Cherry 2011). Similarly, the mimetic fandom of replica prop making can promise both affirmational authenticity via the pursuit of screen-used looks and ontological unity, as well as transformational agency via customization and stylization, as in the case of Dalek Storm, representing one fan's critique of updated on-screen designs (Britton 2014).

4. Works cited

Abercrombie, Nicholas, and Brian Longhurst. 1998. *Audiences*. London: Sage.

- Alvelos, Heitor. 2004. "The Desert of Imagination in the City of Signs: Cultural Implications of Sponsored Transgression and Branded Graffiti." In *Cultural Criminology Unleashed*, edited by Jeff Ferrell, Keith Hayward, Wayne Morrison, and Mike Presdee, 181–92. London: GlassHouse Press.
- Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bacon-Smith, Camille. 2000. *Science Fiction Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Banet-Weiser, Sarah. 2012. *Authentic: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: NYU Press.
- Booth, Paul. 2010. *Digital Fandom*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Britton, Piers D. 2014. "'It's all-new *Doctor Who*': Authorising New Design and Redesign in the Steven Moffat Era." In *Doctor Who: The Eleventh Hour—A Critical Celebration of the Matt Smith and Steven Moffat Era*, edited by Andrew O'Day, 141–58. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Britton, Piers D., and Simon J. Barker. 2003. *Reading between Designs: Visual Imagery and the Generation of Meaning in "The Avengers," "The Prisoner," and "Doctor Who."* Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Brooker, Will. 2005. "The *Blade Runner* Experience: Pilgrimage and Liminal Space." In *The Blade Runner Experience*, edited by Will Brooker, 11–30. New York: Wallflower Press.
- Bury, Rhiannon. 2005. *Cyberspaces of Their Own: Female Fandoms Online*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Cherry, Brigid. 2011. "Knit One, Bite One: Vampire Fandom, Fan Production and Feminine Handicrafts." In *Fanpires: Audience Consumption of the Modern Vampire*, edited by Gareth Schott and Kirstine Moffat, 137–55. Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing.
- Condry, Ian. 2013. *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Success Story*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Coppa, Francesca. 2006. "Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performance." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 225–44. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Couldry, Nick. 2003. *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*. New York: Routledge.

- Crawford, Garry. 2004. *Consuming Sport: Fans, Sport and Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- De Kosnick, Abigail. 2013. "Fandom as Free Labor." In *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, edited by Trebor Scholz, 98–111. New York: Routledge.
- De Zwart, Melissa. 2013. "Cosplay, Creativity and Immaterial Labours of Love." In *Amateur Media*, edited by Dan Hunter, Ramon Lobato, Megan Richardson, and Julian Thomas, 170–177. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1981. "Economimesis." *Diacritics* 11:3–25.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/464726>.
- Deuze, Mark. 2012. *Media Life*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Dickinson, Kay. 2001. "'Believe?' Vocoders, Digitalised Female Identity and Camp." *Popular Music* 20 (3): 333–47. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261143001001532>.
- Eco, Umberto. 1995. *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*. London: Minerva.
- Fiske, John. 1992. "The Cultural Economy of Fandom." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 30–49. New York: Routledge.
- Gauntlett, David. 2011. *Making Is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Gebauer, Gunter, and Christoph Wulf. 1995. *Mimesis: Culture—Art—Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gray, Jonathan. 2010. *Show Sold Separately*. New York: NYU Press.
- Hearn, Marcus. 2013. "Dalekmania." In *Doctor Who 50 Years: The Daleks*, 37–40. Tunbridge Wells: Panini UK.
- Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Hills, Matt. 2010. "As Seen on Screen? Mimetic SF Fandom and the Crafting of Replica(nt)s." *In Media Res*, September 10.
<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2010/09/10/seen-screen-mimetic-sf-fandom-crafting-replicants>.
- Hills, Matt. 2011. *Cultographies: Blade Runner*. New York: Wallflower/Columbia University Press.
- Hills, Matt. 2013. "Recoded Transitional Objects and Fan Re-readings of Puzzle Films." In *Little Madnesses: Winnicott, Transitional Phenomena, and Cultural Experience*, edited by

- Annette Kuhn, 103–20. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers*. New York: Routledge.
- Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture*. New York: NYU Press.
- Jenkins, Henry, and Suzanne Scott. 2013. "Textual Poachers, Twenty Years Later." Interview and introduction to 20th anniversary edition of *Textual Poachers*, vii–l. New York: Routledge.
- Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. 2013. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: NYU Press.
- Johnson, Derek. 2013. *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries*. New York: NYU Press.
- Jones, Sara Gwenllian. 2000. "Starring Lucy Lawless?" *Continuum* 14 (1): 9–22.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713657674>.
- Joseph-Witham, Heather. 1996. *Star Trek Fans and Costume Art*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Karp, Hannah. 2013. "Fans Lose Their Heads in Pursuit of Daft Punk Helmets." *Wall Street Journal*, May 20.
<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324031404578481680129191190>.
- Karpovich, Angelina I. 2008. "Locating the 'Star Trek Experience.'" In *The Influence of Star Trek on Television, Film and Culture*, edited by Lincoln Geraghty, 199–217. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- King, Katie. 2011. *Networked Reenactments: Stories Transdisciplinary Knowledges Tell*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Klinger, Barbara. 2011. "Re-enactment: Fans Performing Movie Scenes from the Stage to YouTube." In *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, edited by Paul Grainge, 195–213. Basingstoke: BFI/Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kozinets, Robert V. 2007. "Inno-tribes: Star Trek as Wikimedia." In *Consumer Tribes*, edited by Bernard Cova, Robert V. Kozinets, and Avi Shankar, 194–211. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Lancaster, Kurt. 1999. *Warlocks and Warpdrives: Contemporary Fantasy Entertainments with Interactive and Virtual Environments*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Lancaster, Kurt. 2001. *Interacting with Babylon 5: Fan Performance in a Media Universe*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Mittell, Jason. 2013. "Wikis as Participatory Fandom." In *The Participatory Cultures Handbook*, edited by Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, 35–42. New York: Routledge.

Morawetz, Thomas. 2001. *Making Faces, Playing God: Identity and the Art of Transformational Makeup*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

obsession_inc. 2009. "Affirmational Fandom vs. Transformational Fandom." Dreamwidth.org, June 1.

Pearson, Roberta. 2012. "'Good Old Index,' or The Mystery of the Infinite Archive." *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom*, edited by Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse, 150–64. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Perry, Kevin E. G. 2013. "The Robots Belong to Everybody." *NME*, May 18, 22–27.

Pugh, Sheenagh. 2005. *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context*. Bridgend, Wales: Seren.

Rehak, Bob. 2013. "Materializing Monsters: Aurora Models, Garage Kits, and the Object Practices of Horror Fandom." *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1 (1): 27–45.

Richardson, Mark. 2013. "Daft Punk, *Random Access Memories*." *Pitchfork*, May 20. <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/18028-daft-punk-random-access-memories/>.

Scott, Jason. 2013. "From Behind the Masks to Inside: Acting, Authenticity and the *Star Wars* Co-Stars." In *Cult Film Stardom*, edited by Kate Egan and Sarah Thomas, 90–106. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scott, Suzanne. 2008. "Authorized Resistance: Is Fan Production Frakked?" In *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, edited by Tiffany Porter and C. W. Marshall, 210–23. New York: Continuum.

Stacey, Jackie. 1994. *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*. New York: Routledge.

Steinberg, Marc. 2012. *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stenger, Josh. 2006. "The Clothes Make the Fan: Fashion and Online Fandom when *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Goes to eBay." *Cinema Journal* 45 (4): 26–44. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cj.2006.0048>.

Thomas, Bronwen. 2011. "What Is Fanfiction and Why Are People Saying Such Nice Things about It?" *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3:1–24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.3.2011.0001>.

- Urry, John, and Jonas Larsen. 2011. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. London: Sage.
- Walton, Kendall L. 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weiner, Jonah. 2013. "All Hail the Robot Overlords." *Rolling Stone*, June 6, 54–61.
- Williamson, Milly. 2005. *The Lure of the Vampire*. London: Wallflower Press.
- Willis, Paul E. 1978. *Profane Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Wilson, Elizabeth. 2013. *Cultural Passions: Fans, Aesthetes and Tarot Readers*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Wolf, Mark J. P. 2012. *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*. New York: Routledge.
- Wright, Mark. 2013. "Objects of Desire." In *Doctor Who 50 Years: The Daleks*, 108–110. Tunbridge Wells: Panini UK.

Theory

It's not all about the music: Online fan communities and collecting Hard Rock Café pins

Lincoln Geraghty

University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, England, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—Previous studies of music fan culture have largely centered on the diverse range of subcultures devoted to particular genres, groups, and stars. Where studies have moved beyond the actual music and examined the fashion, concerts, and collecting ephemera such as vinyl records and posters, they have tended to remain closely allied to notions of subcultural distinction, emphasizing hierarchies of taste. This paper shifts the focus in music fan studies beyond the appreciation of the music and discusses the popular fan practice of collecting souvenir pins produced and sold by the Hard Rock Café (HRC) within a framework of fan tourism. Traveling to and collecting unique pins from locations across the globe creates a fan dialogue that centers on tourism and the collecting practices associated with souvenir consumption. Collectors engage in practices such as blogging, travel writing, and administration that become important indicators of their particular expression of fandom: pin collecting. Membership requires both time and money; recording visits around the world and collecting unique pins from every café builds fans' cultural capital. This indicates an internationalization of popular fandom, with the Internet acting as a connective virtual space between local and national, personal and public physical space. The study of HRC pin collecting and its fan community suggests that HRC enthusiasts are not so because they enjoy rock music or follow any particular artist but due to the physical ephemera that they collect and the places and spaces they visit.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fandom; Heterotopia; Pin collecting; Souvenir; Tourism

Geraghty, Lincoln. 2014. "It's Not All About the Music: Online Fan Communities and Collecting Hard Rock Café Pins." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0492>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] The Hard Rock Café (HRC) is known throughout the world as a themed restaurant chain that promotes music and music fandom through brand loyalty to its merchandise and corporate menu. Music is often central to its promotional strategy, displaying musical props and instruments on its café walls while organizing local band performances and music festivals. However, this article shifts the focus on the HRC from its musical-themed brand identity to its growing fan community that travel to sites and collect unique souvenir pins produced for every city. Therefore, I argue

throughout that despite HRC being seen and advertised as an authentic venue for music fans, promoting rock, pop, and alternative music cultures, a large proportion of visitors travel to cafés all around the world to fulfill other passions unrelated to music culture: pin collecting and tourism. While publically HRC appears to be all about the music, this study suggests that HRC fandom is about practices and passions distinct from music and musical tastes.

[1.2] Discourses of fan studies related to music have largely centered on the diverse range of subcultures devoted to particular genres, groups, and stars. Within these discourses particular attention has been paid to analyzing the relationships between fans and music institutions, changing musical tastes, and the distinctions expressed in relation to the range of styles and genres that define the industry (see for example Cline 1992; Hinerman 1992; Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs 1992; Cavicchi 2007; McCourt and Burkart 2007). Where fan studies have moved beyond the actual music to examine fashion, concerts, and collecting ephemera such as vinyl records and posters, they have tended to remain closely allied to notions of subcultural distinction and nostalgia, emphasizing hierarchies of taste and the authenticity of the musical source (see for example Straw 1997; Stanley 2002; Milano 2003; Shuker 2004; Reynolds 2011). Indeed, the centrality of vinyl record collecting in the representation of music fans is recognized by Roy Shuker who argues that it "not only embodies personal history, it also represents the original historical artefact: how the vinyl single, EP, LP was originally recorded, and therefore the form in which it should be listened to" (Shuker 2010, 65). Thus the collectible in music fandom not only becomes a symbol of nostalgia and memory for audiences, its value as an object is heightened and legitimated due to its connection to the actual music. However, with regard to HRC pin collecting, I argue that fans are not attracted by the musical ephemera or souvenirs connected to the artists but are fans of what pin collecting entails: tourism, meeting fellow collectors, and the creation of an online profile detailing where one travels and what pins are bought there.

[1.3] HRC is a restaurant, hotel, and casino chain branded to attract all types of popular music fan. Its slogan of "Love All, Serve All" underlines its desire to emit a sense of inclusivity; it is both a family-oriented attraction and a venue where established and new musicians can promote their latest tunes. Its global reach has allowed its brand to become a mix of the distinctly corporate (the same menu is served worldwide) and the uniquely national, regional, and local (cafés incorporate local architecture and cuisine, celebrate local musicians, and produce merchandise that trades on a particular city's identity). Merchandising has encouraged various loyalty schemes used by customers and music fans to get priority entry and VIP seating, obtain exclusive items, and get a discount. One particular scheme, originally set up by the Hard Rock Café Pin Collectors Club (HRCPPC) in 2000, allows members to create

an online profile detailing the number of cafés visited and pins collected. Following a decade of increasing membership and a developing customer loyalty scheme, the HRCPC and HRC combined their efforts in 2012 and created an official site to record information alongside a Facebook page that allowed members to network and share photos and the company to advertise the latest pins and restaurant offers (https://www.facebook.com/hrcollectorsclub?hc_location=stream) (note 1). The HRCPC also organizes local collector meetings at various café locations and encourages volunteers to act as club officials who can design new pins, monitor submissions, and update the online pin database.

[1.4] In this article I argue that this distinct fan community represents an interesting intervention in studies of popular fandom. Dialogues within the HRC community do not converge on notions of musical taste and authenticity or issues relating to genre and personality. Rather, traveling to and collecting unique pins from locations across the globe creates a different fan dialogue that centers on tourism and the collecting practices associated with curatorial and souvenir consumption. HRC pin collectors engage in multiple forms of communication and fan practices such as blogging, travel writing, and club administration that become equally important indicators of their particular expression of fandom: pin collecting. Joining and gaining subcultural status within the HRCPC requires both time and monetary investment; recording their visits around the world and collecting unique pins from every café builds collectors' cultural capital. The popularity of the HRCPC indicates a growing internationalization of popular fan practices, with the Internet acting as a connective virtual space between local and national, personal and public physical space. The study of HRC pin collecting and its associated fan community offers an important lens through which we might suggest that HRC fandom is not about the music played in the cafés and bars or the brand it promotes through the famous musical memorabilia on its walls, but rather it is about the physical ephemera that fans collect and the places and spaces they visit.

2. A Hard Rock history of music

[2.1] Founded in 1971 by Isaac Tigrett and Peter Morton, the first HRC was opened on Park Lane in London. Tigrett and Morton were Americans working in the UK who missed the bars and restaurants of home and so wanted to recreate the experience of a diner. (See the HRC corporate history: <http://www.hardrock.com/corporate/history.aspx>). Originally intended as a little corner of popular Americana in a London neighborhood popular with tourists, the HRC has grown into a global corporation that owns restaurants, bars, hotels, casinos, and live music resorts on almost every continent. In 2007 the company was sold by the UK-based Rank Group to the Seminole Indian Tribe of Florida for £965 million (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6216292.stm>). At last count there were 175

locations in 53 countries, with just as many opening up as there are closing down. In addition to hospitality, HRC hosts several music events every year: concerts, live performances, and festivals which signal the company's musical roots. HRC also owns several storage facilities in the US where it keeps its vast collection of music memorabilia that is not presently dispersed throughout its café and hotel network. From guitars once owned by Jimmy Hendrix to the Magical Mystery Tour Bus owned by The Beatles, HRC collects almost anything connected to the history of rock and pop music. A lot of items are donated by artists and groups, eager for recognition in Hard Rock's unofficial catalogue of music's greatest and most glamorous.

[2.2] Besides food, drink, and music, the HRC is known for other kinds of merchandising, including souvenir glasses, T-shirts, soft toys, hats, jackets, and pins, to name the most popular. Everything has the HRC logo on it, becoming instantly recognizable. Indeed, the commodification of music through branding and logos is not unusual. For example, artists have become global brands selling albums, T-shirts, and concert tickets, and their iconic images have remained ever present throughout music history: The Rolling Stones' lips, Elvis's hair and sunglasses, The Beatles' Yellow Submarine and so on. That attempt to connect with fans through branded items develops a sense of brand loyalty. Michele White, in her study of eBay fans, argues that brands have fans: "Brand community members tend to be active fans of particular companies, products, logos, virtual communities, and media texts" (2012, 55). In the HRCPC there is clearly a brand which collectors can actively follow, products they can collect, and a virtual community with which they can engage. White goes on to argue that "Internet settings have methods to tap into and control members' attachments" (83); thus, in the new HRC Web site we see a design that allows collectors not only to add to their record of pins collected but also to promote their attachment to the brand through competitions, newsfeed, and web chats with other collectors, pin designers, and HRC staff.

[2.3] In many ways, this aspect of brand loyalty for the corporation grew out of the founders' original intention to create a welcoming and familiar space for people who wanted to pull up a chair and get a drink. As the first café in London became popular with expats and American tourists, those UK musicians who were used to a US style bar/dining experience while they were on tour started to regularly frequent the establishment. While not originally intended for the incorporation of music memorabilia, the official HRC story on their Web site says it was supposedly a visit by Eric Clapton to the London café in 1979 that changed the chain's brand ethos. Liking the bar, it is claimed that Clapton asked the owners to put one of his guitars up on the wall above his favorite chair to mark his spot. Becoming a symbol of HRC's music credentials for other restaurant goers, the guitar also attracted the attention of The Who's Peter Townsend who saw Clapton's guitar hanging up and immediately donated

one of his own with the message, "Mine's as good as his! Love, Pete." As more music celebrities visited, the collection grew; thus the official symbol of the chain became a guitar. Used on signage, glasses, advertising, and merchandise, the guitar is an iconic symbol for HRC and an unsurprising image that inspired the designs for the first souvenir pins to go on sale and become collector items in their own right.

[2.4] As more and more cafés opened around the world, the variation of pins and guitar merchandise increased. Collecting the glasses with the name of the location printed on the side became a hobby that offered tourists a little souvenir of their dining experience while on holiday. T-shirts were very popular, and the simple logo on white background design became for some tourists a necessity: what better way to display where you went on holiday than wearing an iconic garment from an exotic locale? Demand for location-specific merchandise rose and the number of collectors of particular items grew; the guitar pin became an easily transported and stored souvenir that encouraged collectors to visit new cafés and buy the latest design. Regular customers of their local café began to meet up to swap pins they had bought on holiday from other Hard Rocks. As a consequence, rarity and exclusivity became important markers of distinction for collectors with the biggest and most varied collections of pins. For Russell Belk, in a consumer society where success is often measured by material gain, the collection itself can often emphasize collector competition where monetary value and the number of objects act as "a way to 'keep score' or monitor growth and progress, even though [collectors] may well have no intention or even a possibility of selling the collection" (1995, 80). Local cafés encouraged this collecting and competition, happily hosting meetings and even producing special pins to celebrate national holidays and local events. Waiters and waitresses got into the act too, proudly displaying pins they traded with visiting collectors and incorporating them into their official uniform. The number of pins staff had from exotic locations (places they might not even have traveled to but instead acquired from collectors) raised their status in the café hierarchy: the fuller the pin lanyard, the more senior they were amongst their colleagues.

[2.5] Rival collector clubs were established early on but HRC, clearly spotting the marketing potentials of having an official club just for pin collecting, encouraged the creation of the unified HRCPC in 2000 and with that started to make pins just for members. So, alongside the city-specific pins that collectors could buy at cafés across the globe, they could also receive annual membership pins through the post—marking their loyalty with a specially designed, limited edition souvenir (figures 1 and 2). From local beginnings, where two musicians used their guitars as symbols of their growing celebrity status, HRC has integrated music memorabilia and merchandising into their brand identity. Fans of the restaurant travel there to experience an American style diner but to also see the famous objects hung on the walls and kept in glass cases.

While drinking a hurricane cocktail in a souvenir glass they can listen to music and get close to their favorite artist's guitar or iconic outfit. At the same time, they can buy a pin that literally embodies the physical experience they just had: the design incorporates famous landmarks and images from the location city and references the musical objects seen on the café's walls. Indeed, as White argues about brand communities, "members...are inclined to celebrate and buy the brand's products and to identify with the associated corporation" (2012, 4–5).



Figure 1. 12th Year Membership Guitar Pin—HRCPC Club Pins/Pin Craft, 2012. [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 2. 12th Year Membership Logo—HRCPC Club Pins/Pin Craft, 2012. [[View larger image.](#)]

[2.6] It may seem odd that mass-produced products, one-off purchases bought by tourists as well as die-hard collectors might be cherished as personal objects but the ubiquity of the collectible is not important: "Collecting can be seen as a means of individualizing the uniformity of the mass-produced. In a consumer society, we all look for ways to alleviate the routine of the functional. In collecting, a certain depth or another dimension is found" (Martin 1999, 146–47). Collectors are encouraged to recognize the unique elements of each pin and thus accumulate a collection that represents not only monetary investment but also geographical movement. HRC pin collections do in many ways pay homage to the musical roots that inspired the memorabilia and merchandising but, moreover, they symbolize the collector's journey through time and geographical space as they visit more and more café locations around the world. The success of HRC in creating a brand loyalty and creating a fan following is due in part to what the Internet allows users to do online: "Whereas television and print transmit and push goods and services into the home to audiences via a one-way line of communication, the Internet enables individuals to access information at their own pace, build their own Web pages, and ultimately become producers and promoters of their own popular culture artifacts" (Smith Feranec 2008, 10). In the commodification of HRC fandom through pin collecting and tourism, we can identify an increasing array of fan identities—partly defined by what people choose to collect and partly determined by where they travel and what they do when they get there.

3. Online collecting communities, the pin passport program, and fan tourism

[3.1] To track visits to cafés and hotels throughout the world, collectors can swipe their membership cards on purchasing food and merchandise and their online profile

will be updated with café location information. Online, collectors can then see where they have been on a map and plan where to go next to gain another swipe. To reward loyalty and the number of cafés visited, the online system records the number of cafés as well as their location; the more visited, the higher the online profile rises. Known as the Pin Passport Program, HRC pin collectors track number of visits and receive special pins to celebrate landmark totals: 10, 25, 50, 75, 100 (HRC instituted special 125, 150, and 175 pins named to individual collectors who have been to more than 100 cafés) (figure 3). Clearly status within the HRC collector community is dependent on the number of cafés visited but also what pins are acquired when visiting. In this case, displaying a large collection online to others collecting the same thing "brings the collector heightened status (within his or her collecting sphere) and feelings of pride and accomplishment" (Belk 1995, 68).



Figure 3. Award for Visiting 50 HRCs—Pin Passport Series/Pin Craft. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.2] Furthermore, visiting on a national holiday or during a special event taking place in the city (for example, the Fourth of July in the United States or the San Diego Comic-Con) means fans have likely access to limited edition pins that are designed especially for that café. Thus, their collection is enhanced by the unique experience of visiting on a particular day and getting a pin made for the occasion. For example, both the café and hotel in San Diego sell commemorative pins to celebrate the annual San

Diego Comic-Con held in July at the Convention Center. Encouraging collectors to seek out different pins at both sites means that they have to go that little bit further to get the exclusive souvenirs that make up the set. These in turn are made all the more unique for the collector as they incorporate different superhero-themed designs every year to tie into the Comic-Con buzz and aesthetic which takes over the whole city for that week (figures 4 and 5).



Figure 4. *ComicCon 2012: Super Hero Band Full Set—Specialized Local Café Series/Pin Craft, 2012. [View larger image.]*



Figure 5. *ComicCon 2011: Green Girl Pin—Specialized Local Café Series/Pin Craft, 2011. [View larger image.]*

[3.3] Also, because Hard Rock tries to incorporate local themes and landmarks, holidays, and personalities into the designs of the city pins (regularly updating these in limited batches), collectors may have visited and bought from a location but another collector at another time might have a completely different set of pins to represent their experience. The Boston HRC releases a new pin to celebrate the running of the annual marathon in the spring, a new design every year, and in 2012 it commemorated the 100th anniversary of Fenway Park with a limited edition "Love That Dirty Water" pin that references the song sung by fans of the Boston Red Sox (figures 6 and 7). While the marathon and Red Sox might be synonymous with the city of Boston, therefore appropriate for the café to pay tribute to on its pins, exclusivity can also be found in a one-off event that warrants a special pin.



Figure 6. 2012 Boston Marathon—Pin USA, 2012. [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 7. Dirty Water—Pin USA, 2012. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.4] For example, the Yankee Dental Convention inspired a pin which proved a rare find for collectors visiting Boston just in 2007 (figure 8), and in 2012 for the 75th anniversary of the Hindenburg flying over the Boston Custom House, collectors could

get a special pin to commemorate a rarely known fact and a very famous airship (figure 9). These examples of different and specialized HRC pins are thus commodities which, as Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe (2003, 112) acknowledge, "have histories and geographies which create and alter meaning and value" and tie collectors closer to the HRC brand.



Figure 8. Yankee Dental Convention: Tooth Pin—Pin Craft, 2007. [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 9. Zeppelin Guitar—Pin Craft, 2012. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.5] HRC pins are therefore physical evidence of a fan collector's trip planned and successfully made. Cities traveled to are often new and unfamiliar but the actual café remains ever present and familiar. In many ways, HRC as site of collector pilgrimage performs a role similar to that of the fan convention, filming location, or other media fan settings. It brings fans together in an attempt to get closer to the object of fascination and affection. In the HRC, the location draws collectors but the city also acts as a backdrop from which the holiday experiences of the traveling fans are drawn and upon which their memories of every pin bought and displayed are based. Jennifer E. Porter sees fan convention attendance as a form of physical pilgrimage in a secular context. Using the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, she argues that the pilgrimage to a shared site is a liminal journey of transformation to find *communitas*, "communal fellowship," with other fans (Porter 1999, 252). The site of fan tourism, whether it be specifically tied to the fictional text like filming locations and theme park rides or neutral and generic sites like hotel ballrooms and convention centers, provides "a time and space for fans to be free to explore their love of something deep and meaningful in their lives" (267). As a consequence, these atypical fan sites become important places for popular veneration.

[3.6] If *communitas*, as mentioned above, is defined as "intense bonding and sharing of the pilgrimage and the connection with the sacred place" (Brooker 2005, 18) then I want to argue in the remainder of this article that while places like the HRC might be seen to control and limit the fan collector experience (through the mass commodification of goods bought and sold in homogenous leisure establishments) they are in fact shaped and defined by the physical surroundings in which they are located. Cafés take on the flavor of the city, and the pins and other merchandise are therefore evidence of the localization of the global Hard Rock brand. What is more, and of greater significance for larger questions about fandom and collecting, HRC restaurants, hotels, and casinos are sites that through fan enshrinement and pilgrimage become venerated memorials to popular culture: "Traditional elite institutions build shrines to symbols of faith, patriotism, and knowledge. But popular shrines communicate the legitimacy of popular experience, even if it is lurid, frivolous, or downright kitsch" (Combs 1989, 74). When bought, each pin is incorporated into a collection that represents an individual's identity and sense of self. The interaction between people and objects within a real space enhances both the emotional and physical relationship that pin collectors have with their collected items.

[3.7] All members of the HRCPC have pin lockers online where they can list the specific pins collected ([note 2](#)). Pictures of every pin are accompanied by a description (often written by the first collector to buy it) and once they add it to their locker they can append extra information like price, condition (mint or good), and whether they are willing to trade for it. Both the passport program (which lists where one has visited

and rewards achievements with special pins) and the pin locker (which records one's entire collection and is open to other collectors to look at) combine to give the individual collector a virtual presence that displays their physical travel experience and demonstrates their collecting prowess and status. Like the Weblog as discussed by P. David Marshall, an HRCPC online profile "is an elaborate presentation of the self...the personal website with all its meanderings becomes a public testament, a proclamation of significance and an expression of individuality" (Marshall 2004, 56). In the following examples I examine how the online spaces of HRC pin collectors are evidence of both the individual's traveling experience (offering a biographic narrative of their Hard Rock fan tourism) and their increasing status as a collector (accumulating pins from a variety of locations). The virtual and the physical, space and place, image and object come together to offer the collector a sense of identity and self; the virtual and actual collection not only stand as monuments to personal and financial investment but also become imbued with unique memories of the collector's traveling and collecting experiences.

4. Pin tales as fan travel writing

[4.1] As part of the original HRCPC Web site, collectors could upload stories and pictures from their travels to the various cafés and cities around the world. The blog, *Pin Tales*, took the form of a monthly newsletter and described the collector's journey and also their acquisition of pins (note 3). However, it often revealed more about the collector's personal story, why they went to a particular city, how it fits into a life narrative. After all, as Mieke Bal suggests, collecting is a form of narrative where "a subjectively focalised sequence of events is presented and communicated" through the acquisition, cataloguing, and reordering of objects (1994, 100). The pin tale is a written record of the tourist experience and the pictures alongside act as visual memories of their physical presence in the HRC location. The city visited is captured at a particular moment and the collectibles associated with that place forever connect those memories with a physical object. As will be shown through a survey of blogs posted on the Web site, these so-called pin tales are not just about celebrating the brand (as in the case of Michele White's theory previously discussed); they are about creating a collecting community. The pin as object becomes a touchstone for collectors who meet in cafés and attend collecting conventions. The community is competitive but it also helps to build a social network of new friends that extends beyond the commodity and its consumption. Pins become objects that symbolize fan tourism as outlined above. They are markers of the physical relationship that the HRC collectors have had with an international place and are souvenirs of the touristic desire to consume the spaces through which they pass. The moderator of the *Pin Tales* newsletter, Chris Fairbairn, prefaces the first issue in June 2004 (note 4) with:

[4.2] By now your [*sic*] wondering what to expect, what direction I'll be taking. That's entirely up to you. To answer a few questions I'd like to put the newsletter out around the first of every month so anything you'd like to submit needs to be in by the end of the month. I'd like to run a couple monthly features "Café Profiles" where you get to give everyone a look inside, the history and the local collectors from your local café. Especially those closed cafés, if you have the story and some pictures please share it with everyone so we can see what we missed. The other regular feature will be "The Other Side Of The Magnifying Glass" profiles of Pin Masters, along with a Q & A section. Then there are your stories and lastly with so many Pin Events this is another opportunity for you to brag about what a great event your café hosted.

[4.3] As a call to collectors to write, post, and share stories and pictures of their travels and events hosted at cafés, Fairbairn's aims for *Pin Tales* suggest that HRC pin collecting is both communal and individual, competitive and supportive. Fairbairn is also the first collector to contribute a story about his pin-collecting experience. It is telling in his choice of topic that he acknowledges both critically and favorably the joys of collecting HRC pins. They give him the opportunity to meet new collectors and make new friends, but they also become objects of frustration as he struggles to get the ones he wants before they sell out. In this world of accessibility, where sites like eBay make almost anything available to everybody, Fairbairn bemoans how it also creates an imbalance in the collecting community: individuals (often not collectors) buy up the limited stock and sell them online—making them rarer and taking away the physical pleasure for HRC fans of traveling to a café to purchase them. He even questions the very nature of the HRCPC as he states that once collecting pins became popular and more people joined the group, the intimacy of the hobby was ruined by mass consumption:

[4.4] There was a time not long ago there was no real organization to collecting pins. You got what you could when you could and were happy always looking for your next big score. With a bit of luck you knew a few locals with the same interest and you worked together to help each other... Time moved on to a point where if you were not on-line you were the odd one out. With the creation of the HRCPC and a computer in every home its [*sic*] made the world a very small place and along with that the dark side of the hobby emerged "evil-bay." Or what has come to be known as pins for profit...I was in Washington a few weeks ago and was fortunate to have a number of the locals come out for an evening of food, fun and pins. It was so refreshing as they came in the café, they each pulled out small bags of

pins that they had picked up for one another. YES friends helping friends. No money changing hands just a sincere thanks.

[4.5] He goes on to list a number of things that he wishes would change or happen in the HRC collecting community, including restricting the number of specific pins bought at one time to stop "evil-bay" sellers making a profit; rerunning pins so that people who missed them in store can buy them again to fill gaps in their collections; allowing collectors to suggest designs for new pins; not making more T 'n' A pins (pins which usually depict a scantily clad waitress in an energetic pose); making more musically-inspired pins more faithful to HRC history; and instituting a collector of the year pin that can be awarded to members. Collecting pins, for Fairbairn, is highly motivating—he has achieved the status of creator and moderator of the *Pin Tales* pages on the Web site—and it obviously stimulates quite strong feelings about commercial sites such as eBay and the commodification of women seen in the T 'n' A pins. Thus, pins mean more to him than just consumption—they are items of deeper meaning and contemplation: "An object can thus become more than simply a 'metaphor for the self.' It becomes a pivot for reflexivity and introspection, a tool of autobiographic self-discovery, a way of knowing oneself through things" (Hoskins 1998, 198).

[4.6] It is clear from Fairbairn's contribution in 2004 that the HRCPC had come a long way since its inauguration in 2000—becoming more professional and coordinated in how collectors acquire pins and more diverse in the types of collectors who join and the individual pleasures they get out of collecting. The writing of pin tales, posting them online to be read by other collectors, is also characteristic of new digital cultures and the practices of remembering. As Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading (2009, 132) argue, "The often cathartic narratives demonstrate digital memory practices as global narrative witnessing, allowing participants to share a story told internally over time with an unseen audience able to connect with that story personally (again literally) and publically (by posting a response to the story on the website)." In the same issue of *Pin Tales*, Leona King reflects on the positive potentials of pin collecting and the transformative effect of going to pin-trading events held at cafés. For her, it would appear that the act of collecting offers more than the simple pleasures of accumulating commodities—it is about the people met in the process and the locality of the café that makes the community of collectors feel welcome, accepted, and like part of a family:

[4.7] It had crossed my mind on occasion about how great it was that these pieces of metal and enamel that we all love so much can bring people from all walks of life together and unite them in their love of music, the HRC and all that it stands for...Sure we all collect pins, bears, beanies, t-shirts, shot glasses and now of course our swipes to help build up our collections

into something that we're all proud of, but what about all the great people that we meet and get to know along the way?...It doesn't matter where you come from or what you do to earn your living, what matters is we all share a love for the same things and we pull together to help each other get that special pin that we'd really love to have in our collections.

[4.8] King's view of collecting displays a realization that there is more to the object than its form or simply collecting it; the object becomes almost like a gift that brings with it the joy of social connection and a pride in one's own achievements. She goes on to explain:

[4.9] Not many hobbies are like that, that's something else that I think makes us keep the HRC close to our hearts, we're proud of our local café's [*sic*] and we should also be proud of those who choose to get involved and help each other out...The HRC collectors make this hobby a much more personalized one so to speak, where instead of thinking of the people that we trade with simply as a way to get the pins we need, we count them as friends. Sure a lot of these friends we might not ever get the chance to meet unless we are lucky enough to attend the same event or visit each other's home café's [*sic*], but, even if we don't meet them, and I hope I can speak for most of us when I say this. To us our fellow collectors mean a whole lot more to us than simply an email address and packages in the post.

[4.10] In the second half of her blog entry, King points to the importance of the local café for resident collectors—they can swipe their membership card at cafés around the world and visit new cities but being a local collector means that their nearest café becomes a focal point where other travelers can visit them. For Gregson and Crewe, "consumption occurs in sites and spaces that are ordinary and mundane in their location and in their situation within everyday life, and that consumption is frequently practised here in relation to some very ordinary sorts of goods" (2003, 2). However, by extension, the trading experience in a local café to one collector is enhanced because foreign collectors bring new and rare pins that will add variety and something out of the ordinary to their own collections. Also, in the regular events organized and held by resident collectors at their local café, a sense of community is established with the HRC staff who are themselves more than happy to accommodate collectors as it further establishes brand loyalty.

[4.11] A lot of the pin tales blogs serve as itineraries for planned and recently completed trips to several HRCs at once. Collectors look forward to and revel in the opportunity to swipe their cards, get credits on their online accounts and, of course, add to their pin collections. Entire holidays and business trips are often scheduled around fitting in as many different cafés as possible; sometimes collectors go out of

their way to visit a hard-to-get-to café, incurring higher than normal travel costs to take time out and swipe. Being there counts, and collecting a souvenir pin specific to the city is physical proof of their efforts. While their online map of café visits gets more complete, their pin collection naturally increases in size. Yet, more importantly, the number of memories and experiences they have gathered on their travels builds more meaning into the physical, autobiographical collection. For Susan Pearce there are three predominant modes of collecting—souvenir, fetishistic, and systematic (1995, 32)—but it is the first of those modes which most describes the kinds of pin collecting done by HRC enthusiasts. As she says of souvenir collectors, "the individual creates a romantic life-history by selecting and arranging personal memorial material to create... an object autobiography" (32). As a consequence, "the souvenirs of a lifetime serve to make time itself personal, familiar and tamed" (244). For the HRC pin collector, these objects are clearly personal and represent a life-long investment in traveling and buying, but they also confirm to the individual and other pin collectors (through the collection at home and the pin locker facility online) that the journey took place—they are a little bit of a foreign city brought back home. Pearce makes this point in her reconsideration of collecting: "Souvenirs speak of events that are not repeatable, but are reportable; they serve to authenticate the narrative in which the actor talks about the event" (1994, 196).

[4.12] The photos taken at each stop on their journey also stand as visual reminders and proof of their geographical race to be bigger and better collectors, and the virtual blog space allows them to share and boast about their achievements. Online collector profiles, with a map to record visits and a locker to list pins, and the pin tales pages, with travel stories and pictures, represent what Viviane Serfaty calls "a connecting space between the diary-writer and society." The screen itself becomes "a symbolic space where dreams and fantasies can be projected" (Serfaty 2004, 471). However, pin collectors use the online screen space to project reality—their trips and collected items—and thus it serves as more than just a site for dreams and fantasy—it acts as a record of dreams fulfilled and fantasies experienced.

[4.13] The trip written about by David Rodriguez in *Pin Tales* highlights the extraordinary efforts that he and other collectors make to get more pins and visit new cafés. Over 17 days he traveled to 10 cafés in eight countries: Detroit, Chicago, London, Cardiff, Cairo, Sharm El Sheik, Beirut, Bahrain, Dubai, and Cologne. Some places served as mere stopovers (he was in Bahrain for only 4 hours) and in other cafés he spent an entire evening trading with other collectors (in Cologne he reunited with collectors from London whom he had previously met when he had passed through a few days earlier). Interestingly, his diary of cafés visited and pins bought extends to include reviews of the restaurants themselves, their environs, and the local amenities of the cities. With tips and advice for fellow HRC collectors, travel stories on the *Pin*

Tales blog act just like a Rough Guide for tourists at the same time as they also represent the collected memories and personal experiences of the individual collector. The pins bought and traded while on holiday, like other souvenir objects, "help to comprise tourism"; moreover, "it is not simply objects-in-motion but also objects-that-stay-still that help make up tourism" (Lury 1997, 76). The pins are clearly important—they are the reason collectors travel to cities they might not have ordinarily been interested in visiting—but the pin tales that describe the act of consumption within the contexts of travel and tourism follow the approach offered by Arjun Appadurai in his discussion of commodities and value: "From a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context" (1986, 5). After being in Beirut, Rodriguez writes,

[4.14] I was very surprised with the city. I guess I was expecting a city in ruins, but the truth is that I found a great city with lots of new construction. I felt like I was in Europe again, you can see the a lot [*sic*] of the French in Beirut, yet they have their own flavor. I didn't have to pay for a visa since I was staying less than 2 days (for up to 2 weeks, you can get a visa at the airport for \$17) I didn't have any problems going in or out, no one ever asked me whether I had been to Israel or anything like that...I know that Beirut has a long history, but if you ever make it to the Middle East, I highly recommend that you make a stop there. Don't spend much time at the Hard Rock, and be sure to avoid the Bayview hotel. Other than that [*sic*], I had a good time!!!!

[4.15] As a HRC pin collector it might seem surprising that Rodriguez recommends not to spend too much time at the café, but get out and explore instead. However, what this suggests, as I intimated earlier, is that collecting HRC pins is not the sole objective for collectors. The potentials of traveling, getting out and seeing new things in new cities, are just as much part of the collecting experience as the purchasing of merchandise. Meeting others, swiping visits, and seeing the sights go hand in hand with the accumulation of pins for HRC collectors. In John Urry's discussion of the consumption of tourism he suggests that "satisfaction is derived not from the individual act of consumption but from the fact that all sorts of other people are also consumers" of services and souvenirs they buy while traveling (Urry 1995, 131). In Rodriguez's pin tale, there is a social aspect of travel and collecting HRC pins that gives him satisfaction—he clearly enjoyed meeting other collectors, seeing new places and new cafés, and offering advice and suggestions in his recounting of the trip. Again, the personalization inherent in a collection (memories attached to the objects collected) is augmented by physical places and virtual spaces—being in Beirut and recalling the experience in a blog online.

[4.16] For both Joli Jenson and Paul Booth, fan communities (particularly those online) offer a number of potentials that extend the experience of being a fan. They are "supportive and protective" because "they are believed to offer identity and connection" (Jenson 1992, 14). The blogs, chats, and posts that fans exchange encourage "collectivity and unification" (Booth 2010, 60) that stem from a shared passion; in the case of pin collectors this passion is for collecting pins, traveling to new cafés, and a desire to be further immersed within the HRCPCC community. The pin tales that people can contribute to thus represent attractive travel guides that display and advertise to other online members an individual's enthusiasm, knowledge, cultural capital, and, most importantly, personal identity. Whether this virtual identity is entirely accurate or a facsimile, an exaggeration, or even false, it is a personal reflection of how club members want to be seen by others and thus stands as a marker of personal meaning: "To represent their own conceptual sense of self—their 'me' identity—as it applies in the 'real world'" (Booth 2010, 163).

[4.17] Indeed, it would seem that one identity the pin tales are promoting is that people who travel to cafés, buy pins as souvenirs, and represent the connection between fan tourism and collecting are the most authentic and legitimate type of HRC collector. Their lockers, blogs, profiles, visit maps, and pictures are signs of the fact that not only is HRC fandom about the physical ephemera that fans collect and the places and spaces they visit, but it is also about the convergence of the physical and virtual, the collector and the tourist, the local and the global. In this way, the mass-produced objects at the heart of this confluence become signifiers of an intriguing story, of the merging between all aspects of the collecting process, and of what it means to be a fan within a culture of the mass consumption of commodities. Or, as Igor Kopytoff explains in the "The Cultural Biography of Things,"

[4.18] In complex societies, by contrast, a person's social identities are not only numerous but often conflicting, and there is no clear hierarchy of loyalties that makes one identity dominant over others. Here, the drama of personal biographies has become more and more the drama of identities... The biography of things in complex societies reveals a similar pattern. In the homogenized world of commodities, an eventful biography of a thing becomes the story of various singularizations of it, of classifications and reclassifications in an uncertain world of categories whose importance shifts with every minor change in context. (1986, 89–90)

5. Conclusion: Pin collecting as heterotopic experience

[5.1] The HRCPCC, its members, their travels to collect more pins, and the use of the online profile and the *Pin Tales* blog present us with different perspectives on how

space is used, consumed, and manipulated by collectors—those who have a working knowledge of the real places (cafés across the world) and the online spaces (pin locker and visit map). Indeed, what we have seen from the pin tales is that collectors from all over the world shrink distances between those places by using the virtual space as a meeting point with other collectors; this meeting point, at the same time, also becomes a site for revisiting HRCs and the city-specific pins bought and traded there. An individual's memory of traveling to cafés around the world, collecting new pins, and attaching significant memories to these objects becomes a signpost of recognition for other collectors who have done the same, or plan to do it in the near future. As blogs do, collector memories are built up as an extra layer of meaning on top of the original collectible object and thus collectors can share and experience new café visits and stories about buying pins with others at the same time as they engage with their own consumption practices. One person's experience of traveling to a café or attending a local collecting event then adds to and frames another person's who went there (or will go there) for similar reasons but may not have necessarily seen or done the same things.

[5.2] In the HRC we see nontraditional fan spaces such as the more tourist focused shop, restaurant, and bar utilized by collectors alongside more business and commercial-oriented spaces in the city such as hotels, office blocks, and other high street stores. HRC varies in its location and accessibility. Some cafés are in the middle of the downtown or business districts while others are attached to hotels in huge leisure complexes. Almost all spaces in which cafés are located, apart from those in theme parks, are generic and often mundane in their appearance: a city street corner or market square. What marks out a café as uniquely Chicago, Boston, Barcelona, or Brussels is the decor and merchandise on the inside. An empty and blank space, or "non-place" to use Marc Augé's (1995) term for generic places like airport lounges, stations, and hotels that are used year round for various business and leisure activities, the HRC becomes an active and real fan space through fan tourism, collecting, and personal interaction. Most sites of pilgrimage are "*multiply* coded" (Brooker 2007, 430), and thus fandom connected to place differs for each fan. Locations that inspire fan pilgrimage have real world uses; they are not just used or visited by fans or collectors, therefore fans have to actively make these places special—either through physical transformation of the space (adding familiar objects) or performance in that space (costume and cosplay). According to Will Brooker, fan pilgrimage is about pretending, performance, and making the new from "the familiar and quotidian" and so fan collectors travel to a café, borrowing Brooker's phrase, approach "the location with their own agenda," and "are able to transform 'flatscape' into a place of wonder. They bring their own urban imaginary, their own maps of fiction and their own angles on the everyday" (443).

[5.3] In transforming generic spaces like HRCs into recognizable places through collecting city-specific pins and other merchandise, fans are creating self-styled identities from a corporate brand. However, notions of space and place are also changed so that foreign cities become familiar sites for HRC pin collectors who regularly travel to build their online profile and add to their locker. The Hard Rock becomes a destination that confirms what fans like and, more importantly, who they are. Merchandise and city contexts combine to make HRC a safe place in which fans revel, or, as Yi-Fu Tuan argues in his book *Space and Place*, "When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place" (1977, 73). In reconciling the contradictory nature of HRC pin collector experiences—their relationship with the objects, traveling to the physical place, blogging on a virtual space—we might use the work of Michel Foucault and his conception of the heterotopia. In opposition to the nonphysical spaces of utopias, which Foucault feels are "unreal spaces," heterotopias are

[5.4] real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. (Foucault 1986, 24)

[5.5] Following Foucault, Ken Gelder sees the heterotopia as imagined "but it also has some kind of realisation, somewhere" (Gelder 2007, 81). For Hard Rock pin collectors then, the heterotopia is realized in the object itself as it combines and simultaneously represents, contests, and inverts the physical real place of where it was bought and the virtual space of the web. Pin collecting is therefore both things at the same time. Ultimately, all spaces that collectors inhabit are lived spaces, spaces of possibilities that are at the same time non-places (as defined by Augé) and real places. They offer a dialectic space important to communal life and community: absolute, relative, and relational (Harvey 2007, 45). For collectors of merchandise and travel souvenirs like HRC pins, place and space are in constant flux as individuals within the community move between the object, cafés, and the multiple spaces of their online presence. Collectors, in their pin tales and pin lockers, report their experiences and confirm their efforts yet concepts of the fixed space are no longer relevant, particularly in an age of convergence where all things and all people can play with and interpret objects in different ways through different media. The collection represents a heterotopia, containing real objects from real places, in which and through which collectors can access new worlds, meet new people, and travel to different geographic spaces.

[5.6] In *The System of Objects* Jean Baudrillard proposes that the collection is personal and "what you really collect is always yourself" (2005, 97). As in fan studies, there is a clear link between identity and object of fandom—one reflects the other. In that respect, Cornel Sandvoss argues that fandom is "a symbolic resource in the formation of identity and in the positioning of one's self in the modern world...and the integration of the self into the dominant economic, social and cultural conditions of industrial modernity...it is, in every sense, a mirror of consumption" (2005, 165). In the HRC pin collection, then, we see personalized depictions of history—mirrors to the self and the self transformed as it travels the world. Objects therefore embody memories of things past and inform activities and what one does with the collection in the present and future. There are necessary components of life as it is defined by the historical trajectory from birth to death. Baudrillard continues, "It is in this sense that the environment of private objects and their possession (collecting being the most extreme instance) is a dimension of our life which, though imaginary, is absolutely essential. Just as essential as dreams" (2005, 103). However, if fandom and collecting are about formations of the self, then they are also products of the cultural environment—how we are influenced by culture and what parts of culture we take into our own lives. Jenkins defines fan culture as a "culture that is produced by fans and other amateurs for circulation through an underground economy and that draws much of its content from the commercial culture" (2006, 325). In this way we can also understand practices of HRC pin collecting where mass-produced and public objects are taken into the personal collection of the individual. Again Baudrillard recognizes this:

[5.7] As for collecting proper, it has a door open onto culture, being concerned with differentiated objects which often have exchange value, which may also be "objects" of preservation, trade, social ritual, exhibition—perhaps even generators of profit. Such objects are accompanied by projects. And though they remain interrelated, their interplay involves the social world outside, and embraces human relationships. (2005, 111)

[5.8] Once collected, these pins are made into talking points and allow for social and commodity exchange between individuals on the Web and in store as they become highly valued and desirable within the wider Hard Rock fan collecting community.

6. Notes

1. As of August 2013 there were 2,273 friends of the Hard Rock Collectors Club Facebook page.

2. As of August 2013 there were 1,725 members with personal pin lockers that were open for all members to view. Individuals can opt to share their pin lockers so others can see what pins people have, contact collectors, and offer to trade or buy pins.
 3. *Pin Tales* ran for 2 years with 11 issues between June 2004 and September 2005. Originally created to act as a sort of travelogue for pin collectors, its use and functionality were superseded by other avenues of communication and interaction on the Web site. As already mentioned, as of 2012 HRCPC has had an official Facebook page which now allows for greater accessibility and networking with other collectors. Individuals can post photos, tag favorite images, and use the site to describe their recent trips to cafés and what pins they purchased.
 4. *Pin Tales*, June 2004. All subsequent blog entries discussed come from this edition. It is available online (<http://www.hardrock.com/estore/buzzpower/asps/user/non-frames/#a>). I have chosen to focus on this first issue because it established the terms of reference for subsequent issues. Also, Fairbairn as moderator clearly set out what kinds of collector stories were deemed suitable for publication and even the type of collecting methods he saw as legitimate and worthy—that is, not buying from eBay. As moderator and collector, Fairbairn is clearly distinguishing between forms of and reasons for collecting HRC pins, and therefore this first issue is important evidence of the motivation of the HRCPC.
-

7. Works cited

- Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 3–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Augé, Marc. 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Translated by John Howe. London: Verso.
- Bal, Mieke. 1994. "Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting." In *The Culture of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, 97–115. London: Reaktion Books.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 2005. *The System of Objects*. Translated by James Benedict. London: Verso.
- Belk, Russell W. 1995. *Collecting in a Consumer Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Booth, Paul. 2010. *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies*. New York: Peter Lang.

Brooker, Will. 2005. "The *Blade Runner* Experience: Pilgrimage and Liminal Space." In *The Blade Runner Experience: The Legacy of a Science Fiction Classic*, edited by Will Brooker, 11–30. London: Wallflower.

Brooker, Will. 2007. "Everywhere and Nowhere: Vancouver, Fan Pilgrimage and the Urban Imaginary." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 10 (4): 423–44.

Cavicchi, Daniel. 2007. "Loving Music: Listeners, Entertainments, and the Origins of Music Fandom in Nineteenth-Century America." In *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, edited by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, 235–49. New York: New York University Press.

Cline, Cheryl. 1992. "Essays from *Bitch: The Women's Rock Newsletter with Bite*." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 69–83. London: Routledge.

