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Editorial

Exploring the body

TWC Editor

[0.1] *Abstract*—This unthemed issue centers on the preoccupation with the embodied fan. Essays discuss such topics as the concerns of the aging and the pregnant fan, the relationship of virginity and popular media texts among teen girl fans, and representations of disability in shows and fandoms.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Acafan; Displacement; Subject position

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Unthemed journal issues, like our fifth issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures,* invite diverse ranges of topics and approaches. Current cultural preoccupations and academic concerns are mirrored in submissions, and by extension in our selections. But if we are to attempt to find a theme for this issue, it would most clearly be the preoccupation with the embodied fan. Fandom itself has a conflicted relationship with the body, as does academia. Large sections of various fandoms are quite focused on bodies, whether it be the athletic body, the visual poster and billboard representations of music and film stars, the physical embodiment of the live performances, or the real and imagined bodies of film and television actors and the characters they represent.

[1.2] In all these cases, however, the bodies of the fans themselves are oddly absent. In fact, in popular culture, fans tend to be allowed only a few subject positions: screaming, fainting teenie fangirl; parental basement-dwelling unwashed fanboy; overweight, lonely cat person. Moreover, especially in online fan cultures, pseudonyms are common; even the icons that users use to represent themselves tend to depict popular fan objects rather than personal images. Celebrity bodies and their character counterparts, often objectified and sexualized, are cut and photomanipulated for icons, picspam, wallpapers, and fan art; they are clipped and vidded; and, most of all, they are described in detail, pleasured and hurt in turn. And yet the fan body is often absent, displaced by the imaginary bodies of the desirable and identifiable characters. At the same time, academic discourses on the body have brought

physicality back into the academy, notably in gender and queer studies, both of which are central to many fan studies projects. These disciplines have begun focusing on the identities and bodies of the writers and researchers themselves. Disability studies has brought multiplicities of embodiments into focus.

[1.3] The importance and influence of these discourses, both academic and fan, can be seen in this general issue, which ranges from ethnographic concerns of the aging and the pregnant fan (two embodied experiences often overlooked and thus of central importance to feminist scholarship) to inquiries into the relationship of virginity and popular media texts among teen girl fans to discussions of disability within shows and fandoms.

2. Contents

[2.1] The Praxis essays most obviously looking at fan bodies and their effects on fannish modes of engagement are C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby's "Autobiographical Reasoning in Long-Term Fandom" and Mary Ingram-Waters's "When Normal and Deviant Identities Collide: Methodological Considerations of the Pregnant Acafan." Harrington and Bielby follow up on their earlier case studies on soap opera fans to look at the changes in constructions of self-narrative. They particularly focus on age-related aspects of fannish identities and practices and argue that there may be important differences in the ways younger and older fans construct and experience their fannish identities. Ingram-Waters's essay looks at another embodied female identity, namely that of the pregnant fan. Looking at her own experiences of doing face-to-face research on mpreg stories while being pregnant herself, she not only draws connections between the content of the stories and our personal experiences, but also addresses the complicated positionality of the acafan in regards to ethnographic research.

[2.2] The other three Praxis essays showcase the breadth of fan studies in both subject matter and research approaches. Francesca Musiani's "'May the journey continue': *Earth 2* Fan Fiction, or Filling in Gaps to Revive a Canceled Series" draws connections between production characteristics (in this case, early cancellation) and the types of fan fiction the community creates (in particular, attempts to create closure). Drawing comparisons to other shows and fandoms, Musiani opens up an important question about the relationships between source texts and the creative fan responses they spawn. Mikhail Koulikov's "Fighting the Fan Sub War: Conflicts Between Media Rights Holders and Unauthorized Creator/Distributor Networks" and John Walliss's "Fan Filmmaking and Copyright in a Global World: *Warhammer 40,000* Fan Films and the Case of *Damnatus*" address the conflicts between media copyright holders and fans whose creative and interpretive fan works are considered infringing of

the source texts. Koulikov looks at the way fan-subtitled texts (especially for Japanese anime) are created and distributed and how these amateur fan productions can come into competition with commercial distributions. He uses network and Net war theory to model these fan/media owner clashes and understand their wider implications for online fan cultures. Meanwhile, Wallis focuses in particular on the legal repercussions of one particular transformative work. He focuses on the tabletop battle game *Warhammer 40,000*'s fan film, *Damnatus: The Enemy Within* (2005) and examines the reasons why the film cannot be released. He thus looks at a sort of fan creation that has not been the subject of much academic research and addresses the similarities and differences between this specific legal struggle and those experienced by other transformative works.

[2.3] The Symposium section again picks up the theme of the body of the fan/the embodied fan in various of its submissions. Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, and Melissa A. Click look at the way teen Twilight fans have appropriated the abstinence messages in the Twilight franchise for their own purposes in "The Romanticization of Abstinence: Twilight Fans' Responses to Sexual Restraint in the Twilight Series." Their essay is an interesting case study of the way adults, and in particular academics, may overlook certain modes of engagement in their own readings.

[2.4] Sasha_feather and David Kociemba both look at disability within source texts and fandom responses in their Symposium contributions. In "From the Edges to the Center: Disability, *Battlestar Galactica,* and Fan Fiction," Sasha_feather looks at how she succeeded in engaging disability concerns in both source text and fan responses in the case of *Battlestar Galactica.* Although her approach is critical, Sasha_feather's observations are ultimately more encouraging than Kociemba's critique of *Glee*—both the show and its critical responses. His impassioned "'This isn't something I can fake': Reactions to *Glee*'s Representations of Disability" looks closely at the way the show presents minority characters, only to fail in actually engaging their specific concerns.

[2.5] Judith May Fathallah's essay comments on and responds to various pieces in TWC's last issue on *Supernatural* and the character of fangirl Becky in particular. Against the more critical readings of this female fan, Fathallah suggests a Bahktinian reading of Becky in order to recuperate the character for female and feminist appropriations in "Becky Is My Hero: The Power of Laughter and Disruption in *Supernatural* Fandom." Jeff Watson's "Squared: Web 2.0 and Fannish Production" echoes the concerns of Wallis and Koulikov again as he looks at the broader implications of Web 2.0 for the relationships between media right holders and fan producers, and the difficulties in negotiating areas of competing interests.

[2.6] The issue also features two interviews. Francesca Coppa interviews political remixer Elisa Kreisinger and discusses with her the legal, political, and cultural effects of remix video within and without particular fan cultures. TWC Editor interviews three fan writers, tie-in novelists, and professional writers, Jo Graham, Melissa Scott, and Martha Wells, in which they draw connections and explore the differences between these forms of writing.

[2.7] The review section features three reviews: Adi Kuntsman's review of Tom Boellstroff's *Coming of Age in "Second Life": An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human;* Lindsay Bernhagen's review of Rebecca Feasey's *Masculinity and Popular Television;* and Alex Leavitt's review of the Web site Inside Scanlation (http://insidescanlation.com/).

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[3.1] The following people worked on TWC No. 5 in an editorial capacity: Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson (editors); Alexis Lothian and Suzanne Scott (Symposium); and Mafalda Stasi and Tisha Turk (Review).

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Praxis

Autobiographical reasoning in long-term fandom

C. Lee Harrington

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, United States

Denise D. Bielby

University of California, Santa Barbara, California, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—We explore the social psychological processes through which fan-based experiences become situated in fans' larger life narratives. Drawing on original survey data with long-term U.S. soap opera fans, we examine how the psychological mechanism of autobiographical reasoning functions in fans' construction of self-narratives over time. The case study presented here is a subset of a larger investigation into the age-related structure of fans' activities, identities, and interpretive capacities. Situated at the intersections of gerontological (life span/life course) theory and contemporary fan studies, our project mines relatively uninvestigated theoretical terrain. We conclude with a brief discussion of implications for future fan studies.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Age; Aging; Erik Erikson; Life course; Long-term fans; Soap opera

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Scholarship on media fans includes a number of richly textured analyses of long-term, lifelong, or "enduring" fans, ranging from Cavicchi's (1998) study of Bruce Springsteen fans, to Kuhn's (2002) investigation into 1930s-era cinemagoers, to Brooker's (2002) examination of *Star Wars* enthusiasts, to Sandvoss's (2003) research on football supporters. Of more recent scholarly interest are the meaning and experiences of fandom among older adults—for example, Bennett's (2006) analysis of the changing meanings of punk rock among older fans, Vroomen's (2004) work with adult Kate Bush fans, and Stevenson's (2009) research on aging David Bowie fans. As we argue elsewhere (Harrington and Bielby forthcoming), while this nascent body of work reflects growing awareness of the aging global population and the varied impact of aging on media and fan-based experiences, most of it treats age and aging a-theoretically, thus ignoring a vast body of scholarship located elsewhere in the

academy (gerontology, sociology, psychology, and human development) that examines how lives unfold across time. Our goal in the larger project is to render explicit what is typically treated implicitly in fan studies by drawing directly on life course perspectives to inform our understanding of long-term and later life fandom. By demonstrating that fan identities, practices, and interpretive capacities have more age-related structure than has previously been addressed, we suggest concrete ways that fan studies can more fully account for fandom over time (Harrington and Bielby forthcoming; see also Stever forthcoming). Here, we focus on one specific psychological mechanism—autobiographical reasoning—and explore its role in long-term fans' construction of self-narratives.

2. Narrative, self-development, and autobiographical reasoning

[2.1] Several key points that are well established in the gerontological and social psychological literatures frame our use of the scholarly literature on the life course. First, the way individual lives unfold is shaped by both internal psychological and external social processes. In general, life course scholars are interested in the social and historical changes that impact a particular generation at a particular point in time and come to "govern the manner in which members of that generation make sense of a presently remembered past, experienced present, and anticipated future" (Cohler and Hostetler 2003, 557). Second, socialization does not end in childhood but is instead a lifelong process. Indeed, the very process of getting old "poses challenges, and perhaps threats, to the self" (George 1998, 139). Third, there is a cumulative nature of developmental achievements that promote continuity in the self over time (McLeod and Almazan 2003, 395). The self changes as we age, of course, but there is personality coherence from infancy to adulthood (Caspi 2000). As Kuhn articulates in her study of cinemagoers, "it sometimes seems as if, in the process of narrating [memories of fan experiences], informants are accessing the 'child's voice' within themselves" (2002, 66–67). Finally, we are not approaching fan narratives as factual accounts of past experiences or interpretations; rather, the past is "mediated, indeed produced, in the activity of remembering" (2002, 9). McAdams et al. state: "A person's life story is an internalized and evolving narrative of the self that selectively reconstructs the past and anticipates the future in such a way as to provide a life with an overall sense of coherence and purpose" (2006, 1372).

[2.2] Our case analysis focuses on the becoming-a-fan narratives replete within fan studies—fans' accounts of encountering media texts that resonate so powerfully that they transform one's identity, daily activities, and life trajectories. As Cavicchi explains, "becoming a fan is, for most fans, a milestone in their lives in which 'everything changed'; they tend to think of themselves in terms of being a fan and not being a fan" (1998, 153). Our case study sheds light on the role that becoming-a-fan

narratives play in the construction of psychological continuity across the lifespan. More specifically, we argue that the mechanism of autobiographical reasoning helps us appreciate how the transformational event of entering fandom becomes situated in individual life histories. As such, we are interested in the *developmental* implications of these transformations in adulthood.

[2.3] While the potential influence of any interruption to the life course (note 1) depends on "how individuals interpret and respond to them, as well as on the constraints that limit their responses" (McLeod and Almazan 2003, 395), developmental and personality psychologists are increasingly interested in how those transitions and turning points are "storied" within the larger autobiographical context. As part of the narrative turn taking place throughout the academy, psychologists have begun empirically researching the connections between narrative and self-development. Among developmental psychologists, for instance, storytelling is proposed to be "at the heart of both stability and change in the self" (McLean et al. 2007, 262), with the life story defined as a "selective set of autobiographical experiences that, together with interpretations of those events, explain how a person came to be who he or she is and projects a sense of purpose and meaning into the future" (Pasupathi and Mansour 2006, 798).

[2.4] Psychological theories of narrative and memory have been effectively employed in prior fan studies, most notably by Kuhn (2002), who explores 1930s filmgoers' memory discourse and memory content in the larger production of cultural memory. However, even as Kuhn attends to the recollection of past life as embedded in memory, her analysis does not directly engage life course implications of changing self-narratives in ways that align her insights with their broader significance to questions of human development. Psychologists have identified autobiographical reasoning as a specific cognitive strategy that people employ to create a sense of unity in their lives by integrating life experiences or events with changing self-perceptions as they age. While the theoretical basis of autobiographical reasoning was explored in Johnson's (1993) work bridging cognitive psychology and philosophy, the term itself was first articulated in developmental psychology by Habermas and Bluck (2000). Autobiographical reasoning can be described as "the dynamic process of thinking about the past to make links to the self" (McLean et al. 2007, 263). It is one of the mechanisms that generate a sense of continuity from childhood through adulthood. The developmental capability for autobiographical reasoning emerges in childhood and is aided by parents and other parental or mentoring figures. While adolescence and early adulthood are "a privileged developmental period for the encoding of autobiographical memories" (Pasupathi and Hoyt 2009, 558), autobiographical reasoning as a process is a lifelong activity that amplifies with age. In other words, there are changes over time in the "likelihood of autobiographical reasoning across

young adulthood into middle age" (Pasupathi and Mansour 2006, 804) that can inform understanding of becoming-a-fan narratives. Consistent with a life course perspective, the life story or narrative identity that emerges through autobiographical reasoning reveals continuity over time while also manifesting change (McAdams et al. 2006, 1371).

[2.5] We are particularly interested in how autobiographical reasoning may be attuned to different life stages, and how those in turn may be related to understanding a fan's developmental trajectory. In the 1950s, psychiatrist Erik Erikson (1959) proposed a now well-known model of psychosocial development over the life course, and while we share critics' concerns about subscribing to a sequential model of human development, we believe the matter of purposefulness that underlies his model is useful within fan studies. Erikson proposed eight phases of life, which begin at birth and end at death, and through which a healthy human being matures. Each phase presents a distinct conflict or challenge to the individual, the successful negotiation of which represents a turning point for development—that is, an opportunity for personal growth or failure. We focus here on the three phases of adulthood: the developmental challenge of young adulthood (forge intimate bonds or risk isolation), the striving of middle adulthood (contribute to the social betterment through transmission of core values or culture or risk stagnation), and the accomplishment of the final life phase (to reconcile oneself with one's life accomplishments and thus achieve wisdom or die with bitterness and regret).

3. Data and method

[3.1] Our evidence is drawn from a study of long-term U.S. soap opera actors and viewers (Harrington and Brothers 2010; Harrington and Brothers forthcoming) and includes original open-ended survey data from 34 fans who have been watching the same soap for at least 20 years. Participants' ages ranged from 24 to 73 with a median age of 54. Most report their race as white (88 percent) and their gender as female (76 percent), which is reflective of the larger U.S. soap opera audience. We performed textual analysis on the data using a common social science approach: grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Viewers are not identified by name below as a result of confidentiality agreements; for additional information on data collection/analysis procedures and the institutional review board protocol, see Harrington and Brothers (2010).

[3.2] We believe the developmental issues emergent in our data suggest important new research trajectories for fan scholars. We note, however, that because we are analyzing our data in a theoretical context for which it was not originally collected, we must acknowledge how the design of the primary study may affect the generalizability

of our findings. First, had we collected data on aging actors/viewers with the framework of autobiographical reasoning firmly in mind, we would have structured the interview to engage relevant issues more directly. For example, we would have systematically explored the ramifications of fans' interactions with other (aging) fans as part of the developmental process, along with any generational differences in that process. While our mid-1990s ethnography of soap opera fandom (Harrington and Bielby 1995) suggested that soap fans are less likely to construct large-scale communities compared to other fandoms, that claim is no longer true today. As such, fans' interactions with one another are no doubt important to the adult developmental process (especially the role of mentoring; see below). A second limitation is the small sample size of the primary study. In that study (Harrington and Brothers 2010; Harrington and Brothers forthcoming), the central focus was on aging soap actors, and viewer data was gathered for illustrative purposes. However, our considerable knowledge of fans and their practices more generally suggests that the findings we report here capture the experiences of long-term fans (with 20-plus years of viewing experiences) and perhaps of long-term fans of other media texts—in other words, particular subsets of broader fandoms. Third, the method of data gathering for the primary study, which relied upon referrals by fans to others in their social networks, may over- or underrepresent certain segments of the larger soap audience (CBS soap viewers, for example). On the basis of our extensive knowledge of the structure and organization of soap fandom, however, there is nothing to suggest that this approach systematically biased our sample or our findings.

[3.3] Soap opera is an interesting genre through which to explore developmental issues, given the possibility of a long history of soap storytelling intimately intertwined with a long viewer history of watching soaps. The contemporary network soaps have been airing for decades—*Guiding Light,* for example, broadcast for more than 70 years on radio and television before its cancellation by CBS in September 2009. Allen (2004) explains the diachronic relationship between soap narratives and viewers as follows: "Soap opera narratives are built around 'historical' characters, in the sense that those characters themselves have both personal histories and memories of a social past—both of which are shared with and relied upon by viewers." U.S. soaps are delivered 5 days a week, 52 weeks per year (130 to 260 hours of original programming), with no broadcast repeats. As such, the histories and memories of soap characters, communities, and viewers unfold in a comparable (daily) temporal framework, arguably situating soap viewers at the far end of a continuum in terms of the complexity of adult development and long-term fandom. Our case analysis below explores two related points: first, autobiographical reasoning and becoming-a-fan self narratives, and second, the developmental implications of fandom in adulthood.

4. Autobiographical reasoning and self-narratives of soap fandom

[4.1] In the context of U.S. soap operas, the ideal industry model for initiating new viewers/fans is through familial ties that collaborate in exposure to a soap: mothers introduce their daughters (and sons) to soaps, who then introduce their own daughters and sons, and so on. In the context of this facilitation, there is a strong potential in this particular genre for fictional soap narratives and characters to become bound together (through cross-generational viewing) with larger familial narratives. Consider the following quotations from longtime viewers when asked how they first started watching soaps:

> [4.2] When I was in high school, [*The Young and the Restless*] coincided with the time that Dad and I would come home, and often mom would iron in front of the TV. It brought the family together. (42-year-old man)

> [4.3] Soaps accompanied my real life as a stay at home mother, chronicled my years as a working adult, kept me company when I was alone, gave me something to bond with my mother, sisters, daughters, and daughter-in-laws over…I heard my oldest son, who is a seven-year veteran of a local police force, say that when he is home sick he plays the ABC soaps in the background because it makes him feel safe, secure, and loved: just like when he was a child. (50-year-old woman)

[4.4] Becoming-a-fan narratives also point to the crucial role of others in integrating fan-based experiences into larger autobiographical life narratives and trajectories. Explains one viewer:

> [4.5] I was in high school and had a week home due to the flu…The cool thing was that I didn't know at the time it was a soap my mom watched before she went back to work. It was a real blessing because at the high school age (in the 70s) I had a lot of questions about soaps. And my mom could answer. It helped at a time when a lot of mothers/daughters drift apart. We were able to discuss plots, characters and how we would handle the on-screen situation…My mother was great at listening to me and helping me create boundaries…Without my mother's guidance, I don't think watching soaps would have been healthy. (40-plus-year-old woman)

[4.6] Similar to Kuhn's (2002) analyses of the meaning of adolescent cinemagoing in adulthood, this adult soap fan's initiation into the world of soaps is remembered as central to her explorations as a teenager into questions surrounding adult relationships, activities, and moralities. Significantly, however, this fan's memory

includes her *mother* as a central figure in her negotiation into adulthood as mediated through soap opera. Her mother's ability to facilitate those adolescent explorations at a time of potentially vulnerable mother-daughter relationships is rooted, in this fan's evolving self-narrative, in her mother's attachment to and knowledge of soaps, and her willingness to provide moral guidance through shared textual interpretation with her daughter. Another female fan was drawn to soaps for the opposite reason: as a form of rebellion against parental expectations and constraints:

> [4.7] In my earlier teen years…I would engage in ridiculous self-improvement schemes, such as memorizing dictionaries. By the time I was 15 I was becoming more rebellious and decided to watch soap operas as a way to horrify my mother who was shocked and humiliated that "coming from such a cultured home," I would reduce myself to such disgraceful behavior. (59-year-old female fan)

[4.8] This fan's process of autobiographical reasoning also emphasizes the role of her mother in her entrée into soap watching but as a way to distance herself from her mother and her preferred cultural tastes. While the self-narrative/soap-narrative/family-narrative connections are similar for this fan to the fan quoted earlier, the outcome is different (maternal distance rather than closeness). Finally, watching soaps with her grandmother offered the fan quoted below a unique opportunity to step outside of grandmother-granddaughter roles and come to know her grandmother more fully:

> [4.9] "Hashing over" the daily episodes afforded me the opportunity to learn how my grandmother felt and thought about real life on a level I would never have reached as her grandchild, because no matter how old you get, you are still a grand "child" who never quite reaches adulthood, even though you may be married with several children. (50-plus-year-old female fan)

[4.10] Here, shared soap viewing allowed familial relationships to be transcended or discarded, thus providing more honest insight into one another's preferences, values, and interpretations. For all of the fans quoted above, the presence of familial others is central to their becoming-a-fan narratives.

[4.11] For this next group of long-term soap fans, memories of watching soaps *with* family members come to be experienced, over time, as memories of those family members:

> [4.12] I enjoy it because it reminds me of my mom and my aunts and our discussions of the stories in years past. (60-year-old woman)

> [4.13] My mother passed away in 1999 at age 76 and whenever something happens on *General Hospital* that I know would have outraged her, made her laugh or cry, I connect with her again briefly on an emotional level. (50-year-old woman)
>
> [4.14] My mother and grandmother were avid watchers of [two different soaps]. I began watching with them as a family afternoon event…The soap operas bonded the three of us and gave us "female time" together before my father arrived home from work. It now is a cherished memory of my mother and grandmother…Every day at 3 p.m. my mom and grandmother are "with me" in a certain way. For that, I am forever grateful to Irna Phillips for having created *Guiding Light* 70 years ago. (59-year-old woman)

[4.15] In sum, for these fans, whose initiation into soaps was guided and facilitated by family members and whose memories of learning about "real life" and adulthood are (in part) memories of collective interpretation of fictional characters and narratives, "soap stories" are (re)positioned through self-narratives as "family stories" or shared family memories that are integrated into ever-evolving stories of the self. As one fan explains, her present-day watching of *Guiding Light* is a "connection to my own family's past" (note 2), constructing coherence between the person she is now (in her current family dynamics) to the person she once was (and memories of former family dynamics). As noted earlier, autobiographical reasoning is one strategy by which people revisit specific life events (and their own changing interpretations of those events; see below) to create a sense of unity, to help explain how they came to be who they are (Pasupathi and Mansour 2006, 798). As such, for these fans, text, self, and family are inextricably bound together in the meaning-making process of growing up and growing old. Soap fans, scholars, and critics routinely refer to soaps as throughlines in viewers' lives—autobiographical reasoning is the precise cognitive strategy that enables this. Not all fandoms rely on a cross-generational familial introduction process, and the U.S. soap industry is less able to rely on this process than ever before in its history (De Kosnik et al. forthcoming). However, these fans' evolving self-narratives suggest ways that autobiographical reasoning and the formation and revising of life stories are inherently collaborative processes.

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5. Developmental implications of fandom in adulthood

[5.1] We noted earlier the developmental challenges that Erikson (1959) suggests confront us in each phase of adulthood. The brief analysis above points, in particular, to the generativity versus stagnation challenge of midadulthood, given soap fans' emphasis on their mentored entrée into the world of soap fandom. While our data allow direct insight only into the mentee's experience of being mentored by older family members—the mentors' intentions and experiences are represented indirectly—

research finds that both mentors and mentees are aided developmentally through this process (McLean et al. 2007, 262). Most of the soap fans we spoke with are in midadulthood, which perhaps explains the salience of mentoring in their becoming-a-fan narratives. A number of prior fan studies have explored the mentorship/apprenticeship duties of experienced media fans (Baym 2000; Bennett 2006; Brooker 2002; Harrington and Bielby 1995), and we emphasize here the potential developmental implications of those activities (see also Stever forthcoming).

[5.2] Soap fans' narratives also illuminate the challenges of both early adulthood (intimacy versus isolation) and late adulthood (integrity versus despair). Let us return to the observation that autobiographical reasoning is modified over time. In a study comparing younger (late adolescence to early adulthood) and older (65 and over) persons, the older group had more narrative coherence to their reasoning and had more situated stories representing stability, while the younger group had more stories representing change (McLean 2008). This finding might help fan scholars account for the "I used to, now I…" dimension (or the past/present register; see Kuhn 2002, 10) of fans' changing relationships with media texts as they age. Consider the following quotations:

> [5.3] I was so involved with the stories and the characters. The characters became my best friends. It didn't matter who they were or what story they were involved in…I scheduled my life around these characters…they were my best friends. I was going through a rough time in my life at that time, and these characters got me through them. (47-year-old woman)

> [5.4] When I was young I felt a certain kinship to many of the characters [on *As the World Turns*]. The teens, close to my age (Penny and Ellen), drew me in. Later, Lisa and I were pregnant at the same time, both had boys, and both named them Tom (mine after his father, however). I had a real love/hate relationship with most of the characters…[However], I am not the easily entertained, naïve, willing to watch anything…person I was back then. I am older and wiser and less willing to suspend disbelief. Unlike years gone by, I feel very little sympathy, or empathy, for the characters. (50-plus-year-old woman)

[5.5] These quotes indicate a distancing over time of one's emotional self from the fictional characters and communities depicted on-screen, a memory echoed by most of the adult soap fans in our study:

> [5.6] I am happy to say I have matured a lot. Back in the day, I would think about [the characters] constantly. (40-plus-year-old woman)

> [5.7] I am no longer near as wrapped up in the characters…At one time, whether it was youth or innocence; I did feel a very real connection to these characters as if they might be friends, adversaries. (70-year-old fan)

[5.8] In part, these sentiments might speak to viewer/fan fatigue, which most other fandoms do not have the luxury to experience. These viewers each have at least 20 years of history invested in their favorite soap opera, representing at least 5,200 hours of original programming potentially viewed (not to mention engagement in other fan practices). No soap viewers we spoke with reported becoming more engaged in soap characters as their own lives and viewing histories unfolded, and many said they continue to watch their shows because they've "always" watched (giving new meaning to the sheer "endurance" implied in Kuhn's [2002] concept of enduring fandom). Soap fans' changing emotional investment is obviously worrisome from an industry perspective—indeed, some fans attribute their disengagement to declining storytelling quality—but from a developmental perspective, it might indicate crucial *self*-transformation.

[5.9] For example, media fans' emotional attachments to cultural texts (whether fictionalized characters and communities or "real" celebrities or sport teams) have been subject to a wide range of analytic frameworks, from parasociality to object relations theory to theories of religion to hegemony theory. While we do not wish to summarize or engage these different frameworks directly, we simply point out here that there might be important developmental implications to these relationships that are overlooked by fan scholars. While adolescents' emotional attachments to media texts might speak to their explorations into adult worlds of romantic and sexual relationships and identities (as numerous studies of adolescent fandom suggest), in the context of young adulthood these attachments might reflect the intimacy versus isolation challenge proposed by Erikson (1959). The transition from adolescence to adulthood and adulthood itself—as informed by theory—has been underexplored in fan studies (Harrington and Bielby forthcoming; Stever forthcoming).

[5.10] Moreover, consider again the second part of the quote above—"I am not the easily entertained, naïve, willing to watch anything person I was back then. I am older and wiser"—from a fan who gives her age as 50 plus. A key component of successful negotiation of the developmental challenge of late adulthood (integrity versus despair) is the acquisition of what Tornstam (1997) terms *gerotranscendence:* our gradual acquisition in later life of a "more cosmic and transcendent [worldview], normally accompanied by a contemplative dimension" (143). In the context of self-development, acquisition of gerotranscendence suggests both greater coherence and stability to processes of autobiography (McLean 2008), and a gradually clarified (or clarifying) sense of self. Explains another soap fan:

> [5.11] When I was younger, I saw things in terms of black and white, right and wrong, good and evil. Now that I'm older, I tend to appreciate complexity of character over whether the character is "good" or "bad"… Complexity of character and motivation is more interesting to me [now]. I like to think that means I am a more complex person who is willing to see shades of grey rather than strict black and white. I doubt I would be able to articulate this if I hadn't watched soaps most of my life.

[5.12] While this female fan identifies her age as "late 30s," her quote suggests an early achievement of gerotranscendence through years of soap viewing. Much as long-term Bowie fans converted him into a "cultural resource which can be reinterpreted in the context of their changing life situations" (Stevenson 2009, 85), lifelong Springsteen fans used music "to map out where their current life course might take them and whether they wanted that future" (Cavicchi 1998, 110), and aging punk fans traded the visual aesthetics of punk for a "more subtly articulated" understanding of punk as ideology (Bennett 2006, 225), soap fans illuminate through autobiographical reasoning how the collaborative process of becoming and being a fan transforms the self, and provides unexpected resources for negotiating life's developmental challenges (Harrington and Bielby forthcoming; Harrington and Brothers 2010; Stever forthcoming).

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6. Conclusion

[6.1] Our analysis contributes both to the growing literature on long-term fans and the more nascent literature on fandom in later life. Both literatures are remiss, we argue, in their failure to incorporate scholarship from psychology, gerontology, and human development that sheds light on how lives unfold across time (we admit that our own prior fan studies have been negligent in this regard). Given a rapidly aging global population and thus rapidly aging media audiences, we urge fan studies colleagues to engage directly with scholarship that articulates the scope and impact of these demographic transitions. Our larger project (Harrington and Bielby forthcoming) brings these literatures together to help fan scholars understand the extent to which fan-based activities and experiences are structured by age.

[6.2] Here, we have taken a more microlevel approach to exploring the specific mechanisms through which becoming-a-fan narratives are positioned within (and come to transform) larger life trajectories, and the developmental implications of these processes for adult fans. As our analysis suggests, there are at least three related reasons why media texts are important to consider from a developmental perspective: (1) early exposure to media texts shapes the legitimacy of such exposure (crucial with highly stigmatized texts such as daytime soaps); (2) this legitimized exposure, in turn,

renders the fictional narrative a normatively appropriate developmental resource to call upon; and (3) fictional narratives such as soap operas offer powerful conceptions of emotional/experiential authenticity by which fans come to measure, appraise, or otherwise make sense of their own developmental and/or maturational processes. By serving as a throughline to fans' lives, soap operas offer a crucial sense of anchoring or mooring in an increasingly complex world (Harrington and Bielby forthcoming).

[6.3] The narrative turn taking place throughout the academy includes new research in psychology and gerontology that focuses on the construction of self-narratives (self-as-text) and their evolution across time. Our analysis here points to the potential fruitfulness of exploring unfolding media narratives and unfolding self-narratives in tandem and across time—and in the context of age, aging, and life course progression. This is an important next step within fan studies.

7. Notes

1. Scholars agree that stability in the life course can be interrupted by physiological changes (e.g., menopause), age-graded life transitions (e.g., graduating from college), or turning points "in which a person has undergone a major transformation in views about the self, commitments to important relationships, or involvement in significant life roles" (Wetherington et al. 1997, 216). We consider becoming a fan to be one such turning point.

2. Data collection occurred before the cancellation of *Guiding Light* in fall 2009.

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Praxis

When normal and deviant identities collide: Methodological considerations of the pregnant acafan

Mary Ingram-Waters

Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—In this article, I examine how my visibly pregnant body influenced my experience as a field researcher at a fan convention, interviewing amateur fan fiction authors who write Harry Potter male-pregnancy fan fiction. Despite my efforts at carefully cultivating an identity as an acafan (a researcher who identifies as both a fan and a scholar of fandom), my identity as a pregnant woman was most salient throughout my fieldwork. I argue that because of the particular genre of fan fiction, male pregnancy (mpreg), which my participants engaged with, my status as a normative, heterosexual, publicly pregnant woman negatively affected the research process: my interactions with my interviewees deviated from my expectations in ways that shaped the data I collected. When I analyzed my field notes, I found a strong correlation between interviewees' recognition of my pregnancy and interviewees' experience of stigma associated with authors of mpreg. This research contributes to several bodies of work: the interplay between online and real-life identities, the role of the researcher in field research, and the role of pregnant researchers.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Acafan; Fandom; Fan fiction; Gender; Male pregnancy; Methods; Mpreg; Pregnancy; Stigma

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1. Introduction

[1.1] July 26, 2006, at 4:00 PM, I found myself throwing a hastily packed bag into the passenger side of my old Honda Civic. I climbed into the driver's seat, buckled up, and then called my partner at work to say good-bye. I also gave him reassurance that I was feeling just fine, if a little hot. I was seven and a half months pregnant with our first child, and I was headed to Las Vegas for Lumos 2006, a fan conference on all things Harry Potter. I had made up my mind to go to the conference earlier that day, when I realized that many of the male-pregnancy fan fiction (mpreg) authors whose work I had been following online for over a year would be attending this conference. After a few harried e-mails and phone calls, I scored one of the last standby conference registrations (the conference had been sold out for nearly 6 weeks before

the event), and I booked a room at the casino hotel next door to the sold-out conference hotel.

[1.2] About 6 hours, 340 miles, and numerous bathroom breaks later, I pulled into the Sun Coast casino hotel. It had been a hot drive from Santa Barbara to Las Vegas. I skipped the poker slot machines and the blackjack tables (two of my favorite Vegas guilty pleasures) and headed straight to my room. There I checked my e-mail: several mpreg authors had confirmed their interview times, one of which was set for fairly early the next morning. I e-mailed them back with a suggested meeting point and described myself as easy to find: "I'm white, of average height, brown-haired, and extremely pregnant." I thought no more about it, and I went to sleep.

[1.3] Around 7:30 AM, with a large Starbucks coffee in hand (was I certain I didn't want decaf? a slightly anxious barista had asked me), I drove across two football-field-length parking lots to the conference hotel, the JW Marriott. It was easy to find my way to the conference itself: I merely followed the excited march of robed fans, some of whom had their robed parents in tow. When I got to the conference site, I was momentarily stunned by the volume of people. The vast foyer was packed with fans, many of whom were decked out in full costume. From the foyer, I could see into several ballroom-sized meeting rooms, most of which were nearly full with attendees.

[1.4] I should back up for a moment: this conference was my first *con* (fan convention). Other than the last-minute planning I had done the day before, I had given absolutely no thought to what it would be like to attend a con. When I had first heard about the conference a few months back, I had not considered going, even though it would be held relatively close by. I knew that I would be in the late stages of pregnancy, and I thus assumed that I would not be up for making the trip. As it turned out, I was feeling pretty good physically, and a trip to Las Vegas, even in late summer, did not sound too intimidating.

[1.5] But as I stood in that foyer, dumbfounded, while several thousand fans bustled around me, I felt viscerally out of place. It was completely unexpected. The population of fans was hardly homogenous: white women from their teens to their mid-30s made up the visible majority of attendees. I had been living among these fans, albeit online, as a participant observer for more than a year. I knew many fans. Furthermore, my own particular identity within fandom, that of an acafan (an academic researcher of fans and fandom who also identifies as a fan), was hardly something unknown, at least within fan-oriented spaces. I had expected to be a fellow fan. At that point, I began to question how my pregnant body might influence my experiences in the field. Being publicly pregnant, a concept I will explore in more depth throughout this article, was already something I had been thinking critically about in both the professional and personal facets of my life.

[1.6] I made my way slowly to the registration table, still pondering how being visibly pregnant trumped my self-identification as an acafan. Later, I would write the following passage in my field notes:

> [1.7] After waiting in a snake-like line for about ten minutes behind others whose names started with letters H, I, J, and K, I got up to the registration table. A slim brown-haired white woman, probably in her late 20s, handed me a large folder of conference materials. She gave me a quick once-over and then smiled warmly at me, "You must be Mary!" She pulled her hair away from her shoulder where it had obscured her name badge: SG. I am sure that she recognized me by my pregnant body because she had not heard the other registration volunteer say my name. "You must be so hot," she remarked. I laughed and assured her that I wasn't as long as I was inside air-conditioned buildings. We then confirmed our plans for an interview later that afternoon.

[1.8] As I headed to a panel on slash fan fiction, I realized that my pregnant body made me feel out of place. For the next 3 days, as I moved among thousands of fans, most of whom were women, I would not come across another visibly pregnant woman. Although this was not an uncommon occurrence in other venues of my life, it was startling to me because it emphasized a distinction in my identity, both self-imposed and imposed by others, that seemed to cancel out the amount of time and effort that I had put into carefully cultivating my particular identity as an acafan within the fandom.

