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Editorial

Fan studies pedagogies

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[0.2] Keywords—Acafan; Covid-19; Learning; Multimedia; Pedagogy; Student; Teaching; Writing


1. Introduction

[1.1] Fandom and teaching are intimately interlinked. The expansion of fan studies as an academic field and the growing visibility of fandom and fan activities in popular culture have led to more instructors using students' fandoms in the classroom as well as teaching fan studies as a topic in and of itself (Booth 2015; Howell 2018). Yet because fan studies is often a moving target—refusing in many instances to become "disciplined" enough to match traditional academic units—it becomes imperative to discuss the various contributions, methodologies, ethics, and lacunae of the field in a classroom setting. And as fandom is also becoming an increasingly talked-about identity, its presence in the classroom requires critique.

[1.2] The specific pedagogical needs of the fan studies classroom require sustained interrogation because of the changing field of fan studies itself. Discussions of the power relations between fans and academics (Jones 2016; Busse 2017) joins a necessary interpolation of transnational and intersectional analyses surging through the discipline (Morimoto 2017; Pande 2018), which becomes reflected in learning community dynamics and pedagogical delivery. This special issue brings together the historical and institutional strands of fandom pedagogies, foregrounding what and how fans teach each other to do, and examining how these methodologies and their products enter and enervate academic learning spaces.

[1.3] This special issue focuses on the specific needs of the fan studies classroom, as well as the pedagogical methods, styles, contributions, and concerns when coursework is drawn from a fan studies background. The unique multidisciplinary structure of fan studies (Largent, Popova, and Vist 2020) is reflected in the variety of topics, methods, and case studies in this issue. Although this issue was put together before the Covid-19 pandemic forced teaching across the board to move online and into new spaces, the teaching methods and philosophies discussed in this issue have increasingly become de rigueur for the contemporary classroom. Indeed, types of fannish teaching styles—asynchronous, peer-to-peer, and so on—may become a standardized method of instruction even after the pandemic, at which point the questions of power, leisure,
appropriation, and ecstatic response central to fan pedagogies become fundamentally important.

[1.4] We shadow this move through our inclusion of virtual posters and presentations, sourced from the Fan Studies Network North America (FSNNA) conference held October 13–17, 2020, which took place primarily on Zoom and Discord. The deployment of Discord for fan studies purposes is itself a fraught endeavor, both hearkening back to the days of open message boards and—because of the platform's lax censuring of hate speech, akin to those of platforms such as Reddit and Twitter—also taking place in the same virtual space as virulently misogynist white supremacist conversations (McPherson 2018). To this end, the Multimedia section brings engaging scholarship from the 2020 FSNNA symposium to this issue, deploying fandom tactics of vidding for explicitly academic and pedagogical purposes, as well as engendering questions around transnational applications and demonstrating deep experiential gains. This online conference gave researchers and practitioners an opportunity to present their work in new formats, and we're thrilled to include some of that work here. Contemplating, analyzing, and engaging with these tricky interactional dynamics is also part of what fandom pedagogies can teach us to do.

2. Theory

[2.1] The special issue opens with four Theory articles that explore the relationship between traditional fan practices and classroom engagement.

[2.2] In "Fan Fiction Comments and Their Relationship to Classroom Learning," Lauren Rouse undertakes an innovative exploration of the comments section. Using qualitative data acquired from a web scraping tool, Rouse argues that the comments section is already a rich source of teaching and learning. Rouse ends by suggesting several methods for situating these forms of fan work along a continuum with more familiar academic forms of literary analysis. This article demonstrates the value of qualitative multimodal research for fan studies work, especially useful in collating information garnered from multiple sources online.

[2.3] In "Affirmational Canons and Transformative Literature: Notes on Teaching with Fandom," Linda Zygutis presents the first of two distinct approaches to classroom pedagogies that position fans as experts. Zygutis discusses the prohibitive expertise students see in the designation of "fan," then applies it to the complicated dynamics of importing a transformative positionality into the classroom. As Zygutis cogently argues, being fans requires that students believe themselves capable of expert interpretations of a text, a pedagogical position mostly denied to them. Then, students must be willing to consider their knowledge as not only valid but also applicable—that is, to move from amateur to auteur, and to effectively express their critical perspective. Zygutis's arguments posit navigating these contradictory learning postures as a pedagogical issue at the heart of the university's mission and purpose.

[2.4] In "Exploring Film History by Using Fandom as a Pedagogical Tool," Ellen Wright argues that significant pedagogical transformations occur in the affective shift from student to fan expert. Wright examines effects on student engagement resulting from forms of material culture play in the film history classroom and argues that by repositioning the student as fan, expertise becomes their defining mode of classroom operation. Focusing on physical paratexts results in critically engaged film history students, rendering the field permeable across lines of race, gender, and class.

[2.5] Finally, in "Acafan Identity, Communities of Practice, and Vocational Poaching," Ross Peter Garner provides an incisive discussion of the power dynamics underlying the acafan positionality, specifically surrounding deployment of fannish tactics as pedagogical methods. Garner offers an alternative form of tactical engagement through using deep industry knowledge amassed through fandom to equip students with relevant skills, a tactic that, following Henry Jenkins (1992), Garner calls vocational poaching. This potentially radical transformative pedagogical method speaks directly to the issues of asymmetrical access,
power, and knowledge that enliven the entire issue.

3. Praxis

[3.1] This special issue's Praxis section focuses specifically on how fan-based practices can be integrated into classrooms and how pedagogies based on fandom can influence course content. Taken together, they offer a range of experiences, best practices, and innovative methodologies for engendering student participation and critical learning.

[3.2] Erika Romero's "Including New Media Adaptations and Fan Fiction Writing in the College Literature Classroom" opens the section by discussing how fan practices (like writing fan fiction, creating fan vids, and making fan art) became part of Romero's children's and young adult literary adaptations classes. Beyond studying fan works as crucial components of literary history, Romero's course also asked students to produce their own fan fiction as a final project, demonstrating how Romero's students were able to improve their critical and creative facilities through fandom.

[3.3] Keshia Mcclantoc also discusses the use of fan fiction in first-year writing classes in "Students as Fan, or Reinvention and Repurposing in First-Year Writing Classrooms," exploring the ways the practice benefits students' self-exploration and community building. Writing their own fan fiction allows Mcclantoc's students—many of whom are freshman and new to college writing—to address their own biases, identities, and motivations. This Praxis piece also includes assignment descriptions and excerpts from student papers.

[3.4] In "Evaluating Fandom: Using Blogging and a Grade Contract to Promote Fan Labor in the Classroom," Dominic J. Ashby takes us beyond the use of specific fan creative practices to explore how grade contracts emulate a form of fan-focused ethics. By integrating a grading policy that rewards students for the labor they put in rather than the quality of the work that was completed, students felt more free to experiment with their writing—and be rewarded for it. At the same time, the open course content of Ashby's film and anime course opened up discussions in the classroom about copyright, labor, and privacy—all concerns of both a new media and a fannish classroom.

[3.5] Connor Dyer's "Critical Pedagogy and Visual Culture Art Education in a Cosplay-Based Curriculum" brings cosplay to visual culture art education, a critical pedagogy focused on bringing popular culture to art education. Dyer, by articulating personal experiences as a crafter, demonstrates the artistic merits and influences of cosplay in the art education classroom and offers a curriculum for students to explore both their own relationship to popular culture and their identities as fans, students, and scholars.

[3.6] The Praxis section concludes with "Context, Cosplay, and (Re)configurations: Centering the Geek at the Heart of Science Fiction Pedagogy," which delves into the student experience in a fan-centric classroom. Instructor Kimon Keramidas and student/graduate Fiona Haborak both discuss their experiences in a science fiction course based around students' own fan interests. The class used discussions, website commentaries, "Geek of the Week" presentations, and final projects integrating nonlinear user-driven experiences to demonstrate more democratic classroom experiences.

4. Symposium

[4.1] The Symposium section for this special issue contains a set of compact papers dealing with fan production as models for often virtual pedagogical forms and one roundtable discussion of the pedagogical benefits of embodied fieldwork. This break reflects the particular historical situation of this special issue, as well as its assemblage across the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, this section also overtly addresses fan studies topics of concern as reflected through the Covid-19 pandemic, with especially pertinent
applications for asynchronous and potentially multilingual online learning.

[4.2] In "Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition through Fan Fiction on the Archive of Our Own," Júlia Zen Dariva opens the Symposium with a timely discussion of the fan fiction hosted at Archive of Our Own as a potentially powerful EFL (English as a foreign language) resource. From within a multilingual Brazilian context, Dariva's article first contextualizes fan fiction through the framework of authentic language, then considers the Archive of Our Own as a repository of texts that allow access to fan community participation. These texts thus generate high levels of intrinsic motivation, which powers the extensive reading required for foreign language acquisition in intermediate and advanced English-language learners. Dariva ends with a call to study such repositories from both within and outside an Anglocentric lens for the purposes of interdisciplinary knowledge production.

[4.3] "Transcultural Fan Studies in Practice: A Conversation" is a roundtable with Lori Morimoto, Paul Booth, Ross Garner, Melanie E. S. Kohnen, Bethan Jones, E. J. Nielsen, Louisa Ellen Stein, and Rebecca Williams. This conversation takes place among a group of fan scholars discussing shared memories of a pre-Covid-19 collective embodied scholarly and fannish experience: a conference symposium on transcultural fan studies and trips to various fan pilgrimage sites in Japan, facilitated by Lori Morimoto. Morimoto's framing of the trip as a self-reflexive disruption of fan studies' Anglocentrism fuels the entire discussion. The roundtable bridges disparate yet parallel scholarly conversations around localization and cultural access in theme parks, teaching media studies through reflexive ethnographic practices, and the positionalities at work within experiencing and analyzing culturally distinct forms of fannishness.


[4.5] In "Teaching Fan Fiction: Affect and Analysis," teacher-student pair Kathryn Conrad and Jamie Hawley describe the process and results of teaching a course centered on fan fiction, with specific attention paid to managing the multiple positionalities required of students who are also fans taking the course and potentially being asked to analyze works to which they hold deep affinities. Conrad and Hawley discuss the specific course structures put into place to scaffold this affective analytic performance and document their outcomes as the course progresses.

[4.6] Last, in "Chinese Celebrity Fans during the Covid-19 Pandemic," Yang Lai proposes that presenting Chinese fannish online behaviors through a pedagogical framework of connected learning circumvents the dismissive responses to celebrity fandoms' mobilizations during the initial Covid-19 outbreak in Hubei province. Lai discusses these practices as forms of youth culture and diagnoses them as powerful but temporary interventions in state-controlled civic media participation. Lai's analyses demonstrate the promise and urgent necessity of contextually specific discussions of fannish civics, both online and off.

5. Book reviews

[5.1] The two book reviews in this section focus on books by Rebecca Williams: her 2020 monograph Theme Park Fandom: Spatial Transmedia, Materiality, and Participatory Cultures, published by Amsterdam University Press and reviewed by Carissa Baker, and her 2018 edited collection Everybody Hurts: Transitions, Endings, and Resurrections in Fan Cultures, published by the University of Iowa Press and reviewed by JSA Lowe.
6. Multimedia

[6.1] The different pieces comprising the Multimedia section were originally submitted to 2020's FSNNA conference, which was held virtually October 13–17 during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to synchronous panels, the conference offered an opportunity for participants to prerecord a "poster," which was hosted on the conference website; discussions surrounding the posters were hosted on a special Discord set up for the conference. As discussed by Lori Morimoto in the editorial introduction, the "stylistic leeway given to presenters resulted in a diversity of presentations" (¶ 2). This section includes a selection of these posters, each of which presents information in different styles, from "expository to more revelatory and experiential, each making use of its visual elements in engaging and creative ways" (¶ 3). As Morimoto notes, "Not only did these posters offer a tantalizing variety of presentational modes, but they also offer instructors different ways to engage student creativity in the classroom," both as examples to bring into the class and as models for student scholarship (¶ 4).

[6.2] "Wealth and Heteronormative Romance Tropes in Harry Potter Fan Fiction" by Effie Sapuridis uses a seven-minute video to explore the fetishization of extreme wealth in fanon, using Harry Potter tropes as the basis for this analysis. Sapuridis demonstrates that although these texts often subvert romance tropes, they still represent "the infiltration of classist, racist, and misogynistic ideologies in fan communities" (¶ 1.3). Also breaking through traditional romance tropes, Daiana Sigiliano and Gabriela Borges's "Creative Production of Brazilian Telenovela Fans on Twitter" offers a slide-deck analysis of tweets by fans of the Brazilian show Young Hearts (2017–18) that engendered critical thinking about the LGBTQIA+ community.

[6.3] Both "Broadway YouTubers and Musical Theater Fandom" by Steven Greenwood and "Madonna and Her Multicultural Fan Community" by Rick Pulos offer seven-minute videos that mix the popular, academic, and fannish. Greenwood's analysis of fan-created covers of Broadway hits uses the medium of video to illustrate the mix of professional and amateur creators using YouTube, while Pulos examines the quasi-matriarchal fan clubs that have developed around Madonna.

[6.4] The Multimedia section concludes with two more presentations from Brazil. Vitoria Ferreira Doretto's "The Reviewer's Role in Brazilian K-drama Fan Subs" provides a detailed infographic of the proofreading process within a fan subtitling community. And Aianne Amado's "A Brief Review of Fan Studies in Brazil" provides a four-minute video overview of the field from a Brazilian, transcultural perspective (Chin and Morimoto 2013).

7. Conclusion

[7.1] The repercussions from the 2020–21 Covid-19 disruptions to the academic year will continue to reverberate in the educational community, potentially leading to new equilibria between virtual and face-to-face teaching. Accordingly, the classrooms of the future may be substantially different than the classrooms of the past. We hope that the articles in this special issue help instructors and scholars rethink, overhaul, open up, and transform their classrooms as these changes pile up and up. Not every subject or every classroom can (or should) transition entirely to studying fans or embrace fannish or fan studies methodologies. But we believe that every classroom can benefit from the work presented in this special issue. Whether bringing transformative passions to the classroom or to archives, sharing a love of popular culture from all over the world, offering alternate projects and grading methods, or normalizing affect as a scholarly position, fan studies—and fandom—has a lot to teach.

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9. References


Abstract—Reader comments appended to online fan fiction stories provide benefits as close reading and critical analysis tools. Fan fiction provides a space where fans can develop literary analysis skills and literacy through their interactions in comments. This multimethod study combined the interview of a fan author with various digital humanities methods to closely study the value of comments. A web scraping tool was used to collect comments, and documentary, textual, and terminological analyses were performed alongside topic modeling to assess the frequency of words associated with learning. The co-occurrence of certain words was studied to understand the assessments and analyses that readers were performing in their comments. The study found that fan fiction readers apply strategies of literary analysis to their pleasure reading.

Keywords—Close reading; Critical reading; Data analysis; Pedagogy; Topic modeling; Writing

1. Introduction

There has been a long-standing practice for fan fiction authors to receive help or ask for assistance from others with their fiction, whether they need assistance with plot development, characterization, background information about the fandom, or a simple grammar and spelling review. Assistance is provided through a system called beta reading. Betas, or "experts in writing [narratives,] guide, scaffold, and advise budding writers on their drafts" (Thomas 2008, 679) and provide "some of the best writing instruction [to take] place outside the classroom and in online communities" (Jenkins 2004). However, betas are not the only reviewers of fan fiction. Readers also regularly comment on stories' plot, content, and writing style. More, the comment section on a fic can provide new insight into the writing process that readers may not get in formal education. The long-standing link between fan fiction and learning about writing, coupled with the increasing mainstreamness of the genre, has afforded fan scholars the ability to ask questions about how fan fiction and fandom may be useful in the classroom as a tool to better prepare writers for either future careers or improved writing for pleasure. Rebecca Black's *Adolescents in Online Fan Fiction* (2008) argues that writing fan fiction inside and outside the classroom develops students' creative writing skills and communicative practices as well as providing social support that they might not have received in traditional classrooms. Additionally, Katherine Anderson Howell (2018) notes that inserting fan fiction and its practices into traditional classrooms would "offer students literacy and value in the class work, as well as citizenship" (120).

However, the link between traditional education content and its use in fannish contexts is underexplored. In order to better understand this link, I completed a case study with fan fiction author Ruby and her recently published fan fiction. In addition to interviewing Ruby, I used a web scraping tool to pull comments from the stories that Ruby wrote; the tool isolated the comments from the rest of the text. After collecting comments on the story and investigating the correlation between lessons learned from the
classroom and in online fandom, I used computational techniques to look at word frequency and use. Results indicate that fic writers and commenters engage in structured, formal analysis of texts, performing close readings that rely on modes of discourse clearly influenced by formally taught English literature classrooms.

[1.3] Here, I take a closer look at Ruby's work and the comments left on her fic. I will first address the ways that I selected participants for my study and explain why Ruby was selected in particular for this research (note 1). I will then provide a background on Ruby, her fandom, and her work, all of which was taken from an interview with Ruby. The interview provides a close examination of Ruby's writing and production style and also provides insight into the ways that she interacts with her readers in the comment section. Next, I will break down the documentary analysis that I completed on the comments on Ruby's work. The scraping and data visualizations provide an in-depth look at the ways that readers interpret a work by analyzing the words that they choose. In order to complete the documentary analysis, I used a Python tool to scrape the comments from the website and pull them into a CSV file, on which I used three main pathways of analysis in RStudio (https://rstudio.com/) through the natural language process: data visualizations (including word clouds and bar graphs showing word frequency and used to determine what terms fans used the most in relation to Ruby's work); term association (showing the frequency with which words occur in correlation with other words and used to determine if people discussed topics like "reading," "learning," or "writing"); and topic modeling (showing related terms used for words and allowing an examination of the underlying semantic structures of the comments). This reveals how readers use the literary analysis, figurative language, and close reading skills (often taught in secondary English literature classrooms) in their comments on fan works. The data and analysis demonstrate that fans use skills learned in the traditional language arts classroom, like performing close readings or understanding figurative language, in their comments on fan fiction, which furthers the argument for the inclusion of fic when considering pedagogical approaches to teaching literacy.

2. Participants and methods

[2.1] The DePaul institutional review board (IRB) approved this study on March 18, 2019. The study was submitted as an expedited review. In order to complete the case study, I selected writers via an informal message on a public subreddit, identifying the purpose for the study and details of the study. When participants responded to this subreddit (whether in the thread or in direct messages), they received a link to a survey on SurveyMonkey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/) with an altered short consent document that asked for their agreement to be screened for the study. In the survey, participants were allowed to view the consent document and tick yes or no for their consent. The survey also asked for their reddit username to keep track of the participants who consented.

[2.2] After receiving consent, as well as the Tumblr and fan fiction website URLs, I used the eligibility criteria to determine whether the writers fit the parameters of the survey. Some participants may have responded and not fit all the criteria, so this prescreening acted as a double check for participants that fit all the criteria. Tumblr gave me insight on how the participants interacted with followers and fans of their works. The fan fiction URLs gave me insight into how past works have incorporated multimedia, as well as interactions with fans, betas, and other writers. The selected participants fit all of the eligibility criteria.

[2.3] After this informal recruitment process, and after determining which participants fit the study parameters, I connected with the participants via reddit again. I let the participants know that they had been accepted, and I asked for their email addresses to provide the participants with the voluntary consent agreement forms. After receiving consent, I sent the participants a Google survey (through the email obtained on reddit) to collect demographics (age, pronoun preferences, gender, time zone, fandom, and education level). The obtained responses resided in an encrypted folder on my computer and linked the survey results to a code name. Each encrypted file also held participant interview documents, consent documents, and any other materials related to that code name/participant.
Participants were selected from the subreddit /r/fanfiction (https://reddit.com/r/FanFiction). I selected this social media platform because /r/fanfiction is not sequestered into fandoms. This means that gaining access to many fan communities at once is possible. The subreddit describes itself as "a supportive community for writers, readers, and reccers to talk about and share FanFiction" and has roughly 47,000 members. I posted a "call for fan fiction" on the subreddit, asking for fan authors to submit multichapter fics that had a beta and were ongoing. Participants responded to the call, sending me their fan fiction via the thread. This post was the top post on the subreddit for the first twenty-four hours that it was posted and received over 150 responses; however, the cyclical nature of Reddit—that is, the prioritizing of recent threads over older ones on the website—may have limited the number of responses to the call.

I had several criteria for my participants. First, I asked that the author have a beta reader because, like a peer reviewer, betas provide feedback on content, form, and style. Betas' understandings of what is required may differ greatly from writers' understandings. Fics that have been read by betas thus provide important insight into how the common pedagogical practice of peer review is and is not mirrored in fan practice. Betas may act in many roles in producing fic. They often line edit and make changes to grammar or mechanics, but some may also workshop the fic with a writer. They may suggest that the plot be altered or that a characterization be changed to reflect canon (i.e., the source text) or fanon (i.e., the generally accepted characterization within the fandom). Additionally, betas may help authors keep their audiences' needs in mind; for example, they may interject when they believe more information is needed for the story to be cohesive or coherent. Finally, betas provide meaningful formative feedback, something that peer review or workshops in formal educational contexts also achieve (Li et al. 2020; Liu and Carless 2006).

I chose to study writers with new multichapter fics because doing so would allow me insight into real-time interactions. A work in progress (WIP) fic was extremely beneficial because, as the name suggests, WIPs are not published all at once but instead over days, weeks, or months. Using WIPs meant that I would be able to observe the authors' interactions with their betas and readers across the whole work instead of being constrained to a small set of comments on a single chapter. Moreover, multichaptered fics necessitate more interaction about the work over a longer period of time, which makes developments in the writers' processes more apparent; they therefore provide a more robust source of data. For example, in Ruby's work, after she posted each chapter, its comments often discussed how the chapter fit into the overall plot, which of the readers' wishes had come true, and what cliffhangers or plot points could guide the reader to hypothesize about what might happen next. These kinds of discussions would not happen on a fic with only one chapter.

I requested the participation of authors whose fic was posted to either Archive of Our Own (AO3) (https://archiveofourown.org/) or FanFiction.net (https://www.fanfiction.net/), as these two websites reach the largest fan populations. As such, fics posted to these sites likely garner numerous comments from a wide fan demographic. Because comments comprised part of my data, I also wanted to interview authors who had active reader and writer interactions in the comments sections on AO3, FanFiction.net, or social media. These interactions form the basis of a following for a story and allow in-depth conversations about a work to develop. For example, the readers Ruby interacts with daily on the Discord social media platform (note 2), who often help her workshop her fics, comment on her story when it is posted, noting the changes she has made on the basis of their suggestions or continuing the conversations from Discord. Participating fan fiction authors were asked to undertake video chats with me at least once every two weeks, so that I could discuss the comments and the act of fic writing with them over time and observe their habits in detail.

As I combed through the URLs provided by authors in response to my Reddit post, I began to segment the data. I looked for metadiscourse in the comments, places where readers and the author substantially responded to the fic and talked about the literary and stylistic elements of the fic. I also looked for fics that had multiple comments and author responses, demonstrating ongoing conversations between the authors and their readers about the works. I began to see places where readers created their own spheres of intertextuality
and intratextuality. For example, readers may bring connections of "text-between another text" as well as "ideas, notions, thoughts, and experiences that shape their understanding of the narrative" to the comments section (Booth 2010, 55–56). In their comments on Ruby's work, for example, readers often relied on their knowledge of the fanon or canon of her source text, *Supernatural* (2005–20), as well as their own ideas about the world of *Supernatural* and their own experiences when giving feedback. One reader wrote, "I totally relate, though. TFW you're on a work trip and have to switch from 'work is paying for this' to 'work is not' mode for dinner" (note 3). Additionally, Ruby's work was an alternate universe (AU) fic, which meant that readers were able to analyze her use of the other text that she referenced (another television show) and to make intertextual connections. Intratextual connections that readers draw between the chapters in the fic propel "the reader deeper into a media object, as it connects aspects of the text to other aspects of that text" (Booth 2010, 56). For example, in the fic I studied, Ruby writes, "She was pretty, with dark brown hair gathered in a functional bun and large black eyes. She winked at him before walking away." In a comment about this section, a reader speculates on the importance of that scene and its relation to the overall story, stating, "Imma remember her, she's probably important." This section shows that the reader perceives Ruby to be using foreshadowing, which encourages them to remember specific details of the text and to develop intratextual connections.