Combs, James. 1989. "Celebrations: Rituals of Popular Veneration." *Journal of Popular Culture* 22 (4): 71–77.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs. 1992. "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 84–106. London: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel. 1986. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16 (1): 22–27.

Garde-Hansen, Joanne, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading. 2009. "Digital Memory Practices." In *Save As...Digital Memories*, edited by Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading, 129–34. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gelder, Ken. 2007. *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice*. London: Routledge.

Gregson, Nicky, and Louise Crewe. 2003. *Second-Hand Cultures*. Oxford: Berg.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9781847888853>.

Harvey, David. 2007. "The Kantian Roots of Foucault's Dilemma." In *Space, Knowledge, and Power: Foucault and Geography*, edited by Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden, 41–47. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Hinerman, Stephen. 1992. "'I'll Be Here With You': Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 107–34. London: Routledge.

- Hoskins, Janet. 1998. *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jenson, Joli. 1992. "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 9–29. London: Routledge.
- Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 64–91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lury, Celia. 1997. "The Objects of Travel." In *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, edited by Chris Rojek and John Urry, 75–95. London and New York: Routledge.
- Marshall, P. David. 2004. *New Media Cultures*. London: Arnold.
- Martin, Paul. 1999. *Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self: The Reinvention of Museums?* London and New York: Leicester University Press.
- McCourt, Tom, and Patrick Burkart. 2007. "Customer Relationship Management: Automating Fandom in Music Communities." In *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, edited by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, 261–70. New York: New York University Press.
- Milano, Brett. 2003. *Vinyl Junkies: Adventures in Record Collecting*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Pearce, Susan M. 1994. "Collecting Reconsidered." In *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, edited by Susan M. Pearce, 193–204. London: Routledge.
- Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. London: Routledge.
- Porter, Jennifer E. 1999. "To Boldly Go: *Star Trek* Convention Attendance as Pilgrimage." In *Star Trek and Sacred Ground: Explorations of Star Trek, Religion, and American Culture*, edited by Jennifer E. Porter and Darcee L. McLaren, 245–70. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Reynolds, Simon. 2011. *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to its Own Past*. London: Faber and Faber.

- Sandvoss, Cornel. 2005. *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Serfaty, Viviane. 2004. "Online Diaries: Towards a Structural Approach." *Journal of American Studies* 38 (3): 457–71.
- Shuker, Roy. 2004. "Beyond the 'High Fidelity' Stereotype: Defining the (Contemporary) Record Collector." *Popular Music* 23 (3): 311–30.
- Shuker, Roy. 2010. *Wax Trash and Vinyl Treasures: Record Collecting as a Social Practice*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Smith Feranec, Kelley C. 2008. "Collecting the Internet: How Individually Authored Websites Have Generated Nostalgia and a Desire to Collect the Internet." In *Collecting and the Internet: Essays on the Pursuit of Old Passions through New Technologies*, edited by Susan Koppelman and Alison Franks, 9–22. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Stanley, John. 2002. *Miller's Collecting Vinyl*. London: Octopus.
- Straw, Will. 1997. "Sizing Up Record Collections: Gender and Connoisseurship in Rock Music Culture." In *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, edited by Sheila Whiteley, 3–16. London: Routledge.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Urry, John. 1995. *Consuming Places*. London: Routledge.
- White, Michele. 2012. *Buy It Now: Lessons from eBay*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/9780822391876>.

Theory

Exhibiting fandom: A museological perspective

Dorus Hoebink, Stijn Reijnders, and Abby Waysdorf

Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

[0.1] *Abstract*—Fandom and the collecting of objects are interwoven phenomena. The insights of museum studies may be brought to bear on the study of fan objects to provide a better understanding of fan collections and fan collecting. A museum studies focus assesses the meanings and interpretations of material objects as well as the workings and dynamics of collections, collectors, and collecting. With science fiction fan collections used as examples, we highlight object and museum theory, demonstrating how this theory and its conceptual tools can be used to analyze fan culture. We then apply these tools to a case study: the EMP Museum in Seattle, Washington, a museum in the United States largely dedicated to the genre of science fiction. When fan collections enter the realm of museums, fandom becomes a world that involves touching, smelling, collecting, and controlling objects.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Collection theory; Fan collections; Museology; Museum theory; Object theory

Hoebink, Dorus, Stijn Reijnders, and Abby Waysdorf. 2014. "Exhibiting Fandom: A Museological Perspective." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0529>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Hello, welcome to my inventory of my *Star Trek* collection...I'm going to start with—actually this is one of my favorites—this is my *Star Trek* Master Replicas type 2 phaser. They go for about \$700 on eBay now. It comes with the option to power it up; the second power strip is red. Then it goes into overload mode...of course it fires as well. So I keep this one under glass. It's in a nice museum case, so it's protected against the elements. So that's on display in my *Star Trek* collection.

[1.2] This is how Jisaid08 (2010) starts a three-part video series, posted on YouTube, entitled "My *Star Trek* Collection" (since removed). Throughout the videos, we see, among other items, the above-mentioned *Star Trek* phaser, produced by the firm Master Replicas, displayed in a separate glass case, 1970s action figures in mint condition, and small-scale models of the starship *Enterprise*.

[1.3] Numerous collectors of Star Trek memorabilia and paraphernalia videotape their collections to show them to the world. Browsing through these videos, it is fascinating to see how many people have extensive collections of objects that are part of the Star Trek experience. Take, for example, Steve Kelley, who is interviewed by a local New Hampshire TV station showing off his futuristic cabinet of curiosities in which thousands and thousands of Star Trek objects are amassed. Sitting in a replica of Captain Kirk's command chair, he tells the audience, "Anything you can think of, I probably have something that has Star Trek on it." The camera zooms in on Star Trek babushka dolls, Star Trek Oreo cookies, and Star Trek cigarettes. Kelley explains that as a kid he just wanted toys to play with, but eventually he got to the point where he preferred looking at them on display while they were still in their original packaging. This led him to decide to collect more, "but as more stuff came out, I started to buy more." This led to the desire "to try and have almost a piece of everything" (Kelley 2008).

[1.4] As these Star Trek fan collections demonstrate, fandom and collecting are interwoven phenomena. Of course, not every fan has as an extensive fandom-related collection, and not every collector would describe himself or herself as a fan, but collecting is certainly an essential part of fandom. Surrounding oneself with objects that refer to the cultural icons one loves is one of the ways fandom is performed. However, despite the recognition that fans often collect objects relating to their fandom, collection has been a generally neglected part of the study of fans. Fan scholarship has preferred to focus on texts and on the interconnections between reading, writing, and receiving them. This work, although important and integral in showing the ways in which fans interpret, understand, and make use of favorite texts, as well as showing fans' creativity and production skills (Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins 1992, 2006; Jenson 1992; Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2005; Hellekson and Busse 2006; Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington 2007; Booth 2010), has been less fruitful in providing a framework for understanding the role of physical objects of fandom.

[1.5] That collecting has been a relatively neglected area of fan practice perhaps points to the conflicting thoughts around consumption within fandom. As Matt Hills observed, for much of the field of fan studies' short life, particularly in its earliest stages, "fandom is salvaged for academic study by removing the taint of consumption and consumerism" (2002, 30). A focus on textual and media production demonstrated how fans are more than obsessive consumers and provided a continuing base from which to look at the more affective aspects of fandom. The collection of fan objects is, as John Fiske (1992) has noted, concerned with the purchase of mass-produced commodities, and therefore it elicits the specter of the duped or obsessive consumer. Fiske's study of the economy of fandom, which utilizes Bourdieu's (1989) ideas of cultural and economic capital in order to analyze different elements of fan practices,

addresses collection, although in a limited manner. Fiske's section on collecting stresses the fan collector's desire for accumulation of all fandom-related objects rather than on the exclusivity of certain special objects and on the ways in which the economy of fandom reproduces the official cultural economy, such as in the way comic book fans talk about their collections as investments. However, Fiske's briefness on the topic and his fixation on the cheapness of fan commodities, compared to official cultural collections, and the subordinate status of fans and their collections means that there is space for a more nuanced concept of fan collecting.

[1.6] It is crucial to differentiate between the concepts of commodity and object. The former implies an emphasis on the acts of selling and buying and is part of a (neo)Marxist theoretical framework that merely focuses on the agency (or the lack thereof) of the consumer. Furthermore, the concept of commodity focuses on questions about the use and exchange value of fan-purchased physical objects. Yet this is not the only, or even the most prominent, way that fans make use of certain mass-market commodities. Sandvoss acknowledges that "fans give their consumption an inherently private and personal nature that removes their object of consumption from the logic of capitalist exchange" (2005, 116), making these objects something other than commodities. The studies of toys conducted by Geraghty (2006) and Gray (2010) provide an empirical backing to this, showing how objects "contribute to the storyworld, offering audiences the prospect of stepping into that world and contributing to it" (Gray 2010, 187). For many fans, these products are connected with their fandom on a personal level and are transformed into beloved objects—cornerstones of imaginative fan worlds.

[1.7] There has been an increase in studies that explore these connections and provide a greater understanding of the material aspects of fandom. Studies relating to the use of toys in imaginative play in fandom and involvement in fan worlds, such as those by Geraghty (2006) and Gray (2010), provide an interesting look at how objects are used by fans, especially young fans (and the adults they become). The study of comic book fandom (Brown 1997; Tankel and Murphy 1998; Woo 2012) has also provided insight into the way fans collect and use collecting as part of their fandom, perhaps because of comic books' intertwining of texts with objects. Rehak's study of the "*object practices from Famous Monsters*" (2013, 4), which focuses on the material practices of horror fans, contains the arguments that, first, the community of monster kit builders and action figure collectors "introduces a productive 'noise' of negotiation into market trends" (27), and second, objects play a role in the creation and reimagining of media texts. Finally, Geraghty (2014) discusses how and why material culture and collecting play important roles in fans' personal narratives.

[1.8] This scholarship demonstrates that an approach via museum and object studies can be valuable by removing fan-collected objects from the commodity-consumption framework and viewing these objects and their collection in a new light. Insights from museum and object studies contribute to a better understanding of fan collections and fan collecting by utilizing the field's focus on the ascribed meanings and interpretations of material objects as well as the workings and dynamics of collections, collectors, and collecting, thus broadening the field's theoretical horizon with regard to objects beyond the concepts of commodity and consumption by making use of theory surrounding material and cultural objects and the dynamics of collections and collecting. Previous work has focused mainly on amateur collecting, which is only part of the story; fan cultures are not restricted to the domain of fan homes but are increasingly represented in museums. This "museumification" of fan culture is an intriguing process wherein meanings of fan culture objects are transformed and the museums themselves are tasked with proving to a wide audience that fan culture is worthy of being in a museum. What happens when fan culture enters the museum?

[1.9] We begin by highlighting object and museum theory, showing how this theory and its related conceptual tools can be used to analyze the material dimensions of fan culture. The starting point for our discussion is the work of Pearce (1992, 1994), supplemented with the more recent work of, among others, Preziosi and Farago (2004) and Curtis (2012). Although Pearce's work does not focus on fan culture, her pioneering texts on museums, collections, and objects are fertile ground for analyzing and theorizing the fan collector and the transformations that private collections undergo when they are institutionalized through the workings of the museum. Next, we apply these tools to a specific case study: the EMP Museum in Seattle, Washington, which opened its doors in 2000 and which is unique in its large collection dedicated to the genre of science fiction (note 1). Many of the exhibitions at the EMP Museum are based on the private collections of fans, in particular that of museum founder (and Microsoft cofounder) Paul G. Allen. Analyzing the EMP Museum therefore not only illustrates how concepts from object theory can be applied to (official) fan collections but also shines light on the underlying process: the museumification of fan culture.

[1.10] Our data are based on a site analysis of the science fiction presentations at the EMP Museum conducted between August 31 and September 2, 2011, and between July 29 and August 5, 2012. Exhibitions, including wall texts, were photographed in detail, and audio guides and films were recorded. A combination of methods is used here. We applied discourse analysis to all museum texts (wall texts, object labels, audio guides, and shown films), and we used a semiotic analysis to gain a better understanding of the interplay between the museum texts, the displayed objects, and the presentation techniques.

2. Objects, collections, and museums

[2.1] In museology, objects are not consumed but are acquired or collected. From this interpretation comes an understanding that physical things have a life in the possession of their owner after purchase and are not discarded after they have been used, read, or seen. Moreover, the museological concept of the object stresses the materiality of things, which implies that they are durable and may survive the lives of their original owners and start new lives of their own, creating new relations and new contexts. Therefore, objects can link the past to the present and can operate as strong personal or even collective mnemonic devices. An understanding of the sheer materiality of things means that collected items, including fan-collected items, have to be considered on their merits as objects, rather than being seen as other cultural texts. As Pearce states, "Material culture does not match language in a one-to-one sense, still less in a one-in-relation-to-one sense, but has an independent social existence of its own which contributes to social reproduction" (1992, 22)

[2.2] Pearce (1992) argues that objects are independent from words, and language alone is not sufficient enough to comprehend them. Sometimes we have to see, touch, and smell objects to understand them. Additionally, we use them to create our social lives in order to feel at home. Objects have the power to invoke memories and emotions, and many objects are intrinsic, though not always explainable, parts of our biography. Pearce focuses on the power of objects to carry the past into the present, but this concept can be extended. Objects link us not only to other times but also to other people, other places, and other lifestyles or taste cultures. They can be direct and immanent mediums, to the extent that we perceive objects as the "real thing," especially when juxtaposed against descriptions, images, and recordings.

[2.3] In order to explain the exact functioning of the object as medium, Pearce (1992) turns to semiotics, asserting that semiotics is applicable not only to the workings of language and texts but also to objects. Using the work of the semioticians Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and Roland Barthes (1915–1980), Pearce recognizes that an object as sign consists of a signified (the message that the sign communicates) and the signifier (the physical embodiment of that message). An object then functions as a sign as it communicates a message (signified) through its materiality (signifier). For example, a gold ring communicates luxury and beauty (the signified) through its materiality (expensive gold) and form (a shiny and perfect round form). The fact that the material and form (signifiers) of the gold ring stand for luxury and beauty (signified), however, is a result of human choice. Thus, the exact message that an object communicates is constructed by interpretation.

[2.4] This interpretation—the choice for the meaning of an object—can take on two forms, metonymic and metaphorical, a distinction originally developed by Stewart (1993). First, the interpretation of an object can be metonymic, which means that an object stands for a larger entity in which it is embedded. The gold ring thus stands for all the gold rings ever produced, as it is an intrinsic part of the wide range of gold rings, just as a piece of pyrite in a natural history museum acts like a specimen standing for all the pyrite in the natural world. However, we can also interpret objects metaphorically. In that case, "they are brought into an arbitrary association with elements to which they bear no intrinsic relationship" (Pearce 1992, 27). This means that we can interpret our gold ring in multiple ways, such as an example of the material lifestyle of the nouveaux riches, who decorate themselves ostentatiously with the most luxurious items they can find.

[2.5] According to Pearce (1992), objects can be simultaneously interpreted metonymically and metaphorically because their material form always remains an intrinsic part of their wholes; through their durable physicality, they always keep metonymically connected to (though often physically detached from) their origins. At the same time, they can be endlessly reinterpreted metaphorically as time progresses and social structures transform. This model not only applies to one-of-a-kind objects but to all objects in collections, whether they be ordinary work tools, unique handcrafted artifacts, or mass-produced merchandise.

[2.6] Although objects are meaningful to us through interpretation, they truly begin to speak when they are put into relation with other objects and together form a collection. Objects undergo a transformation when they become part of a collection. They are removed from their preexisting worlds and are used and arranged in a collection-dedicated place, which allows them to take on new meanings (MacDonald 2006). Collections are ordered and serialized, which means that relations between them are established and implied. It is in this set of relations that objects take on new meanings. Simply put, making collections is a way of ordering, or grasping, the world (Preziosi and Farago 2004).

[2.7] Collecting is not a univocal practice. Pearce (1992) distinguishes three different types of collections: souvenir collections, fetishistic collections, and systematic collections. Souvenir collections—another concept introduced by Stewart (1993) and incorporated by Pearce in her theoretical framework—are the most personal objects that form collections. They are the materialized memories of experiences. Objects have the physical power to survive, and in this sense, souvenirs function as triggers of personal memories. They help us narrate our life and present it to ourselves and others as an organic whole, with its own unique continuity. Here we see a metaphoric interpretation emerging. Although it remains possible to connect a single souvenir to

the whole of that type of souvenir (as they are often mass produced), in combination with other souvenirs in our collection, it metaphorically becomes part of our own personal narrative (Stewart 1993).

[2.8] Although it can be said that almost every fan is a collector of souvenirs, some fans start serious collections with a personal systematic rationale that can lead to collections of impressive proportions, described by Pearce (1992) as fetishistic collections. However, in spite of the fact that the fetishistic collection has a similar quality to museums, it does not follow the same intellectual or scientific rationale as the museum. Rather, fetishistic collections are formed through the collector's personality. Pearce (1992, 84) states: "The fetishistic nature lies in the relationship between the objects and their collector, in which the collection plays the crucial role in defining the personality of the collector, who maintains a possessive but worshipful attitude toward his objects." In other words, the collection stands or falls with the individual behind it. These collections can be seen as impressive physical extensions of their owners' personalities. They identify themselves with their collections and the emotions that their objects evoke, which stimulates them to collect even more, until they have a sample of everything. Fiske (1992, 45) equates all fan collecting with this fetishistic collecting, claiming that these collections "stress quantity and all-inclusiveness over quality or exclusivity." However, although fetishistic collecting is eye-catching, it is still only one form of collecting that a certain kind of fan engages in.

[2.9] Although use of the word *fetishistic* remains common within museum studies, the term is highly contested within fan studies. As pointed out by Winget (2011, 30), among others, in general use, the term carries a strong derogatory connotation, reflecting a sense of pathology or obsession that prevents a more considered look at collectors and collecting. Therefore, we choose to follow Winget's suggestion and use the term *devoted* instead. This allows us to emphasize collectors' above-average loyalty to their collection and the worshipful attitude expressed by devoted collectors toward their objects while avoiding connotations of pathology.

[2.10] In devoted collections, the collection itself becomes much more predominant, as if it takes on a life of its own, in which the objects are detached from their original contexts as objects in souvenir collections. The metaphorical interpretation of how a certain object fits in our biography is superseded by metaphorical interpretations of how we were able to obtain certain objects, how much or how little we paid for them, how rare certain objects are, and how certain objects fulfill important roles in the completeness of our collection. One of us (D.H.) encountered an example of such a collection while attending a board meeting of the Dutch Star Trek fan club, the Flying Dutch. Although all the members of the board shared an interest in and passion for Star Trek—which was materially communicated by donating to D.H. an autographed

photo of one of the cast members, a clear example of a souvenir—divisions arose when one of the board members started describing his Star Trek trading card collection. He exhibited a level of enthusiasm for his collection that was not shared by his fellow board members, who withdrew from the conversation. The trading card collector was keen on collecting every trading card that was put on the market, even—or especially—the ones with mistakes, which are naturally quite rare. In this case, the passion for Star Trek was momentarily superseded by the passion related to collecting trading cards. Completing the collection had taken on a life on its own, giving way to a whole new range of stories and anecdotes that were trading card related and not Star Trek related.

[2.11] The third category, systematic collecting, which Pearce (1992) identifies with the methods of museums, has a long history. In the European context, the earliest systematic collections date back to the Renaissance. In this period, well-to-do noblemen and citizens became increasingly curious about the world they lived in and felt an urge to closely examine God's creations (Shelton 1994). Reading and interpreting the text of the Bible was found to be insufficient to truly admire and understand divine harmony; one had to experience the Creation empirically. It is from this time that the first private material collections throughout Europe were constructed in the form of cabinet de curiosités, studiolas, and Wunder- or Kunstkammern. These collections were the private domains of affluent gentlemen who pursued the goal of accumulating God's creation in their own personal realms, according to then-current scientific standards (Schulz 1994; Halbertsma 2012). Each collection had to be organized as specified by the following methods of classification: naturalia, specimens found in the natural world; artificialia, human-created objects such as art and products of craftsmanship; scientifica, scientific and measuring instruments such as lenses and clocks; antiquita, the remaining objects of the ancient civilizations; and curiosity, remarkable and unique objects such as freaks of nature, which demonstrated God's power to transform His own creation.

[2.12] Collections continued to grow and increase in number during the scientific revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries but were now expected to be composed on the basis of new encyclopedic principles (Findlen 2012). The world had become classifiable; this was translated into collections that obtained typical examples of all encyclopedic categories. The focus shifted from the remarkable to the typical (Schulz 1994). In the 19th century, an emerging Romantic worldview encouraged a celebration of the past and traditional community. Objects were perceived to function as links to the pasts of nations and communities and to embody the unique characteristics of the world's different peoples (Halbertsma 2012).

[2.13] The professionalization and institutionalization of the collecting, conserving, and exhibiting of material culture in the emergence of the public museum set standards of how to properly deal with objects. Systematic collections "are formed by the imposition of ideas of classification and seriality on the external world, but the world itself has, one way or another, given rise to these ideas" (Pearce 1992, 88). They are centered around specific intellectual disciplines, which then dictate the sorts of objects that are collected, the number of objects collected, and the ways in which they are displayed (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). All objects in museum presentations undergo metaphorical interpretation as they are positioned using an intellectual or scientific rationale that offers qualifying structures, such as natural history or art history, as these are human constructs and therefore metaphors (Pearce 1995). However, within these qualifying structures, objects can form metonymies for these specific metaphors (Pearce 1995, 275)—for example, "This Monet painting stands for Monet's landscapes," or "This Monet painting stands for the Impressionist movement."

[2.14] Systematic collecting differs from the other two forms of collecting in its seemingly neutral and universal method of object discrimination. It is often said that when an object enters the museum, it ceases to be an object and becomes a specimen of an overarching scientific rationale—or, in our case, metaphor (Preziosi and Farago 2004; Curtis 2012). Although these ideas of neutrality and universality of museum collecting have long been challenged by critical museologists (Vergo 1989; Bennet 1995), a widespread belief maintains that public museums are the highest consecrating authority in the world of material culture (Bourdieu 1993). Private collecting, however, also continues to flourish. Nowadays countless private collections exist around every conceivable subject: baseball cards, matchboxes, World War II paraphernalia, egg cups. Private and professional collecting are not separate worlds; they have influenced and continue to influence each other. Many private collections end up in museums, which then have to fit them into their institutional metaphorical interpretations—a task not always easy to achieve.

3. Captain Kirk's command chair enters the museum: The transformation of collections

[3.1] The museum's professionalized methods of collecting, conserving, and displaying objects, along with its strong rhetorical claim on objectivity and universality, mean that museums transform objects to a greater degree than personal collecting. The authority that professional curators have over material culture makes their arsenal of metaphorical interpretations of objects both more extensive and more influential than that of private collectors. Bourdieu (1993) uses the concept of consecration to explain the influence of museums over material culture. In the eyes of many,

museums make the final judgment regarding the value and presiding interpretation of cultural objects.

[3.2] However, the academic movement of new museology has accused traditional museums of excluding and misinterpreting the material culture of a substantial part of the communities that museums are claiming to represent while favoring and overrepresenting the culture of a white, Western, and elitist upper class. In reaction to this critique, the museum world has started a process of transformation, offering more serious dedication to, among other things, popular culture, treating it as a legitimate and museum-worthy part of social life (Moore 1997). Additionally, new museums have been built dealing solely with aspects of popular culture. A result of this process is that many objects of fan culture have found their way into museums, both old and new.

[3.3] The EMP Museum is one such museum. The bulk of the objects in its science fiction exhibitions come from extensive private souvenir and devoted collections, of which Paul Allen's private collection is the most visible. Allen's wealth and status allow him to collect on a far grander scale than the average fan, yet the style and manner of his collection are the same. It is interesting to see how his collection has moved through all of Pearce's categories. The souvenir phase of his collecting career can be traced back to his old collection of science fiction paperback books, which he acquired during his youth. In his autobiography, Allen (2011) tells the anecdote that as an adult, he discovered that his mother had thrown away this collection. Because, retrospectively, science fiction stories played an important role in triggering his fascination with the possibilities of technology—and therefore were an important source of inspiration during his later career—Allen tracked down copies of his original collection, retrieving almost all of them. That small collection of paperbacks served as the material component of Allen's personal biography, providing him with a sense of continuity: science fiction paperbacks as souvenirs.

[3.4] As Allen's wealth increased, his ability to collect in a devoted fashion greatly increased. The precise content of Allen's entire collection is shrouded in mystery because his acquisitions take place in high secrecy. What we do know is that Allen's collection follows the broad range of his personal interests: antiquities, fine art, rock-and-roll curios, vintage technology, military aircraft, science fiction literature, science fiction film props. "The breadth of what interests me sometimes surprises even me," Allen notes in an interview (Gopnik 2012). This is what distinguishes Allen's larger devoted collection from a traditional museum's systematic collection: Allen's collection follows no other rationale than his own.

[3.5] However, Allen's wealth and status in the city of Seattle, where both commercial and philanthropic investments have made him influential, mean that not only could he afford to collect on a level that most cannot, but also that he could gain

legitimacy for his collection. His wealth enabled him to acquire particularly rare or interesting objects, especially ones used in the filming of science fiction works. It also allowed him to create and open the EMP Museum, which was almost entirely funded by Allen (Zebrowski 2000). He presented it as a gift to the city of Seattle and to the communities of science fiction and music fans.

[3.6] We can see in the creation of the EMP Museum a desire to legitimize Allen's own collecting and the items that he collects. By creating a museum, and therefore utilizing the rhetoric and status of museums, Allen's collection moves from the realm of the devoted to the realm of the systematic. It now must operate outside of Allen, adhering to the neutral and universal concept of the museum rather than the personal and idiosyncratic desires of the private collector. In theory, if Allen ceased to exist, the collection would still endure, grow, and change. By submitting to this, Allen, and those who now work for the museum, are arguing that science fiction is worthy of official public attention and that these objects are worthy of preservation.

[3.7] The transformation of Allen's collection from devoted to systematic is not without problems. One option could have been to simply display Allen's science fiction collection—possibly supplemented by other interesting objects coming from other private collections—and leave it at that. However, this kind of exhibition would only be interesting or accessible to a relatively small community of fans who either share Allen's passion or are already in the know about the social and technological value of science fiction. Allen's desire was to not only display his achievements as a collector but also to showcase science fiction's contributions to society. "Science fiction has always been a vehicle for entertainment, but more importantly it's a genre that is forward-looking by nature, expanding people's views of science, technology and the future—and their exciting possibilities," Allen stated when the first science fiction exhibition was about to open in the EMP Museum (Business Wire 2003).

[3.8] When Allen's collection entered the EMP Museum, it also entered the museum world as such, which is a challenging operation for two reasons. First, unlike a private collection, a museum has to justify its existence to the wider world. Although Allen himself could take pride in the status of his collection over other collections of similar material, the museum management was confronted with the fact that their new collection was based on a popular genre that ranks low on the ladder of cultural hierarchy. Although science fiction is commercially successful, it is commonly perceived to be culturally inferior to texts or artifacts from high culture. There is an immense rivalry in the museum world: art museums are at the top of the hierarchy, and other types of museums fight for recognition. The EMP Museum must exist and compete in this atmosphere.

[3.9] Second, Allen's science fiction paraphernalia, by becoming part of a museum collection, must be promoted in commercial terms. This is distinct from, but related to, the need to make the science fiction collection feel museum-worthy. Museums, and especially American museums, have to reach a broad audience—one that comprises more than just science fiction fans. The EMP Museum must persuade museumgoers, many of whom have no special interest in science fiction, that science fiction is enjoyable and fascinating. The objects contained in the collection must seem culturally relevant to a larger population, not just to specialists or in-the-know fans.

[3.10] The EMP Museum's mission statement notes, "EMP is a leading-edge, nonprofit museum, dedicated to the ideas and risk-taking that fuel contemporary popular culture" (<http://empmuseum.org/>). How does one present this intellectual rationale with objects that are reflecting a single person's specific interests? This challenge is clearly observable in the EMP Museum. Its curators, now distinct from Allen's world of collectors and operating in the world of museums, must make the argument that science fiction is museum-worthy and has important things to say. How is this done with film props, costumes, and first editions of novels?

[3.11] The first strategy to make Allen's collection museum-worthy can be seen in the descriptions provided of the objects on display. This follows a standard museum discourse in which a metonymic interpretation takes place within the metaphor of scientific and intellectual museum interpretation. Thus labels are positioned next to the objects, such as this one by Captain Kirk's command chair: "*Enterprise* command chair used on *Star Trek*, 1966–1969. From the Paul Allen Family Collection." This is a typical metonymy presenting Captain Kirk's command chair as one example of the models and props used in the classic *Star Trek* series. To provide another example, a miniature alien spaceship from the film *Independence Day* is labeled as follows: "Alien fighter craft filming miniature used in *Independence Day*, 1995," metonymically interpreting the miniature as an example of *Independence Day* filming miniatures and as an example of filming miniatures in general. These labels resemble descriptions found in history museums such as, "Clay pot used for cooking, AD 200–300, Germany."

[3.12] Although such descriptions are in line with museum standards, they do not contribute to the EMP Museum's and Allen's ultimate goal: showcasing science fiction's value. This is less of a problem for history museums and their clay pots: it is their purpose to display the materials people used in daily life. There is no friction between metonymy and metaphor. Many objects in the EMP Museum are accompanied by longer texts that metaphorically put them into context, most notably by the audio guides. The audio guide describes the uniform worn by Nichelle Nichols as Lieutenant Uhura on the original *Star Trek* series as follows:

[3.13] It might be hard now to remember what a big deal it was in 1966 for an African American woman to be portraying an officer on a spaceship on television. Lieutenant Uhura wasn't just a staff member; she was in the chain of command. She could conceivably have command of the ship, if need be.

[3.14] The audio guide then tells us that Nichols was thinking of quitting the show, but that she was convinced not to by Martin Luther King Jr. because she was an inspiration for African American children. Here metonymy and metaphor come closer together, although it takes several steps to reach the intended metaphor: science fiction contributed to social thought; *Star Trek* was a prime example of this; Lieutenant Uhura, played by a black actress, was part of this; here you see her costume.

[3.15] Many other contextualizations fail to reach the ultimate metaphorical interpretations and get stuck on a making-of level. *Battlestar Galactica: The Exhibition* (2010–12; the exhibition covers both the original TV show, which aired 1978–79, and the reboot, which aired 2003, 2004–9) is introduced with the following wall text: "The series acted as a lens through which to examine complex issues such as war, the clash of cultures and religions, the quest for meaning in an uncertain world, and how we try—and sometimes fail—to maintain our humanity during times of crisis." This metaphor is reflected in the structure of the exhibition, with one part dealing with the rebooted *Battlestar Galactica's* search for the planet Earth and with that the search for meaning. The other part deals with the struggle between humans and the humanlike Cylons, raising questions about what it means to be human and the distinction between good and evil. Some displayed objects reach these metaphors through steps similar to that of Lieutenant Uhura's costume: *Battlestar Galactica* raised questions about what it means to be human; this was achieved by comparing human behavior with that of humanlike robots called Cylons; one of these Cylons was called Number Six; here you see Number Six's iconic red dress.

[3.16] However, other objects do not reach this level. The audio guide describing a full-sized model of the Viper Mark II space fighter (on loan from Universal Cable Productions) goes into the process of filming a Viper Mark II entering the hangar deck after flying in space. The question the producers faced, and what was discussed on the audio guide, was whether or not the Vipers would emit smoke. Although these considerations are interesting for *Battlestar Galactica* fans, they fail to support the overarching metaphorical interpretation of the Viper Mark II. The most notable example of the making-of metaphor is *Avatar: The Exhibition* (2011–12), where the EMP Museum offers visitors a closer look in the world building and production of James Cameron's 2009 film *Avatar*. Here are displayed prototypes of the alien Na'vi

characters—among other prototypes—that formed the basis for the graphic designers to model their virtual world on. The breach between metonymy and metaphor is circumvented, as it is clearly the exhibition's goal to showcase *Avatar's* achievements in the world of virtual world building and filmmaking. These technological achievements are of a different kind than science fiction's focus on technology. *Avatar's* futuristic technology is mostly remarkable within the field of filmmaking; it is less a critical reflection on the role of technology in society. Therefore, the overarching making-of metaphor of the *Avatar* exhibition does not really cohere with the EMP Museum's mission regarding science fiction.

[3.17] From this it can be concluded that the EMP Museum struggles with positioning the collections it makes use of in its script. To bridge this metonymy-metaphor gap, the museum uses other museum tools to get its message across. For example, general wall texts inform the visitor about the value of science fiction. We already encountered the introductory text to *Battlestar Galactica: The Exhibition*, but the exhibition *Icons of Science Fiction* (2012–) and *Can't Look Away: The Lure of the Horror Film* (2011–) also give clear directions. *Icons of Science Fiction* (figure 1)—the exhibition displaying Captain Kirk's command chair, Uhura's costume, and *Independence Day's* miniature spaceship—begins with this wall text:

[3.18] Science Fiction asks big weird, questions...As you encounter the questions, ask yourself what answers you would give. And a last question: Who cares? What does science fiction has to do with us? The fact is, all the bizarre stuff in SF is a metaphor for real stuff. In other words, SF warps reality in order to reveal the truth about it.



Figure 1. *Icons of Science Fiction* exhibition at the EMP Museum in Seattle, Washington. Photo by Dorus Hoebink. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.19] *Can't Look Away: The Lure of the Horror Film* is introduced with the following wall text: "But horror films offer more than just entertainment. They expose the primal emotions of the human experience by tapping into the anxieties of contemporary

culture and visualizing the unspeakable fears and forbidden desires that lie just beneath the polite face of society."

[3.20] Additionally, the museum has an excellent oral history program for which numerous insiders from the world of science fiction have been interviewed. These interviews are shown on screens throughout all the exhibitions. In the horror exhibition, horror directors Eli Roth, Roger Corman, and John Landis convincingly describe "the lure of the horror film" and even designate a horror canon, consisting of 10 films. A separate short documentary has been made for each film. In the same exhibition, however, the gap between object and script returns: the props from famous horror films do not support the exhibition's arguments about why horror is so alluring. They are accompanied by an audio guide in which the private collectors who own the props tell anecdotes about acquiring the props or meeting the props' designers. Here the difficulty of bringing devoted collections into a systematic environment is clearly evident.

[3.21] Other museum tools include the intricate touch-screen computers that offer a wide amount in-depth information and the museum building itself. Frank O. Gehry's design is a highly visible landmark that symbolically communicates that something extraordinary is going on (figure 2). The EMP Museum building, which resembles the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, in Spain, also designed by Gehry, is clearly demarcated from its surroundings. This is supported by the museum's theatrical mise-en-scènes. For the horror exhibition a haunted forest was designed; for the *Avatar* exhibition a small-scale Pandora, including blue light, was reconstructed. In combination with the largest high-definition LED screen in the world and the museum's entrance, by which are shown video clips and short science fiction films, the museum's exterior and interior can be seen as a shrine to popular culture, a place for celebration rather than critical contemplation. Through this message, another metaphorical reinterpretation takes place: science fiction objects now have to be presented as accessible, high-quality entertainment, highlighted by evocative exhibitions with dramatic lighting, immersive music, and sound effects. The EMP Museum must look like a museum as well as talk like one. These objects are presented as no longer just for geeks; they are for everyone, and therefore, they are worthy of being placed in a museum.



Figure 2. Exterior of the EMP Museum in Seattle, Washington, by architect Frank O. Gehry. Photo by Dorus Hoebink. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.22] On a more general level, the EMP Museum also displays the permeability between categories like the souvenir and devoted personal collections on the one hand and the systematic, institutionalized museum collection on the other hand, showing how the three can sometimes bleed into each other. Most of the displayed objects are rare and therefore unsuitable for collecting as souvenirs. However, as is common in most museums, the EMP Museum's extensive stores offer visitors the opportunity to add to their own personal souvenir collections. These gift-shop souvenirs can function as additions to an already existing souvenir fan collection—the museum has *Battlestar Galactica* T-shirts and miniature starships *Enterprise* for sale—or as a remembrance of the museum visit as such. Yet the general supply of merchandise is largely detached from the museum's exhibitions and can be described as a general store for science fiction and rock music aficionados looking for quirky gadgets, such as guitar-shaped spatulas and Thin Lizzy shot glasses. Yet the most typical museum store souvenirs, such as museum guides, exhibition catalogs, and postcards of objects on display, are missing.

4. Conclusion

[4.1] The museumification of fan culture (and the related processes of legitimization and popularization of fan culture) is not without risk. This transformation could alienate the core fan base. Museumification may result in too categorized and distant a presentation of objects, one that that only hard-core fans will emotionally respond to. The struggle for legitimization may also end up in an overtheorized approach, complicating the matter to the point of alienating fans. There is also the opposite danger: the fan community might perceive popularization as dumbing things down. Paradoxically, most fans do not dislike the fact that they are misunderstood by mainstream society; instead, they relish being in a sphere of exclusivity.

[4.2] Yet the museumification of fan heritage increases the number of people who have access to the objects of interest. These objects, rather than being kept in Allen's private spaces, instead now have the opportunity to be experienced by those who value them and what they represent. Legitimization may also arouse feelings of pride in members of the science fiction community, as their favorite genre is finally presented as genuine culture. Even popularization may be held in high esteem. As one of the curators of the EMP Museum told the authors, "A lot of guys would love to visit our museum with the wives and girlfriends. For our renewed permanent exhibition we are looking for ways to involve them, pointing out that they always liked science fiction; they just did not know that until they visited us." The desire to broaden and legitimize science fiction, moving it away from its stereotypes, means that fans could embrace attempts like the EMP Museum.

[4.3] The EMP Museum is not the only museum facing challenges of matching its collection with the stories its curators want to tell. Museologists have taken note of these problems, with Michael J. Ettema famously observing, "Objects are the props, not the message" (cited in Moore 1997, 34). This happens when the objects that comprise the collection are not the immediate point of reference. Objects can answer questions like "What is something?" or "What happened?" Questions like "How did something happen?", "Why did something happen?", and "What is the contribution of something?" are more difficult for an object to answer and seem to require an overarching metatext.

[4.4] The Maison d'Ailleurs, self-described as a "museum of science fiction, utopia, and extraordinary journeys" (<http://www.ailleurs.ch/en/>), in Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland, struggles in much the same way. Although the Maison d'Ailleurs has a larger focus on the literary tradition of science fiction, whereas the EMP Museum focuses more on the media side of science fiction, and although it does not shy away from analyzing science fiction from an academic perspective, it has problems positioning its collection of novels, pulp magazines, and other memorabilia in a literary and intellectual script.

[4.5] Time will tell whether the EMP Museum, the Maison d'Ailleurs, and similar examples of museumification, such as Stockholm's ABBA The Museum (<http://www.abbamuseum.se/en/>) or the Smithsonian's collection of National Treasures of Popular Culture (2008–12), will indeed succeed in reaching the general public. These aspirations, however, do illustrate a more general development: the ascent of popular fan culture into the domain of museums—once considered as the temples of high culture—whereby inferior mass objects become part of sanctified cultural categories.

[4.6] Studying these museological dimensions of fan culture can be highly valuable. For too long, scholars working within the discipline of fan studies have focused on texts and the textual practices of fandom without paying much attention to the material, physical dimension of fan culture, despite its clear importance to many fans. Fandom is about more than reading and writing; it also about touching, smelling, controlling, and collecting the objects of fandom. Museologists, despite the developments within the field of new museology, have been too hesitant to cross the divide between disciplines. However, the current interest in fan collecting and fan collections is a promising development, and it should be noted that such collecting does not only take place in the amateur realm. High-status institutions, such as museums, play increasingly important roles in the representation of fan and popular culture, as our example of the EMP Museum has demonstrated. It is important to critically assess these representations to better analyze these dimensions of fandom.

5. Note

1. The EMP Museum started as the Experience Music Project in 2000. In 2004, a separate museum, the Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame, was opened under the same roof as the Experience Music Project. Later these two organizations merged to form the Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum, which in 2011 became the EMP Museum. Throughout, we use "EMP Museum" to describe the science fiction collections and exhibitions on display at this facility.

6. Works cited

Allen, Paul. 2011. *Idea Man: A Memoir by the Founder of Microsoft*. London: Penguin Books.

Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bennet, Tony. 1995. *The Birth of the Museum*. London: Routledge.

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

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1989. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

- Brown, Jeffrey A. 1997. "Comic Book Fandom and Cultural Capital." *Journal of Popular Culture* 30 (4): 13–31. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1997.3004_13.x.
- Business Wire. 2003. "Paul G. Allen Unveils New Cultural Project Devoted to Science Fiction; Dynamic, Interactive Exhibits and Programs Bring Sci-Fi to Life in Summer 2004." *Business Wire*, April 17.
<http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20030417005325/en/Paul-G.-Allen-Unveils-Cultural-Project-Devoted#.U0bq4FfeD1U>.
- Curtis, Neil G. W. 2012. "Universal Museums, Museum Objects and Repatriation: The Tangled Stories of Things." In *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 2nd ed., edited by Bettina Messias Carbobell, 73–81. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Findlen, Paula. 2012. "The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy." In *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 2nd ed., edited by Bettina Messias Carbonell, 23–46. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Fiske, John. 1992. "The Cultural Economy of Fandom." In *The Adoring Audience*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 30–49. New York: Routledge.
- Geraghty, Lincoln. 2006. "Aging Toys and Players: Fan Identity and Cultural Capital." In *Finding the Force of the Star Wars Franchise: Fans, Merchandise and Critics*, edited by Matthew W. Kapell and John S. Lawrence, 209–23. New York: Peter Lang.
- Geraghty, Lincoln. 2014. *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom, and Collecting Popular Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Gopnik, Blake. 2012. "Blake Gopnik on Art-Collecting Philanthropist Paul Allen." *Newsweek*, October 15. <http://www.newsweek.com/blake-gopnik-art-collecting-philanthropist-paul-allen-65355>.
- Gray, Jonathan. 2010. *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. New York: NYU Press.
- Gray, Jonathan, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harington. 2007. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York: NYU Press.
- Halbertsma, Marlite. 2012. Introduction to *The Heritage Theater: Globalisation and Cultural Heritage*, edited by Marlite Halbertsma, Alex van Stipriaan, and Patricia van Ulzen, 1–22. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse, eds. 2006. *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press.

Jenson, Joli. 1992. "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 9–29. New York: Routledge.

Jisaid08. 2010. "Star Trek Collection Part 1." YouTube.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyZ6OY0DFiw>.

Kelley, S. 2008. "ABC Interview with *Star Trek* Collector Steve Kelley." YouTube.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ps5RkiRvpoU>.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1998. *Destination Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

MacDonald, Sharon. 2006. "Collecting Practices." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon MacDonald, 81–97. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Moore, Kevin. 1997. *Museums and Popular Culture*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

Pearce, Susan. 1992. *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

Pearce, Susan. 1995. *On Collecting. An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. London: Routledge.

Pearce, Susan, ed. 1994. *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. London: Routledge.

Preziosi, Donald, and Claire Farago, eds. 2004. *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Rehak, Bob. 2013. "Materializing Monsters: Aurora Models, Garage Kits and the Object Practices of Horror Fandom." *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1 (1): 27–45.

Sandvoss, Cornel. 2005. *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Schulz, Eva. 1994. "Notes on the History of Collecting and of Museums." In *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, edited by Susan Pearce, 175–87. London: Routledge.

Shelton, Anthony Alan. 1994. "Renaissance Collections and the New World." In *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, 177–203. London: Reaktion Books.

Stewart, Susan. 1993. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tankel, Jonathan David, and Keith Murphy. 1998. "Collecting Comic Books: A Study of the Fan and Curatorial Consumption." In *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity*, edited by Cheryl Harris and Alison Alexander, 55–68. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Vergo, Peter. 1989. *The New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books.

Winget, Megan A. 2011. "Collecting Artifacts of Participation: Videogame Players, Fan-Boys, and Individual Models of Collection." In *Digital Media: Technological and Social Challenges of the Interactive World*, edited by William Aspray and Megan Alicia Winget, 27–72. Plymouth, MA: Scarecrow Press.

Woo, Benjamin. 2012. "Understanding Understandings of Comics: Reading and Collecting as Media-Oriented Practices." In *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 9 (2): 180–99.

Zebrowski, John. 2000. "Selling EMP to Tourists Will Be Next Big Project." *Seattle Times*, June 11. <http://community.seattletimes.nwsources.com/archive/?date=20000611&slug=4026045>.

Theory

Peril-sensitive sunglasses, superheroes in miniature, and pink polka-dot boxers: Artifact and collectible video game feelies, play, and the paratextual gaming experience

Ian M. Peters

Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Material artifacts included in video game packaging, referred to in the industry as feelies, operate as media paratexts that are both extensions of and separate from the video games that inspired them. Although most discourses on video game feelies are centered on 1980s text-based adventure games, feelies have continually been included in contemporary games, albeit primarily in collector's or special editions. To explore the diversity of feelies and how they are able to generate their own texts away from the digital game itself, I identify two specific types of feelies: artifact feelies, which are life-size reproductions of objects from within the game space, and collectible feelies, which serve as extensions of the game space into the physical realm but tend to include objects more frequently associated with fan collecting activities. Taking an interdisciplinary approach that includes material culture studies and media studies, I show how feelies allow scholars to gain further insight into how screen media operate away from the screens themselves, how the accumulation of material objects in the digital age encourages us to reevaluate our notions of the material and the immaterial, and how the concept of play is crucial to understanding how these objects are reappropriated in ways that move beyond their originally intended use.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Adventure game; Artifact; Atlus; *Batman*; *Catherine*; Collectible; Diegesis; *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*; Immersion; Infocom; Interactive fiction; Material culture; Media studies; New media; Play; Role-playing game; RPG; Text-based game

Peters, Ian M. 2014. "Peril-Sensitive Sunglasses, Superheroes in Miniature, and Pink Polka-Dot Boxers: Artifact and Collectible Video Game Feelies, Play, and the Paratextual Gaming Experience." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0509>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] The focus of most scholars' examinations of video games tends to be on the game's digital components. Although some scholars have researched the materiality of gaming systems and their relationship to games (Murphy 2009), less attention has been paid to the material objects included in many of the games themselves. However, since the days of Infocom and the heyday of text-based games, video games

have often been accompanied by physical objects that materially connect virtual, digital gaming worlds to our own. For the past several decades, such objects, called feelies, have usually been included only with collector's, special, and limited editions of games. Academic interest in feelies is growing, with scholars such as Ian Bogost, Nick Montfort, and Veli-Matti Karhulahti exploring their use in classic Infocom text-based games. However, they have primarily focused on historical examples rather than examining how feelies play a role in contemporary gaming culture, having moved beyond their origins in text-based games.

[1.2] Video game feelies raise questions about how we immerse ourselves in fictional worlds on material, narrative, and cultural levels, encouraging scholars to further explore the intersection between the virtual and the real. As Karhulahti (2012, 7n1) states, the term *feely* was most likely adopted from Aldous Huxley's 1931 novel *Brave New World*, in which feelies are a "cinema-like form of entertainment that provides the sensations of touch and smell in addition to sight and sound." However, the choice of the term in Huxley's novel seems to have been ironic: Huxley treats feelies as dangerous things in a technological world. As one scholar states, "We surrender our reason and join with the undifferentiated masses, slavishly wiring ourselves into the stimulation machine at the cost of our very humanity" whenever "we open ourselves to these illusory environments" (Murray 1997, 21). Video game feelies, however, are to be celebrated rather than feared. Immersing ourselves in fictional worlds is something we all do at some point in our lives, through playing with toys (frequently tie-in merchandise) as children, playing a video game, watching a movie on a giant screen in a darkened theater, or reading our favorite novels. Video games, unlike these other forms of entertainment, are digital environments in which players interact with their surroundings by playing the game rather than merely observing. As Gray (2010) explains, games operate as extensions of childhood play, giving players the opportunity to interact with and inhabit a fictional space. When we play with media franchise toys, we either extend or re-create the same narratives we experienced previously, or we create our own stories using these material objects. Feelies serve as an extension of a game's fictional world; like toys, they enable us to explore that world away from the game through acts of play and reappropriation.

[1.3] By examining feelies in greater detail, scholars can learn more about how video games operate away from the games themselves and can gain further insight into the concept of play, into how the accumulation of material culture in the digital age impels us to reevaluate our notions of the material and the immaterial, and into how cultural practices are created through the utilization of material objects. There has been little scholarly concern to date for how these objects generate texts in their own right, or how players' own cultural practices enable them to either engage with or resist their intended or dominant use. In this study I identify a distinction between artifacts and

collectibles, using this distinction to clarify and expand on our existing understanding of feelies. I chose these terms on the basis of terminology frequently utilized in media studies and material culture studies, and I have combined both these fields in my approach.

[1.4] To explore the concepts of artifact and collectible feelies, I examine three contemporary video games and the feelies they contain: *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition* (Rocksteady Studios, 2009), *Batman: Arkham City—Collector's Edition* (Rocksteady Studios, 2011), and *Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition* (Atlus, 2011). I also briefly discuss some others, such as *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Infocom, 1984), to provide historical context for these more contemporary examples, as well as to provide further insight into the concepts of artifact and collectible feelies. This initial study is designed to flesh out the distinction between them and propose possible functions for these objects through a material culture studies lens. Before future studies can apply these concepts to specific audience studies, a theoretical understanding of the diversity of feelies must be established. Through engaging with the off-screen aspects of these games, we gain further understanding of the relationship between material culture and digital media and of how play operates between the digital and the material, linking the two while also extending the game's life in the material world through cultural reappropriation.

2. Artifacts, collectibles, and the materiality of video game paratexts: Feelies in historical and contemporary context

[2.1] As Montfort (2005) explains, feelies in their earliest forms served multiple functions: they were antipirating measures, they were designed to entice buyers during an era when games were expensive, and in some cases, such as *Wishbringer* (Infocom, 1985), they even inspired parts of the digital game. Bogost (2010) describes early feelies and contextualizes them as extending a game's experience beyond the computer, allowing the player to contemplate the game while not interacting with its digital components. Additionally, Bogost identifies feelies as "value-adds" that "not only made a game seem more hefty and substantial as a product but also allowed developers to clarify the systems or fiction of a game away from the computer" (19). He discusses the diversity of early feelies, which included reproductions of game artifacts, comic books or novels related to and produced exclusively for the game, cosmetic features for game controllers, and other custom-made accessories. In many instances, these objects were incorporated into standard editions of text-based games that had no visual components. Such games are frequently considered examples of interactive fiction, which Montfort describes as "computer programs that display text, accept textual responses, and then display additional text in reaction to what has been typed" (2005, vii). Feelies during this era,

which consisted of mostly inexpensive objects (materially speaking), provided a visual and physical link to the game, offered additional narrative information, and aided in the player's immersion in the fictional world and identification with the main character (Karhulahti 2012).

[2.2] A good example of the early use of feelies is Infocom's 1984 adaptation of Douglas Adams's 1979 novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which includes a variety of life-size feelies that re-create specific objects from within the game, such as a pair of Joo-Janta 200 Super-Chromatic Peril-Sensitive Sunglasses made out of construction paper, a ball of Fluff (a cotton ball), a "Don't Panic!" button, and an empty plastic bag marked "Official Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Microscopic Space Fleet" (figure 1). Players could reappropriate them for other uses, such as by incorporating them into their material surroundings, using them to augment their daily wardrobe (the button could easily be attached to clothing or bags), or playing with them away from the game in whatever fashion they chose.