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2. Researching while pregnant and being pregnant publicly

[2.1] In the appendix of her book, *Fixing Families: Parents, Power, and the Child Welfare System* (2005), and in an earlier article, "Pregnant with Possibility: Reflections on Embodiment, Access, and Inclusion in Field Research" (2003), Jennifer Reich reflects on how being visibly pregnant influenced the processes and outcomes of conducting her dissertation research. Unlike me, Reich had anticipated that her changing body would drastically affect her access to multiple sites within the child welfare system that she studied. (I had not had time to speculate about how my pregnant body might alter my presence in the field.) To her surprise, she found that her pregnancy eased her way with nearly every population with whom she interacted. Not only was her pregnancy an opening with negligent parents as well as child welfare lawyers, social workers, judges, and other professionals, but it also afforded her a sense of legitimacy in her research agenda.

[2.2] Reich found that her pregnancy gave her two main advantages: first, as a pregnant woman, she was inherently nonthreatening, and second, by virtue of her

physical condition alone, she was someone with whom others knew how to relate. The first advantage is hardly surprising. Reich noted that even in high-stakes situations (such as children being removed from their homes, with lawyers and social workers meeting privately to discuss outcomes of custody decisions), her presence was easily accepted. It was if her pregnancy stripped her of all the features that might make her inclusion as an outsider/researcher risky for the populations she was observing. The second advantage worked in different ways with different populations. Parents at risk of losing custody of their children identified with Reich because she was visibly in the process of becoming a parent herself. This identification was mostly positive, though Reich had anticipated that her pregnancy would create tension with people whose parenting status was being evaluated. Professionals in the child welfare system used her pregnant body to highlight the differences between those entitled to procreate (like themselves and Reich) and those who were not worthy to procreate (like the parents under the system's scrutiny).

[2.3] In the second situation, Reich's pregnant body allowed others around her to invoke normative ideals of parenting. She described instances where child welfare professionals assumed that she was heterosexual, married, and otherwise well suited for parenting—drug- and alcohol-free, without a criminal record.

[2.4] What Reich thought would make her an outsider, her pregnancy, actually made her an insider. Because she had conducted her research before, during, and after her pregnancy, she could assess the differences between how she was treated as a pregnant and then a nonpregnant researcher. She concluded that because she had been pregnant, she likely had access to people, situations, and information that she would not have obtained otherwise.

[2.5] Though Reich does not label her experience as being publicly pregnant, the concept is useful for explicating how she assessed her target populations' experiences of her pregnant body. Each of her populations accessed her through her visibly pregnant body. For Reich, it was clear that her pregnancy overrode any other possible identification. Another conceptual understanding of being publicly pregnant follows Balsamo's (1999) discussion of cultural narratives that shape women's experiences of being pregnant. For Balsamo, pregnant bodies engender specific interactional scripts that render the pregnant woman as pregnant before any other potentially meaningful identity. Moreover, the pregnancy is a thing in and of itself, and as such is publicly owned.

[2.6] Similar to Reich's experience, my own pregnancy was obviously a factor while I was in the field. My pregnancy had a very real presence for me and for my participants, as I discovered when I analyzed my field notes and interview transcripts. In each of the 10 interviews that I collected in person, my pregnancy was at the very

least mentioned by my research participants. In nearly all of those interviews, it played a definitive role in shaping the process, and thus it may have shaped the outcomes as well. I assert that the influence of my pregnancy on the field research process was negative because of how participants interacted with me and some of the content of their interviews. This correlation between my pregnant body and the field research is evident to me because I also conducted three interviews via e-mail, using the same questions, with similarly socially placed mpreg authors, in the weeks after the conference. My pregnancy, even for the two interviewees who knew about it, did not come up. Moreover, I was working as a research assistant for a different project on the social history of nanotechnology at this same time. I conducted both face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews with more than a dozen participants. Though my pregnancy also played a role in the data collection processes of the nanotechnology research project, the overall influence of my pregnancy on those research processes may have led to different outcomes that I would not characterize as negative. Specifically, my pregnancy seemed to make the nanotechnology research participants feel at ease with me very quickly, thus engendering an open and comfortable research setting.

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3. The acafan

[3.1] Though I had not anticipated attending this conference for purposes of data collection, I had still expected that I would not have trouble establishing a rapport with my interviewees. I was hardly unknown among my research participants. For more than a year, I had carefully cultivated a participant observer status (Adler and Adler 1994) that allowed me access to a core group of mpreg fan fiction writers without writing mpreg fan fiction myself. To them and the larger online fandom community, I publicly identified myself as an acafan, which has been defined with a range of different subtleties (Baym 2000; Hill 2002; Jenkins 1992). Generally, these definitions explore the role of a researcher's relationship to fans, source material, and fandom at large, as a variable of the research process (that is, does it matter if you are a fan first and foremost or if you participate in fandom activities as a fan?). Though acafans may have different relationships with other fans, source texts, and fandom, they seem to have the most agreement about what they are not: they are not researchers seeking the "objective truth" of fandom. This critique is leveled at Bacon-Smith's (1992) anthropological study of female *Star Trek* fans, wherein she used her outsider status for the purpose of objectively observing fan culture. Though they did not use the term *acafan,* I prefer Harrington and Bielby's (1995) definition of a researcher-fan. For them, being a fan of a fandom that one also studies professionally means being respectful of the various components of that fan world—components that can be fraught with stigma. It also means being up front with one's identification as a fan

during the research process (1995). In their definition, there is plenty of room to play around with other identities within fandom in addition to conducting rigorous research on fandom.

[3.2] For me, developing my insider status meant reading and reviewing mpreg fan fics (stories written with author J. K. Rowling's characters and settings from the Harry Potter series) that were published online at a small number of Harry Potter mpreg fic archives. Reviewing is an integral part of an online fan fic community; it is the primary way authors and readers interact. This is especially important for the mpreg fic community because writing "male preg" or "mpreg" carries a stigma (Penley 1997) in addition to the usual stigma associated with writing fan fic (Bacon-Smith 1992; Baym 2000; Jenkins 1992). Generally, authors are gratified when readers take the time to leave comments about their works. It is fairly easy to quickly develop a connection with an author by participating in the two-way communication of leaving and acknowledging reviews. Though this was my primary means of entry into the Harry Potter mpreg fan fic community, I also occasionally offered authors my services as a beta reader—a critical reader and editor of fan fiction. From previous online interactions, I already knew, to some degree or another, all of the women mpreg authors I attempted to interview at the conference. Had I not interviewed them in person at the conference, I would have attempted to reach them online, as I did with three other authors.

[3.3] The mpreg fan fiction community that I studied is made up of an amorphous group of writers, artists, beta readers, and reviewers, who participated in the construction of mpreg fan works at a number of Harry Potter fandom–affiliated online spaces. I engaged with this community through LiveJournal, an online blogging site friendly to fans. Writers and artists posted their works on their blogs. Their works were usually edited by betas. Readers encountered the works on specific fandom-affiliated sites or through some other contact with writers, artists, or reviewers. Reviewers commented on the works, sometimes recommending them on their own blogs. Each of the authors I interviewed acknowledged the stigma of writing mpreg fan fiction (note 1). One author, CJ, says,

> [3.4] Maybe taboo is not the right word. But it's definitely a "guilty pleasure" for some and a squick for others and is in general not that well-regarded, mostly because it allegedly turns the male characters into whiny, feminized versions of themselves.

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4. When pregnant women are threatening

[4.1] Unlike Reich's experience of being a pregnant researcher who was perceived as nonthreatening and therefore was more easily accepted by her subjects while she performed fieldwork, my own experience was that my pregnant body immediately put many of my interview subjects into a defensive posture, even those who already knew from our previous online communications that I was pregnant. This correlation is based on my analysis of the field notes I recorded of my encounters with interviewees. In these notes, among many other details, I noted how interviewees noticed my pregnancy. Although I cannot make a causal connection between interviewees' perception of my pregnancy and their stigma as mpreg fan fiction authors, from my experiences, I assert that a strong correlation was present.

[4.2] The most memorable encounter with a research participant happened on my first full day at the conference. In my field notes, I wrote:

> [4.3] At approximately 10:50 am, I was on the way to meet CJ for a scheduled interview. I was a few minutes early so I stopped by the registration table to chat with SG [another mpreg author]. SG was talking with three other women, one of whom I recognized by her nametag which read [online pseudonym]. She really stared at me while I was waiting for a lull in conversation so I could introduce myself to the group. It seemed obvious that she was staring at me because I was pregnant [she repeatedly stared at my belly]. She also had a negative expression on her face. When she realized who I was, her expression did not change. She refused to commit to an interview time and after a minute or two, she walked off with one of the other women.

[4.4] I had been excited to run into this author because she and I had been unable to set a meeting time for an interview over e-mail. She had been enthusiastic about being interviewed. That author never returned my e-mails or phone calls, even though she had given me her cell phone number so we could connect during the conference. It is entirely possible that the author had a number of different motivations for her abrupt change in behavior. However, I think that my visibly pregnant body was a source of discomfort for her. Taken in concert with other more straightforward reactions to my pregnant body by mpreg fan fiction authors who did grant me interviews, I can assume that my pregnancy played a role in her dismissal of me. I speculate that my pregnant body, marking me as what Reich refers to as a "normative reproducer," enhanced the stigma that she, as an mpreg author, already faces (2003, 359).

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5. Normative versus deviant pregnancies

[5.1] My pregnancy, like Reich's, was invoked by research participants as normative in terms of my presumed sexuality, marital status, health status, and, most salient for my research, gender. For Reich, being a normative reproducer garnered her better access to everyone within the child welfare system. For me, being a normative reproducer was correlated with negative interactions between me and the mpreg authors. By negative, I mean that the content of the interviews was markedly different from other non-face-to-face interviews. One explanation for the negative interactions is that my physical presence illuminated the extent of deviance of their mpreg stories. Where I was (presumed to be) heterosexual, married, healthy, and female, I stood in stark contrast to the characters that these female authors had spent countless hours writing about: their characters were male and homosexual, and many of their pregnancies were fantastically exciting because of the inherent danger of such risky pregnancies. My interviews consisted of an intense series of questions about authors' understandings of mpreg fan fiction in the larger array of fandom. I asked them for detailed explanations of how male pregnancy works. I also asked them to comment on whether mpreg fan fiction challenged norms regarding gender and sexuality. Let me put this bluntly: I asked authors for graphically detailed accounts of their understandings of male pregnancy while I sat across from them, seven and a half months pregnant.

[5.2] Let me further explore the claim that my presence as a visible normative reproducer negatively influenced the interview process by enhancing the stigma already carried by mpreg writers. Most of the data supporting this claim comes from my field notes rather than my interview transcriptions. Before I turned on the recorder, interviewees usually made small talk about the Harry Potter fandom, the conference, and, inevitably, my pregnancy. Interviewees would often ask me if I was interested in male pregnancy because I was pregnant—implying that I needed a particular reason to pursue what is widely regarded as a derided genre of fan fiction. The prevalence of this question struck me as odd until one participant, WG, a Southeast Asian woman in her mid-20s, pushed the question further:

> [5.3] After we introduced ourselves, WG asked me how far along I was. I said 7.5 months. She seemed surprised and asked me more questions about the baby's gender and name, etc. Then she asked if this [my pregnancy] was why I read mpreg. I said no, that I read mpreg because it's interesting in a number of different ways. Then she said, "But you're pregnant, why would you read mpreg? It must seem implausible. Silly." She said it in a funny way and we both laughed.

[5.4] To me, the implausibility of male pregnancy is not unlike many other science fiction and fantasy novums. I study it, as I told WG, for a number of different reasons,

most of which have to do with the ways that communities of women authors create novel reproductive technologies for men's bodies. I was interested in male pregnancy long before I was actually pregnant. At the time of the interviews, linking the two together seemed spurious to me. For my interviewees, however, the timing of my pregnant body and my questioning them about their mpreg stories seemed unlikely to be a coincidence.

[5.5] In my analysis of the face-to-face interview transcripts with the authors, I found evidence for two mechanisms of stigma management: first, they attempted to normalize aspects of their mpreg fan fictions by relating to my pregnancy; and second, they emphasized the research they had done on "real" pregnancies in preparing for their own writing. First, authors used my pregnancy as a shortcut to relate information ("well, you *must* know what I mean"). For example, one author, AM, a white woman in her mid-30s, defended her answer about the prevalence of pseudo-uteri and cesarean section births in mpreg fics by explaining one admittedly less than glamorous side of vaginal birthing:

> [5.6] Despite the fact that a pregnant woman has all the same organs pretty close to each other, when she pushes a baby out, she's probably going to push a lot of other stuff out of her rectum, too. You're probably thrilled, aren't you? (laughs)

[5.7] AM assumed that I was familiar with a particular aspect of a vaginal birth. What AM did not know was that I had not given this aspect a lot of thought because I was scheduled for a cesarean section. Thus, I was not extremely familiar with it. But her assumption can be interpreted to mean that she expected me, as a pregnant woman, to understand how the particulars of a "real" birth experience (that is, a woman's vaginal birth) back up an author's particular decisions regarding the anatomy of male pregnancy.

[5.8] Second, even though I did not ask them about their expertise with pregnancy, authors often emphasized that though they had never been pregnant, they had done extensive research on being pregnant. Most of the time, authors used both tactics. For example, PS, a white woman in her early 20s, told me that she knew quite a bit about obstetrics even though she had never been pregnant because she had wanted to be an obstetrician when she was a child. She and T (white woman, late 20s), a coauthor she often writes with, then told me that they both regularly consulted an online baby-information center. They would input fictional due dates for their characters so they could receive weekly informational e-mails about their characters' pregnancies. Both PS and T assumed that I was familiar with these kinds of Web sites.

[5.9] Though I followed the same interview script with my e-mailed interviews as I did for my face-to-face interviews, I did not encounter either of the two stigma-management strategies that I noted above in those e-mailed interviews. None of those interviewees used my pregnancy as a shortcut, although two of the three interviewees knew that I was pregnant. Furthermore, none of the interviewees offered any sort of credentials for their expertise in pregnancy.

6. The demands of pregnancy

[6.1] The purpose of this essay has been to explore the questions of how and why my own pregnancy influenced my experiences in the field, here defined as interviewing mpreg authors at a Harry Potter fan conference, held in late summer in Las Vegas. Though I think there is evidence that my pregnant body was offputting for research participants in some fairly substantive ways, there is another, even more obvious level of analysis. It would be difficult for even the healthiest and hardiest of women to be 7 months pregnant in the summer in the desert! The physical demands of advanced pregnancy also played a role in how this research was carried out.

[6.2] Notably, I had not entertained the idea of attending this conference because I had assumed that my pregnancy would make attendance too difficult. In retrospect, I see that this had been fairly sound reasoning. Other salient factors were my exhaustion, sensitivity to heat, and general physical discomfort. Each of these influenced the research process from two perspectives: my own and the participants'. In other words, I had to take certain measures to protect myself (I scheduled frequent bathroom breaks, meals, and snacks; I went to bed early; I avoided being outside), though I was careful to avoid mentioning these to my interviewees. But my research participants also felt obligated to take measures to protect me too, in ways that echo Balsamo's (1999) understanding of the interactional scripts associated with a public pregnancy. For my research subjects, this manifested in the following ways, as noted from my field notes:

> [6.3] WG insisted that we have our interview at a restaurant after I answered her question truthfully about being hungry, even though I said I could easily wait.
>
> [6.4] During the second half of our interview, W [a white woman in her mid-20s] kept her answers very short. She also apologized repeatedly for wanting to reconvene outside by the pool. It was probably 110 degrees. I was very hot.
>
> [6.5] AM rejected two different sites for our interview because she didn't think the chairs were comfortable enough for a pregnant woman.

[6.6] In each of the above examples, the research process was hindered because participants tried to accommodate my pregnant body, even though I had not asked them to do so. Not only had I not asked them to accommodate me, but I actively tried to downplay my pregnancy so it would cease to be a factor in the research process. The recording of my interview with WG is difficult to hear in some places as a result of restaurant noise. The second half of W's interview is much less detailed than the first because she was so keen about getting me back inside the air-conditioned hotel. Finally, AM spent nearly 10 minutes of our allotted 45 minutes looking for what she considered to be an appropriately comfortable place.

[6.7] None of these particular findings is surprising, though. Although there is relatively little research about being a pregnant researcher, there is a large body of research about women being publicly pregnant, a concept I will explore further below. That my interviewees felt obligated to look after me, even at the expense of our interviews, is not unexpected.

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7. Publicly pregnant

[7.1] Similar to Reich's experience with her pregnancy and research, I am quite certain that my pregnancy altered the way this particular part of my research manifested. In hindsight, I should not have been so surprised that my pregnant body would play its own role in the field. Pregnant bodies are public bodies (Balsamo 1999; Bordo 1993; Davis 2004; Reich 2003). To be publicly pregnant means that a woman's identity as being pregnant is pushed to the forefront of all other identities, and that a woman is literally on display for commentary with possible actions taken on her behalf by surrounding publics. For me, being publicly pregnant meant that my interview subjects perceived me as being pregnant before being an acafan. It also meant that it was socially acceptable and expected for my interviewees to acknowledge or accommodate my pregnant body, even at the expense of our interviews.

[7.2] Another way to explain the differences between my in-person interviews and my e-mailed interviews is through considering the actual medium of the interview. It is a fairly established claim that face-to-face research interactions can enhance the stakes for both researchers and participants (Adler 1990; Adler and Adler 1987). Thus, one would expect that sensitive and potentially stigmatized identities would emerge more often in face-to-face interviews. Though I do not doubt this general finding, I do wish to refine it with an analysis of how a researcher's pregnancy may amplify the stakes in particular ways.

[7.3] It seems highly likely that had I met with preg authors as a nonpregnant woman, my identity as an acafan would have been most significant. Had that been the

case, I would have expected preg authors to readily accept the premise of my research: that mpreg fan fiction is important and thus worthy of investigation. Moreover, I would have expected more details in their explanations of the technologies of mpreg, as they would not have had an obvious point of reference, which would have mirrored the data collected in the e-mailed interviews. However, in this case, my carefully constructed identity, which I had honed with more than a year's worth of online ethnographic work, was trumped by my pregnant body. Though I only attribute one author's refusal to grant me an interview to my pregnancy, it seems clear to me that all of my other interviews were negatively influenced by my pregnancy. I was able to contrast the mpreg fieldwork with face-to-face interviews conducted for an unrelated project on the social history of nanotechnology. Though my pregnancy was still mentioned by nearly all of these other interviewees, it served a different purpose: it led to small talk, which then helped me establish rapport. This is similar to the positive influence Reich experienced during her pregnancy. When I examine my field notes for the nanotechnology project, I can find no evidence that my pregnancy negatively influenced the research process. I can only conclude that for my Harry Potter research, my pregnant body clashed with the genre of fic being written, bringing to the fore the stigma of writing mpreg fiction and the lack of real, embodied experience that many of these authors had of pregnancy.

[7.4] I do not advise researchers to avoid doing research while visibly pregnant. Nor would I ever recommend that researchers who identify or can be identified as different from their research populations avoid face-to-face interactions. On the contrary, social differences may help to illuminate attitudes and positions that might not have come to light otherwise. I have chosen to see my field experience as negatively influenced by my pregnancy because it affected the responses of the subjects I interviewed. Yet perhaps my difference offers a venue to a better understanding of stigma management strategies for mpreg authors. Or perhaps mpreg authors are in a better position to look after a pregnant researcher because they are more sensitized to the challenges of pregnancy.

[7.5] For Reich, being pregnant was helpful during her research process. For my other research work, being pregnant helped me to establish a rapport with interviewees. But my understanding of my research experience with mpreg fan fiction authors leads me to conclude that in situations where identities of gender, sexuality, and normative bodies are sensitive topics, adding a further layer of sensitivity should, at the very least, be carefully thought out and planned for.

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8. Note

1. All pseudonyms were selected by the interviewees and are included with their explicit permission. All demographic details were defined by interviewees and are included in the interest of creating an accurate representation of the target population. All quotations I provide, unless otherwise sourced, were obtained during face-to-face interviews conducted at the Lumos 2006 fan convention, held in July 2006 in Las Vegas. All data collection processes and procedures were approved by the human subjects review panel of the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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Praxis

"May the journey continue": *Earth 2* fan fiction, or Filling in gaps to revive a canceled series

Francesca Musiani

Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation, Mines ParisTech/CNRS, Paris, France

[0.1] *Abstract*—This essay explores writing practices in a fan community having to give life to a story deprived of an "official" version: the television series *Earth 2.* I argue that fan fiction writing for this prematurely canceled series exhibits peculiar features in comparison to fan writing for established series: for example, temporality, choice of protagonists, character pairings, and challenges to the original conception(s) of the series. Writing fan fiction for a canceled series is not about creating alternatives to an existing story, but about filling in gaps; it brings to light the ways in which fan fiction deals with closure. I take as a case study *Earth 2,* a series aired by NBC in the United States in 1994–95, whose first and only season ended in a cliffhanger episode hinting that a mysterious ailment had struck the main and most popular character. Shortly afterward, a significant number of *Earth 2* Web sites, online conventions, and especially fan stories started developing; they explored what could have happened next and bore nostalgic but combative mottoes and titles such as "May the Journey Continue." I explore the specific features of *Earth 2* fan fiction production and sharing by analyzing the main *Earth 2* fan fiction archives on the Web and the responses to my email interviews of fan writers. Exemplars of the *Earth 2* case are compared to those of other science fiction TV series, both prematurely canceled (*Firefly, Space: Above and Beyond*) and long-lived (*Babylon 5, Star Trek: Deep Space 9*).

[0.2] *Keywords*—Alternative; Cancellation; Cliffhanger ending; Closure; *Earth 2;* Fandom; Fan fiction; Gap filling; Interview; Mailing list; Participatory culture; Production; Rebirth; Sharing; TV series

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[0.3] "We still have a very long way to go."

"Yeah. It won't be so bad gettin' there."

—Devon Adair and John Danziger, *Earth 2,* 1.16 "Brave New Pacifica"

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1. Introduction

[1.1] The first and only season of the science fiction TV series *Earth 2* was aired by NBC in 1994–95. Shortly after the broadcast of its cliffhanger final episode (1.21 "All

About EVE") on May 21, 1995, a notable number of *Earth 2* Web sites, conventions, and especially fan fiction works started developing, exploring what could have happened next, and bearing nostalgic but combative mottoes and titles such as "May the Journey Continue" (see, for example, the fan site Mooncross.net, http://www.mooncross.net/earth2/index.html).

[1.2] Most scholarship on fandom focuses on famous, established, or long-lived series, and on how fans relate to characters they keep on following on their TV screen year after year. Using *Earth 2* as a case study, this essay explores instead dynamics and practices in a community of fan writers giving life to a story whose "official" version ended abruptly. What happens when fans of a canceled series want more of it? How does the ending of a series influence the subsequent creative writing about that series?

[1.3] I argue that fan fiction writing for prematurely canceled series such as *Earth 2* exhibits peculiar features in comparison to fan writing for established series, in a number of respects including temporality, choice of protagonists, character pairings, and challenges to the original conception(s) of the series. The cause of this, I further argue, is that in the case of canceled series, the story is not only unsatisfactory or lacking; it is abruptly cut off and left incomplete. Writing fan fiction is then no longer about creating variations of or alternatives to an existing story. Instead, it is about filling in gaps, writing an ending for characters whose destinies were left uncertain, detailing the lives of characters that were left in the background, and developing relationships that had started to blossom. Beyond their immediate result—a corpus of works establishing and cementing a community—these gap-filling activities shed light on the ways in which the cancellation of a series is countered with a re-creation—in short, on how official closure is dealt with through fan fiction.

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2. Methods

[2.1] This paper uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, I look at two *Earth 2* fan fiction archives on the Web, in order to discover the topics and characters of the series most popular in fan production. I examine titles, synopses, and selected stories available in the *Earth 2* section of the FanFiction.net archive (http://www.fanfiction.net/tv/Earth_2/) and in Andy's Earth 2 Fan-Fiction Archive (http://www.atech-software.com/fan-fiction/e2/), considering them primary venues for sharing fan fiction for the series. The quantitative indicators derived from this examination are compared with similar indicators for other science fiction TV series, both prematurely canceled and established or long-lived: *Firefly* and *Space: Above and Beyond* are taken as examples of the first category, *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* as examples of the second.

[2.2] Second, I analyze the responses to the interviews I conducted with *Earth 2* fan fiction writers, focusing on their experiences as storytellers. These interviews took place by electronic mail in two different periods of time, January to March 2006 and September to November 2008. I first contacted fan writers in January 2006 by means of the two *Earth 2* fan fiction mailing lists: Earth2 Fanfiction (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Earth2-Fanfiction/) and Eden After Dark (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/EdenAfterDark/), then continued my exchanges with respondents individually. I use the responses of 12 fan writers who not only answered my questions but who also gave informed consent to their responses' use in a published paper.

3. (Death and) rebirth of *Earth 2*

[3.1] On November 6, 1994, NBC aired the pilot episode of an ill-fated science fiction television series called *Earth 2* (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108758/). Its first and only season aired in 1994–95; the slogan advertising the series read, "This time, we are the aliens."

[3.2] The series is set in the late 22nd century, when humanity has overexploited Earth and lives on space stations. The youngest generation is facing a deadly disease, the Syndrome, caused by an "absence of Earth" (1.1 "First Contact"). Billionaire Devon Adair sets up a mission to save her Syndrome-stricken son's life and to provide humanity with a second chance. After traveling through space for 22 years, Devon and her advance team arrive at the faraway planet known as G889, but they crash thousands of miles from their destination, New Pacifica, where they planned to set up a colony for the 250 families that are following. Thus, the survivors of the crash embark on a long and dangerous journey, during which they explore the mysteries of their new home and its inhabitants, as well as the mysteries of themselves: they have unexpected encounters (1.2 "The Man Who Fell to Earth (Two)"), struggle to meet basic human needs (1.6 "Water," 1.18 "Survival of the Fittest"), question their previous allegiances (1.9 "Redemption"), and find that they are changing and being changed by the planet (1.10 "Moon Cross").

[3.3] On May 21, 1995, NBC aired the last official episode of *Earth 2.* Throughout the season, although a core group of passionate fans had developed, *Earth 2* had suffered conflicts among its producers, poor marketing choices, and bad scheduling, which kept it from developing a broad audience and made NBC executives lean toward its cancellation. In an attempt to try and force the hand of the network, the producers deliberately filmed a cliffhanger ending for the series finale, 1.22 "All About EVE," which had the main character (and fan favorite), Devon Adair, contracting a mysterious disease and being put in cold sleep until a cure could be found. Many

questions about the nature of the new planet the advance team had settled on, and their chances of actually making a home there, remained unanswered.

[3.4] This cliffhanger was not enough for a second season to be authorized, but there is nothing like an unanswered question to solicit a reaction from fans, and there is nothing like many crucial questions to make the reactions spread and intensify. This is true especially if a long-expected official answer never arrives. In parallel with a series of petitions to NBC to revive the series and, later, to release a DVD of the existing season, many unofficial revivals began to spread over the Web in the form of fan fiction.

4. Online fan fiction: From alternative story to revitalizing instrument

[4.1] Building on the idea of fandom as a "rational, creative, and optimistic response by subordinate groups confronted with a[n] unjust social system" (Winship 1994), a number of works in fan studies have analyzed the ways in which fans, far from being passive recipients, engage in a variety of alternative forms of cultural production. De Certeau considered it impossible for TV fan writers to "scribbl[e] in the margins" (1984, 31) because he saw them as passive in front of the screen, unable to actively elaborate a personal vision out of the images. But such elaboration not only takes place frequently, but it also assumes previously untold forms of struggle for identification and search for pleasure (Jenkins 1992, 154).

[4.2] "[C]reating a product is the predictable next step" (Harrington and Bielby 1995, 20) of this search, and writing fan fiction is one of the primary ways of doing so (Thomas 2006). Such writing is increasingly done online and by means of electronic tools (Hellekson and Busse 2006); it encompasses issues of identity, community, space, and gender (Harris and Alexander 1998; Bury 2005; Penley 1997). The act of writing, an intrinsically social activity for fans, functions both as a means of personal expression and as a builder of collective identity—a vital part of the very meaning of being a fan (Black 2005). All fans contribute to the reshaping of the world they admire and love, articulating specific community features and spatial boundaries in the process (Bury 2005, 30). Fan fiction is a way of "having a conversation about the story, but also making it [one's] own and adding or subtracting from a collective mythology that brings [everyone] together as a community" (Dare 2006).

[4.3] By forming communities of fan writers, individuals support their own transformation from viewers to fans (Harrington and Bielby 1995, 97), which has its roots in a common, "primitive" (Dare 2006) affective experience. All author-fans have their own way of embarking on their transformation, and this diversity enriches the

community itself (Obst, Zinkiewicz, and Smith 2002). They do so by outlining a range of possibilities that may fall beyond the parameters of the original series (Jenkins 2002; Jenkins 1992, 165). Ultimately, it is the history of each fan that makes History (Tedeschi 2003) and helps define the production and sharing of fan fiction as the fan community's rejection of the idea that there is one and only one definitive—definitively produced, authorized, and regulated from the top down—version of the facts.

[4.4] I draw on the conception of fan fiction as an alternative form of cultural production, and on the empirical analysis of *Earth 2* fan writers' practices, to develop the essay's main argument. Fan fiction writing for this prematurely canceled series possesses peculiar features: if it is true that we have examples of participatory culture whenever fans are rejecting a definitive and official version of the story, the *Earth 2* fans are not just creating variations on an existing story or wanting alternatives to the stories provided by the producers and other official creators. The story is not only unsatisfactory or lacking potential; it is abruptly cut off and then disappears. In the face of this absence, fans use their disappointment at the cancellation to find inspiration for re-creation.

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5. Sharing answers: *Earth 2* fan fiction archives

[5.1] As of March 2009, there were 246 *Earth 2* stories on FanFiction.net and 255 in Andy's Earth 2 Fan-Fiction Archive, the main (but by no means the only) *Earth 2* fan fiction archives on the Internet. They vary significantly in length, from short stories of a few lines to sagas of 20 chapters. These archives are the primary venues for fans who want to share (and therefore legitimize or "officialize") their own fantasies about the evolution of the story line. Examining them reveals the topics, characters, and plots that are primarily focused upon, as well as the ways in which the unended story is addressed.

[5.2] The most striking feature of the *Earth 2* fiction archives is the relatively limited number of stories that are fillers—that is, stories that take place during the time depicted by the series. These account for 73 stories in Andy's Archive and 61 on FanFiction.net. There are 33 backstories (stories occurring before the events of the series), but the substantial majority, 153 and 181 in each archive, respectively, expand the timeline beyond the last official episode and deal with Devon's sudden illness, the way in which her friends will (perhaps unsurprisingly) eventually find a way to cure her, and, to a larger extent, the outcome of the colonists' journey to the supposedly habitable New Pacifica. Representative titles and synopses include "It's time to unfreeze Devon" (McDonnell 2003), "Letting go is hard…" (silhouettepoms 2003a), "My explanation of Devon's illness. Take it or leave it" (silhouettepoms

2003b), "tough decisions after Devon is placed in the cryochamber" (Oonagh 2006), and "Grieving Time" (Powers 2006a).

[5.3] Other fans prefer to undertake a more philosophical exercise that builds on and clarifies the "Gaian Hypothesis," which considers the whole planet as one interconnected living being and which underlies many of the episodes' plots (Tonella 2006). Whether the humans would be able to effectively become part of this huge living organism is another of the problems left unsolved by the cliffhanger ending, with a character making sinister predictions about the planet eventually "refusing" mankind…and this right before Devon becomes ill. Fans perceive this as another delicate issue to deal with in order to "make the journey continue." The challenge produces story lines narrating such things as "a discovery which may provide answers about the mysteries of Planet G889" (Powers 2006b). However, fan writers devote comparatively little attention to topics like class (how the pioneers address the issue of sharing their home not only with indigenous creatures, but also with dangerous prisoners, abandoned on the planet many years before) or hierarchy and politics (how the colonists of G889 relate to the world of the space stations, the "sanitized cans" they left behind). The omission or sparse treatment of these topics might be due to the fan writers' perception that such questions deal with a remote future, one in which humans are well established on G889; for the time being, there are more urgent topics to be addressed, such as Devon's survival and whether the first group of pioneers will be accepted or rejected by the planet.

[5.4] A survey of the synopses of *Firefly* and *Space: Above and Beyond* stories on FanFiction.net, compared to those of *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* stories there, seems to confirm that the relative proportions of stories mapping the characters' futures and those expanding on events within the time frame of the series are different for prematurely canceled series and more established ones. The proportions of the two kinds of stories are detailed in table 1 (note 1).

Table 1. Proportion of types of fan fiction

Type	***Earth 2***	***Firefly***	***Space: Above and Beyond***	***Babylon 5***	***Star Trek: Deep Space 9***
Fillers	134 (26.7%)	1511 (30.6%)	19 (26%)	929 (88.7%)	534 (63.6%)
Backstories	33 (6.5%)	158 (3.2%)	1 (1.3%)	14 (1.3%)	61 (7.3%)
Future stories	334 (66.6%)	3266 (66.2%)	54 (74.0%)	104 (9.9%)	244 (29/1%)
Total	501	4935	73	1047	839

[5.5] The important presence of love and romance in a significant majority of *Earth 2* fan fiction stories is unsurprising; fans "relish episodes where relationships are examined, especially those where characters respond in a caring fashion to the psychological problems, professional turning points, personality conflicts, and physical hurts of other major characters" (Jenkins 1992, 174). In this regard, *Earth 2* fan writers have, in the advance team, particularly rich material. Of the nine main characters of the series, eight of them can in some way be paired, in the present or in the future. Morgan and Bess Martin are actually husband and wife; Julia Heller, physician to the project, and the pilot, Alonzo Solace, discover their mutual attraction on the planet. True Danziger and Uly Adair, the two children of the group, are shown in a flash-forward episode to be more than just friends in the future. Devon Adair, the wealthy space station designer, and John Danziger, the gruff mechanic, eventually emerge as the natural leaders of the group, balancing their strong personalities with totally different views. They always get on each other's nerves, but several hints at how much they actually care for each other were given throughout the season. This tension would likely have led to a significant amount of romantic fiction had the series proceeded normally. There are 250 stories labeled "romance" on FanFiction.net for *Babylon 5,* 323 for *Star Trek: Deep Space 9,* 1325 for *Firefly,* 28 for *Space: Above and Beyond*—in all cases, a major part of the whole. The two analyzed *Earth 2* archives are no exception, with a total of 284 stories labeled "romance." However, these stories differ from those for other shows in three respects: temporality, choice of characters, and levels of subversion. I will consider each of them briefly.

[5.6] First, only 61 romance stories are set within the timeline of the series, and only five of the remaining 223 concern events before "First Contact," usually to clarify the origins of True and Uly. The remainder are set after "All About EVE," especially the stories dealing with the possible outcomes of the relationship between Devon and Danziger (nicknamed by the fans D&D), not only the most nuanced and implicit while the series was running, but left even more uncertain and open to interpretation by the way it ended. Ninety-two stories on FanFiction.net and 71 in Andy's Archive deal with the D&D relationship after the series' official end: they are generally melodramatic in tone, often portraying John Danziger sitting next to Devon's cryogenic pod and telling her, aloud or silently, what he never dared to tell her in person (Earth2Kim 2003), or describing Devon's dreams and thoughts in cold sleep, mostly focused on a predictable topic (White 1999; Maggie1 2000). The fact that she should presumably be unable to dream in cold sleep apparently pales in comparison to the opportunity to finally make D&D into a couple. So the unusual features of the *Earth 2* case appear to derive from the pressure of the suspended animation required by Devon's potentially fatal disease upon an otherwise common trend in the genre. This is particularly true of the romantic involvement of the two group leaders, which was not only never made explicit, but is

now under serious threat with the closure of the official story. The incompleteness of this story line is in this case the main catalyst for the fantasies of fan writers.

[5.7] Second, and following this same line of thinking, the level of interest in the relationships of the other three couples (as indicated by the degree to which they are explored in fan works) seems directly correlated with the couple's stability as described or hinted at during the series itself. Fan writers are probably unwilling to explore the future romantic involvement of True and Uly because they see them as too young. There are very few stories dealing with Morgan and Bess Martin as a couple (focusing instead on the development of Morgan's character), and this appears to be at least partially because their status as a married couple was never really addressed during the season, and is better just taken for granted. More stories can be found about Julia and Alonzo, who are the only two characters who become a couple during the actual time frame of the series, but their romantic involvement is more a background element than a primary one in all the episodes—and in fan works, their future is depicted as ranging from a happy life as married parents to grim good-byes as Alonzo eventually flies back to the space station.