3. Case study: Ruby

[3.1] In her interview, Ruby noted that she was thirteen when she found fandom. Her first fandom was *Sailor Moon* (1992–97), and she currently writes in the *Supernatural* fandom. A native French speaker, she has recently started reading and writing in English, and fandom has allowed her to consider her personal identity, discuss sexuality and sex, and develop friendships with people outside of her immediate social circles. Upon her entry into fandom, she interacted with other fans through play by post, a combination of online role-playing and creative writing (Ito et al. 2009). In play by post, users create threads on social media (such as Twitter), with each post adding a sentence or character to an unfolding story. Ruby moved through fandom in this way throughout her teenage years, investing time in role-playing games and collaborative writing in chat rooms. At the time this study was undertaken, Ruby most often wrote drabbles, which are very short fics, totaling only about 100 words (note 4). She also wrote longer fics reaching about 30,000 words in length. All of her stories have been edited by the same beta reader for the past two years. She workshops them first on a Discord channel, with drafts written in Google Docs so her beta reader can view them. She posts completed fiction on an archive site, then engages with readers via the chapter's comments or via the relevant Discord site or other social media channels.

[3.2] Ruby stated that she tried to be as responsive as possible to her stories' comments: "I answer every single comment; I am a literal human puppy when I get them—so very excited and eager to comment back." She says that her comments depend on the relationship that she has with the commenter. If she does not recognize the username from previous comments or Discord, she generally simply thanks them for reading her fic—the default response of many fan writers. If the commenter is someone she interacts with frequently, the answer tends to be more personalized. She says that overall, about 70 percent of the comments on every story she writes are detailed, which she feels makes her lucky, as many authors receive shorter, less detailed comments. She says that Discord (where she acts as a moderator) draws out a lot of these more detailed comments, as she has usually workshopped her piece there, and many of the comments reference what the reader and Ruby have talked about. Ruby values "the communities [that are] created within the servers: it gets a lot of people to read outside of their fandoms. People are like, 'Maybe I'll go read this because someone posted it and it seems interesting.'"

4. Documentary analysis
After interviewing Ruby, I analyzed her stories and their comments using documentary analysis, "a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning" (Bowen 2009, 29). I began by looking at all of the texts Ruby had produced, noting the target audiences of each, the tone that she used, the story's purpose, and the style in which it was presented. After I had asked these questions of the texts, I examined them and their related comments closely, looking for figurative language use (symbolism, imagery, personification), examining the narratology (the narrative choices made by the author and structures of the text), and considering the contextual world building (how the author uses the setting of the story to discuss and study people and cultures within the source text). I determined what Bowen (2009) terms "what is being searched for"—that is, precisely which elements I wanted to use as data in my analysis of learning skills. I then documented and organized "the frequency and number of occurrences within the document" by using a spreadsheet to tally the number of times elements of figurative language, narratology, or ethnography (as defined above) were used (35). I developed posteriori codes through my initial close reading as they were "related to central questions of the research," then collected and organized data from the story by using these codes (35).

In my documentary analysis of the comments, I particularly noted reader comments like, "This helped me visualize x better," or "I understand this better because of y." For example, one comment on Ruby's work reads, "I think those last two paragraphs are what really starts this off. It puts the setting in place properly and shows us what's at stake for Sam and Dean." This comment helps broadly demonstrate a kind of norm for the work that many other readers follow in their own analysis of the text. In the full comment, the reader began by copying and pasting text from Ruby's work in order to clearly indicate which section they were going to address in their comment. The reader then analyzed that section, noting the setting and how it helps develop the plot points of the story. This process is reflective of how close reading is taught in English literature classrooms: students are first taught to cite the relevant passage that will be analyzed, then apply figurative language or other technical forms of literature analysis to the passage. Similarly, the basics of close reading as shown here parallel the norms put forth by writers of fan fiction for what Ruby termed "good comments." Comments that engage with specific details of the text and ask questions provide a rich opportunity for textual analysis, where authors and readers alike can delve into the world created and developed deploying strategies used in various literacies.

A common topic in comments was Ruby's use of imagery. The translation of imagery into writing is always a game of chance, especially in fan fiction, where readers understand what the characters and settings of the source text—in this case, *Supernatural*—look like but may not be as familiar with other, added material. For example, if an AU takes place in an American city, readers from any other country may have a hard time picturing a scene unless it is carefully described. Ruby uses fan art as a paratext—the material surrounding a text that is not a part of the main body of the text—to help guide her readers. Fan art as paratext is either embedded in the middle of her fan fiction or is placed at the beginning. In one chapter, she embedded the art after a paragraph of description:

Dean could feel the rise of Castiel's magic before he saw it...It had been night outside, but now light streamed through the kitchen window, the stark white of burning magnesium or lightning strikes. It cast strange shadows across the room, fractioned by the coloured glass baubles, making Dean's eyes water as he turned away, focusing on the large shadow wings that unfurled from Cas' back.

In the comments on this chapter, several people mention how beautiful the included fan art was and how it complemented Ruby's descriptive imagery. One reader goes through the chapter, copying about fifteen lines from the text and discussing these lines at length in their comment. The commenter mentions the imagery that Ruby uses three times, synthesizing their discussion with a note regarding Ruby's world building. The commenter writes, "You are really good at throwing in tiny details that show a LOT. And then the exchange
between Sam and Cas. I don't have to guess, and I don't have to read a lot to understand how much history is there." This commentary on the chapter is a "reflection of the reader's response that is intended for the author but does not necessarily include specific suggestions for improvement" (Reagle 2015, 45). It shows that the reader read the chapter closely, recognized the literary techniques and figurative language that Ruby used successfully, and provided feedback indicating to the author that they understand subtext.

5. Textual analysis

[5.1] After completing this qualitative analysis, I undertook a quantitative textual analysis, examining one of Ruby's past works: the prequel to the fan fiction examined above. Because her current work was in the process of being written at the time of the study, the prequel was better suited to quantitative analysis, and it had the benefit of being set in the same world. To scrape comments, I used R (https://www.r-project.org/) and its (rvest) library, which allows HTML and XML page manipulation, as well as the RSelenium library (Wickham 2020). A Python library for scraping fan fiction content and metadata already existed on GitHub (https://github.com/radiolarian); I modified the script so that the program would only scrape comments from the web pages comprising Ruby's prequel, thereby providing me with the prequel's data set.

[5.2] After the initial web scrape of the comments, I analyzed the data. I first visualized the data using the R libraries (wordcloud) and (topicmodels) for text analysis. The (wordcloud) library allowed me to group the most frequently occurring words in the data and present these groupings visually, while the (topicmodels) library allowed me to group the data visually by topic. Having familiarized myself with the comments, I proceeded to create a customized stop word list that would be used in addition to the default library stop word list. Stop word removal permits researchers to filter out common words that are not distinctive and that may overwhelm text analysis at scale; my stop words included references to character names and certain abbreviations. Some of the stop words that I included were names of the characters from the source text (Sam and Dean Winchester, Castiel, Ketch); variations of "thanks," because gratitude is expressed so frequently in comments; and punctuation and white space. I did not eliminate URLs because I thought that they could usefully point to other platforms, resources, or links. I was interested in establishing which terms were used frequently within the comments. I looked more closely at subsets of words that appeared twenty times or more. This subset was then visualized in a bar graph (figure 1) and in a word cloud (figure 2).

![Figure 1. Bar graph representing Ruby's comments.](image-url)
When I looked at figure 1, I noticed several things. The first was the frequency of the word "like." It is used over sixty times in the comments, but it was used in various ways. The data show that "like" was used twenty-four times as a verb expressing approval or pleasure ("I like this"), twenty-one times in citing the content of the story ("this was likely to come back and bite him later"), fourteen times to compare ("this world feels very SPN-like"), and four times colloquially ("Like things are crap, but we are like ok?"). I was most interested in the use of "like" as a comparison word. Focusing on these uses, I found that readers compared characters to other characters, to their own actions, to the television show, and to the world at large. These connections (often referred to as "text to text," "text to self," and "text to world") are commonly used by teachers and professors when teaching analytical and close reading (Kardash 2004). For example, one reader makes a text-to-text connection between the work and the world of *Supernatural*, as well as connections between the work and other AU fan fiction:

Okay so I don't know Shadowrun and I don't read a lot of AU's like this, but they sound in-character enough and the world interesting enough that I think I'll like it…HOWEVER, this world feels very SPN-like if that makes any sense?…Anyway, it was riveting, and I was actually annoyed when my brother came home and wanted to talk so I had to take a break from reading. Can't wait to see more. Also, that cover art is AMAZING

The use of "like" in this comment acts as a form of mixture description, or "descriptions of target documents defined by their likeness to mixtures of other documents," according to Organisciak and Twidale (2015, 2). These descriptions often inform the author of readers' connections between the original text, the transformed text, and further texts. For Ruby's work, these mixture descriptions happen frequently in the comments, showing the expanded frame of reference from fans in this fandom. For example, another reader stated:

OH. MY. GODS. WTF JUST HAPPENED??! THAT WAS FASNIATING!! Okay girl calm down for a minute breathe for sec. The imagery of the caretaker walking into pool of blood and leaving red footprints everywhere was very unnerving. Poor lady! Glad they rescued the people that were snatched. Are they all like assassinations or is it more a programmable thing like on Dollhouse? I can't wait to find out aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Here, the reader makes a connection to *Dollhouse* (2009–10), another sci-fi show. These connections help develop readers' own intertextual understandings of a work; they also make these networks of meaning
These conclusions drawn on the word "like" were completed in the first round of data analysis. I then removed "like" from subsequent analysis, changing the term frequency to determine its impact on the data set overall. However, words that connote mixture descriptions and textual connections were still present. For example, "world" was a frequent term used to acknowledge Ruby's world-building skills, which relate to the comments regarding mixture descriptions. For example, one reader comments on Ruby's world-building skills, then asks a question about Shadowrun (1989–) RPG fandom:

[5.9] I do gotta ask, since I'm a fandom-blind for Shadowrunner, why is Sam wearing a surgical mask but no one else is mentioned? Is it a personal thing, that some people who are more bothered by pollution/more germ freaks do? Or do people who get the computer-hacking stuff in their brain more sickly and more affected by the pollution.

This reader makes text-to-text connections ("computer-hacking stuff in their brain more sickly and more affected by the pollution"), as well as a text-to-world or community connection ("Is it a personal thing, that some people who are more bothered by pollution/more germ freaks do"). The reader brings in their wider experiences with fandom, world building, and their own society into the comment. Similarly, another reader makes a comment regarding mixture description, stating, "I see you there, quoting Neuromancer! And I fucking love you for it because it's SUCH a great sentence." Neuromancer, a 1984 science fiction novel by William Gibson, follows the story of a computer hacker up against artificial intelligence, very much like Sam's character in Ruby's story and the characters in the Shadowrun role-playing game.

6. Associated terms

[6.1] I next created a term document two-dimensional matrix, which included individual terms in rows and documents in columns. Using the findAssocs() function from the (tm) library, I identified terms that were associated with my terms of interest, which were developed out of a list of words that I associated with learning (e.g., "studying," "searching," "understanding") and searched for terms that frequently appeared together in the document, setting the sensitivity to terms that appeared together at least 30 percent of the time, as higher correlation settings did not produce many results. One of the words I was interested in examining more closely through this matrix was "looking," because it was often used in comments discussing textual connections. A reader might say, "I was looking for a fic like this because of another fic!" Inputting this word into the matrix searched the comments for other words that occurred along with "looking." In Ruby's fic, some other words that were associated with "looking" were "glass," "ending," "delighted," and "sugar." This gave me an idea for other possible words that would be associated with the word I was analyzing, which could show relationships between the text and possible analytic skills. For example, one comment that had all of "sugar," "glass," and "looking" was a comment performing a close textual analysis:

[6.2] "Castiel looked at him for a long moment, not meeting his eye, just looking at him in that way that made Dean feel like he was made of glass and spun sugar. 'I'll need a personal item of hers,' he said, voice low in what sounded like a surrender.' That is a beautiful metaphor and a really lovely way to end the chapter.

[6.3] The commenter notes that there is a metaphor embedded in the text. The scene before this actually sets up an extended metaphor that culminates with the words "voice low in what sounded like a surrender." The recognition of this as a "beautiful metaphor" and the nod to an extended metaphor shows that the reader is using modes of analysis likely to have been taught in a literature classroom.
Another word that I was interested in from the matrix was the word "imagine." In the comments, some of the associated words were "dealing," "moving," "environment," and "interactions." The findAssocs() similarly shows examples of close reading within the comments and notes the literary terms that readers use to understand a work's intratextual connections. For example, in figure 4, the term "imagine" was used to collate associated terms. Some associated terms are "giving," "us," and "perfectly," which denote the ways that users interact with the text and how they use their close reading skills to frame their perspectives on the work.

The purpose of analyzing associated terms was to determine the connections that a reader was making between the text in the comments. By analyzing the road maps (associations) that appear between words, one can begin to draw conclusions about how readers are making paratextual relations to other works, a form of analysis taught in secondary literature classrooms. As Showalter (2002) highlights, "When we teach reading literature as a craft, rather than as a body of isolated information[,] we want students to learn […] how to relate apparently disparate works to one another, and to synthesize ideas that connect them into a tradition or a literary period" (26).

7. Topic modeling

Another type of analysis that I conducted was topic modeling, or latent Dirichlet allocation analysis (LDA). Topic modeling is a form of classification of documents, and this analysis was conducted through the (topicmodels) R library. LDA is a generative probabilistic model through which each document is treated as a mixture of topics based on sets of frequently occurring words within the documents, and it clusters documents on the basis of their level of association with particular topics (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003).
modeling is beneficial, especially to this kind of analysis, because it predicts which words might be most closely associated with one another, allowing for groups to be formed. The forming of groups then allows someone to look across a data set and make predictions about what is being discussed and how it is being discussed, as well as how it might relate parts of a data set to a whole set. The number of topics and words included in each topic is customizable, but the more topics you have, the more words will repeat within each topic. Initially, I started out with five topics and ten words in each topic. This yielded topics and words that did not overlap; however, it also did not show any correlations between topics. Essentially, the fewer number of topics, the more outliers in the data. As I increased the number of topics, I was able to ascertain overlap among them, and the data began to look like a cohesive set, with fewer outliers. I established that eight topics was a reasonable number for this body of comments, and I specified that each topic would comprise ten individual terms (table 1).

Table 1. Topics chosen for topic modeling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic no.</th>
<th>Individual terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;still,&quot; &quot;lot,&quot; &quot;little,&quot; &quot;even,&quot; &quot;just,&quot; &quot;story,&quot; &quot;one,&quot; &quot;youre,&quot; &quot;banter,&quot; &quot;wasnt&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;good,&quot; &quot;well,&quot; &quot;beautiful,&quot; &quot;thats,&quot; &quot;worldbuilding,&quot; &quot;looked&quot; &quot;descriptions,&quot; &quot;chapter,&quot; &quot;whole,&quot; &quot;just&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;said,&quot; &quot;wanted,&quot; &quot;work,&quot; &quot;kids,&quot; &quot;bad,&quot; &quot;writing,&quot; &quot;course,&quot; &quot;around,&quot; &quot;eyes,&quot; &quot;loved&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[7.2] Topic modeling was the final form of data analysis used to study Ruby's original story. While the manual analysis of this work allowed me to look at the comments as a whole, topic modeling showed semantic meanings within the structures of the comments via the signifiers between words, signs, and symbols and what they stand for in accordance with their denotations. From there, topic modeling allowed me to draw abstract conclusions about groupings of topics as well as about who was writing the comment and what metatextual and intertextual connections they were making as they read Ruby's story. This is valuable as it shows the skills that readers have been taught (those text-to-text and text-to-world connections) in real time. Topic 2, which I found particularly interesting, related to Ruby's skill as a writer. For example, readers commented on her world-building ability: "The description of the city sets the scene and the area up so well. You world-build like it is an original and I can see your love in it." Taken together, all the data on topic 2 indicated that Ruby and her story's readers prized evocative, rich descriptions, which made them think about how this text might relate to others.

[7.3] Topics 3 and 4 at first glance seem like responses from the author, as words like "glad," "people," "felt," and "write" are often used to express gratitude to readers for their attention. However, the two separate topics also highlight the comment threads where the author responds to readers and vice versa. For topic 4, for example, combining the mode of topic modeling with the mode of term associations revealed the presence of correlations: There were twenty-nine instances of the word "glad" in the comments, and twenty-six of these were in Ruby's comments. Topic 3 is also highly correlated with responses from the author. Manual analysis shows that the word "felt" is used most frequently in quoting the text of the fic in Ruby's indirect responses. Of the twelve uses of "felt," seven quoted the story and three were responses from the author. Similarly, when looking at the other topics (figure 5), words like "looking" and "scene" appear both in readers' comments as
quotes from the text and in Ruby's replies to readers. This reiteration of Ruby's wording—from fic to fic quoted in a comment to author response to comment—demonstrates the importance the community places on various criteria, with their repetition indicating the various steps that Ruby takes to build relationships around her writing.

Figure 5. Topic modeling for Ruby's comments.

As I've just shown, topics and word frequency can demonstrate the methods fan authors and their readers use to build a community through writing, reading, and commenting on a fic. In topic 7, the words "made," "felt," and "looking" were correlated with readers' placing themselves into the scenes described in the story. One reader said, "Suddenly brain matter...that was unexpected! I like all the details Dean is taking in even in this chaos...as a good runner should! This reads really smoothly. Everything is happening all at once, but I never felt lost or confused." This reader is reading the fic immersively, making connections to their own life and to their past education about reading and writing. The reader connects their past readings of difficult and unfamiliar texts and maps these experiences onto this story intertextually while simultaneously inserting themselves and their writing experiences into the story. As this exchange demonstrates, fandom spaces may be used as spaces of learning and connecting.

As a product of the English literature classroom and a former English literature teacher in public middle school (seventh and eighth grades), I have seen firsthand the pedagogy of literature and the types of skills taught when analyzing a piece of text. Further, literary theory has always had a place in the secondary literature classroom. There has always been a connection between reading theories and literary theories, reaching back to the thinking of Kenneth Goodman and Wolfgang Iser. Teaching techniques of literary theory like close reading, paratextual connections, and figurative language allows for students to learn and adopt critical thinking processes, a skill that in turn permits the analysis of media artifacts, physical texts, and a host of other genres outside of the classroom, like fan fiction (Appleman 2015; Misson and Morgan 2006; Karolides 2013).

8. Conclusion

Each form of data modeling and analysis highlighted a different aspect of the comments on Ruby's work, and overall, each analysis demonstrated the clear presence of learned methods of literary analysis. The documentary analysis highlighted surface-level details apparent in the comments, while textual modeling and word frequency analysis demonstrated the specific patterns of language used in Ruby's and the readers' comments. This provided an overview of the topics that readers focused on in their analyses of Ruby's fic, topics that were further highlighted by the associated terms analysis. The associated term analysis allowed links to be made between learned methods of literary analysis and Ruby's fan fiction, as seen through the analysis of the word "looking" in the comments. Finally, topic modeling emphasized possible intra- and
intertextual connections made by Ruby in her fan fiction and by the readers in their analyses of her fan fiction, as well as how the readers and Ruby built a sense of community through the comments.

[8.2] The comments on Ruby's work demonstrate the intricacies of reading fan fiction. Fans' comments indicate that they pay attention to the (formal) techniques that authors use as they write, edit, and publish a story. Fans continually make inter- and intratextual references and are able to apply their knowledge of literary modes, structures, and styles. The figures that illustrate my analyses above visualize the ways that fans use close reading skills when reading fan fiction. Fans may emphasize figurative language such as personification or extended metaphors in their comments, as the visualizations of the data show, indicating community approval of this mode and reinforcing such word usage. Furthermore, certain words used in the comments may connote types of learning or responder attitudes, as demonstrated in the topic modeling. More, these concordances show how fans read beyond the source text, making connections to other media. Close readings and critical analyses in the comments show that fans are using skills valued in traditional classroom settings in their leisure time. This suggests that incorporation of fan fiction into the classroom could improve students' multiliteracies.

[8.3] This study is not without its limitations, not least of which is the convenience sampling in response to an online call, which privileges a particular mode and practice of fan writing (chaptered media-based fan fiction workshopped and published online in the English language). Further, I may have been biased when I chose the codes to organize the data. However, this analysis is novel in that it performs quantitative analysis of fan texts in an attempt to better understand the intertextual process of fan creation of written texts.

[8.4] Several points invite further study. Studies examining word and term frequency would be welcome; in particular, the latter suggests several promising avenues for future research, including looking at the word "thank." "Thank" is used by both authors and readers in the comments, but its implied meanings vary. In particular, studies using lemmatization—that is, the grouping of similar or synonymous words—would offer valuable insight into topics frequently discussed in comments. Lemmatization of "thank" would group words like "thanks," "thank," and "thanked" as well as synonyms like "gratitude." By consolidating variations, inflections, and synonyms of the words being considered in the study, lemmatization can provide deeper nuance in a data set, especially in terms of data visualization. Finally, outside arenas of interaction, such as Tumblr or Discord, should be taken into account in addition to the comments on fan fiction archive websites, as these social media sites are popular arenas in which the discussions undertaken on the fic's archive site are extended.

9. Acknowledgements

[9.1] Thank you to Dr. John Shanahan, Dr. Paul Booth, and Dr. Ana Lucic for this assistance on this project during my Masters degree, and to Dr. Mel Stanfill for their assistance in editing and preparing this work for publication. An additional thank you to Dr. Kristina Busse for her assistance in this process and to the many fan studies graduate students and scholars who have offered words of encouragement throughout this research.

10. Notes

1. Ruby's name has been changed, and I have not provided the title of the piece of fan fiction under study to maintain her anonymity. All quotations from Ruby are from phone interviews I conducted via Discord direct message on February 18, March 19, and April 29, 2019. All references to reader responses to her fan fiction story appear in comments to the fic's relevant chapter posts on the hosting archive's website.

2. Discord (https://discord.com/) is an online chat room service where users can interact in a variety of ways.
Fans use Discord to workshop their fics, message friends, and discuss the latest fandom news.

3. Comment text is reproduced verbatim.

4. The meaning of the term "drabble" is debated, with fan readers and writers arguing over the fic length the term implies. Some people use the term "drabble" to mean any short piece of fic—under about a thousand words.

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Affirmational canons and transformative literature: Notes on teaching with fandom

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[0.1] Abstract — Instructors who use fan studies in the classroom are likely to make use of transformative works and theories. The remix classroom offers a way to read against popular interpretations of mainstream texts. In the process, teaching with fandom—not to mention fandom itself—is often presented specifically as a salve to prescriptive readings of texts. Yet fan practices are often imagined by mainstream culture as being uniquely affirmational—a particularly enthusiastic form of close reading that emphasizes and rewards deference to an authorial voice. In this sense, the way media and popular culture understand fandom is as an extension of how students are often taught to read texts: via a formalistic, New Critical approach that centers authoritative criticism. Students who interact with fan texts but do not see themselves as fans feel this way, just as students often fail to recognize themselves as critical readers because expertise has been made into a form of gatekeeping.