Figure 1. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Infocom, 1984) feelies. Top: Destruction orders for Arthur Dent's house and planet Earth. Middle: Don't Panic! button, Peril-Sensitive Sunglasses, and Fluff. Bottom: Official Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy microscopic space fleet. Photograph by author. [[View larger image.](#)]

[2.3] Much of the game packaging during this era was elaborately constructed (Bogost 2010; Karhulahti 2012). In some games, the packaging itself counts as a feely; *Hitchhiker's* included an advertising pamphlet from the fictional Megadodo Publications on the outside of the box (figure 2). This booklet, which is also a game manual, introduces the player to Adams's fictional universe and also lists potential uses for the feelies within the box, which the player can choose to follow, resist, or ignore. One of the feelies it lists might be called a nonfeely because it does not actually exist: the pamphlet informs players that the box contains "no tea." This is a reference to the endless (and endlessly unsuccessful) search for tea by Arthur Dent, the game's protagonist. For those familiar with Adams's sense of humor, "no tea"

serves as the perfect commentary on feelies and their suggested uses: the monetary value of a feely's components does not determine its value, significance, or meaning. For some people, feelies are no more than what they appear. For others, they are gateways into the world of the game and sources of inspiration for players' own adventures. Players assign meaning to objects according to how they use them, socially and culturally (du Gay et al. 1997; Woodward 2007). Feelies exist within the game and have been re-created in the physical world, thus transcending their material components and offering the possibility of cultural reappropriation and physical play.



Figure 2. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Infocom, 1984) description of feelies from the inside of the Megadodo Publications pamphlet attached to the outside of the game's packaging. Photograph from the Infocom Gallery (<http://gallery.guetech.org/hhgTTg/hhgTTg.html>). [View larger image.]

[2.4] It is feelies' ability to extend the game's experience that allows them to continue to function away from the game's digital components. Gray's (2010) study of media paratexts and Bogost's (2010) concept of extension provide theoretical models that illustrate how feelies function before, during, and after playing the game (note 1). Specifically, Gray's distinction between entryway paratexts, which the viewer experiences before encountering the text itself (and which are designed to control the viewer's initial reaction to the text), and in medias res paratexts, which the viewer experiences during or after experiencing the text, is of particular interest. According to Gray, toys attached to franchises, such as Star Wars, encourage children who play with them to create texts that act as points of entry into the franchise universe. The toys thus move children (and other consumers who play with them) beyond passive spectatorship while also keeping the stories alive between installments of the franchise. In the case of Star Wars, Gray argues, toys become the primary aspect of the franchise that children engage with. They not only extend the film series but also embody it. Gray argues that texts are in constant conversation with earlier texts and build on each other in our minds as we engage with them. This intertextuality means that they are continually growing and changing. For this reason, "paratexts may always work in medias res," and toys or video games "might place a text in a whole new setting, bit by bit shifting our understanding of it" (44–45). This function makes

feelies more than merely value-adds and extensions of a game (Bogost 2010). It also allows them to stand apart from that game, becoming textual generators of their own through acts of play and reappropriation.

[2.5] Feelies, which are linked to specific video games and operate like toys, embody two functions over the course of the player's engagement with them: entryway and in media res. When they are included in game packaging, feelies are often the first part of the game that the player engages with, thus acting as entryways into the text (note 2). Although tie-in toys are also utilized in acts of play and serve as entryway and in medias res paratexts, including feelies with the games themselves adds a new layer to their relationship with a source text that is itself inherently linked to play. Unlike movies and television, video games rely specifically on player engagement, where their choices affect what occurs on screen. Rather than seeking out tie-in toys separately, feelies are part of the game's package and play experience from the beginning. While they are not always included in every edition of contemporary games, and they are certainly not a requirement for playing the game itself, like all paratexts, they are available for those who wish to extend the game's experience beyond its digital components. They also make it possible for players to encounter and engage with the material elements of the game before the virtual ones.

[2.6] Although collector's and special editions of games are often dismissed by scholars as "tired clichés...in today's commercial video game marketplace" (Bogost 2010, 16), they nevertheless continue the long-standing tradition of utilizing physical objects to extend the gaming experience beyond the virtual realm. They do so in various ways. However, the fact that feelies are primarily included in more expensive exclusive editions of the games does affect our conceptions of them.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1995) discussion of how material objects are often used by their owners to express their identity within a physical space illustrates how our material surroundings assume meaning beyond the accumulation of things. Csikszentmihalyi argues that people often consider the objects they collect as extensions of their memory from the present into the future because they are indicative of who we are and who we were at various points in our lives. He also postulates that certain objects operate as power objects that magnify their owner's sense of power and importance. Fetishizing these objects, rather than acquiring and appreciating them for their instrumental value is, according to Csikszentmihalyi, a negative aspect of consumer society and culture. Power objects, from a Csikszentmihalyian point of view, are particularly dangerous because their rarity, expense, and lack of instrumental function means that their cost, in natural resources and labor, are unnecessary.

[2.7] However, it can be useful to see feelies packaged with the more expensive collector's editions as power objects if, as Woodward (2007) does, we consider that

their social and cultural function is to be such objects. In this view, the rarity and expense of some of these feelies serve to demonstrate their owner's financial investment or accomplishments as a collector, which are seen as positive achievements, especially in fan cultures. As Fiske explains, "The accumulation of both popular and official cultural capital is signalled materially by collections of objects—artworks, books, records, memorabilia, [and] ephemera," and such collections are points "where cultural and economic capital come together" (1992, 43). Although Fiske argues that fan collecting is more inclusive than exclusive (that is, fans would rather accumulate many common goods than a few expensive ones), he also points out that there are some exceptions. Feelies are still mass-produced objects and are not as exclusive or rare as film and TV props. Yet judging by some of the more popular games' resale values after they go out of print, their relative scarcity means that they have value as economic and cultural capital in gaming communities. As is the case with all collectibles, the prices fluctuate depending on supply and demand. Consider that on September 30, 2013, a sealed, limited-edition copy of BioWare's 2007 *Mass Effect* was selling for between \$325 and \$1,022.90 on Amazon.com, and used copies were selling for between \$59.99 and \$369.95. The game's original list price was \$39.99. Although later collector's editions often include exclusive content that can only be downloaded using a one-time-use code (thereby making a new copy desirable), this earlier example is distinguished from the standard edition only by special packaging and the inclusion of physical objects: feelies.

[2.8] The designations of *artifact* and *collectible* within the genre of feelies are based on terminology frequently used in both media studies and material culture studies. They illustrate conceptual differences between objects and between their roles in off-screen play. An artifact feely is a life-size reproduction of an object within the game world that players can hold in their hands and study in the physical realm exactly as a character in the virtual realm can. These artifacts seem to have been yanked from the immaterial world into the material one, giving the player the opportunity to examine the objects at leisure and to gain a tangible link to the intangible gaming universe. The term *artifact* is intended to connect the interactive uses of these objects to the uses discussed in material culture and museum studies. As Prown (1982, 1) says, "The term *material culture* is...frequently used to refer to artifacts themselves, to the body of material" through which material culture scholars study a community. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (<http://www.oed.com/>) defines an artifact as showing "characteristic signs of human workmanship or use" and notes that in an archaeological context, it is discovered through excavation. In the context of video games, excavation corresponds to the player opening the box and discovering the artifact feelies, interacting with them as entryway paratexts before experiencing the virtual world of the game. Artifact feelies are objects that are meant to have come from another time or place; they have a history ingrained in the fictional world of their

origin that is, in some cases, reflected in the objects themselves. These feelies are life-size, indicating that they serve a practical function within the game world. Holding them puts the player into a character's shoes, thereby expanding the game experience beyond the game's digital components while maintaining the potential to generate their own textual meaning.

[2.9] Playing with artifact feelies goes beyond playing with toy re-creations of artifacts from a fictional world. Playing with artifact feelies also permits discovery and exploration (figure 3). The link between play and discovery is frequently discussed in material culture studies. Perry (2012), for example, discusses how play is intrinsically linked to learning in a museum environment. According to Perry, "perceptual curiosity" is a key factor in establishing this link; museums use "a combination of senses, including sight, touch, sound, and sometimes even smell and taste" to draw visitors' attention (98). Although feelies do not necessarily register on all these senses, they do enhance the player's perceptual relationship with the digital game in relation to its contextualized surroundings (the museum here corresponds to both the digital game and the player's home). Interacting with these objects lets players learn more about these fictional worlds during all stages of game play and assign new meaning to them. It expands the game's experience into the physical world.

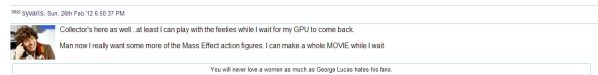


Figure 3. In TV Trope's *Mass Effect 3* (Electronic Arts, 2012) forum discussion (<http://tvtrope.org>), on February 26, 2012, user Syvaris draws connections to feelies and childlike applications of play while also proposing a way to merge them with other tie-in materials in an act of reappropriation. Cropped screen cap taken October 23, 2013, of TV Trope forum discussion page (<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/posts.php?discussion=3lnqp1tp7dbk2bbkf4m3njre&page=1425>). [View larger image.]

[2.10] Although artifacts are certainly collectible, collectible feelies differ from their artifact counterparts because they extend the game experience in different ways. Unlike artifact feelies, collectible feelies do not seem to have been pulled from the game world into our own. At the same time, the term *collectible* is linked to Woodward's (2007), Csikszentmihalyi's (1995), and Gray's (2010) discussions of material culture, as well as to media studies and cultural studies investigations of how fans collect merchandise and reappropriate it for their own cultural practices (Allison 2006; Fleming 1997). Collectible feelies are still frequently re-creations of objects from within that virtual space, but they are often scaled-down versions of large objects or even people. These objects, which include character busts, ships, and dioramas that re-create specific scenes, still provide a tangible link to the digital world, although without inviting players to feel that they are touching the same objects their

characters are. Although the packaging frequently introduces users to these items, and in some cases gives instructions on how to interact with them, the introduction to the game does not stop there. The paratextual entryway continues to the objects within and into acts of play and cultural reappropriation. Because many of us grew up playing with toys, licensed or otherwise, our reactions to these objects are similar. The reason collectibles frequently appear as busts or statues is that these objects can be contextualized almost as zen action figures, a term I propose that indicates that we play using our eyes and minds, rather than relying primarily on our hands.

[2.11] As with artifact feelies, discovery and exploration are important when playing with collectible feelies. Although they are still material objects that can be touched, we play with these toys using our eyes and minds rather than our hands. Collectible feelies can also be soundtracks, exclusive comic book or novel tie-ins, and other items that extend the gaming experience beyond the computer but are not physical reproductions of objects from the digital realm. These feelies enhance the player's perceptual relationship with the game by stimulating other senses (such as hearing) or extend the game's narrative into the off-screen world, allowing the player to experience that portion of the story at a more leisurely pace than in the game world. As Gray (2010) makes clear in his analysis of Star Wars figures, it is through the act of play that feelies provide the opportunity for gamers to extend the game's experience beyond the screen and, in cases like the Arkham games, keep the adventure going between official installments while also generating their own texts and other reappropriated uses in the process. Whether that play consists of childlike play or discovery and exploratory interaction, it contextualizes feelies paratextually, materially, and culturally. For this reason, we need to embrace Gray's proposal for the formation of a field of off-screen studies to complement the already accepted discipline of screen studies. Such a field would permit us to understand that paratexts play a "constitutive role in creating textuality, rather than simply consigning paratexts to the also-ran category or considering their importance only in promotional and monetary terms" (7).

[2.12] Although Gray (2010) does not identify material culture studies by name, this is effectively a call to incorporate that discipline into media studies, which I am endeavoring to do here. As Gray indicates through his description of off-screen studies, media and material culture studies have more in common than is frequently realized, and when combined, they lead to a better understanding of the relationship between the material objects and the media we consume. Video game feelies are an example of this relationship, providing for further insight into our perceptions of play and the intersection between the virtual and the physical. Video game feelies also demonstrate how popular culture material artifacts can be reappropriated into their

own cultural practices, and they provide a fuller understanding of video games in general.

[2.13] While the examples discussed in the remainder of this paper are recent when compared to *Hitchhiker's*, feelies continued to appear in collectors' and special editions of games throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, frequently in games connected to larger media franchises. For example, *Star Trek: The Next Generation—A Final Unity Collector's Edition* (Spectrum HoloByte, 1995) came with an LCD pin of the starship *Enterprise*, a limited edition Trek-themed box, and a poster. Similarly, *Robotech: Battlecry—Limited Edition* (Vicious Cycle Software, 2002) contained the game's soundtrack, art, dog tags, a T-shirt, and a lenticular motion card. These games, like those before and since, provide various opportunities to incorporate the objects into the players' own material world.

[2.14] The following games and the feelies they contain help illustrate artifacts and collectibles in more detail. I discuss *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition* and *Batman: Arkham City—Collector's Edition* together, showcasing the diversity of feelies in contemporary collector's editions and fleshing out the concepts of artifacts and collectibles. These two games also show how the two types of feelies function and extend the game's experience while also leading to new cultural reappropriation through play. I also address the relation of downloadable content (DLC) to the material components of the game, as well as how some material objects are designed to simulate a fictional past that helps players immerse themselves in the fictional world and find new ways of engaging with these objects that move beyond the game itself. My discussion of *Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition* explores how certain artifact and collectible feelies can combine in single acts of play. It also illustrates how some feelies extend the game experience and can be reappropriated through role-playing and areas of play and fandom that are a bit more adult than the other examples. *Catherine* reflects the facts that all feelies, like other material culture objects, mean different things to different people; how we use them is ultimately a personal choice.

3. Batarangs, zen action figures, simulated pasts, and reverse feelies: *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition* and *Batman: Arkham City—Collector's Edition*

[3.1] The feelies found in contemporary collector's and special editions of games tend to be of higher material quality than those that accompanied earlier games like *Hitchhiker's*, and many games, such as *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition*, include both artifact and collectible feelies. This variety provides additional opportunities for owners to reappropriate them through play and incorporate them into their owners' material surroundings. Many contemporary feelies cosmetically depict

the fictional history of the objects they represent, thereby creating a sense of reality that aids in the player's immersion in all stages of play.

[3.2] The *Batman—Arkham City* game is a sequel to *Arkham Asylum*, and the feelies incorporated in its collector's edition are exclusively of the collectible variety (figure 4). Each game also includes DLC, as many contemporary collector's editions do. Although DLC does not qualify as a feely, it does raise questions regarding how we treat digital objects in relation to material ones in contemporary culture. Examining both the games and the feelies they contain shows how contemporary feelies are tied to video games that include visual components, letting us better understand how video games function away from the screen and the diversity of ways these material objects can be played with.



Figure 4. *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition* (Rocksteady Studios, 2009) feelies. Top: In-game design batarang, batarang storage box, and Dr. Young's journal. Middle: *The Road to Arkham* comic book and Joker-modified color manual. Bottom: *Batman: Arkham Asylum* sticker with DLC codes on the back. Photograph by author.
[View larger image.]

[3.3] *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition* comes in a custom-designed batarang-shaped storage box collectible with the game's name imprinted in black letters across the front. The shape of this box is significant: it is in the shape of an iconic object from Batman's universe, and also alludes to a major feely inside it: the batarang, Batman's signature weapon. Players opening the box find inside a variety of artifact and collectible feelies. Unlike *Hitchhiker's*, this game does not list their intended uses on the outside of the box, leaving such decisions up to the player. The artifact feelies include a mounted, battle-scarred batarang (a replica of those featured in the game) and the worn embossed leather journal of game character Dr. Young, which provides additional information on Batman villains who have been patients at the asylum. Also included are several collectible feelies, such as a prequel comic titled *The Road to Arkham* (which was also available as a bonus with preorders for the

standard version of the game), a full-color game manual modified by the Joker (the game's main antagonist), an exclusive making-of DVD, and a sticker with codes on the back giving access to exclusive DLC.

[3.4] The collectible feelies extend the game into the physical world and have other uses beyond the game itself. The batarang-shaped case sets the tone for the game and houses the other materials; it can also be displayed prominently in the home as artwork. Because the interior of the case has a custom foam slot designed to hold the batarang, it may be seen as an equipment box that stores weaponry. It is called a "Waynetech Batarang Storage Box," indicating that it has the potential to exist within the fictional world itself. If the player chooses to ignore the game's logo printed on the front (or modifies the box so it no longer shows), then this collectible feely can transform into an artifact that can be played with in conjunction with the batarang. The comic provides information that situates the player inside the narrative leading up to the game; it can also be used as a source of ideas for other adventures of the player's creation. The modified manual, which at first glance might not mean much to players, takes on added significance after they wander the environment of Arkham and see how the Joker has altered the environment there in similar ways. The making-of disc provides additional production information, and the sticker can be applied to any surface that the player chooses, serving as a reminder of the game while also altering or augmenting the material object it is stuck on.

[3.5] Several of the artifacts included in *Arkham Asylum* are imbued with a sense of history and authenticity, helping players immerse themselves in the game world. Walter Benjamin (2007) famously argued that an aura is present when the uniqueness of an original object is experienced; notions of authenticity and presence are inherently linked to the history of that object. He proposed that mechanically reproduced objects could not possess such an aura because their status as reproductions removes the characteristics that make an object unique: the understanding that the object has a real history and the object's spatial and temporal proximity to the viewer. Because a mechanically reproduced object is not bound to a single location that the viewer has to travel to in order to experience its uniqueness, it loses historical and temporal trace, and it consequently lacks any auratic experience.

[3.6] When we use material culture studies to look beyond the Benjaminian limitations on the significance of these objects, focusing instead on their social and cultural use, the uniqueness of any specific object becomes less important than the ways players can either use video game feelies as they are intended to or resist those prescribed uses and incorporate the feelies into their own acts of play or material surroundings as they see fit. (Re)producing objects from the digital realm in the material one is essentially an attempt to bring players closer to the object in a

Benjaminian sense, thereby enhancing their immersion into that fictional space while providing a sense of reality that helps acts of reappropriation. If we interpret Csikszentmihalyi's (1995) power object positively instead of negatively as the author suggested, the temporal and spatial restrictions on Benjamin's concept of aura may also be overcome through the high regard that players have for these feelies (figures 5 and 6). Additionally, the artificial marks of history and use on these objects imply that they have a simulated aura. Although the player knows that objects like the batarang or the journal are not real or unique in the sense that they belonged to and were used by Batman or Dr. Young, their ability to extend the act of play beyond the digital realm is reinforced by the physical scuffs and scars on the batarang's surface and the simulated stains on the journal. These details add a pseudo-authentic layer to a reproduced object.



Figure 5. *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition* (Rocksteady Studios, 2009) batarang scuff marks. The batarang has scuffs and scratches etched into its plastic body. Some artifact feelies are constructed with a simulated past to aid in the player's immersion in the game's fiction. This also provides a greater sense of realism, which aids players in acts of reappropriation. Photograph by author. [[View larger image.](#)]

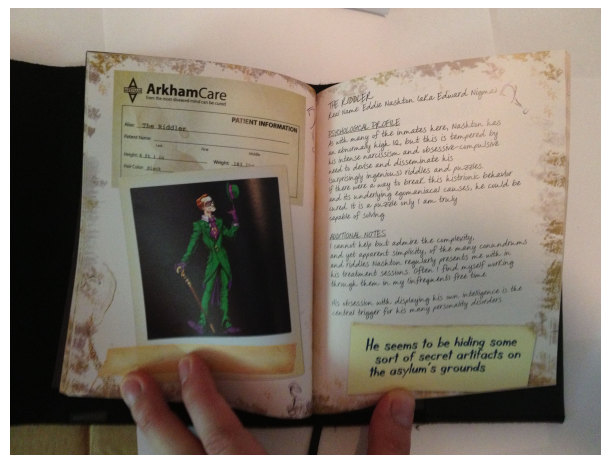


Figure 6. *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition* (Rocksteady Studios, 2009) journal staining. Artifacts like Dr. Young's journal sometimes include a simulated

history such as staining. Although there are no actual stains (instead they are just printed on the book's pages), simulating a history in this way adds a layer of authenticity to certain artifact feelies. Photograph by author. [View larger image.]

[3.7] *Asylum's* batarang also brings attention to the fluidity of the distinction between certain artifacts and collectibles, beyond the fact that all artifacts are also collectible in nature. Unlike many other artifact feelies, it is fixed to a mounted display, meaning that it cannot be thrown unless the player chooses to modify it (figure 7). In other words, it is primarily intended for display, as collectible feely statues are. The player can still hold the batarang and feel what it is like to physically interact with this artifact, as Batman does in the game, but the physical sensation of the mounting stand against the player's palm and wrist changes this experience from an active use of the object to a collectible, archived one. What makes this particular example unique is that the mounting allows the batarang to exist in that state within the game's diegesis.



Figure 7. *Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition (Rocksteady Studios, 2009) mounted batarang. An artifact feely with both collectible and artifact components within the physical and fictional worlds. Photograph by author. [View larger image.]*

[3.8] Batman, unlike many superheroes, is a collector of mementos. The Batcave, his secret base of operations, is filled with mounted artifacts from many of his major cases. The physical history with which this feely is imbued implies that it has seen a lot of action. Because this batarang was specifically designed for the game, we can assume that this weapon was one of the ones that Batman used while trying to restore order to Arkham Asylum and has since been mounted by Batman himself as a memento. Together with Dr. Young's journal (which Batman recovers pages from while exploring the asylum), it has now been passed on to the player. Consequently, the batarang technically qualifies as a collectible artifact from within the game space that, even before the player starts playing the game, illustrates how much action Batman and his gadgets will see. While engaging with the digital game, players can display the artifact on a table, desk, mantle, or elsewhere, and touch it, look at it, or engage with it as they like. Afterward, if still on display, it serves as a reminder of the game and, depending on the player's relationship with it, as a reminder of the challenges

overcome within that digital world. It then becomes part of the home's material landscape, and the player continues to interact with it, reappropriating it for other uses (using it, perhaps, as a prop in a Batman fan film or as an element of cosplay) or letting it decorate the domestic space.

[3.9] *Batman: Arkham City—Collector's Edition*, unlike the earlier game, highlights collectible feelies (note 3). They include a hardcover collectible art book and a Batman statue on a display base produced by Kotobukiya, a renowned manufacturer of collectible pop culture statues, which is featured front and center through a transparent plastic window in the game's packaging (figure 8). Like *Asylum's* batarang, it is capable of being displayed around the player's home before, during, and after game play. Unlike artifact feelies, the Batman statue is not a life-size reproduction; it does not enable the player to hold, grapple, or otherwise touch Batman like someone in the game world could. Instead, players engage with it as a zen action figure that can inspire feelings, sensations, and thoughts of play like the toys we played with growing up, through contemplation rather than articulation.



Figure 8. Promotional image of *Batman: Arkham City—Collector's Edition* (Rocksteady Studios, 2011) showing all of the material objects found in this edition of the game. Screen cap taken June 1, 2013, at Amazon.com (www.amazon.com/Batman-Arkham-City-Collectors-Xbox-360/dp/B0050SYG7A). [View larger image.]

[3.10] Although some collector's editions, such as the *Tomb Raider Collector's Edition/Survival Edition* (Square Enix, 2013), contain an action figure collectible feely with articulated joints that can be maneuvered like a regular toy (figure 9), many others, like *Arkham City*, feature static statues that cannot be repositioned or adjusted without breaking them. Although it is certainly possible to physically play with these statues, they are usually too large for this to be easy. They also intersect with another established collectible in fan communities: character busts and statues from various media franchises outside of the realm of video game feelies.

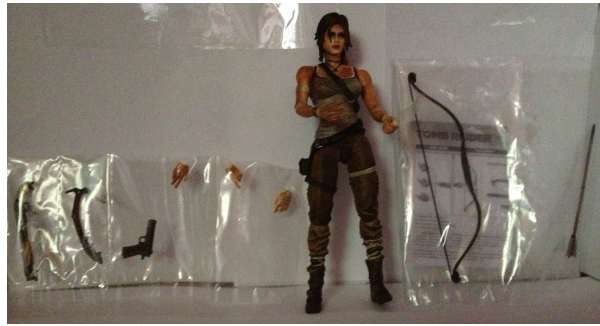


Figure 9. Lara Croft action figure from *Tomb Raider Collector's Edition/Survival Edition* (Square Enix, 2013). Some collector's editions include collectible feelies similar to traditional action figure with articulated joints, while others include static, unmoving statues. Photograph by author. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.11] Unlike the virtual world in *Arkham Asylum*, the one in *Arkham City* is accessible after the main story line is completed, allowing players to complete side quests, finish upgrading the playable characters' skills and technology, and wander the streets of this small section of Gotham, stopping criminals as they choose. Collectible feelies like the Batman statue remind players that the world within the game is still available for free play, allowing them to engage in the more mundane daily activities that Batman probably undertakes (it can't be the end of the world all of the time, can it?). This feely provides players with the chance to not only contemplate the game away from the game, but also engage in a sort of mental planning play (figure 10). Players can imagine what other stories they could create, both within the game world and outside it, that are inspired by both the material objects they surround themselves with and the memories those objects elicit of the time spent playing in that fictional world.



Figure 10. Kotobukiya Batman statue from *Batman: Arkham City—Collector's Edition* (Rocksteady Studios, 2011). This zen action figure can be touched, but players play with it primarily by using their eyes and imagination. Photograph by author. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.12] Although artifact and collectible feelies are both key features in these collector's editions of games, they are not the only components that make them desirable to players. Collector's editions often also include exclusive DLC. However, DLC does not qualify as a feely because it has no physical form and does not extend the game experience into the material realm from the material one. DLC does indicate another area where the virtual and the material intersect from a material culture standpoint. Exclusive DLC might be considered a reverse feely: it magnifies the player's sense of power from a Csikszentmihalyian point of view, yet it only exists in the player's virtual collection inside of a virtual space. It also acts as an entryway paratext for many players, who will download it before playing the game, thus ensuring that the content is included in the game when they first log in. The inclusion of DLC is further evidence of the merging of the material and the immaterial in contemporary video games as well as in contemporary collecting culture in the digital age. Collectors are interested in obtaining not only exclusive material items to add to their physical surroundings but also exclusive immaterial items to augment their virtual ones. When considered in conjunction with artifact and collectible feelies in contemporary collector's editions, nonfeely DLC helps provide a more complete picture of contemporary video game material culture that includes both the physical and the digital, and contextualizes them in similar ways.

4. Vincent's boxers, role-playing, and personal choice in *Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition*

[4.1] Unlike the two Batman games discussed, *Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition* features a combination of artifact and collectible feelies (figure 11) that are capable of being used together and that are also capable of generating the player's own textual content. Although the practice is not as common as it was in the 1980s, some contemporary collector's editions list possible uses for the feelies they contain on their packaging, just as *Hitchhiker's* did, indicating that the gaming industry still contextualizes artifact and collectible feelies in similar ways. However, *Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition* also provides players with an opportunity to think outside the box and find new and sometimes more adult ways of using feelies as extensions of the game experience and generators of their own texts through acts of play.



Figure 11. Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition feelies. Top: Catherine pillowcase and "Empty Hearts" T-shirt. Middle: Stray Sheep pizza box, Catherine box cover, art book, and sound disc. Bottom: Vincent's boxers. Photograph by author. [[View larger image.](#)]

[4.2] This special edition of the sexually charged Japanese RPG/puzzle game includes a mix of artifacts and collectibles that can be used in a variety of ways, several of which are both collectible and artifact. They include undergarments worn by male and female characters within the game, such as Vincent's "Empty Hearts" T-shirt and polka-dot boxers. According to the game's packaging, players can "face [their] own inner fears while wearing this iconic pair of pink polka-dot boxer shorts, as worn by Vincent as he climbs the tower of his nightmares." Players (or their partners in sexualized play) can wear these while role-playing scenes from the game or creating their own narratives. Although the packaging does not explicitly suggest this use, it does remind the player that "while it technically belongs to Vincent, Catherine makes this oversized 100% cotton tee all her own." This potential use illustrates how gamers can redefine the notion of play and how feelies can serve a variety of functions that extend beyond the objects themselves (figure 12).



Figure 12. Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition (Atlus, 2011) back cover. As with Infocom's *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Catherine lists uses for feelies on the box's

*back cover, which the player can either choose to follow, deviate from, or ignore.
Photograph by author. [View larger image.]*

[4.3] There is also a Catherine pillowcase collectible. The packaging invites players to "escape into your own fantasies when you rest your head on this exclusive standard-sized pillow case." Throughout the game, Vincent is clutching a pillow as he navigates the hazardous landscape of his nightmares. The pillowcase feely is not an exact reproduction of Vincent's; it features a color image of Catherine and the game's logo, which makes it a collectible rather than an artifact. The collector's edition also includes an art book and sound disc (preorder bonuses for the standard edition) as additional collectibles that are not listed on the box but that still extend the experience of the game into the physical world. All of these items are held within an artifact re-creation of a pizza box from Vincent's favorite hangout, the Stray Sheep. The packaging contextualizes this feely in a way that encourages players to display it around their home: "As you enjoy Vincent's conversations with his friends in the famous Stray Sheep bar, you too can soak in the ambience with this pizza box-style container for all the items of the 'Love Is Over' Deluxe Edition!"

[4.4] As has already been indicated, artifact and collectible feelies function beyond what the game's packaging suggests. This allows players, and possibly their partners, to engage in either standard cosplay or, if they choose, live-action role-playing (LARPing) (figure 13) that moves beyond the bodily reaction of viewing a game that in many ways fits into Williams's (1991, 4) notion of body genre—that is, a genre of film that privileges "the spectacle of a body," usually a woman's, "caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion" to the point of "uncontrollable convulsion or spasm." Such films have a physiological effect on the viewer's body as well, which they achieve by developing a temporally dependent fantasy scenario on screen that physically affects the viewer. The body genre that *Catherine* best fits is the jerk-off pornography genre (Williams 1991). The game itself is full of sadomasochistic and nonsadomasochistic representations of sex in literal and abstract forms and in real and dream worlds that Vincent finds himself in. Players can use several of the feelies included in this game—the boxers, T-shirt, and pillowcase—in a form of bodily engagement that moves beyond the viewing experience and the bodily reactions associated with it and into reappropriated acts away from the screen (figure 14). From the standpoint of material culture, this illustrates the ways that feelies can initiate a wide variety of cultural uses. Play is an act very much open to interpretation by the player.



Figure 13. "Silicon, Saline, Poison, Inject Me Baby." Players can utilize some game feelies in cosplay. In this instance, the male cosplayer is wearing Vincent's boxers from the Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition (Atlus, 2011), while the female cosplayer is dressed in a custom-designed costume. Photograph by ladyheathergaga (<http://ladyheathergaga.tumblr.com/>). [View larger image.]



Figure 14. Catherine—"Love Is Over" Deluxe Edition (Atlus, 2011) feelies at play. Although this image came from a post on the official Playstation.com blog (<http://blog.us.playstation.com/2011/07/11/wary-of-long-term-commitment-to-catherine-try-the-demo-first/>; July 11, 2011) and was most likely posed and used for marketing purposes, it still indicates the ways that players can use these feelies in the physical world. [View larger image.]

[4.5] Although the concept of play still allows these objects to function as extensions of a game's digital components and as generators of their own texts, it is important to understand that feelies, like all material objects and paratexts, serve nonplay functions as well. Players decide how to use them and how feelies affect their perceptions of the overall gaming experience. To quote Woodward, "If we think of the material culture of consumer societies, they are in fact the point where mass-produced consumer objects are encountered and used by individuals, who must establish and negotiate their own meanings and incorporate such objects into their personal cultural and behavioural repertoires, sometimes challenging and sometimes reproducing social structure"

(2007, 4). For some, Vincent's boxers are just an article of clothing that sits in a box, untouched and forgotten after the game has been played. From a Csikszentmihalyian/Fiskean standpoint, they magnify the player's sense of power and can be shown off to friends, however strange they may seem as a choice of object. For others, they may inspire new adventures that go far beyond the game itself, yet are still linked to it materially. Video game feelies, whether artifacts or collectibles, always extend the game experience beyond the digital into the material. What Vincent's boxers—what all feelies—mean to each of us is ultimately a personal choice.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] The ways that material culture studies and media studies intersect and complement one another need to be embraced further in both these academic fields. As material objects—sound recordings, video recordings, games—are increasingly being transformed into digital components, it is more important than ever that scholars seek out the moments when the material and the digital intersect, historicize them, and provide the necessary context that links those components together through the ways that they are used in cultural practices. Video game feelies are only one kind of such objects.

[5.2] By exploring artifact and collectible video game feelies, we may understand how the material and the immaterial connect by extending texts and potentially generating new ones through the act of play. Through these objects and their paratextual connection to the games that they are included with, video game feelies illustrate how an interdisciplinary approach toward the intersection between the physical and the virtual leads to further insight into how video games operate away from the screen, expand our understanding of play in an era when the consumption and collection of material and immaterial objects are continually changing, and indicate how these objects can be reappropriated in ways that extend the intended narrative and lead to new cultural uses. Artifact and collectible feelies, like other media paratexts, are capable of generating their own texts through play as well as having a continued life and use away from the media that inspired them.

[5.3] This last point is even more crucial at a time when technological obsolescence threatens to block access to these games and the virtual worlds contained within them. Although the games can be emulated, emulations never quite capture the experience of the original. Technological obsolescence has been an issue for many years already. Nearly three decades after *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was released, it is rare to find a functioning computer capable of reading the game's 5.25-inch floppy diskettes. Although it has been emulated and even rereleased online as a free, fully illustrated, official, and updated 20th anniversary edition

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/hitchhikers/game.shtml>), the game in its original form is inaccessible to most. However, even this version is not impervious to technical issues or obsolescence (figure 15). The game's continual functionality depends on maintaining the hosting servers and providing updates so it remains compatible with contemporary browsers. Collectors seeking to obtain complete copies of these early video games flock to auction sites like eBay. Although the digital portion of the games may not be compatible with modern computers, the feelies remain a lasting link to the adventures contained within. These feelies may ultimately be all that remain of these digital worlds. As Csikszentmihalyi (1995) notes, they continue to serve as material reminders of our past adventures and to inspire new ones.



Figure 15. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy 20th anniversary edition (BBC, 2004) death screen. This BBC-licensed, fully illustrated rerelease of the 1984 Infocom game was, as of June 1, 2013, completely unplayable. Instead of the usual text, the message "zmachine xml invalid" appears where the player types in and receives commands. The Guide still reminds the player not to panic despite the technical difficulties. (The technical issues have since been addressed.) Screen cap taken June 1, 2013, from the BBC's Radio 4 page (http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/hitchhikers/game_nolan.shtml). [View larger image.]*

[5.4] My primary purpose here has been to expand on existing theoretical discourse surrounding feelies and to establish a way to better understand these objects, their function, and their relationship to digital games. Further research needs to be performed on artifact and collectible feelies that helps situate them in the contemporary video game industry. The best way to accomplish this is through detailed survey work among gaming communities. Because everyone's experience playing a game is unique, but not all players need feelies in order to enjoy the game, a diverse range of uses and opinions exist. Learning more about who buys collector's

and special editions of games and looking for what might link them—for example, economic status, geographic location, ethnicity, age, and level of education—will help further situate feelies within contemporary gaming culture and within off-screen media studies scholarship.

6. Notes

1. Gray's analysis expands on the work of literary theorist Gérard Genette (2007), who described paratexts as texts that prepare us for the consumption of other texts. According to Gray (2010), Genette argues that we can approach a text only through an understanding of its paratexts, as we have already consumed a variety of them before reading the book itself.
2. Karhulahti differentiates between a game's packaging and the feelies contained within it when discussing paratexts. Karhulahti, applying Genette's (1997) definition of paratext, argues that packaging serves as the paratext of games, while feelies are "materializations of their story worlds" (2012, 4). Although the packaging does act as a paratext, introducing players to the game before their playing it, I argue that the feelies themselves also operate as paratexts as Gray (2010) defines the term.
3. Other objects are included with *Arkham City* that do not qualify as feelies, as they do not act as extensions of the game, nor can they effectively be reappropriated. For example, a DVD copy of the anime film *Batman: Gotham Knight* is not specifically linked to the game and therefore cannot function in the same way that feelies do.

7. Works cited

Allison, Anne. 2006. *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Batman: Arkham Asylum—Collector's Edition. 2009. Video game. London: Rocksteady Studios.

Batman: Arkham City—Collector's Edition. 2011. Video game. London: Rocksteady Studios.

Benjamin, Walter. 2007. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, translated by Harry Zohn, edited by Hannah Arendt, 217–51. New York: Schocken.

Bogost, Ian. 2010. *A Slow Year*. Louisville, KY: Open Texture. Collection of four video games for Atari VCS, PC, and Macintosh, together with two essays and 1,024 machine-

generated haiku.

Catherine—“Love Is Over” Deluxe Edition. 2011. Video game. Tokyo: Atlus.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1995. "Why We Need Things." In *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, edited by Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, 20–29. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

du Gay, Paul, Stuart Hall, Linda James, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus. 1997. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. Los Angeles: Sage.

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

Fleming, Dan. 1997. *Powerplay: Toys as Popular Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Paratexts: The Thresholds of Interpretation*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gray, Jonathan. 2010. *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. New York: New York University Press.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. 1984. Video game. Cambridge, MA: Infocom.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. 2004. Online Web-based game, a rerelease of the 1984 game. BBC Radio 4. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/hitchhikers/game.shtml>.

Karhulahti, Veli-Matti. 2012. "Feelies: The Lost Art of Immersing the Narrative." In *Proceedings of DiGRA Nordic 2012 Conference: Local and Global—Games in Culture and Society*. <http://www.digra.org/dl/db/12168.03111.pdf>.

Montfort, Nick. 2005. *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Murphy, Sheila C. 2009. "This Is Intelligent Television: Early Video Games and Television in the Emergence of the Personal Computer." In *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*, edited by Bernard Perron and Mark J. P. Wolf, 197–212. New York: Routledge.

Murray, Janet. 1997. *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Perry, Deborah L. 2012. *What Makes Learning Fun? Principles for the Design of Intrinsically Motivating Museum Exhibits*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira.

Prown, Jules David. 1982. "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (1): 1–19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/496065>.

Williams, Linda. 1991. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess." *Film Quarterly* 44 (4): 2–13. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1212758>.

Woodward, Ian. 2007. *Understanding Material Culture*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Praxis

A pragmatics of things: Materiality and constraint in fan practices

Benjamin Woo

University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

[0.1] *Abstract*—Although, as qualitative consumer research and material culture studies have demonstrated, objects can be rich sources of meaning and stability, they also entail basic limitations on human action. Interviews conducted as part of a study of one city's nerd-culture scene permitted analysis of the constraints that materiality imposes on fan activity. Fans must have access to certain physical objects in order to realize their practices, and collecting, storing, and purging these objects in domestic spaces constitutes a pragmatics that sets limits and exerts pressures on participants.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Collecting; Consumption; Domestic space; Fan practices; Geeks and nerds; Material culture

Woo, Benjamin. 2014. "A Pragmatics of Things: Materiality and Constraint in Fan Practices." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0495>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] In a recent essay on regimes of legitimacy in geek culture, Karra Shimabukuro (2013) establishes her own fannish credibility by inventorying her home. Taken together, her DVDs, comic books and graphic novels, *Star Wars* action figures, and role-playing game manuals all testify that a geek lives here. We typically talk about a person's fandom as though it were a psychological property—an identity, way of reading, set of tastes, disposition, or affect—but, as Shimabukuro demonstrates, fandom is also objectified in material practices and artifacts.

[1.2] For the past few years I have been studying what I call a nerd-culture scene in a city of roughly 2 million people. I sought out, as starting points, sites and activities conventionally understood as geeky, and from there I followed people and practices where they led me: I spent time hanging out in game shops and comic-book stores and attending community events; spoke with the owners, managers, or organizers of these institutions about their work and their customers; and conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with six ordinary participants in the scene, asking about geek culture, their own fandoms, and the place these activities held in their lives and life

histories. In planning this research, I was interested in the forms of community-making that constitute these groups and articulate them together, particularly in light of the pervasive mainstream media rhetoric of geek chic and the triumph of the nerds. However, it became evident that any thick description of this cultural scene would have to account for the role material objects play in it.

[1.3] Some of the practices involved are public and spectacular, like cosplaying at an anime convention, and some are intimate, like playing *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D) with friends or curling up on the couch for a favorite TV show. Some are well established, like sci-fi fandom or the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA; founded in 1966); others are more casual or ephemeral. Some are productive, leading to fan fiction, art, and criticism, and some begin and end with consumption. But all of them require physical objects: costumes or dice, books or computers. Things are the sine qua non of fandom, that without which it remains only potentiality and not a realized capability.

[1.4] Surrounded by particular things, people produce themselves as particular kinds of agents, as people who can do certain kinds of things. This self-production is hardly unique to geek culture. Many fans express their fandom through collecting—or at least acquiring souvenirs and merchandise related to their fandom along the way—and everyone uses and uses up material objects. But this article will explore how participants in geek culture live with their stuff, particularly in domestic spaces. Public and private are often viewed as binary opposites (Goffman 1959), often with the corollary that the latter is the site of our true, authentic self. I think these spaces are more contiguous than conflictual. Indeed, they are mutually constitutive. Although we may feel pressure to modify our behavior in the presence of others, the practices and projects that make others significant are the products of private commitments. Conversely, how we act under public scrutiny can become habitual. Thus, the domestic object-world, as an objectification of tastes formed in a social world, is sedimented from a whole series of transactions with others. But this is hardly an automatic process.

[1.5] The creation and maintenance of domestic space and the objects within it require work. To cope with the constraints of materiality, fans must (inter alia) research, curate, organize, clean, repair, move, and dispose of objects. To be sure, these everyday practices are only a narrow slice of what people do with objects, but I want to focus on them because they are among the most generic and generalizable. This is also an area where fan activity is contiguous with more mainstream forms of consumption, for we are all in some respect object-oriented.

2. Stories of stuff

[2.1] Material culture studies and consumer research have enriched our understanding of the importance of things. Against accusations of shallow materialism, research into how people relate to objects usually finds depth and complexity (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Holt 2000; McCracken 1990; Miller 1998, 2008, 2010). As Venkatesh and Meamber (2008, 46–47) summarize, such studies "illustrate how individuals collect past meanings, negotiate future meanings, and assemble present meanings of cultural constructs such as family, religion, gender, age, and tradition through their participation in particular consumption behaviors."

[2.2] My interviews with comic-book collectors, SF fans, gamers, *otaku*, and medieval re-creationists (among others) corroborate these findings. For many, things embodied positive values and memories:

[2.3] **Ben:** If you had to pick one thing out that you're most attached to in this closet, what would it be?

[2.4] **Steve:** Oh, it would be my *Dungeons & Dragons* red box set, the original basic set, because that's what basically started me on the hobby? And that was the set that I actually, I mean, I remember exactly when it was given to me. My cousin, it was given to him, and he was too young to use it and didn't want it, so gave it to me. So, I remember the whole kind of story that went with it. I remember reading it and thinking, "Oh my god, this is the greatest thing since sliced bread." And so, yeah, that I wouldn't part with for anything.

[2.5] Yeah, certainly I've got one—one that's probably still okay but I don't wear it because it's somewhat offensive. It's a shirt from an old online comic called *Space Moose*...It's actually still in really good condition because I tend not to wear it very often. [*laughs*]...So I see it in my drawer every once in a while, and then go look up the comics and then read them again. So it's kind of a fun thing just to be nostalgic about. (Wedge)

[2.6] I had a little bag full of things, little tiny items, tokens that I had been given by various people for various performances [as a bard in the SCA]. Every single one of those things, I could remember the person, the performance, the date, the occasion, everything about it because they made it a—a personal memory for me by giving me a token, a physical thing that said, "You touched me and this is for you." (Shiera)

[2.7] But meaning is not the whole story of consumption, and we should resist a crypto-idealism that sneaks the transcendental subject in through the back door of material culture. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, for example, dismiss objects'

materiality because they view things as "bits of information" or "signs" (1981, 13–14). Even Miller, who explicitly repudiates a semiotic approach (2010, 13) and stresses the mutual constitution of persons and things, at times recreates a picture of material culture as an adjunct of mind, for there seem to be few limits on what things can be made to mean through personal aesthetics (2008).

[2.8] Although things objectify human intention and agency, they are nonetheless objects, and objects stand in the way. As Boivin (2004, 64) writes, "The material world is not a blank slate upon which may be inscribed any old narrative, it is a physicality which resists and enables." We must account for the ways objects extend our capabilities and constrain our actions. We might think of these as objects' biases (Innis [1951] 2008) or affordances (Gibson [1979] 1986; Norman 1988). Although objects can be put to surprising uses, they have material qualities prior to their human appropriation:

[2.9] Materials possess inherent physical properties that make them more appropriate for certain symbolic and metaphorical uses and less appropriate for others. Whether objects or materials are durable or ephemeral, rare or common, stationary or mobile, heavy or light, soft or hard, or small or large will make them more or less useful in practices associated with creating social difference, marking time, indicating value, signalling ethnicity, memorializing events, or denoting sacred spaces, for example. (Boivin 2004, 65)

[2.10] Design shapes materials into forms better adapted to some people and functions than others, and people cultivate methods of manipulating objects for particular purposes. Thus, what Lisa Gitelman (2004, 203) calls objects' material meanings—the "nexus of cultural practices, economic structures, and perceptual and semiotic habits that make tangible things meaningful"—are not equivalent to individual, subjective meanings. Rather, they are objective products of the interaction between collective human praxis and the physical world.

[2.11] All activity is determined by (among other things) its material expression. As Giddens (1984, 111–12) notes, these constraints are axiomatic to any study of social phenomena: human beings can be in only one place at a time; multiple people and objects cannot occupy the same space simultaneously; and everything has a finite duration. Yet consideration of the relationship between materiality and fandom is relatively underdeveloped, and fan studies is poorer for its neglect.

3. Fan objects

[3.1] Pierre Bourdieu argues that academics' "scholastic disposition" leads us to imagine mind matters more than matter. This attitude arises from intellectuals' relatively privileged social position, which gives us the "freedom from necessity" to develop an intellectualizing orientation toward the world:

[3.2] One could say that the "as if" posture—very close to the "let's pretend" mode of play which enables children to open imaginary worlds—is... what makes possible all intellectual speculations, scientific hypotheses, "thought experiments," "possible worlds" or "imaginary variations." It is what incites people to enter into the play-world of theoretical conjecture and mental experimentation, to raise problems for the pleasure of solving them, and not because they arise in the world, under the pressure of urgency, or to treat language not as an instrument but as an object of contemplation, formal invention or analysis. (Bourdieu 2000, 12–13)

[3.3] Sound familiar? As I discovered, this disposition (if not the social location with which Bourdieu identifies it) is something intellectuals share with many participants in fan cultures.

[3.4] Fans I spoke with generally claimed that their peers were smarter and more creative than mundanes. Rather than evidencing Hills's (2002) intractable dualism between rival subjectivities, their fandom was deeply informed by a very similar scholastic point of view that privileges abstract thinking and the pleasures of diegetic worlds, min-maxing game mechanics, trivia and intertextual references, and so on. The scholastic disposition doesn't imply asceticism, as academic bibliophiles and fannish collectors both demonstrate, but idealism: interpreting the world in intellectualized or aestheticized terms and overemphasizing the agency of the *ego cogitans* at the expense of structural and material constraints.

[3.5] Thus, fan studies operates under a double whammy: a complicity between the two sides of the aca-fan identity. Academic accounts of fandom render it as "a sort of idealized research seminar" (John Michael, quoted in Hills 2002, 10), even as informants' accounts, which are always already framed by their own lay theories, are made over into concepts for circulation in academic discourse (textual poaching, resistance, transitional objects). Fandom is rationalized from both ends and finally transmuted into an immaterial psychological property.

[3.6] For example, a number of fan studies have taken up the question of object relations under the influence of psychoanalysts like Klein and Winnicott (Harrington and Bielby 1995; Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2005). They seek to understand the origins of fans' commitments to particular devotional objects (TV series or celebrities) and their continuing psychological value as mediators between self and other. It is not at all

clear, however, if the objects of psychoanalysis are material objects. Do Superman fans relate to a particular comic book or piece of merchandise, or to an idiosyncratic mental representation of a character or diegetic world? Hills at first seems to be staking a claim for materiality, noting that the Winnitcottian transitional object proper is "an actual physical object" (2002, 106). However, he soon slips into talking about televisual texts as "proper transitional objects" too (108). Sandvoss more consistently distinguishes between the material and mental:

[3.7] Physical objects of fandom such as records, autographs or photos function as second-order transitional objects—the physical transitional objects inside transitional objects—that function as intermediate spaces between the self and the actual (transitional) object of fandom which itself is absent. (2005, 90)

[3.8] Here, the "actual (transitional) object of fandom"—a sports team, pop idol, character, or text—is necessarily absent or inaccessible to the fan. The role of physical (second-order) objects is to stand in for the idea of the object. On this view, things are screens onto which subjects project (and from which they introject) psychic qualities; their materiality doesn't enter the picture in any substantive way.

[3.9] Any study of human behavior must be able, at least in principle, to account for the material dimension of human existence, but fan studies has not done this very well. How might we integrate materiality into our picture of fandom? Like Sandvoss (2005, 6), I think researchers should focus on observable aspects; that is, we should take a practice view of fandom and fannish consumption (see Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and von Savigny 2001; Warde 2005). Although it relies on knowledge, skills, beliefs, and other psychological factors, fandom is, above all, something people do. I am concerned not with the mental motors of fandom but with how naive fans funnel their private affections into socially established, recognizable practices. Along the way, they learn to express their tastes using discourses that have been legitimized and forms of fan activity that are more or less conventionalized within the relevant community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). This is obviously a complex process of socialization, but I want to suggest that material goods are part of its scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, and Ross 1976).

[3.10] That's because virtually all practices require equipment-goods. Philosopher Russell Keat (2000) uses this term to describe goods that are consumed in order to accomplish some practice. His examples include binoculars for bird-watching and instruments for playing music (144), but one could also name miniatures and model terrain for gaming or costumes, props, and cameras for cosplay. Even the more cerebral pleasures of story and character presuppose books to read them in and

screens to watch them on. These objects equip people to create meaning in their lives by enabling them to participate in social practices.

[3.11] Importantly, scaffolding supports a structure by constraining it. While more could be said about the positive, enabling side of objects, I want to twist the stick the other direction and focus on the problems materiality poses for fan practices. When fans don't have them, equipment-goods can be barriers, and when they do, they can become burdens. Their literal and metaphorical costs may be balanced by substantial benefits, but they have to be paid. Given basic pragmatic constraints, how do people acquire, live with, and dispose of fan objects?

4. While the getting's good

[4.1] Material goods are prerequisites for participation in most fan practices. This perhaps lends credence to portrayals of geeks as voracious consumers of gadgets and collectibles. I certainly found ample evidence of collecting during my study. As Kurt, the president of the City Gaming Network, put it, "Where does geek culture congregate and what does it congregate over? It congregates in stores and places of business, and it congregates over collections and collectibles and status that's driven by possessions and material goods." Unsurprisingly, then, most participants named economic costs as one of the primary limitations on their participation in fan practices. When equipment-goods become too expensive or difficult to acquire, participation withers:

[4.2] **Mr. Fox:** It was actually a really terrible comic shop. It was just the only one in town.

[4.3] **Ben:** Okay. Beggars can't be choosers, right?