[5.8] Finally, almost none of the writers, even the ones who like to challenge the original story line the most, seems to radically change the couples from how they were presented (or hinted at) in the original series. You will hardly ever find Danziger looking for comfort in Julia's arms, or Bess cheating on her husband with Alonzo. Apart from the authors of two slash stories on FanFiction.net and one in Andy's Archive (and these authors' other stories are, in any case, more conventional), I found only one writer who systematically enjoys upsetting the emotional balances of the group. As she playfully points out on her Web site: "I like to torture and kill characters. Why? It's fun!…You can do anything to the characters and label it a possibility. You can even blow up the planet" (Mayer 1998). And yet despite her caustic writing style, she takes care to carefully explain and contextualize her acts ("be safe in the knowledge that 'their friends' are really okay and this was only the strange imagination of one person," she tells her readers on a page specifically devoted to the overall subversive rationale behind her stories). Maybe without this clarification she would be going too far—if what is at stake is not just a fan's *divertissement,* but a fan community proposing its members as the only remaining authors on the subject?

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6. Producing answers: The voices of fan writers

[6.1] As mentioned above, my first direct contact with *Earth 2* fan writers was an open e-mail letter I wrote in 2006 to the subscribers to the Earth2 Fanfiction and Eden After Dark mailing lists, asking if they were available to be interviewed. The following discussion is based on the responses of 12 fan writers, that is, the ones who answered

affirmatively to that letter (or to a copy of it I sent again in 2008) and who gave informed consent. The questions I asked broadly fall into three categories: writing fan fiction in general, the fics' relation to *Earth 2* as a series, and (most important) their fan fiction for this specific series.

[6.2] The act of writing fan fiction is viewed as a reflection of both the audience's fascination with the program and the producers' refusal or inability to tell the stories viewers want to see (Hellekson 1997; Jenkins 1992, 162). The interviewees generally agreed on a definition of fan fiction as fiction written by amateur writers ("for enjoyment and not for money") based on a favorite television show, using the characters and events of the show. Answers to my question about the do's and don't's of the fan fiction writer were more varied. Do's included taking pride in what you write; being courteous; respecting the original creator's concept, even if not rigidly (this was phrased as "honoring the source material" or as "being true to the established characteristics of each character and story line"); and respecting the readers and trying to create a work of professional quality. Most fan writers identified as a "don't" authorial self-insertion, or insertion of a relative, into the story—practices generally considered by the community as either cheap or narcissistic (Dare 2006; Chaney and Liebler 2006). Most fan authors see writing fan fiction as a way of extending a world they love and sharing it with others, but also as a way of showing the world their own writing ability, humor, and imagery. For others, it's an escape from a demanding job, a supplier of some things missing from real life (because of either lack of time or fear of trying), or it may be wish fulfillment, with the fan becoming deeply involved in the lives of the fictional characters on the screen. One writer pointed out that she would never write fiction about any show while it was still on, because doing so would mean creating an alternative story line. She prefers to let the originator tell the story, and only jump in when he or she is done.

[6.3] Most of the interviewees had written fan fiction for other series as well as for *Earth 2,* but very often these stories were connected to *Earth 2,* most of them as crossovers. *Earth 2* characters often spill into other series' plots, and writers explained the overlap as caused by their need to fill an empty hole ("I loved it so much that I couldn't have not done it"), and, in one case, the desire to do justice to a character (Morgan Martin) who had been, in the writer's opinion, misunderstood while the series was airing and badly represented by other fan writers later.

[6.4] Some fans keep on writing stories, either for *Earth 2* or for other series. They offered various reasons for continuing: "It's addictive," "I feel that I can do much better [than] most of the stuff the fiction professional writers get paid for," "I can't help but going on sharing my love for my favorite shows with others." Those who were not writing anymore cited reasons like an increasingly demanding job or newer

interests; but they still underlined their ongoing loyalty to the series and the characters and their belief that writing fan fiction is the best way to keep them "immortal."

[6.5] All interviewees had been passionate followers of the show since the very beginning, except those who didn't know about the show when it premiered and started watching it by accident, were captivated by the plot and characters, and became die-hard fans. All but one had taken part in one or more fan conventions; two people had originated or organized such gatherings; and two other people participated in trips to filming locations. They identified different characters and episodes as favorites, but two trends can be recognized among their answers. First, when one character was cited as a favorite, very often the character perceived as his or her soul mate was also cited, even—or especially—if the relationship between them had not been developed in the aired episodes. Second, each interviewee's favorite episode was almost always the one that displayed more emotion and (romantic) interaction between the interviewee's favorite character and the character's partner. (Even those moments most relished by the fans, however, are not particularly explicit.)

[6.6] Writing fan fiction for *Earth 2,* in particular, is unanimously correlated with the disappointment, anger, or sense of emptiness felt at the cancellation of the series and the inability of the official writers to tell any story at all. This negative feeling promotes fans' ongoing loyalty to and fascination with the program. One fan said that, while exploring ideas that need to be explored, he works through emotional issues of his own; another one "just wanted to live in this world for a bit longer"; another one pointed out that the cliffhanger ending made writing fan fiction an obvious choice: the show was "rife with interpersonal relationships begging to be explored," so while she intended, in the beginning, to just resolve the ending, she couldn't stop until she had written 200 pages.

[6.7] I anticipated negative responses when asking about the fans' reactions to the cliffhanger ending, and indeed I received some: "It's a shame we'll never see what the cast and writers could have done," "I thought it sucked. I truly felt that E2 was the bastard child at the family reunion," "They tried to change the show to fit the demographic they wanted…and failed miserably." But at the same time, and perhaps surprisingly, most fans also added that they were expecting it ("I wasn't surprised at all," "Prepared for that happening"). They also articulately suggested reasons for it ("I guess the time was not right for this concept in the mid-1990s. Today, with *Lost,* a show with very similar premises, it speaks to millions of people"), even though, interestingly, they did not cite technological or industrial reasons for the demise of the series, such as the repeal of the FCC's financial interest and syndication rules, the rise of cable television and the changes it prompted in the traditional networks' standards

of success, or the absence at the time of DVD releases and downloads as alternative revenue streams. Many of the writers explicitly considered themselves the natural heirs to the authorship of the series, empowered to keep it alive: "Writing E2 FF allowed the show to continue even though it had been cancelled. It allowed [fans] to fill in gaps and continue the story past the cancellation."

[6.8] With the exception of one interviewee, for whom crossovers with other series are more important than the stories exclusively about *Earth 2* and who would therefore have written them in any case, fan writers declared that their interest in writing about the series is correlated with the numerous questions left unanswered by it, concerning relationships between the characters, the outcome of their journey, and the habitability of the new planet.

[6.9] A final set of observations concerns the "character ethics" of the authors: what they consider natural for a character to do, and what (if anything) they would forbid a character to do. Most respondents said that they would never let a figure in their stories "do anything out of character"—that is, do anything that contradicted what they believed was his or her true character as originally stated by the series' creators. One fan, quite interestingly, made a precise and deliberate choice to avoid any reference to a group of characters that had appeared as guests in a couple of episodes, because "I never felt they belonged in the program." Another one said that she didn't, and wouldn't, avoid any characters because they are all needed in the stories, but she didn't write any stories focusing on a character other than her favorite one because he was the only one she felt she knew well enough to "get inside his head" and write accurate stories about him.

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7. Conclusion

[7.1] We are at the end of our journey through the modalities of production and sharing of fan fiction for the television series *Earth 2.* The fandom for this one-season series has been a case study of the extent to which fan fiction writing for prematurely canceled series exhibits unusual features in comparison to writing for established series. Moreover, it allowed us to explore whether such features are present because, rather than being an alternative form of cultural production parallel to a running series, fan fiction becomes in such cases the only way for the story to keep on living. I offer here some conclusions regarding these topics.

[7.2] Some features of the *Earth 2* fan fiction contained on FanFiction.net and in Andy's Archive, and of the community of fan writers authoring it, suggest an image of fans as creative but rational, imaginative but realistic, aware of the constraints imposed on them by those who originally created the object of their fandom but fully

capable of turning these limitations into alternative opportunities for cultural production. And yet, beyond this portrait—elaborated over the last 15 years in a variety of works that I can only partially acknowledge because of space constraints—the *Earth 2* fan fiction shows a number of atypical features. The present analysis allows me to suggest that these features are due to the show's premature cancellation and cliffhanger ending, and this analysis constitutes an original addition to the articulate mosaic of participatory culture production, indicating how the official closure of a TV series is addressed through fan fiction.

[7.3] Most *Earth 2*–related writing efforts are attempts to revive an abruptly terminated story by taking over characters, events, meanings, and worlds that have been outlined with some precision and completeness by the original authors but are now left exclusively to the jurisdiction of fan writers. The crucial question is then whether the fans perceive this jurisdiction as a further constraint or as increased freedom. It might be felt as a constraint if fans want to perpetuate the characters and core assumptions of the show as loyally and faithfully as possible, just as grieving parents might not change the furniture in their child's room after her unexpected death. Alternatively, a sense of freedom could originate in a feeling of betrayal, which could lead fan writers to refuse the direction that the story seemed likely to take when it officially ended. My findings indicate that fan writers generally limit their stories' contradictions with the material asbroadcast: writing fan fiction for *Earth 2* appears to be a fulfillment of an original promise rather than a step in new, more controversial directions. The fans' faithfulness to the established *Earth 2* universe seems to be correlated with the sudden and too-early halt this universe came to: a correlation that finds confirmation in the comparison with prematurely canceled series on the one hand, and long-lived series on the other.

[7.4] Furthermore, my analysis indicates that fan fiction written for prematurely canceled series fulfills a promise by filling gaps. Fans point out that some topics beg to be explored, some emotions ask to be delved into, some relationships cry out for development or follow-up—they were left open-ended, and stories thus cluster around a few starting points and main topics. At the same time, however, fan writers ask themselves questions about the ways they can fulfill the promise: the fact that they are the only remaining authors of the story, instead of alternative or parallel ones, bestows upon fan writers a responsibility they seem to be generally sensitive to and proud of (even the very few "heretics" pay homage to it, as their remarks indicate). At the same time, the disappointment over the absence of an official story and the consequent perception of loss produces a sense of combativeness and a will to do justice to the "bastard child at the family reunion," which are reflected in both the literary style and the writing ethics of fan authors.

[7.5] During one of the interviews, a fan writer quoted a remark by one of the *Earth 2* characters, calling it the most inspiring statement for him in all the series: "It's an extraordinary new world, and survival is simply a question of whether we can reach deep enough to find the extraordinary in ourselves" (1.12 "Better Living Through Morganite, Part 2"). This quotation might very well serve as a conclusion to this essay: it encapsulates what the revival of a canceled series in fan fiction is about. It means searching for answers between an established but abandoned world and the opportunity to make it one's own, filling in gaps when fates were left uncertain, characters unexplored, relationships undeveloped, so as to ultimately counter official closure with a re-creation.

8. Acknowledgments

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9. Appendix: Standard questions for e-mail interview

Writing fan fiction

- How would you define fan fiction and the act of writing it?
- What are, in your opinion, the "do's and don't's" of a fan fiction writer?
- What does writing fan fiction mean to you?
- What series did you write/are you writing fan fiction about in your life?
- Why/when did you start writing fan fiction?
- Are you still writing fan fiction? Why/why not?

Earth 2

- How long have you been an *Earth 2* fan?
- Did you ever take part in an *Earth 2* fan convention?
- Do you have a favorite character? Who is he/she/it and why?
- What is your favorite episode?

Writing Earth 2 fan fiction

- What does writing *Earth 2* fan fiction in particular mean to you?
- What did you think when the series was stopped after a cliffhanger ending?
- What subplots/characters/events would you have liked to see explored in the second season that never took place?
- What subplots/characters/events did you explore in your fan fiction up to now?
- Do you think that you would have started writing fan fiction on *Earth 2* had the series not been canceled with so many questions left open? Why/why not?

- Are there any characters you prefer to write about, or any characters you would avoid writing about? Why/why not?
- Is there something that you would never let a character do in your stories? If yes, what and why?

Something about you (optional)

- What is your age and gender?
- What is your profession?
- Do you have any children? If yes, do they watch *Earth 2* with you?

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10. Note

1. Although it would certainly be useful to distinguish the stories posted before the show's cancellation from those posted after it, it is not possible to do so, as one of the archives is a new version of an older one, and the stories have been reposted to it. The posting dates on the existing archive are therefore meaningless. Still, it should be a safe enough bet that the stories dealing with what happens after the last episode of the show were posted after the cancellation.

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Praxis

Fighting the fan sub war: Conflicts between media rights holders and unauthorized creator/distributor networks

Mikhail Koulikov

Brooklyn, New York, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—The way Japanese animation has been spread outside Japan not only by entertainment companies but also by fan groups that have worked to produce fan subs—that is, subtitled translations of films and television shows produced without authorization and shared outside established commercial channels—has been one of the most powerful examples of transformative culture to take place in the last three decades or so. Much has already been written about anime and its global impact, but the process of fan sub creation and distribution, and in particular how these groups have been structured, has not yet been examined in depth. A question that is becoming prominent concerns what happens when the fan subbing culture finally clashes with authorized commercial content distributors. This essay explores the way fan sub distribution has changed over the years and draws on the concept of Net war to illustrate the conflict and the potential tools and methods animation distribution companies have used to engage, subvert, and interdict these groups. This has broad implications for understanding and predicting the flow of other emerging conflicts between networked actors, such as hackers, anarchists, and activists, and hierarchically organized traditional corporate entities.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Anime; Arquilla; Japanese animation; Net war; Networked publics; Peer-to-peer distribution; Ronfeldt

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Numerous authors have put forth the argument that networks are—or are on the way to becoming—the dominant mode of interaction between groups of individuals and within societies (Pagels 1989; Castells 1996; Powell 1990). A good definition of a network, as presented by Brass et al. (2004, 795), is "a set of nodes and the set of ties representing some relationship, or lack of relationship, between the nodes," with the nodes being either individuals or organizations. The notion of the social network, conceptualized and used as a framework for applications, is quite possibly a defining concept of the first years of the 21st century in a whole range of disciplines. For example, Cross and Parker (2004) discuss the effect of social networks on business and management practices, Vega-Redondo (2007) draws on social networks to talk about international economics and development, while Scott (2002) brings together a group of scholars to show how important an understanding of social networks is to sociology. However, much of the scholarly and popular thinking that surrounds networks and their role in society is still limited in its approaches and goals.

[1.2] As Raab and Milward (2003) demonstrate, a significant percentage of the recent writing on networks, in particular social networks, has focused on their positive and empowering effects. The possibility that networks can be agents of conflict and facilitators of ways of achieving particular

goals to the benefit of one group and the detriment of another is frequently either ignored or not even considered to begin with. A network of antiwar activists may be treated as inherently different from a network of white supremacists, even if the ways the two are actually organized as they carry out missions and pursue goals are largely similar. From another point of view, much of the focus on social networks has been limited to looking at their surface and immediate activities. Far less common are deeper analyses and the study of the question why these activities take place and what underlying frameworks can be used to predict how social networks develop and evolve. It would not be a stretch to say that much of the study of networks has left out the possibility of the real or potential threat they present to those whose own interests would be threatened by the development of particular networks.

[1.3] Many American parents are all too familiar with Japanese cartoons such as *Pokemon* (1998–) and *Naruto* (2005–). These shows have dominated television time slots aimed at children and teenagers since the late 1990s. But it will be a surprise to many that the Japan External Trade Organization recently estimated the market for anime (the term used to encompass all Japanese-originated animation, including feature films, DVDs, and television cartoons) in the United States to stand at close to $4.5 billion (Zac Bertschy, "Keynote: Anime in the U.S.," *Anime News Network,* June 29, 2007, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/convention/2007/anime-expo/keynote-anime-in-the-us). Anime conventions held in various cities around the country draw thousands of attendees, and according to internal research by the industry-leading distributor of Japanese animation, 69 percent of all Americans ages 16 to 29 have watched anime within a recent year (Koulikov 2007).

[1.4] Anime fans—whether or not they see or think of themselves in terms of membership in a coherent organization, group, or entity—constitute a prominent community with a distinct set of practices, patterns of behavior, and ways of relating to other communities and groups. The community, or at least its sections and subgroups, has been already been the subject of several studies (Newitz 1994; Napier 2006; Chandler-Olcott 2007; Allison 2008). The approach these studies have usually taken has been essentially anthropological—recording fan practices and behaviors, but not exploring them in depth. One particular topic that has not yet been examined is the relationship between the groups' organizational structures and their actions. Here, I argue that a particularly important feature of the community of anime fans is the networks within it, and that a key to understanding this community lies in understaning its networked activities. One such activity consists of working without authorization, perhaps even outright illegally, to subvert established commercial distribution structures for cinema and video entertainment products. This activity plays a major role in giving the community of anime fans structure and shape, and it allows the group to engage in various ways with the corporate, commercial world that the community comes into contact with. Just how the networks that support this activity operate, and what kind of response the commercial distribution structures offer, are issues that have particular value for both business entities and nonpolitical social groups, regardless of their specific fields or causes—to say nothing of groups and communities of fans of other forms of entertainment.

2. The birth of fan sub networks

[2.1] What is the standard distribution structure for Japanese animation in the United States? Details vary from fan work to fan work, but the overall scheme is the same and can easily be inferred. Animation is aired on Japanese television, distributed on DVD directly to consumers, or

screened in theaters. Some time later, American companies (currently no more than a dozen, most of them privately owned and highly specialized) acquire foreign distribution and merchandizing rights to individual anime titles. Later still, these series and films are translated, given subtitles and voice-overs, and released into the retail market outside Japan for both online and in-store distribution, or broadcast on (primarily) cable television. The time between when a given anime airs in Japan and when it can be purchased at the Best Buy at the local mall generally ranges from several months to several years; 1 to 2 years is typical (Kelts 2006), although this has been changing as digital distribution of media content has undergone a rapid evolution.

[2.2] Alongside this structure exists a "fan distribution network," one that is entirely parallel but aggressively noncommercial (Leonard 2005a, 282). Before the commercial structure was even in place, and faced with no way to access Japanese animation commercially, individuals throughout the United States began acquiring anime directly from Japan, largely through private noncommercial channels, using cutting-edge computer technologies to attach subtitles to the original raw content, and then distributing the resulting products, known as fan subs (note 1), in a framework that Leonard (2005b, 197) defines as a "proselytization commons—[a space] where the media texts and the ideas of a movement are held in common and are employed to advance a directed cause." A more thorough overview of this process is provided by Hatcher (2005). Although a specific start date for this activity is difficult to pin down, by the early 1990s, articles in fan-oriented magazines could comfortably refer to the "earlier days" of fan subbing and its start "a few years ago" (Tatsugawa 1991; Wang 1992). "It was crude, it was make-shift but it worked for the most part" is how one of the earliest groups describes its efforts, which launched in 1985 (William Chow, "New Arctic Animation subtitling ordering information," http://web.archive.org/web/20090805112605/http://geocities.com/Tokyo/Teahouse/8513/policy.txt). From these humble beginnings, fan subs have evolved to a point where an anime episode shown on Japanese television on a Friday night can be available for free online by the following Monday, if not sooner, with (relatively) accurate English subtitles, provided by an unmediated and noncommercial online distribution network. This fan sub might then be downloaded by as many as 18,000 people at the same time (Leonard 2005b). All the while, the relationship between the anime companies and those who create, distribute, and consume these fan subs remains complex, in particular because of the close historical ties between them, but also because the fan sub groups represent an entirely novel and unexpected type of organization—one where it is difficult to know whether they are challengers or potential partners.

[2.3] From the early 1990s to the present, these fan distribution networks (I use the term here in a broad sense) have evolved through at least two, and possibly three, stages. At each stage, the flow of information, the social relationships that held the networks together, and their relationship to other stakeholders—particularly Japanese content creators and official American content distributors—were different. A pertinent area of inquiry might ask these questions: how might stakeholders interact with, and potentially disrupt, these networks? Should they even do so? And is a network, once established, essentially indestructible?

3. From networks to Net wars

[3.1] A new dimension was introduced into the study of networks in the mid-1990s. In a monograph originally prepared in 1996 for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Naval Postgraduate School's John Arquilla and RAND's David Ronfeldt move beyond examining the

structures of networks—and past a relatively uncritical approach—to look at how networks can be agents of conflict and resistance. They have also used the description "dark side of the network phenomenon" (Ronfeldt and Arquilla 2001, 311) to refer to the object of their study. In the monograph, the authors propose the concept of the Net war, which they define as "an emerging mode of conflict…, in which the protagonists use—indeed, depend on using—network forms of organization" (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 5). Chapters in a follow-up edited collection of essays (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001) describe the three possible types of networks, diagram them, and present both expected and thoroughly unexpected examples of entities that wage Net war against more hierarchically organized structures. Anti-Western Islamic terrorists are one such group, but so are Mexico's Zapatista rebels, the loosely organized activists who took part in the violent antiglobalization protests in 1999 known as the Battle of Seattle, and nongovernmental organizations that began a publicity campaign against the government of Burma in the late 1990s. Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that the way the network is actually organized is equally important to its goals—and that understanding a network's organization may be an important first step to effectively engaging with it.

[3.2] A key point to keep in mind when thinking about this analysis of networks and Net wars is that the terminology and diagrams proposed should be universal—that is, applicable to situations and groups beyond those that they describe. But precisely because of the situations in which this terminology is most often used, it is also far too easy to believe that network analysis is only relevant when looking at instances of conflict between sub-state-level groups and the state. In many cases, but not all, this conflict will be violent, involving terrorist, criminal, and otherwise destructive forces on one side and organizations whose duty is to ensure the safety and security of their stakeholders on the other. In fact, the case studies introduced in Arquilla and Ronfeldt's *Networks and Netwars* (2001) do generally demonstrate how networks try to disrupt the power and authority wielded by national or local governments. In their goals and methods, there is a degree of difference between a networked terrorist organization working to harm the interests of the United States and a network of human rights activists collaborating against the interests of the government of Myanmar; likewise, violent anarchists on the streets of Seattle differ greatly from relatively peaceful environmental activists. However, the patterns of power largely remain the same throughout the analyses. One side is limited to using hard power, up to and including violence; the other, the network, has access to the full range of soft-power and hard-power methods, with the specific range determined by its composition and goals. At the same time, there is a certain inherent imbalance: the state, while possessing a theoretical monopoly on the use of power, is not able to unleash its full force, while the network will not be powerful enough to seriously threaten the actual existence of the state structure it is opposed to.

[3.3] The next step in thinking about networks and Net wars, then, should be to extend the analysis of conflicts involving networks outside the state/nonstate arena, and to show how this same thinking can explain interactions between competing groups that do not have access to the level of power normally wielded by a state. The concept of *networked publics* (Ito 2008, 3) is useful here. Ito refers to individuals who are enabled to become "reactors and (re)makers in relation to media, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media 'reception.'" Individuals may be in conflict with the state, but individuals are primarily in conflict (again, used in the broadest sense) with other individuals, and with social and corporate groups. The entire concept of networks and Net wars may be usefully examined if we consider that networks may face off not against governments, but

against corporations. At the same time, there is clearly value in seeing how nonstate actors themselves can respond to threats from networks, and whether these responses are essentially the same as or different from those offered in the original case studies presented by Arquilla and Ronfeldt.

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4. Fan sub networks evolve into...

[4.1] As far back as 1994, Newitz described the typical process by which anime was acquired, translated, and presented to American fans. The original material was bought in Japan by tourists or other visitors, such as military personnel, or exchanged in kind with Japanese fans of American television shows. Several Americans, often college students, would then band together to use personal computer technology to create a fan sub. Advertising would be either by word of mouth or via early Internet communications such as bulletin board systems or Web sites. Actual distribution would be on VHS tape via the mail. An interesting feature, which Cubbison (2005) points out, was the emergence of a code of ethics that guided both the technical features of fan subs and acceptable behaviors of fan subbers. For example, only those shows that were not available in the United States commercially should be fan subbed; translations should be as close to the original Japanese as possible, regardless of how natural or literate the result would be; and fan subbers should be committed to operating not in a black market, but entirely outside market structures. The typical business model required that anyone desiring a copy of a fan sub must mail a self-addressed, stamped envelope containing either a blank videocassette or the cost of one in cash to the fan sub distributor. The transaction would be explicitly noncommercial.

[4.2] From a consumer's point of view, the process of getting access to a fan sub would begin with finding a fan sub group—through friends, an anime club, or an online advertisement or Web site. Each group could have complicated instructions on how to actually get its product, so an individual's request would begin making its way up the chain, from the individual viewer as an outlying node in the fan sub distribution network to the group as a hub. In their study of fan subbing, Diaz Cintas and Munos Sanchez (2006) identify at least five specific roles or tasks that would be performed at the level of the hub, although of course they could be filled by several individuals each, or combined with one person performing several roles. At a minimum, these roles would have include those with responsibility for acquiring and providing the original untranslated source material, translators, timers, typesetters, editors, and encoders. Each hub would in turn be connected via a pure chain network of links between single individuals, terminating with an original provider in Japan, who could also be represented as a node, neither directly connected to nor even really aware of the ultimate consumer. There would be little actual communication between nodes, both at the level of the customer and at the level of the group, although there could be some communication between the members of a given cluster of viewers involved with a particular group. In fact, the groups themselves could either compete against each other, usually on translation quality, or specialize in particular genres. For example, one well-known fan subber, who uses the pseudonym Hishoburaiken, was so dissatisfied with what he considered to be an inferior product being put out by several groups that he was inspired to learn the techniques of the process and founded his own group (Mikhail Koulikov, "Otakon 2008 fansubs and industry panel," *Anime News Network,* August 16, 2008, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/convention/2008/fansubs-and-industry-panel). The groups were often fiercely independent, with an emphasis on a particular identity and a good deal of self-

promotion. Beyond providing a service to the fan community, each group or network itself could be seen as a distinct unit. Of course, there was also nothing specifically built into the system that would prevent abuse; for example, there were stores in areas such as New York's Chinatown and the Washington, D.C., suburb of College Park that were infamous for subverting the ethics of the movement by making in-house copies of fan subs, which they made commercially available for sale or rent.

[4.3] One question that fascinates those who have commented on this history of the fan sub movement is why this underground circulation was tolerated by both the original Japanese rights holders and the emerging American anime distribution companies. Why were there no real efforts made in the early 1990s to disrupt the distribution of fan subs? Russell et al. (2008) provide one simple explanation: there was very little in the way of an American anime industry at that point, and because the companies that did exist frequently grew out of existing fan groups and were still very much connected to them, disruptive efforts from the American side were minimal. For their part, Japanese companies had been soured by an earlier attempt to exploit the U.S. market commercially in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Leonard 2005b), and they now preferred to simply ignore the issue. Moreover, the attitude toward copyright enforcement was, at least then, more lax in Japan than in the West, even if Japanese copyright law is not substantively different (Mehra 2002). Working outside the commercial environment, fan sub groups took "risks no commercial distributor would have confronted, testing the market for new genres, producers, and series" (Jenkins 2005, 79)—and in fact prepared the ground for the anime explosion of the late 1990s. On a different level, trying to interfere with a distribution of a product that was moved primarily by word of mouth and propelled by personal, one-to-one relationships was simply too time-consuming and costly.

[4.4] The emergence and proliferation of high-speed Internet access, which spread outward from college campuses and major urban areas in the late 1990s, was a technological revolution that had an impact far beyond the merely technological. Lessig's read-write Internet ("Creatives face a closed Net," *Financial Times,* December 28, 2005, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/d55dfe52-77d2-11da-9670-0000779e2340.html) and O'Reilly's Web 2.0 ("What Is Web 2.0," *O'Reilly,* September 30, 2005, http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html) could not have happened without this technological backbone. The effect of many of these technologies on fan subbing was great; even the basic terminology shifted with the introduction of the term *digisub,* which puts an emphasis on the technical process. The concept of the fan sub is certainly still around, but although at one point the term had a distinct connection to its community origins, this is no longer the case. Nearly all fan subs are now shared digitally, with little or no ties to any established communities. A fan subbing group could still operate as a hub, but the number of hubs, and the number of end users attached to each hub, could—and did—grow. The output of a group did not need to be limited by how many copies of an anime could be physically recorded onto tapes and then mailed out, and the process of receiving a new anime episode from Japan no longer depended on waiting for a tape to arrive from a Japanese contact. Thus, tightly knit fan subbing groups defined by geography could evolve into essentially global virtual teams defined by working on tasks.

[4.5] In addition, the ethical component of the earlier stage of group-controlled fan subbing began to fray as the scene itself grew. Based as it was on the transfer of physical objects, it was not well suited to an environment where the transfer was of information. The scene moved to

networked data exchange: file-sharing utilities such as Napster, Kazaa, and Hotline, as well as services such as IRC, ran on computers with access to high-speed Internet connections, and these networks permitted links to be drawn between individual nodes within clusters. Fan subs drew on this new model of anonymous content sharing. A customer no longer needed to build a personal relationship with a fan sub group. Instead, the group could provide content to many customers simultaneously, and the customers could connect directly to each other. The chain from original Japanese content provider to fan sub group to end user weakened. The network of fans with access to the latest content gained in strength and effectiveness, and the ethical component of provision of content within a rigid structure of rules fell by the wayside as fan sub groups fought to provide new content the quickest.

[4.6] At about the same time, Japanese companies finally saw the potential of the overseas market. McGray (2002), in discussing the concept of soft power and specifically using Japan as an example, introduced the Japanese government and the country's industry to the idea that it did not need to be an economic superpower to project its image throughout the world. The government—in particular what was then known as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and what has since been renamed the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI)—in turn enthusiastically seized on the idea, proposing, for example, specific actions to promote the country's content industry abroad (Yoshimoto 2003). This, of course, would bring Japanese companies into direct conflict with the evolving American fan distribution network.

> [4.7] These are good times to be an anime fan. DVD's have never been cheaper. If you're not into buying DVD's or don't have the money, you can download DVD-quality copies over the internet for free and never have to worry about anything bad ever happening to you, ever.

[4.8] An anime journalist opened a 2007 editorial with these words. The editorial received hundreds of responses from fans—and several more from executives of both American anime distributors and Japanese production companies (Justin Sevakis, "Editorial: An open letter to the industry," *Anime News Network,* November 25, 2007, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/editorial/2007-11-25). For the anime fan, if not for anyone in the business of selling anime, the third and current stage of fan sub distribution in the United States represents good times indeed. The distribution of fan subbed anime on physical media and via the original file-sharing programs has largely been replaced by the development of true peer-to-peer data sharing. Anime fans were among the first to adopt applications such as BitTorrent for peer-to-peer dissemination of data, which removes the need for any kind of stable, centralized entity that distributes content while also making it easy to access content. It allows for almost simultaneous release of the Japanese-language original and the fan sub—and it supports staggering numbers of downloads. Exact numbers for the popularity of BitTorrent are hard to pin down, but one figure—and not by any means the most recent—put the number of files of anime episodes being downloaded via BitTorrent daily at 120,000 (Borland 2005).

[4.9] Returning to Arquilla and Ronfeldt's diagram of networks, right now, the fan sub network might be understood as largely an all-channel environment, or perhaps a vast array of interconnected all-channel networks. Multiple nodes, some of them redundant, feed information for distribution to all willing participants, who themselves then become distributors. Fan sub groups no longer have to take active steps to spread their products. A new file, once placed online, is tracked

by one or several third-party services that facilitate the sharing/distribution process further and remove most of the potential entry barriers, such as complicated technology or time demands. All a new fan needs to do to locate and download a new episode of an anime series is to know where to search for one using a generic program such as a BitTorrent client. The consumers of the fan subs are now as far removed as possible from both the original producers and the groups that translate the original files into English and make them available, and there is essentially no way to track exactly how a given file spreads or where it will end up. The network has grown and expanded at the price of weakening the internal connections among the nodes of creation and distribution.

5. Fighting the Net war

[5.1] Between the increasing relevance of the foreign market to Japanese companies (Onouchi 2007) and the continuing decline of overall DVD sales in the United States (Paul Bond, "DVD spells digital video decline," *Hollywood Reporter,* December 21, 2006), both Japanese and American companies involved in the industry have moved beyond ignorance or indifference to the sheer amount of unauthorized, perhaps outright illegal, distribution of anime that goes on daily. Especially over the past 2 years, the impact of this type of unauthorized content distribution has been cited as a significant contributing factor in the stagnation and decline of the market for Japanese animation in the United States (Calvin Reid, "News report finds manga sales up; anime DVD down in '07," *Publishers Weekly,* December 7, 2007, http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/new-titles/adult-announcements/article/4776-new-report-finds-c2-a0manga-sales-up-anime-dvd-down-in-07-c2-a0-.html). Companies' reactions to this have varied. In general, the specific methods that are being used to counteract the fan sub networks actually hold lessons for the network/Net war theory in general, especially given what Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue is the difficulty of successfully disrupting networks without the overwhelming use of force. Methods in use range from relatively unsophisticated, heavy-handed approaches that raise their own issues to those that are significantly more nuanced and cognizant of the unique relationship between the producers and consumers of a cult entertainment. Some embrace technological solutions, whereas others take a more strategic view and aim to take away the reasons for these networks' existence.

[5.2] The heavy-handed methods are perhaps the easiest to identify and explain. A frequent practice of American anime companies is to issue cease-and-desist letters to fan subbing groups that are working on series to which the company in question has acquired the distribution rights (Borland 2005). This attacks the major nodes of the all-channel network but does not directly affect other nodes or individuals. Furthermore, a key symptom of the Internet in general and of Web 2.0 specifically is that once information is released, it will exist essentially in perpetuity. Especially in a peer-to-peer environment, once created, a file will continue to be available for distribution as long as at least one person makes it available. An approach that attempted to correct for this by targeting not the originators but the end users (similar to how the music industry has approached illegal downloaders) was recently undertaken by the Singapore-based anime licensing company Odex (Victoria Ho, "Odex softens on illegal downloads," *ZDNet Asia,* September 17, 2007, http://www.zdnetasia.com/odex-softens-on-illegal-downloaders-62032298.htm). The company used technologies that allowed it to identify individual downloaders, then threatened them with court action. Perhaps predictably, the result has been public resistance,

including criticism of the company's own business practices. Some efforts undertaken by Japanese companies have been similar: as discussed earlier, there is an aversion in Japan to litigation, but to protect both rights and potential markets, Japanese anime companies have been leveraging their existing relationships with American distributors to have similar letters issued. Ultimately, this kind of law-based approach is the one Hatcher (2005) recommends, although he does acknowledge that the youth of this industry and its relative lack of sophistication makes legal action unlikely.

[5.3] An entirely different approach has been proposed by, among others, Debra Kennedy, who called on American anime companies to recognize that their existing business models may simply not be sufficient to meet customer needs (Koulikov 2007). In fact, Leonard (2005a) identifies fan subs as complementary or prerequisite goods that have a particular niche to fill until the market sufficiently evolves. Some of the solutions Kennedy proposes, such as implementing online and on-demand distribution, are essentially technological, whereas others, such as prelicensing or coproducing, are purely business decisions. Both types would presumably strike at one of the reasons for the existence of fan subs: the lag between a title's release in Japan and its availability overseas. Conceptually, an approach of this kind would make the entire network obsolete or irrelevant. Of course, it would take significant investment; as Kennedy noted, not all of the companies that are currently participating in the anime market in the United States may be able to bear the cost. Nonetheless, over the course of the last few years, both Japanese and American companies have been embracing this idea. To many American fans, the gold standard of anime releases is a situation where television episodes are legally available for viewing as soon as they air in Japan. Although there has been some resistance among Japanese companies to this, others have been taking steps in this direction by partnering with video-sharing services such as YouTube, Hulu, and CrunchyRoll to premiere anime episodes online at the same time as they are broadcast on Japanese television ("Gonzo works to be streamed simultaneously with airing," *Anime News Network,* March 21, 2008, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2008-03-21/gonzo-works-to-be-streamed-simultaneously-with-airing). Another approach, recently pioneered by the U.S. anime licensing and distribution company Bandai, involves releasing bare-bones DVDs containing subtitled anime episodes and a minimum of bonus content as soon as possible after the licensing contract has been signed to satisfy immediate viewer demand, then following up some time later with more elaborate versions, including an English dub, aimed at both collectors and casual audiences.

[5.4] A third approach to the issue, beyond taking legal action against fan sub distributors and trying to beat them at their own game, is a radical one—and one that has made quite a stir in the ongoing discussion of networks. The original ethic of fan subbing was based on established social norms (Russell et al. 2008). Anime is at heart a commercial product that cannot exist unless its creators are duly compensated for their work, and one key to disrupting the network may be via emotional appeal and education. As early as 2002, there was at least one case of a Japanese producer publicly asking American fan subbers to refrain from translating and noncommercially distributing a particular title (Zac Bertschy, "2002—Fansubs in review," *Anime News Network,* January 14, 2003, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2003-01-27/7). In fact, a connection can be drawn from this kind of approach to what is apparently the highly successful experiment undertaken by the band Radiohead, which released its 2007 album *Rainbows* online without a set price. Eduardo Porter links it to the concept, first proposed by Andreoni (1990), of the "warm glow"—the unquantifiable satisfaction of "helping create a new art form—or a new

economy" ("Radiohead's warm glow," *New York Times,* October 14, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/14/opinion/14sun3.html). Rather than attacking individual nodes, which is costly and does not answer the question of redundancy, or of approaching the network as a whole, which involves even more financial commitment, this approach works at the connections between the nodes. It addresses not merely the network as it exists at any given point in time, but the reasons why a network would be formed in the first place. In fact, returning to the origins of thinking about Net wars from a national security perspective, this kind of approach is near to the model proposed by Abrahms (2008) of the terrorist organization as primarily a social unit.