[0.2] Keywords — Authorship; Composition; Education; New Criticism


1. Introduction

[1.1] Teaching with fandom—and fandom itself—is often presented specifically as a salve to singular and authoritative readings of a text. Instructors who use fan studies in the classroom are likely to make use of transformative works and theories as a way of encouraging students to produce their own readings of a text. The remix classroom, Katherine Howell notes, is an "invitation to write back" against popular readings of mainstream texts, offering "ways to transform popular culture as multidimensional" (2018, 15). In this sense, we're also asking our students to see fandom as primarily transformational, and fans as audiences who manipulate and subvert primary authorial readings. But the image of the fan that we have may not be what our students understand as fan behavior; moreover, how they are taught to read popular texts influences how they approach all texts, even those in a classroom setting. And in contrast to the transformational model of the remix we may introduce in the classroom, fan practices are often imagined by mainstream and popular culture as being uniquely affirmational: a particularly enthusiastic form of close reading that rewards deference to an authorial voice. In this sense, the way media and popular culture understand fandom is an extension of how our students are often taught to read all other forms of text: a formalistic, New Critical approach that centers authoritative readings. I question whether students who interact with fan texts but do not see themselves as fans feel this way in much the same way my students often fail to recognize themselves as critical readers: because expertise has been made a crown, rather than a process.

[1.2] This essay comes out of an impromptu conversation with my composition students. Throughout my
English 101 and 102 courses, I have the opportunity to talk to my students at length about media and the way we consume it. Students discuss and write argumentative essays about media properties, advertisement, and gendered entertainment. As part of the process, we speak at length across the semester about the idea of audience: assumed audiences, unspoken audiences, and consumerism. The composition classroom lends itself well to discussion of fan practices: in the process of asking my students to write both short responses and longer essays, I ask them to engage with material they are already fans of as a way of encouraging their interest in writing. Indeed, over the years I've found the best work comes from students who, whether they know it or not, are absolutely fans of the material they write about. Their engagement spikes, their attention to detail increases, and their coursework improves, as these students are often already more than passingly familiar with the object of their attention. Before assigning every essay, I tell my students to consider what they are already a fan of and to critique it: to turn the analytical eye we have developed in class onto the things they love. In the process, my students often produce readings that question or reject dominant textual messages, bringing both a critical eye and their own readings to the media they consume. As a result, by the end of the semester I generally have a good idea of my students' relationship with popular and mainstream culture—including what they are fans of. With that in mind, at the end of the semester, I ask the questions: What does it mean to be a fan of something? What kinds of people are fans?

[1.3] I've asked this question in the past, but this semester it led to a lengthy discussion. Generally speaking, my students were egalitarian about fan nature: the general consensus, of course, was that anyone can be a fan. Popular examples of objects and texts worthy of fandom came in all directions, from the Dallas Cowboys to Apple to Ariana Grande. But it was the caveats that interested me. My students, who had spent so much of the semester responding thoughtfully to questions of knowledge and cultural canon, became surprisingly dogmatic when it came to defining fan behavior. Although my class was quick to note that anyone can be a fan (as there are, of course, varying degrees of fannishness), they were equally insistent that fan practices were ultimately tied to specialized knowledge of the source text. More specifically, my students agreed, one's identity as a fan depends on how much one knows about a text; rather than affection, it was expertise that made someone a fan. To be a fan is to "know everything about something"—more specifically, to "know way too much." Several students used the term "obsessive." In general, the consensus seemed to be that while everyone could be a fan, it was also entirely possible to "take it too far," generally through excessive knowledge, as well as enthusiasm. One student recalled that fans often "know all of the weird details" about a favored text. Above all, the students spoke with a level of distance: be it stan Twitter or the stat-tracking sports viewer, fans were someone else.

[1.4] In that much, my students would not be unique. Jonathan Gray points out that the wide majority of audiences do not self-describe as fans: that "many viewers watch distractedly, in bits and/or casually; many, too, hate or dislike certain texts" (2003, 65). Fandom does not naturally follow consumption, even if that consumption is heavy. But I'd asked my students this question at the end of the semester, and by this point, I'd had a chance to read their work. My composition class leans heavily on students crafting their own prompts; as a result, many of my students had written essays examining their own relationships to popular texts—often, fannish ones. Everything from Dungeons & Dragons to K-Pop to Panic! At the Disco and Invader Zim: these were students who had engaged, detailed, and yes, fannish, attachments to and opinions of media. By their own definition—the fan as expert—many of my students were indeed fans. In some ways, my experiences echo those of Lincoln Geraghty when he describes his students' position as one of "defensive naïveté" by declining to see themselves among their descriptions (2012, 162). Geraghty describes his students as taking up a "position of superiority" against fans rather than acknowledging themselves as among them. To his students, fans are the "stereotypical 'passive' consumers of media texts" (163): an image students, particularly in a classroom setting, are likely hesitant to cultivate. But my students were not dismissive of fans or fan practices; they simply didn't see themselves among them. Indeed, for many of my students, the identity of fan seemed to be a bar they didn't view themselves as clearing. The term "fan" itself was wrapped in an authoritarian reading of their favorite text: one that is canon-dependent, quantifiable, and authorially
sanctioned. For them, fans keep and repeat this particular form of reading. Their failure to see themselves as among these voices speaks not only to an anxiety regarding the word "fan," but to a sense of fans themselves as being intrinsically connected with enthusiastic, but dogmatic, close reading.

2. Affirmational fandom and authoritative impersonality

[2.1] There is a good deal of research supporting the use of fan practice in the classroom. In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, Henry Jenkins and coauthors note that participatory fan culture has "relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement" and a "strong support for creating and sharing" with others (2009, xi). This description echoes the goals of the composition classroom, where the challenge is often to encourage students to thoughtfully engage with their own writing in the first place. Drawing from fan behaviors and practices encourages students to center their own readings of a text in critiquing it, emphasizing personal stakes in the process. James Gee and Elizabeth Hayes suggest the term "passionate affinity-based learning" to describe the behaviors that drive fans to create communities of like-minded interests (2011, 69). Fandom, and particularly transformative fandom, offers a form of learning not traditionally offered in the classroom: as Jenkins et al. notes, "While formal education is often conservative, the informal learning within popular culture is often experimental. While the formal is static, the informal is innovative" (2009, 11). Fan fiction, for instance, can be valuable as a teaching tool because the practices of beta reading and collective feedback offer not only suggestions to improve a writer's work, but a kind of community mentorship not found in traditional learning circles (Beck 2019). But more broadly, the remix classroom offers students the chance to "respond to, adapt, and resist canonical knowledge" (Howell 2018, 3). As instructors, it is our job to help students to not just be able to read a text but to react to it—to question, critique, and contextualize. Fan communities can offer a model for how to engage with and criticize canonical knowledge in a productive manner, as fans are perpetually reworking their favorite texts in fan fiction, fan vids, and other remix practices. But while we as instructors may be enthusiastic about the potential for participatory and transformative fandom as classroom practice, it's important to note that the vast majority of fandom as seen in popular and mainstream culture is explicitly not transformative. Our students are far more likely to understand fandom in the affirmational sense, as a kind of extended close read for authorial intention.

[2.2] Affirmational fan practices center on knowledge: the teasing out of it, the collection of it, and lengthy discussion of its details. The term itself originates in fandom, coined in 2009 by Dreamwidth user obsession_inc to describe the fan practices of sanctioned fan spaces that reaffirm the source material. "The source material is re-stated, the author's purpose divined to the community's satisfaction, rules established on how the characters are and how the universe works, and cosplay &etc. occur. It all tends to coalesce toward a center concept; it's all about nailing down the details" (2009). In contrast to the laying of hands approach of transformative fandom, obsession_inc proposes that affirmative fans are defined by their relationship to a textual canon. Affirmational fans focus on divining authorial knowledge, centering "overwhelmingly on discussion, debate, criticism, and theorizing," as well as "communal mystery solving, deep discussions about the authorial intent behind episodes, or mapping out the narrative universe as described within a media text" (Ford 2014, 63–64). These are the fans who create Wikipedias, argue over character stats, and produce detailed timelines and viewing orders. They are also the fans most often seen in mainstream culture. The *Saturday Night Live* image of the erstwhile Trekkie is, for better or worse, deeply affirmational [https://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/trekkies/n9511](https://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/trekkies/n9511). The premise of the oft-cited sketch finds its humor in the idea that two fans of the original series accost Shatner with questions about the text so detailed he can't understand, much less answer them. But as the Trekkies in the sketch rattle off episode numbers and technical-sounding terminology, they demonstrate themselves to be affirmational fans: very literally, as they seek affirmation of that knowledge from William Shatner himself.

[2.3] In many ways, this cliché of the affirmational fan is what my students seemed to describe when they
talked about fandom. We are over three decades out from the Shatner sketch and yet my students still perceive fans as obsessed and excessive. As a result, it's worth interrogating just how our mainstream media has helped them develop this image. Indeed, the relationship between industry and affirmational fandom is often complicated. While affirmational fans buy convention tickets and merchandise, their heavy consumption can often tip over into undesirable demands toward the source text. Mel Stanfill reminds us that "being a fan inevitably involves consumption": to be a fan is to consume, be it products or properties (2019, 81). "Fan desire," Stanfill writes, is "divergent from industry's desire for fans. It lingers too long rather than consuming more and more things serially; it does not necessarily want what industry wants fans to want" (82). We often associate difficult fans with transformative fandom: with remix culture, with the desire to talk back to or transform media texts. But affirmational fans trade in knowledge, and with knowledge ultimately comes a sense of expertise. And this problem of excess desire becomes more pronounced on social media, where audiences can respond quickly and en masse to both creators and each other. The sexist response to Captain Marvel (2019) and the controversy of Comicsgate are particularly destructive examples of fan desire lashing out against perceived mistakes in the development of a text. In each case, tension arises when fans' sense of ownership over a text eclipses their acceptance of a new canon (and thus, new material to purchase). Even affirmational expertise can only be rewarded to a point.

Thus, with the increased visibility of fans thus comes the necessity of controlling the source text: to encourage appropriate fan desire and dampen the undesirable, to show the reader who's boss. Thus the portrait of the artist has transformed from that of the bemused and distant creator into what Suzanne Scott defines in her book Fake Geek Girls as the "fanboy auteur": a figure whose knowledge of a text is positioned not as excess, but as expertise; whose fan credentials grant them claim to affirmative mastery of the (often franchised) works they produce. The fanboy auteur is both "an authorial archetype and aspirational form of professionalized fan identity." The fanboy auteur is situated discursively as the ultimate expert, whose position as a fan grants them an elevated knowledge and understanding of the text they produce. The fanboy auteur emphasizes the need for a very specific form of knowledge as a prerequisite for creative production. Scott draws from Foucault's notion of the author function in describing the role the fanboy auteur plays in textual discourse. Because the fanboy auteur is coded as a fan, first and foremost, this figure "performs a similar set of connections, communities, and exclusions at both the fan-cultural level and the textual level." Put bluntly, the fanboy auteur serves as a gatekeeper of knowledge: their presence and voice both produce and reaffirm the existence of a right and wrong reading of the text. Moreover, they are at the epicenter of an entire field of industry-sanctioned media voices: interviewers, critics, and professionals who all serve to remind fans and consumers alike of the necessity of an authorial voice. As Scott explains, because "the fanboy auteur's voice and fannish interpretation are increasingly framed as an essential 'text' for fans to consume," the audience is asked to explicitly acknowledge both the author's voice and its necessity to the text; they're invited to understand his word as the final word, and to seek it out as part of the media experience (2019, 161).

It's worth noting here again how fan is uniquely conflated with expert in the case of the fanboy auteur. As Stanfill (2019) notes, the image of the fan in popular culture is most often one of desire: of consumption rather than production. In contrast, the emphasis on the fan identity by fanboy auteurs suggests professionalization borne of textual expertise, a title won through mastery (Scott 2019). The fanboy auteur is "often celebrated for having a comprehensive knowledge of and affirmational mastery over a given fictional world or franchise" (162): a particularly valuable celebration when, like J. J. Abrams or David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, these fanboy auteurs are not the intellectual property holders. In such cases, despite their fan identity being considered generally as a reason for their worthiness, fanboy auteurs are no longer considered to be imbued with desire: their voices are not subjective or individualistic but rather authoritative, representative, and reflective of an industry-sanctioned canon. Individual tastes and opinions may make up a fanboy auteur's imprimatur, but when it comes to the work itself, fans are quick to lambast creators for what they see as any personal agenda, particularly if that agenda runs counter to fans' desires. Examples such as
the fan backlash against Marvel's Hydra Cap plotline or the vitriolic response to 2016's *Ghostbusters* reboot demonstrate two very different sides of this scenario, wherein fans perceive an auteur to have gotten a character wrong or accuse them of inserting their personal views into the text (Faraci 2016; Hassenger 2016). The fanboy auteur toes a line between the subjective desire of the fan and the objective expertise of the mature artist—and, ultimately, the latter is expected to win out.

[2.6] Thus, although the fanboy auteur is uniquely visible as an individual, those most successful are also subsumed into the text, becoming a conduit for appropriate knowledge about the minutiae of a media property. The fanboy auteur is never speaking from their opinion alone; rather, from a position of power as a producer of the source material. However vocal they may be among their personal relationship to fandom and fan practices, the role the fanboy auteur plays for a media property is distinctly, and historically, impersonal. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T. S. Eliot ([1921] 1996) argues that true art is impersonal: that, in the hands of a "mature poet," (¶ 11) the artist does not channel their emotions or desires into a text but rather acts as a catalyst between new artwork and its historical forebears. Because the artist has "not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium," (¶ 15), the work produced by a mature artist will ascend above personal bias or experience. We see this conceit in the fanboy auteur, with the suggestion that these figures have earned their position through a mastery of the text and that their presence at the helm of a media property is not the result of individual preferences or luck, but a singular expertise over textual canon. In the case of the fanboy auteur, that knowledge is often quite literally the history of what came before; by stepping into the reins of existing intellectual property, the fanboy auteur is not merely a creative individual, but a mouthpiece of industry-sanctioned canon from that point on. Thus the fantasy of the fanboy auteur is portrayed as that of the truly impersonal artist—one who has ascended beyond the desire and consumption of the affirmational fan community and into the grand objectivity of a sanctioned narrative, whose privileged position allows them a mastery of the text that fans alone will never attain. The artist is one who has mastered not only their own art but the whole of art before it. Historical knowledge is prized above all, and a detailed—and accurate—accounting must be made of what has come before in order to gain the right to contribute to its present. In this way, impersonality, perhaps ironically, centers the author as the primary interpreter of a text. Because the author is seen as having ascended beyond the personal, their word is imbued with a godlike reverence. And if there is an omniscient creator, then it follows that all details are deliberate and potentially significant: a logic rewarding author-affirming practices like Wikipedia writing, meta production, and Easter egg hunting. The goal of textual analysis becomes to divine that authorial intention, with the successful affirmational fan demonstrating the greatest expertise over the creator's ultimate vision. It's unsurprising that when the fanboy auteur evokes their expertise, it is often "designed to definitively end a conversation"; because the artist demonstrates "mastery as a form of fannish certification," there is no space for questions or criticisms (Scott 2019, 162). The fanboy auteur's voice is authoritative: as obsession_inc (2009) describes it, "the creator holds the magic trump card of Because I'm The Only One Who Really Knows, That's Why, and that is accepted as a legitimate thing."

### 3. New Criticism and the classroom

[3.1] This emphasis on a One True Reading rewards a specific kind of audience: not only the affirmational fan, who seeks out and rehashes plot and narrative details, but the affirmational fan whose reading of the text most closely matches that of the intellectual property holders. With their emphasis on the authoritative voice of the fanboy auteur, media properties reward fans whose interactions with creators are both positive and intimate; they suggest every part of the text is known, and the auteur alone holds the reins. It is a form of fan practice reflected in the close readings of Harry/Hermione shippers or fans of Kylo Ren in Star Wars: a fixation on reading the details correctly to glean, before anyone else, the right and true ending. In this case, close reading for its own sake is not a reward; indeed, fans who read texts incorrectly are often the subjects of ridicule by other members of the community, emphasizing the importance of knowledge being not just
informed but industry sanctioned (Trendacosta 2019). The value of critique and analysis is found specifically in being correct, on most closely matching the auteur's vision.

[3.2] In this sense, the way we talk about fanboy auteurs in fan culture and media reflects the prescriptive way our students are taught to read everything else as well. In the last five decades, New Criticism has emerged as a key influence on American literary education throughout K–12 (Blake and Lunn 1986; Thomas 2012). As a school, New Criticism is heavily informed by the implications of Eliot's ([1921] 1996) theories of impersonality: namely, that because the artist has surrendered their personality to the work of art, each piece comes to the reader as an aesthetic whole. In contrast to schools like reader-response, which emphasizes the experience of the reader with the text, New Critical analysis focuses on a text's formalist traits: its rhythm, meter, imagery and word choice. As an ideal, New Criticism can be said to "(1) center...attention on the literary work itself, (2) study the various problems arising from examining relationships between a subject matter and the final form of a work, and (3) consider ways in which the moral and philosophical elements get into or are related to the literary work" (Van O'Connor 1949, 489). To a New Critical eye, a work of art is fully present at its moment of completion. The role of the reader, then, is to mine the work until that meaning is found. Appropriate criticism of a piece should "hold more closely to the literary work itself than it does the social or biographical origins of the work"; the text, and only the text (489). New Criticism takes the artistic text as a fully present object demanding qualitative analysis. The conceit suggested here, of course, is that the artist themselves has packaged their work in a way that is both fully present, and self-explanatory to the (properly) educated eye. New Criticism emphasizes an industry-sanctioned view of critical analysis in literature, suggesting that to closely read a text means, above all, "discovering the objective meaning of a piece, determining the author's intended meaning, and reading and responding objectively to the piece itself" (Blake and Lunn 1986, 68).

[3.3] As a formalist practice, New Criticism can have a good deal of literary value: it teaches terminology, close reading, and mindfulness toward the text itself. However, with its emphasis on terminology and the text as a self-contained object, New Criticism has taken over the early composition classroom as a "decontextualized collection of benchmarks" in test questions and essay prompts (Rabinowitz and Bancroft 2014, 8). This "Zombie New Criticism" (7), as it were, has gained popularity in large part because it can be taught simply: students are offered sets of quantifiable literary terms, are given poems and stories with clear solutions to tease out, and are taught to deconstruct literature into a collection of terms, symbols, and, ultimately, correct and incorrect answers. In the wake of No Child Left Behind, reading and composition have taken on what Gee and Hayes refer to as "test literacy": a shorthand for education that emphasizes often-decontextualized facts and figures over subjective analysis or reader-focused qualitative criticism (2011, 67). New Critical practices in particular offer a self-contained and self-referential shorthand with which to teach literature and writing. In particular, it avoids the more challenging aspects of potential critical texts by avoiding the works' social or historical circumstances. It no longer matters that Walt Whitman was gay, for instance; and racism becomes a mere detail in the work of Hurston or Hughes. It is also effective at turning what can sometimes be messy literary criticism into multiple-choice-ready answers. Texts are broken down into diction, tone, and imagery—useful practices in and of themselves, but hardly the universal core of critical analysis. In any case, the result is an emphasis on the reader as a passive agent: students learn that there are right and wrong answers to textual analysis, and thus learn not to speak until that answer has been given.

[3.4] Our students often come into the classroom believing writing, specifically, and reading, more broadly, to be a self-contained process. More than that, they expect us as instructors to have the keys to that containment, to be able to offer the right readings of both critical and artistic texts. Blake and Lunn describe this peculiar phenomenon, as students look to their instructors as ordained in critical analysis: "This ordination meant that they had had the necessary special training for extracting meaning from a piece of literature, had been sanctioned as bona fide literary critics, and knew they now served their students as the final arbiters of the
meaning of pieces of literature" (1986, 68). In the classroom, the teacher takes over the role given initially to the auteur or author: that of the expert, offering students the correct answers about artistic content, meaning, and structure. The problem with this, of course, isn't close reading itself, but rather the assumption that all roads lead to a singular solution: New Criticism as a "terminal goal of reading" (Thomas 2012, 55). In this model, reading becomes less about the student's experience with the text and more about determining what the author (or critic, or teacher) thinks should be obtained from the text. For students trained in New Criticism, questions asking them to read, critique, or analyze a text are ultimately tempered by "the fact that the correct meaning for a piece [rests] ultimately with their teachers" (Blake and Lunn 1986, 68). Education itself becomes a stand-in for the author/auteur; students may be encouraged to offer their own close readings of a piece, but ultimately there will be a single correct answer, already identified, for them to suss out. As a result, reading becomes less about engagement with ideas and more about solutions—an anxious approach to literary criticism. As students are taught to scan for right answers, they become less likely to engage with their own ideas, experiences, and interpretations.

[3.5] As I mentioned above, my class hinges on my students' ability to choose their own topics and prompts. This is a source of anxiety for many incoming freshmen, who have been taught that English literature and composition is a matter of mind reading both instructors and texts (Rabinowitz and Bancroft 2014). Students often come into my classroom expecting to be told what selected readings really mean, and struggle against the expectation that they will offer their own unique—and valuable—analysis. This is particularly true when it comes to the act of writing. K–12 prompts are often narrow in focus; as a result, many of my students come into my classroom expecting to be offered a list of potential topics, or of lenses through which to read a text, or questions to be answered in essay format. I deliberately avoid these things because they tend to reaffirm for my students that, if a question is asked, there must be a single solution; that if they don't know something, the correct procedure is not to tease it out themselves, but to ask me for the answer. When students are asked to choose their own prompts, they are placed in the role of putative expert: it is required of such writing that they know not merely enough about their topic to ask questions, but to puzzle out their own answers. My students often push back against this at first, wanting to know what I consider to be a good or, more interestingly, a real topic worthy of analysis. Common anxieties reflect a fear that their own topics aren't serious enough, or disbelief that I am really encouraging them to write about anything, even if I, as the instructor, am not an expert in the topic. Unsurprisingly, my students often respond with nervousness. My students' anxieties about developing their own essay prompts in the classroom reflect a larger message about expertise in both New Critical education and the affirmational turn in popular culture: that is, the all too common belief that the average reader, or fan, has no expertise to offer.

4. Conclusions and kid knowledge

[4.1] In both popular culture and the classroom, our students are taught a particular form of reading: specifically, a kind that reveres the author, that understands close reading as a means to an end, and that devalues the unlearned reader (or viewer) as a passive consumer. While citing fans and fan practices can offer a way for our students to rethink reading on a broader structural level, it can also recreate the prescriptivist reading practices we seek to help our students work beyond. Ideally, invoking fan practice in a classroom setting functions as a way for our students to think critically beyond the markers of expertise.

[4.2] Often when we look toward fandom as classroom practice, it is with an eye toward how fan practices—and, often, transformational practices in particular—can help our students think of reading and writing as a democratic practice. Transformative fan spaces and practices are often valuable sites of learning specifically because they make space for amateurs to work through the material, alternately as consumers, producers, and teachers: spaces free from the fear of right answers or, more significantly, wrong ones (Gee and Hayes 2011). As Paul Booth states, "Students feel more comfortable sharing insights about their own writing when they view it as a collaborative, interactive experience" (2012, 177): in essence, when they begin to move away
from standardizing student readings and toward a more egalitarian alternative that centers their own experiences with the text. Engaging in fan practices both in and out of the classroom can offer a way for students to reclaim what Peter Rabinowitz and Corinne Bancroft call "kid knowledge": the ability, developed early, to read and interpret a text with enthusiasm, rather than with authoritative aid (2014, 3). In contrast to institutional knowledge, kid knowledge is not taught or dependent on an educator to parse it; it is often drawn from excitement for and engagement with the text. Rabinowitz and Bancroft argue that kid knowledge is often subsumed by secondary and postsecondary education largely because of their circumscription; because students learn that the instructor has the One True Answer, they become accustomed to understanding reading and writing as a form of mind reading, and thus begin to disengage. On some level, it's worth noting the way in which kid knowledge mimics fan behaviors. Kid knowledge is emotive; it is driven by personal interest. Children become attached to texts first emotionally, rather than critically, and critical analysis follows affection. In a sense, kid knowledge can be seen as our first engagement with fan-type behavior, as students learn to read in this way long before they learn critical analysis (8–9).