[4.4] **Mr. Fox:** Yeah, and then it went out of business and beggars couldn't choose anything...

[4.5] **Ben:** What happened to your comic—

[4.6] **Mr. Fox:** Stop reading them. If you can't get them, you can't get them, so you stop reading.

[4.7] Some practices can be pursued relatively cheaply. Others, like comics and collectible games, were described as particularly expensive, although expensiveness is gauged according to personal financial circumstances, perceived value for money, and a belief in producers' capacity to render purchases compulsory. But costs generally increase with participation; there was no theoretical upper limit to how much money could be devoted to products, events, and travel.

[4.8] Many people I spoke with or observed complained about the cost of certain goods, but only Kurt, who was also an independent game designer, articulated an oppositional critique of the geek-culture industry's consumerism. Indeed, even expensive hobbies weren't necessarily understood as materialistic, as a game and comic-book store's manager reminded me when discussing his own experiences with *Magic: The Gathering*:

[4.9] I had to get over this idea that it's this sort of pit of doom that you just dump your wallet into. It's not the case. You know, you spend a good amount of money on it—it's a collectible card game—and you keep spending money, you never stop, but it's a lot of fun...There's just so many different aspects of the game that are intellectually or socially enticing and exciting that there's always something for everybody.

[4.10] If we think of the cost of these goods as the price of admission to a social world, the caricatures seem much less apt (as they are and do for mass consumers, as well [Miller 1998]). People may maximize utility and shop for pleasure, but they also acquire goods to gain access to communities that matter to them. That these communities were often focused on places of business like comic and game shops introduced a certain tension that had to be managed by retailers and customers alike (Woo 2012).

[4.11] Pursuing their ends in the face of economic constraints, interviewees described a number of ways to reduce or avoid costs. SF fans patronized libraries and used book stores. Borrowing, lending, and trading amongst peers loomed especially large in informants' accounts of how things enter their lives. In addition to distributing costs across a social network, swapping was also a way to recommend and learn of new things. For example, Shiera was part of a multi-city book-lending scheme amongst her friends. As with Malinowski's ([1922] 2002) account of the Kula ring, exchanging objects anchors relationships, at the levels of both individual friendships and the larger community of practice. Because objects must come from somewhere, private consumption is never really individualized, and these complementary systems of exchange interweave moral and political economies.

5. The weight of things

[5.1] Objects extend our capabilities. In a real, immediate sense, they equip us to be fans: you can't play in the SCA without a period costume, participate in a war-gaming tournament without an army of miniatures, or successfully engage comic-book fandom without some access to comics and graphic novels. But, once acquired, all these things

must be cleaned, maintained, and organized. At the most basic level, remembering Giddens's time-geographic axioms, they take up space in our homes.

[5.2] A recurring theme in my interviews was the external (i.e., outside the home) storage of objects, whether in rented storage spaces or a parental home. The latter was unsurprising among members of a university anime and gaming club, who complained that their *Magic* cards and *Warhammer* figurines were still at mom and dad's. But even Steve, who had a home and family of his own, recalled the "whole whack of stuff" that remained at his parents'. However, external storage was only a special case of the more general problem of moving collections. Although Wedge considered comic books the collectible par excellence, their material qualities made them difficult to keep in the long run:

[5.3] I sold all of my comics, or most of my comics, when I moved... because it was a lot of comics. I had 4,000 comics or something. Like, ten boxes, ten of those big long boxes. They're hard to move. They get wrecked when they get moved...I still love the stories, and I still love the artwork, but I kind of quit cold turkey, sort of. [*laughs*] Like it was costing a reasonable amount of money and taking up a lot of space and I was moving around for—I think I moved to university, which is probably when I ended up... stopping.

[5.4] This sentiment was echoed by many other participants for whom the need to dispose of collections when moving—including moving in with a significant other—was proverbial. These stories remind us that objects' useful or pleasurable qualities are bundled with other, less convenient ones such as extension, weight, and fragility (Keane 2005).

[5.5] Around the time I conducted fieldwork, a number of reality television shows about people whose lives are dominated by junk were popular (see Lepselter 2011), rendering *hoarding* a ready-to-hand name for the dark side of collecting. Diana used it playfully to tease her partner Steve about his attachment to games and books, but it represented a real fear for others. Shiera tried to be a ruthless curator for personal reasons ("My mom, I think, is on the verge of being a real hoarder, and I just never want to go through it") and because of a general tendency she observed among fans:

[5.6] That's based on having visited a lot of fans' homes...There's an aesthetic of messiness...Your average home, social services would take those people's kids away! [*laughs*] They really would! You have to maintain a certain amount—and I'm dusty...and I'm messy, but I try to stay on top of it...I have lived with people who do that. I have to lock them out of my room, or they'd carry the entropy with them.

[5.7] I want to adopt Shiera's phrase "an aesthetic of messiness," drawing on Miller's (2008, 293) sense of an aesthetic as the "overall organisational principle" in people's lives. Of my informants, Barry probably best typifies the aesthetic of messiness.

[5.8] Barry is a bachelor in his fifties who lives in a basement apartment. He is a practicing Catholic, active in the Knights of Columbus and also in the SCA, where he plays a Benedictine monk. Like the fictitious Doctor Mercurius, Barry espouses the virtues of simplicity and thrift. He doesn't lack for possessions but tries to economize by seeking used goods and making do with improvised solutions to meet his needs. The lion's share of the objects in his home relate to fandom: projects and awards from the SCA, VHS tapes, gaming trophies, and, most importantly, books. Virtually every wall—and every window—of his apartment is covered in shelves of reference books, RPG manuals, and science fiction novels. And those aren't even all of them:

[5.9] **Barry:** This is about half my books in this whole place. The other half is in storage, which is tragic.

[5.10] **Ben:** It must have been hard to make that decision—which ones go in and which ones stay out.

[5.11] **Barry:** It's actually not making a decision. It's the half that was on the outside that I took here, and then I left the other half. So, I have some really good books that I want to get at, but I don't know where they are exactly, and I'm paying \$300 a month, and...oh, dear. Yeah, that's part of the chaos that is my life.

[5.12] Warren, a comic-book store owner whose shop evinced a similar accumulation of things (but whose home I never saw), said his store was so "full" because "I've always enjoyed being surrounded by things that I like." Barry could easily have said the same, and I think it's the best way to understand his aesthetic.

[5.13] Miller (2010, 87) asserts that people with strong social relationships are more likely to have mastery over the object world, and vice versa. I don't know if I would describe Barry's apartment as mastered—during my visit, he kept pointing out objects he intended to organize better or get rid of. And, given his frequent references to conflicts arising from misunderstandings or unintentional slights, perhaps he hadn't mastered social relationships either (if such a thing is even possible). But fandom is certainly the key to the many objects and relationships that are part of his life. Barry's fannish commitments could be read in his clutter, while fan activities—from Tolkien meet-ups to cons, from the SCA to an amateur writers' group—were primary sources of social interaction. If Mary Douglas ([1966] 2002, 44) is correct that dirt (or mess) is only "matter out of place," then the aesthetic of messiness represents a refusal to

separate fandom from what Barry referred to as "real life, so-called." Rather than discriminate between them, he piled them on top of one another, allowing his fandom to surround him waking and sleeping. Similarly, Warren conflated fannish and economic logics in his store, amassing products that he believed in, even when unsold stock strained the store's physical capacity.

[5.14] Like Barry, Mr. Fox and Solo lived alone. Shiera's children lived with her part of the time, though she clearly made the decisions about how things were arranged in their apartment. But not everyone has the same freedom to shape their space. Diana and Steve both identified as geeks, while Wedge and his wife had different tastes. Despite this difference, both homes ended up similarly zoned, with certain areas given over to the storage or display of fan-oriented objects. Zoning was a negotiation:

[5.15] I'm not a collector. Not at all...Pretty much if it's six months old, you're a hoarder. [*laughs*] Almost. Like, I just get rid of everything. (Diana)

[5.16] Basically, what happens is it just fills up and then I get more boxes and try to organize it and make it fit until Diana freaks out, and then we do a purge. (Steve)

[5.17] **Ben:** Seems like a lot of people have that cycle of gradually accumulating things, and then, as you say, a move or some other life circumstance, or just a feeling that they're getting too much stuff—

[5.18] **Wedge:** Sometimes predicated on...external forces, like a wife. [*laughs*] Yeah, 'cause I certainly wouldn't have got rid of as much stuff as I did. Any of the time, probably.

[5.19] Thus their homes did not look like Shimabukuro's, much less Barry's. With the exception of the computers on which they played *World of Warcraft* and a shared library of novels, the geeky objects in Diana and Steve's home were relegated to a space they jokingly referred to as the man-closet. In Wedge's, novels and board games were collected together on one shelf in the living room, and the remainder of his gaming supplies—including the character sheet and map from his first D&D session as a child—were filed by the computer of his home office; other objects were in a rented storage space awaiting disposal.

[5.20] To talk about the meanings or values embodied in domestic objects sounds very romantic, but things also make demands on their owners. Their presence in the home was a problem that had to be continually solved.

6. Sweet sorrow?

[6.1] Most people I spoke to were thus perpetually in the middle of a cycle of bingeing on and purging objects, the latter usually motivated by space concerns. Some first tried to reduce the amount of room their things took up by organizing them more efficiently or disposing of bulky packaging, but eventually they would run out of space and have to make choices.

[6.2] Wedge tried to sell old things, freeing up money he could reinvest in the circuit of collecting, and other informants mentioned garage sales and used book stores as places where they disposed of things. Mr. Fox was turned on to comics while hospitalized as a child, and now donates comics and games he's done with to a children's hospital. And just as networks of peers and friends dominated accounts of acquisition, they are likely destinations for goods no longer wanted:

[6.3] When the time comes for them to go on to their new homes, I have new homes for them because I have a lot of friends who are *Star Wars* fans who would love to have...a collectible of...Boba Fett. He's never been my favorite, so I'm not gonna...hang onto that one too much, even though it's a gift and I'm regifting it, if it's taking up too much room on my shelf, if my shelf starts to get cluttered and I start wanting—no, then it goes. (Shiera)

[6.4] At the best of times, purging is therapeutic, a chance to clear out material and psychic clutter. As Shiera puts it, echoing William Morris's dictum, the things remaining in her home "are things I either use or like aesthetically." It is, however, rarely done entirely whole-heartedly:

[6.5] I think most of the stuff that's in storage is probably stuff that's been purged...It's hard, I've moved it around so much I'm trying to remember what's where. Yeah, I think most of it is stuff that's...been decided on, I'll either not want anymore so I'm just waiting to be able to sell it, or...maybe I want it later, like I can't really give it up yet. (Wedge)

[6.6] Similarly, Diana and Steve explained that he held a veto, allowing him to save things he couldn't bear to part with. Purging is usually a necessary evil, but there are times when the loss of objects is just plain evil. It can be a source of regret and even trauma:

[6.7] The most money I've ever spent on a comic was *Iron Fist* 14, which is the first appearance of Sabretooth. And I think I spent 150 bucks on that, um...and it took me...that one took me three years to find a copy. Like, I hadn't found—I hadn't even seen a copy of it? until I found that, and it was in really good condition and, uh...I ended up selling it, which was a big mistake. [*laughs*] To pay rent, probably. (Wedge)

[6.8] My whole library was decimated and my...clothes were all decimated when I had a storage incident. I'd stored a bunch of things in a friend's garage, and it got flooded and mildewed. Everything destroyed. And it's like...you know what, the clothes? I can let that go. The books? A little harder to let those go. The kids' school papers, the photos, those things I can't replace. Thirty-year-old photos were gone, and there was nothing I could do about it. My old Apple computer, which still worked and I still loved, gone, toasted, you know...It's funny because, even now, there will be times when I'll be thinking about...I'll be talking to somebody or I'll be writing about something, and I'll remember, "Oh. I used to have that, and I don't anymore." And it still hits me. It's still—I mean, it's been, uh...eight years since that flood. Eight years, and I still remember certain items and go, "Dammit!" (Shiera)

[6.9] Calling such loss a trauma is an exaggeration, but if Miller and others are correct about just how entwined our subjectivities are with the objects around us, it is not far off. With their loss (even if they are eventually replaced by other things), we also lose certain ways of being that were previously available to us. A certain degree of loyalty or nostalgia may remain, as it does for Wedge and for self-described comic-book fans who don't actually read comics (Burke 2012). But they are no longer equipped to participate in the social world of fandom in any observable way. They are cut off, and fandom carries on without them as participants continue to innovate, building affiliations and alliances, metabolizing new cultural and technological changes, and generating new pleasures from their practices.

7. Collecting in the cloud

[7.1] Some have proposed digitization as a solution to the problem of materiality. As Gitelman (2004, 200) notes, much ink has been spilt (and many bits flipped) about how "digital technologies make the means of communication 'virtual,' freeing information from the limits of physicality, from tangible things like pages, books, and files." Several interviewees were optimistic about these technologies:

[7.2] Yeah, my ambitions are...I mean, I've got so many books, and...I want to be able to move into a smaller place but still have all the stuff accessible, so translate it all into electronic media. (Barry)

[7.3] It's also—I get guilty about the amount of space things take up. And the amount of stuff that people have. Like, just a little bit of a global consciousness...that I feel like if I can have it in a digital format that's archivable and real and easy to read, then I'd rather have that because it's

not taking any space up except on my hard drive, and that's an acceptable place. (Solo)

[7.4] I'm not...I personally am not tied to the...having a book. Some people really like that. They like to have the book and pull it out and read it. I use it as a reference material. I like the idea of PDF books. I wish they were cheaper than...*[laughs]* than the actual book sometimes? (Wedge)

[7.5] Computer-mediated communication, from Usenet to Tumblr, has indeed transformed how fans organize themselves, but dematerialization is more rhetoric than reality. The dream of paperless fandom is only thinkable with respect to those equipment-goods that can be imagined as content alienable from its medium. And re-mediating an activity or a text simply transforms it into a different object. For example, although Steve happily subscribed to Wizards of the Coast's online service, *D&D Insider*, so that he didn't need to purchase and store all the rulebooks needed to run his campaign, he retained a strong emotional connection to his print D&D manuals: "Just even to open the copy, it's the artwork, it's the feel of the book, the size, the shape, it's everything that goes along with it." And no one I asked viewed digital games as a substitute for pen-and-paper RPGs; they were qualitatively different experiences. All that is solid does not melt into air so easily after all.

[7.6] The uses of digital media I observed were mostly quotidian and integrated into daily life around old goals and problems. So, more often than not, digital technologies were auxiliaries to, not substitutes for, material practices. They supported the primary practice or generated new, spin-off activities, but their ability to enable communication and interaction with real people—albeit on distinctly mediated terms—was more important than their virtuality. For example, Wedge played *Blood Bowl*, a miniatures game that mixes tropes from the *Warhammer Fantasy* game/universe with American football, in a local league. First published by Games Workshop in 1987, the game predates the World Wide Web; however, Wedge's league made heavy use of digital communication technologies. They met monthly in a hotel ballroom to play, but in between game days Wedge spent a lot of time on the league's Web site. On the site, members' win-loss records could be tracked and players could discuss their strategies on the attached forum. These were not separate, digital forms of fandom but fed back directly into their monthly game days.

[7.7] Material practices of acquisition and curation are also required for digital objects. Two of the portraits in Miller's (2008) *Comfort of Things*, for example, focus on organizing and sorting emails and media files, such as digital photos. Editing metadata, searching for downloads, and leveling up *World of Warcraft* characters require brains and hands in addition to computers. In point of fact, not even digital information is truly immaterial—although it may seem that way to those privileged

with unlimited, high-bandwidth Internet connections and cheap storage media. It lives on computers and servers that need to be powered and kept cool. It must travel through a series of tubes with physical limitations on how much data they can transmit. It is vulnerable to planned obsolescence, catastrophic hard drive failure, and human error. Digitization does not solve the problems of materiality, it only entangles them with another set of devices.

8. Conclusion

[8.1] I close with the following two quotations because I think they encapsulate the powerful and contradictory relationship between human subjectivity and the material world:

[8.2] I'm in the middle of reading, uh, *Blade Runner, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and there's this theory posited about things and how you are working against entropy. And you will never win against entropy. No one can. Our little rooms of order, the minute we're gone, they start to decay. In fact, while we're here, they're decaying. And it's just like, that was such a mind-boggling thought because so many people spend so much of their lives and their time and their...energy trying to get more things. And those things are already decaying. It's like when you buy a car, the minute you drive it off the lot it's half its value? What sense does that make? You know. Human beings are very strange. (Shiera)

[8.3] I don't have as much junk as I used to have. I want more. I want more junk now. (Wedge)

[8.4] From the viewpoint of eternity, Shiera is right that attaching ourselves to impermanent objects is ultimately self-defeating ("you will never win against entropy... those things are already decaying"). But Wedge's endorsement of junk cannot be dismissed either, for in its insistent, repeated use of the first-person pronoun, he captures something of how the "I" is constituted by its things in the here and now.

[8.5] In fan cultures, participants orient themselves to some object or set of objects. I don't mean the mental objects of psychoanalysis here but real, physical things. Objects allow us to carry out fan practices and thereby provide access to social worlds in which we develop skills and competencies, relationships, and perhaps even a sense of identity or belonging. But this orienting is not merely attitudinal. It takes work: seeking out and acquiring goods, storing them in our homes (or elsewhere), and eventually disposing of them. The value, rarity, size, and durability (among other qualities) of specific objects can make that job easier or more difficult.

[8.6] I have emphasized how things are used in fans' homes because I believe these aspects of fandom are underexamined. However, attention to the material meanings of equipment-goods can also offer insight into fan practices outside of their expression in the domestic sphere. For example, while their content may be very similar, comic-book fans' discussions vary dramatically according to whether they are mediated by fanzines and APAs, the physical space of a comic-book store, or online forums. The temporality of circulation and relation between interlocutors produced by each medium is distinct. Or, to flip things around, the same equipment-goods of books and miniature figurines produce very different experiences when put to different uses in fantasy role-playing games and war games because these contexts generate different relations between people (the cooperation among a party of player characters, and head-to-head combat between two opposing armies). The relationship between practice and material culture provides a valuable line of inquiry into the possibilities and limitations of fan activity.

[8.7] The term *material culture* is somewhat redundant: in the last instance, since thoughts and ideas are created by brains, expressed by bodies, and recorded by media, there's no such thing as immaterial culture. Moreover, culture is constituted within a nexus of social practices. That means fandom is never simply a matter of individual, private psychology—even in the intimate space of the home. It is always already public and intersubjective, and it cannot be disentangled from the material goods through which it is expressed. But, for a whole host of reasons, we tend to overlook this fact. Horkheimer and Adorno famously defined reification as "a forgetting" ([1944] 2002, 191); addressing the role of material culture in collective memory (or lack thereof), Timcke (2013, 381) notes "that a commodity...makes us perceive the item in terms of abstract qualities that in no way relate to the item itself." As a result, we focus on the pleasures and uses of things rather than the things themselves in their objective, material, and sociohistorically constructed reality.

[8.8] Notwithstanding the new powers afforded by networked computers and the accompanying rhetoric of dematerialization, the material world must be accounted for, because, ultimately, there's nothing but the material world. Fandom may be distinguished by potent, emotionally charged relationships to culture, but it remains a form of human practice that inevitably takes and uses objects. We ought not to concentrate on meaning at the expense of what people are doing—and the goods they use to do it. Understanding the particular material expressions of fans' affective investments, and the affordances and constraints they entail, is part and parcel of understanding fandom.

9. Appendix: Methods and participants

[9.1] This article is based on qualitative field study of an urban nerd-culture scene. It was conducted between September 2009 and October 2011 as part of my doctoral studies and received financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through its doctoral fellowships program. The research design was approved by Simon Fraser University's Office of Research Ethics as a minimal-risk study.

[9.2] The study had two phases: one focused on nine local subcultural institutions—for example, specialty retail stores and fan organizations—and the other on the experiences of six participants in the scene. Phase two interviewees were evenly balanced between men and women, represented three distinct age cohorts, and all self-identified as middle class, although the meaning of this class identity was not consistent between them. While the first group of interviewees included several participants of East Asian descent, all people who volunteered to participate in the second phase were white/Caucasian. Interviews were conducted in person at locations negotiated with the interviewee. They were recorded and fully transcribed for analysis. In the second phase, I also conducted home visits with five out of six informants, enabling me to ask questions about relevant collections and the organization of space in situ. It was in the context of a home visit that I interviewed Steve, the partner of Diana, who was a primary informant.

[9.3] Although there were observational components in larger, public events where I did not announce my presence, interviewees were fully briefed on the study goals and procedures, and signed consent forms were obtained. In order to guarantee participant anonymity, all names are pseudonyms and distinguishing details about the scene have been suppressed.

10. Works cited

- Boivin, Nicole. 2004. "Mind over Matter? Collapsing the Mind-Matter Dichotomy in Material Culture Studies." In *Rethinking Materiality: The Engagement of Mind with the Material World*, edited by Elizabeth DeMarrais, Chris Gosden, and Colin Renfrew, 63–71. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archeological Research.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2000. *Pascalian Meditations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Burke, Liam. 2012. "'Superman in Green': An Audience Study of Comic Book Film Adaptations *Thor* and *Green Lantern*." *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 9 (2): 97–119.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. 1981. *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Douglas, Mary. (1966) 2002. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge.
- Gibson, James J. (1979) 1986. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gitelman, Lisa. 2004. "Media, Materiality, and the Measure of the Digital; or, The Case of Sheet Music and the Problem of Piano Rolls." In *Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture*, edited by Lauren Rabinovitz and Abraham Geil, 199–217. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor.
- Harrington, C. Lee, and Denise D. Bielby. 1995. *Soap Fans: Pursuing Pleasure and Making Meaning in Everyday Life*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. New York: Routledge.
- Holt, Douglas B. (1998) 2000. "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?" In *The Consumer Society Reader*, edited by Juliet B. Schor and Douglas B. Holt, 212–52. New York: New Press.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. (1944) 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Innis, Harold A. (1951) 2008. *The Bias of Communication*. 2nd ed. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Keane, Webb. 2005. "Signs Are Not the Garb of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things." In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 182–205. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Keat, Russell. 2000. *Cultural Goods and the Limits of the Market*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lepselter, Susan. 2011. "The Disorder of Things: Hoarding Narratives in Popular Media." *Anthropological Quarterly* 84 (4): 919–47.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/anq.2011.0053>.

- Malinowski, Bronislaw. (1922) 2002. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge.
- McCracken, Grant. 1990. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Miller, Daniel. 1998. *A Theory of Shopping*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Miller, Daniel. 2008. *The Comfort of Things*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Miller, Daniel. 2010. *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Norman, Donald A. 1988. *The Psychology of Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books.
- Reckwitz, Andreas. 2002. "Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing." *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2): 243–63.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/13684310222225432>.
- Sandvoss, Cornel. 2005. *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Schatzki, Theodore R. 1996. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, Theodore R., Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, eds. 2001. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Shimabukuro, Karra. 2013. "A Geek by Proxy." *Infinite Earths*.
<http://79.170.40.240/infiniteearth.co.uk/?p=200>.
- Timcke, Scott. 2013. "Is All Reification Forgetting? On Connerton's Types of Forgetting." *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism and Critique* 11 (2): 375–87.
<http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/469>.
- Venkatesh, Alladi, and Laurie A. Meamber. 2008. "The Aesthetics of Consumption and the Consumer as an Aesthetic Subject." *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 11 (1): 45–70.
- Warde, Alan. 2005. "Consumption and Theories of Practice." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2): 131–53. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1469540505053090>.
- Woo, Benjamin. 2012. "Alpha Nerds: Cultural Intermediaries in a Subcultural Scene." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15 (5): 659–76.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367549412445758>.

Wood, David, Jerome S. Bruner, and Gail Ross. 1976. "The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 17 (2): 89–100.

Praxis

The invisible teenager: Comic book materiality and the amateur films of Don Glut

Matt Yockey

University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Don Glut, between the ages of 9 and 25, made 41 short amateur films inspired by horror, science fiction, and superhero movies, serials, and comic books. The tactile qualities of comic books as affect-generating objects are instrumental to how Glut confirmed his identity during a time (adolescence) in which that identity is particularly unstable. Glut used the popular figure of the teen rebel and his role as a filmmaker in order to negotiate with hegemonic restrictions on his objects of affection, especially comic books.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Affect; Amateur movies; Comic books

Yockey, Matt. 2014. "The Invisible Teenager: Comic Book Materiality and the Amateur Films of Don Glut." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0506>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] In his 1959 amateur film *Dinosaur Destroyer*, a then 15-year-old Don Glut made one of his earliest attempts at stop-motion animation. In the brief film, he has a dinosaur figure cavort across a Lionel train set, attack a miniature house, and finally explode into flames. Glut has noted that he borrowed the title from a comic book story, and a sequence toward the end of *Dinosaur Destroyer* materializes this link between comic books and Glut's filmmaking. He cuts away from the rampaging dinosaur to shots of himself and a friend in Glut's bedroom. The camera pans across the room, visually cataloging Glut's collection of monster movie memorabilia, including a poster for the film *Rodan* (1956) and framed photographs of Frankenstein actors Glenn Strange and Boris Karloff. Glut cuts to a shot of himself thumbing through the first issue of the prozine *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, and the camera then pans across Glut's bed, upon which lie a number of comic books and monster magazines. The linkage between the mass culture objects that Glut collects and the stop-motion sequences affirm that the tactile contact with mass culture is integral to Glut's remediation of it in the form of stop-motion animation and, in other films, homemade monster and superhero makeup and costumes. In fact, Glut's body of self-reflexive

amateur films illustrates how initial tactile contact with an object is an important motivating device for one's fandom. If watching a film or listening to music inspire affect-driven fandom, Glut's reproduction of material culture and his emphasis on tactile contact demonstrates how touching objects offers the fan the intimate experience of embodiment. Glut's remediation of the mass culture objects of monster and superhero comic books directly concerns itself with the representation of embodied affect in their depictions of socially excessive bodies. In this way, both the consumption of comic books and their remediation in his films allows Glut to work through the contradictions and complexities of adolescence and his fandom in postwar America.

[1.2] Glut's dozens of amateur films made in the 1950s and 1960s illustrate the ways in which a preteen and teenage consumer exploited the richly affective quality of mass culture objects as a means of expressing agency within the contested frames of identity in postwar America. Glut's work provides insight into a subculture in America that developed and grew from the 1950s through the 1970s of amateur filmmakers and pop culture aficionados, in particular the young, mostly male fans of comic books and horror films. In its quality and content, Glut's films are not unique. However, he was arguably a more devoted amateur than most, as evidenced by his body of work, and he translated his youthful passions into a career as a writer and independent genre filmmaker. Further, because Glut was regularly profiled in monster movie prozines such as *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Castle of Frankenstein* in the 1960s, he has long been a recognizable figure in the "monster kid" world of now late middle-aged baby boomer fans of Universal horror films. Because of this, in 2006 he released an autobiographical book and a DVD collection of his films, both titled *I Was a Teenage Movie Maker*, making his body of work readily accessible for examination.

[1.3] Born in Chicago in 1944, Glut made a total of 41 mostly silent amateur films of only a few minutes in length between 1953 and 1969, almost all of them based on or inspired by classic Universal horror films (e.g., *Frankenstein Meets Dracula* [1957] and *The Invisible Teenager* [1962]), Republic serials (e.g., *Spy Smasher vs. the Purple Monster* [1964]), teen exploitation movies (e.g., *Monster Rumble* [1961] and *Dragstrip Dracula* [1962]), superhero comic books (e.g., *The Human Torch* [1963]), or a combination of all of the above (e.g., the wildly intertextual *The Adventures of the Spirit* [1963]). Although the derivative nature of these films superficially indicates a constricting mass culture hegemony, it in fact offers insight into the ways in which that culture could be mastered and controlled, thus enacting a comparable mastery and control over individual subjectivity. Glut provides a fascinating example of how self-determination is realized by a consumer engaging directly with the interpellative strategies of mass culture.

[1.4] Consider *The Adventures of the Spirit*, which opens with a title shot of the words "The Adventures Of" above a copy of a *Spirit* comic book (figure 1). In combining his own title card with the visibly weathered comic book, Glut immediately signals to the viewer that his work is not to be regarded simply as a fannish imitation of its source material but rather as an act of textual blending in which authorship is the result of an ongoing dialogue between the consumer-producer and mass culture. This synthesis is extended to Glut's own subjectivity when, in the next title card, he alerts the viewer that the film stars the Spirit, rather than Glut, who plays the character. In naming the comic book hero as the star, and then naming the actors playing the other roles in the rest of the title sequence, Glut navigates the often precarious territory of personal identity during adolescence at a time in which the teenager was increasingly articulated as necessarily subversive (yet safe) subject within mass culture. In making his films, Glut responds to the postwar articulation of the teenager as a newly powerful market demographic, emphasizing that role by ironically mimicking modes of production. Further, Glut's transformation into a producer offers both a diegetic and extradiegetic response to public anxiety regarding juvenile delinquency (often linked to popular culture), as well as the romantic image of the teenage rebel in popular culture. In being both the star and director of such projects as *The Teenage Frankenstein* (1959), for example, Glut makes visible two liminal subjects: the young adult caught between the poles of childhood and adulthood, and the fan who navigates the boundaries between consumption and production and fantasy and reality. He makes visible the teenage consumer who is otherwise regarded as an abstraction by hegemonic society. In doing so, he simultaneously asserts his own mastery over mass culture and its critics.



Figure 1. The mass-produced comic book is adapted and incorporated by the amateur filmmaker. [[View larger image.](#)]

[1.5] In his desire to reproduce the movies he saw in theaters and on television and later the comic books he read, Glut inevitably amassed a stockpile of material objects,

both handmade and purchased—props, costumes, and the films themselves—that affirm his active and affective participation with mass culture. They are the material residue of his engagement with the cult icons of genre texts, those icons that Matt Hills argues move "continuously across social-historical frames, being re-mapped and reworked in this process: [they are] an iteration, or an accreting set of iterations of the original moment of audience-mapping" (2002, 140). By remediating the iconic cult bodies of figures such as Frankenstein's monster or Batman as his own, Glut doubly marks his body as a cult one. He is both performer and filmmaker (figure 2). This body is performed as a transformative one, and in the process, his films reflexively catalogue the evolution of his body (and hence his subjectivity) from prepubescence to adulthood. His work speaks to Hills's notion of performative consumption. As Hills argues, "Each and every expression of fan identity is...both a non-volitional citation and the (consumerist) 'choice' of a volitional fan-subject...Fans do not claim agency in their 'becoming-a-fan' stories, but they do claim agency through their later 'performances' of an identity" (2002, 159–60). Glut's films articulate the evolution of this transformation; as his films become increasingly sophisticated, the distance between Glut and his becoming-a-fan origin increases. At the same time, each film reaffirms the desire and need to constantly revisit the object of fan devotion. In doing so, the fan reenacts the state of becoming a fan in the circulation of the affective attachment to mass culture objects as a means of asserting one's identity. Body and object coalesce in the ongoing representation and re-representation of the transformative and performative self on display in his work.



Figure 2. *Glut (far left) as both star and director is doubly removed from the everyday on the set of *The Adventures of the Spirit*. [View larger image.]*

2. Touch me, I'm sick: Adolescence as contagion

[2.1] Glut's assertion of identity was important not only simply because he was going through the normal anxieties and uncertainties of adolescence but also because he was doing so during a period in which both adolescents and comic book readers were

increasingly regarded as a problematic subjects. In his oft-cited 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent*, psychologist Fredric Wertham opined: "Even more than crime, juvenile delinquency reflects the social values current in a society. Both adults and children absorb these social values in their daily lives...and also in...the mass media" (1954b, 149). In his study of the causes of juvenile delinquency, Wertham linked comic book depictions of bodily excess (be they of the superhero, crime, or horror genres) with physical acts in response by juvenile readers. According to him, comic book depictions of sexualized and fascistic violence promoted aberrant sexual behavior and violence in children. Implicitly, the material nature of comic books was a primary source of their power to corrupt. They are objects to be consumed in part through tactile contact, adding symbolic weight to their capacity to affect children. Comic books could be passed, like a virus, from child to child. They could find their way anywhere, read openly in the living room or playground, or secretly under the covers of a bed or between the pages of a school book. Popular depictions of children reading comic books affirmed the presence of innocence, while obviously staged publicity shots of Wertham conveyed his position as a protective child authority (figures 3 and 4). Both photographs highlight the affective response generated by the intimate, tactile relationship required to read comic books. For the child, reading comic books is a completely engrossing experience. In this image, the boy performs the disconnection from reality required by Wertham's interpretation of comic books. Meanwhile, the image of Wertham indicates both the threat of comic books that goes unnoticed by children and the containment of that threat by the authority on child psychology. By extension, these depictions of affect are intended to provoke a sympathetic emotional response from the viewer.



Figure 3. *The child consumer is enveloped and engrossed by mass culture.*
Photograph by Morris Engle, 1945. [[View larger image.](#)]

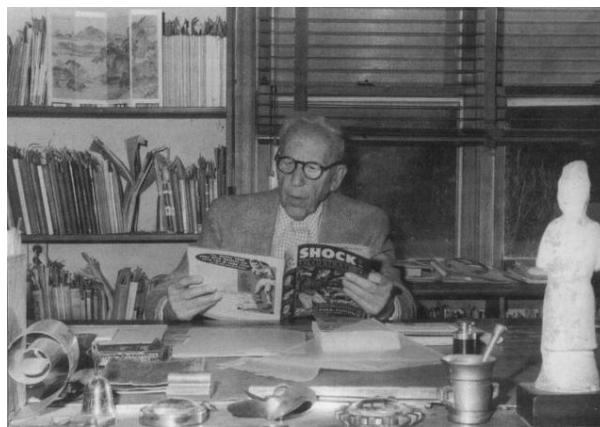


Figure 4. *Wertham's expert gaze recognizes and disciplines the threat of mass culture.* [[View larger image.](#)]

[2.2] The affect-generating qualities of touch, further conveyed in these images of touching, confirm Sara Ahmed's contention that "emotions are both about objects, which they hence shape, and are also shaped by contact with objects" (2004, 7). The affect that Wertham expressed about comic books, which required him to come into contact with them, contributed to a larger public response to them. Thus, the image of Wertham validates such events as mass comic book burnings (figure 5). Again, comic books are treated like disease carriers that require not simply a mass purging (the symbolic eradication of the mass-produced object) but a very public destruction as performance. While figure 3 offers a model of how to consume comic books per mass

culture producers, figures 4 and 5 offer what Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites see as the persuasive power of iconic photographs to interpolate "a form of citizenship that can be imitated" (2007, 12). Given the postwar emphasis on consumption as a performative mode of citizenship, these images are fundamentally contradictory. Wertham himself denounced comic books as "the greatest anti-educational influence that man's greed has ever concocted...We have reduced children to a market" (1954a, 611). However, when the act of reading a comic book directly promotes the transformation of the passive consumer into an active consumer, we see a positive assertion of consumption that ironically confirms Wertham's contention that comic books affect the behavior of children. Thus, an image of a 14-year-old Don Glut reading a Frankenstein comic book (figure 6) is not only, like his films, a representation of performative consumption, but one in which the ritualistic tactile return to the mass culture object is performed for the camera. When this photograph was taken Glut had already made at least two of his nine films featuring the Frankenstein monster (with Glut almost always playing the monster), which he has said were partly inspired by the Frankenstein comic books he was reading at the time.



Figure 5. *Unseducing the innocent.* [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 6. *Glut in 1958: comic book reading as an act of positive transformation. [View larger image.]*

[2.3] Figures 3 through 6 speak to Ahmed's observation that "objects in which I am 'involved' can also be imagined" (2004, 7). Following Benedict Anderson's famous assertion that the nation is first and foremost a community of individuals who imagine their connection to a collective, we must consider how the nation, others, and self are all thus imagined via affect-saturated and affect-generating objects. Affective economies are "where feelings...are produced as effects of circulation" (Ahmed 2004, 8). The circulation of images of the tactile relationship to the vexed mass culture object generate polarizing emotions that can be internalized within the individual, reflecting but not resolving the inherent internal contradictions of individual and national identities. Our individualized relationship to certain parts of mass culture strongly informs an affective attachment to a national body and vice versa. The consumption of American values is affectively experienced as an emotional bond to the national collective, held together in part by mass culture objects and our interiorized relationship to them. Thus, the individual and the collective are conflated within the subjectivity of the individual. In this way, we see how emotions function, per Ahmed, as social and cultural practices. Our relationship to ourselves thus informs our relationship to others. Cornel Sandvoss notes that fandom is a performance of self that confirms the "emotional pleasures" of fandom through the "creation and continuous re-creation of the self in everyday life" (2005, 48). Further, he observes that as fans "temporarily segregate use and exchange-value they juxtapose the objectification of the subject with the subjectification of the object" (120). This transference reflected and encouraged postwar market segmentation, which appealed directly to the essential American trope of individualism. Such segmentation conferred civic identity

onto two of the most significant marketing demographics to emerge at this time: children and young adults.

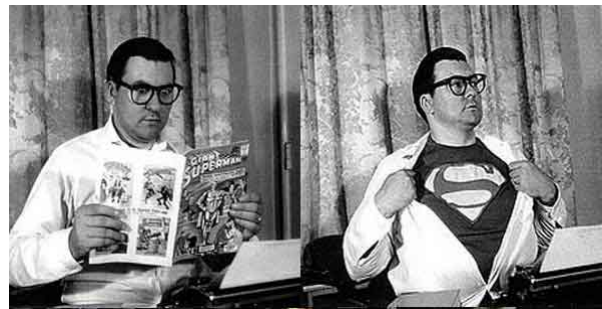
[2.4] To some degree, the anxiety about juvenile delinquency in the 1950s is attributable to the growing number of teenagers and their increasingly important designation as consumers in postwar America. Birthrates in America increased over the course of World War II after declines during the Depression, and by the 1950s, these wartime babies were, according to Thomas Doherty, "set apart from previous generations of American young people in numbers, affluence, and self-consciousness" (2002, 34). Subsequently, the consumer culture that developed around the American teenager was regarded with a large degree of ambivalence by many older Americans. Importantly, teenagers as an American subgroup were understood largely according to their representation within mass culture (especially films) and by commodities attached to them (such as rock music and blue jeans). The juvenile delinquent that concerned so many authorities in the 1950s was the obverse to the young rebel, a figure regarded in more positive terms within popular culture as emblematic of an American spirit of individualism and exceptionalism. According to Leerom Medovoi, figures such as James Dean and Elvis Presley were acceptable to many adults at this time in part because they reflected the postwar image America wanted of itself as the emancipated leader of the "free world" (2005, 1). In order to recognize itself as such, America required self-alienating figures like Presley and Dean. Their essential difference from hegemonic values (especially their excessive affect) was strongly mediated by their commodity status, which was driven by their representations of affect. They represented ideal American individualism in two registers: as iconic commodities and as financially successful artists. This dual appeal was synthesized and reflected by the circulation of commodities directly related to them (primarily films and records) or associated with them (such as leather jackets). Importantly, as Medovoi points out, celebrities such as Dean and Presley also helpfully confirmed a newly emergent concept of identity in the 1950s "as the product of self-defining and self-affirming acts that confront a punitive, authoritarian Other" (2005, 5). While some figures were required to remain excommunicated from the representational field of ideal American individualism in order to confirm the legitimacy of state authority, others were necessarily invoked in order to present an idea of the American state as, according to Medovoi, "the projection of individual liberty onto the level of the body politic" (2005, 7). Per mass culture, those figures of individual liberty were popularly represented as embodiments of teen angst (James Dean screaming, "You're tearing me apart!" at his parents in the 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause*) or unchecked libidinal power ("Elvis the Pelvis"), contrasted by the required figure of adult authority.

[2.5] Glut's films provide a parade of affected bodies—werewolves, vampires, superheroes, and Frankenstein monsters—that exist in a perpetually adult-free world.

The primary figure of authority is always Glut himself as the filmmaker. His authority is derived from his ability as amateur filmmaker to exert a kind of mastery over fetishized mass culture commodities. He either integrates mass-produced objects directly into his films (for example, he wore a rubber mask ordered from a magazine in his earliest Frankenstein films) or appropriates personal objects around the home as stand-ins for fetish objects (such as when a sports jacket discarded by his grandfather became the Frankenstein monster's coat). Central to this process, according to Sandvoss, are transitional objects that affectively attach the fan to "dominant social, cultural, economic and technological systems" (2005, 81–82). The transitional object verifies and confers individuality within the secure context of the collective. The comic book as such a device is foregrounded in Glut's first superhero comic book adaptation, his 1962 film *Captain Marvel*. The film is structured immediately as a self-reflexive text commenting on the nature of consumption: it opens with a shot of several different comic books spread out on a flat surface, announcing that his film is in part about our relationship to the transitional object. Glut cuts to a close-up of the cover of a *Captain Marvel* comic book in the first image; a hand enters the frame and opens the comic book to the first page. The camera unsteadily moves in to a tight close-up of the page, and Glut cuts to his narrative diegesis. The use of the point-of-view shot for the display of comic book covers and the close-up of one of the comic books positions the viewer and director as vexed mass culture consumers. The collection of comic books evokes the specter of comic books as pathological and the collecting of them as a pathology. Steven M. Gelber notes that "collecting as a somatic malady brought on by a pathogen was a popular image" in the first half of the 20th century (1999, 88). Thus, the 18-year-old filmmaker can be seen as a socially problematic figure because he continues to maintain the socially regressive habit of comic book reading developed in childhood. Consequently, when Glut cuts to a close-up of the *Captain Marvel* cover and then to his narrative, the audience is immersed into the text, just as the ideal child consumer is in figure 3. Glut uses the material objects of mass culture to shore up his identity, which is seen by some authorities as threatened by that very same mass culture. Through his film, Glut insists that his viewers assume the same productive relationship with mass culture, a sympathetic allegiance that assumes the viewer shares a similar attitude about that culture. This implied allegiance with viewers is of particular value to Glut at this time, ostensibly when he is meant to have left behind the trappings of childhood and entered adulthood. His role as amateur filmmaker works to resolve this contradiction; he presents his twin hobbies of comic book collecting and movie making as the basis for his future identity as an economically productive laborer. Again, the comic book as a material object is essential to this rhetoric, for Glut's films are apparently motivated by his affection for them.

[2.6] That a hand enters the frame to guide the viewer into the diegesis emphasizes the value of invoking tactile contact as the primary source of an affective response

that bonds filmmaker and viewer. As Ahmed argues, "Emotions...produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (2004, 10). Glut explicitly represents this process in his film *The Adventures of the Spirit* when he shows Clark Kent (Glut friend and movie prop collector Bob Burns) make the transition to Superman after reading an issue of a *Superman* comic book (figures 7 and 8). The character's reading of the comic book is narratively gratuitous, signally the value for Glut of conveying the transformative possibilities inherent in the immersion into the ostensibly bad mass culture object via touch. Material contact with the comic book activates and authorizes fantastic transformation—a positive inversion of Wertham's claims of the transformation of children's psyches when reading comic books. In both cases, transformation requires physical contact with comic books, which then translates into the physical acting out of affect.



Figures 7 and 8. *The Adventures of the Spirit*: Clark Kent's transformation through textual immersion echoes Glut's own move from comic book reader to filmmaker.

[\[View larger image.\]](#)

[2.7] If in *The Adventures of the Spirit* one can reimagine oneself or be reimaged by the viewer (with the comic book as a guiding device) as a superhero, then similarly we can recognize the transformative possibilities inherent in mass culture in the very existence of Glut's film. Glut reconfigures the physical responses to comic books warned against by Wertham into the disciplined physicality of performance and labor. Central to the effectiveness of both Wertham's arguments and Glut's reified subjectivity via film is what Ahmed terms their affective "stickiness...an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs" (2004, 90). Objects acquire stickiness when they accumulate an affective history, whether that affect is positive or negative. The history of the comic book's stickiness indicated in figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 is extended and reflexively commented on in figures 7 and 8. In the images of Burns as Clark Kent/Superman, the stickiness of comic books is transferred to the film itself and its director. Both become objects that can acquire a similar history of affect.

[2.8] As a result, Glut's films become what Sandvoss calls "second-order transitional objects," which serve as intermediaries between the self and an absent object of

fandom (2005, 90). His films are significant in this regard because in some cases the original transitional object is not simply missing (such as a film it is derived from) but rather has been willfully displaced by the consumer. Glut has noted that his initial motivation for making these films was because he wanted to watch the films he saw in movie theaters or on television whenever he wanted to. Given that he also adapted comic books that he continued to have access to, his underlying motivation for all of his filmmaking might more reasonably be that he wanted to re-create the affective experience of encountering the text for the first time. In other words, his films potentially reproduce nodal points in his development as a fan—his original encounters with significant texts. Consequently, in all his films, Glut as reader is as much the subject as Dracula, Batman, or Rocketman are. Glut's films are suffused with second-order transitional objects that bear the potential to become first-order ones that can inform a reading of Glut himself as a textual object. Several of his films feature costumes made by his mother specifically for his film work. His films also routinely feature toy rockets and ray guns from his childhood, as well as latex monster masks and model kits. His films mark him as a reader who evokes the materiality of comic books, evidenced by his use of life-size speech balloons taped to the wall behind actors in *Superduperman* (1962), but also as a reader who literally embeds the material object into his films, as with the series of images of Superman cut out of comic books for the credit sequence of *Superman vs. the Gorilla Gang* (1965).

[2.9] However, perhaps the most interesting objects used by Glut in his films are the numerous props from many of the films and serials that inspired him. Because of his friendship with Burns, a young collector living in the Los Angeles area, Glut used a number of props in many of his films. These include the headpiece for an alien from *Invasion of the Saucer-Men* (1957), the silver-tipped cane from Lon Chaney Jr.'s *The Wolf Man* (1941), preproduction sketches from *Forbidden Planet* (1956), a Metaluna mutant mask from *This Island Earth* (1955), and the Captain America costume from the 1944 Republic serial. Glut maximized his access to this treasure trove of props, lending some of his films an almost surreal quality. For example, in *The Adventures of the Spirit*, Captain America (Burns, in the Republic costume) turns into a werewolf and is killed by the Spirit (Glut, wearing a homemade costume modeled after Will Eisner's comic books) using the cane from the original Universal *Wolf Man* film. Actual film props work in concert with homemade costumes and objects to inspire a narrative that exceeds the boundaries of the source material. In this way, we see that not only do objects reflect an affective history but they also help Glut articulate new chapters in that history. In conflating these objects (a literal conflation of mass culture and the individual), Glut not only affirms his affection for the source material but also creates a film that extends the boundaries of affect. This is confirmed by the fact that after shooting *The Adventures of the Spirit*, Burns purchased the Superman costume Glut's mother made, indicating the value of the costume as a valuable souvenir to the

collector of not only the film but also Burns's experiences with it. In turn, Burns's purchase elevates Glut's film, equating it with the professional productions that Burns owns props from.

[2.10] Glut realizes the synthesis of the public and private in his films' archival presentation of actual props from professional films and serials, as well as mass-produced objects from his childhood and costumes made by his mother. This conflation is furthered when, for example, he includes the actor Glenn Strange (most famous for playing the Frankenstein monster in a number of Universal movies) in *The Adventures of the Spirit*. Burns was friendly with the actor, who invited Glut (when he was on vacation in California) and his young crew to his home in suburban Los Angeles one afternoon to shoot scenes for the film. Significantly, while Glut has Strange reprise the role of the monster, he has his star actor wear a rubber mask of the creature that was designed for him by the Don Post makeup studio to wear for a film publicity campaign (Glut has said he did this because he did not want to ask Strange to shave his mustache) (figure 2). The result is a rather bizarre conflation of actor and role in which the star power of an actual movie actor reprising an iconic role is hidden from sight. Glut had to compensate for this by featuring a shot in his credit sequence of Strange out of costume holding a placard that identifies him and the role he plays. Strange here is as much an affect-saturated prop as the Captain America costume or the cane from *The Wolf Man*. In fact, Strange is more so because Glut can foreground and exploit the ability of his audience to recognize the actor. Without prompts, a viewer would have no idea that certain of the costumes and props came from Hollywood productions. In using Strange with the mask, Glut marks Hollywood-related objects as personal and elevates the personal as resonant within the public. This latter maneuver is achieved by the very act of making his films, which becomes a conflated private-public archive of the mass culture texts that were important to Glut. The transitional object (such as the original Captain America costume) can be the original object of fan interest, further rendering the film in which Glut used this costume an original object of fandom. The costume lends both the film and the filmmaker a significant degree of authenticity, informed by the affect generated by the original auratic object.

3. Editions of you: Remediating subjectivity via the object

[3.1] The development of 8mm cameras and projectors in the 1950s ensured that the exhibition of the amateur film would be mostly limited to the domestic sphere, thus locating the amateur film within the category of the home movie (and further distancing it from the professional film). According to Patricia Zimmerman, the amateur film at this time "was redefined as a social relation between families, rather than as an art form or a public intervention" (2007, 280). However, we see in Glut's work how the boundaries between these categorical functions are blurred. Glut makes

art that intervenes in the circulation of meaning between the private and the public. He brings exterior labor practices into the home, merging work and play, destabilizing categories by remediating the physical space of the home as film and comic book text. Glut's use of objects in his film indicates the ways in which he used mass culture as a means of asserting his identity. Of further significance, then, is the role that place played in the production and exhibition of his films. Objects are defamiliarized when placed in the context of the amateur movie, most of which Glut shot in and around his suburban Chicago home. Conversely, Glut's home and neighborhood are defamiliarized by their remediation in his films. Further, his home was defamiliarized each time he transformed a portion of it into an exhibition space where he charged money for family and friends to watch his films. Significantly, Glut's mother was supportive of his filmmaking efforts (his father died when Glut was an infant). She gave him his first camera, made many of the costumes used in his films, and even served as the camera operator in several of his earliest efforts. The fan's cultural production is thus directly tied to a dialogue between the child and parent in the affect-rich environment of home. Glut notes, for example, that in his later work in which friends, rather than his mother, served as camera operators when he was on screen, he could "get away with a lot more" (Glut 2006). Domestic consumption became a pivotal means by which civic identity and familial integrity could be confirmed and integrated in postwar America. The household engages with the public sphere (a condensation of popular and political culture) by domesticating commodities; these commodities are incorporated and adapted to what Roger Silverstone terms "the moral economy of the household," which itself is shaped by that public culture (1994, 48). Public and private values are synthesized through consumption, a process both extended and critiqued by acts of cultural production within the household. Because the moral economy of the household is regulated by parental authority, the child (and especially the teenager), in fully performing his or her civic identity (as mediated via mass culture), is encouraged to exercise the role of rebellious citizen. In order for the ontological security produced by the moral economy to cohere and be legitimated, it must be symbolically challenged in these modes of performance by the teenager, thus confirming the image of America constructed in the political and cultural spheres at this time.