6. Conclusion

[6.1] The concept of networks and Net war is clearly too important to be limited to thinking merely about defense, security, or political issues. From Castells's (1996) idea of the network society arises what Varnelis (2008, 145) calls "network culture," where the network is the "dominant organizational paradigm." Ronfeldt and Arquilla (2001b) argue that the "rise of netwar and its many early successes imply the need for statecraft to adjust to—perhaps be transformed by—these civil and uncivil manifestations of the information revolution." And likewise, as network culture begins to have a meaningful impact in other spheres, all types of organizations and business entities will need to become aware of how networks are going to affect—both positively and negatively—many of the basic patterns of interaction between content producers and their intended audiences. The next step will have to involve understanding the exact nature of the network. This in turn will determine the scope of available actions and responses. The experience of anime fans and the anime industry is a specific case, but nonetheless, it holds lessons for all types of content producers. At the same time, the success that fan sub distribution networks have enjoyed itself may be used by other social groups, whether they are distributing particular products or broader ideas.

[6.2] In 2005, the business magazines *Forbes* and *Fortune* were singing the praises of American anime companies for their success in turning fans' demands into handsome profits. But as noted earlier, the outlook for their continuing success was already bleak. Five years have now gone since those laudatory articles, and the North American anime market is structured in a much different way. Many of the companies that had been sharing the market have since gone out of business, and those that still remain have greatly downsized their product lines, at least in terms of actual DVDs. Even for DVDs that are still on release schedules, production and marketing costs are being trimmed whenever possible (Chris Tribbey, "Anime Expo indicates industry climate," *Home Media Magazine,* July 7, 2008, http://www.homemediamagazine.com/news/anime-expo-indicates-industry-climate-13084). What has really changed is the approach that both the American companies and anime's Japanese producers have been taking to digital distribution. Whereas in 2005 turning to a fan sub was most likely the only way to download an anime episode, now, for many series, fans are presented with an entirely legitimate, authorized form of digital access. The speed at which fan subbers were working then is now frequently the standard practice for anime shows placed online with the full consent of their Japanese creators and American commercial distributors. If assuring that kind of release pattern was the goal of the fan sub war, then that war has been won.

[6.3] The paradox is—don't tell that to the fan subbers. Much of the original reasoning behind fan subs is no longer applicable. Now it's not about filling the void when no authorized release exists. Rather, it's about direct competition with authorized distributors, but with the benefit of not having to think about licensing fees, translator wages, or taxes. Viewers, especially those who are not particularly sophisticated, are faced with the option of paying to watch an authorized translation of a new anime episode, or choosing one of several unauthorized versions to watch for free. In fact, recently, a new front has opened in the conflict, now involving what are known as *scanlations*—noncommercial, unauthorized translations of Japanese comics. The features of the conflict between media rights holders and unauthorized creator/distributor networks may have changed from how this conflict first played out, but the fan sub war is still being fought on new fronts, without an end in sight.

7. Acknowledgments

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8. Note

1. Both fans and the scholarly literature frequently treat this term as one word—*fansub.* The derivative form *fansubbing* is also used. See, for example, Dattebayo Fansubs (http://www.dattebayo.com); Nakama-Fansubs (http://www.nakama-fansubs.com); Poitras (2001, 74); and Rusch (2009).

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Praxis

Fan filmmaking and copyright in a global world: *Warhammer 40,000* fan films and the case of *Damnatus*

John Walliss

Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, England, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—The last decade has witnessed a proliferation, both online and off-line, of films produced by amateurs inspired by mainstream films, TV shows, and novels. As with much other fan production, fan films exist in, at best, a legally gray area since they are produced by amateurs, rather than by the media companies that own the copyrights to the films and novels that provide both their inspiration and settings. I examine the phenomenon of fan filmmaking, focusing on films produced by fans of the *Warhammer 40,000* (W40K) tabletop battle game. In particular, I examine the case of *Damnatus: The Enemy Within* (*Damnatus: Feind Im Innern,* 2005), a German-made fan film set in the W40K universe, which was banned from release by the game's rights holder, the UK company Games Workshop, in 2007. *Damnatus* offers an interesting case study in both the ongoing struggle between rights holders and textual poachers and the tensions that can exist between different legal understandings of copyright in an increasingly globalized world.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fan community; Fan vid

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1. Introduction

[1.1] The last decade has witnessed a proliferation, both online and off-line, of films produced by amateurs, inspired by mainstream films, TV shows, and novels. These fan films have ranged in tone from comic to erotic, and in length from a few minutes to several episodes. They have contained special effects varying in quality, from rank amateur to professional, featuring casts of human actors, action figures, characters made of modeling clay, and everything in between. For example, in 2005, *Star Wars: Revelations* (2005), a 40-minute live-action film set between *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) and *Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977), was downloaded over 3 million times within 3 months of its release, with a third of those downloads occurring within the first 48 hours of its posting online (Young 2008). That same year, the H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society, a group of fans based in California, released *The Call of Cthulhu* (2005), a 47-minute live-action adaptation of Lovecraft's story of the same

name, filmed using the conventions of 1920s silent cinema. More recently, May 2009 saw the online release of the live-action *The Lord of the Rings* fan film, *The Hunt for Gollum* (2009), a so-called side sequel that cost around £3,000 (US$4,800) to produce, based on events described in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and in the novels' appendixes, but not shown in Peter Jackson's trilogy (Masters 2009).

[1.2] Such fan films, as Clive Young (2008) shows in his *Homemade Hollywood,* are of course not a new phenomenon; Young dates the very first fan film to the second decade of the 20th century. However, the emergence of relatively inexpensive digital filmmaking and editing technologies, coupled with a growing fan culture and the growing popularity of Internet sites such as YouTube, Google Videos, or Fanfilms.net (http://fanfilms.net/), have led to fan films becoming an increasingly visible part of fan culture. Less than two decades ago, fan films may have been seen by the filmmakers' family and friends, and if they were lucky, they might be shown at a fan convention. Now, fan filmmakers can, with a little technical know-how, use freely available software to produce their own content, often of high quality. This can then be uploaded for global consumption by potentially hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide.

[1.3] As with much other fan production, fan films exist in a legally gray area (Lessig 2004; Tushnet 2007). They are, after all, produced by amateurs, rather than by the media companies that own the copyrights to the films and novels that provide both their inspiration and settings. Accordingly, rights holders have taken a range of approaches to fan films—from disapproval and the threat of legal sanctions, to tacit approval if they are produced on a not-for-profit basis, to celebrating them as an unofficial part of the fictional worlds that inspired them. Thus, while *The Hunt for Gollum* has not been officially authorized by New Line Cinema, the Tolkien estate, or Middle-earth Enterprises (formerly Tolkien Enterprises), the filmmakers have, according to the film's director, "reached an understanding with them that as long as we are completely non-profit then we're okay…They are supportive of the way fans wish to express their enthusiasm" (Masters 2009). A similar position has recently been adopted by DC Comics, which, according to its president, "are not against things where people use our assets if they don't do anything monetarily with them" (cliveyoung 2008a). Conversely, in 2008, the producers of Max Payne and James Bond fan films received cease-and-desist letters from rights owners Fox and MGM, respectively (cliveyoung 2008b, 2008c). The most innovative, and in some ways controversial, strategy toward fan films is Lucasfilm's. It has opted for a policy of incorporation and containment, offering fan filmmakers free Web space on the official *Star Wars* site—as well as unique content for their films—and sponsoring fan film competitions, on the condition that whatever they post becomes Lucasfilm's intellectual property (Brooker 2002; Harmon 2002; Jenkins 2006a).

[1.4] In this article, I examine the phenomenon of fan filmmaking, focusing on films produced by fans of the *Warhammer 40,000* (W40K) tabletop battle game. In particular, I examine the case of *Damnatus: The Enemy Within* (*Damnatus: Feind Im Innern,* 2005), a German-made fan film set within the W40K universe, which was banned in 2007 from being released by the game's rights holder, the UK company Games Workshop (note 1). W40K fandom, and *Damnatus* in particular, offers an interesting case study for a number of reasons, not least because, while there has been a growing body of academic work in the related areas of tabletop and online gaming, W40K has to date been ignored in academic literature. Little has been written about the medium of fan filmmaking, compared with the volume of writing about, for example, fan fiction. W40K fandom offers interesting insights into the role of canon within fandom and the extent to which fan creativity necessarily involves subversive textual poaching by fans attempting to reread and transform existing media products to reflect and serve their own particular interests and social agendas (Fiske 1992; Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins 1992). While W40K fandom is inherently based around fan creativity, this creativity is typically additive to the W40K canon; fan filmmakers typically use their films to celebrate or illustrate the canon, rather than trying to transform, reread, or subvert it. Fan filmmakers use their creativity to fill a perceived void within W40K fandom caused by the absence of an official film, rather than attempt to reenvision the canon. I will show *Damnatus* was not banned from release by Games Workshop because it presented a subversive reading of its intellectual property (per the textual poaching thesis); rather, it was a result of inconsistencies and tensions between UK and German copyright laws that both sides tried, but ultimately failed, to overcome. Whereas the overwhelming bulk of the literature to date has focused on female fandom and fan creativity (Busse and Hellekson 2006, 17), W40K fandom is almost exclusively a male domain. It therefore represents a useful case study of gender differences within fandom and how these may affect the form and nature of fan creativity. Finally, the case of *Damnatus* serves to illustrate the increasing role that online fan communities may play vis-à-vis rights holders (Jenkins 2006a, 2006b). The ban generated a flourishing debate among fans on various forums, with fans attempting to respond to Games Workshop, expressing their anger at the ban (or, in some cases, their support of it), as well as offering various strategies for overturning it.

[1.5] My argument is that although W40K fandom is inherently based around fan creativity, this creativity is typically highly orthodox in its relationship to the W40K narrative canon. In particular, rather than using their creativity to transform or comment on the narrative canon, W40K fan filmmakers are seemingly content to color within its lines. I suggest the reasons for this stem from a combination of the gender and age of the filmmakers, with teenage male fans creating artworks that express a hegemonic understanding of masculinity, plus various practical limitations. While

Damnatus was technically more sophisticated than the majority of W40K fan films, it was still nevertheless characterized by a high degree of deference toward the W40K canon. Consequently, the ban on its being released should be understood as stemming from legal concerns over copyright rather than its subversive or transformative content.

[1.6] I first briefly introduce readers to the W40K universe, gaming system, and culture. In the second and third sections, I turn my attention to W40K fan films and the case of *Damnatus,* focusing particularly on fan reaction to the ban.

2. Warhammer 40,000

[2.1] W40K is a tabletop miniature war game produced by Games Workshop (http://www.gamesworkshop.com/) and set in a dystopian future 38,000 years hence where humanity, represented by the Imperium of Man, stands on the brink of extinction, threatened on all sides by the forces of Chaos, a multitude of enemies, and, closer to home, the threat of heresy. Within the W40K universe, to use one of the game's slogans, "there is no peace, only war," with each species fighting just to survive. On earth (Terra), superstition and dogma dominate, the knowledge of science and technology having been lost millennia before, and a godlike emperor who has ruled the imperium for the last 10,000 years holds power. The emperor, long since dead and now existing only in a psychic state maintained through the daily sacrifice of thousands of souls, keeps the forces of Chaos at bay and commands the absolute devotion of the many millions of imperial troops who battle across the galaxy in his name (Cavatore et al. 2008, 101–29).

[2.2] To play W40K, players acquire and paint plastic and metal 28-millimeter scale miniatures sold by Games Workshop of a particular army and race combination within the W40K universe. This is not an inexpensive hobby; a standard-sized army, for example, may cost £150–£200 (US$225–$300) to purchase, and the paints and brushes are not a negligible expense. In addition to the cost, it may take many hundreds of hours of gluing and detailed painting to produce an aesthetically pleasing army.

Figure 1. *Photograph of the author's Salamanders space marine army. [View larger image.]*

Figure 2. *Photograph of the author's Salamanders space marine army. [View larger image.]*

[2.3] Once an army is painted, the player engages in battles with friends. These battles range in size and complexity from minor skirmishes with a few miniatures to mass Apocalypse battles involving many hundreds of miniatures and futuristic vehicles, using a relatively straightforward rules system developed by the company over the past two decades (Cavatore et al. 2008). Such battles are not necessarily reenactments of battles that occurred within the W40K narrative universe—in the way that, for example a historical war gamer might recreate the Battle of Waterloo or Gettysburg—but are rather generic battles or missions of the type that might take place in that universe between the different armies/races to take and hold objectives, to seize ground, or simply to annihilate the enemy. Each battle may thus be seen as a sort of fan fiction, with the players creating their own narratives through their game play within the broad context of the W40K narrative and gaming/rules canon (Fox 2001; Bryant 2009; Wirman 2009). Games Workshop's monthly magazine, *White Dwarf,* publishes regular battle reports in which games played by its staff members and other Games Workshop employees are described in a narrative form, with accompanying photographs emphasizing key moments within the battle. Similar reports written by fans are also a regular feature of fan forums and, as will be discussed below, are sometimes filmed and shared with other fans via YouTube.

[2.4] Games may thus be seen as the intersection of fan creativity and the official W40K narrative and gaming/rules canons, both of which have developed over the past two decades, and which are consolidated and expanded on an ongoing basis through a combination of the official rule book, novels (produced by the Black Library, a Games Workshop subdivision), articles in *White Dwarf,* and the published rules supplements (codices) for each species/army. The Black Library has, for example, produced a series of novels known as the Horus Heresy. These novels tell the history of the Imperium of Man, focusing on the great schism within the imperium between heretical and loyalist space marine legions that provides a key narrative trope within the W40K universe.

The Black Library also produces a number of related novels that cover the histories of other armies/races within the W40K universe. These histories are, in turn, summarized within the background section of an army's codex, providing key source material for players to draw on when collecting and gaming with their armies.

[2.5] Fan creativity extends to other aspects of the W40K hobby—most notably, the painting, assembling, and conversion of the miniatures and models used in the game, as well as the construction of scenery and buildings required for gaming. While W40K fans are not as constrained in how they paint their armies as they would be if, for example, they were painting an army from the Napoleonic era (and they can, if they wish, invent their own armies with their own personal color schemes), there are nevertheless conventions for how the various canonical space marine and heretical Chaos space marine chapters should be painted. This information, which is often extremely detailed, is in the codex for each army, as well as in painting guides published by Games Workshop or available online. In contrast to some other forms of fandom, W40K fandom is inherently built around—and necessitates—fan production. Whereas many people would consider themselves to be fans of a particular TV show, film, novel, or even a game without necessarily having to engage in any form of fan production, it is nearly impossible to be involved in W40K fandom without producing something on some level.

[2.6] Such creativity, however, can only go so far within the W40K universe before it finds itself on a collision course with Games Workshop's intellectual property (IP) policy (Games Workshop 2008). While W40K fan fiction is permitted as long as it is not written for profit and the author states at the top of the material that it is "an unofficial story by [name]…without permission, upon the Warhammer intellectual property owned by Games Workshop Ltd.," fans may not produce desktop themes or have tattoos that feature Games Workshop's trademarks. Similarly, while Web comics and animation are permitted as long as they are not produced for profit and "avoid any topics considering illegal behaviour, obscenity, or libel," fans may not use forum avatars that feature Games Workshop's IP. Crucially, although Games Workshop "appreciate[s] that hobbyists may…want to make movies based upon our intellectual property," such fan films are also forbidden "due to the nuances of the law in some territories" (Games Workshop 2008).

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3. W40K fan films

[3.1] If the content of YouTube is any indication, Games Workshop's ban on fan films have little or no effect. As of August 2010, a search on YouTube brought up 28,500 videos for Warhammer 40K. In contrast, the official Games Workshop channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/gamesworkshopstudio) hosts only 37 videos, 25 of

which are three identical advertisements dubbed into different languages for new rules systems or games. The only official W40K film released to date—the 25-minute film *Inquisitor* (1996), which was sold at gaming tournaments and is no longer available—was uploaded by a fan, not Games Workshop itself. On one level, then, one can view W40K fan creations as attempts by fans to fill a definite void within W40K fandom (note 2).

[3.2] In general terms, the W40K fan creations that have been uploaded to YouTube may be classified, following O'Brien and Fitzgerald's (2006) typology of YouTube clips, as a combination of three main types of footage: copied/ripped content, transformative derivatives, and original creations. I discuss each of these in turn.

4. Copied/ripped content

[4.1] Most ripped content has its origin in officially released PC games set within the W40K universe. While there has yet to be an official W40K film, there have been a number of video games released over the course of the last two decades, such as *Final Liberation* (Holistic Design, 1997), *Fire Warrior* (Kujo Entertainment, 2003), and the *Dawn of War* series of strategy games (Relic Entertainment, 2004–). A great deal of the fan content available on YouTube originates from these games, with fans uploading the scenes and introductory movies from these games, or screen-capture videos of fans playing the games, sometimes talking viewers through the various levels (see Jones 2006 on speed runs). Such content has typically been uploaded as is and therefore features little if any transformation or creativity, other than added commentary. It is simply the uploading and sharing of copyrighted material. The following clip, for example, is the introductory movie to the *Dawn of War* PC game as it appears to the player at startup.

Vid 1. *Dawn of War Intro movie ripped and uploaded to YouTube by Irai, February 11, 2006.*

5. Transformative derivatives

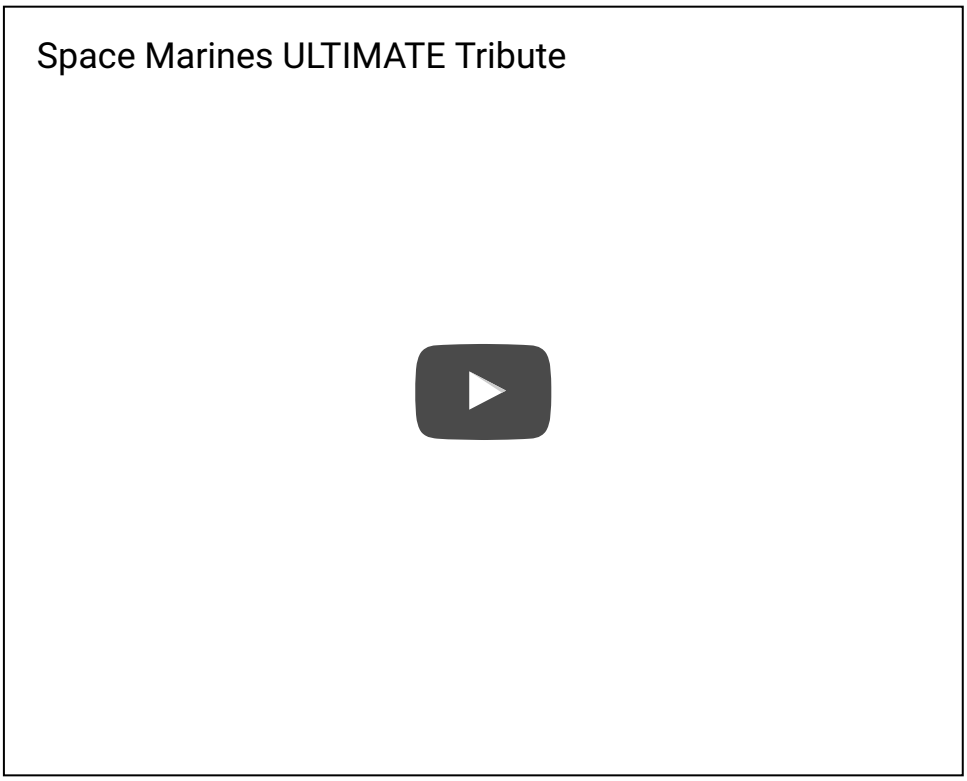
[5.1] Moving along a continuum toward more transformative and original content, one finds, as one does across a number of fan communities, numerous examples of fan vids within W40K fandom. In contrast to vidding in many fan communities, where emotional/relational or even erotic content is emphasized, or where vidding is used to comment on or critique the canon (Jenkins 1992; Trombley 2007; Coppa 2008, 2009), vidding within W40K fandom appears much more conservative and orthodox in its approach, seeking to literally reiterate, if not celebrate, existing canon. All the fan vids that I am aware of, for example, emphasize the inherent themes, events, and dramatis personae of the W40K universe, and they portray the various armies/races in ways congruent with their depictions in the narrative canon. Space marines, for example, are depicted as loyal, courageous warriors, fighting with an almost religious devotion for the emperor, while space orks are shown as barbaric, bloodthirsty creatures intent on destruction and pillaging. Similarly, rather than the choice of song or music offering an alternative reading of the images, the music used—which is often in the genres of industrial or heavy metal—reflects in an auditory sense and often in its lyrical content the intensity of warfare in the 41st millennium as depicted within the narrative canon. Indeed, in what is arguably a reflection of the almost exclusively young male fan base of W40K, the only emotion common to the majority of W40K fan vids is a sense of testosterone-fueled celebration of the martial themes inherent within

the W40K universe. The only slash one finds in W40K fandom is that of a las-sword or space ork choppa, and the only close male relationships the esprit de corps of elite military forces in battle.

[5.2] "There Is Only War" by Silverdrake19, for example, juxtaposes images of warfare and slogans from the W40K universe with the song "Fight" by Motograter; the martial imagery is reinforced by both the extreme nature of the music and the song's refrain, "They don't ever live to die/Only live to fight, fight, fight!"

Vid 2. *"There Is Only War" fan vid by Silverdrake19, July 31, 2007.*

[5.3] Similarly, "Space Marines ULTIMATE Tribute" by Froggars is an accolade to the imperium's elite troops, created by juxtaposing their images and slogans with the song "Hymn of the Immortal Warriors" by Manowar (which is about a dead Viking hero entering Valhalla, not future warfare).



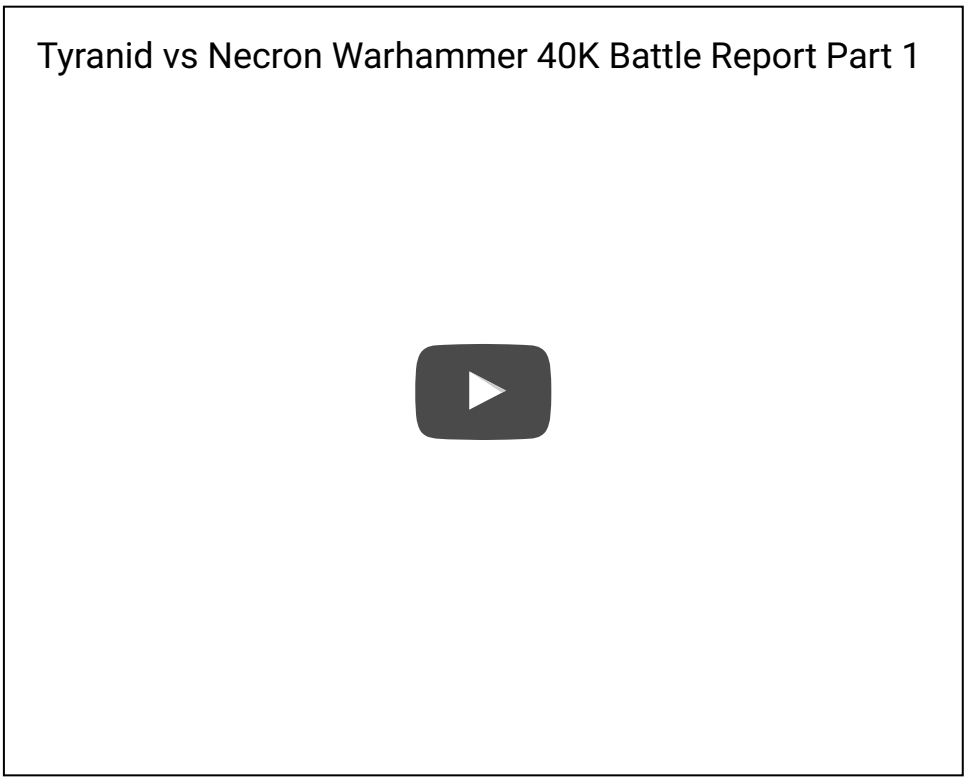
Vid 3. *"Space Marines ULTIMATE Tribute" fan vid by Froggars, January 5, 2008.*

[5.4] This orthodoxy regarding the canon is also highlighted by the relative paucity of fan vids offering parodies or humorous readings of the W40K universe. Those W40K fan vids that do feature comedy tend to feature in-jokes rather than parody by, for example, ironically juxtaposing music, voice-overs, or statements with W40K imagery. The machinima clip "Warhammer 40000 Parody" by Jaggardos combines game play footage from *Dawn of War: Dark Crusade* with humorous voice-overs and music. I have only been able to find two fan vids on YouTube that engage in parody, and both of those criticize Games Workshop for banning the release of *Damnatus.*

Vid 4. *"Warhammer 40000 Parody" by Jaggardos, September 7, 2007.*

6. Original creations

[6.1] Examination of video clips featuring original fan creations reveals three broad forms of content. First, there are battle reports where, in an extension of the previously discussed practice of reporting games as narratives, fans record and upload highlights of their games, often providing running commentary while they are playing. Second, reflecting both the hobby-based and strategic nature of W40K fandom, a number of fans have uploaded instructional videos, covering such things as painting and modeling techniques or game tactics.



Vid 5. *"Tyranid Versus Necron Warhammer 40K Battle Report Part 1" by MiniWarGaming Channel, July 3, 2008.*

[6.2] Third, there are small number of original fan films, most of which—compared to other SF fan films—are relatively unsophisticated in terms of both their plots and style, being typically short films of battles, produced using stop-motion animation. At the time of writing, there are approximately 550 such clips on YouTube, ranging in sophistication from short experimental clips to multipart films featuring music tracks and basic special effects. As an example, "Warhammer 40K Stop Motion Part 1—Hunt the Relic" by Zehzima is the story of a platoon of space marines. While searching for a lost relic from their home planet of Ultramar, they discover a group of heretical Chaos space marines near the location of the relic. Although outnumbered three to one, the space marines battle and, once reinforcements arrive, ultimately defeat their sworn enemies. As the film closes with a "to be continued" notice, a phalanx of Necrons is seen to arrive, ensuring that the space marines' continuing hunt for the relic will involve more combat.

Vid 6. *"Warhammer 40K Stop Motion Part 1—Hunt the Relic" by Zehzima, December 24, 2008.*

[6.3] Perhaps the most ambitious—and judging by their YouTube star ratings, the most popular—W40K stop-motion animations are two films by Coltsith: "Warhammer 40K: Space Hulk" and "Warhammer 40K Stop Motion Movie Pt 4." The former, an homage to the *Space Hulk* board game released by Games Workshop in 1989 (recently reissued), shows a squad of space marine terminators investigating a distress call from a derelict ship that, they quickly discover, is overrun by hostile alien life-forms, while the latter shows a battle between space marines and a mob of marauding space orks.

Vid 7. *"Warhammer 40K Stop Motion Movie Pt 4" by Coltsith, August 1, 2006.*

[6.4] The great majority of original W40K fan filmmaking, then, is clearly at an early stage of development, both in terms of plotting and production values, and in its relationship to the W40K narrative canon. Most fan vids, for example, are simple slide shows with fairly rudimentary transitions, or game footage with few edits, invariably set to heavy metal/industrial music. Little or no attempt is made to use the vids to tell new stories or stage alternate readings of the canon. At most, the W40K fan vids redescribe the canon with little or no interpretation; the filmmakers seem content to remain true to canon, rather than actively trying to transform it or read it against the grain. While the battle shown in "Hunt the Relic" is not part of the W40K canon in the way the Battle of Yavin would be within the Star Wars universe, the broad motifs of lost relics and battles between heretical and loyalist space marine armies are an implicit part of the canon. The same can be said of the battle between space orks and space marines shown in "Warhammer 40K Stop Motion Movie Pt 4." Both clips thus complement the narrative canon by showing, to use Pugh's (2005) terms, more of the battles that take place within it—filling in some of the details of the universe by adding more battles—rather than attempting do more with the canon.

[6.5] There may be several reasons why this is the case. Primarily, it may be understood in terms of how male and female fans typically approach canon. As several commentators have noted, male fans are not only typically drawn to different forms of fan creativity than female fans (see Brooker 2002, 139, 174; Pugh 2005; Sandvoss 2005, 16; Jenkins 2006b, 43; Jones 2006, 263; Coppa 2009, 107; Long 2009, ¶3.7);

they also, crucially, tend toward a more orthodox approach to canon (see, for example, the 2007–8 gender and fan studies debate at the LiveJournal community Fandebate). Jenkins (2006b, 44), for example, argued that "the compulsion to expand speculations about characters and story events beyond textual boundaries" is more of a feminine than a masculine interpretive strategy (see also Russo 2009, 128). Consequently, men feel more comfortable talking and writing about "future technologies or military lifestyle" than "pondering Vulcan sexuality, McCoy's childhood, or Kirk's love life" (Jenkins 2006b, 43).

[6.6] Similarly, Bob Rehak, in a LiveJournal entry dated April 18, 2008, posted to the Fandebate community, highlighted the "apparent gender split between traditionally female fans who produce work considered to be transformative" and male fans "who gravitate towards activities that uphold and extend the essence and ideology of the parent text, rather than diverting from it and working 'against the grain.'" In particular, echoing Jenkins's point above, he suggests that male fans are drawn more to what he terms "blueprint culture": an interest in the technical aspects of the canon, such as schematics of the *Millennium Falcon* or the bridge of the USS *Enterprise* (see also Toten 2008). Again, this would clearly seem to be the case with those clips that deal with the more technical aspects of the W40K hobby, such as modeling and painting.

[6.7] On one level, then, the orthodox reading of the narrative canon found within W40K filmmaking may be a reflection of a male or masculine approach to canon. On another level, it may reflect the age of the filmmakers. As noted above, while many fans are in their 20s and 30s, the core audience for W40K is teenage boys. Because the teens are crucial age in the development of sexual identity, such fans may either not feel confident or believe that it is not socially acceptable among their peers to explore emotional content in their films, even in the anonymous space of the Internet (see Martino 1999, 244; Pascoe 2003, 1428; Paechter 2007). For such boys, focusing on the martial themes within the W40K universe might be perceived as much more socially acceptable among their peers, reflecting, as it does, a hegemonic understanding of masculinity (see Kline, Dyer-Witheford, and de Peuter 2003; Schut 2006; Malaby and Green 2009).

[6.8] In addition, the relatively unsophisticated nature of much W40K fan filmmaking may reflect the limitations faced by any fans attempting to produce a live-action fan film. In contrast to the primary footage that, say, a *Star Wars* or *Star Trek* fan filmmaker has access to, original W40K fan filmmakers have much less primary material to draw on, so they must turn to the raw materials of their hobby—the miniatures collections—to construct their narratives. Similarly, while replica light sabers, blasters, and phasers are readily available in toy stores and costumes may be

purchased or rented, budding W40K filmmakers wishing to produce a live-action film would have to produce the weapons and costumes themselves from scratch. The cost and technical skills required to do so this are a serious barrier to the majority of the W40K fan base.

[6.9] The German W40K fan film *Damnatus* is therefore noteworthy for being what is to my knowledge the only attempt to date to produce a live-action fan film set within the W40K universe. Indeed, its high production values, including the use of relatively high-quality CGI and its almost 2-hour length, represent in many ways a paradigm shift within W40K fan filmmaking. However, as with the YouTube clips cited above, *Damnatus* is clearly an attempt to get show more of the W40K universe rather than do more with it. The film tells the story of a group of mercenaries sent into the depths of a hive city by the imperial inquisition to cleanse and purge a conclave of heretical cultists intent on summoning an ancient demonic entity that could destroy the planet. As with the YouTube clips, this is not an adaptation of a story found within the canon, but in terms of plot, setting, characters, and costumes, it is clearly derivative of the W40K canon. Its producers, in other words, were seeking to stay within the boundaries of canon rather than performing a radical reenvisioning or producing a subversive reading. This desire for canonical orthodoxy is exemplified by the way its crew contained, alongside the camera operators, computer animators, makeup artists, and costume and prop designers, an expert on the W40K canon. Despite this emphasis on canonical orthodoxy, for the last 2 years, Games Workshop has forbidden *Damnatus* from being screened or released. I now turn to how this ban came to be, and to assess the reception the film has had within W40K fandom.

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7. Damnatus: The forbidden film

Figure 4. *Screen capture of Damnatus (2005) showing the main cast. [View larger image.]*

[7.1] The production of *Damnatus* is, in many ways, a combination of professional ambition and fan creativity. *Damnatus* was produced over a 4-year period by a crew of around 80 German fans led by its writer and director, the then-21-year-old Huan Vu, at a cost of around €10,000 (US$13,000), all of which was paid for by donations from the crew and from fans. Before starting filming in 2003, Vu asked Games Workshop for

permission to make the film and was told "that they probably would have nothing against a fan film" on the condition that the film not be made for commercial purposes (Torwaechter, posting at Warseer, "*Damnatus* not allowed to be shown," July 12, 2007, http://www.warseer.com/forums/showpost.php?p=1728604&postcount=161). Indeed, the film also appeared to have tacit approval from Games Workshop when a small advertisement for the project appeared in the German edition of *White Dwarf* in January 2003, as illustrated in figure 5.

Figure 5. *Advertisement for Damnatus (2005) that appeared in the German-language edition of White Dwarf, January 2003. [View larger image.]*

[7.2] According to e-mail correspondence from Vu on August 12, 2009, the plan had been to distribute the film for free through downloads, with the requisite bandwidth being donated by individuals. There were also plans for 20 copies of the film to be distributed on DVDs worldwide, half for Europe and half for the rest of the world, to volunteers who would each make 10 further copies and distribute them to other people who would do the same. The 20 copies represented, in an explicit nod to the W40K narrative canon, the 20 legendary primarchs created by the emperor.

[7.3] Two years into the project, in early 2005, a legal support assistant from Games Workshop contacted Vu with a copyright disclaimer to appear at the beginning of the film. During these discussions, Vu told the company that under German copyright law, he would have "unrevocable [*sic*] rights" to the film as "[his] creation" (Torwächter, posting at Forenplanet, "Clarifications," July 11, 2007). This led Games Workshop to investigate the German copyright situation; after taking legal advice, it banned the release of the film in May 2005. Vu, however, claims he did not receive this e-mail from the company's lawyers, and he continued to work on the film in good faith, completing it the following November. When he announced this via the *Damnatus* Web page, Games Workshop wrote to him again to restate the ban.

[7.4] A month later, it was announced that an agreement had potentially been struck to overcome the copyright issues. This quickly broke down. After taking further, external, advice, Games Workshop amended its IP policy in mid-April 2006 to ban all fan films. Four months later, the legal and licensing head of Games Workshop, Andy Jones, wrote to Vu telling him although "the great endeavor upon which you have embarked is truly to be admired," because German copyright law would not allow the filmmaker to assign copyright to the company, "it is impossible for us to countenance

the release—for free or otherwise—of this movie project." The company, Jones insisted, "must protect our IP. We have no choice…we cannot have elements of our intellectual property 'universe' owned by a third party." Consequently, in October 2007, Vu announced on the *Damnatus* Web page that the project had been put on indefinite hold.

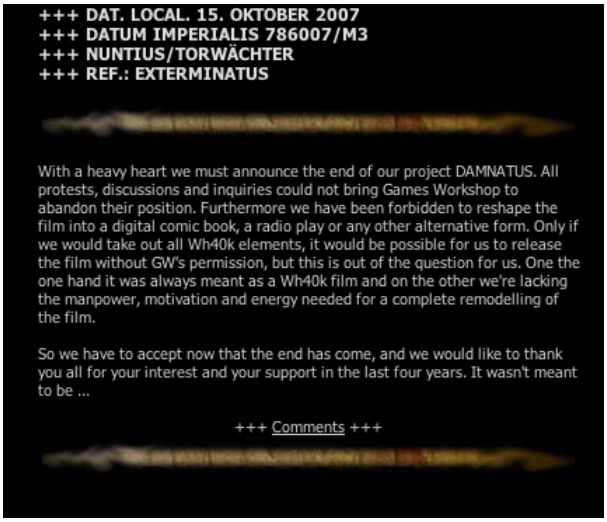


Figure 6. *Screenshot of "Exterminatus" section from the Damnatus Web page (http://www.damnatus.com/seite.php?file=news), 2007. [View larger image.]*

[7.5] If we are to believe the correspondence, the main issue behind the ban was not Games Workshop's disapproval of the content of the film, but the company's belief that allowing it to be released would threaten its control of its intellectual property. Indeed, Jones's letter to Vu makes no mention at all of the content of the film—good or bad, subversive or orthodox. The issues for Jones were simply legal and business ones: could the company allow a third party to potentially own part of its intellectual property?