[4.3] But in order to benefit from fan practices, students have to be willing to participate in them: to, on some level, see themselves as fans. As my students' observations demonstrated to me, for many students the definition of fan is very much tied to excessive consumption: to be obsessive, to love something too much. While we as instructors and fans ourselves may see fandom as escaping prescriptivist or authoritative modes of reading, students may see it as codifying them. In the classroom, students often feel distanced from reading education because they do not see themselves participating in the roles they feel their instructors inhabit: that of expert, of literary critic, of analytic (Gee and Hayes 2011). This is increasingly true of popular culture as well, where our students may see themselves as amateurs specifically as contrasted to industry-sanctioned media experts. Students do not see themselves as critics, writers, readers, or even potential auteurs, but rather as potential fans: an identity they associate with excess, useless knowledge, with an abiding affection for something that cannot love you back. Paul Booth notes in his work with undergraduate and graduate students that, even in fan-focused classrooms, many students push back against the idea of transformative fandom, preferring "to hold onto the auteuristic 'creator-is-God' model of cult appreciation" (2012, 176). Indeed, students may struggle to see the value of transformative critique because they fail to see themselves as inhabiting a role worthy of offering it, feeling themselves outside of the role of critic or artist. More insidiously, because the most oft-loved student texts tend to come from popular culture, students may see them as already solved, generally by industry-sanctioned experts. In these situations, while students may have an excess of kid knowledge about a topic (as is often the case, when we are fans of something), they have lost faith in their conclusions.

[4.4] Ultimately, the first step in developing taste is learning to trust one's own. While not all students identify as fans—or even want to—our students are inundated with messages about the right and wrong way to read, both in the classroom and beyond. Increasingly, the messages of authorial intention and expertise that create students' anxieties toward reading in the classroom replicate themselves outside of it, as students are taught to seek authoritative answers in order to read popular culture according to industry expectations. As I read my students' final reflections this semester, I was pleased to find students still responding to my final question in their discussion of the class: of processing how, exactly, their identities as fans, readers and critics might overlap. And yet I was also taken aback by how many students expressed surprise, that what they see in the text matters, no matter what text it is: that they have some expertise to offer, both in and out of the classroom. Students internalize the lessons they are taught about right and wrong ways to read; they learn to distrust their own kid knowledge and wait for the word of an expert—an instructor, a critic, a True Artist. When we say that fan practices can help our students to write, we assume that because they love something, they feel knowledgeable about it. Often, the goal of bringing fan practices into the classroom is to tap into that supposed self-confidence. But this is increasingly untrue, because popular culture, like the New Criticism classroom, has tied that expertise to a level of authorial and industry sanctioning that, by design, very few people can have. It's worth considering whether this may become more pronounced in the future, as fan
culture is increasingly folded into the net of industry-sanctioned popular culture, where devotion to a single
text and interpretation is expected and rewarded. At any rate, it's worth considering just what fandom means
in a broader cultural sense and, as a result, to our students themselves. As fans and fan practice become
further folded into the juggernaut, teaching our students to trust their own analysis may become an uphill
battle against not just institutionalized forms of reading that codify authorial intention, but against a version
of popular culture that defines only certain people as the right kinds of readers. Students need to feel a sense
of expertise, a belief that their analysis of texts—literary or popular—matter. And they do. At its core, after
all, reading should not be affirmation.

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Exploring film history by using fandom as a pedagogical tool

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[0.1] Abstract—An exploration of the terrain of how to engage learners effectively and why that matters. Using fan engagement in the field of film history reveals that encouraging learners to self-identify as fans shifts the power balance, placing the learner in the position of expert, thereby increasing the chances of learner engagement and enabling learners to gain a more nuanced understanding of their field while also making for a more invested, lively, and varied learning and teaching experience. Based on firsthand experience designing and delivering a research-focused undergraduate film history module combined with a multidisciplinary pedagogical approach, this work demonstrates that treating students as fans with affective stakes in history and exploring historical moments experientially offers learners significant benefits.

[0.2] Keywords—Affinity space; Experiential learning; Interpretive archaeology; New film history; Relational frame theory; Threshold concepts


1. Introduction: "You call this archaeology?"

[1.1] It seems apt to begin with a quote from the Indiana Jones franchise—a film series about the adventures of a fictional archaeologist, which is itself an homage to classical Hollywood cinema—because this essay considers the connections between the fields of fandom, archaeology, and film history and how to explore what is at stake, in terms of access and agency, in the construction, dissemination, reception, and embodiment of histories. The paper is concerned with why history—and who has the means to tell it—matters. It does this by advocating the engagement of learners using an experiential approach borrowed from interpretive archaeology and by exposing them to a range of cinema artifacts (both recent and older) that reveal aspects of film and social history with a view to encouraging those learners to seek out and tell their own fannish histories.

[1.2] However, as anyone who has ever attempted to hold an academic audience's attention knows, eliciting enthusiasm and engagement is key to successful learning, and at times this is easier said than done. Sadly, we don't all have Harrison Ford's magnetic appeal. So how might a film historian such as I demonstrate to learners that history is for them?

[1.3] A stumbling block when facilitating learning around film history—or even history more generally—is that unless the facilitator is careful, the "material of teaching" (Moon 2004), can appear to the learner to be irrelevant to their prior life experience and therefore to their current learning encounter. Certainly, any field's essential theoretical, methodological, and contextual underpinnings can sometimes seem needlessly abstract to learners, presenting an "epistemological obstacle" (Brousseau 1983) to overcome in order to grasp these foundational ideas effectively. My concern as a film historian is that my learners will see history as past and
Therefore irrelevant. Indeed, they can initially seem dismayed when they learn that they will be using historic resources. Presumably these items will be dull, dusty relics. So, they are generally surprised—and swiftly engaged—when they are shown current film culture as historic artifacts, such as unanticipated, esoteric 80-year-old pornographic cartoons starring classical era film stars, or 60-year-old magazine articles featuring astonishing racism, ableism, and misogyny that—at first glance at least—wouldn't fly nowadays.

[1.4] This article proposes a means of evading these obstacles to engagement (and ultimately to learning) through a pedagogical technique based on direct contact with a range of specially selected cinema paratexts. It borrows, in part, from Gee's (2005) notion of the affinity space discussed previously by Booth (2018, 122–23), in which "learning happens through small-group work, student-teacher interactions, and peer contributions." In this setting, learners are encouraged to "critically engage in their own interests" and with a range of new and old fan objects in a range of ways, mixing the familiar with the less familiar.

[1.5] Encouraging learners to self-identify as fans, or at least encounter fandoms through direct, physical, even playful engagement with loosely grouped, cinema-related fannish objects—variants on dolls, types of magazine, or varieties of ephemera given away free in cigarettes or confectionary, for example—reveals to modern eyes commonalities as well as differences across decades and fandoms. It highlights to learners how the histories and ideas that these resources reveal could be relevant to their own lived experience. The subjectivity built into this approach offers a further benefit: providing learners with opportunities to make and see the value of their own interventions into history, developing their critical skills through reflexive discussions around how their specific prior experience (or relational and contextual frame) may affect their individual comprehension and interpretation of these artifacts. This realization is key to comprehending and ultimately mastering the broader epistemological principles of history as a discipline.

2. Theoretical, epistemological, and pedagogic frameworks: "We have top men working on it now." "Who?" "...Top...men."

[2.1] Throughout this article I will draw upon a theory of language, cognition, and learning known as Relational Frame Theory (RFT) (Haynes, Barnes-Holmes, and Roche 2001). Developed from B. F. Skinner's science of Radical Behaviorism and rooted in the philosophy of Functional Contextualism, RFT posits that learning is contextual. According to this theory, complex human behavior develops through learned relationships between words, ideas, and events. Sets of relations are derived in specific contexts, and individuals make complex meanings (functions) by relating sets (frames) of previously learned relations from similar contexts. So particular cues have particular meanings for individuals in particular contexts according to their prior learning history (or, in Bourdieu's [1984] terms, their habitus).

[2.2] An example of this phenomenon can be found in our familiarity with the conventions of film genres, such as the action-adventure narrative. Through prior filmgoing experience, we have expectations (contextual behaviors) of what such films and their narratives will offer: a plucky hero on a quest (let's say for a precious religious relic); a damsel in distress, for whom our hero falls; a bunch of bad guys (let's say Nazis) also looking for the relic, and lots of out-of-the-frying-pan-into-the-fire scenarios. For the purposes of this article, I draw upon this notion of learning as contextual and upon the concepts of context and framing by referring to a learner's contextual frame.

[2.3] In terms of educational methods, I am advocating the use of what archaeology refers to as an interpretive approach. This is to be applied by learners to a range of fannish primary resources. As archaeologists Shanks and Hodder note, the use of the adjective "interpretive" here is indicative: "Foregrounded is the person and the work of the interpreter. Interpretation is practice which requires that the interpreter does not so much hide behind rules and procedures predefined elsewhere, but takes responsibility for their actions, their interpretations" (1995, 4) (note 1).
The focus upon interpretation and the interpreter lends itself well to fandom-focused pedagogies that foreground the subjective and learning through experience. While Geraghty (2014) discusses how students are often reluctant to talk about their fandoms in class, I always open my first workshop with a group by confessing a film-related fandom and subsequently asking learners if they will share something of which they are fans. For learners who find this question too personal or who struggle to identify something of which they are enough of a fan, reframing the question from "What are you a fan of?" to "Have you seen or experienced a fannish activity before?" helps considerably.

Given Shanks and Hodder's (1995) remark regarding interpretive responsibility and the reflexive nature of this teaching/learning approach, it is germane to also consider the justifications and potential pitfalls of this pedagogical approach. It is also relevant to reflexively engage with these complications and limitations, considering how they might be anticipated, mitigated, appraised, and possibly even utilized to learners' and facilitators' ultimate advantage.

### 3. Academia, fandom, and inclusion: "Don't call me Junior!"

The academy is exclusive: it is classed, racialized, ableist, ageist, and gendered. As scholars such as Bourdieu (1984) have amply demonstrated, access (to materials, histories, even learning itself) is linked to control and power. In a typical learning transaction, the learning facilitator will usually hold the knowledge, resources, and often the advantage. In Bourdieu's terms, when attempting to develop their cultural capital and facilitate their social mobility through learning, a learner is in many ways at the mercy of the larger system—a system that many academics, such as bell hooks (1994), Heather Savigny (2019), Nicole Brown and Jennifer Leigh (2018), Regina Day Langhout, Francine Rosselli and Jonathan Feinstein (2007), and Karen Kelsky (2012), have all noted is still beset with systemic racism, sexism, ableism, classism, and ageism.

Fandom is also subject to boundary policing. However, historically fandom studies has worked to unpick prevailing cultural distinctions and, for example, systemic gender-based marginalization, acknowledging fans' diversity and agency (Busse 2013; Scott 2019; Hills 2002). Similarly, post-processual archaeology approaches, such as interpretive archaeology (tellingly, also known as the new archaeology) have also sought to depart from processual archaeology's primary preoccupation with the mainstream, the anthropological, and broader cultures, systems, and structures, toward a concern with nuances, individuals, and interpretation.

Within film studies, disciplinary revisionism also prompted a shift away from broad historical sweeps to case studies recording the minutiae of film production, exhibition, and consumption. As Elsaesser notes, the advent of New Film History saw a movement away from "the surveys and overviews, the tales of pioneers and adventurers that for too long passed as film histories; and sober arguments among professionals now that, thanks to preservation and restoration projects by the world's archives, much more material has become available" (1986, 246).

This larger methodological shift—to seek out and communicate narratives that reflect a more inclusive range of interests, experiences, and perspectives—is laudable and timely. History is about the telling of narratives, and who gets to tell those narratives matters. To have a voice is to have agency. To teach the methodology and the politics of history is to potentially provide individuals with the means to tell (and see the value of) their own stories. For this reason, the progression toward inclusivity should be constantly reflected in our teaching, but this is easier said than done. Educators don't know what they don't know, and learners may not have the inclination or skills to challenge and educate their educators. So how can a truly inclusive syllabus anticipate and address such gaps?
[3.5] Asking students to bring their fandom and its associated expertise into the learning space can offer this opportunity. In my experience, learners from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds (BAME) have taken the opportunity to investigate specific cultural phenomena about which I, a middle-aged, white woman, may have little comprehension or awareness. The considered use of a fandom-focused approach can be far more inclusive of students' own contexts and concerns, more accurately reflecting and speaking to a diverse and multifaceted student cohort. It shifts the power balance, placing the learner in the position of expert. Suddenly, a workshop that may initially be perceived by the learner as obtuse or even dull becomes the workshop where they find—and can actively demonstrate—their oeuvre, test their skills in synthesis, and gain confidence, making for a more invested, lively, varied, and productive learning and teaching experience.

4. Familiarity, creativity, and investment makes for mastery: "Fortune and glory, kid. Fortune and glory."

[4.1] The engagement, comprehension, and eventual mastery of a resource, foundational or threshold concept, or broader field of learning come in stages. Playing with or examining an artifact and identifying its surface or denotative reading is merely the first stage of critical engagement. Beyond that, learners must progress to a more nuanced connotative engagement in order to achieve the required level of analytical skill. It is useful here to consider Sandvoss's notion of "heimat" or "home." As he observes "Fandom best compares to the emotional significance of the places we have grown to call 'home,' to the form of physical, emotional and ideological space that is best described as Heimat. Fans themselves often associate fandom with a sense of home...Similarly, fans...often refer to their fandom in terms of 'emotional warmth' or a sense of security and stability, which in turn are associated with Heimat" (2005, 64). This emotional significance linked with individual fandoms can be utilized to bridge the gap, to cross the threshold, if you will, between the familiar and the strange, in order for the learner to master the field.

[4.2] Furthermore, heimat's implications of safety and comfort, both of which are requisites for successful learning, raise another salient point: the need to remember that when encountering unfamiliar examples, learners can be inadvertently or deliberately derisory or dismissive about another's fandom. This actual or feared rejection and/or ridicule may mean that learners feel unsafe engaging with or sharing aspects of their fandom: it may simply be too personal. Here Hills's notion of fandom as "a form of cultural creativity or play" (2002, 90) is helpful.

[4.3] Engaging with history through a range of resources and in relation to a range of theoretical contexts in a playful, creative, and subjective way may, at first glance, appear to carry probable complications in terms of authenticity and objectivity, but as Shanks and Hodder observe: "Archaeology is...conceived as a material practice in the present, making things...of the material traces of the past, constructions which are no less real, truthful or authentic for being constructed" (1995, 4). This exploratory, playful approach can offer such potential, in terms of broadening access and increasing ownership and investment, that it warrants consideration, if only because of how creative the assessed presentations on my module often end up being. For one presentation entitled "A Part of Their World" that examined the psychological pleasures of Disney fan collector culture, I was banished from the presentation room and upon my return found the two presenters in full Disney regalia, with what appeared to be the entire contents of the Disney store laid out on the table in front of me and with a carefully selected Disney medley playing softly in the background in order to immerse me "in their world" (figure 1).
I have been talked through a student's grandparent's film star cigarette card collection and a battered, 60-year-old film soundtrack LP collection, had a life-sized Marilyn standee emerge clumsily through the classroom door in readiness for a presentation on marketing Monroe's star persona to contemporary film fans, and had a pair of learners present on the social media promotion of actor Chris Evans and the Captain America franchise in matching T-shirts and baseball caps, replete with Evans's beaming face.

Obviously, students don't always have direct access to such materials, so on my module they are given physical archives training (courtesy of our Special Collections staff), schooled in accessing various digital archives such as Lantern (https://lantern.mediahist.org/) and encouraged to access items in our host institution's own cinema archives, such as the Hammer Horror archive and the Indian Cinema archive (https://www.dmu.ac.uk/research/centres-institutes/cathi/partnerships-and-collaborations.aspx) or Special Collection's film star scrapbook collection, much of which is available digitally.

But however students accessed materials, the levels of effort, self-aware irony, and fannish enthusiasm evident in the presentations around these materials bodes well for the learners moving beyond their familiar contextual frames and seeking to grasp those crucial subsequent stages of deeper critical engagement—the threshold concepts.

5. Subjectivity versus objectivity: "I think it's time to ask yourself, what do you believe in?"

The most obvious pitfall of fandom as a pedagogical tool is both fandom's biggest benefit and its biggest drawback: its inherent subjectivity. As has already been discussed, fandom is about personal experience and taste. There is a prevailing assumption, which fan studies as a discipline has worked hard to counter, that fans lack adequate distance and are excessively emotional, incoherent, illogical—that fandom is unreliable (Ang 1989; Radway 1982; Jensen 1992).

Film history aspires to objectivity but is, of course, not objective. Even the most empirical research is a product of choices and interpretations: decisions, norms, values, prejudgements, presuppositions, and maybe even prejudices are imposed upon artifacts. As Shanks and Hodder observe

The expressive, aesthetic, and emotive qualities of archaeological projects have been
largely downplayed or even denigrated over the past three decades as archaeologists have sought an objective scientific practice. In popular imagination the archaeological is far more than a neutral acquisition of knowledge; the material presence of the past is an emotive field of cultural interest and political dispute. The practice of archaeology is also an emotive, aesthetic, and expressive experience. This affective component of archaeological labour is social as well as personal, relating to the social experiences of archaeological practice, of belonging to the archaeological community and a discipline or academic discourse. Of course, such experiences are immediately political. (1995, 12)

[5.4] Archaeologists and historians are expected to maintain an objective distance. However, this attempted objective impartiality can mask taste judgements and—either inadvertently or deliberately—reinforce biases, hierarchies, and cultural inequalities, working in a hegemonic fashion to make these underlying disparities and divisions seem natural and inevitable. But as Hills (2002), McKee (2007), and Larsen and Zubernis (2012) have all considered, what is the difference between a film fan and a film scholar? Often very little. Does a fan seek to enjoy a text while a scholar seeks to understand it? Even these lines are blurred, particularly so when learners engage in affinity space learning premised on their own interests and expertise.

[5.5] This approach not only places fan learners in a much better position to trade up within the learning economy and realize their academic potential but also moves to address the need to give voice to the kind of marginalized perspectives discussed by scholars such as hooks (1994). And while there is a risk here that some learners might assume that their experience, the fandom that they choose to share with their colearners, or the ways in which they express their fandom are typical when they may in fact be exceptional, this is also the case for other autoethnographic approaches.

6. Interpretation and getting it right: "They're digging in the wrong place!"

[6.1] Excavating and assembling meaning is a complex, polysemic process. In any learning scenario, fan focused or not, learners can miss the point that the learning facilitator seeks to teach. Teaching through fandom initially appears to complicate matters further, as a key gratification and articulation of fandom is the desire to demonstrate to others one's accumulated knowledge around a favored topic. As such there is potential, due to personal investment, for the learner to offer a torrent of trivia rather than critical comment, forgetting that they should be considering the gaps between the texts: the theoretical, cultural, historical, and industrial frameworks as well as the texts themselves, the film, the star, and/or the director for which they have an affection.

[6.2] Yet this fannish desire to demonstrate one's expertise is not unlike the academic impulse. In both contexts, it is the type of knowledge that the learner demonstrates, the discrimination employed, and the resultant connections forged that matter. As meanings are negotiated, and theories and speculations are built out of this nexus of sources, the gaps between these texts are what provide the required space and opportunity for critical thought. As Booth (2018, 123) observes, affinity space learning, because of its collaborative, peer-to-peer approach, allows space for "safely controlled and monitored transgressions," providing an ideal opportunity for learners to sift trivia, include the necessary context, and suggest and consider a number of ideas and explanations regarding particular artifacts before settling upon the most likely interpretation. For example, in my workshops, learners work in small groups of a maximum of four. Where needed, I circulate around the learning environment, checking in to offer reassurance before learners feed their group observations back to the rest of the learners. This interpretation analogy is useful as it brings us back to the importance of linguistic scaffolding and a learner's contextual frame. As Shanks and Hodder observe: "To interpret something is to figure out what it means. A translator conveys the sense or meaning of something which is in a different language or medium. In this way interpretation is fundamentally about meaning. Note however that the translation is not a simple and mechanical act but involves careful judgement as to the
appropriate shades of meaning, often taking account of context, idiom and gesture which can seriously affect the meaning of words taken on their own" (1995, 4–5).

[6.3] That said, meanings are obviously not entirely elastic. As Shanks and Hodder also observe: "To hold that archaeology is a mode of production of the past does not mean anything can be made. A potter cannot make anything out of clay. Clay has properties: weight, plasticity, viscosity, tensile strength after firing etc., which will not allow certain constructions. The technical skill of the potter involves working with these properties while designing and making so there is no idealism here which would have a count of the archaeologist inventing whatever past they might wish" (1995, 12). This opportunity for the learner to ascertain that meaning is "an ongoing process" and as such that "final and definitive interpretation is a closure which is to be avoided or suspected at the least" (4–5) is key and provides a useful answer to learner anxiety surrounding getting the right answer. There is no right answer, just the most likely answer, and this can be subject to change in light of new evidence.

7. Considering frames of reference: "'X' never, ever marks the spot."

[7.1] Given the importance of a learner's contextual frame, an issue also arises with learners potentially being unacquainted with a number of nuanced ideological implications that a text may offer, due to an unfamiliarity with that object's context. An example from my own recent learning experience is helpful here.

[7.2] Recently a fellow film historian kindly shared their Hammer Horror bubble gum cards with me (figure 2). They still smelled faintly of synthetic strawberry, some forty years later. They were 2×3″, so handy for pockets or, if you were more grown up, your first wallet. A glossy, gaudy, colored photograph and an awful punning caption featured on one side of the card; the other side had a matte finish and promised its collector "shocking laffs" using a deliberately anarchic, juvenile, and colloquial misspelling suggesting informality, naivety, or silliness as well as a subversion or rejection of correct English. This, combined with the accompanying cartoon depictions of cartoon monsters and ghouls rendered in an illustrative style reminiscent of then-contemporaneous British kid's comics Shiver and Shake and Monster Fun, gives the cards an anarchic, willfully camp feel. The use of the word "shocking" carries a dual implication here: the font suggests electrification or electrocution, in the manner of the Universal Studios' horror classic Frankenstein ('It's alive! Alive!'), while reference is also presumably being made to two awful jokes that appear on each card alongside a brief factual detail pertaining to the tantalizing photograph on the reverse and that are clearly to be understood as shockingly bad.

Figure 2. Hammer Horror bubble gum cards

[7.3] The cards were creased, bent, and faded in places. The owner asked me, "Why do you think the corners
are so battered?” I replied, "where they've been pushed into pockets?” Having no personal experience of collecting such cards, I lacked the relevant contextual frame. While I was aware that swapping is common within collector culture, I was unaware that within this fan's particular working-class, northern British collecting culture, young collectors gambled with these cards. My historian friend explained that in his experience, a desired card would be placed on the ground a few feet away, and fellow collectors would then attempt to throw one of their own cards at the desired card. If their card landed touching any part of the desired card, the thrower would win said card. If it didn't touch, they not only didn't get the desired card, but they also had to surrender their thrown card. It was the repeated throwing that blunted the corners of these cards. Experiencing these artifacts out of context, how would I have known this? I needed that contextual frame.

[7.4] As a film historian, my own research interests lie in what the material culture surrounding film (particularly Hollywood film, between the 1910s and the 1960s) tells us about broader social contexts. I work with denigrated forms such as pinup photography, slash fiction, and pornography, as well as what Gray (2010) would term "media paratexts," such as press books, posters, film fan annuals, film star fan club publications, film star fiction, and film star and celebrity advertising endorsements (Wright 2013, 2015, 2016; Wright and Smith 2019). This approach, which maps onto Klinger's (1997) notion of a film's "discursive surround" (so not just production, distribution, and exhibition, but other related ancillary materials, such as the film's merchandising, reviews, and fan responses), enables me to more clearly understand a film in its entirety and how "such contextual elements…helped negotiate the film's social meanings and public reception" (114). Put another way, Glancy observes that "Magazines, along with critical reviews, fan clubs, promotional materials such as posters and postcards, and other forms of film ephemera, belong to what Kuhn (2002, 9) has termed 'a cinema culture thriving off the screen and outside the doors of the picture palace'." (2011, 455).