[3.2] Glut symbolically challenges authority by maintaining into young adulthood his interest in the comic books and horror films of his childhood, all mass culture objects marked as potential threats to children. More significantly, Glut's own perception of himself in his teen years expands on the popular image of the 1950s teenager as a James Dean-style rebel, with the leather jacket serving as the primary object that authenticates this identity and its attendant performativity (in rumbles staged for his films and as a member of rock bands). The jacket is a fetishized object that affectively links the fan to the cult icon (i.e., James Dean or Marlon Brando) through its materiality. Yet Glut reenacts and extends the appropriation of this iconicity in teen

monster films of the era by making it an integral component of his own identity. This confirms Hills's contention that "whereas the 'icon' remains locked into a given set of social and cultural co-ordinates...its temporal persistence across markedly different economies of meaning and affect...produces the moment of cult formation" (2002, 140). Though he grew up in a comfortable middle-class suburb of Chicago, Glut routinely refers to himself as having been a street kid who wore leather jackets and black clothes and was more in tune with a rock-and-roll subculture than any other. At the same time, he links his love of rock music (he was a member of garage rock bands in Chicago and Los Angeles) to his love of horror, science fiction, and superhero comic books and films. Recalled Glut in a 2010 interview, "When I was a kid, there was something rebellious about liking the fantastic stuff, just like it was in liking rock 'n' roll music." The primary way by which he articulates these intersecting affections is in many of his movies, which are themselves derivative of a comparable conflation performed in the mass culture arena in the 1950s. Glut made a series of films that were not simply inspired by such drive-in theater exploitation fare as *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957) but were directly shaped by Glut's exposure to them. In 1959 alone, he made *The Teenage Frankenstein*, *The Teenage Werewolf*, *I Was a Teenage Apeman*, *I Was a Teenage Vampire*, *Return of the Teenage Werewolf*, and *The Teenage Frankenstein Meets the Teenage Werewolf*. More than just derivations of teen exploitation movies, Glut's films extend and exaggerate the intersection of horror tropes with the figure of the teen rebel through their affective immediacy, so that while American International Pictures featured Michael Landon as a werewolf in a letterman jacket in *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957), Glut's *Revenge of the Teenage Werewolf* (1960) features Glut in full werewolf makeup and a leather jacket (figures 9 and 10). Although Landon's character becomes a werewolf because of the work of a misguided psychiatrist trying to help humanity (shades of Fredric Wertham), in Glut's narratively bare film, lycanthropy, like rumbles, is presented as an expected and unexplainable condition of adolescence.



Figure 9. AIP's teenage werewolf. Michael Landon in the film *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957). [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 10. *Glut's teenage werewolf.* *Glut's synthesis of the personal with the mass culture text makes his a more authentic iteration.* [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.3] According to Thomas Doherty, "AIP teenpics seem to be the kind of motion pictures a group of high schoolers let loose with 35mm equipment might come up with, an impression due in equal parts to market savvy, youthful talent, and bargain-basement budgets" (2002, 132). Glut's amateur teenpics then stand as more authentic than AIP's efforts, as Glut's objectified presence as an actual teen filmmaker with a

below-bargain-basement budget and 16mm camera attests. The marriage of monsters and teen rebels in 1950s B movies is not so surprising. Each figure is shaped by and generates intense affect as a reflection of a transforming body and subjectivity mediated by way of the conflation of body and costume. For Glut, the sympathetic relationship between the genres offered another opportunity by which he could use mass culture to confirm his identity. As he recalls, the AIP "teenage monster" films were

[3.4] something truly momentous. Up until that time my amateur horror movies featured teenagers playing adult characters. Now, with teenage werewolves and Frankensteins in vogue, I had the opportunity to try something more "believable"—have my teenage actors actually play monsters their own age! As I was going through a black-leather jacket/motorcycle/teenage rebel phase at the time, nothing could be cooler for this teenage movie-maker. (Glut, n.d.)

[3.5] He goes on to highlight his association with teen gang and rock-and-roll cultures as instrumental to his teen horror movies: "The casts featured in this new series of movies [were] mostly guys I was either hanging around with, the Chicago Vandals (a name lifted from the Roger Corman cult movie *Teenage Doll*), or playing in rock 'n' roll bands [with]...at the time" (Glut, n.d.).

[3.6] Given that Glut's films were almost entirely populated by men (women were virtually absent from his work until he attended college; even then, they were passive, barely visible figures), his self-articulation as a teen rebel should also be understood in explicitly gendered terms. As Hills contends, "fan-text attachments...[act] as mediators of gender identity within the family, as possible openings for communication and/or impersonation/emulation of gendered identities across and between generations—from father to son, or from mother to daughter" (2002, 162). Given that his father died before he could know him, Glut's filmmaking suggests an avenue by which the son could confirm an affective attachment to his father, who was the original owner of the 8mm camera he used. His father is as much a ghostly memory evoked via the filmmaking process as any Universal monster. Further, his filmmaking, coupled with his father's absence, provides an opportunity for Glut to play with the rigid homosociality of parent-child relationships codified in the home. As noted, his mother (who, in fact, originally purchased the camera for Glut's father) was a key collaborator on nearly all of Glut's films. Thus, all of his work is to some degree determined by, and determines, the mother-son relationship. Their collaborative relationship conflates familial love, fan devotion, and labor that further marks Glut's consumption of ostensibly dangerous mass culture—such as rock and roll and horror films—as

completely safe. Her validation of his interests also acts as a counterpoint to repressive figures of social control, such as Wertham.

[3.7] Interestingly, from the age of 18 to 25, Glut's focus shifted from teen monster movies to adaptations of superhero comic books, and most of the films he made in the 1960s are superhero films. Although it might seem odd that he would turn to texts more strongly tied to childhood at this time, Glut explains that his superhero films are all parodies, "all very campy, before people knew what the word *camp* really meant for the most part...before the word *camp* was really in common use" (Glut 2006). Thus, the consumer does not simply position himself in relation to mass culture trends but as a visionary who anticipates trends. Yet significantly, Glut's second superhero comic book adaptation is *Superduperman*, based on a comic book story of the same name that appeared nine years earlier in *Mad* no. 4 (April–May 1953). *Mad*, which began publication in 1952, was part of a growing postwar cultural trend in America of an oppositional culture that spoke simultaneously to various segments of the nation previously unacknowledged by mass culture. Following W. T. Lhamon Jr.'s characterization of the 1950s, *Mad* was symptomatic of "a major welling up of confessional and personal expression" (1990, 7). According to Geoffrey O'Brien, "To children growing up in the fifties, *Mad* provided the reassurance that someone else was watching, someone else had seen what [The Media] looked like" and acknowledged "that we were all soaked in mass-produced words and images" (2002, 52). If Wertham did much the same, it was from a position of authority that substantiated and justified adult authority and which positioned the consumer as impotently childish. *Mad*, on the other hand, treated children like adults and adults like children, upending the ideological sawhorse upon which Wertham stood (*Mad* even parodied him in a story as "Frederick Werthless").

[3.8] Glut's adaptation of a *Mad* parody confirms his own ambivalence about the superhero genre and mass culture in general as a vehicle for making meaning. Glut, as a young adult maintaining a tough-guy facade, must mitigate his open expressions of affection and assert that all of these superhero films are parodies. His attempts to distance himself from one form of affect by replacing it with another speaks to the problems of stickiness associated with objects. It is significant that Glut worked in genres (horror and the superhero) that are profoundly invested in narratives of emotion and that he circulated that emotion through objects. The emotionality of the genres relates to what Ahmed sees as the "very public nature of emotion" and "the emotive nature of publics" (2004, 14). Glut's films are highly personal, but only in terms of how he relates to mass culture as a source of identity making within his life; his films are thus suffused with in-joke casting of friends, for example. The source of his affection also serves to contain that affect; he loves superhero comic books, but only from an ironic distance and within the structures of amateur production.

[3.9] As with *Mad*, all of Glut's work reminds us that someone else is looking at "The Media" along with us, an imagined community of American consumers who get the references who share a comparable affective response. *Mad*, it can be seen, assisted Glut in negotiating the dualities of child/adult and consumer/producer. Glut's "Superduperman!" adaptation reflects and confirms the original's conflation of rebellious teenage subjectivity with adult labor (evident in *Mad*'s byline, the "usual gang of idiots"). Glut uses the strategy of parody to assert his own agency in the face of both institutions of authority and mass culture itself. Further, because the subject of the parody in this instance is the superhero genre, Glut can safely confirm his teenage subjectivity and distance himself from a preadolescent self, placing himself within the flow of sanctioned mass culture subversion. Therefore, when Glut adapts "Superduperman!" the absent object of fandom is not the original *Mad* comic (which appears in the film itself as an authenticating object). The absent object is, so to speak, Glut's original experience of reading that issue of *Mad*—or, to put it another way, Glut in the past. Thus, Glut establishes a circuit of meaning between himself in the (ever-changing) present, his younger self, his own textual production, and specific mass culture objects with which he has a nostalgic and affective attachment. He represents himself on film as a cult body so that the typical nostalgia evoked when looking at old photographs or home movies is transfigured when Glut reexamines his amateur films in the present. Glut's reflexivity and constant state of self-awareness offer a means by which his body (and subjectivity) escapes the limits of mass culture even as he relies on that culture for some degree of meaning. As Hills argues, "The cult body is neither a produce of an entirely volitional subject, nor is it the product of such a subject trapped in a total consumer code....Performative consumption...cannot be reduced...to narratives of self and other" (2002, 168).

[3.10] As curator of his own past, Glut used objects to recover a sense of wholeness, even as the attempt acknowledges the impossibility of such an endeavor. Just as his filmmaking offered him the opportunity to reproduce the leisure activity of home movie making undertaken by his father and to extend it into the field of adult labor, the lost object (in this case, his father) remains just that (figures 11 and 12). This loss informs the nostalgia that gives objects their affective power. The transitional object is thus a souvenir of the past, and it is significant that Glut has kept nearly every prop and costume he used in his films to the present day, making his home a kind of archive to his childhood yet also the living present of his adulthood. As an adult, Glut has made a living making low-budget exploitation films at the margins of the Hollywood film industry, as well as authoring a number of pulp-style novels. All of his work continues his engagement with the same genres that his amateur films trafficked in, ostensibly confirming the promise offered by those youthful efforts while also maintaining their social limits. Well into middle age, Glut lives with his invisible

teenage self, a spectral presence that inhabits the objects of his youth, reminding him that as he continues to consume and produce media, so too does his younger self.



Figure 11. *Glut as Superduperman (1962).* [[View larger image.](#)]

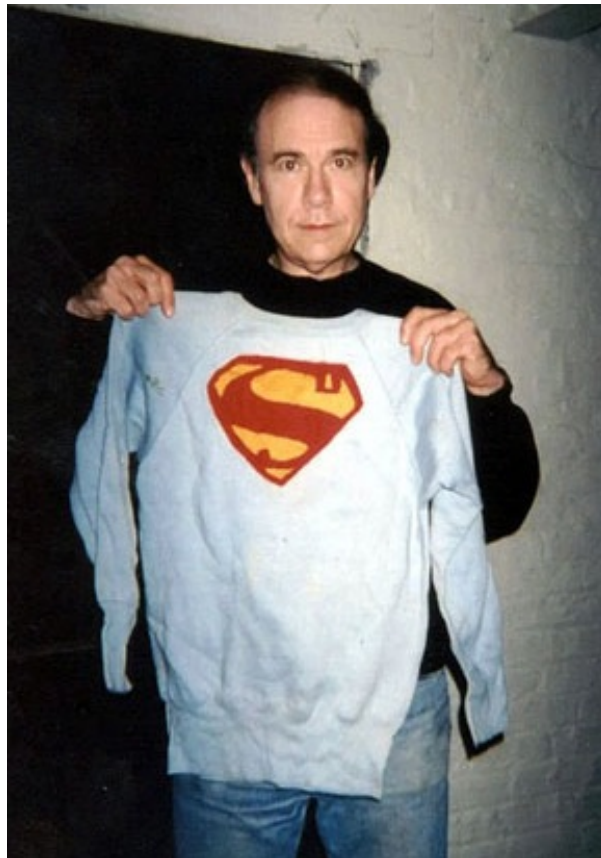


Figure 12. *Glut in 2008: the perpetual return of Superduperman and the teenager who played him.* [[View larger image.](#)]

4. Works cited

Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Doherty, Thomas. 2002. *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gelber, Steven M. 1999. *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Glut, Don. 2006. *I Was a Teenage Movie Maker: Don Glut's Amateur Movies*. DVD. Frontline Entertainment Inc.
- Glut, Don. 2010. "An Interview with Don Glut, by Abhay." Interview by Abhay Khosla. *Savage Critic*, March 31. <http://www.savagecritic.com/interviews/an-interview-with-donald-glut-by-abhay/>.
- Glut, Don. n.d. Don Glut's Teenage Horror Movies. <http://usersites.horrorfind.com/home/horror/moviemaker/dgteenhorror.html>.
- Hariman, Robert, and John Louis Lucaites. 2007. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. New York: Routledge.
- Lhamon, W. T., Jr. 1990. *Deliberate Speed: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American 1950s*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Medovoi, Leerom. 2005. *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- O'Brien, Geoffrey. 2002. *Castaways of the Image Planet*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint.
- Sandvoss, Cornel. 2005. *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Silverstone, Roger. 1994. *Television and Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.
- Wertham, Fredric. 1954a. "Reading for the Innocent." *Wilson Library Bulletin*, September 22, 610–13.
- Wertham, Fredric. 1954b. *Seduction of the Innocent*. New York: Rinehart.
- Zimmerman, Patricia R. 2007. "Morphing History into Histories: From Amateur Film to the Archive of the Future." In *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, edited by Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmerman, 1–28. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Praxis

The heterogeneity of maid cafés: Exploring object-oriented fandom in Japan

Luke Sharp

University of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

[0.1] *Abstract*—Maid cafés may be positioned as objects of (often oversimplified) fan communities in Japan; their heterogeneous qualities may be explored by presenting chronotopes with which they may be reconsidered. The problematics of viewing maid cafés in a homogeneous or reductive way (via *iyashi-kei*, "relaxation purposes," and *moe-kei*, "entertainment purposes") are considered, and the results of empirical research conducted at establishments across Honshū in Japan are presented. The vast differences in the services and interactivities provided in maid café settings are at odds with the homogenized fashion in which these venues have been treated in the popular press, in local promotional publications, and often in the academic literature. By presenting chronotopes and case studies with which maid cafés may be reconsidered, what it means to discuss maid cafés as a holistic phenomenon is challenged, and a heuristic for examining how spaces are constructed inside such establishments is provided.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Chronotope; *Iyashi*; *Moe*; Space

Sharp, Luke. 2014. "The Heterogeneity of Maid Cafés: Exploring Object-Oriented Fandom in Japan." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0505>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] The maid café may be treated as an object of fandom in Japan. In establishments throughout the country, patrons interact and converse with costumed waitresses, creating a vast array of experiences. Maid cafés are objects of affirmation and tribute to the Japanese maid persona; the variations of interactive services that they provide necessitate reconsideration of the term *maid café* holistically (note 1). After an initial discussion of the homogenizing of maid cafés and the methodology used for this study, I offer five chronotopes of maid cafés to highlight their variety and to demonstrate how they are not uniform. The chronotopes may be used as a heuristic for the consideration and evaluation of the communicative elements of maid cafés, particularly with how spaces are constructed inside them (note 2). This is useful for the consideration of, among many other potential space-related topics, how space is

gendered inside maid cafés, how power relations between maids and customers are forged vis-à-vis space, and how public and private spaces converge in maid café settings.

2. The heterogeneity of maid cafés

[2.1] A maid café is a small establishment where waitresses dressed in some form of a maid costume engage customers (usually, but not exclusively, men) in conversation and provide entertainment, perhaps musically in the form of karaoke or through playing board or video games with patrons. Certainly this is how maid cafés are typically presented in the mass media. Central to these interactive elements is the role-play of the master/servant. Maids often greet customers as they enter an establishment with the phrase, "Welcome home, Master" (*okaerinasaimase goshujin-sama*), and on initial contact, they use formal language. Maid cafés have only been around since 2001, but they are best understood as part of a longer history of establishments in Japan's eroticism industry, to use Silverberg's (2007) term. Antecedents of maid cafés include the teahouses of the Tokugawa period (1603–1867) pleasure quarters, the cafés of the 1930s' "erotic grotesque nonsense" movement, and the hostess bars and clubs of the era after World War II. Sexual exchanges were not a primary part of hostesses' jobs in these early iterations, but they did happen. In contrast, in maid cafés, they uniformly do not. However, like these early establishments, they commodify elements of femininity, sexuality, and conversation (Galbraith 2011; Louis 1992).

[2.2] However, there remain large differences in the services and activities provided in each maid café in Japan, as well as in the forms of role-play that are present. To refer to maid cafés as if they were a single entity is thus inaccurate, despite the prevailing inclination to regard them in a homogenized fashion (note 3). It is important to reflect on this heterogeneity in relation to maid café fandom in Japan because it can potentially offer a new paradigm for rethinking the phenomenon holistically as well as offer new ways of analyzing how spaces are constructed.

3. Study design

[3.1] This study used ethnography as its methodology. It was structured to use the O'Reilly's (2009) "key concepts in ethnography." The fieldwork for this study involved several considerations of these key concepts, such as gaining access, establishing an insider role, building rapport, assessing both emic and etic perspectives, and avoiding "going native" (O'Reilly 2009, 3). Becoming a café regular was a risk, so the balance of "distance and empathy, insider and stranger" (O'Reilly 2009, 89) was imperative. The methods used were participating, asking questions, observing, collecting documents,

and taking photographs. I spent May 2009 to August 2009 and September 2010 in the field in maid cafés in Japan. I was thus able to quantitatively add to the data by visiting cafés that had opened over that 12-month period.

[3.2] Although a comprehensive discussion of ethnography as a methodology is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to briefly address some of its important considerations vis-à-vis this study. One significant issue is how "proper ethnography" (Delamont 2004, 219) faithful to classic anthropological models differs from ethnography as an intermittent method of data collection (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998, 110). Wolcott highlights the distinction between the two as "ethnography as *product*" (that is, "*doing ethnography*" devoted to a set of principles within the discipline of anthropology) and "ethnography as *process*" (that is, "*borrowing (some) ethnographic techniques*" where researchers adapt fieldwork procedures for gathering data) (2008, 44). In this process, participant observation forms the crux of ethnography (Esterberg 2002). However, fieldwork has also come to incorporate the use of other research methods, including conversations and interviews, analysis of textual materials, and interpretation of visual sources such as photography, film, and video (Atkinson et al. 2001). I made use of all these modes in my methods.

[3.3] Given the conceptual contentions outlined above, and given that there are no prescriptive specifications for what ethnography is or how ethnographic research is conducted, it is not possible to neatly classify ethnography for this study as either product or process, to use Wolcott's (2008) terms. Although I used ethnographic techniques such as engaging in participant observation and analyzing photos, I also interacted with people in their everyday contexts and attempted to gain an insider's perspective of maid cafés and their customers. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) acknowledge this fluidity of what ethnography is and can be, noting that positions exist between the polar extremes of ethnography for data collection and ethnography as paradigm.

[3.4] For this study, maid cafés in Honshū, the largest island in the Japanese archipelago, were sampled. Honshū was selected as the focal point of the study for reasons of accessibility and mobility, but more significantly, it offered the widest range of diverse locations in Japan. Although maid cafés exist on the other main islands of Japan—Kyūshū and Hokkaidō have several—these areas are limited in their size and population. Being situated on Honshū enabled me to access the largest urban centers and most highly populated cities in the whole of Japan (Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, and Nagoya), areas with medium-size populations (Sendai and Hiroshima), and much smaller prefectural capitals (Okayama, Nagano, and Wakayama). Honshū thus provided the broadest range of localities possible. I did not sample maid cafés;

instead, I successfully visited every one in operation there from May 1, 2009, to July 31, 2009, and September 2010–73 in total.

4. Selecting maid cafés for study

[4.1] During my fieldwork, finding maid cafés was often problematic because no single protocol exists to describe them. Local publications and Internet listings subsume maid cafés with other maid-themed establishments, such as maid hair salons and maid reflexology clinics, as well as with other cosplay eateries. A number of venues market themselves as maid bars, maid *izakaya* (pubs), and maid *kyabakura* (hostess clubs) (note 4), yet all often fall under the umbrella term of "dining" or "food and beverage" in many local print media. The line between maid café and other establishments is thus often obscure as a result of this lack of explicit compartmentalization in local publications.

[4.2] I selected two factors to separate a maid bar and maid *kyabakura* from a maid café and a maid café from any other type of cosplay café: hours of operation (open from midmorning until late evening, unlike a maid bar or maid *kyabakura*, which open exclusively in early evening and often operate all night until early morning) and overall mode of dress of waitresses. For this study, a maid outfit must be the primary costume worn by the waitresses for the largest percentage of time an establishment is open; this was measured by the number of events days scheduled by a venue (note 5). These complexities in demarcating maid cafés indicate the wider problematics in their homogenization as a category or label.

5. *Moe* versus *iyashi*

[5.1] The propensity to view maid cafés in a homogenized fashion is found in both Japanese- and English-language media commentaries, in local promotional literature, and in the small body of academic literature dealing with the topic. On the occasions when they are referred to heterogeneously, however, they are placed into one of two categories: venues intended for relaxation (*iyashi-kei*, "healing type") and those intended to entertain (*moe-kei*, "moe type," or in English-language literature, simply "entertainment-kei") (note 6). Many establishments embrace these dichotomous and essentialized terms by self-labeling in their promotion.

[5.2] Although Galbraith believes "soothing" to be an aspect of leisure that *otaku* (often translated as "fans," "aficionados," or "enthusiasts" of manga and anime) particularly hold in high regard (2009, 108), the allure of repose as a marketing technique is not a phenomenon unique to maid cafés. As Allison points out in her discussion on toys for children in Japan, healing and soothing "are perpetual tropes in

the marketplace of play goods these days" and are "said to be a relief from the stresses caused by consumer capitalism" (2006, 14). Maid cafés thus provide escapism, and they draw on this in their marketing as *iyashi-kei*. They both appeal to and capitalize on customers' emotional responses (Galbraith 2011). Allison refers to this as an encoded form of familiarity, consumerism, and technosocial interaction, which shape the fundamental construction of Japanese play (2006). In Western fan discourse, Jenkins (2006) describes something similar in affective economics, a marketing theory that seeks to understand emotions in the process of consumer decision making.

[5.3] The use of the alternative marker *moe* is restricted primarily to media commentaries and online reviews in fan blogs. For example, two free maps placed at the train station and local landmarks in Akihabara highlight the locations of cafés, listing these establishments under the heading *moe-kanren* (*moe*-related cafés). Some cafés themselves likewise suggest this association by incorporating the term *moe* into the name of the actual venue, such as Moekon@cafe (Akihabara) and Moe & Shandon (Osaka). The agenda for entertainment at the latter establishment is evident in its weekend "*moe* time" sessions, when live karaoke performances by the maids take place and the cover charge increases. Some establishments do not view *moe* and *iyashi* in absolute terms in their marketing strategy; for example, the flyer for Ichigo Miruku (Shibuya) states that it "offers to customers both *moe* and *iyashi*." By suggesting it is able to please everybody, regardless of their *moe* or *iyashi* orientations, this flyer effectively encapsulates the polar extremes of these two agendas and accommodates *otaku* more broadly.

[5.4] The terms *iyashi-kei* and *moe-kei* may be reasonable starting points to think of maid cafés in terms of functionality, but they are problematic. Because there is no fixed contextual definition of either *iyashi* or *moe*, the line between the two is subjective; the terms are arbitrarily applied by venues for marketing purposes. On the surface, the image portrayed by both the media and cafés themselves is that *iyashi-kei* venues strive for a tranquil ambience where interactive elements (often the catalysts for conversation) are minimal. *Moe-kei* venues, on the other hand, are depicted as highly communicative and interactive, loud, and colorful, with "a syrupy sweet atmosphere" (Galbraith 2009, 137). However, venues with an agenda of maid-customer interactivity often tout themselves as *iyashi-kei*. All branches of Pinafore (Akihabara), for example, have several interactive elements (based on conversing) available à la carte. They suggest an *iyashi* tendency on their menus by stating, "This establishment offers a space for healing" (*iyashi no kūkan wo teikyōsuru kissaten*). The perception of what is soothing and what heals the mind is not the tranquility of the café environment resulting from a lack of interactive service but rather the chance to converse and engage in communicative activities as if they were a form of therapy.

These differences reflect a wide gap between the conceptions of what *iyashi* and *moe* processes entail among establishments.

6. Maid café chronotopes

[6.1] The difference between conceptions of healing and entertainment practices makes categorizing maid cafés as either *iyashi-kei* or *moe-kei* ineffective, especially in examining the spatialities of their settings. I thus suggest five chronotopes for maid cafés that illustrate the contrasts in major services and interactive elements. This categorization scheme challenges how the term *maid café* may be used holistically and permits reconsideration of the communicative spaces of fans and customers. I use the term *interactive elements* to refer to services that involve significant levels of interaction between maids and customers, such as *cheki* (Polaroid photographs taken with maids), *rakugaki* (art graffiti where maids draw images and words on served food with condiments such as ketchup), and notebook exchanges (where customers exchange messages and artwork in notebooks for the maids to read).

[6.2] In choosing the term *chronotope*, I have drawn on the work of Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005), who reconsider traditional qualitative research approaches by offering more fluid and variegated paradigms in which qualitative studies can be located. Their work developed from a need to rethink the fixed definitions associated with qualitative inquiry and its predetermined, concretized guidelines. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis challenge this type of epistemological demarcation with their development of the chronotope, a construct for reconsidering qualitative research. This includes assumptions about the world, knowledge, and the set of methods used for conducting research. Maid café chronotopes are thus constructs for the consideration of how spaces are created in their settings. In a similar vein to the caveat issued by Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, it is important to recognize that these maid café chronotopes ought not be viewed as fixed and static. Because they have been devised to correspond with the results vis-à-vis interactive elements and conversation, different chronotopes would be in order for the consideration of, for example, the interior dimensions of maid cafés or the uniforms that maids wear.

[6.3] It is inevitable that there will be some overlap with these chronotopes, so I recommend, as Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) do with their constructs, that they be viewed as a heuristic for the consideration and evaluation of maid café interactivities and conversation—that is, what kinds of spaces are constructed—rather than as a list of prescriptive components that comprise maid cafés. This could entail elements such as how space is gendered inside maid cafés, how power relations between maids and customers are forged vis-à-vis space, and how public and private spaces converge in maid café settings. I identify the five chronotopes in table 1.

Table 1. Five chronotopes of maid cafés

Chronotope	Description
A	No or minimal interactive elements with little or no conversation between maid and customer.
B	Low to medium level of interactive elements with moderate volume conversation between maid and customer.
C	Venues where conversation is the main objective with a considerable level of interactive elements.
D	Venues where conversation is the main objective with a strong emphasis on interactive elements.
E	Theaterlike venues with an extreme level of interactive elements but with little or no conversation.

[6.4] With these chronotopes, I have disaggregated the terms *interactive element* and *conversation* because the relationship between services of an interactive nature in the mise-en-scène of the maid café and the conversations generated between maids and customers is multifaceted, and the two phenomena are not always linked. There are occasions when interactive elements and conversation exist independently of each other. For example, chronotope A cafés provide few interactive services (*rakugaki*, *cheki*, games) on their menus, and conversation between maids and customers, beyond ordering food and settling payment, is limited. In contrast, chronotope E cafés, which tend to be well known because they cater to tourists and receive media coverage, provide an overwhelming number of interactive services. Despite this, little conversation between maids and customers exists, as with chronotope A cafés (which generally have no interactive elements of this sort). This may be attributed to the type of clientele they receive (one-time customers) and the exceedingly high turnover of customers during opening hours (the maid to customer ratio is low during these times). In contrast, chronotope C cafés, which constitute the largest number of venues, specialize in the art of repartee while providing a considerable number of interactive elements. However, conversation between maids and customers is not always contingent on these elements; chat is generated as a standard service. This differs from chronotope D cafés, which use interactive elements as catalysts for conversation: these services form the foundation for chat, and the conversational content usually revolves around these services. This is reflected by the set menus (that is, fixed-price menus) that many of these cafés provide. Chronotope B cafés, in contrast, comprise venues that are on the quieter and less active end of the communicative spectrum; neither chat nor interactive elements are found in these establishments in any significant way.

[6.5] The manner in which conversation is generated, if indeed it is generated at all, is not uniform in maid cafés. The act of initiating conversation may or may not depend on interactive elements, and the degree to which these elements forge the content of the chat also varies. The differences in these communicative spectrums is illustrated in figure 1.

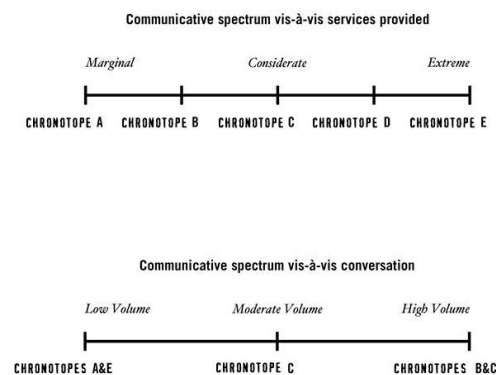


Figure 1. Communicative spectrums of interactive elements and conversation. [[View larger image.](#)]

7. Chronotope A

[7.1] Although the term *iyashi-kei* implies that little interaction will occur, this label is only partially correct. It is true that participatory services are not available in some establishments, but in others, communicative interactivity may be present, even if at only marginal levels. A hybrid form of these two degrees constitutes the cafés of chronotope A, which accounts for the second smallest number of the five chronotopes identified, at 12.3 percent of all cafés. These venues provide no regular *cheki* or other photographic services; they sell a limited range of maid goods or no goods at all; and they do not offer games or notebook exchanges. Although food art created in front of diners is not unknown, predrawn *rakugaki* is the dominant feature. This practice appears to be the only element in chronotope A cafés that involves a perceptible communicative exchange beyond greetings and ordering, and with this exception, these establishments function like most noncosplay restaurants with table service.

[7.2] Correspondingly, because the food at these establishments is the main draw (unlike the appeal of chronotopes C, D, and E, where communicative experiences are the predominant attraction), the meals served in chronotope A cafés are of much higher quality than other venues, with diverse menus that may include fish and other seafood, deep-fried foods, gourmet pizzas, and various red-meat dishes. A vast array of alcoholic beverages are also available: Granvania (Akihabara) prides itself on having

30 European beers from more than twelve countries, Milkcafe (Osaka) proudly promotes its 300-plus types of spirits, and Hiyokoya (Akihabara) offers wines that cost more than ¥8,000 per bottle. This emphasis on the dining experience rather than the communicative experience can be seen in their marketing: the flyer for Granvania provides pictures and descriptions of their dishes, and some cafés do not mention the term *moe* and contain no images of maids.

[7.3] Despite the low levels of interactivity at chronotope A cafés, these venues sponsor event days. Chronotopes C, D, and E tend to advertise event days with great fanfare, but for chronotope A, the "event" may be little more than a day when an alternative menu is offered, with added bonuses such as an amnesty on expired reward cards or free-drink tickets. Event days at chronotope A cafés blur the lines between them and other venue types because as interactivity is heightened. Emaid (Osaka), for example, offers a *cheki* service only on event days, and M's Melody (Nagoya) holds a biannual *satsueikai* (photographic) event. Sometimes events occur frequently: Cure Maid Cafe (Akihabara) holds a concert each weekend where the maids perform on musical instruments. Some event days are also connected to the promotion of specific enterprises, which usually sponsor the event. This could be the launch of a new video game or computer software, where promotional products are given out to customers. Events may also simply be a change of usual costume to celebrate or correspond to an annual festival such as Valentine's Day, Halloween, or Christmas.

[7.4] There is a possibility that the focus of chronotope A cafés not being on communicative experiences is connected to another significant feature of these venues: the high number of female customers. Emaid (Osaka) and Wonder Parlour Cafe (Ikebukuro) in particular have many women patrons, with female customers actually outnumbering male customers. I observed women in chronotope A cafés in groups of two to four, though women dining alone were also present. In my discussions with fellow customers at other cafés, they suggested that the women who patronize chronotope A venues are avid cosplay fans motivated by creative inspiration: they visit to observe and admire the maids' costumes, seeking ideas for their next cosplay endeavor. My own observations and encounters with female customers support this interpretation, or at least its possibility. In Osaka, I witnessed young women (usually in pairs) dressed in some cosplay variant, and while visiting more than one café on the same day, I saw the same women at these different venues. Although some were in full costume, with wigs and makeup, others were only wearing cosplay accessories, such as mini top hats with veils. Similarly, at M's Melody in Nagoya, I was approached by a young woman who left her table to speak with me. She announced she was a "cosplay *otaku*" and proceeded to show me a collection of photographs of her in full costume. These observations suggest that for female customers,

communicative exchanges are secondary reasons to visit cafés, and thus chronotope A cafés are a good choice for them. An esoteric appreciation of the surroundings is at the forefront of their motivation.

[7.5] Milkcafe, located in the Nipponbashi area of Osaka, is one example of a chronotope A maid café. From the outset, Milkcafe leaves no ambiguity about its intentions or function as an establishment. The first page of their menu contains an extensive list of expectations. The first three items state:

[7.6] 1) This establishment is a restaurant. Beyond offering food and drinks, we provide no other kinds of services.

2) Customers should be aware that the staff at this venue are not paid company—they are waitresses.

3) If your purpose is to find a date, we recommend that you spend your money at some other café that is that way inclined. (note 7)

[7.7] Although other cafés may not be so direct in their customer expectations, the explicitness of this text is indicative of the feel that chronotope A cafés aim to achieve: a setting where only minimal interaction exists between maids and customers, and where passivity in the experience of dining is the dominant objective. Pearson's (1998) reflection on performance relationships is apt here. The customer remains a constant passive spectator of the surroundings of the café; there is little opportunity for the role of actor to be taken. The declaration that its only concern is food and drink reinforces this, leaving aside the fact that the possibility of conversation with staff is remote. Similarly, branding the maids as waitresses, thus distinguishing them from paid company, circumscribes their role as servers; they are not generators of conversation. The third expectation elucidates the difference between Milkcafe and other establishments such as cabaret clubs.

[7.8] The focus on food, not interactivity, is further reinforced by the emphasis on the quality and range of products available to customers. Milkcafe's Web site clearly establishes it as an independent establishment not reliant on interactive elements. For example, during their *Ai no Epuron* (Love's Apron) ¥500 lunch promotion in September 2011, Milkcafe stated, "Milkcafe has no entry fee, table charge, service tariff or the like. We also have no tacky theatrical *moe* service or anything of the sort. Ordinary maid cafés are expensive and the food tastes awful, but Milkcafe is cheap and the food tastes great" (note 8). This differentiation between the ordinary maid café and Milkcafe, with an emphasis on the quality of food and the rejection of a *moe*-oriented service, indicates that the venue does not seek to provide interactivity between maids and customers. This typifies chronotope A cafés.

8. Chronotope B

[8.1] Chronotope B cafés provide a moderate volume of conversation on the communicative spectrum and provide between marginal and considerable volumes of interactive elements. Interactive elements and conversation in these establishments are best described as both fleeting and noncommittal: the communicative exchanges that do exist are not bound to any set length of time (unlike chronotopes C, D, and E, which have fixed time limits for certain services), and because the maids are not obligated to engage customers in such a manner, these exchanges are brief. In this sense, conversation initiated by maids between customers is arbitrary. If there are few patrons, she may spend more time chatting than if the venue were full (in which case she may not chat at all), and activities such as delivering food and greeting new customers take priority over conversation. Chronotope B cafés form less than a quarter of all establishments, at 19.2 percent (14 of 73 cafés). These venues typically provide no *cheki* or other type of photographic service (including *satsueikai* events), sell only a small range of maid goods, and do not provide games or notebook exchange services. Food art is perhaps the most interactive of the services provided. Consequently, *rakugaki* can act as the conduit for the limited conversation that is initiated. As with chronotope A cafés, chronotope B cafés rely on food art as the only element that initiates communicative exchanges between maids and customers, apart from exchanging greetings and ordering food.

[8.2] Although interactive elements are minimal and conversation between maids and customers is arbitrary at chronotope B cafés, event days are scheduled with a relative degree of frequency. Like chronotope A cafés, these events blur the line between them and cafés with an agenda for conversation. Event days seek to provide an occasion for more communicative elements than are usually present. Promotion of these events exists on both the Web sites of the cafés and at the physical venues via leaflets, posters, and announcements on bulletin boards.

[8.3] Fairy Tale, a café located in the Aoba-ku ward of Sendai in Miyagi prefecture, is an example of a chronotope B café. Chronotope B cafés characteristically have few interactive elements (many market themselves as having an *iyashi* agenda), but they simultaneously engage customers with a limited degree of conversation that is not time based. This is exemplified by the mission statement of Fairy Tale. Its Web site states that it aims to re-create a "classic image of a maid café" and offers "a place to unwind when feeling tired." However, highlighting the liminal space they occupy between relaxation and conversation, the statement continues with a description of what a fairy tale connotes in English: "The term *fairy tale* corresponds to *dōwa* or *otogibanashi* in Japanese, conveying a sense of nostalgia and amusement from within

to those who hear it. In this manner, our café offers tranquility yet also friendliness" (note 9).

[8.4] Friendliness in this sense is best understood to be the act of conversing between maids and customers, while tranquility, as with chronotope A cafés, alludes to minimal interactivity. The initiative of either rests with the customer. Maids, if prompted, will converse with customers in the fashion of chronotope C and D cafés, although because it does not explicitly provide a time-based service, priority is given to delivering food and greeting new customers. However, if the customer chooses not to chat, either by failing to initiate conversation or failing to respond to maids' prompts, then communication between them advances no further; it is understood that they have taken the tranquil path. This arbitrary nature of conversation and liminal space that exists between it and interactive elements typify chronotope B cafés.

9. Chronotope C

[9.1] Chronotope C cafés constitute the largest number of venues, representing just under half of all establishments, 46.5 percent. These cafés, like chronotope D cafés, are high volume in terms of conversation on the communicative spectrum, with a considerable number of interactive elements. The main objective for these venues is to provide customers with an opportunity to converse with maids, for which interactive elements generally—though not always—act as a conduit. This is the differentiating characteristic between chronotope C and chronotope D cafés, where the interactive services provided consistently make the environment amenable to chat.

[9.2] Most chronotope C cafés provide a *cheki* service and regularly hold events. They place an emphasis on food art drawn in front of customers (as opposed to predrawn *rakugaki*) and sell a wide range of maid goods, both in the store and online. Although the *moe* incantation (chants that the maids say and customers repeat to magically make food more delicious) is an element found relatively widely, it is not common to all cafés in this category. The same is true of notebook exchanges. Games also play a part in the *mise-en-scène* of chronotope C cafés.

[9.3] Chronotope C cafés have a varied quality of food. Some establishments follow the gastronomical agenda of chronotope A cafés (and to a small extent chronotope B cafés), though generally food is more similar to the chronotope D and E cafés: of low quality and limited to a few main dishes of pasta, curries, and fried-rice omelette (*omuraisu*). Although blogs describing chronotope C cafés focus largely on the interactive elements of the venues, such as event days, there are also commentaries on the food, as café chronotopes A and B have.

[9.4] Ichigo Miruku, situated in the Shibuya ward of Tokyo, is an example of a chronotope C café. There is a cover charge of ¥400 per hour for male customers and ¥300 for female customers, with a reduced rate for students. This system is explained to customers as they enter, and any previous visits to maid cafés are confirmed at the same time. Ichigo Miruku promotes itself as a venue that offers both *moe* and *iyashi*, and according to its Web site, it welcomes "grandpas and grandmas, mums and dads, boys and girls, couples, and foreigners." Indeed, this distinction between *moe* and *iyashi* seems reified by menus presented in two different folders to customers: one is the usual menu—the à la carte menu where individual items can be selected—and the other is the set menu. Although the presence of a set menu may seem more indicative of a chronotope D venue, where interactive elements have fixed time limits, in chronotope C, it is more representative of the level of engagement that customers can experience while conversing with the maids. Selecting a set menu usually guarantees the maximum time possible communicating with the maids. On top of the general chat she provides as part of the service at the café, customers who choose set menus are also afforded extra time spent playing games, taking *cheki*, and engaging in *rakugaki* activities. Conversely, customers who choose the usual menu items individually do not experience extended communication time, opting instead for the standard chat. The prerogative to maximize conversation thus lies with the customer. This typifies chronotope C cafés: conversation is not always contingent on interactive elements, and it is generated as part of the service, with food service being their main objective.

10. Chronotope D

[10.1] Chronotope D cafés form the third most common sort of maid cafés, at 13.7 percent (10 of 73 visited). They are venues that are high volume in terms of conversation on the communicative spectrum and between considerable and extreme in terms of interactive elements. The links between conversation and interactive elements in these establishments are strong. Unlike in chronotope C cafés, where conversation may not necessarily be contingent on the interactive services offered, in chronotope D cafés, conversation is founded on these interactive elements, the development of which is bound by a set length of time: 5-minute games, 10-minute à la carte photography, 30-second *moe* incantations. Chronotope D cafés almost always provide a *cheki* service and other forms of photographic opportunities; sell a wide range of maid goods; have a *moe* incantation; provide a variety of short- and long-duration games; and offer a notebook exchange service. Food art drawn in front of customers is also a common interactive element in chronotope D cafés, although predrawn *rakugaki* is not unknown. Because of the prevalence of these interactive elements, Pearson's (1998) performance relationships in chronotope D cafés are fluid

and interchangeable. Through the construction of spaces enabled by the maid persona, the maids in the café initially begin as the active actors. However, customers' role as passive spectator alters once they begin interacting and become involved in the performance.

[10.2] Because the generation of conversation based on interactive elements is the dominant objective of chronotope D cafés, the food at many is not the point. Beyond drinks, some offer nothing more than small savory snacks such as potato chips and edamame. Those that do offer more are restricted to a few main dishes, such as curried rice, pasta, and *omuraisu*.

[10.3] Filles, located along Chūō dōri, in Akihabara, is an example of a chronotope D café. The café has a ¥1,800 cover charge known as a system, and the price includes one (nonalcoholic) drink and a short-duration game. The length of time for a stay is capped at 90 minutes. Food at Filles is an additional cost, and choice is extremely limited: a few savory snacks to accompany the drink, toast, sandwiches, cake. In short, the dining experience at Filles is supplemental to its communicative agenda. Customers do not come to eat but to interact and converse.

[10.4] Because the menu is so limited, food art does not exist at Filles. This is actually exceptional because all other cafés categorized as chronotope D have this interactive element. It does have a *cheki* service available for a fee, as in most chronotope C and E cafés. However, because the focus is on instantaneous communication, there is no notebook exchange service and, as expected, no collection of reading materials. The sale of in-store maid goods is also limited. Its shortfalls in terms of *rakugaki* and communication notes are made up with an interactive service rare among other cafés: the chance for female customers to dress up in full maid costume. At Filles, this is free of charge for 30 minutes and comes with the added bonus of the opportunity for the female customer to serve the food and drinks ordered by those she is dining with to them (unheard of at other cafés). This is marketed on Filles's flyers and Web site to male-female couples under the heading "Great news for couples!," suggesting to the women that it is an opportunity to know what it feels like to be a maid, body and soul (note 10).

[10.5] The maids immediately start chatting after explaining the system, and within moments after ordering, beverages arrive. Customers are given two poker chips, one white and one red, in a black folder containing the bill. When customers are ready to play a game with the maid (included in cover charge), they put the white chip on the table. For any games after that (at an additional cost), the red chip is put down. Additional games are capped at 15 minutes, but the initial game has no such time limit. Most other venues time all the games, and most do not usually last longer than 5 minutes. The maid informs customers that winners will receive a prize (usually some

type of candy), but the consequence of losing is being made to do something embarrassing (*hazukashii koto wo saseru*). This usually entails the customer wearing a maid headband until his or her departure.

[10.6] The time spent conversing with maids at Filles is extensive, and by using the short games as a catalyst for chat, it typifies chronotope D cafés—that is, venues where the generation of conversation is always reliant on one or more interactive elements, which are usually part of a fixed system or set menu.

11. Chronotope E

[11.1] The communicative spectrum presented in figure 1 demonstrates that, despite there being links between interactive elements and the generation of conversation among maids and customers (café chronotopes C and D), the two can in fact be mutually exclusive. This is indicated by chronotope E cafés, where there is incongruence between the level of conversation (low volume) and the forms of participatory services available (extreme). Chronotope E cafés account for the smallest number of the five types identified, constituting 8.2 percent of all cafés visited. The draw for patrons visiting these venues is the emphasis on interactive elements and role-play in the fashion of theater restaurants. All provide *cheki* services (some also have regular *satsueikai* events), all sell a wide range of maid-related goods as souvenirs, and all have various *moe* incantations and a selection of games available. Because forging a regular stream of communication between maids and customers is not the primary objective of chronotope E cafés, the notebook exchange service is uncommon. *Rakugaki* is an especially noticeable (and marketable) feature of these venues, with food art images consistently appearing on their Web sites and other advertising material. Additionally, karaoke stage performances by maids are common—arguably what designates them as entertainment-*kei* venues. Because of this focus on musical performance and the corresponding cover charges, chronotope E cafés are among the most expensive to visit. At the opposite end of the continuum to chronotope A cafés in terms of interactive elements, in which the gastronomic experience forms the core purpose of the establishment, chronotope E cafés play on the novelty of what are popularly perceived as maid café fundamentals: the unfamiliar, unusual, and unique facets of stereotyped and exoticized maid cafés. Points of attraction include waitresses dressed in cosplay attire, intermittent musical performances, and spells cast on food and drink to make them taste better. These venues target and subsequently attract men, foreigners, male-female couples, mixed groups, women, and casual one-off visitors interested in gaining an ephemeral insight into maid cafés.

[11.2] Because chronotope E cafés exist to entertain, the food and beverages at these establishments are peripheral in terms of their variety and quality. This is clearly at opposite end of the spectrum as chronotope A cafés, which often go to great lengths to emphasize their high-good food. The culinary scenario that Galbraith (2009) describes of maid cafés serving a limited range of dishes that are staples of family restaurant children's menus—*omuraisu*, curried rice, and spaghetti—is truest for chronotope E cafés. It is possible that these dishes are the most amenable to the drawing of *rakugaki*, and that offering a more varied menu would diminish the opportunities for customers to partake in this particular interactive element. This is an especially marketable feature of chronotope E cafés, and the flyers for MaiDream, @Home Cafe, and Pinky Cafe all contain images of *omuraisu*, curried rice, and desserts covered in *rakugaki*. Similarly, all contain the word *moe* somewhere on the flyer, sometimes written in ketchup on a food item.

[11.3] Event days at chronotope E cafés occur with the highest frequency among all the café chronotopes—as often as two or three times a week, as is the case with @Home Cafe, compared to once a month with most chronotope A cafés. Many of the larger events, which occur around Halloween or Christmas, last for longer than a day and are usually drawn out over a 2- to 3-day period. The most common events at chronotope E cafés are *satsueikai* and costume changes.

[11.4] As with chronotope A cafés, chronotope E cafés attract considerable numbers of female customers. Female customers in chronotope A cafés were observed either alone or dining in groups of two to four together (without men). In contrast, the highest number of women in chronotope E cafés were accompanied by men, either as half of a couple or as part of a group of male-female couples. It is possible that for this demographic, the point of visiting a maid café is to listen to musical performances and engage in sensationalized interactive elements, and thus it acts as a social outing or date. Similarly, because of the focus on entertainment in chronotope E cafés, foreign tourists (in this case, those who appear white) were also present in noticeable numbers.

[11.5] The @Home Cafe in Tokyo's Akihabara is an example of a chronotope E café. Although it is often represented in the media as a singular entity, it is in fact fragmented into two branches (*honten* and *donkihôte*), with the former further divided into separate sites. The café prides itself on the large number of customers it has attracted; its Web site announces that it has had over one and a half million visitors. The @Home Cafe Donkiten is located on the west side of the Don Quixote department store's fifth floor, sharing the floor space with cosplay merchandise (with an entire section dedicated to different maid costumes) and an adult goods section that sells sex toys, pornographic DVDs, and erotica. In front of the chained-off entrance to the café

is a small waiting area with chairs for customers to be seated on if the café is at full capacity. On the occasions I went, I was given an A4-size laminated card that stipulated the house rules of the establishment. This effectively functions like a consent form; acknowledgment of its being read permits entry into the café.

[11.6] The food menu at @Home Cafe Donkiten is one of the most limited of all cafés in Akihabara, if not Honshū. It is restricted to two types of pasta and four items in its rice category. The taste of the savory items is, at best, questionable and of low quality compared to that of chronotope A cafés. However, @Home Cafe is less about eating and more about the interactive events that accompany the food, such as *moe* incantations and food art. The limited menu and the food's poor quality are intended to be neutralized by the novelty and amusement of the interactive elements involved in their consumption. This counterbalance is indicated on the menus themselves, where colorful writing explains that for all the rice meals, "to finish the dish off, the maid will draw a picture on it with ketchup in front of all masters," as if to announce the dish is incomplete without a *rakugaki* component (note 11). Similarly, for spaghetti dishes, "the maid will mix in the sauce while she says a word like *moe* together with the master" (note 12). By explicitly announcing this as a part of the meal, customers are being made aware that what they are paying for is not the dish per se but rather the incorporation of these interactive elements into their dining experience—a novelty that does not exist at noncosplay cafés. Entertainment, not the food, is clearly at the forefront of their agenda. This typifies chronotope E cafés.

12. Conclusion

[12.1] Viewing maid cafés in a homogeneous or reductive way through the use of the terms *iyashi-kei*, "venues for relaxation purposes," and *moe-kei*, "venues with an agenda to entertain," is problematic. The chronotopes highlight their heterogeneity by permitting a more nuanced reading of the elements that comprise maid cafés. The need for a consideration of the heterogeneous qualities of maid cafés stems from the results of empirical research conducted at different establishments across Honshū, with vast differences in the services and interactive elements provided by the venues. The multiplicity of maid café settings is at odds with the homogenized fashion in which these establishments have been treated in the popular press, in local promotional publications, and in the academic literature.

[12.2] In response to this neglect of the diversity of the *mise-en-scènes* that exists among venues, the chronotopes may be used for maid cafés as a heuristic for viewing them heterogeneously; this will also permit maid cafés to be discussed as a holistic phenomenon in the future. The chronotopes are a heuristic for the consideration and evaluation of how spaces are constructed inside these establishments.

13. Notes

1. The origins of the maid persona in Japan are obscure and remain largely unexplored academically. Although Azuma (2009) claims that the first maidlike costume was present in the pornographic animation *Cream Lemon: Black Cat Mansion*, many Japanese fan Web sites insist it was neither a manga publication nor an anime series that vivified the maid but rather the highly popular video and gaming industry. Characters from so-called visual novels (interactive computer games with narratives) such as Sayori from *Kindan no ketsuzoku* (Forbidden kinship) and titles such as *Kara no naka no kotori* (Little bird inside the shell) and its sequel *Hinadori no Saezuri* (Song of the baby bird) are perhaps the first incarnations of the maid persona in Japan (<http://www.galge.com/galge/member/soft/GS00004501/index.html>; <http://getchu.com/>). In these games, the attire of the maids was distinctly Victorian (a full-length black gown and white pinafore), with the latter two texts specifically set in Victorian Britain during the industrial revolution. The games were thus significant in positioning the origins of the *meido* (as the Japanese maid persona is known in Japan) and directly linked her to the female domestic servants of 19th-century England. The erotic story lines of these media consistently delineate the maid protagonist as a naive ingenue, vulnerable and at the total mercy of her master, the central male character of the narrative. However, over time, nonerotic incarnations of the maid persona developed, and according to Hayakawa (2008), this fascination with the maid identity and costume culminated in 1999 with the immense popularity of the manga series *Mahoromatic*. The eponymous heroine introduced fans of the maid genre to a different side of the maid persona, "a tough and noble young girl" (*tsuyoku kedakai onna no ko*). This persona was a precursor to numerous other maid-themed production, including Mori Kaoru's love story *Emma*, about a maid in Victorian England who falls in love with a wealthy upper-class man. The origins of the maid persona in Japan are thus connected to conceptions of dependence, servility, feminine passiveness, naïveté, (sexual) vulnerability, youthfulness, and domesticity. Although it is difficult to know whether these attributes accurately reflect the situations that domestic servants encountered in Victorian Britain, it aligns with how their experiences and histories have been represented and reconstructed by academics and numerous television dramas and movies in Britain.