[7.6] The announcement of the ban led to vigorous debate among fans across several W40K forums. Broadly, the comments ranged across three main positions. One group of posters, while acknowledging the unfortunate position that the filmmakers found themselves in, defended Games Workshop's decision, arguing that the blame lay rather with German copyright law. As Black Bear put it in the "Damnatus is complete! But not to be released" thread on the Bolter and Chainsword (TB&C) fan forum on November 7, 2007, post 73, "Blame the stupid law, not GW. Thay [*sic*] cannot allow the film to be released. They will LOSE their rights if they do…It is not their fault the law has put them in this situation, and getting upset at them is silly. If anything get upset at stupid German laws, and rant at them as THEY are what is keeping GW from giving the green light for the movie."

[7.7] Such sentiments were echoed by Ferrata in the "Damnatus is complete! But not to be released" thread on TB&C on November 10, 2007, post 110. Ferrata argued that if Games Workshop had given the rights away to the *Damnatus* filmmakers, it would effectively open "the gate for people to use [Games Workshop's] copyright, and they [would] have the backing of a previous case to back them." Others laid the blame for the situation solely at the feet of the filmmakers, accusing them of being naive in not fully investigating the copyright issues before beginning production. Centurian99, in the "More death of Damnatus news" thread on DakkaDakka (DD) on November 6, 2007, called it "simply idiotic," "moronic," and "utterly irresponsible" (p. 1) for the filmmakers to have begun shooting without securing the IP license first. Similarly, Brettz123 in the "More death of Damnatus news" thread on DD on November 6, 2007, argued "the Damnatus guys might have wanted to consult a lawyer themselves and find out what the relevant legal issues would have been." For him, "It really isn't GWs responsibility to tell them what they can and can't do. It is the Damnatus people who are responsible for their own actions. They should have done the research. To me that is the bottom line" (p. 3).

[7.8] Indeed, a number of posters argued that perhaps Games Workshop had banned the release of the film either because, to quote Flagg07 in the "More death of Damnatus news" thread on DD on November 7, 2007, "its a steaming pile of _____ (insert choice phrase) that they don't want to be connected to" (p. 2) or, as Luthor Huss speculated in the "Yet another brilliant move by GW…" thread on the Warhammer Forum, on July 12, 2007, because the company "could have a deal with another movie firm for a franchise, so they dont want any unofficial movies coming out first and stealing its thunder" (p. 1).

[7.9] A middle position was adopted by those fans who believed that the situation was due more to confusion and mutual misunderstanding than a conspiracy by Games Workshop against the fans and filmmakers. Both sides, posters such as Kilkrazy, in the "More death of Damnatus news" thread on DD on July 8, 2007, argued, had mishandled the situation to the ultimate detriment of project:

> [7.10] From my experience [of working in a large IP-related corporation] it is quite likely that GW simply did not join up all the dots until near the end, when the need to resolve the situation became urgent. Up until then, the Damnatus guys must have thought they were "talking to GW" and that "GW approved their project" though actually they just talked to a couple of guys at GW who liked the idea, but had no authority to form contracts, and some stuff on their project appeared in WD which is edited by some other guys who also probably liked it but again these guys had no authority to make

> contracts. Once the project neared completion, the corporate legal department got involved, and the whole thing was stamped on. (p. 3)

[7.11] The vocal majority of posters, however, blamed Games Workshop, arguing that the company had not only mishandled the situation but was now, to quote Wolfstan, in the "More death of Damnatus news" thread on DD on November 8, 2007, "taking a sledgehammer to a nut" (p. 3). A number also questioned, as Vu did in an e-mail to Andy Jones responding to the ban published on the *Damnatus* forum (Torwächter, posting at the Sphärentor forum, August 2, 2007, "Letter from GW," p. 1), why companies such as Lucasfilm and Paramount had no problem with fan films (including ones made in Germany), but Games Workshop did. As Rev Nice put it on the "GW goes wrong again" thread on Frothers Unite! UK forum on July 12, 2007, "If Lucasfilm are quite happy to allow fans to make their own films based on their IP (and expanding on it) then surely a comparative minnow like GW can be reasonable" (p. 1; http://www.frothersunite.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?p=187174&sid=98805ffd77d3141bfa18fc7f15633076#187174). Others expressed disappointment that the company had seemingly passed up the opportunity for free advertising, and as Iamfanboy put it in the "Damnatus is complete! But not to be released" thread on TB&C on November 7, 2007, post 72, the chance to revitalize "the 40k universe by exposing the game to a whole new audience in the same way that Dawn of War did." Indeed, the general tenor of the fan reaction to the ban may be seen by the titles of some of the forum threads relating to the ban: "Yet another brilliant move by GW…" (Warhammer Forum) and "GW goes wrong again" (Frothers Unite! UK).

[7.12] In articulating their anger against the ban, a number of fans linked Games Workshop's decision with a wider set of grievances against the company. To quote Steve Veto on the "GW goes wrong again" thread on Frothers Unite! UK on July 12, 2007, "For the last 15 or so years GW hasn't really given a toss for the fans/mugs (delete where applicable)—it's all about the bottom line and protecting investors dividends" (p. 2; http://www.frothersunite.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?p=187254&sid=98805ffd77d3141bfa18fc7f15633076#187254). For these fans, the Damnatus ban was not the result of a misunderstanding or Games Workshop's not connecting the dots until it was too late; rather, it was symptomatic of what they allege to be the company's negative attitude toward fans. Polonius, in the "More death of Damnatus news" thread on DD on November 9, 2007, put it this way:

> [7.13] I suppose GW had a meeting, where legal made its case to nix the film, and marketing made it's argument that'll bring ill will to the company. Part of me simply envisions this shadowy figure sitting through the entire meeting, then quietly saying, "We raised prices, the fans stayed. We

cancelled specialist games, the fans stayed. We won't answer rules questions, our magazine is a monthly catalog, and despite our core demo being adults, we continue to dumb done the product for 10 year olds. And you honestly think vetoing a german fan movie is going to hurt us? Nothing can hurt us, we are invincible!"

[7.14] And then everybody around the table laughs, and laughs, and laughs.

[7.15] And then they eat a kitten. (p. 3)

[7.16] Some fans went as far as to suggest possible strategies for either overcoming the ban or trying to make Games Workshop reverse its decision, ranging from "accidentally" leaking the film to YouTube or BitTorrent to collective letter-writing campaigns, boycotting the company's products, and protesting at the 2007 Games Days in Germany and the UK. Others asked whether it was possible to reedit the film to remove or black out all the elements covered by Games Workshop's IP, or release the script of the film or an animated version, or whether the company could buy the film from Vu for a nominal fee and then distribute it, possibly as a giveaway in *White Dwarf* or as a download from its Web site. The filmmakers also launched an online petition (http://www.petitiononline.com/damnatus/petition.html) urging the Games Workshop management "to reconsider their decision and allow the publication of DAMNATUS as well as the creation of future films by us fans," and provided a list of several things fans could do to support the film.

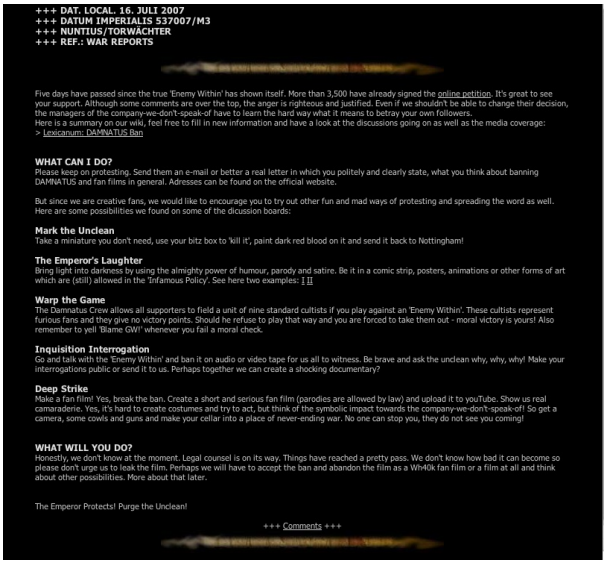


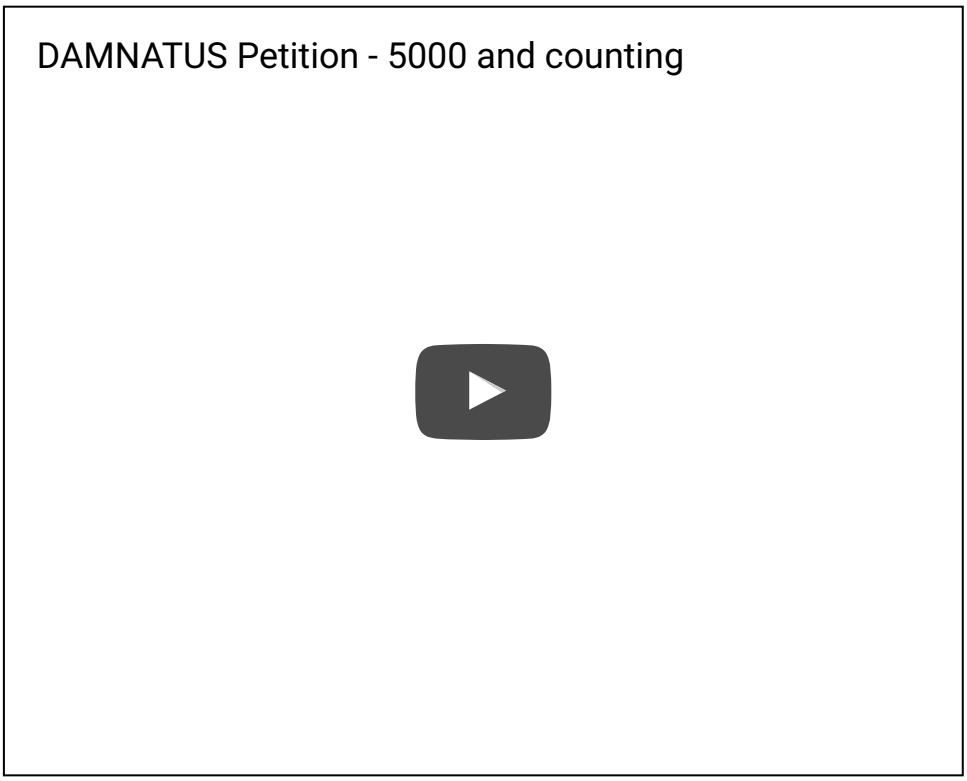
Figure 7. *Screenshot of "War Reports" section from the Damnatus Web page (http://www.damnatus.com/seite.php?file=news), 2007. [View larger image.]*

[7.17] Two brief clips parodying the situation were uploaded onto YouTube. The first, "Damnatus: The Forbidden Film" by Halbaradin, shows cartoon representations of

Games Workshop management sitting around a boardroom table, one of whom is smirking while holding up a piece of paper titled "IP Policy." In the background, a French-language song is (inaccurately) subtitled to tell in lyric form what it terms the tragic story of the *Damnatus* ban. The finale of the film shows sticks of dynamite exploding, destroying W40K imagery, while the subtitles read "WE WANT DAMNATUS / GET OUT GAME WORKSHOP / YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED / TO DISAPPOINT US / WE WANT DAMNATUS."

Vid 8. *"Damnatus: The Forbidden Movie" by Halbaradin, July 27, 2007.*

[7.18] In the second clip, "Damnatus Petition—5000 and Counting," posted by Vu in early August 2007, a caped man approaches a seated one, who turns and shows him a script, saying, "We want to make a fan movie." On seeing the script, the caped man shouts "Fan movie? You must not!!!" and thrusts an IP contract toward the camera before hitting the hopeful filmmaker with it. When the filmmaker responds by telling the caped man, "This is madness!" the latter, in an apparent homage to the film *300* (2006), kicks him onto the floor with the words "Madness? This is Games Workshop!!!"



Vid 9. *"Damnatus Petition: 5000 and Counting" by HuVuTorwaechter, August 3, 2007.*

[7.19] None of these strategies has been successful. At the time of writing, *Damnatus* is still officially banned from being released, and Vu, having abandoned hope that this position will change, has moved on to another project: *Die Farbe,* an adaptation of the H. P. Lovecraft's 1927 story "The Colour Out of Space" (http://www.die-farbe.com/main_e.html). Nor would it appear, judging from Games Workshop's share price and sales, that the ban has adversely affected the company financially (Williams 2009). The stalemate was nevertheless dramatically broken in December 2008, when, as many fans posting on forums had hoped, an MPEG version of *Damnatus,* complete with optional English-language subtitles, was posted on the infamous file-sharing Web site, the Pirate Bay, whence it was shared—and continues to be shared—on a number of similar sites. In October 2009, the complete film was also uploaded onto YouTube, but it has since been removed as a result of Games Workshop's copyright claim. There are also signs the film is itself being appropriated by fans, who are posting their own trailers for the film on YouTube and incorporating elements of it into their own films.

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8. Conclusions

[8.1] Three main points may be summarized from the preceding discussion. First, while W40K is built around fan creativity of sorts, this creativity has clear limits, as defined by both Games Workshop's IP policy and, it would appear, the fans themselves. While there is clearly scope for different types of stories to be told that

would flesh out the simplistic outlines of the W40K narrative universe, at present, W40K fan filmmakers appear to be content to use their creativity to stay within the boundaries of the canon, rather than attempting to transform or comment on it. Such filmmakers may be highly creative in what they produce, but for them, the canon, like the published rules of the W40K game, provides clear parameters for creativity, rather than acting as a jumping-off point. Within this context, creativity appears to be judged in terms of how accurately a film portrays the W40K universe—its characters, species, and ambience—rather than the extent to which filmmakers transform this material to tell a different story or stage an alternate reading.

[8.2] Why this is the case is open to speculation. However, I argue that it stems from a combination of the age and gender of the filmmakers and, to a lesser extent, the lack of primary film material and readily available props, when compared to the Star Wars or Star Trek universes. As noted above, the consensus within the literature on gender and fandom is that not only are male and female fans drawn to different sorts of fandom, but they also tend to express their fannish creativity in different ways and with differing levels of canonical orthodoxy. On one level, the canonical orthodoxy of the W40K filmmakers may be understood in terms of gender. However, it can also be understood as a consequence of the typical age of W40K fans. Such adolescents probably feel more comfortable celebrating the martial themes of the W40K universe than they do exploring emotional themes or sexual identities through their films.

[8.3] Second, the reaction to the *Damnatus* ban illustrates the increasing role online fan communities play as a potential voice in dialogue with rights holders. Although neither the complaints nor the strategies suggested to protest against the ban were ultimately successful, as is often the case, the ban created a flourishing debate both among fans and between fans and Games Workshop. Debate topics included the limits imposed on creativity by copyright laws, the perceived responsibilities that rights holders have (or should have) toward fans, and the legal complexities of fan production. Such discussions are, however, inherently asymmetrical, with fans being placed in a relatively powerless situation through a combination of possible legal sanctions and love of W40K. Huan Vu could not simply ignore Games Workshop's legal representatives and release the film without risking legal repercussions—a point he made clear in his forum postings. Equally, although some fans are critical of the ban and what they perceive to be the company's emphasis on profit over fans' needs and desires, they are still loyal to the W40K universe despite their reservations about the company. Indeed, all but the bitterest fans continue to buy its products.

[8.4] Last, but by no means least, while it appears unlikely a W40K fan film with the ambitions of *Damnatus* will be seen again, dozens of more modest W40K fan vids and clips have been created and uploaded onto YouTube since the ban, most of which are

in breach of Games Workshop's IP policy. Games Workshop may therefore have won one particular battle, but, like the game's epic conflict depicted in the grim future of the 41st millennium—with its ongoing bloody skirmishes—the war over copyright and the issue of fan creativity within the W40K universe is far from over.

9. Notes

1. I requested an interview with the legal and licensing divisions of Games Workshop to discuss fan films but was refused.

2. For the last decade, there have been rumors that an official W40K film would be produced (see, for example, Aldrick 2001). One CGI film, *Bloodquest,* was begun in 2001 by Exile Films, which planned to release the film in 2002. It was subsequently canceled, and it appears the company no longer exists, although a brief trailer for the film is still available on YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpEY630UaMg). In September 2009, it was announced that Codex Pictures, a London-based company that had previously worked on the Lego BIONICLE films, would be producing a straight-to-DVD 70-minute CGI film entitled *Ultramarines* (http://www.ultramarinesthemovie.com/home).

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Symposium

The romanticization of abstinence: Fan response to sexual restraint in the Twilight series

Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, and Melissa A. Click

Department of Communication, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Meyer's Twilight series has been criticized for its regressive gender representations. To understand its continuing appeal, we problematize the messages of abstinence and romance in the series, and contextualize fans' response with a discussion of postfeminist culture.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Feminism; Gender norms; Girl culture; Postfeminism; Power dynamics; Sexuality; Teen fans; Virginity

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series is a rich text for scholars interested in mediated messages about gender, sexuality, and romance, and the reactions audiences have to such messages. At the center of the young adult book series turned record-breaking franchise is the romance between sparkly vampire Edward Cullen and average high school student Bella Swan. The two are instantly and fatefully attracted; their love is intense and passionate, yet Edward, who has lived as a 17-year-old (virgin) for more than a century, insists they wait to have sex until they are married.

[1.2] As of November 2009, the series, which includes *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), has sold more than 85 million copies worldwide and been translated into 37 languages (Adams and Akbar 2009). Despite its popularity with teen and adult fans alike, the series has been regularly criticized for containing regressive gender representations (Seifert 2008; Siering 2009), particularly Edward's controlling nature and Bella's willingness to submit. Like many fans, we quickly devoured the series, but as feminist scholars, we questioned the series' pull. To understand Twilight's appeal, and specifically the appeal of Edward and Bella's romantic relationship, we decided to study Twilight's fans using a large-scale online survey, focus group interviews, and ethnography.

[1.3] In this essay, we provide a brief overview of how the themes of abstinence and romance emerged in responses from teen Twilight fans, recount the ways in which the media responded to and framed our research, and problematize the abstinence and romance messages in Twilight. We conclude by contextualizing fans' responses to Twilight with discussion of postfeminist culture.

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2. Studying Twilight fans and the emergence of the pro-abstinence theme

[2.1] Through an online survey of 627 teen female fans and focus group interviews with 24 teen female fans, we examined their interest in and interpretation of Edward and Bella's relationship (Behm-Morawitz, Click, and Aubrey 2010) (note 1). From these data, what struck us was teen girls' recurrent references to and discussion of Edward's insistence that he and Bella not have sex until after they were married—especially because we never directly asked them about this. For example, a 15-year-old girl reported on our survey that she felt "a draw towards a romantic and passiona[te] relationship that is safe like sex after marriage and takes things slow." Andrea, an 18-year-old girl, discussed in a focus group interview that she sees Twilight's message about abstinence as one she could apply to her own life, "so I think it's kind of cool how it's like an interesting story and behind there's also something that you can actually learn. That you can follow in life."

[2.2] Other teens, like 19-year-old Justine, expressed that messages about abstinence in Twilight were more persuasive than messages from their parents: "I get that message a lot from my mom. Like whatever, but just to see like a young couple kind of like doing it, it's just like, you know, not a lot of my friends do that." In a focus group discussion, 16-year-old Kourtney and 15-year-old Shana similarly noted that Twilight's portrayal of abstinence resonated differently with them than discussions with their parents had:

> [2.3] **Kourtney:** Yeah. Because that's what my parents always tell me, and to actually read a book that says the same thing, that's good.
>
> [2.4] **Shana:** Like usually, you don't want to listen to your parents and you're just like, "Oh, whatever. They're just being stupid." And then whenever you read it, you're like, "Oh. Maybe that's not such a bad idea."

[2.5] At first, we were shocked by the interest in and praise for Twilight's message of abstinence. We thought surely teens would find this message irrelevant and puritanical, especially against the backdrop of the hypersexualized American media landscape in which teen characters typically engage in hookups and other sexually permissive activities.

[2.6] Nevertheless, as we have reflected more on the fans' interpretation, the draw to Twilight's abstinence message makes sense. In general, the girls idolized Edward Cullen as a romantic hero. We must connect this idolization to where teen girls are developmentally. In adolescence, girls become interested in romance and dating. Not surprisingly, at the same time, they become more aware of social norms that suggest that they should have romantic feelings for someone of the opposite sex (Simon, Eder, and Evans 1992). Typically, young girls develop crushes on teen idols (and we see Edward here as fulfilling the role of the teen idol, albeit a fictional one) as a way of acknowledging their emerging sexual feelings in a safe, nonthreatening way (Engle and Kasser 2005). In this context, Twilight's Edward is a powerful exception to typical teen boys, who are often viewed by girls as only interested in sex (McRobbie 1991). In contrast, the teen idols to whom girls are typically drawn project a feminine form of masculinity that is sexually nonthreatening and thus accessible (Engle and Kasser 2005; Karniol 2001; McRobbie 1991; Sweeney 1994). Edward represents a "safe" sexuality: his simultaneous passion for Bella and his protection of her virtue result in a romantic hero who is both sexually charged and chaste.

[2.7] The appeal of Twilight's abstinence that we discovered by interviewing and surveying fans was not the most frequently mentioned topic by our sample, yet it was perhaps one of the most eye-opening themes that we uncovered. We went into the project thinking that teen fans would roll their eyes at Twilight for not containing enough sex. Instead, Twilight appealed to some of the fans we studied precisely because it was not oversaturated with sexual permissiveness.

3. Picking up on the message of abstinence

[3.1] Excited by our research, and finding ourselves in the unusual situation of actually having a news hook (the premiere of the second film of the Twilight Saga), we sat down with a public-relations representative from our university to share with her the many themes our research uncovered. For example, we discussed the antifeminist themes within Twilight, the intergenerational appeal of the series, and the pro-abstinence message that appealed to some of our teen fans.

[3.2] On November 16, 2009, the week of the premiere of *The Twilight Saga: New Moon,* the News Bureau at the University of Missouri sent out a press release featuring our work on fan responses to the Twilight narrative. The headline read, "Bitten by Twilight: Younger Fans Embrace Abstinence, True Love" (http://munews.missouri.edu/expert-comment/2009/1116-bitten-by-twilight-younger-fans-embrace-abstinence-traditional-love/). Though the press release highlighted our finding that some teen fans found the message of abstinence in Twilight appealing, it contained the many other themes that we discovered in our research. The result of the press release was a brief but intense media storm.

[3.3] Initially, we were excited that the popular press would communicate that "girl culture" like Twilight was culturally important, legitimate, and worthy of study. We quickly discovered, however, that media coverage of our research greatly oversimplified it, and we were dismayed by the way the media framed the phenomenon. To be clear, we were not necessarily surprised that the media simplified our work, but we were surprised that abstinence quickly became the hot-button issue. Noticeably absent from the media coverage were the broader, more complicated messages about gender, love, and romance in Twilight. The headlines of news stories that covered our work read, for example, "'Twilight' Makes Abstinence Popular?" (Bartyzel 2009), "The 'Twilight Saga': Is It Promoting Abstinence?" (Denberg 2009), and "Romance and Abstinence Attracts Teen Girls to Twilight Series" (Stone 2009). In short, the media seemed most interested in talking about Twilight as the tool parents and educators have been seeking for abstinence education. Many reporters jumped on the story looking for proof that abstinence is indeed the popular choice for American teens today and that Twilight may be the key to promoting that message. For example, on November 20, 2009, the day of the premiere of *New Moon,* we were interviewed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The lead question of the interview was: "An endless line of parents and groups have tried to preach the message of abstinence and has essentially gotten nowhere. Why do you think this movie has resonated on that message?"

[3.4] When we were interviewed by CNN International on November 19, 2009, the reporter asked us if we thought Twilight was causing a "sexual revolution" in the United States—a revolution wherein abstinence would become the choice most popular with teens. Try as we did to complicate the abstinence message by grounding the fans' interpretation within the larger themes of the series, the news media simplified the message by turning our interviews into sound bites that supported their angle.

4. Situating the abstinence message within the text of the Twilight series

[4.1] Although some of the fans reported that the sexual abstinence themes were appealing, we cringe at the idea of using Twilight as the basis of a healthy sexuality education. Indeed, we observe some problematic messages about female teen sexuality that complicate the abstinence message. In particular, we identify three themes pertinent to contextualizing the findings from our fan data.

[4.2] First, Twilight promotes a sexualized abstinence. Edward and Bella share a strong physical attraction, and throughout the books, they often let their sexual desire progress, until Edward puts the brakes on the situation. Edward and Bella thus continually put themselves in circumstances that test their commitment to abstinence. At the same time, they share an obsessive focus on each other, so in the books, they are hardly ever apart. Perhaps the most salient evidence of this is Edward's tendency to

stay in Bella's room at night, watching her while she sleeps. Further, although sexual intercourse does not occur in the series until after the couple gets married, there is a lot of sexual contact in the books in the form of elaborate descriptions of kissing, intimate details about the look and feel of Edward's body, and Bella's narrative of her own sexual feelings.

[4.3] Thus, to endorse Twilight as a model for sexual abstinence is to unrealistically assume that young people will be able to carry on similar sexual relationships. Research documents that girls, not boys, typically act as the sexual gatekeepers in romantic relationships (Cohen and Shotland 1996; Knox and Wilson 1981), regulating the progression of physical intimacy. It is unrealistic to presume that girls can sustain physical relationships with boys that are sexual without crossing the line to sexual intercourse. Further, in Twilight, the tables are turned: Edward takes on the gatekeeper role, and it is Bella who tests his restraint. This reversal in roles does not reflect girls' real-life experiences, nor does it prepare them for navigating the sexual boundaries of real-world romances.

[4.4] The second theme that contextualizes the pro-abstinence message is Edward's role in policing Bella's sexual desire. Throughout the series, Edward chastises her for trying to push past the limitations he has set on their physical relationship (Siering 2009). The decision to maintain a chaste relationship is not one that Edward and Bella have made together; rather, Bella's sexual desire is consistently squelched by Edward. Twilight is thus one example from a long history of cultural texts, including romance literature and young adult literature, in which women's sexuality is censured, limited, and controlled (Christian-Smith 1993).

[4.5] The third theme that contextualizes the pro-abstinence message of Twilight is the connection of sex and violence in the series. In the series, Edward and Bella practice abstinence because he could literally kill her. Edward does not trust himself to maintain the kind of vigilance over her safety that would be required of him in the passion of the moment. The narrative ties together sex and violence in a way that is reminiscent of a long history of sexualized violence in our culture (Malamuth and Check 1981). According to the script of sexualized violence, women are the potential victims of male sexualized aggression, and men are the potential predators, teetering on the edge of giving in to their aggressive sexual impulses. Additionally, the script portrays sexualized violence in ways that depict the victim as secretly desiring and eventually deriving pleasure from the violence. This is similar to Bella's experience, as she eventually decides that even if Edward's passion proves too much, the sacrifice of her life would be worth the fleeting pleasure of being with him. For example, after Bella learns that Edward is a vampire, she reflects on whether she should risk being with him:

> [4.6] I didn't know if there ever was a choice, really. I was already in too deep. Now that I knew…I could do nothing about my frightening secret. Because when I thought of him, his voice, his hypnotic eyes, the magnetic force of his personality, I wanted nothing more than to be with him right now. Even if…but I couldn't think of it. (Meyer 2005, 139)

[4.7] Bella willingly enters into a sexual relationship that could result in her violent end. Clearly, the power dynamics here favor Edward, and Bella deliberately submits.

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5. Conclusion

[5.1] Although we cast a critical eye on the text, we still validate fans' view of sexuality in Twilight. For some of the fans we interviewed and surveyed, Twilight can be viewed as a shelter in a hypersexualized media environment. Our data suggest that at least some of the fans want media messages of romance rather than explicit sex. Further, we are sensitive to girls viewing Edward as the ideal romantic partner because he epitomizes the conflicting needs of adolescent girls who have sexual feelings but are nervous about acting on them. It also appears that Twilight connects with this particular generation of girls because many of them have grown up in a time when abstinence-only sex education was commonplace in their schools and communities. Like some of our focus group participants told us, they had heard their parents and teachers preach abstinence, but reading Twilight was the first time that it appeared to be a desirable option.

[5.2] Still, reducing Twilight to a straightforward tale about abstinence is an oversimplification. That this particular love story, so infused with problematic messages of male overprotection, restraint of female sexuality, and sexualized violence, is romanticized by many Twilight fans, is also telling of our current cultural moment. But to shed the problematic aspects of Twilight and to suggest that it constitutes the moral fiber of abstinence education is dismaying.

[5.3] Further, we wish to stress the importance of contextualizing fans' perspectives both in the text and in the larger culture, a longtime goal (albeit a sometimes elusive one) of cultural studies work. Doing so in this case reveals that teens recognized the general theme of abstinence in the series but disregarded the ways Twilight frames abstinence. Likewise, the media were titillated by the possibility that this seemingly conservative message in Twilight would spark a reverse sexual revolution (note 2). Both groups overlooked the complexity of abstinence in Twilight (although to be fair, some fans—particularly older ones—recognized it), ignoring the patriarchal assertion that sex is dangerous and that female desire must be controlled by men. Comparing fans' interpretations against a critical reading of the text helped bring this discrepancy to light.

[5.4] Twilight's messages about gender and sexuality and the fans' responses to these messages may be further contextualized within the politics of postfeminist America. This generation of teens is coming of age in a culture that largely accepts the belief that gender inequality and feminism have been transcended. We see this postfeminist thought reflected both in popular culture texts and audiences. As McRobbie (2004, 255) argues, popular culture contributes to the "undoing of feminism" through the presentation of texts that oppose goals of equality while simultaneously masquerading as enlightened and contemporary. We see Twilight contributing this undoing through the framing of Bella as being empowered via traditional notions of "feminine devotion" (Levine 2010, 297). Further, Meyer (n.d.) uses the rhetoric of choice when she explains to fans why Bella is not antifeminist. Her argument is that Bella's choices mark her as empowered: "In my own *opinion* (key word), the foundation of feminism is this: being able to choose." This rhetoric of "choice" is used to construct Bella's experience as one reflecting the postfeminist themes of individualism and empowerment (Gill 2007a) that are had within the bounds of normative femininity (Gill 2007b).

[5.5] Our analysis of Twilight's fans and messages suggests that the series is influential in teens' understanding of sexuality. Because "the media [have] become the key site for defining codes of sexual conduct" (McRobbie 2004, 257), they are an important site of investigation of gender and sexuality norms. Not only does Twilight reflect current postfeminist culture, but it also helps create it—and Twilight's message about abstinence should be interpreted within this framework.

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6. Notes

1. The first phase of the study involved distributing an online survey of Twilight fans. A Web link to our survey was posted on two major Twilight fan sites: Twilight Lexicon (http://www.twilightlexicon.com/) and TwilightMOMS (http://www.twilightmoms.com/). Additionally, we recruited from other Twilight fan sites, blogs, and groups on Facebook, MySpace, and LiveJournal. In accordance with the guidelines of our institutional research board, the supplied link directed potential participants under the age of 18 to an online consent form, where they were instructed to have a parent or legal guardian e-mail us for the password to enter the site. Once participants under the age of 18 had access to the survey through an adult guardian, they were asked to consent to participate in the survey before they began. The second phase of the study involved conducting focus group interviews with Twilight fans, most of whom were recruited from the survey. Participants under 18 years of age were required to have written permission from a parent or legal guardian on our consent form to participate in the interview. In addition, written consent was also solicited from each participant.

2. This is particularly ironic given the media's sexualization of Twilight fans lusting after Robert Pattinson and Taylor Lautner, who play Edward Cullen and Jacob Black,

respectively, in the Twilight Saga films. The media are simultaneously fascinated by and derisive of female fans' lustful response to public appearances of the male Twilight stars, yet they are also titillated by the possible use of Twilight to produce chaste teen girls, and thus to contain teen female sexuality. This simultaneous representation of the chasteness and lustfulness of Twilight fans in the media yields an interesting contradiction in the discourse of female sexuality.

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Symposium

From the edges to the center: Disability, *Battlestar Galactica*, and fan fiction

Sasha_feather

Madison, Wisconsin, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—As a fan of *Battlestar Galactica*, I was intrigued by the inclusion of disabled main characters, but disappointed by the show's resolution of their stories. Fan fiction provided an alternate way to talk about these concerns, although many works fetishize or romanticize disability. I credit fandom for continuing to educate me and allow me to educate others.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Disability; Fan community; Fan fiction

Sasha_feather. 2010. From the edges to the center: Disability, *Battlestar Galactica,* and fan fiction. *Transformative Works and Cultures,* no. 5. http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2010.0227.

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1. Introduction

[1.1] I am a reluctant fan of *Battlestar Galactica* (BSG): I'm a hard science fiction television fan who tends to identify not with the main characters, but with those characters who live at the edges of the narrative. This is perhaps because I live at the edges of society's narratives myself: I am a queer woman with a disability. Television tells me exciting stories about people who are ostensibly like me, living in worlds that are supposedly not like mine, and yet that echo the oppressive structures of my world. The main characters in BSG, as in other U.S. television shows, are predominantly straight, white, male, young, healthy, and able-bodied. BSG did have characters of color, disabled characters, interesting female characters, and older characters. All of them piqued my interest in the show.

[1.2] My favorite character in *Battlestar Galactica* is Felix Gaeta. Gaeta is a quiet, intelligent military officer whose motives are difficult to discern. In the season 4 episode "Guess What's Coming to Dinner," he is injured by a gunshot wound and loses his leg, later getting a prosthetic. It was at this point in the narrative of BSG that this minor character went from being an intriguing, mysterious person to my favorite person in the whole of the large cast of characters. What would the writers choose to do now? How would Gaeta react to his disability? Later we learned via Webisodes that

Gaeta is bisexual and was at this time in a relationship with a male character named Hoshi. My interest in the show went from moderately high to skyrocketing squeeful levels of fannishness.

2. *Battlestar Galactica* collides with disability theory

[2.1] I was excited about the show's promise of diversity for several reasons but particularly from the standpoint of disability: here was Laura Roslin, a female president of the colonies living with chronic cancer; Saul Tigh, an alcoholic executive officer who had lost an eye; and Felix Gaeta, a bisexual military officer who had lost his leg. These were recurring, main-cast characters. There was not a "very special episode" devoted to a disability topic, which is a standard trope on other shows. Characters were not magically or suddenly healed, which is a common science fiction and fantasy story line, but instead lived with their changed and changing bodies. Even when Laura Roslin's cancer went into sudden remission, she was not permanently cured. These characters existed in a world of high technology but with few resources and low population—a society desperate to hang on to all of its people, or so I thought. Their stories fascinated me in particular as a disabled fan: the complexities of living with a body that can be ill or injured, that does not magically heal, in a military world that is designed around healthy, able bodies rather than disabled ones. The contrast of the human bodies to the "resurrectable" Cylon bodies added a further layer of fascinating complexity, especially after the Cylons lost their ability to resurrect. Moreover, the Cylons wanted to reproduce human style, and some were masquerading as humans all along. Issues of embodiment were interwoven with the show's very premise: survival, war, and reproduction.

[2.2] The show let me down, and let me down hard, on these points. *Battlestar Galactica* showed its audience just how disposable disabled people are when Samuel Anders, after experiencing a traumatic brain injury and being hooked into the flagship via Cylon technology, piloted the fleet into the sun and oblivion. Felix Gaeta was executed as a traitor. President Laura Roslin died from her cancer at the end of the series. Humanity as a whole decided to abandon technology, without any mention of how this would affect particular members of the population, such as the child, Nicky, who used a dialysis machine. While it is true that for most people technology is a luxury, for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, technology can be the difference between life and death. It is a harsh fact of life that people with disabilities are vilified, ignored, institutionalized, and disposed of, as when disabled people were left behind in hospitals during Hurricane Katrina (Fink 2009). To see these things echoed in science fiction storytelling—in American myth making—is heartbreaking and only reinforces ableism. When a high-technology, low-population society such as that

of the *Galactica* treats its disabled people as it treated Sam Anders and Felix Gaeta, that is a bleak and hopeless message for the rest of the world.

3. Fannish interactions

[3.1] Fandom served as catalyst, refuge, and academy for me in this situation. I had a show I loved but that I had deep reservations about, an impulse to talk and read about it, and a desire to reclaim the characters and world. I wrote fan fic about Felix Gaeta so that I could move his story, the story of a queer disabled person, from the edges to the center of the narrative. A friend and I wrote about Gaeta experiencing his disabled body, being fitted with a prosthetic made from Cylon Centurion technology, experiencing pain and isolation, and struggling with acceptance and relationships (anna_bird and sasha_feather 2009). Writing this fic was an empowering experience for me; I made the character my own, saw into the possibilities of the show in a way I had not before, and saw story lines it could have explored but did not. Fannish involvement helped me see the show's failings, understand my own relationship to BSG, and understand how I could still love the characters on my own terms. Slash fan fic in particular allows writers like me to center queer characters and queer voices, and a great opportunity exists to center disabled characters in a similar way.