[7.5] Of course the "discursive surround" methodological approach to historical research isn't uncommon within film studies. The first recorded use of the term "new film history" was in 1985 by Thomas Elsaesser, who "noted the tendency of [then] recent scholarly works to move beyond film history as just the history of films and to consider how film style and aesthetics were influenced, even determined, by economic, industrial and technological factors" (quoted in Chapman, Glancy, and Harper 2007, 5). As Maltby (2011, 3) observes in his summary of the new film history field, before long, new film history became "[a significant] trend in cinema history research [which]…shifted its focus away from the content of films to consider their circulation and consumption and to examine the cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange."

[7.6] My methodological approach is one branch within this broader development. It was through engaging with the kind of primary resources previously mentioned and examining them within an interpretive archaeological framework, akin to that discussed by archaeologists Renfrew and Bahn as "the study of past ways of thought from material remains" (2000, 385), that my own learning really took off. Placed within a functional context, previously abstract film studies theories and contexts began to gain relevance or affinity to me as a learner.

[7.7] While sourcing and utilizing primary resources is common in postgraduate film history research, undergraduate learners tend to avoid this approach in assessments. They might insert box office figures fromrottentomatoes.com into their arguments as a problematically simplistic shorthand to demonstrate the success or failure of a film, but their critical assessment of that material is generally limited. In my experience, learners tend to need frequent reassurance that, for example, analyzing a film's poster could offer just as fascinating an insight into a film's broader contexts as could a textual analysis of the film itself.

[7.8] This apprehension among learners regarding primary resources is surprising and suggests an unfamiliarity or uncertainty regarding this methodological approach rather than idleness, lack of originality,
or lack of ability. In my experience, learners tend to be most enthusiastic and animated in learning sessions where they get to work with—and learn from—such resources.

8. The learner's tool kit and threshold concepts: "Choose wisely. The true Grail will bring life; the false Grail will take it from you."

[8.1] Teaching film history experientially can expand learners' frames of reference and the skills tool kit they use to demonstrate their aptitude for critical thinking. To master film history, a learner must develop and be able to demonstrate their ability to think critically and apply those critical observations in new contexts in order to identify the trends and anomalies that are the stuff of the history field. As such, critical thinking is what pedagogical theorists Meyer and Land (2006) call a "threshold concept," or one of the "conceptual building block[s] that progress the understanding of the subject." As with other threshold concepts, critical thinking is complex and challenging, and a learner will have to revisit what it means to think critically a number of times as part of a "recursive process" (Cousin 2006, 5) before they attain mastery of it.

[8.2] In his 2010 talk "Threshold Concepts and Issues of Interdisciplinarity," Land advocates for placing learners in learning contexts that they find strange in order to challenge and prepare them for the "super-complexities" of life beyond education. This approach seems logical and complements the safe yet challenging nature of the affinity space. It must be kept in mind, however, that there is potential—if the learning method is presented to the learner without adequate planning—to cause the learner undue anxiety, damage their confidence, and actually arrest their learning.

[8.3] Returning once more to my Indiana Jones analogy, I argue that learners should be urged to seek out material treasures for themselves and encouraged and enabled to explore around and beyond that artifact as a means of investigating broader contexts. These treasures provide the facilitator with an interactive means through which to introduce strange new theories or concepts to learners or to help to reinforce significant, foundational theories and concepts introduced on the program while providing the learner with a means to demonstrate their learning through the application of theory or idea to an appropriate external example. I have been talked through fan cultures around the cult actor Bruce Campbell (figure 3) and director Wes Anderson. I've been offered a feminist perspective on the marketing of Harley Quinn sex dolls and a Black British perspective on the representation of the cast of Marvel's Black Panther. I have even been talked through the politics of fan handicrafting through the use of a "Home is Where the Demogorgon Is" cross-stitch sampler, inspired by the Netflix franchise Stranger Things, in an approach evocative of Brigid Cherry's (2016) work Cult Media Fandom and Textiles. These presentations are often extremely engaging, competent, and, occasionally, deeply moving historical studies.

Figure 3. Slide from a student presentation

[8.4] As learners work in workshops and observe others' practices and presentations, their direct acquaintance
with such objects, in Cousin's (2006) terms, increases their "experiential proximity" to different, unfamiliar resources, contexts, and ideas. They are investing in a resource and increasing their "emotional capital," a term that Lihong Wang (2015) notes was "coined by Cousin (2006) after Bourdieu's (1979) cultural capital to refer to the emotional positioning of students in terms of the receptivity to the learning of otherness. Thus, the students with greater experiential proximity to the aspects of otherness under examination may bring more emotional capital to their understanding of them" (93).

[8.5] As learning facilitators, we work to increase learners' emotional capital in the expectation that by directly engaging with such items, the learner stands a greater chance of comprehending the contexts that these items reveal. The learner is initially encouraged to consider the other or alien resource, making parallels with resources they have previously encountered. As their familiarity with the resource increases, they should be able to unlock the "inert knowledge" (Perkins 2006)—knowledge they already possess but may not yet be confident enough to utilize or may until this time, have not realized its relevance. In turn, their confidence should grow, and they should be more inclined to incorporate the new methodology and at least some of the resource's contextual details into their repertoire of acquired knowledge.

[8.6] As I have already suggested, learners' concerns around interpretation are not unfounded, but they are mistargeted. More often than not, concerns around critical thought are focused on getting the right answer rather than on the actual business of history—exploring the range of potential answers based on current available evidence. When I approach peer-to-peer working groups in workshops and ask the learners how they are doing, a common response is concern that they don't have a definitive answer or interpretation of a resource. In response I use the analogy of detective work or the archaeological dig, whereby numerous lines of enquiry should remain open. Furthermore, when discussion opens up to the larger group, the various interpretations offered demonstrate and reinforce the polysemic potential of resources.

[8.7] Archaeologists Renfrew and Bahn (2000) highlight how the arbitrary nature of symbols used to communicate within any material culture means that there is considerable potential for differences in interpretation, certainly when those representations are removed from their original contextual anchors, such as language or history. As Leslie Poles Hartley famously observed, "the past is a different country. They do things differently there" (2004, 5). By implication then, when facilitating film history learning, it is likely that both foreign and domestic learners will perceive older historical resources as alien or strange. This is not a drawback. This strangeness places all learners at an even point of departure, provided all learners are given similar means to explore the resource and its context. Furthermore, a distance from the culture/era that produced these resources can offer a considerable advantage to learners seeking to develop their critical thinking skills. Just as Gramsci (1992, 100) theorized that the strength of hegemony—the dominant ideology—lies in its seeming naturalness, so the ideological messages that these resources convey may seem natural and thus imperceptible to those who are habituated in that culture.

[8.8] A useful example can be found in Renfrew and Bahn's discussion of a prehistoric Scandinavian rock carving, observing that it "appears to us to be a boat, we cannot without further research be certain that it is a boat. It might very well be a sledge in this cold region. But the people who made the carving would have had no difficulty interpreting its meaning. Similarly, people speaking different languages use different words to describe the same thing—one object or idea may be expressed symbolically in many different ways" (2000, 385–86). Again, context is vital and any contextual shift across culture or time period results in increased ambiguity, making it increasingly difficult to reliably and definitively determine a text's original ideological implications. Nevertheless, the otherness that historical artifacts such as the one described above represent and the inherent inability to definitively interpret or translate what they mean encourage us to be reflexive and curious: to speculate, hypothesize, and engage in critical thinking.

[8.9] This brings me to my final example. Due to the development in the late 1970s of stardom studies, where
film stars and celebrities are examined from semiotic, sociological, and philosophical perspectives, current film studies learners may be aware of a coterie of classical-era Hollywood film stars such as Cary Grant and of a methodological technique used by scholars such as Dyer (1986) of watching one or more of such a star’s films to gain insights into the range of meanings they may have had or may now offer to contemporaneous and contemporary audiences, through their performance, appearance, and the ideology of their films.

[8.10] However, as Dyer (1986, 3) notes, stars are more than a signifying element within a film. Their stardom is comprised of a "total star text" whereby they are made available across a range of media, and like any other signifier, their meaning may also alter across time and culture. It is this range of representations that cumulatively forms a broader star image: "With stars the 'terms' involved are essentially images. By 'image' here I do not understand an exclusively visual sign, but rather a complex configuration of visual, verbal and aural signs. This configuration may constitute the general image of stardom or of a particular star. It is manifest not only in films but in all kinds of media text" (Dyer 1998, 34).

[8.11] Looking beyond Grant's films to consider the contemporaneous culture of the period in which he appeared in films (1930s–1960s) can offer learners useful insights into his audience appeal, what his star persona was, and how those understandings might have shifted over time in light of new evidence. Well-chosen artifacts can also offer a valuable opportunity for learners to engage with broader ideas that Grant's stardom may have touched upon or that it touches upon now that may not be evident from his films alone. In previous workshops, I have demonstrated how Grant was repeatedly cast as a debonair leading man and onscreen romantic interest to the most glamorous female stars in American cinema but how artifacts from the 1930s, such as Edith Gwynn's "Hollywood Party Line" gossip column in American film fan magazine Photoplay alluded to Grant's possible homosexuality. Objects such as these function like a breach in the façade of Hollywood stardom, providing the historian with an illicit glimpse into the workings of Hollywood's star machine, offering a counter to Grant's sophisticated heterosexual persona and suggesting an actor forced to disguise his authentic self and sexuality to succeed within a conservative industry and culture.

[8.12] One can see, then, that resources such as these can be useful tools to prompt debate around a raft of complex issues with continued relevance for today's learners, such as the representation of masculinity, the politics of sexual identity, the problems with stardom, and the incongruous relationship between celebrity and authenticity. Far beyond learning just about a star or about a clutch of artifacts linked to a specific star, learners are being prepared for the kind of super-complexities that Land (2010) refers to as existing in the real world, beyond education.

9. Conclusion

[9.1] So how do we engage students in a subject such as film history, a subject that learners can perceive to be irrelevant and dull and yet is necessarily central to their film studies program?

[9.2] Altering the learner/facilitator power balance through affinity space learning and increasing emotional capital provides a key route to engagement, understanding, and enlightenment, using the fact that all learners are able to identify themselves as fans of something as a starting point. As many pedagogy scholars have demonstrated, engaging learners via experiential means is an effective way of provoking learner engagement, as the learner's own personal fan experience (their contextual frame) can be used to engage them.

[9.3] Through direct contact with primary resources, learners are less likely to exhibit the signs of what Biggs and Tang (2011) term as "surface" learning, whereby they utilize only "low cognitive level abilities" (24), and are instead more likely to actively engage, exhibiting signs of "deep" learning, whereby the learner grasps the politics and the value of studying history and considers the resources "appropriately and meaningfully," hopefully retaining what they have learned (26).
[9.4] The kind of artifacts I advocate the use of may initially appear to be other to learners because of their age, obsolescence, condition, or the specificity of the fandom and or contexts they refer to. Culturally and within teaching, there is an understandable drift away from physical media toward the digital, so you might think that an in-the-flesh encounter with an artifact could seem dated to learners, but anonymous feedback on the module I deliver consistently highlights the pleasures garnered from these physical interventions with film and film fan history, with learners commenting upon their surprise at how relevant/useful the module was and how they enjoyed sharing their fandom with others and giving it serious attention. Assessment results on my module also suggest that by actually handling these objects within the context of a suitably supportive yet challenging environment for learner-led debate and exploration, those learners incrementally developed confidence, critical thinking skills, and familiarity with the research method. This also enabled them to translate unfamiliarity into mastery and apply their own contextual frame to another, in a manner that one learner observed "felt like cheating" because it was "fun and easy to grasp."

[9.5] As Hills observes, fan cultures function as "interpretive communities" that "display self-reflexivity" (2002, 182) so it's no wonder then that "some teachers…hope to leverage their participatory and transformative potential in order to encourage the critical faculties of students" (Pande 2018, 96) just as many transformative fan works "frequently play in the gaps and margins of their source material" (Scott 2019, 126). Learners using this approach are asked to do the same: to work reflexively and playfully and to examine potential, a process the student cited above clearly enjoyed.

[9.6] An object-focused approach to history or to any other social science is productive because it starts with the learners. Its foundation is learner identification. Working from the learner's contextual frame outward, it is based on personal engagement, piquing each learner's interests, whatever their contextual frame, to increase interest and confidence levels, which can then be exploited to demonstrate and reinforce threshold, critical, and research skills. The use of material culture itself—the opportunity for learners to handle history and experience the tactile pleasures offered by direct contact with and investigation of fan artifacts—reinforces that sense of investment and affinity, gradually and safely extending their contextual frame to make the strange familiar and handing agency to learners.

[9.7] For that reason—if I may crowbar in two final Indy quotes—it may seem that in using fandom as pedagogy, "you are meddling with powers you can't possibly comprehend," but the rewards, not only for learners but also for learning facilitators, are so very worth it. "Trust me."

10. Five tips for fandom as a teaching tool

[10.1] Open your first workshop by discussing your learners' experiences of fandom. Lead that discussion with an example of your own fandom before moving to the first student. This year I confessed my love of Ru Paul's Drag Race. As a result, a coterie of learners would approach me at the end of each workshop to discuss the latest developments in the current season. At the end of the term, two of that group delivered a superb presentation on queer baiting in popular culture.

[10.2] It is fine to refer to your own fandom throughout your module. In fact, it helps. It levels the playing field.

[10.3] Bring plenty of physical examples to workshops. Variety is key. You want to tickle as many fandom fancies as possible. Sometimes the most unlikely artifact prompts the most animated discussion.

[10.4] Allow learners to respond to resources in a range of ways. Always have paper and pens on hand for learners to work with. Bullet points and spider diagrams are the standard learner presentation style, but last year I had two students who each week would produce a series of detailed, wryly observed cartoons to
answer the tasks I had set them. A close discussion of them became a staple of each week's larger group discussions (figure 4).

Figure 4. A learner's interpretation of how cinema exhibitors may have generated ballyhoo outside their theaters around 1 Million Years BC (1966)

[10.5] Seek consent to share all written/drawn responses with your learners after the session. It is not high tech, but I currently photograph the group work that learners produce and upload the photos onto the virtual learning environment for them to refer back to.

11. Acknowledgments

[11.1] Thanks to Heidi Waddington and to Heather Savigny, Daisy Richards, Claire Sedgewick, Justin Smith, and Phyll Smith, all of whom are excellent educators and who kindly gave feedback, support, and advice.

12. Note

1. I refer throughout to an unpublished manuscript by Shanks and Hodder (1995), which is archived on academia.edu with the following note: A version of this paper appeared in Ian Hodder, Michael Shanks, Alexandra Alexandri, Victor Buchli, John Carman, Jonathan Last, and Gavin Lucas (eds) Interpreting Archaeology: Finding Meaning in the Past. Routledge, 1995.

13. References


Theory

Acafan identity, communities of practice, and vocational poaching

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[0.1] Abstract — In a conceptualization and critique of the implications motivating a set of teaching and learning sessions designed to introduce undergraduate students to the professional role of location scouts and managers, two main interventions are offered. First, discussion of acafan identities is advanced by considering how this subject position applies to teaching and learning contexts rather than individual research dispositions, with acafans transferring competencies developed through fan practices that appropriate industry-located forms of knowledge to inform pedagogical design. Second, the concept of vocational poaching is applied as an alternative of fannish appropriation that acafans can engage in when designing teaching and learning sessions. Vocational poaching involves individual acafans performing tactical raids on industrially located forms of knowledge via fan practices such as location visiting and using these to satisfy the requirements of neoliberal teaching policies.

[0.2] Keywords — Doctor Who; Media tourism; Textual poaching; UK higher education


1. Introduction: Facing the raven

[1.1] I begin with a reference to the episode "Face the Raven" (2015) from the ninth series of Doctor Who (2005–) for two reasons. First, the episode features outside shooting around multiple locations in the city center of Cardiff, Wales, which are in close proximity to the School of Journalism, Media, and Culture where I am based. Consequently, the episode's choice of locations for filming have made it suitable for designing teaching experiences that introduce undergraduate students studying a module about diegetic and extradiegetic spaces and locations in screen media to consider how places they encounter on a routine basis become selected and used for out-of-studio shooting. Secondly, the episode's plot centers on companion character Clara (Jenna Coleman) being dramatically killed by the titular bird because she attempts to imitate the heroic behavior associated with the show's lead character (Peter Capaldi). "Facing the Raven" therefore thematically covers the risks involved with mimicking the behaviors of a group (or species, in the case of the Doctor) to which you do not belong to. This theme dovetails with this article's aims, which are to reflect upon the design of a particular incarnation of my teaching practice and think through the motivations and consequences underpinning the identity positions of fan and academic that the session mobilizes. The article therefore intervenes in debates concerning acafandom by addressing an alternative way that this "hybrid scholarly identity[ly]" (Scott in Scott and Jenkins [1992] 2012, vii) can be theorized, embodied, and performed. This concerns how competencies arising from fannish pastimes, like close textual analysis and location visiting, are fusible with academic expectations to produce learning opportunities that respond to contemporary higher education (HE) policy in the United Kingdom. The article's arguments are thus situated where marketization has given rise to an employability agenda that guides expectations for undergraduate teaching.
The article is split into three sections. The first critiques discourses on acafandom for focusing on research contexts at the expense of pedagogy. Building upon observations made by Sangkyun Kim's (2010) study of fan tourists' location-visiting behaviors and combining these with pedagogical theories of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), I posit an alternative, teaching-oriented acafan subjectivity. This identity recognizes how the acafan transfers knowledges acquired through fandom to teaching practice (and vice versa). The second section outlines the lesson plan demonstrating the theorized acafan identity in a practical context. The final section brings its two predecessors together to introduce and reflect on the neologism "vocational poaching," which I have coined to capture how an acafan working within the context of HE in the UK raids competencies associated with both professional identities and fan practices. Informed by an autoethnographic methodology, through which the researcher attempts to dislodge the rationality of their arguments by questioning the assumptions upon which these are based (Chin 2007), I reflect upon the claims to status, ideological disposition, and gendering of the vocational poaching acafan. Naturally, I am aware that "through autoethnography we can never entirely 'disprove'" (Hills 2002, 86)—or, in this instance, corroborate—a theory due to the method's perceived lack of representativeness of other acafans' experiences. Nevertheless, I hope that this article initiates further conversations regarding the relationship between academic, fannish, and professional forms of knowledge within individual teaching practices and/or institutional contexts.

2. Acafan identities, communities of practice, and the UK HE sector

[2.1] In the early 90s, Henry Jenkins was not the only scholar using fandom to explore then-prominent issues concerning resistant readers of media texts (Bacon-Smith 1992; Lewis 1992). However, Jenkins's ([1992] 2012a, 5) work introduced the term "acafan" by declaring:  

[2.2] When I write about fan culture…I write both as an academic (who has access to certain theories of popular culture, certain bodies of critical and ethnographic literature) and as a fan (who has access to the particular knowledge and traditions of that community). My account exists in a constant movement between these two levels of understanding which are not necessarily in conflict but are also not necessarily in perfect alignment.

[2.3] Where the acafan as an embodied disposition of the researcher differed to the stance adopted by Jenkins's contemporaries was in its complication of deep-rooted systems of scholarly preference. These included binary logics valuing objective detachment over subjective involvement and an intellectual stance above affective participation with the object of study (Cristofari and Guitton 2016, 715–16; Morimoto 2019, 1–4). The acafan position has since gained currency and now broadly refers to methodological choices rooted in ethnography, whereby the researcher speaks as an insider on behalf of the identities and practices under scrutiny. By doing so, the scholar can provide outsider readers with nuanced insights concerning how particular fan groups negotiate a commercial(ized), media(ted) object (Cristofari and Guitton 2016, 722–25).

[2.4] Lori Morimoto (2019, 4) has posited that "the term 'acafan' has accumulated a lot of baggage, and it's still the subject of sometimes-heated debate." I would extend this argument by suggesting that the ongoing terms of debate have overemphasized the cultural position and status of the acafan. Matt Hills's (2002, 5) conceptualization of "scholar-fan" and "fan-scholar" as problematic "imagined subjectiv[ities]" has highlighted the systems of cultural and institutional value that underpin these uneasy identity positions. Hills's discussion brought to light the difficulties that taking up such subjectivities can present for fans, academics, and those in between such poles and set the agenda for understanding acafans and their relationships to the communities that they straddle (Gray in Stein 2011a; Jenkins 2012b; Larsen and Zubernis 2012; Cristofari and Guitton 2016). There have been useful and timely divergences from this line of discussion, such as Louisa Stein's (2011b) intervention that acafan subjectivities permit feminist-indebted critiques of popular culture centered on affect and devalued forms of fan knowledge. However, much of the
ensuing discourse has focused upon the status of the acafan within and between the two communities they represent, typically calling for greater integration between these (Jenkins 2008; Booth 2013). In contrast, manifestations of the identity in pedagogical contexts have been overlooked.

[2.5] The absence of alternative exhibitions of acafan identities might partly be because of the methodological place occupied by autoethnography in fan studies. Issues of fan affect have most often been theorized through questioning and critiquing self-produced accounts of individual acafan attachments (Driessen and Jones 2016; Garner 2018). However, scanning the indexes of recently published fan studies compendiums suggests that continuing a debate of acafan identities is becoming less of a disciplinary priority and that its meanings are now self-evident. The term is not listed in Linda Duits, Koos Zwaan, and Stijn Reijnders's (2014) *Ashgate Research Companion to Fan Cultures* and is only granted six listings in both Paul Booth's (2018a) *Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies* and the second version of Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington's (2017) *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (note 1). If the number of entries for acafandom in each volume is compared with those for transformative works like fan fiction, the difference is notable. The exception to this trend is, at first glance, Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott's (2018) *Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, where the term is discussed at some length (Brooker, Duffett, and Hellekson 2018). Yet the term's primary representation in the volume occurs in the informal, less theoretically rooted context of a roundtable discussion, connoting the term's periphery status.

[2.6] If it is the case that fandom is characterized by multiple practices and knowledges (Kirkpatrick 2015, ¶ 1.1; Cristofari and Guitton 2016, 719; Morimoto 2019, 2) then it is logical to posit that there might be a range of acafan identities. How might the knowledge obtained through fannish practices associated with transmedia tourism, where fans visit affectively significant locations (whether real world or virtual) linked to the fan object and engage with these through the affordances provided by convergent technologies and platforms (Garner 2019), be translated to the design of learning opportunities? Alternatively, if it is accepted that "the aca-fan represents a crucial node where knowledge from the community is passed on into the academic world" (Cristofari and Guitton 2016, 718), how might knowledge obtained through participating in fannish practices be creatively appropriated for teaching purposes? What potential issues and tensions might arise out of such translations? Moreover, if "we must be careful to attend to the…precise historical context [and] the…concrete social and cultural circumstances" (Jenkins [1992] 2012a, 35) that generate fan practices, what contextual circumstances encourage transferring fandom-acquired knowledge into pedagogical practice?

[2.7] Fans have been theorized as being "attracted to properties that reward re-reading and offer an abundance of textual resources to inspire their own production" (Scott in Scott and Jenkins [1992] 2012, xii). Sam Ford (2014, 63) reads this as a preference for "drillable" texts that are "densely packed with meaning so as to require repeated analysis" (also Mittell 2015, 288–90). Such preferences for excavating meaning also apply to fans' location visiting habits. Rebecca Williams (2019, 76–8) argues that high levels of familiarity with different audiovisual iterations of the Lecterverse (the fictional transmedia landscape concerning the character of Hannibal Lecter) combined with other fannish behaviors such as online-research-informed preparation for a location-visiting trip to Florence, Italy. Alternatively, when sites are closer to home, repeated viewings fused with knowledge of one's local surroundings can assist with planning visits to affectively significant locations (Hills 2006). Fan practices like pausing shots or rewatching scenes, enabled by domestic digital playback technologies (Jenkins [1992] 2012a, 72–73), can generate high levels of knowledge concerning the locations used for external shooting purposes.