2. By spaces, I am referring to the grounding work of scholars such as Lefebvre (1976), De Certeau (1984), and Soja (1996), who believed that space, although traditionally understood to have a purely geometrical existence, was best thought of as a production of social interactive elements. According to Lefebvre, because space is a social construction it is "not a thing but rather a set of relations between things" (1991, 81), in which power is effectively a medium for its production.

3. Locally produced promotional literature and mainstream variety shows in Japan frequently present maid cafés in a homogenizing way. Examples of such variety shows include YTV's *Koeda no sugotoku* and TBS's *Shinchi Shikaikyū Kumagusu*. In addition, documentaries or exposés about Japan have been produced abroad, including *Japanorama* (BBC, 2006), presented by Jonathan Ross, and *In Search of Wabi Sabi with Marcel Theroux* (BBC, 2009). The travel genre in particular has made several contributions in drawing maid cafés to the attention of foreigners, with blanket pieces on maid cafés. These include major international guidebooks on Tokyo and Japan, such as *Lonely Planet* (2008), *Fodor's* (2009), *Michelin* (2009), and *Frommer's* (2010), and travel television series, such as Channel Four's *Globe Trekker* in the United Kingdom, France 3's *Faut Pas Rêver* in France, and the Nine Network's *Getaway* in Australia.

4. *Maid kyabakura* might also be translated as a "maid cabaret club" or simply as a "maid club." As Faier explains (2009), contemporary hostessing establishments are fragmented into several specific venues—snack bars (*sunakku*), pubs (*pabu*), cabarets (*kyabare*), and clubs (*kurabu*)—all of which vary in price and services provided, though none explicitly offers sexual exchange, as establishments like pink salons (*pinku saron*) and soaplands (*sōpurando*) do.

5. There are no standard features that unite maid cafés when it comes to staff attire. Maid uniforms vary from black floor-length garments reminiscent of Victorian-era domestic servants to pink *kawaii*-type (cute) miniskirts, though one common element of all of these styles is a pinafore or an apron. Several texts have attempted to photographically document the difference in styles among maid cafés across Japan, including the *Akihabara Housemaid-Cafe Costume Collection and Guidebook* (2005) and the *Parlour Maid Cafe Costume Collection* (2006).

6. Some examples of productions and Web sites that have utilized this schema include NHK's Tokyo Eye, reviews on <http://www.akibanana.com> and <http://www.Otaku2.com>, and listings on <http://www.sunnypages.jp>.

7. In Japanese, these read as follows: (1) "Tōten wa inshokuten desu. Inshokubustu no teikyō igai no ikanaru sabisu mo itteorimasen"; (2) "Tōten sutaffu wa konpanion de wa naku, uetoresu desu"; and (3) "Deai mokuteki no okyakusama wa sōiita rui no omise ni sorenari no ryōkin wo haratte iku koto wo osusumeitashimasu."

8. The Japanese reads, "Milkcafe wa chajiryō, sekiryō, sabisuryō, nado issai itadakimasen. Wazatorashii gehinna 'moe' sabisu mo issai arimasen. Meido kissa wa takakute mazui, mirukukafe wa yasukute umai."

9. The Japanese reads, "Fairy Tale wa dōwa ya otogibanashi to itta imi no sōgo to narimasu. Kiku hito ni, dokoka natsukashisa ya tanoshisa wo ataete kureru dōwa. Sono dōwa no yōni, hajimete no kata ni mo ochitsukeru, yasashii omise ni shitai to omoimasu."
10. The Japanese reads, "Kokoro mo karada mo meido-san ni narikitte itadakima~su!"
11. The Japanese reads, "Saigo no shigae ni, goshujin-sama no mae de, meido ga kechappu de oe kaki itashimasu."
12. The Japanese reads, "Moe-na kotoba wo meido ga goshujin-sama to isshoni iinagara mazemaze itashimasu."

14. Works cited

- Allison, Anne. 2006. *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Atkinson, Paul, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland, and Lyn Lofland. 2001. *Handbook of Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Azuma, Hiroki. 2009. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Introduction and translation by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Delamont, Sara. 2004. "Ethnography and Participant Observation." In *Qualitative Research Practice*, edited by Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium, and David Silverman, 205–17. London: Sage.
- Esterberg, Kristin. 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Faier, Lieba. 2009. *Intimate Encounters: Filipina Women and the Remaking of Rural Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Galbraith, Patrick. 2009. *The Otaku Encyclopedia: An Insider's Guide to the Subculture of Cool Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Galbraith, Patrick. 2011. "Maid in Japan: An Ethnographic Account of Alternative Intimacy." *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* 25. <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue25/galbraith.htm>.

- Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 1995. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Hayakawa, Kiyō. 2008. *Meido Kissa de Aimashō*. Tokyo: Āruzu Shuppan.
- Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press.
- Kamberelis, George, and Greg Dimitriadis. 2005. *On Qualitative Inquiry: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1976. *The Survival of Capitalism*. Translated by Frank Bryant. London: Allison & Busby.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Louis, Lisa. 1992. *Butterflies of the Night: Mama-sans, Geisha, Strippers, and the Japanese Men They Serve*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.
- O'Reilly, Karen. 2009. *Key Concepts in Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Pearson, Mike. 1998. "My Balls/Your Chin." *Performance Research* 3 (2): 35–41.
- Silverberg, Miriam. 2007. *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Soja, Edward. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolcott, Harry. 2008. *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*. 2nd ed. Plymouth: Altamira Press.

Praxis

Cosplaying the media mix: Examining Japan's media environment, its static forms, and its influence on cosplay

Matthew Ogonoski

Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

[0.1] *Abstract*—Cosplay—costume role-play—has dramatically increased in popularity over the past 20 years in conjunction with the cultural institution of anime, comic book, manga, science fiction, and other related fandom conventions. Cosplay was prominently established in Japan before gaining attention in North America. In this article I analyze the significance of those Japanese origins in relation to the experience of a unique media environment. The aesthetics and practices of cosplay in Japan are fundamentally informed by a specific ontological characteristic of Japanese anime, manga, and ancillary forms: the static image. Of essential importance to these consumption practices—both materially and conceptually—is the phenomenon of the anime database: an archive of static images that is continually accessed for the purposes of understanding, consuming, and creating new media. Through a detailed discussion of Hiroki Azuma's conception of the *moe* database, Thomas Lamarre's discussion of the cel bank as a material requisite of the database, and Marc Steinberg's assessment of the media mix, I extend the phenomenological affects of this media environment and its static images to the act of cosplay posing—an act that aspires to create a mimetic and collective connection between cosplayers and particular media images. This exploratory platform will permit me to develop specific conceptions of Japan's complex media environment and its transformations of material forms into ephemeral consumption practices.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Anime; Cel bank; Convention; Database; Fandom; *Moe*; Posing; Role-play; Stasis

Ogonoski, Matthew. 2014. "Cosplaying the Media Mix: Examining Japan's Media Environment, Its Static Forms, and Its Influence on Cosplay." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0526>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Over the past two decades cosplay has grown into a veritable institution of fan culture practice. The term *cosplay* is a portmanteau of *costume* and *role-play* (Newman 2008, 83; Gunnels 2009, ¶1.1), and today thousands of Web sites are devoted to cosplay culture, including community sites for the consumption and distribution of the practice, and commercial sites that sell cosplay materials. The most widely recognized form of cosplay is that which adopts the aesthetic qualities of

popular media properties, including anime, manga, comics, television, film, and video games. This form, in which participants adopt the roles of their favorite media characters, is the focus of this study.

[1.2] There are two principal settings for cosplay, conventions and cosplay community Web sites such as the North American site Cosplay.com (<http://www.cosplay.com>) and the Japanese site Cosplayers' Cure (<http://curecos.com/>): the Web sites are international, but were established and are maintained in their respective regions. These community Web sites typically include areas for sharing photos and video, forums for discussing cosplay strategies such as those of costuming and photography, calendars of upcoming events, and cosplayer profiles, and are generally used for the circulation of all things cosplay. Cosplay takes place at a wide number of conventions related to popular media properties as well as at cosplay-specific conventions. Though many cosplayers wander the conventions in various degrees of dress, the crux of much convention-situated cosplay is stage performances, also referred to as masquerades. Participants enter contests in order to display their skills and win approval from fellow players and convention attendees. In her article "Costuming the Imagination," Theresa Winge discusses the difference between cosplay stage performance in Japan and North America. In Japan, cosplayers enter the stage and strike a number of poses for the benefit of photographers. In North America, however, cosplayers perform short skits or sketches, followed by a brief period of posing before they exit the stage (Winge 2006, 73). Patrick Galbraith makes the same observations (2009, 53).

[1.3] Galbraith's and Winge's research focuses on Japanese cosplay practices from around the turn of the century. Over time, this difference (stasis on one side, performance on the other) has become less dramatic, as a result of exchanges between transnational cosplay communities. However, of fundamental importance to my analysis is the concept of stasis as a traditional characteristic of the Japanese media environment, and an investigation of how this characteristic might influence cosplay practices. I analyze Japan's culture industry by reviewing scholarship concerning the phenomenological experience of the media environment. I will first contextualize cosplay within larger fandom structures and provide an overview of the forums in which it is produced, consumed, and distributed. I examine the specificity of media environments proposed by Hiroki Azuma, Thomas Lamarre, and Marc Steinberg in order to relate cosplay to wider practices of Japanese media consumption. I use Winge's and Galbraith's assertions to speculate on why and how stillness functions in cosplay practice. Database consumption influences cosplayers to pose according to the characteristic stasis of images that run throughout Japan's media mix. (The term *media mix* refers to the many iterations of a media property across a variety of commodity types, including adaptations into different formats, and ancillary products.)

I offer a reading of the Japanese media environment in order to understand one narrative of cosplay within its expanding, globalized cultural exchange.

[1.4] Japan's media history is unique in that the mainstream consumption of anime and manga far outweighs North America's consumption of cartoons and comic books (Napier 2001; Kinsella 2000). Hiroki Azuma's discussion of otaku culture, in his *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (2009), helps to distinguish the qualities of the Japanese media environment. Though cosplayers are not always what Azuma would consider otaku, cosplaying is indeed one of the many activities that otaku practice. Azuma sees otaku as consumer groups that indulge in "forms of subculture strongly linked to anime, video games, computers, science fiction, special-effects films, anime figurines, and so on" (2009, 3). At best, *otaku* is a term that refers to a broad diversity of consumers. The practices of both otaku and cosplayers are what Koichi Iwabuchi would refer to as the fan practices of prosumers (producer-consumers) and appropriators (appropriator-readers), "who [do] not just passively consume media texts but actively and creatively participate...in their cultural signification processes" (Iwabuchi 2010, 87). Because the fanbase is diverse, Iwabuchi uses these terms to avoid a fixed taxonomy of fan characteristics. Neither these prosumers nor their practices can be comprehensively totalized. Like Lamarre, who refers to otaku as "a set of practices related to the reception of anime, games, manga, and related media" (2009, 108–9), I wish to approach cosplay as a set of practices situated within media consumption, and not a demarcation of a contained and totalized consumer. This approach avoids essentializing formations of cosplayers. However, a particular practice within these cultures can be assessed in order to shed light on its significance: the static pose of the cosplayer. Consumption practices like those of otaku exist in North America, such as the transmedia practices of fan cultures that are discussed by Henry Jenkins and his peers. But the propagation of the term *otaku* in Japan indicates that otaku practices have more comprehensive historical significance and cultural cachet than do fan practices in North America. However, instead of focusing on the historical significance of the term (see Azuma 2009), I wish to draw attention to the ways in which otaku culture—and cosplay by association—is often practiced in Japan, and how the practice of posing may align with an understanding of media consumption.

[1.5] Despite some accounts that privilege the Japanese origins of cosplay (Winge 2006), there is general agreement amongst commentators that cosplay emerged from similar practices in North American fan cultures in the 1960s. Properties utilized for this progenitor of cosplay were the *Star Trek* and *Batman* television shows (Winge 2006; Galbraith 2009, 51). *Star Trek* fans at this time were the most consistently invested in the practice. Role-play also factored into this activity, as Michael Jindra notes (1999). In one way or another, this costume play found its way to Japan. The use of the terms *cosplay* and *cosplayer* are reported to have begun with Takahashi

Nobuyuki, a Japanese journalist who attended Worldcon in southern California in 1984. Takahashi himself acknowledges his use of the terms as early as 1983 in *My Anime* magazine (Galbraith 2009, 51). And, as Winge points out, Takahashi encouraged otaku to take up this form of masquerade (2006). Regardless of its origins, cosplay practices within Japan are markedly extensive and widespread, as is reflected in contemporary cosplay culture. According to Galbraith, cosplay represents a \$350-million annual market in Japan. As of 2007, the most popular cosplay Web site in Japan, Cosplayers' Cure, had 200,000 members and 270,000 registered users, and was gaining 200 members a day. "In 2007, Net research firm iSHARE released survey results showing 46.8 percent of women between the ages of twenty and forty said they want to try cosplay, and 18.9 percent said they had already done it" (Galbraith 2009, 52).

[1.6] It has been argued elsewhere that cosplay is not simply a form of escapism, but provides a space in which participants can express their love of a particular media property while also displaying their own agency: they are not wholly subsumed by characters, but form new identities through the utilization of those characters (Lamerichs 2011). Regardless of the amount of agency involved, however, role-play remains an inherent part of the practice because the very act of reproducing a particular media character implies adopting a particular role. For Winge, the role-playing aspect of cosplay is facilitated by the player's ability to dress and act like the chosen character, regardless of whether this role-playing is accurate, parodic, or frivolous (2006). I would extend this point to also include subversions: why choose any particular character unless that character's identity, or role, holds some significance for the cosplayer? Winge emphasizes the costume as the most important element of cosplay, the element utilized in order to "nonverbally communicate his or her chosen character and character traits" (2006, 72). But how can role-playing be identified purely visually? This is where accuracy of character can be differentiated from the enactment of a skit. Winge states,

[1.7] A distinguishing characteristic between Japanese and North American cosplay is the way in which cosplayers perform in competition. In North America, during masquerades cosplayers wear their dress onstage and perform skits, often humorous but not necessarily an exact mime of their chosen character. In Japan, cosplayers also wear their dress on stage during competitions; however, they usually give only a static display, such as striking their character's signature pose or reciting the motto of their chosen character. (2006, 73)

[1.8] Galbraith refers to these skits as "cos-plays" and emphasizes that they are far less common in Japan than in North America (2009, 53). I do not consider these two

practices of cosplay definitively distinct, but read them instead as workings within different geographical and cultural media spheres. Furthermore, they should be considered in their historical contexts. As mentioned above, many cosplay practices now interpenetrate cosplay communities around the world. Galbraith's and Winge's studies document particular practices witnessed at past cosplay events in Japan, practices easily distinguished from North American cosplay practices of the time. The differences in masquerade practices suggest the experiences of different media environments. As I will argue in this paper, Japanese cosplayers may have traditionally emphasized the static pose because of the particular characteristics of Japan's media environment. But how can the action of role-play be reconciled with the stasis of posing? Before answering this question, however, I will first examine in greater depth the method of cosplay that is the focus of this paper.

[1.9] The most obvious explanation for the importance of cosplay posing is the fact that photography requires stasis. However, the documentary aspect of photography does not account for cosplay methodology. For example, an alternate history of cosplay photography might have seen cosplayers stand directly facing the camera, or in profile, in order for as much costuming detail as possible to be captured. Yet, cosplay-posing guides explain that such poses are undesirable because cosplay—and posing, by extension—is not simply a process of documenting a cosplayer's costuming skills, but a process of illustrating the cosplayer's understanding of that character. Doubtless there are many ways in which cosplayers pose for photographs. But there is also an undeniable importance placed on particular methods of photography—and being photographed—that circulate through certain groups within cosplay culture. I examine the etiquette of this form of cosplay posing, which aims to mimetically connect with the media characters on which the costumes are based.

[1.10] Two cosplay-posing guides, linked through Cosplay.com and uploaded on deviantART (<http://www.deviantart.com>), list a number of characteristics to aspire to and avoid when posing for photos (Tux Team 2011; Cherazor 2011). Deviantart.com is a popular prosumer site that hosts media productions from a number of otaku-like practices, including cosplay. The guides agree in recommending energetic and engaged poses that should somehow convey the iconic attitude of the chosen character. Cosplayers should also avoid the utilitarian approach of facing the camera directly or standing in profile. The "Tux Team Guide to Posing and Convention Etiquette" provides a series of photos that concisely illustrate the primary concern of this study. One of the models used, China (snowpeachdrop), cosplays the character Uzumaki Naruto, an adolescent ninja popularized in both anime and manga. In these photos, accompanied by an illustration of the character, focus is placed on emotiveness.



Figure 1. *Naruto, forced pose. [View larger image.]*



Figure 2. *Naruto, strong pose.* [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 3. *Naruto.* [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 4. *Naruto, unenergetic pose. [View larger image.]*

[1.11] In the first of these images (figure 1), China demonstrates a problematic pose, a pose that is "completely out of character for Naruto" (Tux Team 2011). In contrast with the second pose (figure 2)—the successful pose—Tux Team calls the first pose "seemingly forced," which is to be avoided. China's facial expressions in the pictures are similar, yet one of them is disparaged. There is an undeniable mimetic connection between the second photo (figure 2) and the illustration of the character (figure 3): the pose is not quite the same, but the facial expression of the character is easily recognized. As Cherazor states in her tutorial, "The first thing you should do when trying to come up with a good pose is to check what signature poses your character has. If the character has no 'signature pose,' have the character's personality in mind, or you might end up with very weird photos...Another thing to remember is energy. If you're posing half-heartedly you might as well not be posing at all!" (Cherazor 2011). A forced pose is one that is not characteristic of the character or easily recognizable as part of the character's repertoire. In the case of these images of Naruto, figure 4 features a facial expression like the one in the illustration (figure 3): both images display Naruto frowning. However, China's expression in figure 4 would be characterized as forced, half-hearted, or unenergetic. In this approach to cosplay,

these sorts of adjectives not only criticize the commitment of the cosplayer, they indicate the disparity between the cosplayer's method and the understandings of characters as they are rendered by the commercial industry. In other words, figures 1 and 4 fail to illustrate an understanding of Naruto that corresponds to the broader understanding of the character as depicted in his many media iterations. Thus, this method of cosplay is not so concerned with the exact replication of particular images as with appreciating the character's nature or personality within the media mix. Yet the character's appearance remains contingent upon a form of stasis that enables the subject to appear through a variety of images while maintaining the recognizable traits of a particular iconic image. The complexities of representing a character's iconic attitude in a single image will be discussed at greater length below. But first, a brief sample of the popular media character Tifa Lockhart on the sites Cosplay.com and Cosplayers' Cure—the two largest cosplay communities online—will serve as examples of how this reproduction might be traced.

[1.12] Tifa Lockhart is part of the *Final Fantasy* franchise, an expansive role-playing video game (RPG) that includes at least a dozen iterations in sequel and prequel games, produced by the game developer Square Enix. The franchise has generated an enormous ancillary market, and Tifa is one of the most utilized cosplay subjects. James Newman points out that cosplay community Web sites such as Cosplay.com "clearly illustrate the ways in which videogame cosplay is seamlessly located within wider cultures of anime and Manga costuming and conventions and events typically bring together cosplayer form across the spectrum" (2008, 86). Cosplaying practices that are informed by anime in turn inform how cosplayers engage with video game characters. Furthermore, the particular rendition of this character that I will examine first appeared in *Final Fantasy: Advent Children* (2005), a CGI film adaptation of the property. There is a wealth of Tifa cosplay images on these community Web sites, but I have chosen a particular pose because it is easily recognizable and distinct (figure 5).



Figure 5. Tifa Lockhart in *Advent Children*. [[View larger image.](#)]

[1.13] The image is a still from *Advent Children* in which the character is engaged in battle. During the battle, there is a momentary reprieve in which Tifa strikes a three-point pose while crouched against a wall: this is the most static moment during the

battle. In this moment, the character is poised for another attack. This image was adapted into other forms for the purpose of promotion and commoditization (posters, desktop backgrounds, etc).



Figure 6. Tifa desktop background. [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 7. Advent Children poster. [[View larger image.](#)]

[1.14] Many of the Tifa cosplay images on both Cosplayers' Cure and Cosplay.com (figures 8 and 9) directly mimic the promotional images (figures 6 and 7). These cosplayers strike a similar three-point action pose. In fact, one of the cosplayers used digital manipulation to embed flower petals into the scene, making an even stronger mimetic connection with the promotional still (figure 9).



Figure 8. Tifa cosplayer 1. [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 9. Tifa cosplayer 2. [[View larger image.](#)]

[1.15] Though the energy called for by the tutorials is an ambiguous concept at best, it clearly has to do with striking cosplay poses that faithfully represent characters' iconic attitudes. The adaptation of this image for promotional material suggests that the pose is important to understandings of the character: this is Tifa in a nutshell, so to speak. Cosplayers were obviously not opposed to this commoditization of the image, as it ended up becoming the model for hundreds of cosplay poses. Of the 2160 *Advent Children* Tifa images on Cosplayers' Cure, 210 directly mimic this pose, and of the 3925 images on Cosplay.com, 206 do so. The pose thus comprises 10 and 5 percent of the total number of images based on *Advent Children* on these two Web sites. Furthermore, these numbers only represent the reproduction of one pose; other cosplay images reproduce other widely circulated images from this franchise iteration.

What motivates cosplayers to reproduce the mimetic sensibility of such images? In order to examine this question, I will contextualize cosplay within the Japanese media environment.

2. Media Environments

[2.1] For Hiroki Azuma, otaku culture fits comfortably within the rise of postmodernism in Japan (2009). He categorizes three generations of otaku, the most recent of which, born around 1980, are the most directly relatable to his conception of the database. By the 1980s, postmodernity, as it related to narrative form, greatly influenced Japanese media production. Japan's fragmentary history—resulting from the traumatic events of WWII, the postwar occupation by the US, and the economic crash of the 1980s—produced an otaku who lacked the grand narratives that cultural discourses had instilled in previous generations. This fragmentation inspired new practices of media consumption. Azuma states,

[2.2] Independently and without relation to an original narrative, consumers in the 1990s consumed only...fragmentary illustrations or settings; and this different type of consumption appeared when the individual consumer empathy toward these fragments strengthened. The otaku themselves called this new consumer behavior "*chara-moe*"—the feeling of *moe* toward characters and their alluring characteristics...without relation to the narrative or message of those works. (2009, 36)

[2.3] As Lamarre explains, *moe* "refers broadly to the affective responses to elements that appear to sprout from manga, anime, or game characters, such as...costumes or uniforms, and poses, gestures, or situations" (2009, 258). For otaku, *moe*-elements overshadow the narrative significance of these media forms. As a result, both otaku and media producers utilize "a database for *moe*-elements that generates the characters" (Azuma 2009, 47). This database is both conceptual and material: conceptual in that it organizes consumption practices of *moe*, and material in that it organizes production practices, such as the cel bank used by anime producers. Azuma continues, "Since those who feel *moe* toward a particular character tend to buy its related goods excessively, the success of a project for the producers of such goods is directly determined not by the quality of the work itself but by its ability to evoke the *moe* desire through character design and illustrations" (47). A production/image/design is judged not according to originality but by its association and referentiality of the *moe* database.

[2.4] The consumer behavior that results from these practices is what Azuma refers to as "database consumption" (2009, 54). However, database consumption is not

completely without narrative quality. Azuma refers to the bare-bones narratives associated with *moe* consumption as *small narratives*. It is the dissociative behavior of database consumers—their separation of these small narratives from grand narratives—that facilitates their reactions to "the drama in the outer surface layer of the work, despite their desire to disassemble, analyze, and reassemble works, or precisely because of this desire" (2009, 94). All of these actions combine to form what Azuma sees as the contemporary human, which he refers to as the "database animal" (2009, 95).

[2.5] With these insights, the importance of stasis within the practice of cosplay becomes more palpable. Images and traits of characters are more important than narrative significance, as in Azuma's model of database consumption. Cosplayers must not only depict a particular character's design features, such as clothing, but also reconstitute the character's attitude and personality. According to the cosplay tutorials, one depicts attitude or behavior by energetic, engaged posing. In this sense, a correlative to Azuma's small narratives is established, if not literally, then at the very least analogically. In the above images of Naruto, two photos of China depict the character with a frown on his face, but only figure 2 conveys the significance, and China's understanding, of Naruto's small narrative characteristics. Figure 2 is not an exact replication of figure 3 but it nonetheless connects with the illustration in a way that figure 4 does not. In this example, cosplay is a definitive example of database consumption: a form of consumption primarily concerned with a substantial understanding of character through surface-layer qualities.

[2.6] Lamarre develops Azuma's concepts further by assessing the anime cel bank. A cel bank is a reserve of images that are used and reused in animation; such banks are maintained both in anime and in other animation industries. A single cel may be a drawing of a character's arm or leg in one position of a larger movement, or it may be a static image of a character. Lamarre asserts that the assembly mentality of the cel bank extends to other otaku consumption practices that use tools made up of parts, such as model kits and customizable characters in video games (2009, 192). The cel bank is not so different in form from the *moe* database, aside from the fact that a cel bank is not primarily conceptual but is a repository of material items. However, the cel bank is yet another element of Japanese media that supports database consumption. Anime, because it has a limited animation structure, utilizes the cel bank more than any other form of animation. Thus it holds particular cultural cachet in relation to Japanese media.

[2.7] Furthermore, anime's superflat structure provides otaku with multiple entry points into the consumption of anime. The lack of depth in the anime form results in a lack of a stabilized viewing position: there is no primary focal point on which to

concentrate. For Tamaki Saitō, this enables otaku as prosumers to focus on "delocalized layers of context." Lamarre expands on this: "At this level, Saitō's notion of multiple orientations...seems to follow from, or at least to be consonant with, the very postmodern condition that Azuma calls grand database or database structure" (2009, 267). For Lamarre, superflat structure further facilitates Azuma's database consumption, since the destabilized viewing of anime elicits the promotion of *moe* elements and overshadows narrative structure: this is an otaku way of viewing the world.

[2.8] Limited animation relies greatly on the appeal of individual images, which are instilled with meaning as they circulate and become available to forms of database consumption. These images become prime material from which cosplayers can assemble costumes and styles, because they are highly identifiable as objects of shared pleasure and knowledge. As the Naruto images above indicate, a shared experience is translated through particular methods of cosplay that evoke small narrative significance. Furthermore, the lack of a stabilized viewing position within limited animation forefronts the character—or *moe* element—separating it from its context. Again, whether literal or analogical, such a characteristic of database structure can be seen at play within the Tifa cosplay images above. The cosplayers mimic Tifa's three-point pose, yet the photographs are shot from slightly different angles and feature slightly different characteristics. Figure 8 does not replicate Tifa's dress flowing behind her, and both images utilize different backgrounds from those of either the promotional images (figures 6 and 7) or the film still (figure 5). The latter is particularly intriguing as both cosplayers (or photographers) use digital backgrounds, yet both neglected to exactly replicate the background of either source image. Regardless of these singularities, the cosplayers manage to affect engaged and energetic poses that illustrate their knowledge of the database structure and thus share their appreciation of the character.

[2.9] Marc Steinberg emphasizes the importance of the mass proliferation of database structure and how it influences the understanding of media environments in Japan. Database structure, and the practices of consumption it inspires, is not limited to the narrative media productions of these characters. In his article "Immobile Sections and Trans-series Movement" (2006), he examines the Japanese media mix. Though the concept of the media mix is akin to the affective economics of media convergence in North America—synergetic production strategies that bolster brand recognizability while diversifying and consolidating distribution channels—Steinberg examines the specificity of anime by asking, "What is the nature of the relation between motion and stillness of the image in Japanese anime, and how does this motion-stillness economy link up with the extensive commercial apparatus that surrounds and supports the anime industry?" (2006, 191). For Steinberg, the

immobility of limited animation indicates not only the manga on which it is based, but also "*similarly immobile commodity form[s]*" (2006, 192). Cel bank images and elements find their way into ancillary products: particular images become easier to identify and are therefore coveted by fans. Steinberg refers to these as "privileged moments," assembled from a "discrete media—that deals in both motion and immobility, movement and poses" (2006, 199). Consumption practices resonate through still images that appear across media and products. Steinberg concludes that anime

[2.10] is not only a medium that was formed by the convergence of discrete media (comics, animation, television) but one that functions through the continuing resonance between these media and the new medium of anime, a resonance (via the immobile image of the character) that extended onto (and created) a brand new social world of character-images: a social world that everywhere resonates with the diegetic world, and channels the consuming subject's desire. (2006, 202)

[2.11] This model of media production became a dominant force of cultural production in Japan, and remains part of the Japanese social world of character images.

[2.12] As a video-game character, Tifa Lockhart is indicative of the media mix. The image discussed above is an example of how stasis maintains an important place within the Japanese media environment: static images greatly influence consumption practices. A discrete moment in a moving-image medium (CGI film) was translated into static-image media (promotional materials), and was enveloped within practices of database consumption. For instance, Square Enix distributed desktop backgrounds of this pose that were free to download and that otaku could then appropriate, manipulate, and redistribute through prosumer media Web sites and forums. The image's recognizability moreover makes it a perfect subject for cosplay reproduction. These images of Tifa represent an evaluative convergence of cosplay with, and as part of, the media mix. They express the need to mime an emotive correlate of the source image. The emphasis on posing, and the resultant convergence of the Tifa image, implies that posing according to a mimetic guideline, and reproducing privileged moments, is indeed a substantial aspect of Japanese consumption of cosplay. This may be further evidenced by the greater number of images located on Cosplayers' Cure than on Cosplay.com.

[2.13] Still images and, more specifically, poses play a fundamental role in Japanese media culture. In terms of Azuma's grand database and the cel bank, poses prompt significant affective connections with the consumer, despite their impoverished narrative elements. Though practices of media consumption may have changed since

Azuma first made his claims about the postmodern Japanese consumer in the mid-nineties, this model presents a coherent structure by which to assess the history and development of Japanese media and its influence on cosplay practices. Poses convey a character in a way that enables database consumption practices, based on small narratives. These practices infuse the stasis of the image with meaning—create privileged moments—from which to create a role to cosplay. Furthermore, as Steinberg notes, the social world of character images proliferates everywhere throughout Japan's media environment.

3. Conclusion.

[3.1] Japan's media environment facilitates affect on the basis of a surface-level engagement of the grand database, which manifests through static image iconicity. This iconicity suggests both stasis and movement, and establishes a specific form of consumption that injects these privileged moments with particular meaning on the basis of Azuma's small narratives. These small narratives nonetheless facilitate complex understandings of media franchises that enable the role-playing component of cosplay by implementing the significance of the privileged moment within the cosplay pose. The pose, as a form of static image, functions as a method of consumption of a referent database image. In turn, the cosplay pose becomes yet another productive element of prosumers' experiences of the media mix.

[3.2] In this article, I have traced a form of consumption within the Japanese media environment through the concepts of the grand database and the cel bank, and the importance of the static image within the media mix. I do not suggest that cosplay practice is determined by nationality: otaku culture and cosplayer practices are always changing and in flux. Instead, I present particular methods of cosplay practice, and furthermore express a conception of particular production and consumption practices within Japanese media environments. This study provides a starting point from which to contextualize otaku, cosplayers, and other groups of prosumers within ever-expanding transnational media practices. Moreover, this analysis reveals consumers' persistent motivations to actualize their social worlds of media experience in a variety of material forms.

4. Acknowledgment

[4.1] I would like to thank Dr. Marc Steinberg for the generous guidance and support he has provided throughout the writing of this paper and, moreover, throughout my academic career. I would also like to thank the Fonds de Recherche: Société et culture (FQRSC) for their financial support and for making this paper possible.

5. Works cited

- Azuma, Hiroki. 2009. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Translated by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cherazor. 2011. "Cherazor's Random Guides: Tips on Cosplay-Posing, for the Ladies!" DeviantArt.com, April 6. <http://cherazor.deviantart.com/art/Guide-Posing-in-Cosplay-172433587>.
- Galbraith, Patrick W. 2009. *The Otaku Encyclopedia: An Insider's Guide to the Subculture of Cool Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Gunnels, Jen. 2009. "'A Jedi like my father before me': Social Identity and the New York Comic Con." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 3. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0161>.
- Iwabuchi, Koichi. 2010. "Undoing Inter-national Fandom in the Age of Brand Nationalism." *Mechademia* 5:87–96.
- Jindra, Michael. 1999. "'Star Trek to Me Is a Way of Life': Fan Expressions of *Star Trek* Philosophy." In *Star Trek and Sacred Ground: Explorations of Star Trek, Religion, and American Culture*, edited by Jennifer E. Porter and Darcee L. McLaren, 217–30. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Kinsella, Sharon. 2000. *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society*. Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon.
- Lamarre, Thomas. 2009. *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lamerichs, Nicolle. 2011. "Stranger Than Fiction: Fan Identity in Cosplay." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0246>.
- Napier, Susan. 2001. *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. New York: Palgrave. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780312299408>.
- Newman, James. 2008. *Playing with Videogames*. New York: Routledge.
- Steinberg, Marc. 2006. "Immobile Sections and Trans-series Movement: *Astroboy* and the Emergence of Anime." *Animation: an Interdisciplinary Journal* 1 (2): 190–206.
- Tux Team. 2011. "Tux Team Guide to Posing and Convention Etiquette." DeviantArt.com, April 6. <http://behindinfinity.deviantart.com/journal/21030596/>.

Winge, Theresa. 2006. "Costuming the Imagination: Origins of Anime and Manga Cosplay." *Mechademia* 1:65–76.

Symposium

The butcher, the baker, the lightsaber maker

Forrest Phillips

[0.1] *Abstract*—Lightsaber artisanship is an entrepreneurial fandom that has thus far avoided encountering legal trouble because of their deferential attitude toward the IP holder.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fan community; Profit; Prop making; Star Wars

Phillips, Forrest. 2014. "The Butcher, the Baker, the Lightsaber Maker." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0498>.

[0.2] If you look at the potential for working props then Star Wars has the edge. Series such as Dr. Who, or Harry Potter have spawned maybe one or two that can be activated but the lightsaber is the most popular as it is so interactive.

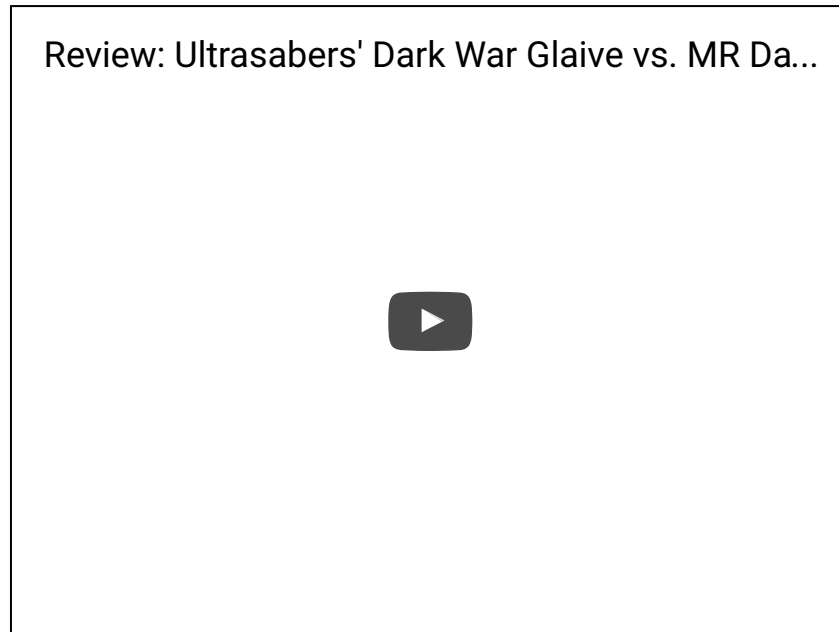
—Susan, e-mail, May 15, 2012

1. Introduction and definition of terms

[1.1] A significant portion of fan studies scholarship is focused on how fans interact with texts by manipulating them or creating new ones. However, as fans' access to the means of production has increased over time, so have their methods of engagement. One new practice is the fan labor of professional prop creation. It can be found in many fandoms, but in this essay, I will focus on lightsaber artisans and their interactions with the Star Wars franchise.

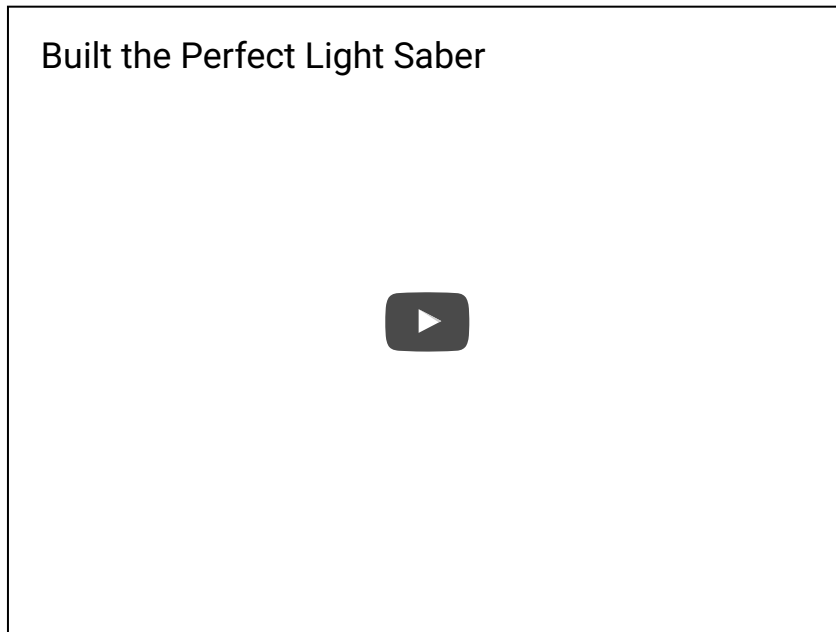
[1.2] I use the term *artisan* to refer to small outlets that sell handcrafted goods directly to individuals. They emphasize quality and craftsmanship over maximizing growth (Forkish 2012, 17). There are more buyers than sellers, each item is handmade, and craftsmanship is king (Hetherington 2012; "F.A.Q.," n.d.). These businesses are artisan regardless of the category of goods they sell. Lightsaber artisans' handmade products, their emphasis on quality, and their work's status as reverse-engineered industrial products tie them into the history of fandom via their similarities to blueprint culture (Rehak 2012).

[1.3] Lightsaber artisans fall firmly within the definition of artisanship laid out in the previous section. In line with the definitions provided by Forkish and Hetherington, Ultra Sabers says their bottom line is "quality of product, affordability, and a speedy delivery" (UltraSabers LLC "About Us," n.d.). The artisan behind LDM Custom Sabers prioritizes his artistic fulfillment over his desire to make a profit ("Services," n.d.). This contrasts strongly with non-artisans like Hasbro whose focus, quite appropriately, is on delivering profits and other benefits to their shareholders ("Hasbro, Inc.—Governance Principles," n.d.). While generating a profit is a good thing, from a fan perspective, artisans' emphasis on quality has resulted in superior products.



Video 1. *Ultrasabers vs. Hasbro.*

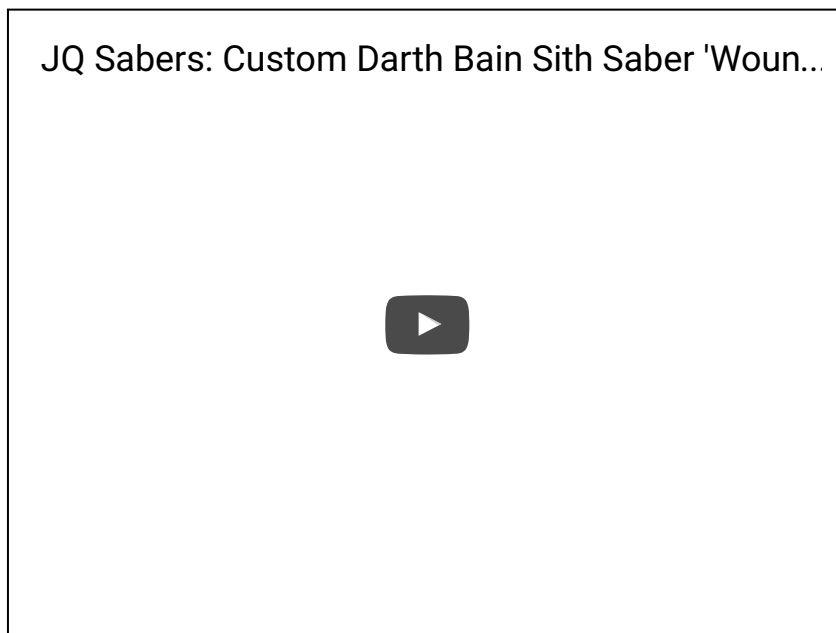
[1.4] Artisan sabers fall into two categories. The first is duplicate sabers. These are screen-accurate replicas of lightsabers seen in a Star Wars film. Much as Franz Joseph worked backwards from episodes of *Star Trek* to create the Starfleet Technical Manual in the 1970s, these saber artisans work backwards from the celluloid canon (Rehak 2012). Some duplicate sabers are machined from scratch while others are assembled from scavenged parts like those used by Lucasfilm's prop department ("Graflex/Heiland," n.d.; "The New Hope Obi-Wan," n.d.).



Video 2. *The high-end parts used to build a lightsaber in the 1970s.*

[1.5] The second is original sabers. This refers to any design that hasn't appeared in an official visual depiction. They can be unique designs, a predesigned stock saber, or something in between (saberforge 2008; "Sabers for Sale," n.d.; Ultra Sabers LLC, "Single Blade Sabers," n.d.).

2. Why lightsabers?



Video 3. *A JQ Sabers product.*

[2.1] The lightsaber represents Star Wars more than any single prop represents its source material. This iconic status is part of what motivated artisans to sell them:

[2.2] Lightsabers fit in nicely with Martial Arts also from a business point of view there are a lot more people ready to spend money on a lightsaber... Creating a profitable business was another important criteria. (Ratcliffe, pers. comm.)

[2.3] Additionally, builders report that crafting a saber is gratifying (Caine 2012). Fandom is a key part of this satisfaction and indicates that lightsaber artisanship shares DNA with other forms of fan labor (Ratcliffe, pers. comm.; Rehak 2010). Saber artisans are thus best viewed as a hybrid of entrepreneurs and uncompensated fan laborers (Deuze 2007).

[2.4] Artisan lightsabers allow fans to cut through the fourth wall and step into Star Wars' diegesis. Duplicate sabers are endowed with the personality and history of the character they belong to, allowing fans to step into said character's shoes (Gunnels 2009). Claims about original sabers are less direct. While some fans give their creation a backstory, most claims stem solely from using the term *lightsaber* (Spectre, n.d.; "Sabers for Sale," n.d.). These totemic and diegesis-piercing qualities aren't unique to artisan props. As Jen Gunnels explains, they are key to the appeal of cosplay (Gunnels 2009). What separates saber artisans from cosplayers has nothing to do with their fandom. What differentiates them is financial motive.

3. My business is fandom and business is good.

Sith Lightsaber, 51TH Commando v4.5 by LDM

Video 4. *An artisan shows off his wares.*

[3.1] The key difference between saber artisans and most other fan laborers is that artisans profit. Their windfall has been generated via two models. Under the first model, an artisan lists a completed saber for sale on a forum or on their website (Kit

Fisto 2013; TridCloudwalker 2010; "Sabers for Sale," n.d.). The second is that a patron commissions an artisan to construct one to their specifications ("Services," n.d.). The gift economy, which is otherwise considered the norm in fandom, is deemphasized (Deuze 2007; Jenkins 2006, 132; Noppe 2011). Renown and other forms of cultural capital are still important, but monetary and material rewards have primacy. This allows artisans to have the best of both worlds as they can reap a profit while retaining the sense of community that the gift economy brings (Scott 2009). It also allows them to avoid third-party commodification, as unlike examples of other attempts to profit from fandom such as FanLib, the fans who labor also reap the fruits. Lightsaber artisans work within fandom's structure rather than attempting to reshape it.

[3.2] Daren Ratcliffe of JQ Sabers was quite open that the decision to focus their work on lightsabers was partially based on demand (Ratcliffe, pers. comm.). This isn't to say the DNA of fan artanship is unique to Star Wars fandom. There are artisans in the fandoms of every significant media property, but Star Wars' are unique. The lightsaber is no ordinary plot object. It was voted the greatest movie weapon of all time (Borland 2008). This widespread popularity makes it easier to build a business on than an overlooked item from an obscure creature feature.

[3.3] This popularity has also provided artisans with the benefits of community. First, artisans get to trade tips and best practices. On forums across the Internet, saber builders discuss the best way to make a saber and compare the relative merits of components (fullyfired 2012; surlygirlie 2004; Xamas 2009). The names of sound cards and saber blades fly like the names of engines at an auto show. Second, the community acts as quality control. If an artisan's work or behavior is shoddy, the community will blacklist them (darthmorbius 2007). For example, when one customer complained about never receiving a lightsaber they ordered, the artisan community tried to track down the merchant (Anakin Skywalker 2009; chaos_79 2009). Third, the community's online presence provides a clear method of sale. Forums serve as bazaars that let fans find an artisan to construct the saber of their dreams (Enzo 2013). The FX-Sabers forum facilitates this by providing subforums for select artisans ("Fx-sabers.com—Forum," n.d.) (note 1). Providing this space has helped artisans to develop individual brands (Darth Smorgis 2013). These brands are not limited to the division between skilled and unskilled artisans, and customers spend their money on the basis of aesthetics rather than solely on concern about competence (Iggy 2013).

[3.4] The rise of distinct brands and aesthetics isn't the only indication of the health of the lightsaber market. Demand is so high that JQ Sabers and other artisans have had to either implement a waiting list or become increasingly selective ("JQ Sabers—A force," n.d.; Kit Fisto 2013; "Services," n.d.; TridCloudwalker 2010). This strong

customer base has allowed lightsaber artisans to personally profit from their fan labor. Historically, making a profit has been taboo within fandom due to the fear that this would inevitably lead to legal reprisal from IP owners (Fiesler 2008, 731–49).

4. Artisans and Lucasfilm

[4.1] Common wisdom holds that profiting from fan labor opens fandom to the legion of lawyers assembled at its gates. This fear stems from a belief that works that make a profit inevitably encounter legal trouble (Lantagne 2012). No less an authority than George Lucas has indicated that Lucasfilm objects to fan activity making a profit (Balkin 2004, 8). Despite doing this very thing, lightsaber artisans seem not to be a target of the threats and lawsuits that other fan producers have to wrangle with (Davis 2008). Lightsaber artisans don't appear to have suffered in any way for their labor. There is precedence for this. Lucasfilm has traditionally been supportive of fan activity as long as it doesn't construct new stories or alter the existing Star Wars universe (Mullin 2012; Phillips 2012). Lucasfilm's former Vice President Jim Ward summed up the company's position when he declared that "fandom is about celebrating the story the way it is" (Jenkins 2006, 153). Duplicate sabers celebrate the story's essence by recreating a plot object featured within it. While original sabers may not celebrate it to the same extent, they don't challenge the existing story. Despite this tradition of amnesty, artisans are aware that their companies are built on a precarious foundation. Many of the sites I visited in my research had a disclaimer making it very clear that they are not affiliated with or endorsed by Lucasfilm (UltraSabers LLC, "About Us," n.d.). JQ Sabers' Daren Ratcliffe made a similar distancing statement in our email exchange:

[4.2] I admire [George Lucas's] work and the control he keeps over his rights, we take great care not to infringe any SW trademark or merchandising rules. A mistake can be very costly and disrespectful. (Ratcliffe, pers. comm.)

[4.3] In order to avoid such a costly mistake, Ratcliffe has refrained from using the term *lightsaber* altogether ("JQ Sabers—A force," n.d.). This deference and rhetorical distance sets them apart from other fan producers who at times assume an oppositional stance and cite their own colleagues as being greater talents than Lucas and other IP originators (Bionicbob 2012).

[4.4] Given the deferential stance of lightsaber artisans, Lucasfilm's more benevolent attitude is likely no coincidence. Lucasfilm hasn't spoken well of fans making money from their intellectual property. When asked about The Phantom Edit, a Lucasfilm press officer told the *New York Times*, "We can't allow them to duplicate and distribute

our films for profit" (Broderick 2012; Larson 2011; Zalewski 2002). Duplicate saber artisans are, in essence, doing the very thing this press officer said that Lucasfilm can't allow. They are profiting from Star Wars. If the principle is that fans shouldn't profit from Lucas's work, then one might expect these artisans to be as culpable as anyone else. However, they have been spared any sort of legal penalty. Why? I think the answer lies in the quote from Jim Ward that I touched on earlier. Some fan producers want to rework a property to fit their own tastes or communicate their own concerns (Jenkins 2003). Lightsaber artisans are different. They don't want to change Star Wars. They don't want to revise Star Wars. They just want to feel like they're a part of it. Lucasfilm understands that encouraging some level of fan labor, especially celebratory fan labor, is in their own interest (Jenkins 2006, 135; Landa 2012; Mullin 2012). Lightsaber artisans are the type of creators that Lucasfilm has historically encouraged. Much like Lucasfilm's official Fan Film Festival, they pay tribute to Star Wars rather than transforming it (Rose 2012, 94). Allowing fans to enact their desire to be part of Star Wars furthers the emotional and psychological ties that are the core foundation of fandom and by extension increases the value of the franchise (De Kosnik, n.d.).

5. Conclusion

[5.1] Lightsaber artisans' uniqueness comes from the fact that they have done the impossible. They used their fan labor to generate a profit while avoiding any legal punishment. Lucasfilm's history of turning a blind eye to lightsaber artisans is likely because the relatively small amount of money such artisans draw away from their coffers is dwarfed by the profit that such die-hard fans generate for Lucasfilm and its partners (Jenkins 2003). It remains unclear whether this will persist under the new regime. Some artisans are concerned that Disney will crack down on people selling unlicensed props, but others have faith the Mouse House knows this decision would backfire (Nico Diath 2012; Warrent Voyd 2012).

[5.2] Beyond questions of whether these practices are sustainable, lightsaber artisanship also raises questions about how we define fannish production. It is well documented that the border between fans and producers has become blurred (Gillan 2010, 228). This discourse often focuses on the fading line between producer and fan, but lightsaber artisanship demonstrates that the line between consumer and creator is becoming similarly hazy.

6. Note

1. If forums are bazaars, these subforums are best conceptualized as artisans' individual booths.

7. Works cited

Anakin Skywalker. 2009. "Re: Starkiller Lightsaber, Do You Have Yours?" Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, March 16.

Balkin, Jack M. 2004. "Digital Speech and Democratic Culture: A Theory of Freedom of Expression for the Information Society." Faculty Scholarship Series, Paper 240. http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/240.