[3.2] While it is not difficult to find fan fic featuring disabled characters, often these works have problems. Tropes within fan fic tend to fetishize or romanticize disability, such as by using a disabling event as a simple plot device to bring two characters emotionally closer. Even the hurt/comfort trope in general could be seen as playing into this type. These tropes exist within the fan community, which includes people who have disabilities themselves, although those disabilities may be different than the ones we are reading and writing about. My own disabilities are chronic pain and fatigue, which are not uncommon among my peers in fandom but which seem to be underrepresented in the characters we read about. It is rare to find a character who is living and working, struggling with her or his disabled body, having relationships, perhaps developing a disabled identity. It is even rarer to find a character who is being politically active around disability or who has a disabled community. We cannot rely on canon sources to provide these characters because they do not currently exist or are extremely rare in the sources we are engaged with. Instead, as writers and artists, and especially as people who understand what it is like to live at the margins of society, we must create such characters by putting more of ourselves and our own lived experiences into our fiction. Let us value ourselves and our identities; let us center our own experiences.

[3.3] As a reader, I rarely find fan fic that speaks to my disabled identity—fan fic that I feel gets it "right" from my own perspective. In my limited experience reading fan fic

in BSG, which is a relatively small fandom, I have read few stories that explore disability at all. Reading accurate portrayals of disability is a rare enough experience in all of fandom that I am very enthusiastic about stories I find that succeed. Two such stories are "Fair Trade" and its sequel "Moebius," by esteefee (2009a, 2009b), a pair of *Stargate: Atlantis* fan fiction stories. In these stories the main character, John Sheppard, has a disabling knee injury that causes chronic pain and some mobility problems. He hides his pain from people and has a hard time talking about it or asking for help. Such reticence is completely automatic behavior, tied into his personality, and he similarly hides the fact that he is queer and that he is intelligent. Sheppard struggles to form relationships and build community despite his closed-off nature. His chronic pain is a fact of his life that he works around and lives with. He must negotiate issues in his sexual relationship because of it. This is one of the few extremely well-done instances of disabled queer sexuality I've seen in fan fiction, or in any kind of storytelling, and agrees with my own experiences. Sheppard's disability is central to the story but so are his job, his romantic and sexual relationship, his friendships, and his passions.

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4. Conclusion

[4.1] Fandom has given me inroads to developing my own identities, being political, and having community. The fannish impulse to create stories and art, analyze media, and engage with other fans can open doors, create community, and lead to new opportunities and even new career paths for fans. As a fan who has successfully found identity and community, I now feel that I can help others along this same path. Part of my goal in doing this is to create a more accessible and safer world for all people, a more welcoming space both within fandom and in the wider world. I do this by blogging, by sitting on panels about disability at conventions, by volunteering for disability access at WisCon, by continuing to educate myself as an antioppression activist, and by continuing to create fannish work such as fan fic and icons. I have rather accidentally become a fan who is known as a disability activist, and I am proud of that, but it is fandom itself that has helped forge my identity.

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Symposium

"This isn't something I can fake": Reactions to *Glee*'s representations of disability

David Kociemba

Emerson College, Boston, Massachusetts, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Angered by how *Glee*'s creators depict the character of Artie giving up on his dreams of being a dancer, I demonstrate the show's ignorance of integrated dance and wheelchair ballroom dance. A review of other responses reveals widespread criticism by disability studies scholars. However, the fan communities generally are unaware of what is missing, engrossed in shipping and music appreciation debates.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Crip drag; Fan community; Integrated dance

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1. Introduction: Critical reactions to *Glee*'s representation of disability

[1.1] I want to begin by confessing that I am angered by how *Glee*'s (2009–) creators use Artie Abrams (played by Kevin McHale) (note 1). I was first introduced to the series during a student presentation in my "Images of Disability" course at Emerson College. The student showed "Proud Mary," the all-wheelchair number that ends the *Glee* episode "Wheels." Zach Woodlee's choreography shows no knowledge of integrated dance, which crafts distinct movements and kinetics by using dancers with and without physical disabilities. This genre, practiced over the past three decades by more than two dozen dance companies worldwide, includes numbers choreographed by such movement innovators as Bill T. Jones, Joanna Haigood, Victoria Marks, Stephen Petronio, and Margaret Jenkins. My anger compelled me to write and publish a response. One need only compare the choreography of "Proud Mary" (http://repka.tv/video/84198, 40:55 to 43:18) and AXIS Dance Company's 2009 "Light Shelter" (http://www.axisdance.org/video_lightshelter.html) to see *Glee*'s ignorance of integrated dance and recoil at its self-congratulatory tone (see also Kociemba 2010a). (After this number, their choreography returns to marginalizing Artie.) In "Dream On," Artie gives up his dream of being a dancer and cedes dancing with Tina in the final number. Here, they ignore the possibilities offered by wheelchair ballroom dance, a sport since 1998 that has international competitions featuring 22 countries (note 2). Their deliberate erasure of mainstream and fine arts forms of integrated dance irks me. And it's what prompted me to see whether critics and fans of *Glee* saw what was missing.

[1.2] I'm not alone in this reaction. A number of commentators experienced in the representation of disability share it. Anna from Feminists with Disabilities for a Way Forward is just one writer among many who decries the series' use of crip drag: Artie is played by Kevin McHale, who does not have a mobility impairment (Anna 2009). Crip drag performances are rather like blackface and yellowface performances. They are inherently inauthentic, enact the biases and fantasies of majority culture, and perpetuate employment discrimination in the entertainment industry (note 3). A multiunion committee for performers with disabilities used "Wheels," the first episode centered on Artie, to publicize hiring discrimination against actors with impairments, noting that the industry has actually gone backward since the 1980s (Associated Press 2009). Wheelchair Dancer (2009) found the wheelchair dance choreography that ends "Wheels" insultingly ignorant and the dancers poorly trained. Phil (2009) at Rocky Time Warp laments the opportunity lost to portray genuine deaf culture when the deaf choir performs John Lennon's "Imagine" in

"Hairography" and worries that most audiences will think it's about how the singer/signers wish they could hear. S. E. Smith (2009) at *Bitch Magazine* finds the series to be a serial disability stereotyping offender. Smith (2010) later writes in the *Guardian,* "Artie is a painfully troped character and the show utilises almost every imaginable disability stereotype, with a heavy emphasis on 'inspirational' storylines."

[1.3] If I might sum up the perspective offered by these and other authors: Artie is a crip drag performance of a stereotype written by people who erase the arts, cultures, and histories of people with impairments (note 4). *Glee* does not increase the visibility of the disability rights cause or effectively convey the experiences of disability-based oppression. If viewers find this character empowering, that says more about their desperation to find an authentic character amid a sea of disability stereotypes than it does about the merits of the character.

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2. *Glee*'s old directions: Its disability stereotypes

[2.1] Before turning to the question of whether the Gleekdom's comments in three mainstream fan communities show the influence of these criticisms, I'd like to provide a brief clarification of the stereotypes in the series referenced by Smith (2009).

[2.2] Disability studies scholar Leonard Kriegel (1987) examines literature to find prominent representational patterns of disability. One such pattern, the Charity Cripple, aptly describes the use of many characters with impairments in *Glee.* This figure draws out the charitable impulses of middle-class audiences. Charles Dickens's Tiny Tim defines this type. The granting of alms, pity, or sympathy assures us that we will escape Tiny Tim's fate and serves as an opportunity to demonstrate our virtue. Notably, "Wheels" consists of a literal charity drive to get an accessible bus for William McKinley High School, which Will and Puck use to demonstrate their virtue. Sue Sylvester's charity toward Becky, a student with Down syndrome, reinforces that message. "Wheels" serves a similar function for the series' creators, who showcase their good intentions as a way of rebutting criticism of their hiring decisions. The pity solicited by Charity Cripples from ableist audiences makes Haverbrook's choir a threat in "Sectionals." *Glee* uses the "there but for the grace of God go I" aspect of Charity Cripples in "Laryngitis," as Rachel learns that she's more than her voice by meeting Sean, a quadriplegic former football player (note 5). Finally, when Artie angrily rejects Tina after her confession of faking a stutter in "Wheels," many Artie/Tina shippers on the sites I studied reacted with dismay. That would be because the Charity Cripple "soothes middle-class society because he refuses to accept his wound as the source of his rage. Indeed, he refuses to acknowledge rage. His purpose is never to make 'normals' either uncomfortable or guilty" (Kriegel 1987, 36–37). Unfortunately, that would be the only time in the first season Artie would express that kind of power.

[2.3] Martin F. Norden's taxonomy is specifically based on American film and television practices. Two other of his rubrics, the Saintly Sage and the Civilian Superstar, fit Jean Sylvester (Sue Sylvester's sister, played by Robin Trocki) and Artie, respectively. Saintly Sages are wise, asexual older persons who serve as a voice of reason and conscience in a chaotic world, with the hermit in *Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935) being its fullest expression (Norden 1994, 131–32). Jean advises Sue how to recover from the loss of her "Bad Reputation." Saintly Sages often "see" people better because they are blind. Jean's placement in a residential facility means that she's not a part of McKinley High, which gives her a unique insight into it. On the other hand, Civilian Superstars like Artie are resourceful and adaptive figures who tend to show up in inspirational movies about overcoming individual deficits, not social bias. The history of collective action is erased, and its criticism of discrimination and access is lacking or temporary (Norden 1994, 28–29, 51). Writer and disability rights activist Irving Zola (1991) provides an additional critique of the implied message of such films: "If a Franklin Delano Roosevelt or a Wilma Randolph could OVERCOME their handicap, so could and should all the disabled. And if we fail, it's our problem, our personality, our weakness. And all of this further masks what chronic illness is all about." The Civilian Superstar often

returns to his or her former glory or surpasses it, with an iconic example being the triumphant walk across the stage that ends the FDR biopic *Sunrise at Campobello* (Vincent J. Donehue, 1960). Civilian Superstars accomplish this task by overcoming the real block to successful integration: their own self-pity. *Glee* gives every sign that Artie is going to reenact this trope. "Dream On" features his desire to walk again and explores how self-pity impedes his relationship with Tina. The two of them establish the possibility of a cure (note 6). The triumphant and brilliantly executed flash mob "Safety Dance" fantasy sequence stokes demand for more of former boy band performer Kevin McHale's nonwheelchair dancing. The series' past and future are saturated with familiar disability archetypes.

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3. Enter the Gleeks: When shipping is not enough

[3.1] But what of the Gleekdom? Did the wisdom of the crowd succeed in making connections to disability arts, cultures, and theories where *Glee*'s creators failed? Did fans in online forums link to other sites outside the fandom that critiqued its representation of disability, such as Wheelchair Dancer and *Bitch Magazine?* To try to answer these questions, I went to two corporate fan forums (at Television Without Pity and Fox) and one seemingly independent one that came up second in a Google search for "Glee fan forum" (Gleefan.com, http://www.gleefan.com/, which lists no corporate ownership). I made these selections fully knowing that any study of fandom tends to study social or visible fans that are easy to locate—especially with a survey as informal as mine. I selected these sites for their different natures within the mainstream and the possibility that the responses there might hint at the reception of mainstream audiences.

[3.2] The official *Glee* forums available on Fox's *Glee* Web site (http://glee.community.fox.com/) don't really deserve the term *community.* Just a few members have posted moire than once. Many posters have bad etiquette: they ignore the comments of others, use lots of exclamation points, and even write in all caps. The ethos at the forum seems to silence any criticism of the show. Many posts dealing with the episode's treatment of Down syndrome, stuttering, and the Americans With Disabilities Act are rebutted with comments along the lines of, "It's just TV; don't complain—change the channel!" Yet there was an entire thread devoted to ableism in casting controversy that coincided with the airing of "Wheels" ("Arty—The wheelchair person," January 6, 2010, http://glee.community.fox.com/go/thread/view/100198/22625382/Arty_-_the_wheelchair_person). What's also remarkable is how negative the few posts on "Proud Mary" were ("WHAT A DISGRACE!!," http://glee.community.fox.com/go/thread/view/100198/22624674/WHAT_A_DISGRACE!!?pg=1, November 11, 2009). Anneea described the choreography as being so simple a chimpanzee could have done it. Doctortruth likened the number to blackface and pointed out that the reveal of Sue's sister is inconsistent with Sue's previous slam on how Will should look for recruits from special education classes. Just two posters specifically praised "Proud Mary" despite the preairing press focus on the number. Many posters rated "Dream On" highly. Yet two posters on another thread decried the idea that Artie couldn't have a career in dance, linking to integrated performances by dance companies like the Dancing Wheels, CanDoCo, and AXIS ("Episode 19 and dancers in wheelchairs," http://glee.community.fox.com/go/thread/view/100198/24898949/Episode_19_and_Dancers_in_Wheelchairs, May 27, 2009). This community lends itself to drive-by criticism: only one critical poster had put up more than a single message.

[3.3] The thousands of posters at Gleefan.com, however, have developed something more approaching a community, with posting etiquette, individualized avatars isolating small character moments, and members with hundreds of posts. That social cohesion came at a cost. Virtually none of the posts demonstrated any knowledge of the debate about the representation of disability on *Glee.* The one exception was a thread on the politics of casting ("Disabled actors upset about Wheels and Artie,"

November 13, 2009, http://www.gleeforum.com/Disabled-Actors-Upset-About-Wheels-and-Artie-t2472.html). This community epitomizes the virtual community as an inward-directed phenomenon.

[3.4] Television Without Pity's recaps and boards are considered so important in the blogosphere that its purchase by NBC-Universal was covered by the *Guardian* and *Slate Magazine* (Donaghy 2007; Stevens 2007). TWoP's boards had the least discussion of the union critique of the casting of Kevin McHale. There was no mention of it in the recap or the thread discussing "Wheels" despite the opportunity offered by Artie's line, "This isn't something I can fake." The politics of the casting decision is buried on page 32 of a subforum of TV Potluck ("Magical cripples and their life lessons: Disability on TV," July 2, 2008, http://forums.televisionwithoutpity.com/index.php?showtopic=3131010&st=465). Both of the other *Glee* forums were more open to political debate around this issue than TWoP.

[3.5] Demian's recap of "Wheels" describes the choreography as "Busby Berkeley–esque" but observes that it "left me feeling a little meh, overall. Maybe I shouldn't have watched Tina [Turner]'s version before writing this paragraph" ("Proud Mary keep on burnin'," n.d. [2009], http://www.televisionwithoutpity.com/show/glee/wheels_1.php?page=18). In his recap of "Dream On," he snarkily talks back to a touching Artie-Tina moment after the "Safety Dance" number: "'I'm gonna dance one day, you know,' Real Artie replies, still smiling at his little fantasy. Yeah, don't bet on it, kid" ("Tigers? At Night? With Voices Soft as Thunder?", n.d. [2010], http://www.televisionwithoutpity.com/show/glee/dream_on_1.php?page=1). Of all the writers on TWoP, Demian should be the one aware of the many sites decrying *Glee*'s representation of disability. On the other hand, a photo gallery entitled "*Glee:* The show's worst musical moments" includes "Proud Mary," which TWoP labels "insulting" as a result of its "laborious" choreography and lack of subtlety in its message (http://www.televisionwithoutpity.com/show/glee/glee_the_shows_worst_musical_m.php).

[3.6] In TWoP's "Wheels" thread, just 12 posts of 519 total even mention "Proud Mary." The thread devoted to Artie on TWoP broadens the discussion in their forums in a few ways ("Artie Abrams: Rock and roll," August 30, 2009, http://forums.televisionwithoutpity.com/index.php?showtopic=3188546). Posters there debate whether the series hides Artie in the early episodes' choreography by having his character play guitar when the actor doesn't play the instrument. One posted a link to a YouTube video of an integrated ballroom dance performance ("'Dream On' 2010.05.18," May 19, 2010, http://forums.televisionwithoutpity.com/index.php?showtopic=3195607&st=285&#entry12927983). Two posters praise Woodlee's inclusion of Artie for two moments in Kristin Chenoweth's "Last Name" number in "Rhodes Not Taken." Later, a poster questions why the creators used a quadriplegic instead of Artie in "Laryngitis." That short discussion is silenced when a moderator posts a "friendly" warning against discussing the representation of disability in the character thread.

[3.7] The only person on the site to link to the blogs critiquing *Glee*'s erasure of integrated dance is AnnieF, on pages 3238 and 3239 of the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* thread ("Someplace that's else: The meet market," May 25, 2010, http://forums.televisionwithoutpity.com/index.php?showtopic=2891151&st=48555). She goes on to observe, "What I don't like about Artie's wish to be able-bodied is that it makes dance a solely able-bodied experience. He can't walk, therefore he can't dance. Grrr. That's annoying, because it's a big damn lie." (The *Buffy* connection is Joss Whedon's direction of the episode. That's what caused me to blog about it at Watcher Junior; Kociemba 2010b.) It's a shame her observations were so hidden; the *Glee* recappers and the readers of the series forum needed to see what she wrote.

[3.8] What's most notable, however, is the lack of comments on "Proud Mary" across all three communities. Most of the "Wheels" comments deal with the diva-off "Defying Gravity" number, Kurt's relationship with his father, whether Rachel's aggravation in this episode is justified, how lovable Sue is after the Down syndrome plotline, and various plot-hole and shipping debates. The absence of comment

on "Proud Mary" is itself a damning indictment, given that it is the show-ending number in an episode that *Glee* creator Ryan Murphy labeled "a game changer" (Fernandez and Martin 2009). I attribute that response to the inauthentic choreography. Posters would have commented at their first exposure to the beauty of a sophisticated integrated dance sequence. Uninformed creators limit their work's potential by cutting themselves off from the communities of artists versed in the experiences of disability and its cultures.

4. Conclusion: Trapped on the screen

[4.1] Few of the fans I observed knew what they were missing. Each community was its own sort of inward-directed echo chamber. The official network community lacked the cohesion to engage the material posted by its most critical members. With no regularly active members, no sustained dialogue was possible despite the readers' exposure to the most criticism of the series. Gleefan.com members were too engrossed in their shipping and music appreciation debates to care what others were saying. TWoP's moderators stifled debate, its recapper's trademark snark didn't make up for a lack of research, and the site's architecture scattered the few informed fans. None of the three sites discussed disability stereotypes. These three fan communities were limited to discussing the plausibility of the plot, the singing, and the pleasure provided by the show's relationships. Viewers were trapped on the TV screen.

[4.2] When Kevin McHale's Artie says in "Wheels," "This isn't something I can fake," it has a double meaning. The experience of disability for the character isn't something he can fake because disability is located in social barriers, not individual physical impairments. But McHale is faking the mobility impairment. Woodlee is faking dance choreography informed by disability culture, and badly. And the creators fake progressive politics while reinforcing barriers for actors with mobility impairments and erasing authentic disability culture while pretending to celebrate it. "Wheels" and "Dream On" reveal that its creators think that there's nothing very special for mainstream audiences to learn from the experience of those with disabilities in their Very Special Episodes. As a result, their fans didn't learn much, and most couldn't find someone else to teach them.

5. Acknowledgments

[5.1] I thank In Media Res (http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/) editor Avi Santo for lending me a publishing opportunity and for providing his expertise; Stephanie da Costa for her presentation in the "Images of Disability" course, which sparked my interest in this topic; my mother, Alice Kociemba, for her support; and Kristen Romanelli, my fiancée, for everything.

6. Notes

1. This is in the tradition of situating the author in fandom studies and feminism scholarship (Cochran 2009). It's particularly important in disability studies. As the medical and rehabilitation fields have silenced those with physical and mental impairments by speaking for them, I also need to reveal that I spent 5 years with chronic fatigue and immune dysfunction syndrome, an immune system disorder. Although no two impairments feature the same disabling cultural, physical, and economic environments, I do think that that there are enough commonalities across the spectrum of impairments to enable informed dialogue and solidarity.

2. There's even a BBC3 reality program on selecting their nation's team: *Dancing on Wheels* (http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00pnsnq).

3. There are exceptions, such as black vaudeville performer Bert Williams, and complications, such as vaudeville's similar impersonations of German and Irish immigrants. For a catalog of recent crip drag

performances and possible aversions, see TV Tropes' entry on crip drag (http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/discussion.php?id=fskcfmp1mgmg6puklujp050t).

4. It's not just integrated dance that tends to get erased. *Glee* wants audiences to share in the outrage of the theft of their song list without reflecting on the fact that their sources—rock and roll, power ballads, and the musical's show tunes—are themselves the product of complex processes of cultural appropriation, cross-pollination, and exploitation. The fact that New Directions counters with "You Can't Always Get What You Want" is not without irony, given that the song itself was inspired by the Beatles' "Hey Jude."

5. This is their third casting of an actor with an impairment in a marginal role that in part serves to provide cover for their use of crip drag. To the creators' credit, Robin Trocki (as Jean Sylvester) and Lauren Potter (as Becky Jackson) have ongoing roles, albeit minor ones.

6. Norden (1994, 58–59) found that of the 430 feature films with disability themes in the 1912–30 period alone, 35 percent featured a miracle cure. The miracle cure remains a prominent feature of the medical melodrama, the medical mystery, miracle cure news stories, and *Lost* (2004–10).

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Symposium

Becky is my hero: The power of laughter and disruption in *Supernatural*

Judith May Fathallah

University of Cardiff, Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—Interpreted through Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of resistant laughter, the fan insert character of Becky from *Supernatural* can be read as an invitation to appropriate the narrative for their own pleasure. However, outsiders to the fan community may not recognize that Becky's depiction is hyperbolic and may thus read the character as a damaging stereotype.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fan fiction; Gender; TV

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1. Introduction

[1.1] When the cult TV show *Supernatural* branched out into explicitly metatextual domain, introducing the heroes to their own fans and apparent author, the fangirl character of Becky received extremely mixed responses. On the surface, her depiction buys into many of the female mad-fan stereotypes: Becky is a humorous, obsessive, very feminine young woman who writes bad slash on her bedroom computer and dotes on one of the male leads. While many fans greeted Becky with laughter and appreciation at being "noticed," others were far from amused. Negative reactions, ranging in intensity from mild annoyance to outright anger, tended to fall into broad overlapping categories. Lisa Schmidt (2010) reports fans' feelings of being mocked, exposed, betrayed, or simply uncomfortable with the intersection between fanon and canon. Now that episode 5.09 "The Real Ghostbusters" has aired, a specific objection is noted by Catherine Tosenberger: unlike the male fan characters, Becky doesn't get to be heroic (2010, 1.6).

[1.2] This is a legitimate complaint, resonant with any woman who remembers wondering why *she* couldn't wield a sword or undertake a quest, or imagined herself a boy in order to do so. The fan base portrayed in "Ghostbusters" is predominantly male, which *Supernatural* fandom is not, necessitating a strong investment of meaning in

Becky as the sole representative of the female fan. But I want to suggest that while Becky does not get to participate in the traditional, masculinist quest narrative, which is fueled by angst, pain, revenge, and linear progression to a goal, this does not have to be read as failure of power. It could equally be interpreted as a rejection of that ideology. Interpreted through Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of resistant laughter, Becky could be read as refusing to take seriously the official, dominant story line, inviting those not privileged in mainstream society to appropriate the narrative for their pleasure.

2. Becky and laughter

[2.1] I should make it clear that I do not read Becky as a literal representation of a fangirl, any more than I read the neurotic, chaotic, isolated Chuck as a literal representation of Eric Kripke, the real creator of *Supernatural.* For me, she is a comic character with a hint of truth: YouTube commenters on Becky clips frequently acknowledge that there's a little bit of Becky in every fangirl, just as, I believe, many writers have experienced a hint of the equivocation between "writing is *hard*" and "I'm a god" (Chuck, 5.18 "The Monster at the End of This Book"). So how might we interpret Becky as heroic? The key to this reading is Bakhtinian laughter and disruption. Consider this insight:

> [2.2] In the Middle Ages, folk humor existed and developed outside the official sphere of high ideology and literature, but precisely because of its unofficial existence, it was marked by exceptional radicalism, freedom, and ruthlessness. (Bakhtin 1968, 71).

[2.3] I believe this is equally applicable today. If fangirls, with Becky as their representative, can be taken as a branch of the folk with their own "unofficial truth" (Bakhtin 1968, 91), both the humorous aspects of Becky to the viewer and her own joyful sense of humor can be seen to radically disrupt and at times rewrite the official narrative of *Supernatural.* The fact that Becky herself is humorous in no way negates this, because the folk are not exempt from their own laughter. The folk laugh at everything, so everything is equalized.

[2.4] Sam and Dean think their quest is of fundamental importance and seriousness, but to Becky, both the characters and the quest are leveled out into her ideology of pleasure and comedy. Hence this now infamous scene from 5.01 "Sympathy for the Devil":

> [2.5] **Sam:** Um, Becky, c…uh can you…quit touching me?
>
> [2.6] **Becky:** No.

[2.7] My reaction on first viewing was explosive laughter, minus the tension and edge of horror experienced at earlier canon humor.

[2.8] Then, in 5.09 "The Real Ghostbusters," Becky creates her own plot, recruiting Sam and Dean for her convention using a text from Chuck's phone:

> [2.9] **Chuck:** Um…did you take my phone?
>
> [2.10] **Becky:** I just borrowed it. From your pants.

[2.11] Later on, having transferred her affections from Sam to Chuck, she actually gets Sam to cooperate (awkwardly) in her comedic romance when she "breaks up" with him. Their chemistry, she informs him, was too hot to survive, and so perished "like a monkey on the sun." Becky is the heroine of her own, happily anarchic narrative, which operates according to a different narrative logic, or no narrative logic at all.

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3. Gender and genre

[3.1] The quest is a hallmark of the masculinist epic. Sam and Dean's quest is in some ways an epic narrative, and laughter contains the potential to "destroy…the epic, and in general destroy…any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance." Laughter has "the remarkable power of making an object come up close," that one might "examine it freely and experiment with it" (Bakhtin 1981, 23). Here Bakhtin is contrasting the epic with the novel. Though it is significant that the novel is more polyphonic, fluid, and traditionally conceived as far more feminine than the epic, I do not think it necessary to categorize Becky as a novelistic character as opposed to an epic one. She is not easy to pin down, and so in a sense is more radical: generic categorization is a form of cultural taming. But Becky certainly does not need a quest. She is already where she wants to be.

[3.2] Becky pulls the quest characters into her creative playground. She draws the official narrative into "a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare, and expose it" (Bakhtin 1981, 23).

[3.3] Bakhtin finds this an indispensible step in the realization of creativity. To say the character of Becky accomplishes all this is too much. The key phrase in Bakhtin's analysis of laughter's operation is "where one can," or to adapt it slightly, "where *we* can." Becky is not a finished project of liberation, but she is a powerful symbol that real fans can appropriate. Her laughter, and ours, is potential: she demonstrates the

kind of power available to real fan fiction writers, to take apart, to finger with familiarity, to look into the center, to dismantle.

[3.4] Finally, it should be noted that while Becky cannot contribute to the quest narrative in the physically active way Chuck and the male fans do, it is her comprehensive fannish knowledge that provides the vital information for the broader myth arc narrative (the whereabouts of the Colt, a gun with special demon-killing properties). As a discussion at *Sequential Tart* acknowledges, this episode's hunt literally would not have been achieved without the fans, a "nice quasi-metafictional acknowledgement" (O'Connell 2010).

4. A Caveat

[4.1] There is a dark side to the breaking of the fourth wall in this way. What happens if Becky is read literally by outsiders to the fan community, those in real-life relationships with fans? To anyone with a basic knowledge of fandom, she is obviously hyperbolic, but fandom is a proportionally small segment of the television audience. In a thought-provoking and disturbing comic strip posted in the LiveJournal community Supernaturalart by Counteragent, a man storms angrily out of the marital home after viewing the scene in which Becky is writing Wincest (note 1) and inferring that "this" is what his wife and the mother of his baby does online (January 9, 2010). This could be read as a warning against the presentation of Becky as potentially damaging to the real-life female fan.

[4.2] For Becky *is* available for appropriation; but to appropriate her without fear, the female viewer must already be in a relatively privileged position. She must have the internal and external resources to assert her nonofficial desire. Internally, she must be secure in the conviction that hegemonic stories of female passivity and traditional heterosexual unions are not the only legitimate ones, which implies a degree of education in feminist and gender studies. Externally, she cannot be practically dependent on those hegemonic narratives, which implies a degree of financial security. She must be confident that anyone she watches the show with knows enough to share the joke, rather than inferring that *Supernatural* fangirls actually are irrational nymphomaniacs. For some people, fandom is a refuge, a space where they can explore facets of themselves not sanctioned by official culture, where anonymity provides security and they need not fear jeopardizing their off-line situation. It could be argued that it was not the place of Kripke and his writers to present a character who may cause risks for female viewers in less privileged situations than themselves, who are economically and emotionally dependent on structures in which it is necessary to keep part of themselves hidden.

[4.3] But the comic strip also problematizes the situation in which such risks arise, demonstrating just how disruptive Becky is to the masculinist, heterosexual narratives our society operates on. We might ask who the villain of the piece is. Is it Kripke for the act of exposure? The husband for his narrow-minded overreaction to a joke he doesn't understand? The wife for marrying into, and having a child in, a repressive situation where she must hide a fundamental part of herself? All are possible candidates. In my reading, though, the problem is the discourse according to which this marriage operates, in which the husband is so threatened and angered by the possibility of his wife having an imagination and a sex drive. The strip highlights how far we still have to go in terms of the equality of women in the cultural sphere, as does the author's note: "Luckily, this is fiction. For now." Fandom being a relatively accepting and open-minded community, the strip serves as a reminder of the vast gap between our ideals and day-to-day life under culture's dominant discourses.

[4.4] On the one hand, to assert that public texts should not say what society is not ready to hear is to resign ourselves to endless repetition of the same tired ideology. Perhaps there can be no progress without cost, no new thought without shock. But on the other hand, while industry control remains in the hands of the privileged few, creators must take some responsibility for their representation of disprivileged cultures, bearing in mind the very real impact of text on life.

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5. Conclusion

[5.1] The complaint that Becky is not heroic only makes sense in terms of the official, masculinist quest narrative of the myth arc. Many female fans are likely to feel the disappointment of this, particularly since the unnecessary death of Jo, a female character who did take an active part in the official story. But Becky exists outside of and in spite of this narrative, which she refuses to take seriously and appropriates to her own ends of pleasure and libratory expression. Becky is available as a hero, for those able to appropriate her as one, and if we change our definition of a hero from one who is driven by a quest narrative of achievement and suffering to one who writes and lives her own, radically comic, stories.

6. Acknowledgments

[6.1] Thanks to Morgan and Counteragent for permitting me to reference their works.

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7. Note

1. Fan term for incest slash concerning members of the Winchester family, usually Sam/Dean. As with much Gothic fiction, this is certainly available in *Supernatural,* but only as subtext. See Tosenberger (2008). Admittedly, Becky's writing is deliberately atrocious, a compilation of cringe-inducing fan fiction clichés. It would be interesting to see if the writers were brave enough to reference Wincest fan fiction of high literary quality, such as Morgan's 2009 story "Midwinter Montana," archived at Sinful Desire (http://www.sinful-desire.org/).

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Symposium

Fandom squared: Web 2.0 and fannish production

Jeff Watson

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—By comparing how businesses and fan communities conceive of, foster, and manage participation, I outline the tensions that reveal the emerging shape of fan practice in the era of Web 2.0. The producer-consumer relationship does not map neatly onto the producer-fan relationship. The more that media companies integrate fans into the process of producing and developing content, the less agency fans actually feel.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Resistance; Social media; Web 2.0

Watson, Jeff. 2010. Fandom squared: Web 2.0 and fannish production. *Transformative Works and Cultures,* no. 5. http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2010.0218.

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1. Introduction

[1.1] At first blush, the real-world, real-time Web might seem a dream come true for anyone involved in producing or consuming media. After all, the Web 2.0 business model, canonically described by Tim O'Reilly and John Batelle in their 2009 white paper, "Web Squared: Web 2.0 Five Years On," is all about leveraging the torrential data flows generated by ubiquitous computing and social media in order to build applications and services that are responsive to the needs of their users. Unlike earlier iterations of the Web, such applications don't just *serve* the networks of people who use them. Rather, they are *constituted* by them and depend on them for their existence and refinement. For media producers, this shift in technology and practice has created a wide range of new methods for generating, monitoring, and communicating with audiences. For fans, it has empowered them as never before to band together, engage creatively with content, and have their voices heard. In many respects, this new arrangement seems like a win-win situation.

[1.2] Of course, the reality is that while there are many key harmonies between Web 2.0 and fan practices, there are also many differences that are hard to reconcile. Being a fan has always been about more than just "voting" for a particular story world. Indeed, in contrast to the streamlined logics of Web 2.0, fandom is a dynamic and

sometimes elusive set of "social structures and cultural practices created by the most passionately engaged consumers of mass media properties" (Jenkins 2010). As such, fandom often exists (at least in part) beyond the boundaries of taste and canon sanctioned by the creators of those properties. While it is sometimes gratifying to know the companies behind media franchises are keen to listen to and directly address their properties' fans via real-time Web applications, in many cases, those fans would actually prefer to be left alone. It is through such tensions that we can see the emerging shape of fan practice in the era of Web 2.0. Here, I outline several such tensions by comparing how Web 2.0 businesses and fan communities conceive of, foster, and manage participation.

2. Media remix, data remix

[2.1] The remix is a foundational component of fan practice. Fan fiction remixes stories and characters from a variety of sources in order to generate new texts and perform identity. Fannish gaming practices, from live-action role-playing games (RPGs) to pen-and-paper RPG spinoffs to massively multiplayer online games like *Star Trek Online,* arguably succeed or fail on the basis of their capacity to enable the remixing and repurposing of their source material. Vidding uses songs and footage from television shows and movies to "comment on or analyze a set of preexisting visuals, to stage a reading, or occasionally to use the footage to tell new stories" (Coppa 2008, ¶1.1). The list goes on.

[2.2] Such practices have been with fandom since its earliest days. But in the Web 2.0 era, this kind of reordering, repurposing, and remixing of media archives is no longer solely the province of the fan. In a sublime symmetry, the media industry itself now sees its economic salvation as being dependent on its ability to interpret and remix the productive output of its fans. Social media data flows and other explicit and implicit metadata sources—including everything from user-generated folksonomies such as those found on sites like Flickr or Delicious, to automatically generated data such as GPS coordinates embedded in photographs taken with cell phone cameras or interpersonal connectivity maps made available by social networking services—constitute a massive archive of texts that media companies and entrepreneurs can analyze and structure in order to divine and shape the desires of their audiences, real and imagined. As independent filmmaker Lance Weiler notes, understanding how to productively filter and interpret data is quickly becoming essential for anyone hoping to survive in the rapidly changing media industry:

> [2.3] We are swimming in a sea of data. On average, Americans wade through 34 gigs of information a day, according to a recent report by researchers at the University of California, San Diego. The ability to "filter"

> this information will drive future innovation. How people are posting, commenting and clicking will greatly impact the ways films are created, curated and shared over the next decade. (Weiler 2010)

[2.4] This kind of mapping "from unstructured data to structured data sets" (O'Reilly and Batelle 2009) is both a consequence of and a driving force behind the evolution of the real-world, real-time Web. Studios and broadcasters would be remiss if they failed to find a way to make sense of the wealth of data flowing through global information networks. By so doing, they create a demand both for better interpretive algorithms and for a diversification and expansion of sensor and social media inputs. To some extent, the relationship between media companies and fans has always been interactive; but in Web 2.0, we see this feedback loop approach a kind of apotheosis.

[2.5] As O'Reilly and Batelle (2009) note, a "key competency of the Web 2.0 era is discovering implied metadata, and then building a database to capture that metadata and/or foster an ecosystem around it." This ecosystem then itself produces more metadata, giving rise to new opportunities, new databases, new brand initiatives, new fan remixes, and so on, presumably ad infinitum. Put differently, the new technological and economic regime has not only expanded the means of media production out from the industry that had previously monopolized it and into the hands of the fans; it has also imported and translated core fan practices into the industry.