[2.8] Writing on the transfer of competencies between the cultural sites that acafans straddle, Will Brooker, Mark Duffett, and Karen Hellekson (2018, 71) discuss how knowledge obtained through academic practices of research and critique can lead to forms of "textual productivity" (Fiske 1992, 39) in collaboration with nonacademic fans. Relating to practices of location visiting, Sangkyun Kim (2010) has implied that such
fannish behaviors can enhance the visitor's knowledge of audiovisual production techniques such as location use, camera framing, cinematography, and lighting. Writing in relation to a South Korean romantic drama series, Kim (2010, 70) observes that "the visitors…encountered on Nami Island usually asked other visitors to take photographs for them and explained a particular angle and shot in which they wanted to be framed." By seeking out exact recreations of favorite scenes from the fan text, media tourists demonstrate how "previous viewing experiences of a television series and visualized signifiers…provide…a means of preparation, aid, documentation and vicarious participation when visiting screen tourism locations" (Kim 2010, 71). In other words, partaking in location-visiting pursuits can result in fans' boosting their "popular cultural capital" (Fiske 1992, 34) by developing their understanding of how and where the fan object was produced.

This type of acafan learning, where knowledge gained through experiences from one imagined subjectivity transfers to the other, recalls constructivist pedagogies concerning communities of practice. For Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), apprentices learn through observing their more experienced peers and eventually develop specific "regimes of competence" (Wenger 1998, 136) that enable the apprentice to perform tasks independently. Similar approaches to learning are implied by Jenkins, Ford, and Joshua Green (2013, 158) in relation to digital media environments:

Educators have long studied how members of communities of practice learn from and sustain each other's participation. Their research suggests that people initially learn through "lurking" or observing from the margins, that certain basic activities may represent stepping-stones toward greater engagement, and that key individuals help to motivate others' advancement.

Jenkins, Ford, and Green are not alone in considering how community of practice pedagogies might assist in conceptualizing professional and fan identities within digitizing environments. Hills (2015a) uses the concept to critique sociocultural discourses proclaiming the displacement of expert knowledge in favor of formations of collective intelligence within convergence culture. For Hills (2015a, 361), "wishing away the cultural power of discourses of expertise—whether at a participatory or pluralist level—fails to illuminate how media fandom iterates forms of expert knowledge" through practices including fan-written histories of the fan object, which draw boundaries around what constitutes canonical knowledge. Hills therefore rightly recognizes the continued presence of established hierarchies and barriers to accessing communities of practice despite digital culture's knowledge flows.

However, Hills's critique cannot account for knowledge transfers between production contexts, fan behaviors like location visiting, and the embodied knowledges of acafans. Instead, if Kim's (2010) arguments concerning the competencies acquired through acts of fan tourism are aligned with theories of communities of practice, a new and productive way of understanding acafan identities becomes possible. For example, fans may begin to learn pertinent skills from cultural spheres of media production via their fan behaviors and then use these to inform the design and delivery of teaching tasks. In such instances, knowledge of screen media production roles concerning location selection and cinematography might be informally learned by the acafan partaking in media tourism. This has certainly been my own experience, as the skills I have gained through location visiting, combined with academic competencies such as comprehensive research into media tourism, onscreen space, and filming locations, have enabled me to transfer knowledge between fannish and academic contexts. Consequently, academic research can enhance fannish practices (rewatching favorite episodes, visiting profilmic spaces) and vice versa.

It should be noted that I am not arguing that skills acquired through acafan practices can or should substitute for the expertise of industry professionals that has been acquired through years of performing such tasks. While I may have acquired knowledge about how locations are transformed to their onscreen
equivalents through reading publications, attending (trans)media tourism experiences providing behind-the-scenes knowledge, and visiting profilmic spaces as leisure activities, I have no hands-on experience of performing location work in a professional setting. Instead, I am arguing that the forms of knowledge generated through embodying a particular version of the acafan identity can enable the transfer of acquired competencies between the fannish and academic spheres and can be used to introduce new learners to these topics. While performing such tasks arguably violates student expectations that their lecturers are "provider[s] of expert knowledge" (Bates and Kaye 2014, 663) rather than knowledge obtained through secondhand appropriations of skills from nonprofessional hobbies, the last section of this article complicates this assertion by returning to ideas concerning communities of practice.

[2.14] The pressure to design learning opportunities that creatively mobilize the spatially orientated acafan's knowledge partly arise from contemporary expectations in UK HE. The Browne Report of 2011 recommended that public funding for UK HE be removed in favor of transferring the full costs directly to students (Tomlinson 2016, 149–50); these suggestions were passed by the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government as part of their austerity measures. A consequence of this turn has been that discourses of employability now emphasize institutional, parental, and student expectations of the design and delivery of both individual modules and undergraduate courses:

[2.15] Students are placing greater emphasis on graduate employment, and hold greater expectations of better job prospects as a result of investing more in Higher Education. This presents a strong justification for HEIs to critically consider the extent to which they are preparing their students for employment following graduation, and to enhance the way in which employability is integrated as a core component of Higher Education curricula. (Bates and Kaye 2014, 672)

[2.16] This agenda has consequences for pedagogical approaches within HE, as "the language of 'employability' reinforces a narrow concept of education and encourages students to focus on narrow individual outcomes rather than broader, transformational experiences" (Millican 2014, 637). Subsequently, students afford higher levels of value to "practical and project-based elements" over critical pedagogies and theoretically informed approaches. Such policies and preferences are indicative of "the continuation of neo-liberalistic policies in higher education" (Millican 2014, 635) being adopted at the level of individual institutional practice. This agenda results in staff being structurally positioned as expected to factor in industry-focused learning opportunities when designing modules—even if they hold low skill levels in these areas.

[2.17] The acafan is therefore structurally encouraged to transfer industrially focused competencies from one part of their identity to another. In the context of this article, this means that fannish skills developed through identifying sites of filming, understanding how those spaces were dressed and shot by professionals, and reflecting on why specific combinations of shots and sequences may utilize specific streets and areas are applied to teaching. The next section details the deployment of these skills for a week of lectures and seminars.

3. The lesson plan

[3.1] The teaching session, which included a three-hour lecture and screening session for approximately forty third-year undergraduate learners, a location-visiting tour, and a one-hour seminar (run once each for two groups of eighteen students), was designed to fulfil the following learning outcomes:

- [3.2] To better understand the role and responsibilities of location scouting and management within television production.
To identify and recognize how real-world spaces within Cardiff were used for shooting purposes in line with multiple contextual factors (e.g., logistics, economics, etc.).

To compare different scenes within a preselected television episode to understand how specific geographical locations are reused in production.

To demonstrate applied understanding of taught material by working in small groups and responding to a hypothetical brief requiring the selection of a suitable filming location.

To defend the chosen location by evaluating its strengths and weaknesses in line with the requirements of the brief and other contextual factors.

[3.3] The learning outcomes are indebted to Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of learning (1956), as students are expected to build upon the knowledge to which they are first introduced by gradually developing their analytical, critical, and creative skills. Additionally, the teaching sessions are structured by the constructivist spiral curriculum model, whereby each learning opportunity advances an individual learner's skills. In this instance, the lecture and screening session provide a foundational understanding and application of core concepts pertaining to location work. In contrast, the tour applies the information introduced to specific geographical areas in Cardiff with which the students would likely be familiar. The seminar sessions then allow for students' creative application and the lecturer's and students' own self-reflective evaluation of what they have learned.

[3.4] The lecture begins by providing students with information concerning what the role of location scouting and management involves, referencing professional-facing resources offering entry points to the screen media industries (My First Job in Film 2016; Creative SkillSet 2020). This material is supplemented by an academic paper by Chris Luckinbeal (2012), which is the set reading that students are required to complete between attending the lecture and participating in the seminar. Key arguments from the set reading are introduced at the start of the lecture to provide points of recognition for students with the intention of allowing them to move from understanding the article's content during the lecture to instead thinking critically and evaluating the implications of what is being argued during the seminar (Bloom 1956).

[3.5] The students watch "Face the Raven" following the lecture. In the episode's early sequences, different angles up and down Westgate Street are used, taking in the diverse range of building fronts which this area offers. Additionally, outdoor spaces within one of Cardiff's main retail areas (The Hayes) as well as the city's Victorian indoor arcades (specifically, the Morgan Arcade and Royal Arcade) feature. Cardiff's doubling for London within the episode warps the city's geography (e.g., different locations on Westgate Street are shot looking up and down the street to function as a broader place), offering a distorted understanding of space similar to that discussed by Lincoln Geraghty (2011) in relation to touring Vancouver, Canada. Geraghty (2011, 146) argues that fan tourists engage in practices of "reordering the physical space according to their desires" such as by recognizing how locations that appear in close diegetic proximity to each other may, in actuality, not be physically close (and vice versa). Since the external locations in "Face the Raven" are all within proximity of Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media, and Culture, it is hoped that some of the students would recognize how spaces that they traverse on a day-to-day basis can be transformed through location filming.

[3.6] The guided tour takes the cohort on a journey around the city center to see which locations were used and how they were filmed. Throughout the tour, I refer to screenshots captured via VLC Player and uploaded to an iPod Mini. The screenshots mediate between the fictional diegesis and the geography of Cardiff and assist the students' understanding of how external locations were used throughout the episode. The aforementioned places on Westgate Street are visited to demonstrate how shooting both up and down this road produces different shots that indicate an expansive urban environment by positioning the camera at separate points and using the variations of architecture that are closely located to each other. This stop on the tour invites students to think about the environments that they inhabit and gain an appreciation of how
locations are used in filming. My commentary also tackles practical issues such as how costs and time can be saved by having one location double for many across multiple shots.

[3.7] The group then visits the Morgan and Royal Arcades to show how these spaces—which are a matter of meters from each other—are also used to suggest a vaster geography within the episode. The information given concerning how and why these locations have been selected also provides an entry point for discussing production techniques. Each filmed sequence within these spaces is of one character walking, framed in medium shot. Disclosing this point and asking if any of the students know why this might be the case introduces the role of assistant directors as it is outlined that, following location scouts and managers' suggestions of suitable external spaces for shooting, assistant directors can shoot short sequences simultaneously and in close proximity to each other to save time and avoid closing off areas for extended periods.

[3.8] The small group seminars take place at a later date. This separation allows students to think about the learning experiences, complete the set reading, and correlate points put forward by Luckinbeal (2012) with content from the lecture. Within the seminar, attendees are split into small groups (maximum five members) and asked to put what they have learned about locations into a simulated exercise by responding to one of the briefs in Table 1.

Table 1. Group prompts for student response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>You're producing a new, gritty medical drama for Sky Atlantic that will be high-budget &quot;quality&quot; television, and you need to film a car crash sequence set in a densely populated urban area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>MTV is bringing back <em>The Valleys</em> but wants to do this in a more sensitive manner than in previous seasons. The producers are looking for a public location with a sophisticated feel where a confrontation between the two male leads can take place. This should be outside but <em>not</em> near a bar or a nightclub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>You're working to produce a new police drama that focuses on &quot;bobbies on the beat&quot; for BBC One. You need to find a suitable location or locations where a chase sequence between one of the leads and a local drug dealer can be filmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>E4 wants to make a new teen drama that is similar in tone to <em>Skins</em> but that focuses on more LGBTQI+ issues. The sequence you're shooting involves two of the lead characters hooking up for the first time. The director requests that this scene be shot close to water.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[3.9] The seminar attendees are required to discuss and defend their chosen location using the following questions:

- [3.10] Why have you chosen your specific street/streets?
- What other areas did you consider? Why did you reject these?
- How important is your local knowledge of specific areas? How does this structure your decision making?
- How does this respond to the demands of the genre that you are working in?
- What practical constraints will you encounter in securing your chosen location? How will you handle this?

[3.11] Students are given access to a laptop computer. They are asked to use Google Earth to identify suitable locations and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their choices. Their evaluations should include elements such as accessibility for crews, roads closures, necessary permissions to obtain, potential social and
environmental impacts (e.g., loss of trade for businesses), and how the architecture and aesthetic of the chosen location (e.g., surrounding buildings, monuments, etc.) addresses the brief. Each group must present their choice of location to the other attendees and myself, detailing why that location was deemed suitable in comparison to other places considered and how they would negotiate any constraints. By participating in the task, students can simulate how the skills discussed in the lecture can combine with their own knowledge as residents of Cardiff to provide practical filing locations. Feedback is provided to each group by me.

4. Vocational poaching: Theory and critique

[4.1] The two sections above suggest a hitherto overlooked form of (aca)fan appropriation that I name "vocational poaching." Vocational poaching is, in this instance, indicative of my fannish interests and, like other forms of fan productivity, is enabled through intersecting historical, institutional, social, cultural, and technological structures that generate fan subjectivities. The term refers to how an acafan working in HE may perform tactical raids on forms of knowledge associated with professional identities with which fan specialisms and practices overlap and to how an acafan can translate these competencies into teaching practice. Vocational poaching is conceptually indebted to Jenkins's ([1992] 2012a) metaphor of fans as textual poachers, and it is worth revisiting his arguments to tease out the similarities and differences between vocational poaching and textual poaching.

[4.2] For Jenkins ([1992] 2012a, 18), fans "raid mass culture, claiming its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations." Indebted to Michel de Certeau's ([1984] 2002) understanding of everyday sociocultural power relations, Jenkins's perspective accentuates fans' shared interpretive cultures alongside their creation of transformative works like fan fiction. In terms of understanding interactions between fans and those occupying sociocultural sites of power, Jenkins ([1992] 2012a, 24–33) prioritizes two points: negotiations of discourses of authorial intent and fans' (in)ability to influence production decisions.

[4.3] Vocational poaching, as evidenced through the previous lesson plan, intersects with these understandings but demonstrates enough divergences to sanction its status as an alternative mode of fan appropriation. Vocational poaching involves the acafan performing tactical raids on professional fields within which they do not typically take up subject positions and transferring the knowledge obtained to the academic field(s) they occupy. Vocational poaching still represents "a type of cultural bricolage through which readers fragment texts and reassemble the broken shards according to their own blueprints" (Jenkins [1992] 2012a, 26) but the processes of reassembly are guided by the requirements of a professional academic lecturer rather than fandom's shared reading strategies. In the lesson plan, production-orientated information concerning how the crew filming "Face the Raven" selected, framed, and used Cardiff locations is first gained through both textual analysis and site visits and then used to design teaching sessions. However, this practice "does not provide an adequate substitute for access to the means of cultural production and distribution" (Jenkins [1992] 2012a, 27), as the vocational poaching acafan has (at best) minimal and distanced interaction with media production contexts.

[4.4] Acafan vocational poaching arguably demonstrates greater ambiguity to media production contexts than textual poaching or other transformative fan practices. This is especially the case when contrasted with spatially oriented fan practices such as reporting on filming while the text is still in production. Hills (2010, 72) views these habits as a version of "pre-textual poach[ing]," which positions itself as "opposing the publicity plans of media organizations by breaking production (and textual) news ahead of official schedules and promotional strategies" (Hills 2015b, 166). Rather than resisting either dominant meanings within the narrative (Jenkins [1992] 2012a) or official temporal rhythms (Hills 2010, 2015b), vocational poaching focuses on practical and aesthetic textual readings and uses fannish habits of close visual analysis and image manipulation via digital platforms to (re)produce the intended meanings of these textual elements'
production. In contrast, however, the relationship of vocational poaching to discourses of authorship is less clear than in Jenkins's ([1992] 2012a) examples. On the one hand, foregrounding the practical-aesthetic level of location use within *Doctor Who* dislodges the romantic figure of the executive producer. Instead, the agency of less-celebrated creative personnel—location scouts and managers—are foregrounded. This case of vocational poaching therefore forwards a collaborative understanding of television production that recognizes the importance of creative personnel like location-oriented workers within the production process (Creeber 2007). Nonetheless, the lesson plan's altered focus does not dislodge the symbolic status of television professionals, as these remain distant to the embodied acafan. Rather than replicating textual poaching's opposition to authorially sanctioned meanings, this example of vocational poaching simultaneously demonstrates deference to the broadcast text as the primary site of meaning while also recognizing the contributions of creative personnel beyond the executive producer.

[4.5] Having defined vocational poaching, it is useful to address how this neologism and the acafan identity that enables it intersects with ongoing debates within fan studies so that its value to the discipline can be demonstrated. Firstly, the practice and identity that I have outlined suggest an alternative example of how insecurity characterizes hybridized professional identities. I have elsewhere argued that performed tour guide identities for the (now closed) *Doctor Who* Experience Walking Tour in Cardiff demonstrate insecure appeals to status due to the guides' position between a consecrated media affiliation (the BBC) and the culturally devalued meanings of tourism as a service-based industry (Garner 2017, 435). The claims to status that the vocational poaching acafan embodies naturally differ from those of tour guides. Whereas a tour guide's performed identity brings "connotations of formulaic, standardized and (financially) unrewarding labor" (Garner 2017, 430), acafan identities instead accrue consecrated forms of educational and cultural capital in the form of institutionally bestowed doctorates, professional positions, and titles. However, alternative inflections of insecurity are identifiable for the vocational poaching acafan because they appropriate competencies from the distinct fields of fandom, media production, and academia. Revealing to students that your expertise is drawn from secondhand appropriations—where knowledge of media production is appropriated via fannish practices and then transferred to an academic setting—risks undermining the authority and respect of those you are educating. In a historical moment where UK HE is becoming more market-driven and focused on employability, acafans are tasked with either creatively appropriating their embodied forms of capital while risking reputational damage in making these explicit or failing to meet student expectations to provide employment-focused learning.

[4.6] However, I would argue that disclosing the nonindustrial origins of the competencies being taught need not necessarily lead to an undermining of the acafan's status. Instead, engaging in discussions with students can indicate how skills learned through participating in one of fandom's communities of practice can be creatively appropriated to serve an employability agenda (Booth 2018b). By demonstrating the skills learned from fannish pursuits like rewatching episodes, utilizing technology to better understand how and where scenes were shot, and visiting filming locations, an acafan can invite students to think about how they may be able to translate their (fannish) interests in to career opportunities. Writing on employability discourses in UK HE, Michael Tomlinson (2016, 162) shows that undergraduates understand the concept of employability "mainly in terms of presenting and performing an employable self, including appropriate marketable resources and capabilities that transcended the prepackaged mass HE graduate profiles based largely on formal achievements." Employability is here associated with gaining advantages over one's peers through foregrounding particular skills that generate distinction. Disclosing to students where forms of vocational poaching inform the teaching and learning opportunities presented to them might therefore encourage their own reflection on how they can perform tactical raids on production-orientated forms of knowledge acquired through their own interests. In other words, the acafan can demonstrate how being part of a particular community of practice can make one more employable. This can potentially inspire individual learners by inviting reflection on equivalent knowledges that may service their future employment interests.
[4.7] I am also aware that the concept of vocational poaching can be critiqued for supporting neoliberal ideologies. The tactics I am advocating are obviously motivated by encouraging undergraduates’ access to media production jobs. Jenkins ([1992] 2012a, 34) recognizes that "readers are not always resistant; all resistant readings are not necessarily progressive readings." He argues that this demonstrates the contradictory nature of popular culture engagements. Similarly, my status as a left-leaning media academic working within a HE institution whose educational policies favor a neoliberal agenda produces an irreconcilable contradiction between my subjective political allegiances and having to bend to alternative governmental and organizational policies.

[4.8] Further accusations of conservatism could also be directed at vocational poaching because it can be seen to support affirmational fandom. Following the influential arguments made by fan writer obsession_inc (2009, ¶ 5), affirmational fandom is "all about nailing down the details" of the source material, such as the "rules established on how the characters are and how the universe works." Affirmational forms of fan engagement, which are assumed to demonstrate deference to authors or producers and to generate greater forms of industrial approval, contrast with transformational equivalents, which "spin outward into nutty chaos at the least provocation" (obsession_inc 2009, ¶ 7) by offering radical reworkings of the source material, including mining queer subtexts. According to this binary logic, using close textual analysis to identify external Cardiff locations, considering the production motivations underpinning those choices, and comprehending their aesthetic framing demonstrates deference to the series' producers and thus a conservative disposition toward the show's producing institutions.

[4.9] Closer interrogation of how the above lesson plan negotiates affirmational fandom and its transformative equivalent nevertheless complicates rigid separations of these terms. Lincoln Geraghty (2014, 53–72), Matt Hills (2014), and Louisa Stein (2015) have each individually demonstrated the artifice of separating out different modes of fan engagement based around the levels of deference they demonstrate toward the originating text, and I would argue that my example of vocational poaching further supports these assertions. While rewatching episodes of Doctor Who and using domestic digital technologies to freeze the text and better understand how and where it was shot may not ideologically transform the text, these practices certainly go against the purposes of the BBC when making the program. The BBC does not make episodes of Doctor Who with the expectation that fans will forensically rewatch episodes (Mittell 2015, 288) and educate themselves about television production. While the relationship to the text that I am outlining might be affirmational due to the respect it demonstrates toward the broadcast episode, the reading practices that it gives rise to are arguably transformational in that they involve creatively reworking the text for purposes for which it was not initially designed. Moreover, the hope that undergraduate students might start to think about their own fannish interests and consider how they can use these creatively in their future vocations arguably encourages them to think critically. Although the overall goal of vocational poaching may align with the neoliberal expectations of HE to produce future employees for the creative industries, the tactics being encouraged demonstrate creative transformation by seeking to inspire individual reflection on how we consume and engage with media texts.

[4.10] Finally, it should be recognized that my arguments concerning vocational poaching are reflective of the subject position occupied by its author—that is, those of a white, heterosexual, cisgender male. Existing literature within fan studies has identified that understanding fandom as a developmental arena for industry-focused skills is a masculinized attitude. Jenkins ([1992] 2012a, xxx) reflects that "male fans have often profited from fandom (seeing it as a stepping stone into a professional career) while female fans have refused to 'exploit' their friends" (see also De Kosnik 2009). This gendered fandom-as-career trajectory is well established in academic understandings of fandom (Cross 2008; Ford 2014, 56). As the position of the vocationally poaching acafan discussed in this article is rooted in demonstrating expertise over specific technical elements of the fan object, the theorized identity is also one rooted in culturally masculinized engagement modes and so may be excluding either to students who adopt more feminized subject positions or
to those who engage in less professionally oriented fan practices.

[4.11] Such a critique is valid. I worry that attempting to diffuse it would reinstate patriarchal positions. However, while I am aware that by making this discursive maneuver, I am shifting the focus from individual agency to institutional structures, my acafan practice may well demonstrate how forces such as the marketization of HE in the UK place greater value upon the professionalization of patriarchal acafan identities over more feminized equivalents. More work is therefore required—work considering both individual and institutional practice—to recognize these forms of gender bias with a view to better challenging the inequalities that they create and maintain.

5. Conclusions

[5.1] This article has intervened in academic debates concerning acafan identities by suggesting an alternative conception of acafandom focusing on teaching and learning rather than individual researcher status and positioning. The article has argued that the knowledge acquired through practices associated with one side of this hybrid identity can flow to the other (and back again) and assist in the design of teaching and learning sessions within HE. This fluid knowledge transfer may arise from the neoliberal policies adopted for university teaching and learning, as in the above case. The article introduces the concept of vocational poaching through my theorizing the teaching-focused acafan. Vocational poaching involves performing tactical raids on knowledge associated with media industry workers; this knowledge, gained secondhand through fannish practice, is integrated into pedagogical design. Vocational poaching demonstrates different ideological stances toward discourses of resistance celebrated in the concept of textual poaching by, on the one hand, imitating forms of industry-sanctioned knowledge and using this to prepare learners to take up positions in a neoliberal labor market. On the other, it demonstrates resistance to authorial discourses by highlighting the roles and agency of frequently overlooked creative personnel and reframing the intended use of popular entertainment texts like Doctor Who as potential conduits for learning about specific industry roles. Vocational poaching is therefore an ambiguous and inherently contradictory form of fannish appropriation that sits between the entertainment industry, fandom, and HE.