Bionicbob. 2012. "User Reviews: Star Wars—Episode III: Dawn of the Empire." *Fanedit.org*.

Borland, Sophie. 2008. "Lightsabre Wins the Battle of Movie Weapons." *The Telegraph*, January 21. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1576154/Lightsabre-wins-the-battle-of-movie-weapons.html>.

Broderick, Ryan. 2012. "George Lucas Owns the Universe: A Timeline of Star Wars Copyright Battles." *Motherboard*, May 12. <http://motherboard.vice.com/blog/george-lucas-is-a-copyright-lunatic>.

Caine. 2012. "Re: I Can't Do This." Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, December 11.

chaos_79. 2009. "Re: Starkiller Lightsaber, Do You Have Yours?" Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, June 16.

darthmorbius. 2007. "Re: Idopticalsystems" Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, August 31.

Darth Smorgis. 2013. "Re: Which Saber Smith to Choose???" Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, February 14.

Davis, Wendy. 2008. "MPAA Targets Fanedit with Takedown Notice." *Online Media Daily*, November 25. <http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/95378/mpaa-targets-fanedit-with-takedown-notice.html#axzz2MAOIFSzL>.

De Kosnik, Abigail. n.d. "Interrogating 'Free' Fan Labor." *Spreadable Media*. <http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.UStNy-i7-rg>.

Deuze, Mark. 2007. "Deuzeblog: Fandom and Media Work." *Deuzeblog*, October 25. <http://deuze.blogspot.com/2007/10/fandom-and-media-work.html>.

Enzo. 2013. "Which Saber Smith to Choose???" Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, February 14.

"F.A.Q." n.d. *Vader'sVault.com*. <http://vadersvault.com/f-a-q/>.

Fiesler, Casey. 2008. "Everything I Need to Know I Learned From Fandom: How Existing Social Norms Can Help Shape the Next Generation of User-Generated Content." *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law* 10 (3): 729–62.

Forkish, Ken. 2012. *Flour Water Salt Yeast: The Fundamentals of Artisan Bread and Pizza*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

fullyfired. 2012. "Best Blade Option?" Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, December 8.

"Fx-sabers.com—Forum." n.d. *Fx-sabers.com*. <http://www.fx-sabers.com/forum/>.

Gillan, Jennifer. 2010. *Television and New Media: Must-Click TV*. New York: Routledge.

"Graflex/Heiland." n.d. *Custom Saber Shop*.
<http://www.thecustomsabershop.com/GraflexHeiland-C5.aspx>.

Gunnels, Jen. 2009. "'A Jedi like my father before me': Social Identity and the New York Comic Con." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 3.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0161>.

"Hasbro, Inc.—Governance Principles." n.d. *Hasbro, Inc*.
<http://investor.hasbro.com/documentdisplay.cfm?DocumentID=8613>.

Hetherington, Jason. 2012. Untitled forum post. *Rebel Legion Forum*, April 14.

Iggy. 2013. "Re: Which Saber Smith to Choose???" Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, February 14.

Jenkins, Henry. 2003. "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence and Participatory Culture." MIT.
<http://web.mit.edu/21fms/People/henry3/starwars.html>.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

"JQ Sabers—A force to be reckoned with." n.d. *Rapid Online*.
<http://www.rapidonline.com/customer-profiles/jq-sabers>.

Kit Fisto. 2013. "Ven Zallow 'Axis' Lightsaber: Official Run Thread Now Open." Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, January 14.

Landa, Jennifer. 2012. "How to Make a Wampa Cave Shadow Box." *StarWarsBlog.com*, December 11. <http://starwarsblog.starwars.com/index.php/2012/12/11/how-to-make->

[a-wampa-cave-shadow-box/](#).

Lantagne, Stacey M. 2012. *Fan Fiction and Copyright: Outside Works and Intellectual Property Protection*, by Aaron Schwabach [book review]. In *Transformative Works and Fan Activism*, edited by Henry Jenkins and Sangita Shresthova, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0418>.

Larson, Erik. 2011. "Lucasfilm Loses U.K. Supreme Court Bid Over Stormtrooper Helmet Copyright." *Bloomberg*, July 27 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-27/lucasfilm-loses-u-k-supreme-court-bid-over-stormtrooper-helmet.html>.

Mullin, Joe. 2012. "Disney owns Lucasfilm: Will It Have Room for *Star Wars* Fan Movies?" *Ars Technica*, October 30. <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2012/10/disney-owns-lucasfilm-will-it-have-room-for-star-wars-fan-movies/>.

"New Hope Obi Wan Kenobi Weathered Static Lightsaber." n.d. *Slothfurnace.com*. http://www.slothfurnace.com/sabers/ANHObiStatic_01.html.

Nico Diath. 2012. "Lucasfilm bought by Disney for 4 Billion dollars!" *Imperial Royal Arms*. <http://www.imperialroyalarms.com/post/12364/thread>.

Noppe, Nele. 2011. "Why We Should Talk about Commodifying Fan Work." In "Textual Echoes," edited by Cyber Echoes, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0369>.

Phillips, Forrest. 2012. "The Star Wars Franchise, Fan Edits, and Lucasfilm." In "Fan/Remix Video," edited by Francesca Coppa and Julie Levin Russo, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0385>.

Ratcliffe, Daren. Personal e-mail interview, May 13, 2012.

Rehak, Bob. 2010. "Modeling Monsters, Part Two." *Graphic Engine*, December 30. <http://graphic-engine.swarthmore.edu/?p=450>.

Rehak, Bob. 2012. "Franz Joseph and Star Trek's Blueprint Culture." *Graphic Engine*, March 11. <http://graphic-engine.swarthmore.edu/?p=1602>.

Rose, Frank. 2012. "Control." In *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way We Tell Stories*, 77–102. New York: Norton.

saberforge. 2008. "Show Off Your Lightsaber." Forum message. *Rebel Legion Forum*, September 25. <http://www.rebellegion.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=213414&sid=3fc0d1609a0c7abe16492b66679b7bea>.

"Sabers for Sale—LDM Custom Sabers." n.d. *LDM Custom Sabers*.

<http://www.ldmcustomsabers.com/sabersforsale.htm>.

Scott, Suzanne. 2009. "Repackaging Fan Culture: The Regifting Economy of Ancillary Content Models." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 3.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0150>.

"Services—LDM Custom Sabers." n.d. *LDM Custom Sabers*.

<http://www.ldmcustomsabers.com/services.htm>.

Spectre. n.d. "Character Profiles." *Sith Academy*.

<http://sithacademy.freewebspace.com/bios.html#>.

surlygirlie. 2004. "Lightsabers & Blasters—Official Lightsaber Tips and Tricks Thread." Forum message. *Jedi Council Forums*, September 15.

TridCloudwalker. 2010. "TridCloudwalker's Anakin AotC Lightsaber Run—NOW ACCEPTING PAYMENTS." Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, June 27.

Ultra Sabers LLC. n.d. "About Us." <http://www.ultrasabers.com/aboutus.asp>.

Ultra Sabers LLC. n.d. "Single Blade Sabers." <http://www.ultrasabers.com/category-s/70.htm>.

Warrent Voyd. 2012. "Lucasfilm Bought by Disney for 4 Billion Dollars!" *Imperial Royal Arms*. <http://www.imperialroyalarms.com/thread/1208>.

Xamas, Senti. 2009. "Starkiller Lightsaber, Do You Have Yours?." Forum message. *FX-Sabers Forum*, May 20.

Zalewski, Daniel. 2002. "Thinking These Thoughts Is Prohibited." *New York Times*, January 6. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/06/books/thinking-these-thoughts-is-prohibited.html?src=pm>.

Symposium

Written on the body: Experiencing affect and identity in my fannish tattoos

Bethan Jones

Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, Wales, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—This autoethnographic account of fan tattoos emphasizes the importance of affect and identity in relation to fan tattooing.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Cultural capital; Fandom

Jones, Bethan. 2014. "Written on the Body: Experiencing Affect and Identity in My Fannish Tattoos." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0527>.

1. A short history of body modification and me

[1.1] I got my first tattoo when I was maybe 19 or 20. It is a Chinese dragon at the base of my spine—a piece of flash, the technical term for artwork picked off the wall, rather than the custom pieces I would later have, but it nevertheless has a meaning to me. Since getting that first tattoo I've collected (and I use the term deliberately) many more. They are all custom pieces, designed by my artist on the basis of photos, drawings, and notes I e-mail him. They all have specific meanings, and sometimes layers of meaning, depending on who I'm talking to and how much about myself I want to reveal. They are, as Victoria Pitts writes, "a message of self-control...through self-inscription" (2003, 8) ([note 1](#)). In my case, they act as reminders of times, feelings, identity, and things, and in the context of fan tattoos I want to focus on the latter two.



Figures 1–2. Lord of the Rings and Guerrilla Tapestry tattoos written in runic. [[View larger image](#) (figure 1).] [[View larger image](#) (figure 2).]

[1.2] I currently have four tattoos that are taken from texts I am a fan of, though I would only call one of them fannish. The first three of these, taken from Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings*, Patrick Jones's "The Guerrilla Tapestry," and VNV Nation's "Further"

(<http://youtu.be/gz0UEjisP1A>), have a specific meaning to me, but the meaning is largely independent of the source of the tattoo. To use the latter as an example, I have been a fan of VNV Nation for the past ten years, have bought their albums and DVDs, have seen them live many times, and own official merchandise. I engage in fan practices, and like most fans, I find meaning in their songs. Of course, one could argue that this engagement is an essential element of being a fan, and I think that is fair to say, but VNV Nation was not the reason for the tattoo.



Figure 3. Lyric from VNV Nation's "Further." [[View larger image.](#)]

[1.3] Although I love the whole song, it is the final line of the chorus which I derive a specific meaning from. It relates to my previous struggles with depression and self harm ([note 2](#)), but I also find it gives me hope. "Darkness" in the song refers to the lowest point of all: that pit you sink into when you feel like you're all alone, that no one else could ever feel the same as you. But I know that there are others there with me: some of my closest friends, some strangers who I'll never know. Knowledge that I'm not alone is what I draw from the song, and what makes it so important to me.

2. I want to believe in affect

[2.1] So I found the meaning of these three tattoos myself, through my experiences and the places and times I was in when I came across their sources. I didn't get the *Lord of The Rings* tattoo to demonstrate that I was a fan, just as I didn't get the Patrick Jones or VNV Nation tattoos to illustrate my fannish attachment. The meanings I derive from those texts are not influenced by my relationship to them. My *X-Files* tattoo, however, is different, and my reasons for getting it and my relationship to the text are what lead me to call it a specifically fannish tattoo. Lawrence Grossberg argues that "the fan's relation to cultural texts operates in the domain of affect or mood" (1992, 56) and suggests that different affective relations inflect meanings and pleasures in different ways. My relationship with *The X-Files* is an affective one, unlike my relationships with Tolkien, VNV Nation, and Patrick Jones.

[2.2] I first discovered *The X-Files* around the age of 12, shortly after it began airing on BBC 2 in the UK. I admit now to being skeptical about the series: I read Asimov and Bradbury, was interested in "proper" science fiction, and was determined to be a parapsychologist when I grew up. This series was bound to be inferior and paint us nerds in a poor way. But I watched it, and I was hooked. My 1994 diary is covered in quotes and taglines: I want to believe; the truth is out there; trust no one; and I scrawled the logo on the front of my school exercise books. I collected books and posters, and my grandmother bought me membership in the X-Files fan club. My early relationship with the series, then, was one that many fans will recognize, but as I have grown up so too has the way I view the show and what it means to me. My love of the series moved beyond a love of the characters and storylines into a deeper, and more affective, investment. I joined fandom and wrote fan fiction, and in doing so I connected with other fans who were involved in a similar relationship with the show. Grossberg suggests that

[2.3] affect is also organized; it operates within and, at the same time, produces maps which direct our investments in and into the world; these maps tell us where and how we can become absorbed—not into the self but into the world—as potential locations for our self-identifications, and with what intensities. (1992, 57)

[2.4] My affective investment in *The X-Files* certainly worked in a similar way: I began to view the show more academically, deconstructing themes and using academic theories to understand specific aspects of it. I wrote essays about the show as an undergraduate, wrote essays about my fan fiction for the show as an MA student, and turned the series and its fandom into my PhD research. My investment in the series thus, as Grossberg suggests, constructed the places and events that became significant to me, as well as constructing my own identity in relation to it. But, more importantly in relation to this essay, it was an investment that arose out of pleasure.

[2.5] The series, then, held and continues to hold a special place in my heart, and that was in large part the reason for my tattoo. Whereas I got my other text-based tattoos because the piece of text I was inking on myself had a very specific meaning, I got this one because the *text* from which the quote was taken had meaning. I got my X-Files tattoo to demonstrate my affective attachment to the series. Of course, choosing which specific quote I was going to use involved deciding what aspect of the series I most connected with and which piece of text I would be most happy to have permanently on my skin. This meant returning to the series on a much more personal, more reflective, more affective level. What do I love most about *The X-Files*? Mulder. He's the character I relate to the most. What is *The X-Files* about? For me it's belief—a

belief in a specific truth and a search for it. It's about Mulder's sister and his search for her. Although my PhD research may look predominantly at Scully and Fowley, Mulder is the heart of the show for me. So the tattoo had to involve Mulder; it had to be a piece of text that resonated with me; and, for reasons I talk about below, it had to be not immediately obvious as a fannish *X-Files* tattoo. Taking each of these things into account, Mulder's opening monologue from the season 7 episode "Closure" was the obvious choice.





Figures 4–6. *X-Files* tattoos. [[View larger image \(figure 4\).](#)] [[View larger image \(figure 5\).](#)] [[View larger image \(figure 6\).](#)]

3. Tattooing and fan identity

[3.1] My affective investment in *The X-Files* played an important part in the getting of my tattoo, then, but it also positions me firmly within two specific subcultures, each of which has its own identity. The first of these—which I unfortunately do not have the space to discuss—is the body modification community, but the second, which is more important for my purposes in this article, is the fan community. I am not suggesting that the fannish experience requires communality—it is, of course, perfectly possible to be a fan without participating or being involved in fandom. For me, however, the fan community, and specifically *The X-Files* fan community, is an important part of my affective relationship to the text. It is this specific way of experiencing the fandom that is important, not just the fandom itself. Kim Hewitt writes that "the message of a public tattoo is not only its content but its existence as a display of public identity. Symbols of identity that are used to construct identity in the eyes of others carry meanings far beyond their physical existence" (1997, 83). In marking myself with a visible tattoo featuring text lifted from *The X-Files*, I construct a meaning within fandom: I am identified as a fan, someone with knowledge of the series, and—in choosing a tattoo that is not obviously related to the show—in possession of a certain amount of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984).

[3.2] Fans have often been discussed as members of an interpretive community (Jenkins 1992; Bacon-Smith 1992; Kaplan 2006; Parrish 2007), and the performance of fandom has been analyzed through fan cultural productions such as fan fiction and fan art, cosplaying and collecting merchandise (Jenkins 1992; Brooker 2002; Norris and Bainbridge, 2009). Each of these positions fans in certain ways, and I would suggest that fannish tattoos work in a similar way. Craig Norris and Jason Bainbridge note, in their study of cosplayers, that the wearing of "T-shirts or caps with logos such as the Autobot or Decepticon insignias from the *Transformers*...[is] connected to a more general *otaku* experience, marking out people as fans of a certain manga/anime property" (2009). The tattooing of logos or images, such as the X from *The X-Files*, the deathly hallows from *Harry Potter*, or the TARDIS from *Doctor Who*, similarly marks people as fans of those texts. Bainbridge and Norris also, however, note that the wearing of clothing featuring logos such as the team emblem from *Gatchaman* or the NERV symbol from *Neon Genesis Evangelion* marks the wearer out as a member of fandom through a play with identity: others have to be able to recognize the design in order to recognize the property and thus recognize the fan. In a similar way, the tattooing of less recognizable icons, or pieces of text, further plays with identity and, I would suggest, performativity. My tattoo is an obvious X-Files reference to someone who is a fan of the series and has seen the episode in question often enough to recognize the monologue. To someone who only watched up to the third season, or someone who is not a fan of the show at all, it is unrecognizable as an X-Files tattoo. This play with identity through the choice of tattoo further functions as an in-joke of sorts, or, perhaps more accurately, a form of gate-keeping: to the uninitiated it is a tattoo of a remark by Chris Carter, one of my favorite writers; to the fan it demonstrates my position within fandom.

[3.3] I would also suggest, however, that this particular notion of community is also at work in the construction of the "sacred" fan identity. Brendan Richardson, in his study of football fandom, notes that fans will utilize any available resource to maintain the sacredness of their fan experience:

[3.4] In the case of members of the "Real Reds" Liverpool fan community, co-production that relies excessively on consumption of official merchandise is regarded as far less meaningful than co-production that utilises alternative consumption objects, such as home made banners, as part of the process of production. (2011)

[3.5] This sacred experience is an experience imbued with meaning through the choices and distinctions that set it aside from the mundane. Fannish affect gains significance in the choices made during its expression—why this symbol on a banner; why this quote on a t-shirt? In the same way my tattoos gains affective significance by

"walling off" a piece of canon important to me as "sacred" while simultaneously making it visible to viewers (of both my body and *The X-Files*) as being of import.

[3.6] The notion of the sacred is also prevalent in discussions of body modification, and I would argue that analyzing the sacred in relation to the fan community and in relation to tattoos provides us with a new way of understanding and engaging with the fannish tattoo. Of course, as part of the body rather than simply an accessory to it, tattoos cannot be considered in quite the same way as official and unofficial merchandise. Paul Sweetman, referring to tattoos as corporeal artifacts, argues that they escape the flow of commodification and cannot be interpreted simply as superficial accessories (2000, 66). Rather, tattoos can be considered as a form of "anti-fashion," sharing certain affinities with subcultural uniforms.

[3.7] Bryan S. Turner argues that traditional tattoos were embedded in social processes, but modern society erodes these traditional processes and allows tattoos to become optional and playful. He suggests that "tattoos and body piercings are no longer functional, but indicate the social construction of traditional patterns of sociability in the modern world" (2000, 41). Modern tattooing, then, is a form of postmodern neotribalism, in which membership is voluntary and marking optional. Hewitt draws on a similar understanding, arguing that a tattoo is a symbol of uniqueness. In relation to fandom, however, I would argue that a fannish tattoo is actually a symbol of community. Viewing fandom as a form of postmodern neotribalism disrupts Turner's dichotomy. Fannish tattoos are "part of a personal and interior biography" (2000, 42), but they are also a feature of a collective fannish memory.

4. Final thoughts: In fandom I will find you

[4.1] Matt Hills, criticizing Grossberg's constructivist notion of affect, contends that we must consider affect as "capable of 'creating culture' as well as being caught up in it" (2002, 93). That fans have created a culture around the texts they love is, I would suggest, irrefutable. But I would also argue for viewing fannish tattoos as a specific culture within fandom. Of course, not all fans get tattoos, and positioning fans with fannish tattoos as superior to those without (something I hope I have not done in this essay) misses the point of the argument.

[4.2] Fannish tattoos occupy positions similar to those of other forms of material fan culture, but they also exist outside of it. Fannish tattoos are not commodities in the same way as merchandise is, and fans with tattoos also complicate the idea of neotribal affiliations proposed by Turner and Sweetman.

[4.3] Sweetman suggests that tattoos that serve as connections to specific periods "might be argued to commit the tattooee to a particular narrative...tattoos could tell a story [but] the extent to which others would be able to read this text would depend on their ability to 'piece it all together'" (2000, 68). Returning to my X-Files tattoo, my decision to ink the opening monologue from "Closure" onto my body irrevocably commits me to a particular narrative: the narrative of myself as an X-Files fan, and the narrative of *The X-Files* itself. Fannish tattoos, then, illustrate the affective nature of fandom, as well as fannish identity and community, while perhaps disrupting more traditional understandings of consumption and performance.

5. Notes

1. Pitts also notes that body modification (broadly encompassing tattooing, piercing, scarring, and other techniques) sparked much controversy among feminists. Given the way in which fandom has often been framed as a female space (Bury 2005; Coppa 2006; Lothian, Busse, and Reid 2007), I am interested in the role that women's fannish tattoos might play in fandom, and in broader debates about affect, feminism, and postfeminism. Unfortunately I do not have the time to discuss all of these in this essay, but I hope that this could be the start of a dialogue.

2. I have written about depression and fandom elsewhere (<http://79.170.40.240/infiniteearthshs.co.uk/?p=492>).

6. Works cited

Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Brooker, Will. 2002. *Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans*. New York: Continuum.

Bury, Rhiannon. 2005. *Cyberspaces of Their Own: Female Fandoms Online*. New York: Peter Lang.

Coppa, Francesca. 2006. "A Brief History of Media Fandom." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 41–59. Jefferson, NC: MacFarland.

Grossberg, Lawrence. 1992. "Is There a Fan in the House? The Affective Sensibility of Fandom." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 50–65. London: Routledge.

Hewitt, Kim. 1997. *Mutilating the Body: Identity in Blood and Ink*. Popular Press.

Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge.

Kaplan, Deborah. 2006. "Construction of Fan Fiction Character through Narrative." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 139–52. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Lothian, Alexis, Kristina Busse, and Robin Anne Reid. 2007. "'Yearning Void and Infinite Potential': Online Slash Fandom as Queer Female Space." *English Language Notes* 45 (2): 103–11.

Norris, Craig, and Bainbridge, Jason. 2009. "Selling *Otaku*? Mapping the Relationship between Industry and Fandom in the Australian Cosplay Scene." *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 20.

http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/norris_bainbridge.htm.

Parrish, Juli J. 2007. "Inventing a Universe: Reading and Writing Internet Fan Fiction." PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh.

Pitts, Victoria. 2003. *In The Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification*. New York: Palgrave. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9781403979438>.

Richardson, Brendan. 2011. "Football Fan Loyalty and the Fan Conversion Experience." Paper presented as part of the Norwich Business School Seminar Series, University of East Anglia. <https://cora.ucc.ie/handle/10468/337>.

Sweetman, Paul. 2000. "Anchoring the (Postmodern) Self? Body Modification, Fashion and Identity." In *Body Modification*, edited by Mike Featherstone, 51–76. London: Sage.

Turner, Bryan S. 2000. "The Possibility of Primitiveness: Towards a Sociology of Body Marks in Cool Societies." In *Body Modification*, edited by Mike Featherstone, 39–50. London: Sage.

Symposium

Fitting *Glee* in your mailbox

wordplay

Washington, DC, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—A *Glee* fan's personal fannish odyssey from the Archive of Our Own, LiveJournal, and Tumblr to the creation of physical objects.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fandom; Fan practice; Material fandom

Wordplay. 2014. "Finding *Glee* in Your Mailbox." In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0522>.

[1] In 2009, *Glee* premiered on Fox Network in the United States to much fanfare and initial hesitant critical acclaim. The show presented a high school glee club, a band of misfits brought together by their love of performance in a stifling Ohio town, and featured ridiculous musical numbers and the kind of broadly satirical take on high school that left older audiences grinning. The quality of the satire dropped off after the first hot rush of the new episodes, and the love affair with the show didn't last for long. Long after it was fashionable, I spent most of 2011 obsessed with it. I can't fully explain it; even then, I had given up trying to defend the show and my ardent interest in it. Part of it was certainly because Kurt Hummel, the character on the show I felt most like I understood, was growing increasingly more important and (contrary to the usual trend of the show, which continues to operate in broad strokes of characterization), more human and complex, away from the original sketch of his character as the sarcastic, bitter gay kid and toward something more complicated and layered, more grounded in everyday pathos. And then, of course, there was his adorable new boyfriend, Blaine.

[2] Even as Kurt's world was expanding past the halls of McKinley High School and his beleaguered and slushied glee club, a big part of Kurt's story that year was about his relationship with his family. And what a family it was—in season 2, his father, Burt (the blue-collar business owner most deserving of his World's Greatest Dad coffee mug), survived a heart attack, sent his son to prep school to make sure he stayed safe from bullying, gave his son a sex talk that has since become the gold standard for such conversations on television, and married another single parent to create a blended family. Because *Glee* is about kids in high school, the snippets we got of this

family were incomplete, just the tiniest glimpses into their life at home, but they became the beating heart of the show. For me, as Kurt grew as a character and his life beyond the worries of the glee club expanded, the show became less about the glories of becoming a performer and more about the victories of becoming a person, and I found that appealing.

[3] As the year drew to a close, I had written a few hundred thousand words of fan fiction, much of it featuring the blended Hummel family, which had only made the characters more real to me. I spent hours thinking about their lives, about the layout of their house, about what it might be like to live with them. I wrote them making weeknight dinners, going grocery shopping, and hanging out around the house. I wrote short stories where I made the new stepmother, Carole, teach Kurt how to knit, and I had Burt giving his son's boyfriend a talk over a can of pop at the kitchen table. These stories were well received because I wasn't the only *Glee* fan who latched on to the Hummel family and household for a central emotional connection to the narrative. There was no level of the comfort of their house that I hadn't imagined, no room or object that I hadn't considered with warm feelings and made real in my mind and my stories, and no shot of their home that fans didn't screen shot and analyze obsessively for the objects within them. I had created a cosy domestic center to my experience of *Glee*, that most broad and brittle of narratives, but it lacked any material connection. The busy home and complicated family life I had created wasn't something I could really experience outside of my imagination because the producers of *Glee* never had any interest in making that family or home more real or manifest in the narrative or the associated official merchandising; it was something that fandom made, inspired by Burt Hummel, his relationship with his son, and his steadfast warmth and good sense. I made a flip comment to a friend about how sad I would be when I didn't receive a holiday letter from this family I knew so well—and then was thrilled when I realized I could make one.

[4] I pitched the idea to my trusted beta, the person who helped me wrestle my ideas into stories between tasks at her day job as a graphic designer, and she loved it and agreed to help. We spent days crafting the language and putting together drafts of what their holiday photo collage should look like. The idea was that Kurt, who was a high school junior and a budding aesthete, would have designed it, and so she had some fun making it look appropriately amateurish (figures 1 and 2).

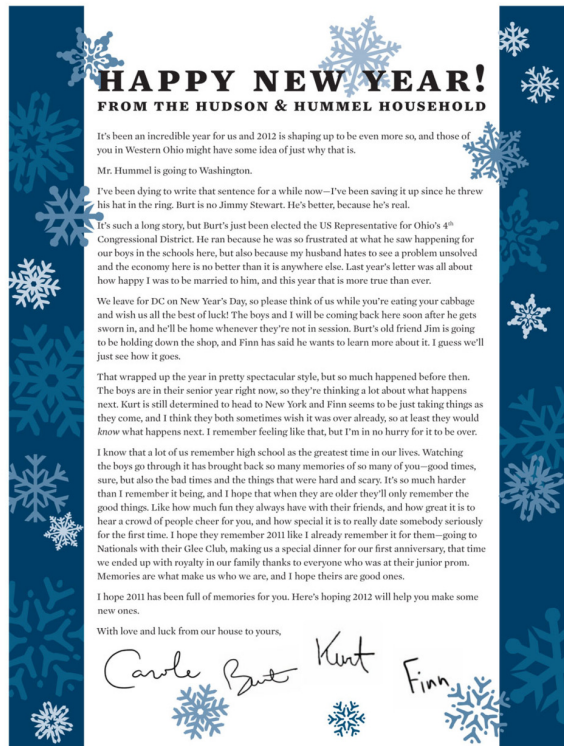


Figure 1. Fan-created Christmas 2011 Hummel family Christmas letter. [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 2. Fan-created Christmas 2011 Hummel family photo collage. [[View larger image.](#)]

[5] Then the idea took on a life of its own; our artist decided that she wanted to make something else, a little gift to include in the envelope. She designed a bumper sticker that would have been appropriate for Burt Hummel's congressional campaign. (Did I mention that he ran for and won a seat in Congress in season 3? Burt Hummel is a man of many talents.) Suddenly we were in the middle of a complicated multistate campaign of mailings—parts came together in Ohio from Washington, DC, New York, and Vancouver. There a friend stuffed and sealed envelopes and dropped them in the mail in Westerville so that they would have a postmark that matched the return address (scraped up from freeze-frames of the front of the Hummel house) and was appropriate to their purported provenance.

[6] Over the next 2 weeks, my fandom network was filled with excitement. As the letters started showing up in people's mailboxes, the contents were photographed, posted online, and recirculated. Fans were excited, touched, and happy to receive something in the mail, something that they could touch and hang on their refrigerators or bulletin boards. One fan put the Burt Hummel for Congress bumper sticker on her car next to her Obama reelection sticker, and her giddy photograph of the collision of her fandom loves and her real life politics was reblogged by the Obama campaign's Tumblr (<http://barackobama.tumblr.com/post/32740556638/hedgerose-sometimes-a-girl-has-to-put-her>). A year and a half later, I still see reports of these stickers and questions about where one could buy them. The tiny project that had begun as a joke, as something to make myself feel connected to a fannish property that frequently seemed too big for real life, became real and tangible and somehow seen by others, and it continues to make me smile.

[7] This was my first adventure in shrinking fandom down just enough to fit it in a mailbox, but it didn't end there. After Blaine gave Kurt a promise ring made of gum wrappers (in excised material from season 3—material the Klaine part of *Glee* fandom donated thousands of dollars just to get a chance to see, and that is now available on YouTube), I wrote tiny snippets of stories on gum wrappers that I then packaged in a pretty box and raffled off on Tumblr, sending it off to a *Glee* fan in the UK. I went on to write a triplet of short stories themed around chalk and the colors red, white, and blue, printed the lot of them, taped them to a box of chalk, and sent them around the world just in time for Independence Day in the United States. I'm planning another project now around pencil boxes (something small, simple, and thoroughly mundane) that I hope will be appropriate for the launch of season 5 of *Glee*.

[8] If the usual urge of fandom is to take simple stories we've been given and blow them up, to take the limits of the original characters and narratives and bump them out over and over until all that remains is the barest sketch of how they originated, this kind of fandom habit has to be doing something a little different. *Glee* is a

property where the characters come to us enormous and self-parodying; Kurt and his friends are messy, sprawling masses of ego, theatricality, hurt, and lampooned teenaged earnestness. The scenarios that are central to the show's underwritten plots are frequently cartoonish, and even as it drifted from the satire that characterized the first half of the first season, the show has maintained a singular mix of earnest mawkishness and distracted, half-hearted satire; the phrase "tonal shift" shows up in so many reviews and critiques of *Glee* in part because there's a perceived shift over time, but even within single episodes it's almost impossible to predict how single events will be framed. The characters are what keep us coming back, and centered around this beautifully drawn, odd little family, they've pulled me away from bigger frontiers and larger frames and into smaller, more intimate pieces of their imagined lives.

[9] Kurt Hummel will never not be larger than life; it's in the character's DNA. In order to better understand him, then, I have focused on framing him within the context of the everyday, the environment of his relationships with his family and his friends and that same adorable boyfriend. In this case, an engagement with fandom beyond my laptop and my television screen has served to bring him closer and round him out by translating him into the kind of everyday objects that make up daily living—a holiday letter, a pack of gum, a cheap box of chalk, a plastic pencil box. These projects are shared among fandom because they're fun, because everybody likes getting silly mail, because by giving them away I'm still participating in the fannish gift culture that runs through all of our interactions, which drove me to write fic and post it for others to read. They're shared because that's what fandom does, even when it's something small and silly, and because this kind of participation (real names and addresses, tangible objects) draws us closer together over jokes and ridiculousness.

[10] I'm still on Tumblr. I still publish my fan stories on the Archive of Our Own, and sometimes I'm even still on LiveJournal. But my fannish experience has taken a step into the world of material objects now, to my own great joy, and I'm always looking for the next way to take something imagined and turn it into something I can hold in my hands and then send to 100 of my closest fannish friends. In this way, not only have I solidified my understanding of this connection to this most beloved character, but I have also used this kind of material fannish engagement to connect more with other fans. It's become simply another way to carry out the social exercise of fandom itself. It begins with a connection to a story, that most abstract of human loves, but it frequently yields real social connections with other people. The only difference is that now I have all of their mailing addresses.

Interview

Interview with Mark Racop

Matt Yockey

University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—An interview with replica Batmobile maker Mark Racop.

[0.2] *Keyword*—Batmobile

Yockey, Matt. 2014. "Interview with Mark Racop" [interview]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. doi:10.3983/twc.2014.0508.

1. Gotham City 14 miles: The superhero in the garage

[1.1] In the United States, 1966 was the year of the bat. On January 12, *Batman* (ABC, 1966–1968) burst onto American television sets, launching an unprecedented wave of Batmania. This craze for the show was primarily distinguished by a glut of merchandise aimed at children, and like Bruce Wayne, fans could exercise economic power in order to (at least symbolically) transform themselves into the Caped Crusader. However, the series also inspired nonauthorized and amateur productions. These ranged from fan films to garage band novelty songs like "Who Stole the Batmobile" by the Gotham City Crime Fighters (who dressed as Batman and Robin). The production, rather than simply consumption, of texts and objects more intimately linked the fan to the bifurcated figure of Bruce Wayne/Batman because the Batman persona and all of his attendant bat-branded objects were made by Bruce Wayne in the comfort of his home. And no object was more popular, or more immediately identified with Batman's crime-fighting or a more potent symbol of Bruce Wayne's wealth, than the Batmobile. As Lorenzo Semple Jr., the show's principal screenwriter, told producer and creator William Dozier during the development of the series, "I can tell you that we've created one absolutely guaranteed new TV star: the Batmobile" (Garcia 1994, 28). The vehicle was created by custom car designer George Barris (following the design sketches of 20th Century Fox production artist Eddie Graves), who based his design on the Lincoln Futura, a concept car made by Ford in 1955 (figure 1). The Batmobile was the ultimate car as extension of owner; it literally and figuratively embodied Batman. As Barris recalled, "I incorporated the bat-face into the design sculpturing of the car. That's why you see the ears go up where the headlights

are. The nose comes down for the chain slicer. The mouth is the grill. Right on back to the huge long fins which are the Bat-fins" (Garcia 1994, 29). Like that other iconic car of the 1960s, James Bond's Aston Martin, the Batmobile was not simply a mode of transportation but a mobile laboratory of crime-fighting gadgets and state-of-the-art refinements. These included an atomic-powered engine, an antitheft device, bat armor, a mobile crime computer, an emergency bat-turn lever, seat ejectors, and a parachute for emergency stops.



Figure 1. The 1955 Lincoln Futura. [[View larger image.](#)]

[1.2] The Batmobile was, in other words, the fantastic reimagining of that singular postwar symbol of success and freedom in America, the automobile. It is not surprising then that it became one of the most popular elements of the series. A fan such as Mark Racop was hardly alone in his adoration of the Batmobile. Born in 1965, Racop cannot remember a time when he was not a fan of the series. Growing up in the small city of Logansport, Indiana, he had two ambitions: to become a filmmaker and to have his own Batmobile like the one on the show. In the 1980s he fulfilled both ambitions, making and starring in three amateur Batman films (figure 2) and building his own Batmobile for the last one, *Eyes of the Cat* (1983). Driven by the desire to build a better replica of Barris's iconic car, Racop created version after version, until finally in 2004 he built a model of the car that sold at auction for over \$85,000. His pursuit of the perfect custom Batmobile continues, and today he is the owner of Fiberglass Freaks, an auto body shop dedicated to making replica Batmobiles. Racop's cars sell for \$150,000, and his shop is the only one in the world officially licensed by DC Comics to make replica Batmobiles. Meanwhile, he also owns and operates MagicHouse Productions, his own film and television studio in Logansport, realizing his other childhood dream.



Figure 2. *Racop as Batman for one of his amateur films (1981).* [[View larger image.](#)]

[1.3] In a 2-week span in January 2013, two events occurred that, in very different ways, reaffirmed the ongoing appeal of the car from the series. Barris's original Batmobile sold at auction for a staggering \$4.62 million, and Allyson Martin, an 18-year-old woman with terminal cancer, went for a ride in one of Racop's custom Batmobiles. Martin was a tremendous fan of the car, and her friends arranged for her to visit Racop's shop in order to fulfill her dream of riding in the Batmobile. If the auction confirmed the commodity value of the car (and probably made its new owner feel as much like Bruce Wayne as Batman), Martin's ride confirmed its social value as a personal expression of individuality and escape. Racop's encounter with Martin also allowed him to actualize a very *Batman*-esque ethos of good citizenship.

[1.4] In their rhetorical intersection, each event speaks to the utopian value of the superhero object as a commodity and as a symbol of transcendence. This is the primary significance of the superhero: he or she is intimately linked to society but also always transcends its limits. If a superhero such as Batman is always ritualistically performing that transcendence in the shift from secret identity to superhero identity, his objects come to stand as fixed representations of his ideals and the link between identities. It is through objects that the superhero and the superhero fan negotiate the perpetual slippage between the quotidian and the fantastic. Both are always in a locked groove movement between terminal points in the perpetual motion of becoming.

[1.5] The sign that Batman races past when leaving the Batcave on the 1960s television show reads: "Gotham City 14 Miles." Batman is always speeding to the

center of Gotham to save it and to reassert his own meaning in the process, only to retreat to the Batcave, consummation of final meaning avoided. For fans, *Batman* can never reside in the past, only in a perpetual present moment that is blurred into the past by the impulse toward the future. Subjectivity must be felt, in other words, in order to have meaning. For the Bat fan, the Batmobile is a common means by which that meaning can most directly be arrived at. With a Batmobile, that idealized self is always just on the horizon; Gotham City is always just 14 miles away. As Racop says of his Batmobiles, he is constantly striving to make the perfect replica of the original vehicle. If a concept car is a utopian design for the masses, then the Batmobile demonstrates how a custom car is a utopian design for the individual. A custom Batmobile is the ideal object by which the inherent contradiction between the mass and the individual can be navigated. Behind its wheel, the driver is intimately a part of a collective memory of a childhood wish to always be somewhere and someone better.

2. Out of the Batcave: An interview with Mark Racop

[2.1] **Q:** Do you have any primal memories of the TV show from your childhood?

[2.2] **A:** My mother says I was a fan of the 1966 *Batman* TV show since I was 2 years old. I can distinctly remember my very first episode of *Batman*, where Robin was tied to a printing press, about to be stamped into a comic book. I also remember Robin on the buzz saw with the Riddler. I was at a babysitter's house while my mom was pregnant with my brother. I fell in love with the TV show, the music, the action, the color—everything about it was fantastic, but I especially liked the car. The flamethrower, peeling out of the Batcave, driving over the folding danger sign—that car left an indelible impression on me. That was the most beautiful car in the world. It was so much better than my parents' Volkswagen bug! I promised myself that someday I would own that car. Fifteen years later, this crazy kid talked four other crazy 17-year-olds into tearing apart a 1974 Monte Carlo and turning it into the Batmobile (figure 3).



Figure 3. *Racop (left) has an early encounter with the fetish object (1975).* [[View larger image.](#)]

[2.3] **Q:** Not exactly a Lincoln Futura.

[2.4] **A:** No! The Monte had the wrong wheelbase, the firewall was too tall, and it had other issues. But we finished the car. It was not a prototype but more proof of concept.

[2.5] **Q:** So what led you to building 1966 Batmobiles?

[2.6] **A:** I made a Batman fan film in 1980, shot on Super 8 movie film. It was pretty ambitious for my first foray into filmmaking. Most people start with a short film; I started with a feature. We had lots of people in the movie, including the current mayor of Logansport. Our second film was even more ambitious. For the first two fan films, I cut footage in from the TV series, but by the time I was in college, making our third Batman fan film, I wanted to have the ultimate prop. Necessity was the mother of invention. It took three summers to build Bat 1, version 1. We had no tools and no auto body experience, and only four photos and a Corgi toy Batmobile from which to build the car.

[2.7] **Q:** How did you learn to do this?

[2.8] **A:** We were completely self-taught. I had some advice and help, but I basically taught myself fibreglassing, body filling, and mold making. There was no Internet back in those days. We used every material that we shouldn't have: plywood, paneling, even duct tape! Hindsight being 20-20, we should have pulled a mold from the car, cast a new body, tore off the buck (the sculpture from which you pull a mold), and replaced it with a nice, perfectly even fiberglass body like we do today.

[2.9] **Q:** What was the process to get you to where you are today?

[2.10] **A:** Fourteen years ago, I brought in some professionals to help me redo Bat 1. Between version 1 and version 2 of the car, my dad recorded all 120 episodes of the TV show for me, and I went through every Batmobile scene, frame by frame, taking lots of notes and making lots of drawings. We tore off the back half of the car and redid it. One of my friends brought in all kinds of experience, tools, and other professionals. I told him someday this could turn into a business. He thought I was crazy; he didn't believe anyone else would ever want a Batmobile. We went to an auction in Auburn, Indiana, and saw a 1966 Batmobile replica *not* sell for \$140,000 (because it didn't meet the reserve). We looked at each other and said, "Oh yeah, we can do that, and we can do it *better*." We bought a Lincoln Town Car and started

sculpting our own Batmobile buck from yellow urethane foam with the intent of popping a mold.

[2.11] But things changed when we found the "Futura in the Woods," the nickname given to a replica sculpture of the 1955 Lincoln Futura. The original Lincoln Futura was a metal concept car, and there was only one ever built. Famed sculptor Marty Martino loved the Futura. He was such a fan of the Lincoln Futura that on January 12, 1966, while everyone else fell in love with the Batmobile, he was screaming. He was mortified to see what Barris had done to this beautiful one-of-a-kind concept car. He made it his life's ambition to build a 1955 Futura tribute car. He built a buck from wood, chicken wire, cardboard, and body filler. Unfortunately, though, it sat out in the woods for 12 years or so and was starting to fall apart (figure 4). Marty needed to sell it, or he was going to have to trash it. He put it on eBay. I bought it for \$2,125. We got there and saw the Futura in the Woods in person for the first time. We quickly realized that every square inch of the car was going to need major body work. It required 3 months of work before we could pop the mold. Strangely, the major damage only took a few days to fix, but the body work required a tremendous amount of effort to get the buck to a point that was satisfactory. But that was the turning point for us.



Figure 4. *Utopia deferred: the "Futura in the Woods."* [[View larger image.](#)]

[2.12] My business partner at the time wanted to convert the Futura into the Batmobile and then pop a mold. I said no, this is a rare car. There's the Futura replica that the late Bob Butts made, and this buck. That's it. We need to maintain this as it is. Besides, somebody might want a Futura someday. So we made a Futura mold, cast a Futura body, then started converting it into the Batmobile just like Barris did to the original metal Futura in 1965. Using high-res photos I took of the #1 while it was in Indianapolis—this was really high-tech—I used an opaque projector to get the scale right, and then I traced the wheel wells, projecting onto the nose of the car to get the beak right, the scallops on the ends of the wings. We used this method to make sure that we got the dimensions right. Then we made a Batmobile mold.

[2.13] Our first Batmobile, we took to the same auction in Auburn, Indiana. The year before, the car got up to \$140,000, so we're thinking—Oh, this will be great, we'll get \$100,000, maybe \$125,000. It stopped at \$85,300. We were disappointed. I mean, really? Did we miss something? Other Batmobiles had sold for far more than that, and they weren't nearly as nice. So we thought, let's build another one and see what we can do. Five months later, we sold our second car at an auction for a very, very paltry \$70,100. We thought, wow—we've really, really missed. Something is really, really wrong. We almost closed the business over it.

[2.14] **Q:** What year was this?

[2.15] **A:** Let's see—2003 is when we started the business. Our first car was auctioned in September—Labor Day weekend—of probably 2004, and the second one was May 19, 2005. But then things changed. Shortly after we auctioned Bat 3, we got our first nonauction order, a customer-ordered car. The runner-up bidder from the auction called us 2 weeks later. He said he wanted to order a car. We finished his car and put a video on YouTube called "Batmobile Delivery Day." We had 50,000 hits in less than a month. We sold four cars in 2 weeks. That is when everything changed.

[2.16] **Q:** So, since that point in time, how many Batmobile replicas have you sold?

[2.17] **A:** Twenty.

[2.18] **Q:** Who buys these? Is there a profile of a typical buyer?

[2.19] **A:** Yes, there is a profile of these very unique, zany individuals. They are 40 to 65 years old. They typically own their own business or are high up in their business. They are decently well-off. They have to be because it is an expensive toy—not something that everyone needs. While everyone wants one, not everyone needs one. They cross-geek into James Bond, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Mission Impossible*, the Monkees, *Get Smart*, and all of that. There is an incredible amount of camaraderie that we develop between ourselves almost immediately, and between themselves, too. We have had a couple of Batmobile gatherings where about 40 people came together. We had one at Barris's shop in North Hollywood.

[2.20] **Q:** What do you do when you get together?

[2.21] **A:** We just geek about the car. We talk about the details, the misrepresentations over the years, the things that have been changed from 1968 until today, and things like that. Accuracy, for me, is king. I want the car to look like it did in episode 1, season 1 of the TV show. It's quite a contrast to what it looks like today, which is horrendous. I interviewed George Barris for a DVD that we put out. That is why I was able to take a lot of high-res pictures of the interior of the #1—parts of the

car that no one had ever photographed before. All of my customers enjoy the car, but not necessarily all of them enjoy the show. That was very interesting to me. Some absolutely love the car but don't like the show—it's too corny, too weird, etc.—so there is a lot of that.

[2.22] **Q:** Do you have clients then that are more car aficionados while others are more Batman or pop culture aficionados?

[2.23] **A:** Yes. You do get a very interesting cross section of those growing up in the 1960s. If they were 6 to 12, that's the age that loved both the show and the car. If they were a little older than that, if they were 12 to 16, they loved the car but not the show. From a pop culture standpoint, it was very interesting. *Batman* worked on two levels. If you remember watching the show, it was great action adventure for the kids. As a kid, I don't remember the "bams," "biffs," and "pows." I was so into it that it didn't even register. Then I saw the show again as a 12-year-old and I thought, "Are you serious? Really?" At 12 to 16, the show doesn't really work. But then as you get older, you start to get the well-oiled clichés and jokes. *Batman* producer Bill Dozier knew he had the right formula when he received a letter from a father that said his 8-year-old son kept saying, "Daddy, stop laughing—this is serious!" It hit perfectly. That preteenage age, that's where it didn't work, and those are the ones that don't like the show. And those are the ones that probably have never given it a second chance (figure 5).



Figure 5. *Racop behind the wheel of one of his replicas (2008).* [[View larger image.](#)]

[2.24] **Q:** If I wanted to leave here with a brand-new Batmobile, what do I have to shell out?

[2.25] **A:** Up until this point, the price tag had been set at \$150,000, but starting March 1, we've started offering both a lower-priced car and a higher-priced car. I've done some marketing research—and my surveys have shown that's the case. \$150,000 is a weird price point that doesn't work for people. They either need a lower

price tag because that's what their budget allows, or price isn't a concern and they want more features. So that's why we're going to offer a \$100,000 car and also a \$270,000 car. The \$270,000 car will have a 625 horsepower engine, a performance monster transmission, a Currie rear end to get that power to the ground, and a custom-built chassis with air ride suspension, to raise the car for driving and loading in vehicles, but be able to drop it down to the ground to make it look just like the original car. GPS, satellite radio, and all kinds of modern gadgets to spice it up, and a real chrome interior to match the #1 perfectly. And then we'll offer the current car as a midrange car for those that still want something like that. The \$100,000 car will pretty much be a stripped-down model as far as features go. It won't have the flamethrower, the working Batbeam, working dashboard, detect-a-scope. It will have Mustang seats instead of Futura seats, but it gives people a chance to get their foot in the door, and if they want those features later, they can add them.

[2.26] The Batbeam is just a radio antenna—an automatic antenna that raises and lowers. But apparently—and I'm shocked by this—for whatever reason, that's the firework of the car. I mean, you've got the flamethrower, but everyone expects it, and that's the biggest feature of the car, and everyone goes bananas for that, but the next one is the Batbeam. The antenna grid, the gold antenna grid sitting in between the front windshields, when it raises and lowers—Ooooo. Ahhhh. Ooooo. What? You've never seen a power antenna before? But everyone seems to go bananas for it just because it's another feature that they're not expecting. And then electric actuators open the hood and the trunk of our cars. That's unexpected as well. They're not looking for something like that. Then we say, oh by the way—we have a rearview camera that plays on the LCD screen on the dashboard. The detect-a-scope has a green flashing light and other lights, and now even sound effects in our current cars. You put all these things together, and it really starts to add up fast as being exciting.

[2.27] **Q:** No ejector seats?

[2.28] **A:** No ejector seats. No, and no working parachutes, either. A friend of mine in LA built a Batmobile replica, and he put working parachutes on his car, and he used them once. Once. He was going 40 to 50 miles per hour, and he popped the chutes. Not expecting, I guess, that they actually *do* something—like on the drag strip; they stop the car! Well, on the road, they stop the car too. He hit his head on the steering wheel and just about knocked himself out. So I said, you know what, I've got enough to worry about. So we use real parachute packs, but the contents are fake. He also, apparently at one time, had some kind of a seat ejector, an actuator to raise the seat, but he said after having to clean up a mess or two, he deactivated that.

[2.29] **Q:** Can you explain how this all evolved and you became an authorized Batman Batmobile maker?

[2.30] **A:** From 2003 to 2007, it was a gray market. Pretty much people could do that kind of thing and not expect trouble from DC or Warner Bros., unless they were using their cars to make a ton of money, or to advertise a product or advertise a business—then they would stop that. In 2007, the world changed. They started using the trademark. They gave Mattel—Hot Wheels—the license rights to start producing 1966 Batmobiles. For the first time in 40 years, they remembered, "Oh yeah, huh. We've got this 1966 Batmobile thing, and this whole 1966 TV series thing that we might want to look at." I received a cease and desist from DC Comics. I called them immediately and said, we're not licensed, so ... what does it take to become licensed? Oh, no, no, no, they answered. We're not going to license you or anyone else. That's never going to happen. We've discussed it internally, and it's not going to happen. I replied, no, seriously; you're in business, I'm in business—let's make this a win-win. No, no—it's never going to happen, he said. So, okay. I hired the best trademark attorneys in the Midwest, Barnes and Thornburg, and went toe to toe with DC Comics. We said, look, you don't have anyone else licensed, you are not losing any money out of it, and a licensee is not losing any money, either, so really, we don't see what the problem is. Again, if you would like to license us, we're good to go. After a year of back-and-forth discussions between the attorneys, they said, we're not going to pursue this any further. I thought, that's odd, but hooray. Then I'm over in England, helping a guy mount his Batmobile body to the chassis of the car, and I get this e-mail from my attorney from Barnes and Thornburg, and he said, you'll never believe this, DC just called and said, do you think Mark would consider licensing? Then the ball started rolling! In October of 2010, we had a contract in our hands for licensing, to be able to build these cars as officially licensed vehicles. So everything changed—anybody else trying to build Batmobiles is no longer in a gray market; they are in a black market situation.

[2.31] **Q:** That's impressive. They wouldn't just rubber stamp anybody to do this.

[2.32] **A:** They sent a spy to the shop, pretending to be a customer. He liked what he saw and reported back. And DC admitted that they sent a spy to the shop! I didn't know at the time, but they said that everything was good, and the quality level was at a point where they felt compelled to license somebody finally. They had seen many other replicas and they were all awful. And they are—most of them, anyway. It's sad to see most other replicas, but now the ball game is so different. Because we are licensed, and because DC is heavily marketing the Batmobile, nobody else can use the same defense that we did back in 2007 (figure 6).