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3. Fans are more than just sensor systems

[3.1] Feedback loops such as the one described above are at the heart of Web 2.0. Indeed, any business activity in the context of the real-world, real-time Web must engage and leverage a variety of feedback loops in order to acquire the markers of success necessary to confer value in the marketplace. Consequently, Web 2.0 companies endeavor to maximize the degree to which they are attentive and responsive to the desires and conditions of their users. This approach, in its emphasis on efficiency, fluidity, and rapid capitalization, epitomizes the producer-consumer relationships of late capitalism, and in so doing, it fails to map neatly onto the considerably more complex terrain of the producer-fan relationship. To understand this mismatch, consider the design of the location-based social gaming service Foursquare. When Foursquare launched, the company knew its initial fan base would be largely code-savvy early adopters from the tech development community—that is, lead users. To maximize their engagement with this fandom, Foursquare prioritized the release of an application programming interface (API) that would enable such fans to create mash-ups and mobile apps that connected to their service. Founder Dennis Crowley notes:

> [3.2] [We] rolled the dice a bit and built an API before anything else. That turned out to be a good bet because that's how we got the Android app. It started at South by Southwest where we met some kids who wanted to make an Android app for us. It took four months. There were three or four of them doing it in their spare time, which was great. And in a lot of ways, I think the Android app is better than the iPhone app that we built ourselves. And now, because there's so much interest around our Android app, we brought an Android developer in-house to help manage the open source developers. (Slocum 2010)

[3.3] On the face of it, this is something of a win-win situation: Foursquare is happy because people are using its product and extending it at their own expense, and the app's lead users are happy because they're participating in something that permits them to perform and play in ways that make sense to them. Further, the lead users' productive energies funnel back into the product they admire, informing its future development such that it is likely to become more aligned with their desires. But while this putatively frictionless system might be perfectly consonant with the Web 2.0 business model, it lacks the nuance and complexity on display in more traditional fandoms. Most notably, because of the hyperefficiency of the feedback loops that exist between Foursquare and its productive fans, there is an absence of the critical distance and antinomy that inform and inspire many kinds of fannish production, particularly those who seek to express or invoke notions of resistance.

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4. Productive tensions

[4.1] Cooperative feedback loops such as those generated by Foursquare and other Web 2.0 enterprises are far less common in fan practice than are indifferent or even antagonistic one-way channels. Indeed, much of fannish production manifests itself through various kinds of conflict between the originators of a media franchise and its fans. From a Web 2.0 business perspective, this kind of contentious relationship might be cause for concern. In a system dependent on the free and smooth two-way flow of data, there's no room for discord of this kind. But such mutual disapprobation (or, at the very least, neglect) is not necessarily a bad thing from the point of view of productive fan communities—and herein lies the crucial divergence between fan practices and the Web 2.0 business model. From a simple human perspective, there is too much to be gained from having something to write or act against to remove all conflict from the producer-fan relationship. If the most extreme proponents of brute-force Web 2.0 were to have their way, and media artifacts, imbued with superpowers born of densely interconnected sensor systems and interpretive algorithms, were somehow able to adapt in real time to the desires of their fans such that fans only heard or saw or experienced what they wanted to hear or see or experience, fans

would go elsewhere. And that is true not merely because people need a symbolically contested space within which they can express and enact resistance to the real conflicts they face in their lives (although that is indeed an important factor here). It is also because, ironically, the more that media companies integrate fans into the process of developing and producing their content, the less agency those fans actually feel. No one wants to be reduced to a function in a virtuous feedback loop. Standing outside a media franchise, being separate from the apparatus of its production, affords fans the distance and autonomy necessary to perform their own identities. As media companies grapple with Web 2.0, this autonomy must remain protected.

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Interview

Interview with Elisa Kreisinger

Francesca Coppa

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Elisa Kerisinger, self-described "pop-culture pirate," is interviewed by Francesca Coppa.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Gender; Mash-up; Politics

Coppa, Francesca. 2010. Interview with Elisa Kreisinger. *Transformative Works and Cultures,* no. 5. http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2010.0234.

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Elisa Kreisinger, self-described "pop-culture pirate," comoderates Political Remix Video (http://politicalremixvideo.com/) with fellow remixer Jonathan McIntosh. Her political remixes (known in the community as PRVs) have been screened at festivals like DIY: 24/7, the RE/Mixed Media Festival, and South by Southwest. Her latest work is the "Queer Carrie" Project (http://elisakreisinger.wordpress.com/projects/queercarrieproject/), in which she queers *Sex and the City* season by season. Kreisinger blogs at Pop Culture Pirate (http://elisakreisinger.wordpress.com/) and hosts her video remixes at Pop Culture Pirate (http://www.popculturepirate.com/).

[1.2] This interview was conducted online by Francesca Coppa, member of the board of the Organization for Transformative Works (http://transformativeworks.org) and chair of its vidding committee (http://transformativeworks.org/projects/vidding-index), and edited for clarity. Coppa and Kreisinger met at the Open Video Alliance (http://openvideoalliance.org) conference in 2009, when they appeared together on the panel "Who Owns Popular Culture? Remix and Fair Use in the Age of Corporate Mass Media."

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2. Interview

[2.1] **FC:** How did you get involved in political remix video (PRV)?

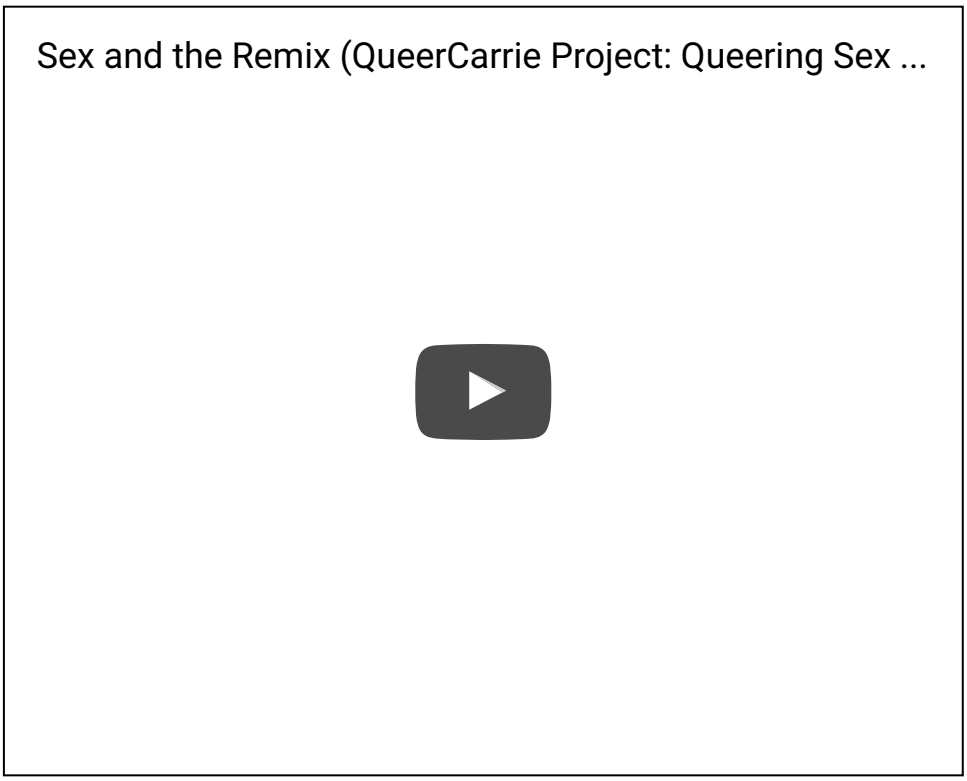
[2.2] **EK:** Jonathan McIntosh first introduced me to mash-ups. I was familiar with feminist video artists' use of appropriation and the history of Soviet montage, but video mash-ups updated all that about 40 years and distributed it on the Web. Jonathan and I were both involved in video activism and, at the time, he already had a body of mash-ups he had made and posted on his Web site. While I didn't have the resources to explore gender issues in depth by making a documentary or creating a TV show, I had enough critical thinking and tech skills to remix a douche-bag Burger King commercial (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGLHlvb8skQ). I also experienced how helpful remixes were in the classroom in teaching media literacy, and began to create them myself because there was so much fucked-up material to work with. I remember specifically a plethora of MTV and Axe body spray ads that were so ripe for remixing. So I got involved because I had the support of a friend and I wanted to see more people working with these ridiculous commercials.

[2.3] **FC:** What was the first PRV you ever made? What drove you to make it?

[2.4] **EK:** "I Am Man"—it remixed the aforementioned Burger King commercial. What drove me to make it was that it featured a feminist song, Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman," but it was co-opted by Burger King to extol the power of meat and condemn tofu, or small, "chick" food. I thought I'd co-opt it back. It wasn't very good. I had great source material but couldn't make it all work. I'd still love to see this commercial remixed.

[2.5] **FC:** You work a lot with shows that have large female casts, like *Sex and the City* and *The Real Housewives of New York City.* Can you talk a bit about what attracts you to those sources?

[2.6] **EK:** I am not a fan of the feminist-lite franchises but I was intrigued by the societal expectations they set forth for women, hetero-heavy narratives notwithstanding. These shows were ripe for remixing thanks to their all-female casts, character-driven stories, and focus on deconstructing social norms. They also had voice-overs I could manipulate and bend to my will. I also work with them because they are so easily disregarded as chick-flick nonsense. Neither *Sex and the City* nor *The Real Housewives* is revolutionary or defiant of stereotypes, but they both have potential. By "potential" I mean that there are multiple women cast in roles other than "the girlfriend" who talk to each other about things other than men and usually share some commonalities around navigating their life issues and career choices. But as these shows progress, some of these aspects disintegrate in the effort to "minimize creative risks and maximize profits" within their now highly marketable franchises. I enjoy making these characters into something that I, and I hope other women, would want to watch sans product placement. I'm attracted to subverting mainstream female culture.



Vid 1. *"Sex and the Remix, Seasons 3–6" (Queering Sex and the City), by Elisa Kreisinger (2010).*

[2.7] **FC:** The vidding and amv communities are fairly organized, with conventions like Vividcon and sites like Anime Music Videos (http://animemusicvideos.org/). Is there a political remix community?

[2.8] **EK:** We are a small community and we are trying to make it bigger or at least broaden it enough to organize it. It's not like the vidding community, though, where there's lots of women to offer support and sharing of resources and beta testing. I hope it grows to something similar, though.

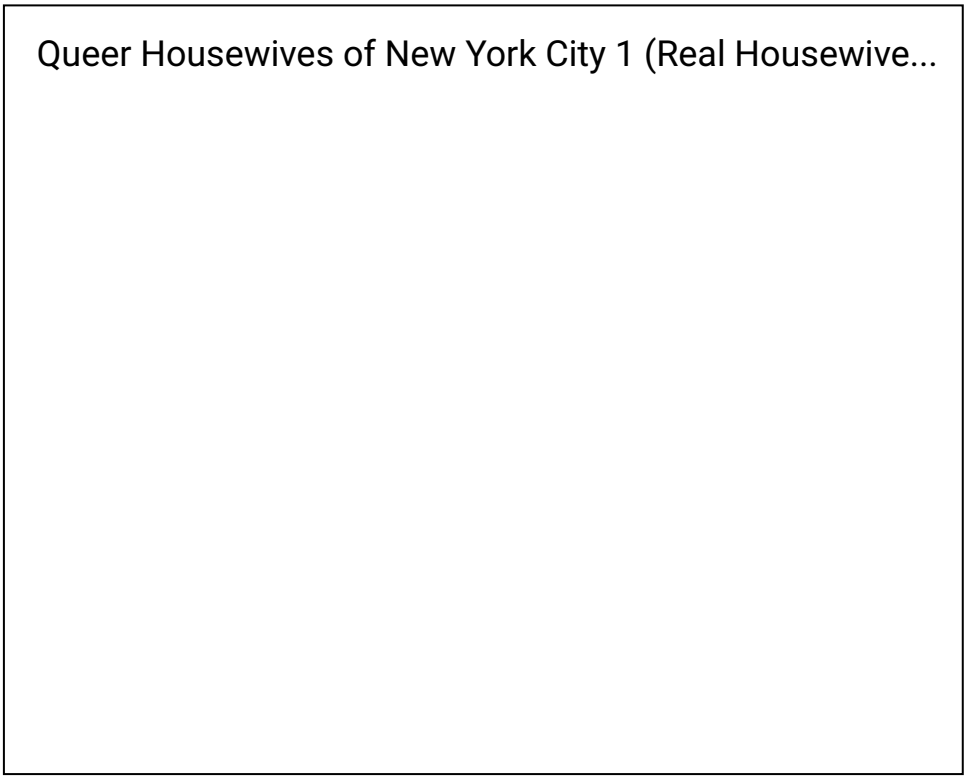
[2.9] **FC:** You've featured many fan vids on the site you comoderate with Jonathan McIntosh, Political Remix Video. Jonathan has talked about the ways in which he was influenced by vidding in making his Webby-nominated "Buffy vs. Edward" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZwM3GvaTRM). What do you think are the similarities and differences between vidding and PRV?

[2.10] **EK:** I'm definitely in awe of and inspired by female fan vidders, the community that has evolved around the practice, and the writings that have emerged, and this is something that we try to acknowledge on the blog. PRVs are different in that they don't rely on music or a narrative subtext to tell the story. PRVs are critical of an aspect of the story, like Edward's creepy, patriarchal behavior being accepted as romantic, or Carrie Bradshaw's failure to question her repeated unfulfilling relationships with men. Jonathan and I weren't fans of *Twilight* or *Sex and the City,*

respectively. Instead, we were concerned with the accepted gender norms we saw existing in these narratives and sought to correct them: he by killing Edward, and me by editing out the men. So while vidders and remixers both rely on pop culture texts, vidders come at it from the perspective of being a fan. You can still be a fan and be critical, but I think the intent of a remix is always to critique while vids do that and other things too, like expanding or contributing to the existing story.

[2.11] **FC:** You recently had one of your PRVs taken down from YouTube. Tell us about that experience.

[2.12] **EK:** I tweeted during a SXSW [South by Southwest, a set of annual festivals featuring "original music, independent films, and emerging technologies"] "meet-the-studio-executives" panel that audiences have more power than ever to respond to narratives filled with product placement: they can edit out the sponsor and create a better show. The next day, I received a takedown notice from NBC exec Cameron Death, who was present on the panel. NBC owns Bravo, the creators of *The Real Housewives* and the source footage I remixed for "Queer Housewives."



Vid 2. *"The Queer Housewives of New York City" (Real Housewives Remix), by Elisa Kreisinger (2009).*

[2.13] The remixes were an obvious (and stated) fair use of copyrighted content and were wrongfully removed. This little dance between creators, YouTube, and studios is a ridiculous power struggle based on the perceived threat of participatory audiences. Studios police YouTube and accuse creators of copyright infringement in an effort to

weaken fair use. Remixers and vidders have a right to make their work and distribute it on YouTube because fair use is an extension of the very same copyright law we are accused of infringing. There's no debate regarding the legality of our work. I'd like to see an advocacy group protecting creators wrongly accused of copyright infringement.

[2.14] **FC:** Your own site is called Pop Culture Pirate, and in your explanation "why a pirate?" (http://www.popculturepirate.com/pop_culture_pirate/why_pirate.html), you cite lesbian feminist scholar Mary Daly's specifically feminist ideas of women needing to pirate from the patriarchy: "it is necessary to Plunder—that is, righteously rip off—gems of knowledge that the patriarchs have stolen from us." This is a really different way of thinking about piracy—different even than the political piracy of Europe's Pirate Parties (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate_Party). Can you talk more about the relationship between piracy, remix, and gender politics?

[2.15] **EK:** Mary Daly was a radical feminist and her work, along with the work of postmodern scholars like Judith Butler, goes hand in hand with political remixing. Most of our societal and gendered constructs are reinforced in popular culture, and the physical deconstruction of these images allows us to question them. I see remixing as the rebuilding and reclaiming of once-oppressive images into a positive vision of just society. Now, Mary Daly had her transphobic moments and Judith Butler didn't exactly offer us a way out of patriarchy, so I in no way mean to look at these women's work uncritically or to equate it to all of remixing. In terms of piracy, for me, remixing is righteously and legally ripping off content created by the patriarchs in order to invert their strategies—or, co-opting their commodification of our identities.

[2.16] **FC:** You also have an interest in community-based media; do you still do work for Cambridge Community Television? Do you see any relationship between local media and political remix?

[2.17] **EK:** Public access centers took the initiative to teach media literacy to teens in the 1980s, and while the discourse has changed and practices updated, I think they still have a great opportunity to teach not only teens but also parents and teachers about being a participant in the changing media landscape. I know lots of teens who consume media and do nothing with it. Then there are teens who blog and create video responses to everything they watch. Public access centers can cost-effectively provide teens with access to the media-making and critical thinking skills to be participants on a hyperlocal level. For example, at CCTV, for 50 cents a week, you have access to Final Cut Pro editing suites, subsidized software classes, one-on-one tutorials on editing/blogging/distributing video to the Web, and even camera equipment. Also, teens get paid $8 an hour to participate in our youth program. If your city has a public access center, check it out—they provide lots of resources specifically set aside for residents.

[2.18] In terms of parents and teachers, I know many public and private schools block access to social networking and video distribution sites or forbid students from creating accounts on those sites. I think local media centers are in a great position to foster discussions about the dangers and benefits of new technologies and how students, teachers, and parents can safely benefit from them. This information works best when coming from people and organizations within the community, rather than, say, a research institution writing a white paper on the participation gap.

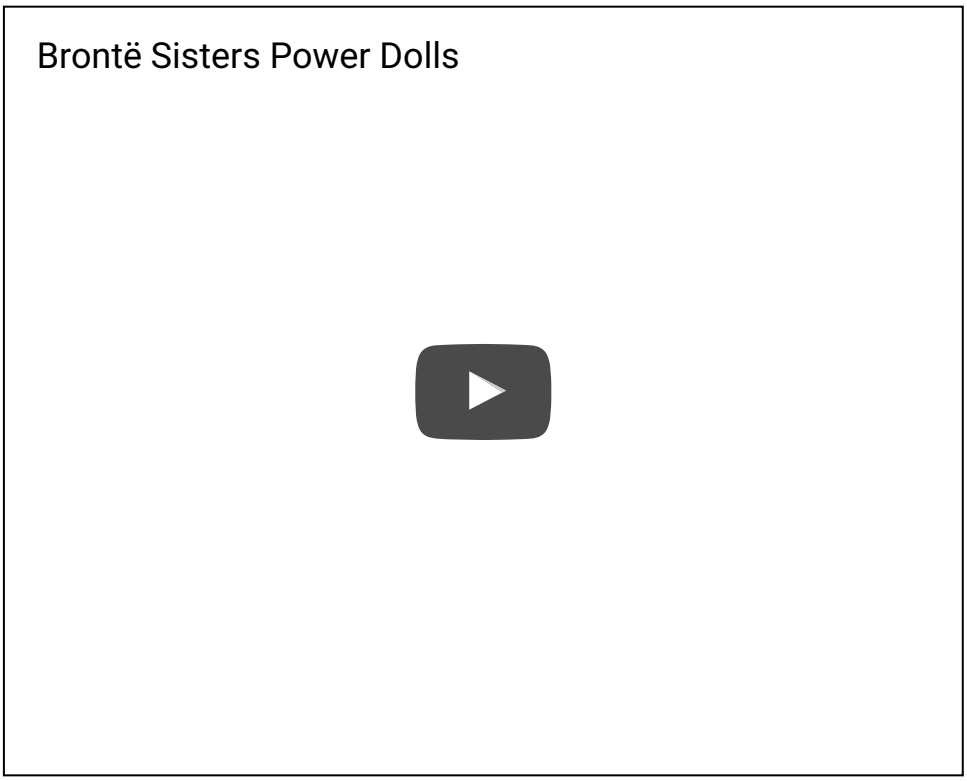
[2.19] With specific regard to remix and public access centers, it's the closest place you'll find real people who will encourage and physically help you to participate in the evolving media landscape. Public access centers encourage freedom of speech, fair use, media literacy, and participation on a local level.

[2.20] **FC:** It's been five years since the founding of YouTube; what do you see as the future of DIY/remix video in the next five years? What's the best case? What's the worst?

[2.21] **EK:** Best case, remixes are able to effect actual change and the work that goes into them is acknowledged. Ideally, we are no longer asked if our work is legal, we are free to post our content on video sharing and distribution sites without accusation, and we develop a community where we can beta test, access shared source footage and scripts, and create a collective intelligence around remixing and media literacy. Worst, the future is the co-optation of the video remix genre by corporations who use it to reinforce stereotypes. I've already seen a few of these, the worst being "Bachelor Island" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-OEP5I-TOA), a remix created by *Playboy* illustrating that women are criminally and emotionally insane and men are the passive victims of their CRAZY pursuit to be their wives. Not surprisingly, there's no critical component here, as *Playboy* would never give permission or commission an artist to pull apart, critique, and dismember its brand identity. I think it exemplifies how remixes can *perpetuate* a stereotype in order to enhance a brand's identity. What kills me is that, in this case, the *Playboy* brand's identity is patriarchy and essentially fucking over women.

[2.22] **FC:** What's your favorite video of the moment? Why?

[2.23] **EK:** My favorite video of the moment isn't actually a remix. It's "Brontë Sisters Power Dolls." I just laugh every time.



Vid 3. *"Brontë Sisters Power Dolls," by Phil Lord and Chris Miller (1998).*

Interview

Interview with Jo Graham, Melissa Scott, and Martha Wells

TWC Editor

[0.1] *Abstract*—An interview with Jo Graham, Melissa Scott, and Martha Wells, who are professional authors of original fiction and media tie-in novels in addition to writing fan fiction.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fan fiction; Original fiction; Tie-in novels

TWC Editor. 2010. Interview with Jo Graham, Melissa Scott, and Martha Wells. *Transformative Works and Cultures,* no. 5. http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2010.0239.

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Jo Graham, Melissa Scott, and Martha Wells are professional authors of original fiction as well as media tie-in novels, but they have also written fan fiction.

[1.2] Jo Graham (http://jo-graham.livejournal.com/) describes her novels as historical fantasies—revisiting mythological narratives and imagining the surrounding stories in detail. Her first novel, *Black Ships* (Orbit, 2008), which was a Locus Award finalist, creates characters and narratives against the backdrop of the *Aeneid*; her second novel *Hand of Isis* (Orbit, 2009) uses ancient Egypt as its narrative setting. Her most recent, *Stealing Fire* (Orbit, 2010), takes place during Alexander the Great's campaigns, featuring a male protagonist for the first time. Graham also has two *Stargate: Atlantis* (SGA) tie-in novels forthcoming: *Death Game* (Fandemonium, 2010) and *Homecoming* (Fandemonium, 2010), the latter cowritten with Melissa Scott.

[1.3] Melissa Scott's (http://galacticsouth.blogspot.com/) work spans nearly three decades and over 20 novels. Her tie-in novels include the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* novel *Proud Helios* (Pocket Books, 1995), the *Star Trek: Voyager* novel *The Garden* (Pocket Books, 1997), and the SGA novel *Homecoming* (Fandemonium, 2010), cowritten with Jo Graham. Her original fiction career began in 1984, and she won the science fiction and fantasy John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in 1986. Her work always includes issues of gender and sexuality, and she has won the Lambda Literary Award for several of her works, including *Shadow Man* (Tor, 1995), *Trouble and Her Friends* (Tor, 1993), and *Point of Dreams* (Tor, 2001). *The Armor of Light*

(Baen, 1988), *Point of Hopes* (Tor, 1995), and *Point of Dreams* were cowritten with Lisa A. Barnett.

[1.4] Martha Wells (http://www.marthawells.com/) is the author of two SGA tie-in novels, *Reliquary* (Fandemonium, 2006) and *Entanglement* (Fandemonium, 2007). She has published short stories, nonfiction, and seven fantasy novels, including *The Element of Fire* (Tor, 1993). It introduces the world of Ile-Rien, which she revisits in the Nebula-nominated *The Death of the Necromancer* (Eos, 1998) and the *Fall of Ile-Rien* trilogy (Eos, 2003–5). Her novels have been translated into eight languages.

[1.5] Going into the interview, we were most interested in the way these forms of writing differed from one another; what the specific creative, imaginative, and personal advantages and disadvantages were of each of these three genres; and how writing would affect the relationship to readers and fandom at large. During the course of the conversations, when it became clear that the questions held certain biases, the questions turned more toward professional writing and publishing in general.

[1.6] The initial interview questions were written by Kristina Busse with the help of Karen Hellekson, Alexis Lothian, and Louisa Stein. Much of the interview comprised e-mail exchanges among Kristina Busse and the three writers to be interviewed, and the questions changed in response to their conversations. The following is an edited version that collects discussions spanning several e-mail threads.

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2. Writing and publication

[2.1] **Q:** What do you find most rewarding about writing? How does the fan fic production experience differ creatively from the professional production experience (revising, editing, releasing into print)? Do publishers and market demands influence your pro and tie-in writing?

[2.2] **MW:** I enjoyed writing fan fic, but I find original SF/F more rewarding because I feel less creative constraint. I love creating my own worlds and my own characters, and not being bound by any prior assumptions on the part of the reader. In contrast, the enjoyment I get out of fan fic is from writing TV or movie characters and worlds that I have fallen in love with, and trying to duplicate in prose what I see on the screen as closely as possible, then using that framework to build new stories around.

[2.3] I find fan fic much faster to write than original fiction, since so much of the world building is already done, and I already know so much about the characters and their backstory. I tend to write original fiction more slowly. But I like the revising and editing process in original fiction because I like the feedback and feel it pushes me to produce better work.

[2.4] I feel I have a lot more creative freedom in original fiction, but it is much harder to get the original fiction to your audience. In fan fic, romantic stories that lead to true love/permanent relationships are very popular, and while I like reading those, I don't feel much inclined to write them. I'd rather write adventure or mystery stories, with or without casual sex. I also tend to be drawn to characters that I can interpret as bisexual, and I seem to end up with stories that don't really fit the fan fic labels, which is frustrating for me. The fact that my pro novels aren't labeled as anything but the very general "fantasy" or "young adult" makes me feel less constricted.

[2.5] **JG:** When you write original fiction, you can write anything. There are absolutely no artistic parameters or thematic and stylistic guidelines. You can say anything about anything. There are no boundaries at all. The publisher is not even a consideration. You write. Whatever you want. And then, possibly, you find a publisher who is a good fit. But what a particular publisher may want, what a particular editor's stylistic preferences are, is completely irrelevant. You have no idea where this will sell or if it will sell. You are completely and absolutely free.

[2.6] A tie-in is different in that you are under contract from an early point. It's more like writing a fan fic story for a ficathon. You have the constraint of the prompt, or of the request of the person you're writing for. If they ask for a Ronon/John sweet love story, you're not going to give them a John/Rodney angst fest. A tie-in is constrained like a ficathon story, but original fiction has no constraints whatsoever outside your imagination.

[2.7] Most fiction works are shopped around to 5, 10, even 20 or 30 different houses before they are sold. Each house, and sometimes each editor within a house, has different expectations in terms of style, content, length, and so on. Additionally, each house and each editor has different preferences in terms of tone and theme. It would be absolutely impossible to come up with a style guide or a formula that would in any way be standard or universal. What one does is write what one wants to—and then one's agent shops it around to find a good fit, to find the editor who is seeking the thing you've written.

[2.8] Now, if you're writing something already under contract to a specific editor at a specific house, then you already know what they want. You are filling an order—or to put it better, writing something already agreed upon—which is the case with a tie-in. With *Homecoming,* Melissa and I knew that it had to be 90,000 to 110,000 words, it had to feature certain characters, and it had to revolve around a particular event. We were under contract for it before it was written.

[2.9] **MS:** Regarding books written under contract: my experience at Tor was that they liked what I was doing well enough to ask for an option on the next project, and

they were also willing to offer multibook deals. So the first book that I would be writing would have a fairly detailed proposal, and the next two would have somewhat less detailed summaries. There was no particular constraint on what I proposed to them—in fact, most of the time, the three books in a deal were wildly different. For example, *Trouble and Her Friends* and *Shadow Man* were part of the same three-book deal. *Trouble* was pretty much as I proposed it; by the time I got around to writing *Shadow Man,* a year later, the story in my head had changed dramatically. I told my editor this, and he liked the new idea even better, so the contract stayed in effect. He could quite easily have said no, and I would have had either to write the book as proposed, or offer a third project in place of it. On the other hand, three years later, he rejected a sequel to *Shadow Man,* and I gave him *The Jazz* (Tor, 2001) instead. So at some publishers, there's quite a lot of freedom even after the contract is signed. I've also heard stories from people back in the 1980s who had books refused at delivery for minor deviations from the original outline. Of course, another reason that this worked for me was that this is what Tor expected of me: one-off novels, set in unrelated worlds.

[2.10] Another thing that's worth pointing out is that publishers—and editors—vary enormously. Even publishers of tie-in novels work very differently from each other—a difference set partly by the publisher and partly by the studio that owns the material. I was recruited to do the *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* (DS9) novel because at that point in Pocket's management of the Trek tie-ins, sales had dropped (as had perceived quality), and the Pocket editors decided that what they needed was established SF writers to bring the SF back to the franchise. Paramount (if I remember correctly) thought this was a great idea, but emphatically didn't want anyone involved who was "tainted" with fan fic. I fit the bill, I liked DS9 (though I wasn't passionate about it, which was—I think rightly—seen as an advantage for what they wanted), and I sold the editor (a fanboy himself) something he'd sworn he'd never buy: a pirate story. I wrote the *Star Trek: Voyager* tie-in novel before the show had aired, on the basis of three scripts, and would never, ever do that again. The scripts were only so-so, and I hated the actors' interpretations. [The UK-based publisher] Fandemonium, on the other hand, has gone out of its way to recruit fan writers. I got this gig because Jo and Amy got me hooked on the series and had already invited me to play in a fannish version of a sixth season when Jo got the idea of proposing *Legacy* to Fandemonium.

[2.11] The restrictions on the two series are very different. In both the DS9 and *Voyager* tie-ins, nothing substantial could change, which meant that there was very little room for exploring the show's characters. This is what I meant when I said it was an advantage not to be passionate about the show: I wasn't particularly frustrated at being held to strict canon, to being expected to reproduce exactly the kinds of interactions you saw on screen. The two things that I was passionately interested in—

the Cardassians and the mirror universe—were things Paramount wanted to keep for the show itself. (I had actually gotten a mirror universe novel accepted by Pocket, but Paramount rejected it because the show was doing more episodes there.)

[2.12] With *Stargate: Atlantis,* I am passionate about the show. I'd be intensely frustrated trying to write a Paramount-style tie-in. Fortunately, what Fandemonium wants is something more open-ended, something that explores some of the things that the show didn't have time for. Among other things, they're letting us fill in the blanks around the Wraith, who fascinate me, and they are letting us move the characters forward. This is a virtual sixth season, and we don't have to reset to zero at the end of each book. There are restrictions: no hot sex, queer or straight; no more violence than you could see on the original show—Jo's spoken about the need to keep this at a PG rating. But we are being allowed to go a little deeper into the characters.

[2.13] **JG:** I began *Fortune's Wheel,* my current novel out for sale, in 1992. I've worked on it intermittently for 18 years, working to no one's specifications except my own. My agent believes it's at a point where it could be sold. So she is seeking a fit for it: a specific editor and house that will fall in love with an already completed book that has been in the works for 18 years.

[2.14] **MS:** There is a kind of double vision involved, I think, in creative writing. One does conceive a story, and I, at least, write large chunks of the draft long before I'm seriously thinking about market or editor. I do think about genre—is this really SF? mainstream?—but that's as much about choosing one's tools as choosing one's market. It's only at a later stage, when the story is solidly formed, that I start thinking about where it might sell. Part of the job of writing is not to edit oneself too early, not to try to outthink the market and the editors.

[2.15] Beyond that, however, I think most professional writers work from the conviction that a book that is good enough will sell, and I think most of us start with the assumption that the latest project—the latest darling, shiny and new and brilliant—is going to be good enough.

[2.16] I think that maybe my own preference for reworking a text rather than accepting it as given is just the way I think about writing in general. I mean, the earliest thing I know I wrote was when I was 6, and was about the lions from *Born Free,* only I'd changed the names and gotten my uncle to tell me about his time in Kenya and so the lions had to deal with green mambas.

[2.17] **MW:** I've always written what I wanted to write. I don't think the publishers have much influence at all over the kind of books I write, except for their ability to choose not to publish them. I've never discussed with an editor the kind of book I was

going to do next, for example. If I paid more attention to market demands, I would probably have sold more books by now.

[2.18] Some writers (at a much higher level than me) will talk to their editors or agents about what sort of book to write next, like switching from epic fantasy to urban fantasy, or whether to start a new series, or do more in a current series, but that's about it. An editor who wants to micromanage a writer and change the story, characters, and so on is a very bad editor and would have a terrible reputation.

3. Transformation and constraint

[3.1] **Q:** How do you see your tie-in and fan works as related to the source text? Are you filling in gaps? Are you interested in characters or backstory? In what ways do you transform the source text? What are the different liberties and constraints when it comes to tie-ins and fan fiction? Can you talk about the artistic parameters and thematic and stylistic guidelines by publishers and, in the case of tie-ins, by the producers? How much autonomy do you have over plot, world building, and characters?

[3.2] **MW:** I felt like the tie-ins needed to stay as close to canon as possible, that I had to get all the details as right as possible. I wanted to do stories that could fit seamlessly in with the show, be a continuation of it, because that's what I think tie-in readers are usually looking for. When I was writing fan fic, I also generally liked to stick with canon, but I also felt free to do alternate universe (AU) stories and change things around. When I did fan fic, I did everything, from short character vignettes to long action-adventure stories to AUs.

[3.3] I had fairly complete autonomy with the tie-ins, or I wouldn't have written them. A friend (a writer who also writes fan fic and professional SF/F/horror novels) had already written a tie-in set in this world and told me that her experience was extremely positive and she wasn't given any constraints or restrictions, which was one of the reasons I decided to do it. Also, the temptation to do something that was a lot of fun (writing about TV characters I loved) and get paid for it was too good to pass up.

[3.4] I wasn't given any kind of guidelines at all—artistic, thematic, or stylistic. The only constraint I was given was to not kill off any canon characters, or at least not to kill them off permanently. I didn't receive any extra information from the producers at all, and I based my books on the episodes as they aired on TV.

[3.5] I first started writing fan fic in the 1980s, and I felt free to do pretty much anything I wanted. The other writers in the fanzines I read were all over the map and

did all kinds of different stories, from plots and characterization that stuck very close to canon to stories that took the universe off into wild, strange tangents. In the last few years I was writing fan fic, I felt far more constrained, especially when it came to the way I wanted to write the characters as bisexual, and the way fan fic is now labeled and organized by pairing. I didn't feel these constraints with my original fiction, and felt a lot more free creatively.

[3.6] **JG:** I go in saying, "Here is a story I want to tell." But I've heard people say, "I want to sell a book, and I've heard that my best chance of selling a book is to write a genre mystery of 60,000 to 80,000 words aimed at a young adult audience and containing a supernatural element." But those are self-imposed constraints. And it may very well be that by the time the book is complete the book written for the market may no longer be hot! Vampires are in this year. Next year they'll be over, and it will be something else.

[3.7] This is why my agent and many much more experienced authors I've talked to caution against writing for the market. My agent, who handles a lot of romances, says that one year it's all French Revolution and the next year it's all pirates and the year after that it's all Scotland. There is no point in chasing the market.

[3.8] My interest is in interacting with the canon. When I write fan fic, it's because I love the show or movie or book. I want more. I want to look around the corners. I want to see what happened off screen. I want to see what happens next. I want to play with this wonderful thing I've discovered. For many years I wrote fan fic that I only showed to a few close friends, and my pleasure in that was no less than when I started posting on LiveJournal. After five years on LJ, I discovered that my pleasure in it was much decreased. I was writing with one eye on the wank-o-meter, worrying about who would dog pile my story or if someone would be offended by something. I was no longer playing freely or enjoying interacting with the text because I was so disturbed by the Internet bullies of fandom. And so I cut back. I only post finished and polished pieces on my unlocked main journal, pieces I consider ready for publication as short stories, pieces that do nothing controversial or difficult—in short, stories that are exactly what I would sell to a genre magazine. There is no difference at all between some recent pieces of gen *Stargate: Atlantis* fan fic on my main journal and the gen SGA story I had published in *Stargate* magazine—except that I was paid for the latter. The process and the editing are exactly the same.

[3.9] Is writing fan fiction different from writing a tie-in? Yes and no. The risks I can take are. In a tie-in, I am much more constrained in terms of writing sex. But I am much less constrained in terms of writing politics. I can say things to the broader society about the issues of the day, about war and peace, about race and sex, that I could never say in fandom without starting firestorms of wank. It's no longer possible

to discuss those things in fandom without tons of abusive comments, whatever one's position, because the issues are too controversial and the Internet bullies on all sides are too abusive. We are going places on those issues in the tie-ins that I certainly would not dare go in fan fics!

[3.10] **MS:** I feel I'm very invested in canon when I write fan fic or tie-ins. And I think it's because unless I'm really attached to a particular source, I'm going to take the parts that are interesting, file off the serial numbers, and turn them into original fiction. I wonder how much that has to do with having been published first, before I got involved in fan fic? I'd rather do my own worlds 90 percent of the time. It's a rare show that has both an original enough premise and distinctive characters that I love that I don't want to change something anyway.