[5.2] I have developed the arguments put forward concerning learning-oriented acafan practice and vocational poaching in relation to a specific fan practice (transmedia tourism) and a particular national educational context. Further discussion of these ideas is required by acafans who hold alternative fannish knowledges and operate in alternative national (and institutional) contexts. For example, how might the experiences of a fan fiction writer working as a lecturer in English literature respond to the arguments presented in this article? I hope that reflecting on an example of my own teaching practice and using this to initiate a discussion concerning how—or indeed whether—the adaptation of fan-acquired knowledges can feed into the design and delivery of employability-focused teaching for students motivates others to offer similar insights. By adding to the conversation that this article has initiated we, as a community of scholars, can better understand how fan behaviors become appropriated for teaching purposes and the broader conditions that make such raids a felt necessity.

[5.3] Vocational poaching is also a significant term for further debate because it suggests hitherto overlooked ways of engaging with established disciplinary concepts. Further discussion of the relationship between acafandom and teaching and learning could be aligned with debates concerning relationships between professionals and amateurs within convergence culture or with those regarding the neoliberalization of labor more broadly. Alternatively, reflecting on manifestations of the acafan identity in different contexts could shed further light on other ways that (aca)fans engage in transformative work shaped by the contexts within which they operate. Engaging in this form of discussion could further highlight the contradictory nature of individual instances of (aca)fan agency with a view to better understanding the different forms of transformative action and the contexts within which appropriative tactics are employed.
6. Notes

1. In Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington's (2017) edited collection, many of these references are located within Hills's chapter.

7. References


Including new media adaptations and fan fiction writing in the college literature classroom

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Abstract—Fan artworks may be used to engage college students in their literature courses. One such course is described herein, focused on reading, watching, and analyzing children's and young adult literature and their new media adaptations, including fan fiction, fan vids, and fan art. Rather than only requiring academic writing assignments, students were also assigned the task of writing their own piece of fan fiction in response to a course text.

Keywords—Children's literature; Harry Potter; Vampire Diaries; YA literature; Young adult literature


1. Introduction

As someone who often watches the movie or television show before reading the book and began reading online Harry Potter fan fiction on portkey.org over fifteen years ago while waiting to see if Harry and Hermione would end up together, I knew that I wanted to demonstrate the power of reading, watching, analyzing, and creating new media adaptations of literary texts while teaching my internship course at Illinois State University (note 1). Including the analysis of new media genres such as movies and television programs in the literature classroom, I argued in my internship paper, gives students a better opportunity to understand the connection between literature and popular culture. It also demonstrates how critically engaging with these texts creates a better grasp of how students' own values and beliefs are often influenced by these supposedly "just fun to watch" texts. "In cultures saturated with media, fans authorize themselves to critically respond and engage with their chosen texts" (Howell 2018, 2), and I wanted to create a class environment in which students understood that critical and engaging responses to the texts could be a form of empowerment rather than merely a task to complete to earn the grade they want.

As literary adaptations commonly written and posted online by nonprofessional writers, fan fiction in particular can provide college students with avenues to discuss ideas like authoring a text versus owning the copyright of a text, the authorial intentions of the writer versus the reader's interpretational response, and the genre conventions of collaborative writing and digital narratives. Paul Booth states that "many students are wedded to the auteur theory, but by 'acting' like a fan in the safety of the classroom, they start to see how active reading constructs meaning as well" (2012, 177). As such, if instructors assign the reading and writing of fan fiction as part of their course curriculum, their students can grapple with their own critical reading and writing skills through a genre that (1) requires careful knowledge of published literary texts and (2) creates avenues for inspiring enjoyable and empowering interactions with the source texts. These basic premises are why I designed my fall 2016 version of the undergraduate course "Literary Narratives" as "Analyzing
As a course thematically focused on children's and young adult literary adaptations, my internship showcased multiple approaches to teaching literature using a combination of print and new media texts. My experience with this course has given me a plethora of (institutional review board-approved) data about the effects of reading, watching, and creating adaptations in the college undergraduate classroom. In this article, I provide details of my internship course design, experience, and results in order to demonstrate how studying new media adaptations and writing their own adaptations (aka fan fiction) helped my students improve their ability to critically and creatively experience the literary texts that surround them every day and influence their perspective on the world around them. To actualize these learning outcomes in my students—to show them how "by working within fandom itself, students gain valuable insights that they can turn around and apply to their own lives as well" (Booth 2012, 185)—I assigned them the tasks of writing a formal literary analysis paper and a piece of fan fiction based on our course texts. Alongside these assignments, students also wrote reflective narratives about their composition processes in order to strengthen their awareness of the critical and creative nature of their work in the course. Before I describe these assignments and student responses to them, I will first provide important contextual information about the course and the students who took it.

2. Course context

Understanding the context in which I found myself when teaching my internship is an essential element of understanding the dynamic of this classroom experience. In the English department at Illinois State University (ISU), doctoral students are required to design and teach a course tied to their research area as the "internship" portion of their comprehensive exams. The course I chose to teach was a standard undergraduate course, Literary Narratives. This course is described in the English department's course catalog simply as "critical reading and analysis of a variety of literary narratives that reflect on human experience." A general education course, Literary Narratives is capped at thirty students and is filled with non-English majors who need to meet the "Language in the Humanities" requirement. I titled my section of the course, "Analyzing Children's and YA Literary Adaptations: Books, Movies, TV Shows, and Fanworks," and provided a brief description in the course catalog.

However, because I was given my teaching assignment late into the spring 2016 semester, my section had a full roster before my description was added to the catalog. As such, my students did not choose to take a children's and young adult (YA) literature course or a fandom course; rather, they chose to take a literature general education course required of them based only on the basic, one-sentence description of what the course would include. Students with an English major or minor do not receive credit toward their degrees for completing this course, so my students came from across many majors available at Illinois State University. Table 1 details this diverse educational demographic with information from the twenty-seven students who consented to take part in my research study (note 2).

Table 1. Student educational demographics in an internship course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Student College at ISU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Applied Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Undeclared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A third of my students had majors located in the same college as the English department, but a survey I had my students complete during the first week of class quickly made evident that in general these students had little interest in or experience with analyzing literary texts or writing their own short stories. Furthermore, as attendees of a fall semester general education course, my students ranged from first-year students just beginning their college experience to seniors anticipating the moment they would complete their coursework and move on to the next stage of their lives. In regard to my research study, this spectrum of student year levels provided me with a wide demographic of students to work with in exploring their experience with learning literary terminology, practicing analytical, metacognitive, and creative writing skills, taking part in fandom practices, and reading/watching children's and young adult texts and their various adaptations.

The next section depicts in broad strokes the overall design of my internship, including the rationale for my heavy emphasis on the importance of studying adaptations and composing fan fiction. I will then transition to specific examples of the knowledge and skills these students gained through our study of children's and YA books, movies, television shows, and fan works using excerpts from the reflective writing assignments the students completed in the course, before briefly concluding with a call to action for any English college instructors who have yet to buy in to using new media adaptations and fan fiction in their classrooms. This call is especially relevant for instructors who already know the pedagogical benefits of teaching children's and young adult literature but have not taken the farther step of acknowledging the pedagogical power of their new media adaptations.

Because "research into fandom can become a path to understanding and augmenting research into media and cultural literacy" (Booth 2012, 174), I focused a large portion of my internship on analyzing and creating fan works. These texts, alongside Hollywood films and network television shows, demonstrate to students the power and influence of the popular culture texts that surround their experiences outside the classroom. Improving students' media and cultural literacy is becoming a common goal of twenty-first-century English college courses, so a literature course that features new media analysis and creation fits well with this important learning objective.

3. Course design

As this course centered not only on literary narratives but also on their adaptations, I divided the semester into two major units, with a three-week introductory period leading to the first unit and a two-week wrap-up period to end the semester. I limited my selection of class materials to two source novels, *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* (Smith 1991) and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling 1998), each of which provided the foundation for the two major class units. The reading of each first novel of these two series was followed by watching a multimodal new media adaptation, then reading, watching, and viewing a variety of fan fiction, fan videos, and fan art.

This narrow scope in required texts was inspired in part by Gillian Steinberg's article on her "new model" of introductory English courses, in which she states, "Coverage should not be our goal for an introductory course, which can reasonably and meaningfully teach students both how to read literature and why to read it but cannot, in a semester, make them read all of it" (2013, 481). Furthermore, my decision to focus the course on these particular source series was influenced by their meeting of specific criteria: they both have an unusually complex web of texts and adaptations that surround them. This characteristic of both series creates the opportunity to demonstrate to students how literary texts are affected by the adaptation process and how they can respond to these texts and their changes via formal and creative writing.
The first major unit my students completed was the Vampire Diaries unit, which included reading the first novel, watching the first six episodes of the television series adaptation, reading four pieces of fan fiction, watching three fan videos, and viewing a page of Google images fan art. Each section of the unit was preceded by a short PowerPoint lecture that provided contextual information on the book series, the television series, and the fan works, respectively. In the first lecture of this unit, I explained that the complex publishing history of the books was the reason I chose to spend four weeks on this young adult series. Put briefly, L. J. Smith, the author of the first seven (of thirteen) Vampire Diaries novels, was fired from writing the series and replaced by a ghostwriter who completed the final six books. Smith's name, however, remains prominent on the covers of books eight through thirteen, and she is also acknowledged in the credits of the Vampire Diaries (CW, 2009–2017) television series. In 2013, when Amazon launched Kindle Worlds, Smith continued her own version of the series via this new publishing avenue, which basically allowed fans to sell their fan fiction based on certain storyworlds because of the licensing agreements Amazon had with the creators and publishers. As such, Smith's decision to publish through Kindle Worlds put her in the strange position of being both the original author of the series and a fan writer of the series, a situation that powerfully demonstrated the complexity of authorship and copyright to literature students. With the closing of this publishing system, it seems Smith will be unable to finish her continuation of the series.

Additionally, the television series Vampire Diaries is a highly divergent adaptation of its source material, portraying many storylines and characters that never appear in the book series (note 3). Comparing and contrasting the source text to its TV adaptation, therefore, provided ample material for a robust discussion on how different creators, media, and target audiences have influenced the narratives portrayed in these series. Finally, the fan works created and published online for this series are largely inspired by the television show adaptation rather than the original books. Analyzing this imbalance in reader/watcher response explicitly demonstrates why new media adaptations should not be shunned from courses that are designed to study the influence and effect of the literary texts that they explore. All of these facts inspired my decision to use this series in my course.

The complicated expansion of the Vampire Diaries book series through its various adaptations can powerfully illustrate to students how young adult literary narratives are valuable texts to study not just in their original print form but in relationship to their new media forms as well. This television series is a particularly strong choice for a course of this kind because "Vampire Diaries offers an indicative case study through which to understand the intersections between horror and the teen genre, notions of quality and cultural value, and the enduring appeal of the vampire genre in contemporary popular culture" (Williams 2013, 97). This series provides a fascinating avenue for discussing concepts tied to adaptation studies, but it is also full of material that lends itself to studies of multiple literary genres, audience response, and popular culture. By having students study this web of texts in the first literary unit of the course, my intention was to complicate any assumptions that my students might have had about YA literature, television shows, fandom, and adaptations when they first entered my classroom.

The second literary unit was designed to amplify the above pedagogical effect. The Harry Potter books are another example of print texts that have inspired many forms of adaptations and can therefore be taught using a combination of print and new media texts. These include adaptations not only by thousands of devoted fans and published authors such as Rainbow Rowell, but also, as with the Vampire Diaries books, by the author herself. In contrast to Smith, however, J. K. Rowling has kept creative control over her series; she gave the final approval of the Harry Potter and the Cursed Child play's script and the Fantastic Beast movies' screenplays, and she created and oversaw the Harry Potter series' companion website, Pottermore.

Studying the first Harry Potter novel alongside its movie adaptation in the second unit allows students to analyze the differences between television series and movie adaptations. With such a large pool of Harry Potter fan works to analyze, teaching this series as the second unit creates the opportunity to more robustly
investigate this fan creation process. But, just as importantly, learning about this series from an adaptation studies perspective rather than as a standalone novel strengthens the students' understanding of how literature lives on and grows through the additional texts created after the publication of an original, canonical series. Having the Vampire Diaries publication and adaptation histories to juxtapose with the Harry Potter series leads to a critical examination of ownership versus authorship power dynamics regarding popular culture texts.

[3.8] In designing my internship, I intended for my students to have a better understanding of the creative and critical elements that are intrinsic to literary narratives, their various media adaptations, and literary analysis papers. To create this understanding, students had to write both a formal literary analysis paper and a piece of fan fiction. Students writing their own adaptations of the texts read in class is not a standard assignment included in literature courses. However, I agree with Veronica Austen's assertion that "when used in literature courses, creative writing assignments, thus, can heighten students' engagement with the literature that they are studying and, by extension, prepare them to become more active and competent scholars of literature" (2005, 139). In addition to strengthening the students' literary analysis skills via the writing of their own fan fiction, a primary goal of the course was to help enable my students to perceive adaptations as a form of creative critique, similar to the ways in which literary analysis papers are an academic genre of critique. As such, my students were required to complete a literary analysis paper for one major class unit and a literary adaptation (i.e., fan fiction) assignment for the other unit, each of which involved a guided self-assessment activity.

[3.9] Students were given the freedom to decide which assignment they wished to complete for each unit, so the first few introductory weeks of the semester included discussions of fandom and online fandom cultures. "Becoming familiar with fan communities and making clear to students how they operate and what their expectations are is essential if fan works are to be included as course materials" (Smol 2018, 19). My students were not required to respond to the fan works they read and watched on the platforms in which they are posted by fans, nor were they required to post their own fan fiction online. I explained this assignment design decision to the students through discussions of how online fandoms are communities that have their own terminology, cultures, and written and unwritten rules. The whole course was not devoted to learning about fandom, I explained, so a level of separation would be kept between the work the students were doing in the course and the fan works they were reading, watching, and analyzing. I welcomed the opportunity to meet with the students if they were interested in learning more, and I also provided optional supplementary reading for any students who wanted to immerse themselves more deeply in fandom.

[3.10] For the students to understand how to complete their longer writing assignments, we spent the majority of our class sessions discussing and analyzing the content and format of our required reading/watching list. To prepare for these larger projects, I included additional, shorter assignments in the course design to scaffold student learning. Almost daily notebook writing prompts inspired both creative and critical discussion points, with the students responding to questions like, "Which vampire reveal (book vs. show) did you enjoy more and why?" and "Why do you think the show producers changed Elena's little sister from the book into Jeremy the teenage brother?" Many of the individual and small group class activities were created to bolster this form of response to the class reading and viewing materials as well. Quizzes were assigned to prompt the students to complete the reading/viewing assignments in time for in-depth class discussions.

[3.11] A further purpose of these small activities was to strengthen the students' ability to practice close reading (and viewing), a skill needed throughout the course for the various major assignments. Theresa Tinkle and colleagues stated in their article on introductory English courses that "by concentrating on close reading, we invite students to learn transferable skills: the critical analysis of texts, the presentation of evidence, the correct use of disciplinary terms, and the ability to frame questions for research and analysis" (2013, 527). The notebook prompts often focused on the close reading of changes made in mainstream and
fan-created adaptations for this exact reason. In a similar manner, the quizzes based on the adaptations always included multiple questions that pointed out major changes made to the characterizations, plot, or setting of the source text.

[3.12] In contrast to Tinkle et al. (2013), instead of using the quizzes just to show students "what they did not know, motivating them to raise questions in lecture and thereby facilitating additional instruction on challenging points" (509), I also designed them as starting points for class discussions on the intertextuality between the materials read and watched throughout the unit as a whole. For example, in our *Vampire Diaries* television series quiz, I asked, "How does Elena discover Stefan is a vampire?" In the novel, Elena happens to walk in on Stefan drinking blood from a bird he has killed. In the show, Elena witnessed multiple strange occurrences surrounding Stefan which led her to investigate him and discover he is a vampire. By including questions like this one in the quizzes and going over each question immediately after the students turned in their answers, the class always had a starting point for analyzing the dynamic relationship between characterization, plot, and/or setting in the two canonical series and their adaptations.

[3.13] These activities were intended to increase student engagement in the discussions, as they provided students with material to which to refer during the verbal whole-class discussions. Students did not have to rely on their ability to produce spur-of-the-moment analysis immediately after our classes began; they had writing prompts and quizzes to inspire their future class discussion interactions. Furthermore, these small activities provided scaffolding for a larger assignment, the Reading/Viewing Write-ups, a major class project I designed to be one of the primary ways of comprehensively assessing the students' success in achieving various course goals. In my final section of this article, I reflect on this particular assignment and the fan fiction project using samples of my students' writing to showcase the benefits of including new media adaptations alongside their print source texts in the college classroom.

4. Course experience

[4.1] Because the majority of our class time was filled with discussions of our required texts, I promoted active reading/watching of these materials at home through the Write-ups homework assignment. This assignment took place throughout the two literary units of the internship (note 4). Each of the original ten Write-up prompts required students to either integrate class terminology into their scholarly response to the reading/viewing material or to analyze this material on a level most general education students would not feel necessary to consider when encountering these texts outside of the English classroom.

[4.2] Students were required to submit individual Write-ups before we discussed the specific material for each Write-up prompt in class. For example, if students chose to complete the Write-up that asked them to compare and contrast the *Vampire Diaries* novel and television episodes watched for class, they needed to submit their response to that prompt before we discussed the episodes in class. Students received a list of all the Write-up prompts and their individual deadlines during the first week of the semester, but they were only required to complete five of the ten Write-ups so that they could have ample time to work on their other projects like the literary analysis paper and fan fiction. I also gave students the opportunity to complete additional Write-ups as a way to mitigate lower grades received for prompts that they might have struggled with due to misunderstanding this potentially new approach to analyzing literary narratives and their adaptations.

[4.3] Requiring the completion of only half of these prompts lessened my own workload, which provided me with time to write and send feedback to my students on each prompt before the deadline of the one that followed. Most prompts called for a response of at least one to two pages, though this length could increase depending on how engaged the students were in their responses. This assignment, along with the two major writing assignments and the many minor in-class activities, formed 90 percent of the students' course grades.
The final 10 percent of the course grade was based on the class zine I constructed at the end of the semester using the students' revised papers, fan fiction, and extra credit fan art. After I constructed the zine PDF, I assigned my students to read it and vote for various awards, such as "Best Opening Line," "Best Plot Twist," and "Best Argument." This activity during the final week of class allowed students to experience the incredible work created by their peers and celebrate their work through a small awards ceremony and discussion of the zine readings and artwork.

I approached the lessons on teaching students how to analyze Vampire Diaries and Harry Potter from the perspective that my students first needed a vocabulary with which to work, along with a basic theoretical understanding of literary narratives, adaptations, and fandoms. As such, after the introductory first week of the semester, the following two weeks were devoted to helping students learn literary terminology, such as the terms "foreshadowing," "point of view," "characterization," and "tone," along with fandom terminology with terms like "slash," "alternate universe," and "ship." Alongside the list of terms assigned during these weeks, I also required students to read selections from Toby Fulwiler and William Stephany's *English Studies: Reading, Writing, and Interpreting Texts* (2002) and Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013), along with an article I had written on the genre conventions of fan fiction in ISU's *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*. These texts provided the students with basic adaptation and fandom studies terminology and concepts without going into a level of detail that would confuse them in an introductory level classroom.

By limiting the amount of fiction the students read during these two weeks to one short story—"Midnights" (2014) by Rainbow Rowell—my intention was for students to practice the application of the literary terms and theory on a short text before the first major literary unit began. Once the Vampire Diaries unit started, the first few Write-ups tested the success of this course design. The first two required students to provide examples of characterization, foils, tone, foreshadowing, symbols, and narrative structure in the *The Awakening* and the first two episodes of the television show *Vampire Diaries*, respectively. The third tasked students with identifying changes made to the source text in its adaptation as well as articulating the potential reasons for these changes.

Nineteen students completed at least one of these three Write-ups. Three examples of student responses showcase the analytical work asked of them through these assignment prompts (note 5).

One example of foreshadowing is the ring that Damon and Stefan wear. The producers really emphasize that they each have this special ring, but do not say why. Elena even asks Stefan why he won't take it off at the car wash, but he doesn't give the real reason … Because the producers emphasized it, it was really foreshadowing that something was going to happen when one of the brothers wasn't wearing the ring. (Sarah 2016)

In the show Stephen lives in the boarding house with another guy who he calls his Uncle Zach, but in the book he lives with an elderly lady. This change was made to appeal to a teenage female audience. By putting another young, attractive male in the show it will bring in more of a teenage girl audience. (Ashley 2016)

Bonnie … in "The Awakening" says she is a psychic/witch descending from the Druids. In the TV adaptation, Bonnie says she is a witch descending from Salem. This could have been done because Salem and witchcraft are something that go hand in hand, and is pretty widely known, Druids on the other hand are less talked about in media or other movies/show. In order to have Bonnie's powers be better and more quickly understood by the shows audience the writers may have chosen to change her family lineage. (Cassie 2016a)

These responses demonstrate the students' strong grasp of how the class terminology could be applied when analyzing the Vampire Diaries texts, along with their ability to consider genre-based reasons (such as
audience response) when analyzing why certain changes were made in this television show. These responses are not the only ones that demonstrate how starting with vocabulary and theory was beneficial to student learning, but it should be noted that there were also answers in these Write-ups that suggested the two weeks were not enough preparation for these tasks.

[4.12] The Write-up assignment gave students ten diverse opportunities to practice articulating their analysis of our class texts. Because these activities were heavily guided by where I wanted the students to focus their attention, I designed their literary analysis paper and fan fiction projects using a much more open approach. Students had to complete one of these two activities in each literary unit, but they could choose which project they wished to complete for each. Their paper had to have an argumentative thesis, and their fan fiction had to include either a character or setting from our class texts, but the only other major requirement I gave my students for these projects was a minimum page length. Unlike the Write-ups, students had almost total control over the content of these two activities. To help students with their papers, I had a two-week lesson on writing literary analysis, and I also assigned supplementary academic articles about the material we were reading and watching to give them a better sense of how academic arguments are structured. To help with their fan fiction, I made the reading and watching of fan works such as fan fiction, fan art, and fan videos a major element of my internship. In this way, students could gain a better sense of the varied ways readers and viewers have already responded critically and creatively to our source material (note 6).

[4.13] This approach to teaching an introductory English course is not without precedent, especially for educators who include fandom studies in their classrooms. Katherine Anderson Howell's edited collection Fandom as Classroom Practice: A Teaching Guide, for example, explores almost a dozen different examples of educators using fandom to help students reach the learning outcomes of their courses. In her Transformative Works and Cultures article, Misty Krueger describes Draxler's model of "adaptation as interpretation" as connecting "creative writing with the practices of literary analysis, including close reading, critical thinking, and contextual and cultural analysis" (2015, ¶ 2.1). One way she makes this connection evident to her students is through an adaptation assignment, in which students must write an adaptation along with a reflective introduction to it. In a similar manner, I called on my students to interact with our source material via the creative genre of the short story, with the additional option of creating a piece of visual art or a video in response to the readings as well. Both these assignments included a reflective statement about their projects, as did their analysis paper assignment.

[4.14] Few students regarded their fan fiction as critical works by the end of the semester, and only a handful of students felt that there were connections between writing a literary analysis paper and writing an adaptation. In regard to the reflection question asking how writing one major assignment affected the other (whether fan fiction to paper, or paper to fan fiction), most students responded like Amy, who stated, "I don't think writing my adaptation really affected my writing of my paper since they are very different concepts (one being creative and the other being academic)" (2016). Nevertheless, there were four study participants who stated that writing the fan fiction first affected their paper, and two who stated that writing their paper first affected their fan fiction. In excerpts from these four student reflections, the first two responses are from students who wrote their fan fiction first, and the later two are by students who wrote the analysis paper first.