Figure 6. Barris poses with his most famous creation. [[View larger image.](#)]

[2.33] **Q:** What are your thoughts on the auctioning of Barris's original Batmobile?

[2.34] **A:** I was there. I was about six people deep from the rear of the car on the auction block. To describe the crowd in any other way than *electric* would be an understatement. When that car rolled in and was up on the auction block, everyone stood up. People that have been going to that auction for 25 years said they had never seen anything, *anything*, like that before. One of the auctioneers said, "You know, I've been telling people all week that we had been hyping up the Batmobile a little too much. I guess I was wrong." It is a piece of television history. It is an icon. It is more than just a vehicle. The car is a character. It is not a useful item. There's a useful item under it, but the car itself, the design of that car, is an icon, and it is a character, and that is why it struck such a chord. The car itself, if you would think of it from only an automotive perspective, is probably only worth only \$50,000 to \$100,000 in its current shape because it's in really bad shape. They cut away part of the frame when they changed out the transmission, and they never replaced it. That's why the car was so springy when they stopped it—it would bounce so badly because the car is cut in half in the middle. Because of it being a piece of television Americana, that is what makes it worth the other \$4.1 million.

[2.35] **Q:** Does it feel nostalgic, this relationship you have with the Batmobile?

[2.36] **A:** That *happens*. I do feel younger when I drive one around town, to be sure. But—I don't know—it's so multifaceted for me, anyway. I don't drive around town to feel young, to remind me of my youth. I drive it around because I enjoy it. It's neat to be able to go out to the shop and just sit in one and go, I'm sitting in a Batmobile! How cool is this? It doesn't get any better than that!

[2.37] After I built Bat 1, at three in the morning I would just go out and just sit in the car because I can't believe this—it's right here. So enjoyment is big part of it, but it's grown to be more than that as you start to see the reactions of people and you realize that you are able—with just a car—to spread some joy out there. And you

really get to the hearts and minds of people. Whether they've seen the TV show or not—it doesn't seem to matter. It doesn't matter their age; it doesn't matter their gender; it doesn't matter their nationality—everyone honks, smiles, and laughs and has a great time when they see the Batmobile. It's really been an honor to carry out that tradition that George Barris started back in the 1960s, and carry that on today, especially when we've got somebody like Ally Martin, who's dying of cancer, and one of her last wishes was to ride in the 1966 Batmobile.

[2.38] **Q:** What was her attraction to the Batmobile, and how did you two meet up?

[2.39] **A:** She's not a fan of the show at all, but she loved the car, absolutely loved the car. A friend of the family found out she is a huge fan of Batman—from the movies, somewhat from the comics, but mainly from the movies—but she fell in love with the 1966 Batmobile from the TV show. That mutual friend called me about 4 months before to set up a ride for her. I said, yes, absolutely. But every time we set up do it, Ally's health took a turn for the worse. It just about didn't happen. Even a week before, she was in really bad shape—she couldn't keep any food down. But they got that worked out, and they came in from eastern Ohio. I took her for a ride, and took her friends for a ride, and we just had a ball.

[2.40] **Q:** When you drive the Batmobile, do you ever dress up as Batman?

[2.41] **A:** I did for some birthday parties back in the 1980s and 1990s. It's not the safest thing to do. That cowl cuts off the peripheral vision.

[2.41] **Q:** Let's go look at some cars.

[2.42] **A:** Sounds great! To the Batmobile! (figure 7).



Figure 7. *Individualism, assembly-line style. A collection of Racop-made Batmobiles. (Photo by Rich Vorhees.) [View larger image.]*

3. Work cited

Garcia, Bob. 1994. "Building the Batmobile: How the Futuristic Ford Futura Got Customized." *Cinefantastique* 24–25:28–31.

Interview

Beyond souvenirs: Making fannish items by hand

Dana Sterling Bode

Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Fan crafts such as knitting, plushies, painted objects, and food are a fulfilling and creative endeavor for the artists. Five fan crafters were interviewed via e-mail to discuss how and why they create.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Artisans; Crafts; Fan community; Handiwork

Bode, Dana Sterling. 2014. "Beyond Souvenirs: Making Fannish Items by Hand" [interview]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0548>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Sports fans may wear team jerseys with their favorite player's name and number, television fans may paste a Starfleet Academy sticker in the rear window of their car, and vampire movie fans may carry a purse proclaiming their affiliation with Team Jacob versus Team Edward.

[1.2] However, far beyond the simple purchase of commercially produced souvenirs lies the labor of love that is fan crafting. Instead of spending cash on mass-produced objects, fan crafters express their involvement in their chosen fandoms by making things by hand, sometimes to sell, sometimes to give away, sometimes to keep.

[1.3] And what things! The variety of fan crafts is nearly limitless—as limitless as the imaginations of these crafters and artists. To wit: A scarf knitted in Gryffindor colors. A game similar to "Trivial Pursuit," but with its focus the world of *Stargate SG-1* (1997–2007). A wedding certificate, done in calligraphy, for Sam Gamgee and Rose Cotton. Exact replicas of the futuristic sidearms in *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* (1964–68). A paper model for the *Arrested Development* (2003–13) banana stand. Cookies decorated as Captain America's shield. Recipes based on descriptions of meals eaten by hobbits. Christmas ornaments decorated with painted portraits of characters.

[1.4] What follow are excerpts from interviews with five fans who explore their love of particular fandoms through crafts. The interviews were conducted via e-mail and

have been slightly edited for length and clarity. Aly, from the United States, has made recipes and cookbooks based on meals in episodes of *The Sentinel* (1996–99) and writes fan fiction about that show and others. Kivitasku, of Finland, makes character dolls. Gnat has been in fandom for a decade and loves this community full of women and queer people. She makes fan art, in particular paper crafts. Dreamflower lives in the United States and does calligraphy, paints on rocks, and does needlework, among other things. From the United States, Naked Bee makes "all kinds of things: sex toys, jewelry, clothing, food, decorative knick-knacks." Wyomingnot is a knitter from the United States who makes shawls, scarves, gloves, and other items inspired by motifs from several fandoms, including Harry Potter and *Stargate: Atlantis* (2004–9). She also makes vids.

2. What do you get out of making things in your fandoms?

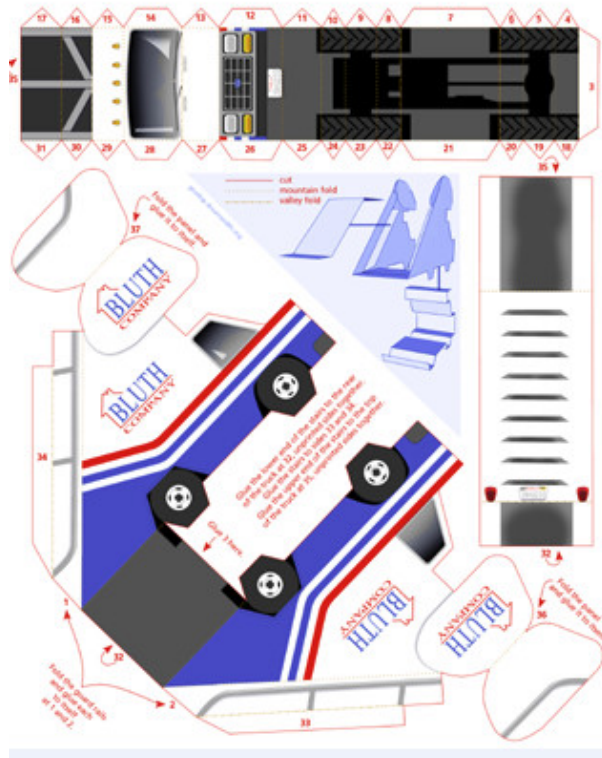
[2.1] **Aly:** Any outlet that permits me to transfer my love of a show, character, etc., into something creative, something that adds to or expands the show and the enjoyment of it, for both myself and hopefully others, is what it's all about. There is a great sense of gratification when succeeding in creating that special something. For me, creating is the key and I've learned over the years during dark periods of not being able to write, that fan fiction isn't the only method of creating for that fandom. To be brutally honest, the ability to share my love of a—okay, TV show—at the age of 45 actually changed my life. Being able to create was definitely a lifesaver.

[2.2] **Kivitasku:** I love characters and creative images. I also just want to pay tribute to a character or a style.

[2.3] **Gnat:** I don't know, I think the joy I get out of making things in fandom is the same joy I get out of being in fandom period, whether as a crafter or as a reader or as a lurker or anything, and that is the joy of a shared experience. To be exact, for me, it's shared *silliness*.

[2.4] Like, I wanted a tiny frozen banana stand to stick on my bookshelf, and so I made a pattern for one. This is a silly thing. And it turns out, there are other fans out there who likewise want a tiny frozen banana stand to stick on their bookshelves. That is a silly thing. That's the joy I get out of fandom.

[2.5] Paper crafting is the type of craft I have the most experience with. Other than that, what I mostly create in fandom is digital art, or sometimes I make GIFs or write fic. There is a definite difference, for me, between paper crafting and other stuff I've made. But it's not because of the choice of material, as I've done other one-off sculptural projects with paper that don't feel the same at all.



Figures 1 and 2. Model of *Arrested Development's* (2003–13) banana stand made out of paper, created and built by Gnat. Photos provided by the artist. [[View larger image of figure 1](#)]

[2.6] The difference is the pattern. It's other people using my pattern to build models for themselves, and changing it up in ways that suit them. It becomes a collaboration, where my contribution is just a part of it. Some other fan has printed it out and glued it together and now it's theirs. It exists now, as a real object, because somebody built it.

[2.7] I've done a cross-stitch pattern as well, which had the same feeling of collaboration when other people stitched it and sent me pictures of their completed projects. It's the coolest thing, like what I made is not a finished piece, but always a

potential for more. Which sounds totally cheesy, I am aware, but there you are. Shared silliness.

[2.8] **Dreamflower:** I look at my fan work and my fan fiction as part of my lifelong tribute to Tolkien and his work. He made a tremendous impact on my personal life—he led me to my faith, and because of LOTR [*Lord of the Rings*], I met my husband of 37 years. And my participation in online fandom has led me to most of my best friends. Since discovering how I can link my various [craft] hobbies to my fandom, I have had some of the most creatively fulfilling years of my life.

[2.9] **Naked Bee:** Interacting with other artists has certainly solidified my identity as a fan artist and made me feel like I was part of the community, rather than just a lurker who reads a lot of fan fic but never writes anything. There's such a huge range of fannish expression it's hard to find the edges sometimes. Making a pot of tea after reading a batch of *Sherlock* [2010–] fic feels a little like performance art. I also do stealth cosplay all the time, like when I wear nondescript skinny jeans and a cardigan to work; no one knows I'm expressing my deep love for Abed from *Community* [2009–2014].

[2.10] **Wyomingnot:** My interaction with fellow knitters is important to my mental health, but it can also be inspiring. Different ways of looking [at] things, and sharing pics of our creations.



Figure 3. Shawl inspired by architectural motifs and colors of the city of Atlantis, as depicted on *Stargate: Atlantis* (2004–9), designed and knitted by Wyomingnot. Photo provided by the artist. [[View larger image.](#)]

3. How do you choose which fandoms to make crafts for?

[3.1] **Dreamflower:** One thing that makes a fandom good for crafting is if there are actual artifacts identified as part of the fandom. For example, in LOTR, Pippin's scarf [has had] a pattern available online for years, and for me at least hobbit holes are a great inspiration. Star Trek has certain props (such as the pin worn by crew as a

communicator). For *Doctor Who* [1963–89, 1996, 2005–] there's the Tardis and so forth. Another thing is how well the world of the fandom is described. In a media fandom a fan can look at props and costumes. In a literary fandom there are the author's descriptions—the better and more detailed the descriptions, the easier for a fan to visualize and then create.

[3.2] **Gnat:** I see a lot of writers say they wrote their first fic at age 6 or at age 9 or whatever, and that's amazing to me because storytelling has never been something that comes naturally for me like that. Set dressing, on the other hand—when I was a kid, playing pretend meant making little clothes and matchbox furniture for my dolls. Whether in 2-D art or in paper crafting, I really like objects. I like depicting them. I like objects which capture the idea of a thing, you know? Objects which are emblematic. A DeLorean, a red Swingline stapler, a black 1967 four-door Impala. Sometimes the fandom comes first; sometimes the type of project comes first.

[3.3] **Naked Bee:** My largest commission to date was a prop for a local theater company. They were doing a Shakespeare play set in space and wanted to have one of the actresses frozen in carbonite à la Han Solo. Adding the final coats of metallic paint was very exciting; all of a sudden it went from being a weird mish-mash of separate [plastic] parts to a real spacey-looking thing! The best part was seeing the cast's expressions of surprise and delight when I delivered the prop to a rehearsal. A close second was seeing the prop used in the play and getting to think, "I made that!"



Figure 4. Theater prop replicating the carbonite slab from *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), made by Naked Bee. Photo provided by the artist. [[View larger image.](#)]

[3.4] **Wyomingnot:** Colors and shapes tend to give me ideas. House scarves are something I think every knitting HP [Harry Potter] fan makes. The gate room and general colors in *Atlantis* had me shopping for colors that fit. And I spent a lot of time looking for the right shawl pattern that was reminiscent of the stained-glass window of the gate room.

[3.5] **Aly:** Many of my ideas come from my fellow fans and their requests. They ask me to create a banner or whatever, based on their specific fandom. Viewing the brilliant works of friends and strangers inspired me, encouraging me to push the envelope using anything that helped [with inspiration], be it music, watching episodes as I worked, whatever it took.

[3.6] **Dreamflower:** When I read [Tolkien's] poem "Bilbo's Last Song" [1966], for example, I just knew I had to calligraph it. My hobbit marriage certificates and adoption certificates, however, were inspired by stories I wrote, in which those items figured prominently.

4. Do you interact with other people who make fan crafts?

[4.1] **Kivitasku:** I don't really interact with other creators. Making dolls and drawing pictures is something I do alone, to the sound of a cop show, and I rather like it that way. Feedback, comments and help solving a thorny problem of design are always appreciated, though.

[4.2] **Aly:** Absolutely. Otherwise I'd be creating in a vacuum and I can't work that way. Besides increasing my education and providing ideas, and maybe a form of validation, I get, to put it simply, friends. And friends who do what you do, who understand it—well, that's priceless.

[4.3] **Dreamflower:** I love seeing what others have made. It's always inspiring and fun. I would never have begun my The Hobbit quilt without the "There and Back Again" community [an online project by the group Fandom in Stitches].



Figure 5. Portion of an in-progress quilt depicting scenes from *The Hobbit*, sewn by Dreamflower. Photo provided by the artist. [[View larger image.](#)]

[4.4] **Gnat:** I have crafters all over my dash and my RSS feed and my reading lists. Yarn, silicone, felt, sugar...Someone is always experimenting with some new material, something cool and unusual that would never have occurred to me. I also sometimes read forums devoted to specific types of fan projects. And cake-decorating competitions! Oh, those are incredible, and they always have lots of fannish entries. I love those cakes.



Figures 6 and 7. Thematic snacks from a Kink Bingo party hosted by bironic. Kink_bingo (at Dreamwidth) is a fanac challenge community. These pudding and Jell-O shots fill the "wet and messy" square on bironic's card. Photos provided by the artist.

[\[View larger image of figure 6 | View larger image of figure 7.\]](#)

Multimedia

Interview with Kandy Fong

Francesca Coppa

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Video interview and transcription of subject Kandy Fong, an early Star Trek vidder. Part of the OTW Oral History Project (<http://transformativeworks.org/projects/oral-history>).

[0.2] *Keywords*—Filk; Oral history; Slide show; Vidding

Coppa, Francesca. 2014. "Interview with Kandy Fong" [multimedia]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0535>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] This is an excerpt of an extended video interview with Kandy Fong, a fan whose mid-1970s Star Trek slide shows are the earliest known examples of vidding, or fan music video. This interview was conducted as part of the Organization for Transformative Works' Oral History Project (<http://transformativeworks.org/projects/oral-history>), which aims to record the history of vidding in vidders' own words.

[1.2] Widely regarded as the foremother of vidding, Fong was the guest of honor at the Vividcon convention's celebration of the 30th anniversary of fan vidding in 2005—a date marked by the debut of Fong's first slide show (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/839495>) at an Equicon/Filmcon convention chaired by Bjo Trimble in spring 1975. This slide show was a narrated fictional performance piece made from slides of discarded or damaged *Star Trek* (1966–69) footage that Fong and her husband had collected. The show included a music video to the filk song, "What Do You Do with a Drunken Vulcan?" (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/846732>), which many fans regard as the first fan vid.

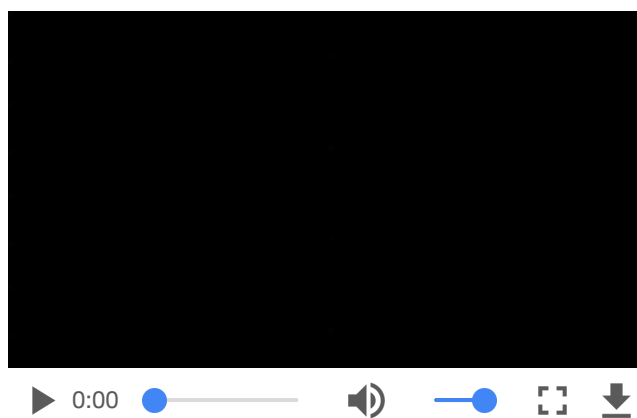
[1.3] In the years that followed, Fong created and performed a number of music videos made from Star Trek slides, including "Both Sides Now" (<http://archiveofourown.org/works/839489>), "Banned from Argo"

(<http://archiveofourown.org/works/842022>), and "When I'm 64." "Both Sides Now" was filmed in the mid-1980s at the request of Gene Roddenberry, who had seen it at a con and wanted a copy. Many of Fong's other early slide shows were recreated and filmed by fans at Vividcon 2012 and can now be seen for the first time. Fong later also made slide shows in other fandoms, including *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–94) and *Blake's 7* (1978–81). She eventually began to vid using VCRs and made several notable vids, including the early 1990s multifandom vid, "Something to Talk About."

[1.4] Fong is also known for pioneering the vid show compilation tape, or con tape—that is, for coming up with the idea of making and distributing a videotape featuring all the fan vids shown at a particular fan convention. She has a large collection of analog con tapes and vid masters. Fong was also one of the founders of the United Federation of Phoenix, the longest-running *Star Trek* fan club, as well as a con organizer and zine editor. She remains active in fandom.

2. Five questions with Kandy Fong

[2.1] This video interview was conducted by Francesca Coppa at the seventh annual Vividcon vidding convention, which took place in Chicago, Illinois, in August 2008. The film was edited by Muhlenberg College students Sarah Sheldon and Kevin Tomasura. A transcript follows.



Vid 1. *Five questions with Kandy Fong.*

3. What gave you the idea to make a slide show to *Star Trek*?

[3.1] In 1973, I moved to Phoenix, Arizona, with my then-husband. And I was going to school at ASU [Arizona State University]. And in the ASU paper there was a little notice that they were trying to form a *Star Trek* club. I ended up showing up there,

and that was the United Federation of Phoenix. It's the oldest, longest-running Star Trek club in the world.

[3.2] So the Star Trek club needed entertainment. And we decided that since John [Fong] had three cigar boxes filled with little pieces of film that had been edited from the TV show itself, because the TV show back then was all shot on film. And there were outtakes, there were extra takes, there were scenes that weren't used. So there was a lot of scenes that people hadn't seen before. And odd things like Spock sucking on a sucker, or laughing. So unusual scenes. And I said, "Well, why don't we do something with this?"

[3.3] We took a bunch of the slides, mounted them as slides, and ended up using them to make a little show. And I wrote a little story about Ensign Fong aboard the *Enterprise*. And we sang the song, "What Do You Do with a Drunken Vulcan?" And we illustrated it with the slides, and that was a big hit.

4. What was the first public performance of the slide show like?

[4.1] The next couple months later, Bjo Trimble was in town, and I invited her to come speak at the club. And I said, "Oh, by the way, I've got this little thing I showed at the club, and would you like to show it at your convention?" And she says...I showed it to her, and she was like, "Oh yes, I'd very much like to have it!"

[4.2] So the next spring, several of the starship members went to the convention. And we went into one of the small rooms in the basement. We ended up with a line of people outside the door. People were waiting in line an hour and then seeing the show and then getting back out and going back in the end of the line again.

5. What was Gene Roddenberry's response to the show?

[5.1] And because of our association with ASU, which has the PBS station for Phoenix, we actually got to meet Gene Roddenberry when he came in to do a talk on futurism. One of our associate members, so to speak, was working at PBS. And they actually asked us to make up some questions for him to be interviewed. So I got to meet Gene Roddenberry and got to sit there in the studio, just the three of us: my future husband, John, and a friend of ours, and myself. And so Gene Roddenberry got to see me around, and then for his talk I was there right in the front row. So he realized, hey, here's a person who's sane and a fan.

[5.2] At the convention I got to see Gene Roddenberry again and mentioned that I had a tape of this appearance, because my husband—my future husband, John—had a 3/4-inch machine, so he was able to videotape the PBS show. So he was very

interested in seeing that. And he said: "Well, listen: next time you're in town, why don't you come by Paramount?" I was kinda like, "Whoa."

[5.3] I wrote to him saying, "Here's the video tape that you wanted to see. " And "Oh, by the way, I'm doing these little slide shows." And he wrote me back a letter giving me permission. Because he was trying to interest Paramount in the idea of the *Star Trek* movie. And by—[being] able to show that, "Hey, this person is going around the country to conventions and people are very excited to see something they haven't seen before." He thought that it was really great to encourage me. I thought it was wonderful.

[5.4] I got to visit Paramount several times, and they let me pick what I wanted out of the slides they've taken for publicity shots. Even after the movie had been done, the second movie, they let me come in there and take whatever I needed to kind of like build up the shows and add things to them.

[5.5] Eventually I even ended up giving him a copy of some of the slide shows, including "Both Sides Now" (which is some people's favorite)—which had of course a suggestion in there of slash. Well, he was very mellow about that. In fact, I remember once, this was before the *Next Generation* TV show had been shot, and David Gerrold was attached for the first, I think, five episodes as the story editor. But I was sitting next to Susan Sackett in her office in the old Desilu studios, and David Gerrold came in and goes, "Hi, Kandy!" I go, "Hi, hi!" And he sticks his head in Gene's office and goes "Gene! Kandy Fong's here, we gotta add more Sodom and Gomorrah!"

[5.6] So back then there was slash. I put my real name on the slash that I had written. And of course here I did slightly slashy slide stories, songtapes, whatever you want to call them.

6. What was the influence behind "Both Sides Now"?

[6.1] Well, as I said, I was looking for entertainment for the Star Trek club. So I wanted something funny, entertaining, etc. And I was already writing by then, and we had a club fanzine. So the idea of writing a story and putting it with pictures just made good sense to me.

[6.2] If you remember back, these dates of so-called professional music videos, you'd have a band standing up there playing their instruments, and that's pretty much the video. But the Beatles did a video called "Strawberry Fields Forever." And they're doing all kinds of very strange things like jumping out of trees, and they had this deconstructed piano that the wires just go up to the thing up there...And they're just doing all sorts of unusual images. And to my mind I'm thinking this, going, "Okay,

we're disconnecting the actual playing of the instruments and singing the song with the images we're seeing. So *I* can take a song and use images from somewhere else to tell my story—oh, *Star Trek*, oh, of course *Star Trek!*" And that's where I got the idea.

[6.3] Spock is such a dual character: half human, half Vulcan. Half trying to follow Starfleet, half trying to do the whole thing with his parents. The two sides of him. And then there's Chapel, and then there's T'Pol, and then there's Kirk. There is just so many different sides to him that "Both Sides Now"—he's trying to be both sides now. And it seemed to just fit him so very well.

7. What was the atmosphere of these performances?

[7.1] So in these slide shows was always a live performance. The tape, the music tape was running, and then I had my little script, and I had a little mark where I was going to...where I was going to fast-forward, change slides on there.

[7.2] Because Gene had known about these things, and was encouraging me and letting me have pieces of film etc. and slides, publicity slides, at one point I decided I wanted to send him...[copies of the performance]. So I went to a friend of a friend's house, who had two slide projectors that I could marry together and I could actually have the things—if I wanted either a hard cut or a soft fade from one to the other. And so I sat there and did a live performance—one shot, that's all I had—to go ahead and record these [to videotape].

8. End credits

[8.1] "Five Questions with Kandy Fong." Interviewed by Francesca Coppa. Edited by Sarah Sheldon and Kevin Tomasura. Filmed in Chicago, Illinois, at Vividcon, August 2008. Produced by the OTW Vidding Committee. With thanks to Muhlenberg College and the Muhlenberg College Research Assistant Program.

Book review

Cult collectors: Nostalgia, fandom and collecting popular culture, by Lincoln Geraghty

Michael S. Duffy

Towson University, Baltimore, Maryland, United States

[0.1] *Keywords*—Comic-Con; Fan made; Memory; Star Wars; Transformers

Duffy, Michael S. 2014. *Cult collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture*, by Lincoln Geraghty [book review]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0584>.

Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, fandom and collecting popular culture*. New York: Routledge, 2014. \$39.95 (224p) ISBN 978-0-415-61766-6.

[1] In the contemporary marketplace of popular film and media, with its strong reliance on adaptations of comic book superheroes, best-selling young adult novels, and decades-old television shows, collecting becomes something of a complex, hybridized connection between fan consciousness, nostalgia, and the life extension of contemporary studio- and producer-driven media. Lincoln Geraghty's *Cult Collectors* is a much-needed coalescing of what have often been competing academic notions of media industries, cult fandom, comic book histories, and toy collecting studies.

[2] The book is a well-organized and engaging journey through four broader sections of discussion, each containing two chapters, one driven by theory and the other providing specific analysis. Images are plentiful, but they are primarily provided in later chapters to illustrate examples of "Spaces" and "Places" in the discussion. In "Stereotypes," Geraghty explores popular media portrayals of fans and cult collectors in popular shows as *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-present), and in chapter 2 of this section, he explores the ongoing fascination with collecting Hollywood memorabilia, analyzing what it says to us as a culture about memories, nostalgia for fantasy worlds, and ourselves. The second section, "People," discusses the implications that gender associations in fandom have on our perceptions of collecting cultures; the author suggests that through expansions of online communities of collecting, such perceived distinctions become less important than the notions that bind these fans and collectors

together. Geraghty then examines the "rebirth and repackaging" of the Transformers franchise through toys, animated series, and contemporary live-action films (6).

[3] In "Places," the author explores convention spaces used for meet-and-greet opportunities with casts and creators of cult and popular media, as well as (with more specific implications for Geraghty's argument) the commandeering of these spaces for an increasingly elaborate marketplace of buying and selling merchandise that helps bind fans' personal memories of the source material to physical representations of it. Chapter 6 looks at the collecting phenomenon surrounding Star Wars-related merchandise; Geraghty claims that the cultural significance of both the franchise and the collecting of objects related to it imply that our ideas of preservation and cultural memory have shifted in significant ways. In the final section, "Spaces," Geraghty explores how the success of events like Comic-Con and the emergence of Internet marketplaces have affected the activity of collecting for fans in personal, physical, and archival ways. The final chapter, "Cult Collectors," explores the multiplatform resurgence of the Lego system and its "transformation from educational children's toy to transmedia adult collectible" (9). In this analysis, Geraghty argues that the past is, like the innumerable building blocks that form the foundation of the toy line, once again made present through the convergence of personal memory and our intricately constructed, ever-changing digital culture.

[4] The greatest issue being questioned is implied in the title itself, *Cult Collectors*. If, as Geraghty explains in his introduction (via the words of writer/comedian Patton Oswalt), "nothing remains unpopular" in our still-new socially mediated culture, where "old media texts are remediated" (13) through Web sites like YouTube and eBay, as well as viral campaigns and multiplatform storytelling, then what is really cult about the collecting of any collectible object anymore? Indeed, in an age where *The Big Bang Theory*, which both lionizes and problematizes geek culture, is one of the most popular shows on television, and formerly niche projects such as the Star Trek and Transformers franchises are given new life through ever more expensive feature film revivals, the tension displayed in the portrayals of so-called geeks and their proclivities becomes a center-stage narrative for media reporting, reverberating throughout multiple discussion pathways. Yet, as Geraghty notes, the continually privileged portrayal and discussion of geeks as something special (and therefore other) in mass-marketed storytelling contains an inherent bias that reveals a still-problematic notion of fandom. It makes one question how shows like *The Big Bang Theory* can be contentious in their seemingly innocuous popularity.

[5] "We are all fans of something," Geraghty argues (15); "the collecting of popular culture has never been so popular" (2). Is it now cool to be seen as a fan, or is it merely revisiting past notions of nerds? Does it contain the same cultural bias and

defined otherness, but placed in a more palatable mainstream packaging? Reaching into contemporary depictions of geek-associated culture on film, Geraghty explores films like *Galaxy Quest* (1999) and *Fanboys* (2009) and how they seem concerned with communicating "a sense of what it means to be a fan" (28), though their overall plots are of course slyly constructed to represent fanboy/girl fantasies of integrating real and fictional worlds. For Geraghty, a film like *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* (2005) takes a nuanced approach to the reality of collecting cult objects, using its narrative to demonstrate the "fan experience of building, keeping and living with a collection" (29).

[6] Geraghty's book is primarily concerned with the increasingly complex links between fandom, memory, and nostalgia, and his work here draws on an admirable amount of other authors' investigations into these specialized fields. He successfully fuses discussions of past, present, and possible futures of media and memory to demonstrate just how meaningful and malleable collecting remains for us. "Nostalgia and memory are bound up in the creation of a contemporary fan identity," Geraghty notes (3), and quoting Jean Baudrillard from *The System of Objects*, he maintains that all collecting is personal: "what you really collect is always yourself" (4). Especially in our contemporary socially connected culture, collecting can also signify being "part of a larger community that shares in the same affective relationship" (35) while articulating our own particular fandoms—and thus identities—individually. Our culture of fandom now celebrates the public history of franchises and storytelling while revealing personal histories that are inherently tied to these cultures, and Geraghty's book helps deconstruct the images we as a culture have of fans and fan culture.

[7] *Cult Collectors* arrives at just the right time to explore how the roles of fans and the nature of memorialized objects are shifting thanks to the expansion of the Internet; the World Wide Web has allowed collectors of previously obscure material to become more sophisticated both in their knowledge of media and object histories and in their ability to discuss and reobtain precious items of—or representing—their youth. For Geraghty, the Web, and our access to it, has made "history more accessible, our memories more tangible, thus bringing the past into the present" (2). Now, with the Internet, "collecting enables fans to connect with the histories of their favorite media texts in ways they just could not achieve twenty or thirty years ago" (2).

[8] Geraghty argues that the prevalence of and access to digital technologies in our daily lives has not only reminded us of how digital culture is in certain ways replacing older forms of entertainment but also has encouraged fans/collectors to further privilege material objects, as they remain "solid signifiers of the historical significance of previous media texts" (2). He notes that previous work on toys and collecting "suggest[s] that the histories of popular culture are being constantly rewritten, re-

evaluated, and there is an audience out there that wants to engage with and relive that history in some form or another" (3).

[9] The book also provides a blueprint for exploring a seemingly more accepted movement in contemporary media-making culture depicting fans as developing from childhood dreamers to consumers to creators of fan-worthy material. Writer, producer, and director J. J. Abrams is a great example; he has never been shy about his fandom for the Star Wars films and franchise. This of course was partially generated by his family friendship with George Lucas, and this circular personal-professional cycle of growth and regeneration of fandom into work has truly come full circle, with Abrams committed to cowriting and directing a new Star Wars film set for release in 2015.

[10] In *Cult Collectors*, there is due attention to gender and representation in fandom. Although Geraghty notes that, for example, "women are increasingly more vocal" in their attention to text and fandom within historically male-dominated environments (55), one wonders whether it is really about their competition with boys and men who are reasserting rights and values perceived as inherently given, or simply an acknowledgment of their own inner geek, an aspiration to play within the sandbox of nerd or comic book culture and indulge (as men do) in both stereotyped and sometimes accurate descriptions of gendered portrayals. Geraghty rightly wonders whether we lose significant value and meaning of fan culture when we focus too much on gender distinctions.

[11] Overall, Geraghty forms a compelling argument that collecting in and of itself contributes significantly to fan identity, and that television shows such as *Hollywood Treasure*, which focuses on locating and ascribing value to authentic props and memorabilia, help collectors recontextualize Hollywood history by reevaluating (and revaluing) Hollywood artifacts. In the new millennium, collecting authentic props from fan-favorite productions seems to be a direct display of ownership and authenticity in terms of cinematic/cultural history, as we don't really own home video or digital versions of films or television; we own copies. Geraghty also raises enormously important questions surrounding contemporary access to archival studio materials through the Internet and hubs like YouTube; in the time spent reposting, uploading, and rearchiving, what are we ignoring about our current generation's development in culture, place, and history?

[12] There is an engaging discussion about geographical sites for fandom such as the San Diego Comic-Con, more popular than ever despite the rise of Internet fan culture. In chapter 7, Geraghty explores how the heterotopic space has expanded through the past few decades to feature major film studios promoting their upcoming franchises. Comic-Con has grown beyond fan interaction. Geraghty alludes to Henry Jenkins's argument that the annual event has transformed into a place that privileges fans as

consumers rather than cultural producers. Its primary function now seems focused on the buying and selling of goods, generating a cross-parallel and cross-pollinating fandom encouraging attendees to celebrate their inner geek among thousands of like-minded individuals. This increasingly interactive space has benefits for both fans and license holders. Long-standing groups like Mattel engage in direct conversation with fans about cult interests like *Masters of the Universe* through Comic-Con and Web sites where fans can vote on and order custom and limited-edition figures and play sets that tie both consumer and license owner into a more direct creative-business relationship that benefits both. There is also a valuable section on the Lego history and phenomenon that provides a perfect primer for how the Lego brand has sustained and renewed itself, tapping into collector markets, offering fans exclusives, and signing agreements with major studios and content holders to develop sets and feature films based on licensed characters and universes such as Indiana Jones and DC Comics superheroes.

[13] For this reviewer, Geraghty's most compelling riffs concentrate on how specific fandoms help generate and construct modes of behavior for individuals. Collecting and interactive fandom increasingly help consumers develop and maintain an "endlessly-deferred narrative" (176) about the universe they're playing in, yet also allow them to maintain a "transformative nostalgia" for their own personal connection to beloved characters and worlds (178). No greater example of this phenomenon can be made than Star Wars and its multibillion-dollar merchandizing history, which demonstrates the cultural significance of international fandom. Graphically and textually rich books have been published illustrating the innumerable details—and thus collectability—of Star Wars-related toys and merchandise, and fans continue to consume spin-off novels, unauthorized fan-made films, and Lucasfilm-sanctioned conventions where fans can meet individuals who have worked in the enormous—and seemingly unending—universe.

[14] Within this discussion of Star Wars collectibles as "paratexts" (122), Geraghty compellingly argues that collectors are using licensed corporate products to assert and recreate their own identities. He also describes how intricately and delicately fans can individually and collectively transform the nature of a museum (and what should be preserved there) by constructing their own, either within their houses or with the help of others for larger public venues. The point is clear: even if the museums, displays, and conventions are temporary, fandom and collecting is forever.

[15] *Cult Collectors* demonstrates the power of, and problems behind, collecting and fandom. It leaves us with critical questions surrounding the future of our cultural histories. What does this consistent return to our pop cultural pasts indicate about our contemporary humanity? Is nostalgia for media and cultural products now a functional

mode instead of a memorial? In an age where Hollywood increasingly draws on preexisting brand knowledge and history, the personal connections that we retain to representative objects of these cultural phenomena deserve much more analysis.

Book review

Anime's media mix: Franchising toys and characters in Japan, by Marc Steinberg

Brandaise Monk-Payton

Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, United States

[0.1] *Keywords*—Convergence; Industry; Material history; Transmedia

Monk-Payton, Brandaise. 2014. *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*, by Marc Steinberg [book review]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0557>.

Marc Steinberg. *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012, \$25.00 paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-8166-7550-0, \$75.00 cloth (304p) ISBN 978-0-8166-7549-4.

[1] The topic of anime is much discussed popularly but has yet to gain as much traction in the academic sphere, as its critical analysis has purchase for anyone interested in audience studies, fan studies, and the media's ever-changing format in its local and global circulation. Marc Steinberg's *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* explores the rich genealogy of Japanese media convergence and its relationship to the emergence of the country's animated television programs in the early 1960s. In particular, he reveals the continuities between what is known as the Japanese media mix system of the 1980s and its postwar precursor, anime. Steinberg argues that what he terms the anime system, referring to the transmedia practice of character merchandising, is a crucial component to understanding how the media mix became integral to the fabric of life under late capitalism. By tracing historical developments in the Japanese creative industries, he articulates the communicative impulse of the figure of the character both locally and globally and examines the important role of things, such as stickers, chocolates, and toys, in establishing circuits of connectivity crucial to the success of the media mix. In conversation with East Asian scholars and critics of Japanese visual culture, the project is a transnational reflection on ideas of convergence, post-Fordist commodity production and consumption, and the materiality of objects that are central to a theoretical analysis of media in the contemporary moment.

[2] Steinberg divides his book into two sections. The first section contains three chapters and locates the important role played by popular 1960s anime television program *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*) for the current Japanese transmedia system, especially through the circulation of the character image across media forms. Such circulation reconfigures dominant conceptions of the commodity through its focus on the communicative value of the object. The second section contains two chapters that expand the synergistic logic of the anime media mix through an investigation of a publishing house, Kadokawa Books, and its entrance into production across diverse media platforms utilizing novel marketing techniques that cultivate entire consumptive worlds and experiences for audiences. By including a plethora of *Tetsuwan Atomu* images, such as magazine advertisements, sticker sheets, and stills from the television series, the book invites readers to immerse themselves in the commodity culture that the anime character (seen in vivid color on the book's cover) is constitutive of for the media mix.

[3] Central to Steinberg's analysis of the media mix is the visualized character and what he terms the dynamically immobile image. In contrast to classical animation's emphasis on creating an illusion of life to produce realism (most notably seen in the images associated with Walt Disney), the limited animation of the television anime aesthetic ruptures such an impression. In its lack of fluidity and overall disjointed quality, anime's reliance on an element of stillness paradoxically allows for its effective movement *across* media. Indeed, Steinberg suggests that the dynamic stillness of the anime image incites an affective response at the spectatorial level that creates the desire to consume the image within networks of media connectivity. Such an "expanded economy of return depends on a new form of active consumption that encourages its consumers to follow a series across transmedial incarnations" (7). Steinberg offers historical determinants for this operation in anime's relationship to media forms that existed before it, notably *kamishibai* (storyboard theater) and manga. For him, anime is actually intermedial, comprising components from these other media that produce a mobile stillness on television while simultaneously having the ability to proliferate and help constitute an entire media ecological system centered on the circulation of the image.

[4] The powerful degree to which the character image circulates is accounted for by its paradigmatic temporality of dynamism and stasis, which contributes to its robust popular reception. Steinberg emphasizes the marketing of *Tetsuwan Atomu* through an examination of its relationship to product tie-ins. For example, the use of the character for stickers gave the image a degree of autonomy in its potential for "anymovement, anywhere, anytime" (79) in the lived environment of the consumer. Independent of the television program, the sticker image of *Tetsuwan Atomu* was free to traverse beyond the medium's apparatus and its accompanying narratives, inserting itself into

the intimate experiences of the child on a daily basis. In this process, Steinberg argues that the sticker gains an unprecedented vitality in its thingliness that produces an affective investment in the object. In this way, "the character's material expansion intensifies its attractive force, multiplying the number of media and commodities offering the Atomu image. The intensity of the character's attraction as a kind of immaterial force is thus indexed to, and amplified by, the degree of material circulation of the character image" (82). What is important to note in this iteration of the Atomu image is its both material and immaterial qualities, which are necessary for its successful distribution across circuits of media connectivity.

[5] Steinberg states that such a dialectic of image and thing mutually transforming each other creates what he calls the media commodity. Crucial to the media commodity is its emphasis on communication, particularly interobject (thing-thing) communication across a transmedia network. Therefore, the book once again fruitfully delves into Japanese creative industry history, this time of the mass media toy. What is interesting about his analysis is the focus on reconceptualizing participation and play in relation to the media commodity. The visual consistency of the character across media, among other elements, gives children the chance to consume the material object in the openness of the media mix. Pleasure is thus derived from the manifestation of communicative circuits, and consumption is considered active, cultivating sociality and relationality across objects so that it moves from television screen image to tangible toy.

[6] The second section of the book is dedicated to advancing research on the media mix in relation to its roots as a marketing term as well as articulating the development of the anime media mix under the late capitalist global economy. Steinberg argues that the anime media mix operates by a logic of continual reproduction and circulation that is not goal oriented (that is, the consumption of a product as an end in itself) but rather feeds off of its circulating media commodities in the hopes of creating a continually expansive transmedia network. Such synergy contributes to the ubiquity of consumption—so much so that the activity becomes the texture of one's everyday atmosphere. This was an experience commonplace under post-Fordism and exemplified by the Kadokawa media mix of the 1980s, emerging 20 years after anime's influence on the convergence culture of Japan. After this, in his final chapters, Steinberg situates the media mix as a manifestation of contemporary logics of capitalism espoused by Italian Marxists within the *autonomia* tradition, most notably Maurizio Lazzarato. The turn to experience as integral to the production and consumption (now arguably interchangeable) of commodities helps to promote the expansion of the diegetic universe of anime that is central to the media system. "The displacement of the text as unified totality by the text as a series of transmedia fragments" (169) is ultimately bridged by the character who "permits a series to

diverge (allowing transmedia development) and holds things together (allowing these divergent series to be read, despite their incongruities, as existing within a larger, yet unitary world)" (190). The character and its multiple object-oriented variations across disparate media forms—the anime media mix—serve to cultivate a world of connectivity and belonging for the consumer.

[7] In many ways, Steinberg's book centers on the theme of extension. Indeed, he extends the origin of the Japanese media mix to include its anime antecedent; elaborates on the concept of convergence culture more generally; and, crucially, broadens the idea of what actually constitutes media. One of the most productive insights in the book is his discussion of the status of the medium and communication itself. Amid debates surrounding medium specificity, Steinberg retains this analytical framework by taking into account the fact that media are not just conduits for communicating messages from senders to receivers but are historically and materially situated. In this way, they are dictated by the inherent qualities of the technology yet are in turn transformed by external forces. Additionally, reconfiguring the definition of communication to include thing-thing interaction is a notable contribution that demands the consideration of the materiality of the commodity in its circulation across media forms, exploding the object's texture into all arenas of life in an expansive media ecology.

[8] It is clear that Steinberg is engaged in a conversation with East Asian scholars and critics about the continuities and discontinuities between anime and other media forms in the emergence of the Japanese creative industries. Yet while deftly weaving together anime's associations with various media forms, some of Steinberg's own analytical connections to film and television studies as well as critical theory could benefit from more explication. For example, the relationship between anime and Jean-François Lyotard's notion of acinema as well as the intersection between anime and televisual flow through segmentation as espoused by Raymond Williams, John Ellis, and others require more elaboration in terms of the particularities of their apparatuses. He refreshingly and attentively brings media studies to bear on critical theory, but the use of particular poststructuralist thought, such as that of Gilles Deleuze, could be examined more fully in its links to the historical and industrial development of the anime system and media mix. Although Steinberg highlights the importance of consumer engagement and affective investment in the media commodity, it is sometimes unclear how he is defining affect—whether as emotional connection or sensory perceptual schema. It would seem that it is both. The project could benefit from an in-depth analysis of theories of affect, especially as it relates to studies of fandom. Also intriguing is Steinberg's discussion of children as a burgeoning and lucrative market for character images and toys; it would be interesting to include more Japanese sociocultural history in order to explore the gendered assumptions

surrounding the media mix and how this may affect its consumption. Within the amount of space in the book—approximately 200 pages, including illustrations—it would be difficult to attend to all of these threads adequately. However, his final gesture toward thinking of the character in relation to branding and legal theory is an exciting and useful direction to take.

[9] *Anime's Media Mix* is an excitingly comprehensive and perceptive intervention into contemporary media theory and will be an important contribution to the fields of media studies, visual culture, and East Asian studies. Through his examination of the anime system's influence on Japanese creative industries and media franchising in relation to current formations of late capitalism, Steinberg provides a critical analytical engagement with both the material history and political economy of character merchandising. It is a must-read for those interested in the intersections between animation, media industry, and transmedia storytelling in a global context.

Book review

Send in the clones: A cultural study of the tribute band, by Georgina Gregory

Sun-ha Hong

Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

[0.1] *Keywords*—Fandom; Music history; Popular music

Hong, Sun-ha. 2014. *Send in the Clones: A Cultural Study of the Tribute Band*, by Georgina Gregory [book review]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0542>.

Georgina Gregory. *Send in the clones: A cultural study of the tribute band*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2012. \$29.95 (184p) ISBN 978-1845532451.

[1] Bjorn Again, Dread Zeppelin, The Iron Maidens: the derivative nomenclature completes the in-between and often under-the-radar existence of the tribute band. Not only touring on the musical backlog of the originals but also mimicking their aesthetic and performative repertoire, the tribute band lies at the intersection of production and consumption, original and copy, music industry and live music. Asserting that tribute bands have been denied their place in history and analysis, *Send in the Clones* joins a small collection of academic studies—such as 2006's *Access All Eras*—addressing this gap. It is Gregory's first foray into the subject in monograph form, following several years of work on tribute bands and popular music. The result is an easy-to-read, comprehensive exploration into both the history of tribute bands and their current life.

[2] Relatively slim at 150 pages (excluding notes and references), *Send in the Clones* nevertheless covers the tribute band from a variety of angles. After a short introductory chapter, the book offers a historical overview of popular music's relationship to the past and to copies (chapter 2) and a specific lineage of forms of tribute (chapter 3). Chapter 4 provides a typology of tribute bands today, followed by a description of their work, lifestyle, ethos, and industry (chapter 5). Chapter 6 considers critical responses to the tribute band in relation to the history of copying. The book then concludes with a brief meditation on fandom and participatory culture (chapter 7).

[3] The emphasis on the tropes of copy and nostalgia aligns with Gregory's interest in disrupting the "quasi-Old Testament" "creationist narrative" (2) of music and stardom over the last century. *Send in the Clones* rejects the pathologic treatment of copies, tributes, and imitations; it argues that public acceptance of skilled imitations and fakes is widening (14-15), and that copies themselves have always played a key role in the development of popular music in forms like midcentury "race covers" (116) and jazz re-presentation. This dovetails with a voracious appetite for the past in the form of tribute bands, which tend to focus on a small list of acclaimed bands from the 1960s to 1980s—the baby boomers' heyday. Gregory's position should not meet a great deal of resistance, given the swing in popular culture and scholarship toward a positive definition of the copy in recent years (Binkley 2000).

[4] The position works well with Gregory's mission to revalorize tribute bands; the latter become a part of a vast stratum of music practices that partly escape or subvert the dominant apparatus of the market, stardom, and the record format. Although the qualities of the music itself generally do not enter Gregory's narrative, tribute bands possess an inherently ambiguous relationship to that apparatus on the level of taste. On one hand, tribute bands can only hope to command an audience by imitating critically acclaimed bands like Pink Floyd; on the other, their performances potentially subvert the singular aura of the star and the dominance of the recording format in contemporary music consumption. For Gregory, this ambiguity and difference becomes a source of tribute bands' unique value. Gregory explains how tribute bands can often be more financially sustainable than original outfits for those denied the rewards of stardom; "it could be argued that tribute bands acts [*sic*] are correcting the disequilibrium by providing work in a growth industry" (5). At the same time, tribute bands can offer affordable and accessible options for music consumption on the consumer side, even as the music industry increasingly turns to live music as a source of revenue in the digital age.

[5] Unfortunately, the book does not offer a consolidated and sustained argument for what kind of place tribute bands should occupy in our understanding of popular music and culture and how (or whether) they constitute a form of resistance. For instance, how do tribute bands subvert or otherwise influence the well-oiled star machine, at once their competition and benefactor? How might we situate tribute bands against the wider landscape of online amateur covers and mashups or the reappearance of the original performances on YouTube? Chapter 6, promisingly entitled "The Value of Paying Tribute," instead revisits the themes of chapter 2 by showing that copies have a long history in music and that rock stars and virtuosos are a relatively recent construction. Likewise, chapter 4's typology of tribute bands does not follow a systematic model, making only a broad distinction between look-alike and soundalike approaches that are in practice frequently hybridized. *Send in the Clones* does not

provide a clear positive image of how tribute bands should be repositioned and copies rethought, but it does successfully problematize the current epistemic configuration.

[6] The greatest strength of the book is the detailed insight it provides on the life, work, and career of tribute bands. Chapter 5 in particular shows how tribute band members must juggle the skill of self-managing businesses, the skill of playing music in a very particular manner, and the skill of imitative performance that they know can play a large role in their success or failure. Primarily sourced from interviews with bands themselves, these sections bring into focus the logistical dimension of the phenomenon. Gregory successfully dislodges the pathological stereotype of third-grade musicians devoid of creativity, willing to make a quick buck by cannibalizing the greats. Though the confluence between musicians' self-description and her broadly positive perspective presents a risk of bias, *Send in the Clones* provides a valuable illustration of the complex motivations and constraints that produce a tribute band.

[7] In contrast, the book's theoretical arguments and appeals to wider contexts of popular culture and modernity are less helpful. The book's use of Fiske or Adorno offers no surprises to any reader familiar with those works, while its more specific claims raise questions. For instance, the lack of tribute bands in the early years of popular music is attributed in one sweep to "the pre-eminence of modernist ideology" and future-obsessed baby boomers (7–8). One wonders how this might be reconciled with Gregory's own claims about a rich heritage of copying and tributes in this very period, whether modernity does not flirt as much with memorialization as futurism, and how this ideological explanation can overturn the clear economic advantage of tributes that Gregory herself notes.

[8] It is also regrettable that these discussions often do not extend to an explicit argument about tribute bands and their relationship to popular culture and society; this would have greatly amplified the book's impact. An example is a lengthy meditation that draws upon the likes of Plato and Giorgio Vasari to argue that art has become separated from craft, generating a lasting prejudice against the value of copies. Puzzlingly, Gregory does not spell out exactly how tribute bands are more than mere fakes, or what a revalorization of tribute bands means for the epistemology of popular music. Similarly, the discussion of fandom and fan practice involves repeated arguments that audience analysis is "few" (130), "problematic" (133), "haphazard" (136), and "cannot remain static" (135), but it does not go on to outline how tribute bands can contribute to the solution. Indeed, Gregory's rich and detailed interviews with tribute band members form a mismatch with a lack of consumer viewpoints other than autobiographical experience.

[9] *Send in the Clones* is a valuable contribution to the comparatively slim body of literature on tribute bands. Although its theoretical arguments and links to wider social

flows remain underdeveloped, its careful and engaging exploration of tribute bands makes a good case for paying greater attention to what Michel de Certeau (1984, 48) called the "polytheism of scattered practices" that lurk beneath the dominant.

Works cited

Binkley, Sam. 2000. "Kitsch as a Repetitive System: A Problem for the Theory of Taste Hierarchy." *Journal of Material Culture* 5 (2): 131–52.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/135918350000500201>.

De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Homan, Shane, ed. 2006. *Access All Eras: Tribute Bands and Global Pop Culture*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.