[3.11] In a way, though, too strong an investment in the series can be a drawback. Paramount—well, the Star Trek franchise in particular—has always been very concerned about keeping control of their property. They're terrified that a writer who's not completely under their control might do something with their series. So what they want is competent, professional engagement—writers who are interested in the one-off story, often with a central gimmick. Not passion.

[3.12] **MW:** I didn't write my tie-ins any differently than I wrote my fan fic; they were the same characters and my emotional engagement toward them was the same. If I didn't have a strong emotional attachment to the characters, I wouldn't have wanted to write the tie-ins or the fan fics.

[3.13] My emotional engagement with my original worlds and characters is absolute. But since I own them, I'm not worried at all about what other people do with them or change the characterization when they write them in fan fic. Actually, seeing people write fan fic for my original novels is one of the neatest things that's ever happened in my career.

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4. Audience, fandom, and feedback

[4.1] **Q:** How much influence does your readership and their desires have on your pro and fan writing? Do you like engaging with your audiences? Do you think that your relationship with readers of your fan fic differs from your relationship with readers of your pro fic? Does writing tie-ins change your engagement with other fans in that fandom?

[4.2] **MW:** I do like engaging with my audiences, especially in person. I have a lot of fun talking to people at SF/F conventions, and I like doing readings and answering questions about my books. It helps to know there are people out there who do enjoy

my novels, and it's just fun to talk about books and TV shows, and to feel that shared enthusiasm. I also really enjoy getting e-mails from readers.

[4.3] I also loved getting feedback about my fan fic. I did have instances of being contacted by people in my fan fic audience who got frustrated and angry when I didn't write what they wanted me to write, the way they wanted me to write it. I've never had this happen with my pro novel audience.

[4.4] My readership, in general, doesn't really affect my writing. I feel a close tie with my friends who read my fan fic and wanted to talk about it and come up with ideas for stories, but I also feel a close tie with my friends who read my fantasy novels and want to talk about them, speculate on what could happen next, and so on. Those groups of friends aren't mutually exclusive, either.

[4.5] In the last few years I was active in media fandom, I had a few bad experiences that have made me extremely reluctant to continue to admit to fan fic fans that I also write original fantasy novels and tie-ins. In the 1990s, after I sold my first professional novel, many of the people I knew in various fandoms I was involved in—fanzine editors, people on the mailing lists I was on or who I met at MediaWest*Con, the other fan fic writers I worked with on archive Web sites—knew about my pro career. I never really had any problems because of it, so I was unprepared when it did finally happen. I'm not sure if it was writing the tie-ins that changed my engagement, but it has changed substantially.

[4.6] My pro audience is my audience because they like my prose style and the characters and worlds I create—things that are more unique to me, so I feel like there's a higher level of engagement there. There were people I heard from in my fan fic audience who liked my characterization or things about my writing in particular, or who read my stories in fandoms they weren't familiar with just because I'd written them.

[4.7] I'd say the one physical constraint is length. Fan fic can be any length (especially now when it's going online and you don't have to worry about page count), but short story markets have length limits—7,000 words, 10,000 words, and so on. Book publishers are a lot more strict now on length limits than they used to be. Talking about constraints in professional publishing is a sore spot because pro writers in media fandom often face the assumption that our editors are practically puppet masters completely controlling us, and people often don't believe us when we explain how it really works. If I've heard "I would never be a pro writer because I won't be told what to write!" once, I've heard it a fricking thousand times.

[4.8] **JG:** This is directly related to reader distance. The vast majority of readers of a novel would never dream of getting all their friends to write rude letters to an author whose book they disliked! And yet this happens in fandom all the time. People feel that they have the right somehow to attack anything they don't like, rather than just simply turn the page. No one goes through the bookstore picking out every book they dislike and writing a letter of protest to the publisher. In the bookstore, if they don't like horror or don't like whatever, they just pass it by.

[4.9] Certainly reader feedback can be a positive thing, and the vast majority of feedback I've gotten is positive, but my ability to try new things, to experiment, to take risks, is definitely stifled in fan fic that is posted openly.

[4.10] The good thing about the tie-in is the much broader audience. Internet fandom, and especially LiveJournal/Dreamwidth fandom, for all that it likes to think it's diverse, isn't so much. It tends to be highly educated women, and disproportionately American women from the Northeast and California. Its culture is very specific and out of touch with the majority of fans of the show, especially for something like *Stargate: Atlantis.* How many people in LJ SGA fandom are men who are active-duty military? How many are over 50? How many consider themselves Christian, or are from rural areas? If I want to talk to a broad audience, to talk to a truly mixed audience in terms of gender, race, age, and region, a tie-in will reach a far more diverse group of people than fan fic will. Fan fic skews to female, liberal, and young.

[4.11] A published novel, original or tie-in, has a far longer shelf life as well. A fic may be read for a few years. A novel remains in libraries for generations. It continues to have impact decades later. This is not to say that I think fic is bad, or that I don't continue to write fic. But it is very, very limited compared to original novels, or even compared to tie-ins. A fic may reach a few thousand people for a few months. A novel will reach hundreds of thousands of people over several generations. There is absolutely no comparison in terms of return for your time put into it.

[4.12] What you can do in a tie-in depends. In *Star Wars: New Jedi Order,* they did kill major characters. SGA *Legacy* is like *New Jedi Order* in that it's a postquel, with no reset to zero. So canon relationships will break up and new relationships will be established. Characters will change. Injuries are real and not resolved between now and next week. Our parameters are not as open as *New Jedi Order* but not as tight as Melissa's *Star Trek* ones. No major character death. No major character slash on screen. Sex and violence must stay within the PG rating of the show, within the parameters of what you could show on a family show—which is not necessarily the content, but the explicit scenes.

[4.13] For example, so far we are getting by with references to the war in Afghanistan that imply a level of violence that you couldn't show at a PG rating, but as they did on the show, I wrote a "reaction shot" rather than descriptions of gore. There is a scene that strongly implies sub/dom sex, but it's all implication. As Sally said on her edit, "It's the hottest thing I've ever read at a PG rating." That's about skill. And that's something I'm learning from the tie-ins. In fan fic or my original fiction, I'd go straight to the NC-17 rating. But learning how to do it without actually showing it is a challenge. It's really stretching me.

[4.14] In terms of what one can assume—you can assume a basic familiarity with the canon, but not that the reader will remember every specific incident. In other words, they all know who Rodney McKay is. They all may not remember that he was unable to fix the DHD in "Phantoms" because he didn't have any spare control crystals with him. And so John says, "Hey Rodney, this is like that time when…"

[4.15] Some readers will remember everything (and others will look it up), so you have to be completely familiar with the show. And you don't have to do a lot of physical description of the basic characters and sets, or do much more than refer to the show's basic premises.

[4.16] Here's where I see a lot of fan fic writers having problems when they make the transition to original work. (I teach a couple of creative writing workshops in my copious free time.) They don't know how to create the engagement that already exists when you're working from someone else's universe. They spend far too much time inside the characters' heads without giving me a reason to be interested in them first. It's all interior life—often very well done—but no story. No reason to care.

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5. Canon, fanon, and communal conversations

[5.1] **Q:** One thing I've found most interesting in interviewing the three of you is how much you skew on the canon side of what I might want to call a canon/community spectrum, where on the one extreme are missing scenes and on the other AUs and crack fic that are often more about participating within a specific community than writing back to the source text. Could you say a bit more about that, and do you think that this is connected to your desire and ability for tie-in writing?

[5.2] **JG:** To me, fan fic is absolutely not part of a communal conversation. I'm not in fandom for community. I'm not particularly interested in taking part in community activities, and I frankly read very little fan fic. It's like a musical coffeehouse. I don't come to the coffeehouse to hang out with my friends. I come to the coffeehouse to perform. I play the musical instrument because I love to play, and I love to play for an audience. I would play if the house were empty.

[5.3] I write because I love the canon. I want to interact with the text. If other people enjoy hearing me interact with the text, they're welcome to listen, but they're not the reason for me being here, and their critiques frankly don't have much impact. I don't generally post widely or to large communities or notice boards because I don't care. My pleasure is in interacting with the source material.

[5.4] As you suggest, close ties do create expectations and demands. You start writing as part of the communal conversation. All fics start collapsing toward fanon. It stops being original. It stops being real. Things turn into endless self-referential inside jokes.

[5.5] I realize a lot of people are in fandom for the community. But not all. I often find the community in a fandom a real turnoff. I don't want Internet wank with strangers! I don't want silly crack fic about penguins! I want to write something that's captured my imagination. The close ties and cliques are a big drawback, not a plus.

6. Literary criticism and creative writing

[6.1] **Q:** Can you say a bit more about how you actually think about writing? What might be some of the differences between literary analysis and creative writing that come to bear on this conversation?

[6.2] **MS:** It also occurred to me, reading the various e-mails [that make up this conversation], that it's hard to talk about the creative process using the language of criticism—it's almost literally a linguistic issue, I think. I mean, I can point to the tropes I used in any particular novel, and I can talk to you about how they function and why I chose them, but that doesn't really tell you anything about the process of creating the story. And I'm a pretty conscious and technical writer. I can, for example, talk at length about the ways in which *Trouble and Her Friends* is a response to Bruce Sterling and the cyberpunks, and the ways that I deliberately subverted a number of cyberpunk tropes about bodies and minorities; I can also talk about *Trouble* as a parallel to the revisionist Western.

[6.3] All those things are true, and I knew I was doing them when I wrote them. But that language misses the—I think equally important—artistic play that went into making the book: the Westerns that I love and the ones that I hate; the trips to the West, to the frontier, that played into my images of the Electronic Frontier Foundation's virtual frontier; developing the sensuality of description to characterize what it's like seeing the Net through the brain worm's mediation. It leaves out the guy from ACT UP who slept on our porch one night, the way Butch van Liesveldt does in the novel. It leaves out that part of the inspiration was a challenge from my partner to

write a buddy story with women. It's that messy process that critical language doesn't handle well.

Book review

Coming of age in "Second Life": An anthropologist explores the virtually human, by Tom Boellstorff

Adi Kuntsman

University of Manchester, Manchester, England, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—Tom Boellstorff. *Coming of age in "Second Life": An anthropologist explores the virtually human*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008. $39.95 (336p) ISBN 978-0-691-13528-1.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Anthropology; *Second Life;* Virtual worlds

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Tom Boellstorff. *Coming of age in "Second Life": An anthropologist explores the virtually human.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008. $39.95 (336p) ISBN 978-0-691-13528-1.

[1] Clearly and engagingly written, *Coming of Age in Second Life* will be of interest to researchers and students in the anthropology of virtual worlds, as well as to those particularly curious about *Second Life* in its early years. Although not directly focused on fandom, the book addresses many of the issues that interest researchers of and participants in fan cultures: community and everyday life in online worlds, mediated identities, gaming environments, negotiations of culture, and, more broadly, the transformations of life, technology, and culture.

[2] *Coming of Age in Second Life* is first and foremost an encounter between two worlds: the virtual world and the world of anthropology. Tom Boellstorff is an anthropologist who spent years doing traditional anthropological research in Indonesia. In this book, he argues for the usefulness and power of anthropological tools—participant observations in one field site over an extended period of time, a holistic approach rather than a focus on one particular topic, focus on the "natives' point of view"—when applied to virtual worlds. This claim is closely linked to the book's main claim regarding the virtual: Boellstorff argues that while virtual worlds are cultures in their own right, cultures and humans have, to some extent, always been virtual.

[3] The first part of the book, "Setting the Virtual Stage," contains three background chapters that set the context of the research. Chapter 1, "The Subject and Scope of this Enquiry," provides an introduction into *Second Life* and its everyday practices and then positions them within the framework of anthropological research, similar to that conducted by the author in his previous work in Indonesia. Chapter 2, "History," positions *Second Life* within longer histories of virtual worlds. The chapter charts the author's own experiences of computer games and virtual worlds from as early as the 1980s. More importantly, the chapter presents virtual worlds as a much older phenomenon than one would imagine. Against the futuristic hype that sees virtual worlds (and *Second Life* in particular) as new, Boellstorff approaches virtuality as an inherent part of human cultures.

[4] Chapter 3, "Method," follows the usual repertoire of most monographs in the social sciences: a description of the ways the materials were collected (in this case, observations, interviews, and focus group discussions) and information on ethics and the researcher's own position toward his subjects. This chapter will be of particular interest to researchers and students interested in conducting ethnographic research in virtual environments. Extracts from the author's field notes also convey the sense of "being there." They show that once inside a virtual world, the practice of conducting research, while of course having its specific challenges, is not that different from researching any other cultural site, such as decoding a new language, traditions, practices, and formal and informal codes of behavior.

[5] But most importantly, this chapter presents Boellstorff's approach to the virtual worlds "in their own terms" (60–64)—that is, conducting his research exclusively online. His claim may look obvious to those readers who spend a significant amount of time in a virtual world, be it a multiuser computer game, an online forum, or even an e-mail-based community. And yet the question of the relationship between online and off-line worlds is recurrent in the field of Internet research, suggesting that studying only the virtual world may somehow be insufficient. Against those claims, Boellstorff insists that "actual world sociality cannot explain virtual world sociality" (63) and that an appropriate methodology for studying a collective that exists solely online is research conducted solely online. "Meeting residents in the actual world is perfectly legitimate, but addresses a different set of questions" (61).

[6] The second part of the book, "Culture in a Virtual World," introduces the reader to different aspects of everyday life in *Second Life.* Chapter 4, "Place and Time," focuses on the importance of place in understanding *Second Life.* Place making, suggests Boellstorff, is "foundational to virtual worlds" (91). The chapter demonstrates that *Second Life* residents are indeed preoccupied with place, even though that place is only virtual. First of all, the world of *Second Life* is based on geography: land and

water, mainland and islands. Every resident can own land (although some choose not to), build on it, buy and sell it. The sense of place can operate through the capitalist logic of ownership and profit, but it is often shaped by other forms of special sociality—collective belonging, "our" neighborhood or area—or even notions of psychological comfort ("my place," "refuge heaven"; 101). These different visions of place are of course not entirely separate and can be related to each other.

[7] No less interesting is the way time and place work together in *Second Life.* While "the virtuality of online worlds inheres in their status as places" (102), there is a disjuncture between online and off-line time. This is demonstrated by the phenomenon of *lag*—a delay that occurs due to a slow Internet connection or a heavy stream of information, causing images to appear slowly or out of synch. Another phenomenon is temporal inequality, which occurs when events in *Second Life* are more suitable for those in European, North American, or Asian time zones. These two distinct phenomena reveal that "even when space is virtual, time is actual" and suggest that "time resisted virtualisation in a way that place did not" (105).

[8] The remaining chapters in the second part of the book continue the description of various aspects of life in virtual worlds, by looking at personhood (chapter 5), intimacy (chapter 6), and community (chapter 7). These chapters reveal the complexity of virtual worlds and interactions, showing the diversity of their residents and challenging some of the assumptions we may have about *Second Life.* For example, contrary to a popular belief that people enter *Second Life* only to engage in virtual sex, sex is only a small part of what residents do. Similarly, not everyone enters *Second Life* to socialize and interact: some people "enter virtual worlds to be left alone" (125).

[9] As Boellstorff repeatedly notes throughout, each of the topics discussed—language, sexuality, gender, race, kindness, violence—could have become a topic of a separate study. Instead, he chose to present each of them only briefly, in order to holistically describe a culture (in line with the anthropological tradition of addressing all aspects of a culture in relation to each other), rather than focusing in depth on a single phenomenon—a practice more common to sociology or cultural studies. This is one of the book's most important advantages, for it allows the reader to learn about many aspects of *Second Life* together, in one monograph. It makes it an invaluable resource to those unfamiliar with virtual worlds and with *Second Life* in particular. It also makes the book accessible to a wider audience: although informed by extensive scholarship in anthropology, philosophy, and cybercultures, *Coming of Age in Second Life* is written in accessible, jargon-free language. At the same time, this holistic approach can be a source of frustration for a more analytically oriented reader, who might want a more detailed and critical analysis of intimacy, violence, language, sexuality, or race. Faithfully following the "natives' points of view" and abandoning any

critique or judgment for the sake of thick description can unintentionally normalize conflicts and injustices built into virtual worlds.

[10] Readers looking for more generalized theoretical analysis will find some answers in the last part of the book, "The Age of Techne." Chapter 8, "Political Economy," moves away from specific ethnographic narratives to describe how the economics and politics of *Second Life* are based on "creationist capitalism" (205–11), where labor is understood in terms of creativity. The concept explains how creativity is central to life in *Second Life,* how it puts forward a particular notion of individualism, labor, and satisfaction. In *Second Life,* creativity is linked to self-expression and freedom, but it is also a way of making money. Boellstorff analyzes creationist capitalism as part of the "Californian Ideology"—a fusion of high-tech industry and "cultural bohemianism" (207–8), but also as embedded in broader Western notions of self, labor, and creation. The chapter also briefly discusses forms of inequality that exist in *Second Life*—both those based on "real life" inequalities and those inherent to the virtual world itself, such as length of time spent there.

[11] The concluding chapter, "The Virtual," returns to the claims presented at the beginning of the book, that "online worlds draw upon a capacity for the virtual that is as old as humanity itself" (238), while at the same time developing new aspects of human sociality. Virtual worlds might transform what being human means and redefine the relations between humans and technologies. The power of anthropology here is of particular interest to the author when he suggests that "through culture, humans are always already virtual; ethnography has always been a kind of virtual investigation of the human, and can therefore play an important role in understanding cybersociality" (249).

[12] *Coming of Age in Second Life* is very much a sign of its times, and not only because, as any good ethnography should, it manages to capture social life in a particular period of time. The book captures the moment when virtual worlds increasingly become part of many people's everyday lives, but are not yet familiar to everyone and are not yet taken for granted in the way that, for instance, daily use of the Internet is. The book also tells us something important about anthropology. The discipline has been open to cybercultures and virtual worlds for almost two decades and is now sending students to do fieldwork assignments in *Second Life;* however, the legitimacy of virtual worlds as fieldwork sites and "cultures" in their own right still seems to be in need of defense—defense that *Coming of Age in Second Life* performs constantly and repeatedly, more often than it probably should. A culture alive does not need constant defense, and Boellstorff's account of this virtual world is highly convincing on its own.

Book review

Masculinity and popular television, by Rebecca Feasey

Lindsay Bernhagen

The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Rebecca Feasey. *Masculinity and popular television*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2008, $36.00 (224p) ISBN 978-0-7486-2798-1.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Commercials; Gender; Masculinity; Sexuality; Television

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Rebecca Feasey. *Masculinity and popular television.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2008, $36.00 (224p) ISBN 978-0-7486-2798-1.

[1] Scholars of television studies have produced a profusion of literature theorizing the representation of gender on the small screen, especially when one considers television studies' relatively short history and its interdisciplinary roots. However, as Rebecca Feasey rightly notes, most of this work has focused only on constructions of femininity in the televisual form. Observing that feminist research on representations of femininity and women's roles on television has provided significant insights but has left masculinity relatively untheorized, Feasey sets out to identify and interrogate the representation of men and masculinity on television. Leaving masculinity untheorized, notes Feasey, allows masculinity to be understood as unwavering and permanent, and therefore not worthy of critique or questioning. Feasey argues that examining the representations of masculinity on television is essential because these representations not only offer a reflection of the cultural realities from which they are generated, but also function to prescribe socially acceptable norms of manhood.

[2] As a response to the identified void in television studies, this book offers a broad overview of masculinity as depicted on popular British and American television. Those interested in reader-centered approaches to television studies will not find any discussion of audience or fan culture in this book: Feasey exclusively uses textual analysis to critique representations of masculinity on television in the same way that representations of femininity have been critiqued. Readers with considerable background in gender and television studies are likely to find the book too introductory

for their purposes. However, the breadth of television genres covered in this book, along with the lack of theoretical density, makes this accessible volume particularly apt for undergraduates or someone with a casual interest in trends of gender stereotyping on television.

[3] Each chapter focuses on contemporary British and American programming to explore how men's roles on television can be understood in relation to wider cultural debates about sex and gender. The book consists of 11 chapters, plus a short introductory chapter and an even shorter conclusion. There are no illustrations, though the book does include a thorough index. Each chapter is dedicated to a single genre of television programming, beginning with a history of the genre, then a case study or two (each of which includes a general synopsis of the program and relevant characters), and a brief conclusion. The scope of Feasey's project is far-reaching as she sets out to discuss the generic conventions of masculinity in a wide variety of television programming, including (in chapter order): soap operas; sitcoms; adult cartoons; teen melodramas; science fiction and fantasy shows; hospital dramas; police and crime dramas; media coverage of sporting events; reality shows; lifestyle programming; and grooming, car, and beer commercials.

[4] One of the axioms of the book is that television programming reflects the social world from which it emerges, and any analysis of a television program must be able to account for historical context and change. There are many useful insights in *Masculinity and Popular Television* that follow from this, and these occur most frequently when Feasey takes the time to contextualize not only generic conventions, but also the social contexts from which certain genres and audiences emerge. For example, she argues that male characters on soap operas were initially simplistic and more reflective of stereotypes of masculinity. This occurred because female characters were the narrative centers of soap operas whose audiences were primarily housewives; male characters simply functioned in the periphery of female characters' lives. As soap operas started to appear during prime time, more men began to watch them, and the male characters became more central to some of the narratives, giving writers the screen time to complicate masculinity. Likewise, she explains that early representations of male doctors in hospital dramas as kind, patient, and infallible miracle workers were the direct result not only of norms of masculinity, but also of the American Medical Association's involvement in script approval.

[5] The consistent layout of each chapter is reader-friendly, but the sheer breadth of programming that Feasey ambitiously attempts to tackle in this slim volume means that no genre receives more than a few pages of treatment. For example, her chapter on how science fiction and fantasy programming challenges gender norms presents a one-and-a-half-page summary of the genre, starting with children's programming in

the 1950s, then attending to the import of *The Twilight Zone* (1959–64), and finally briefly noting the popularity of *The X-Files* (1993–2002) and *3rd Rock from the Sun* (1996–2001) in the 1990s. Her history is concise and peppered with references to television series, but this conciseness means that she offers at most only a sentence or two of description for each series. Following from this brief background, Feasey explains how many feminist television theorists have remarked that science fiction and fantasy programming has historically been a site for exploration of alternate sexualities and modes of gender organization because of the genre's self-conscious distancing from and critique of social reality, but that (as with other genres) this exploration is only analyzed for what it says about femininity. In an effort to move a critical focus to masculinity, the body of the chapter presents 7 pages first summarizing and then analyzing how the short-lived *Firefly* (2002) and the longer-running *Farscape* (1999–2003) challenge hegemonic models of masculinity. Feasey offers a single-paragraph conclusion that science fiction and fantasy television often present male heroes who combine feminine characteristics like sensitivity and emotionality with masculine ones like strength and dominance to explore alternate models of masculinity, and that this is a significant challenge to norms of male behavior.

[6] Readers who have spent time watching and thinking about television will likely be disappointed by the too-brief and too-tidy genre histories offered at the start of each chapter. Similarly, the case studies seem arbitrarily selected and do not consistently receive the amount of contextualization and attention that would lend itself to a more complex and productive set of analyses. It is simply not possible to fully contextualize such a diverse genre as science fiction/fantasy or reality programming in a page and a half, nor is it reasonable to expect to sufficiently capture and critique representations of masculinity in television advertisements in just one 15-page chapter. Each of these topics could have easily been the basis for an entire book. By including them all in one volume, Feasey does not have the space to make clear the different rules by which different genres of fictional television, various types of reality television, sports coverage, and commercials operate. To treat them all so succinctly implies there is no substantial difference among the ways these various types of television are generated and consumed.

[7] Though Feasey sets out to theorize masculinities in the plural, she routinely ends up measuring the male characters on television against a rather unidimensional masculinity that is recognizable primarily by its presence in the public sphere, its aggression, and its failure to express emotion. For her, any violation of this bounded stereotype counts as a legitimate and notable challenge to hegemonic masculinity, regardless of the ways in which any individual violation of this particular set of norms might simultaneously reproduce other characteristics of patriarchal masculinity. For

example, she lauds soccer star David Beckham as having "challenged the very foundations of the hegemonic hierarchy" of the heroic, aggressive, and competitive male because he uses his strength and charisma as well as traditionally feminine characteristics such as "sensitivity, empathy and emotional maturity" to encourage young soccer fans to respect the world and their bodies through a soccer academy he has founded (105). He has also made his marriage to former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham and his role as a father central to his image—a publicity choice that Feasey suggests deserves attention because it, too, challenges traditional ideas about the forceful male sports hero. Feasey makes no mention of how a traditional white, heterosexual, and economically privileged model of paternalism is reflected in Beckham's "father knows best" image and thus misses a crucial way in which he upholds other hegemonic models of masculinity even as he, in some ways, challenges one very specific model of the male athlete.

[8] Throughout *Masculinity and Popular Television,* Feasey offers little on the subjects of race and class as they intersect with the production of hegemonic masculinity. Most male characters she chooses to discuss in her individual case studies are white (though she does not mention this), and there is no discussion of how whiteness is an integral part of normative masculinity. This absence is especially striking in her discussions of police dramas and hospital dramas, in which a male character is generally treated as the cleverest, most powerful, and most worthy protagonist of the series. Both *House* (2004–) and *24* (2001–2010), two shows that feature prominently in the book, have at their center white men—a trend that seems lost on Feasey. Supporting male characters of color receive no mention in Feasey's analyses, though their presence surely helps construct the narrative context in which the masculinity of the central male figure is understood. Similarly, unless Feasey is talking explicitly about *gaycoms*—sitcoms like *Will and Grace* (1998–2006) that focus on the lives of gay characters—heterosexuality is an unmarked characteristic of hegemonic masculinity that receives very little treatment. Likewise, when Feasey is talking about adult cartoons such as *The Simpsons* (1989–), *Family Guy* (1999–), and *King of the Hill* (1997–2010), she addresses the working-class context in which these characters live, whereas in other chapters, middle- and upper-middle-class attributes remain unmarked and unworthy of commentary. Because race, class, and sexuality are such legible categories of social difference, and because they intersect so obviously with ideas about normative masculinity, these omissions are startling. Furthermore, allowing middle-class status, whiteness, and heterosexuality to pass as the unmarked norm allows these socially constructed characteristics to seem natural and unchanging. Finally, it should be noted that when Feasey is writing about masculinity on television, she is only writing about masculinity that can be read on legibly *male* bodies. She does not attend to the means by which female characters might embody masculine characteristics in a way that challenges or contributes to ideas about masculinity, and

thus she inadvertently seems to reify naturalized assumptions about the exclusive proprietorship of masculinity by male bodies.

[9] There is no questioning the dearth of scholarship on masculinity and popular television, and Feasey's book serves best to point out many of the places in which scholarly investigations need to be undertaken. However, because of the breadth of television genres that Feasey attempts to discuss in this book, depth of analysis has to be sacrificed. There is, as she rightly notes in her conclusion, much more work to be done. The number and variety of case studies, combined with the lack of dense theoretical language, make this book an appropriate source of reading material for undergraduate students; more advanced scholars of television will likely find it too basic and repetitive in its argument. However, she succeeds in offering "a useful introduction to the representation of masculinities on television" coupled with fertile prompts that will develop into longer, more detailed scholarship (156).

Web site review

Inside Scanlation

Alex Leavitt

Convergence Culture Consortium (Comparative Media Studies, MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States

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Inside Scanlation

[1] As an online and contemporary practice, scanlation—the scanning, translation, editing, and sharing of foreign comics, specifically Japanese manga, by fans, for fans—has not been recognized in any major historical account. Outside of academia, a fan with the username "gum" published a compiled history of the American scanlation community entitled Inside Scanlation (http://insidescanlation.com), on October 3, 2009, providing an in-depth investigation of "the secrets of scanlation, its past, its future, and everything in between…brought to you by people who have created and lived in the world of scanlation." Although produced by fans, the encyclopedic project proves to be valuable as a historical and social resource to fans and other interested readers alike, whether educated in or ignorant of the controversial translations.

[2] Through a narrative history, community profiles, and interviews with both scanlators and American industry insiders, Inside Scanlation provides a rigorous, intellectual outlook on the projects, spaces, and collectives that formed around this ethical yet illegal fan practice. The Web site even rivals published scholarly attempts to characterize these decades of fan enterprise. Lee provides an overview of the global trends of scanlation; however, her coverage of its history is limited to one vague statement: "It is difficult to know when manga scanlation began, although anecdotes suggest it might have been the turn of the century or slightly earlier. The number of scanlation groups has increased rapidly during the past few years" (2009, 1015). Deppey tells a similar, insufficient story: "In the late 1990s…groups of people were beginning to gather into online groups to produce the manga equivalent of fansubs. Thus were scanlations born" (2005, introduction).

[3] Inside Scanlation, as an interactive Web site, provides four sections, comprising 114 pages of documented analysis (History of Scanlation), community profiles (Spotlight), personal exchanges (Interviews), and appendices (Backgrounds, which includes terminology, guides, and technical and anecdotal details). The historical narrative is separated into three epochal chapters of five stages each, reflecting what gum calls "generations" of the scanlation community: the Classical Era, the Golden Age, and the New World. Each periodized "chapter" employs the maximum potential of the Web site format, hyperlinking to other sections of the site as well as to external sources that allow direct interaction with textual conversations that would ordinarily be filed into a bibliography.

[4] In the first chapter, gum examines the origins of the scanlation movement: its uncertain origins in the archived messages of Usenet, which document fan translations of Japanese manga as early as 1989, and a few undertakings that span Geocities, Angelfire, and IRC (Internet Relay Chat). He names a few popular projects and the pseudonyms of the people associated with them, and he explicates an initial history approaching the early 2000s, detailing initial communication among translators and editors, the semantic evolution of the term (including terms such as *fanscans, fan lettering,* and *manga fan subs*), and a few complications with members of the American manga industry threatening DMCA claims. In this first chapter, gum sets up many of the prominent elements that tie together the historical narrative: the formation of key players in the scanlation scene, translation projects that would influence later ventures, the technical systems utilized for internal communication and product dissemination, and the initial aesthetic and ethical values that would shape future producers and consumers of online scanned manga. He moves casually from an explanation of MangaProject, the first collaborative venture "to fully scanlate an entire manga," to Toriyama's World, the only large, cooperative project that would rival MangaProject, which bought and scanned *tankoubon* (a compilation of multiple manga chapters) and whose leader (AK of Troy) would be featured in a *Wired* magazine article on the Japanese comics industry in the United States (Thompson 2007).

[5] The first chapter also details the early experiments and controversies of various scanlation groups. While these projects and disputes occurred early in scanlation's short history, they interestingly were rarely or never encountered again in later years. As early as 2001, Japanese art books and Korean *manhwa* were included in scanlation compilations. The Great Manga Application Onidzuka, the first and only open-source translation of a manga (specifically *Great Teacher Onizuka,* by Tohru Fujisawa, to which the project's name wittily refers), exemplifies the close-knit community of translators, editors, and scanners at work in the early years of major scanlation efforts. Toriyama's World, surprisingly, partnered with Viz (a major American manga distributor) to promote the introduction of the weekly Japanese manga collection

Shonen Jump to American fans, from which the Web site accrued some profits. These exceptional cases of industry involvement appear rarely throughout gum's work (and critical insight begs for a more thorough investigation here), but he elucidates the situation in a neutral light, given that the industry-scanlator relationship has been and continues to be hostile. Reflecting that antagonism, the financial return prompted a number of fellow scanlators to lash out against the group, fueling one of many early debates amongst the population on such topics as the scanning of licensed work and the emphasis on quality over speed or quantity.

[6] Moving into 2002, the second chapter outlines the shift from the dominance of large centralized scanlation groups to communities shaped by aggregation Web sites, which collected announcements of releases from various smaller scanlating teams. While the chapter is robust, gum's impressive referencing of these marginal collectives might alienate readers unfamiliar with this particular historical space. While the first generation of scanlators operated and collaborated on projects primarily via IRC, translating teams of fewer members (mainly members of previous, larger groups with enough experience to attempt their own projects) began to produce greater numbers of translated scans, outpacing the community and necessitating the creation of Web sites that could track the releases in a central space. These sites, gum notes, hosted forums—the next step in community structure—through which the second generation of scanlators flourished, sharing techniques, discussing translations, and offering free services. However, these smaller scanlation groups began to pursue niche genres (erotic game scripts, light novels, and sexualized and amateur comics), further splintering the older and newer translation teams.

[7] From 2002 to 2004, the manga industry in America grew and spread simultaneously with technology, so that the barriers to entry into both scanlation production and consumption were lowered. The boom in popularity prompted important, though detrimental, changes in distribution and collaboration. As smaller groups branched out into newer modes of production, working on different kinds of content, forming various teams, and gearing themselves toward aggregation Web sites, the older groups remained in the private bubble of IRC, passing around RAW files of original Japanese pages and focusing on delivering quality products. The reputation of older groups overshadowed new teams with their novel values, prompting comments like "the community has lost its focus and purity" as scanlation teams shifted their focus from promoting the spread of manga to distributing free comics online.

[8] The third and final chapter delineates further trends in the American scanlation community: recent activities familiar even to readers inadequately versed in scanning operations. The process from scan to translation having been consolidated, group

organization continued to evolve. From 2006 to 2009, the number of releases per day increased dramatically, reflecting three circumstances: the mass popularization of *shonen* titles (for example, *Naruto,* by Masashi Kishimoto) in America, the emergence of newer translation groups previously uninvolved in the community, and the development of new distribution Web sites. The United States witnessed the height of the manga market in mid decade, and alongside the televised airings of *Naruto, Bleach,* and other action shows, the manga versions of these franchises also gained popularity. Because these comics were fashionable, many new translation groups focused solely on them.

[9] As the Internet matured and access to Japanese media increased, the newest groups took advantage of the resources compiled by the two previous generations. The informative materials of MangaHelpers and the widespread availability of direct download sites like MangaUpdates created pressure to "speedscan" titles as soon as they were released in Japan, as fans demanded immediate access, regardless of scan or translation quality. The ease of acquiring RAW files and then translated files through download or online reading portals (for example, OneManga) stimulated greater movement away from IRC as the space for community discourse. Furthermore, ad-supported Web sites thrived, as multitudes of fans discovered free manga with a few effortless clicks in a search engine.

[10] The Spotlight, Interviews, and Backgrounds sections of Inside Scanlation provide well-rounded commentaries and additional source materials to support the strong documentation provided by gum in the historical narrative. He includes profiles of 24 scanlation projects, as well as 66 interviews with members of 50 scanlation groups. Nine supplemental sections provide links to the guides mentioned in the history, as well as analysis and discussion of IRC as a cultural space, legal issues with the industry, specifics of the scanlation of *Naruto,* and stories of intergroup conflicts. The interviews elucidate firsthand backgrounds from experienced scanlators, inspired by questions asked by a community insider.

[11] Gum approaches the imposing issue of the legal gray area (Lee 2009; Deppey 2005) of scanlation with a flat tone. The legality of fan-produced translations is rejected, using multiple examples; however, the style of certain statements suggests that the scanlation community does not fully comprehend the implications of its activities. Still, gum bluntly asserts that the cultural practice of consuming scanlations devalued printed Japanese popular culture in the United States. Regardless, the legal issue has escalated again recently: a coalition of Japanese and American publishers has taken steps to shut down some of the major scanlation sites infringing on Japanese and American copyright laws (Reid 2010). The actions seem to target sites hosting scans of official translations distributed by American publishers—scans being a

topic completely ignored on Inside Scanlation—but large communities such as MangaHelpers and OneManga have already removed the entirety of their digital comic archives. Given these developments, it is unfortunate that Inside Scanlation sits quietly as a completed project with no prospective updates, because the site could become an authoritatve voice in these debates.

[12] Inside Scanlation is not an academic work: it compiles the results of an attempt to create a historical database for Manga Jouhou, one of the premiere online spaces for the third-generation community. What results is an essential historical resource for a specific fan community. The Web site is fan oriented and uses terms, contexts, and slang whose meanings may not be clear to a reader unfamiliar with scanlation, Internet communities, or the global manga industry. Though its pages chronicle particulars of scanlation groups that might attract fascinated fans, the considered history epitomizes an exhaustive approach that will also attract academic curiosity and scrutiny, given its many references, resources, and contributors. Some concepts are not fleshed out (such as what constitutes a "modern scanlation group"), but the dense hyperlinked details go beyond mere anecdote and make up for some of these lacks. An abundance of pictorial references to defunct Web sites, abandoned logos, and deleted conversations reinforce Inside Scanlation's value by providing information that even the Internet Archive (http://archive.org/) has overlooked. Overall, the Web site alludes to the anime and manga fan sites of the late 1990s that colonized Geocities and other mainstream Web hosts and therefore hints at the scale of a historical artifact. Given its form, we must hope that Inside Scanlation survives better than its predecessors, so that it will remain a valuable historical resource for online fandom.

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