[4.15] Writing an adaptation before did affect my approach because I was more aware of literary elements and found ways to include them in my paper. By having to add in literary elements into my adaptation, I learned in more detail what each element was and it was easier to pick them out in the book. (Dana 2016)

[4.16] Since the literary analysis paper focused more on the hidden elements found within a piece of writing, I feel like I was more comfortable to identify those by already writing an adaptation myself … By writing that before my literary analysis, this helped me better
understand that even though the hidden arguments aren't always obvious, that with enough support and explanation that you could find arguments pertaining to almost anything. By first understanding the structure of writing a literary narrative, this allowed me to see how a story can contain hidden meanings. (Sasha 2016)

[4.17] I do think it [writing the paper first] affected my experience, but in a positive way. I was able to think more deeply about what I was writing and make sure there was depth to it, instead of it just being surface leveled. (Kristine 2016)

[4.18] Now that I have learned how to write analysis papers I find myself analyzing everything that I read and watch. I question why the author chose to do things the way they did or why producers don't include certain aspects from the original text if it was an adaptation and because of that I was more cautious when writing my adaption. I tried to really think about why I was making the changes I was making and how it would later affect the plot line … I think that if I had written my adaption first I wouldn't have made the changes I did because they wouldn't have mattered to me before. (Susan 2016)

[4.19] These reflective statements demonstrate a strong understanding of the intimate connections between writing formal academic papers and creating literary adaptations like fan fiction. Though only six of my students were able to clearly see these connections, it is imperative to note that the concept of creative works as critical in nature was not formally introduced until late in the semester, during the Harry Potter unit.

[4.20] As a general education course, the student demographic was one that required introducing elementary facets of analyzing literary narratives before more in-depth critical work was attempted. I introduced the more layered understanding of adaptations as not simply creative responses to a source text but critical ones as well only after the students had been given ample time to practice this analytical form of reading and watching the class materials. Refraining from sharing this information with the students until the last few weeks of the semester was a major element of my course design, as I was interested in seeing whether the students could recognize the critical work they were doing in their adaptations without this perspective being stated outright before they wrote their adaptations. I wished to discover whether students understood that their adaptations or fan fiction were not simply "subjective, fluid interpretation of the readings [or viewings]." but also ways of "exhibiting in-depth literary analysis … [and] incorporating the writing process through the use of critique and revision" (Mathew and Adams 2009, 36).

[4.21] To help the students conceptualize this approach to interpreting fan adaptations during the final weeks of class, I had them read articles like Sarah Winters's "Streaming Scholarship: Using Fan Vids to Teach Harry Potter" (2014), along with Angela Thomas's article "Fan Fiction Online: Engagement, Critical Response and Affective Play through Writing" (2016). Winters's article was particularly relevant not only for its focus on Harry Potter fan vids—the source material used in the second literary unit of the semester—but also for its clearly stated argument that "[fan] vids perform a traditional task in an innovative medium: vids carry out traditional literary analysis in the form of close reading, in particular the use of detail from a text as evidence to support an argument" (2014, 252). Thomas's article helped me articulate this argument to my students with its focus on forms of fan engagement outside of fan vids, with statements such as "in addition to fan fiction providing spaces for critical responses to texts through writing, these spaces also serve an important role for exploring issues of identity and empowerment" (2006, 236). By including articles from educators other than myself that express this view of fan works as more than just a creative response to source material, I was able to demonstrate to my students that there is a body of academic scholarship that supports the interpretation of fan works as a form of creative criticism.

[4.22] By introducing the concept of fan fiction as a form of critical creative writing so late into the semester, I designed a classroom environment that asked students to create connections between analytical writing and
creative writing on their own, before I formally worked to make this aspect of writing adaptations clear to
them. More specifically, I overtly introduced this specific element of fandom research and the concept of
adaptation as a critical creative response during the same week that the final major writing assignment was
due. Before this point, we had already discussed the potential authorial intentions behind over a dozen pieces
of fan fiction. The students had been analyzing the potential reasons behind changes in characterization, plot,
and setting, as well as articulating their own personal responses to these fan works and the canonical texts on
which they are based. Altogether, this course design gave students over two months to (1) make their own
intuitive leap into understanding adaptations as critical in nature and (2) practice their verbal and written
literary analysis skills using more than just novels. The students had control over both these learning
outcomes by completing the course activities like the writing prompts and Write-ups that required creative
and critical thinking and by writing in response to the materials we read and watched.

[4.23] The students seemed to really enjoy the opportunity to analyze children's and young adult novels,
movies, and TV show adaptations, and fan fiction, fan videos, and fan art, and they created many robust class
discussions and assignment responses throughout the semester. But while I wanted students to have the time
and opportunity to discover how adaptations are not just creative but critical in nature and how formal literary
analysis has its own creative aspects, I did not want students to leave the course without these connections
being formally articulated and discussed in our classroom. Many students chose to write their fan fiction
earlier in the semester, so by the next to last week of class, when the final major writing assignment was due,
most students were working on writing their formal literary analysis paper. This focus on critical writing by
all but a handful of students made discussing the critical nature of fan fiction all the more relevant because it
provided the opportunity to show the students that they had all already practiced a long form of critical
writing, even if they had chosen to complete their fan fiction assignment first.

[4.24] All but a few students struggled to perceive the critical aspects of creative writing and the creative
aspects of analytical writing, though they simultaneously acknowledged that we had spent a large portion of
the semester discussing how the fan writers and artists were responding to and commenting on their favorite
or least favorite elements of the source text by creating their own fan fiction, art, or videos rather than
academic papers. I was not surprised that so few students saw the intrinsic ties between these forms of
writing; even still today "the artificial divide between creative writing and academic prose" is still prevalent
in the English Studies curriculum (Austen 2005, 139). Outside the classroom setting, a fan is much more
likely to turn to creative expression—rather than academic writing—to respond to and critique a text they
enjoy. Reading academic books and journal articles is not exactly considered a pleasurable pastime by fan
writers and readers. A fan writer is best served, therefore, by using fan fiction, fan art, or fan videos as the
form in which to share their thoughts on their fan object. In contrast, inside the classroom, a student is more
likely to assume that academic writing is the only option for creating a critical statement about a text they
have read or watched.

[4.25] Creative writing is too rarely acknowledged as a valuable form of analytical writing in the literature
classroom for students to easily believe otherwise. Because one's environment is so critical to choosing the
writing they perceive as acceptable for achieving their goals, it is imperative that instructors of English
Studies courses seriously consider how they can empower their students by including creative writing
projects—like writing a piece of fan fiction—in their classrooms. Furthermore, instructors will likely need to
challenge themselves to see the critical potential in creative writing and help their students see this potential
as well. If I am fortunate enough to teach a version of this course again, I plan to place the connection
between creative and critical writing as a foundational concept of the course. By introducing this aspect of
writing at the beginning of the course rather than waiting to formally acknowledge it at the end, I can gain
insight into how strongly students internalize this understanding of fan fiction and other adaptations when
using a more prescriptive approach to teaching this lesson. A comparative study of these two course designs
could help strengthen future approaches to teaching this facet of fandom and writing pedagogy.
5. Conclusion

[5.1] In "Children's and Young Adult (YA) Literary Adaptations: Analyzing Books, Movies, Television Shows, and Fan Texts," I sought to teach general education students how they could use not only academic genres like the literary analysis paper to critique literary narratives but also creative genres like fan fiction to achieve a similar goal. Courses focused on teaching students how to analyze literature tend to require students to write multiple, formal analysis papers to demonstrate their ability to critically read and respond to the required texts. While I did require my students to write an argumentative literary analysis paper—along with an additional reflective piece about their writing process for this assignment—I challenged this pedagogical status quo by also requiring them to compose their own literary adaptation in response to one of our literary unit texts. Including this twofold approach when asking students to respond via writing to our class's source materials enabled my students to learn not only how to compose a formal literary argument but also how to read literary adaptations not simply as creative additions to source material but also as critiques. Through scaffolding these assignments with Write-ups, notebook writing prompts, reading/watching quizzes, and class discussions, I gave the students the opportunity to practice not just their academic and creative writing skills but also their ability to critically engage with the texts they encounter in their everyday lives.

[5.2] The number of adaptations released in theaters, on television, via laptop screens, and in bookstores seems to increase every year. By designing a short adaptations unit for their college courses, English instructors across various fields of study can encourage their students to grapple with the complex relationships between source text and adaptations. Considering the percentage of popular culture adaptations and fandoms that are based on children's and young adult texts, instructors in this literary specialization in particular can enrich their students' learning experiences for many semesters to come.

6. Notes

1. Illinois State University's motto is "Gladly We Learn and Teach." Unsurprisingly, as part of earning my PhD in English, I was required to design and teach an undergraduate course of my choice during my third year in the program. This internship often includes going through the institutional review board approval process so that student data from the course can be used in our dissertations (which must include at least one chapter focused on pedagogy).

2. One student dropped the course midway through the semester due to a personal matter. From this point forward, I will use "students" to refer only to those who consented to take part in my research study.

3. During the Vampire Diaries unit, the term "skeleton adaptation" was used in one of the supplemental readings. It is defined as "when plot elements are so far removed from the source material that the originals seem to become mere skeletons of the original plot" (CalvinLaw 2015).

4. The first mini unit of the course focused solely on theory. It was followed by two literary units, Vampire Diaries and Harry Potter, and a final mini-unit based on the Class Zine activity. A two-week lesson on writing literary analysis was inserted between the two literary units.

5. The students I cite have been given pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy.

6. I purposely chose fan works that demonstrated overt critical responses to the source texts. Henry Jenkins, a media studies scholar, has stated that all fan texts are critical in nature: "Fandom's very existence represents a critique of conventional forms of consumer culture" (2013, 283). As this understanding of literary adaptations as critical works is not the standard assumption of students, especially by those outside of the English major, I refrained from using fan texts that would require a more advanced knowledge of how to deeply analyze
literary narratives. For an example of what I am describing as "overt critical responses," see the fan fiction "Disillusion" (asagi5 2015).

7. References


Praxis

Students as fan, or Reinvention and repurposing in first-year writing classrooms

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[0.1] Abstract—I performed a study of two first-year writing classrooms and their interactions that used a fan fiction–based pedagogy. Rather than using fan fiction as class texts, this pedagogy used the fan fiction practices of reinventing and repurposing to help students better understand themselves and their community. This was done to position the students as fans themselves. Students were challenged to act as a fan would as they moved through myriad overlapping fan fiction and composition studies practices. I include descriptions of major assignments, examples of student writing, and reflections on both the successes and struggles within this classroom.

[0.2] Keywords— Beta reading; College writing; Pedagogy


1. Introduction

[1.1] Though many scholars view fan fiction as a transformative act, and this reading has merit in and of itself, there has always been a certain form of intention left behind by this terminology. Transformation feels too pretty, like a word only belonging to the final product that is a fan fiction work, not the grasping, identity-wrangling, participatory act of creation. Instead, I define the process of writing fan fiction as an intentional act of reinvention and repurposing, for these terms better settle me within a place where fan fiction and composition pedagogy meet. In composition studies, reinvention and repurposing offer ways to work with and against existing conditions to create something new. The fan fiction practices of borrowing, mixing, and inserting characters, narratives, and plot are forms of repurposing and reinvention because they are mediated through the existing conditions (the canon), creating a writing process where readers and writers alike can learn in a participatory way. While teachers may initiate a fan fiction pedagogy by bringing fan fiction, as text, into the class, or challenging students to write their own fan fiction, the fan fiction pedagogy featured in this paper is built on a foundation of reinvention and repurposing. However, it is unlikely that fan fiction writers would describe their writing process in terms akin with traditional academic learning. Rather, they are more likely to describe fan fiction writing as experiments in understanding self and finding community.

[1.2] The pedagogical potential of fan fiction comes from creating a classroom where students deliberately move through exercises of reinvention and repurposing to explore self and find community. First-year writing classrooms, in particular, offer space for students to address their own biases, identities, and motivations, as well as react to and through community difference. In "Lessons In Citizenship: Using Collaboration in the Classroom to Build Community, Foster Academic Integrity, and Model Civic Responsibility," Anne Biswas (2014) posits that by working "collaboratively to form an academic community inside the classroom, students
can model what it means to participate as honest, responsible, and respectful members of a civic community" (10). A classroom that mimics fan fiction community challenges students to actively participate in generating and contributing to classroom knowledge, rather than allowing competitiveness or passive, bare-minimum work to spur their motivations. Positioning the teacher as a community member on par with students also fosters better participation as "communities are a natural fit in the conceptual transformation of pedagogy from the teacher-centered to learner-centered paradigm" (14). My fan fiction pedagogy does not suggest that a teacher step down from their teaching role, rather that they position themselves as a learner alongside their students. This mimics the autonomous learning of the fan fiction community, where all members, from those who amply participate to those who veer toward lurking, have means to contribute to and generate knowledge. Using overlapping fan fiction and composition practices, like reinvention and repurposing, helps students in first-year writing classrooms gain the civic skills necessary to reflect on and understand self as well as create and negotiate through community.

[1.3] Of course, bringing fan fiction into classrooms is not new. Since Henry Jenkins first popularized the term, acafans have created pedagogies and scholarship that signal their dual allegiance to both academia and fandom (note 1). While fandom pedagogies as a whole can be applied across a variety of different disciplines, fan fiction is particularly potent for first-year writing classrooms because the foci of both spaces is writing. In "Shared Passions, Shared Compositions: Online Fandom Communities and Affinity Groups as Sites for Public Writing Pedagogy," Katherine DeLuca (2018) argues that fan fiction is well-suited to work alongside composition because it "enable[s] instructors to build a pedagogy that begins where the students already are" (78). In "Looking to Fandom in Times of Change," Shannon Sauro (2017) explains that fan fiction is important in the first-year writing classroom because "we live in a time of change that requires flexible and creative approaches to the socio-political mandates and constraints imposed upon our teaching and scholarship." Paul Booth (2017) echoes these sentiments in addressing change in "Fandom in The Classroom," by saying "fandom presents a bastion of critical thinking in a world of conformity." "Fanfiction in the Composition Classroom," by Kimberly Karaluis (2012), posits that fan fiction can help composition students build the "narrative muscles" necessary to move through higher education." These scholars are only a few of many who are now looking to the ways that fan fiction and composition classrooms may overlap. Each scholar has their own unique approach to pedagogy. DeLuca has students look to works of fan fiction as means to understand public writing, Sauro has her students address fan fiction as text for analysis, Booth makes his students study the history and cultural relationships within fandom, and Karaluis challenges her students to write their own fan fiction works. While these approaches all proved fruitful, I approached my fan fiction pedagogy by looking at fan fiction as practice, rather than subject. It is through the practices of the fan fiction community, not the content, that I found the pedagogical potential of self-exploration and community building.

[1.4] My fan fiction pedagogy doubly prepares students to understand self and others, through intentional writing practices like repurposing and reinvention, as well as collaborative, community-building practices like beta reading. In Spring 2019, I performed a case study of this fan fiction pedagogy across two sections of English 151: Writing and Argument, the first-year writing course at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Each section of this course had between twenty and twenty-five students, mostly freshmen and sophomores. The English department at UNL allows graduate teaching assistants, like myself, ample freedom in designing their own syllabi, loosely formed around the following agendas: "engaging [students] in the composing process (immersing students in drafting and revising, providing strategies for revision, proofreading, responding to texts-in-process, etc.)" and "helping [students] become more rhetorically aware (experienced at identifying significant contexts for writing, developing and following through on real purposes for their own writing, engaging questions of audience, etc…)." Additionally, UNL requires that students produce at least twenty pages of graded writing by the end of the semester (split among major assignments), participate in some form of peer review and revision, and do significant research for at least one major project. With these agendas as the foci of my syllabus, I used a combination of composition and fan fiction scholarship to design
a course with these three key characteristics:

1. Knowledge is produced by participatory and autonomous learning.
2. Classroom assignments encourage students to explore and express their own identities while regarding the identities of others.
3. Peer review is based on transparent, collaborative efforts around subjects of students' own interests.

[1.5] The following is a reflective case study of how this design played out within these two different sections of first-year writing. First, I give a brief literature review of the theories that serve as the foundation for this fan fiction pedagogy— invention, reinvention, and repurposing. I include an explanation of how these theories are ascribed in composition scholarship and their connections with the fan fiction community. Additionally, each explanation of theory is paired with a correlating assignment description, as well as exemplary excerpts from student papers. I weave the case study alongside the theory to concretely demonstrate the praxis of this fan fiction pedagogy. The next section describes how beta reading was used in lieu of the traditional peer review and shares student feedback on the beta reading process. After an explanation of these assignments, I provide a reflection and examination of the positive results and limitations of this study before concluding. Overall, I argue that this case study demonstrates the way that fan fiction practices are uniquely situated for suitable adaptation to the first-year writing classroom. In implementing this fan fiction pedagogy, we may better prepare students in understanding self, community, and how to be a fan.

2. Theories and writing assignments

[2.1] Although it may not seem like it, almost all fan fiction works begin with the compositional tool of invention. In his article, "A Plan for Teaching Rhetorical Invention," Richard Larson (1999) poses a series of wh-questions that invite writers to "invent" within their writing process. These "who, what, when, where, why, and how" (139) questions are rhetorical inquiries that allow writers to invent their own interpretations, arguments, and analyses. In the classroom, these questions are asked to stimulate discussion and help students write via dissemination of a text. However, when a fan fiction writer questions an existing text (the canon), they are working with reinvention, a transformation of the traditional invention. In "Re-Inventing Invention: A Performance in Three Acts," Jason Palmeri, Bre Garrett, and Denise Landrum (2012) argue for reinvention as the making of something new out of chaos, saying "writers need to resist narrowing focus and coming to closure too quickly; rather, writers who learn the 'uses of chaos' come to value the process of gathering and juxtaposing disparate materials in order to generate a 'new' idea." (Palmeri, Garrett, and Landrum 2012). Reinvention is not the traditional generation of new ideas about a text, but rather a remixing of the preexisting, disparate chaos from within and around a text. Although reinvention is used in this context for composition studies, both invention and reinvention feel very similar to what happens within the fan fic community. Therefore, the first major assignment of my fan fiction pedagogy class was grounded in invention and reinvention.

[2.2] In the first five weeks of class, which comprised Unit #1, students did readings and held discussions on fandom, fan fiction, and community. Although we would like to imagine fandom as a term both recognizable and ingrained in culture, I knew that many students would still need guidance in understanding and recognizing fandom. Additionally, students were introduced to the concepts of invention, reinvention, and voice. This was done in preparation for the first major assignment, which came in the form of a personal narrative. In this assignment, students were asked to explore a fandom they belonged to. Here, fandom was a rather loose construction, as it could mean both the traditional fannish behavior surrounding a form of media as well as any type of participatory community-centered hobby. Part of the instructions included answering this prompt:

[2.3] In a narrative, tell me a story about a fandom you are part of, including the answers to the
following questions: How did you come to join this fandom? What types of people join this fandom—do they have defining characteristics, beliefs, or arguments they want to make? What type of hierarchies exist in this fandom? What practices do you and other members of this fandom engage in? In what ways do you think your fandom interacts with the larger world, whether positive or negative? What misconceptions do others have about your fandom? What does it mean for you, both personally and socially, to participate in this fandom?

[2.4] This prompt asked that students do what fan fic writers do—engage with a fandom they are passionate about, demonstrate what this fandom says about their own identity, and comment on how that fandom interacts with the larger world through the answering of Larson's wh-questions. Use of invention questions here allowed students to better understand self, as well as set them up within the early steps of reinvention.

[2.5] In most cases, allowing students to engage with their chosen fandoms within their personal narratives produced the same type of fannish enthusiasm for this assignment that fans have in writing fan fiction. For example, Nick, in writing about hunting (which, for him, was both hobby and fandom), demonstrated a good understanding of self as he explained how hunting was both an individual sport and communal activity (note 2). Nick wrote: "I was brought up on hunting and it has truly shaped part of who I am. It has made me respectful, caring, willing to learn valuable lessons, and always staying humble." Here, he outlines the ways he individually participates in his fandom, all the while narratively answering several of the questions from the prompt. He also alludes to hunting as a participatory practice shared by his whole family, which he went into in further detail throughout the paper. Additionally, Nick was able to examine the ways that his fandom interacts with the larger world outside of himself and family, commenting on how the larger fandom exists through shared hashtags and dedicated spaces on social media. "Scrolling through social media, it is mainly pictures of ducks, geese, deer, and other species I have hunted. A majority of the pictures have thousands of likes and comments, showing the hunting community is bigger than most think." Although he was writing on a traditional activity through the lens of fandom, Nick still moved through the early steps of reinvention with ease, as did many other students. Through the answering of wh-questions, students were able to explore and understand self in an assignment situated around subjects of their own interest.

[2.6] This personal narrative was designed to ground students in invention, an early and necessary step of reinvention. When composing work of fan fiction, a writer is piecing together preexisting narratives both through their own ideas and identities, but also accounting for the identities of others within the fan fic community. Kat Heiden (2016) argues that "fanfiction writing is a powerful tool in discovering, shaping, and strengthening these multifaceted identities. It provides a creative outlet through which participants are free to explore and co-create identity through narrative" (25). This co-creation via ideas and identities exemplifies the "uses of chaos" that Palmeri, Garrett, and Landrum argue for in their conception of reinvention. This form of reinvention is a powerful tool in the first-year writing classroom because it allows students to compose through the questioning and acknowledging of the multiple ideas, biases, and practices. Reinvention is a practice that gets students thinking not only of their own answers to Larson's wh-questions but also to the answers of those around the them, giving them the ability think deeply about the multiplicity of the texts and people they encounter.

[2.7] In the second major assignment of this class, students pushed reinvention to its fullest potential. In the second five weeks of class, which comprised Unit #2, students continued to do readings and hold discussions on reinvention. Additionally, they also read on empathy, collaboration, and the importance of talking across differences. This was done in service to their second major assignment, the outsider narrative. Here, students were asked to engage in a fandom they were not part of. The directions for this assignment were quite literally the same as the personal narrative, except that students would now answer the wh-questions based on another fandom. The goal was to make them see outside of themselves, valuing extrospection as much as introspection was valued in the first assignment. Additionally, students were required to do research on their
outside fandom, finding disparate materials to fulfill the latter steps of reinvention. This helped students see through differences in a creative way as they "benefit[ed] greatly by gathering a wide array of disparate materials and then taking the time to experiment with combining and re-arranging these materials in novel ways" (Palmeri, Garrett, and Landrum 2012). In some ways, this outsider narrative was quite literally a fan fic itself, because students were seeking to understand a group they did not belong to so they could compose a narrative as if they were members of that group.

[2.8] Caleb, who struggled in the initial personal narrative, wrote quite prolifically in the outsider narrative. For his outsider narrative, he chose to feature the fandom that surrounds *The Bachelor* (2002–), which his "girlfriend and sisters are obsessed with but [he] never watched." Caleb immersed himself in this fandom through his own research and interviews with those in his life who watched the show. In an apt demonstration of the outside fandom's habits and beliefs, Caleb wrote:

> [2.9] The fans of this show are not just watching the show, but they are falling in love with the contestants too. Being a fan of this show literally means becoming a version of the bachelor, allowing the fans to make their own assessments and fall in love with their favorite girl and pick out who they think would be the best match.

[2.10] Here, Caleb answers the wh-questions from the prompt in a way that is surprisingly empathetic for someone who claimed, at the start of their outsider narrative, that he would never "get" what the show was about. This was exactly the point of the outsider narrative, to make students think as deeply about others as they had thought about themselves in the former narrative. Paired together, both narrative assignments encouraged better understanding of self and community through addressing the wh-questions and uses of chaos found within reinvention.

[2.11] Although reinvention is a critical practice within the fan fiction community, repurposing holds even more potential for the first-year writing classroom, particularly in reflecting fanfic practices. In Shari Stenberg’s *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Intervention for a Neoliberal Age* (2015), she defines repurposing as the "practice of locating and enacting imaginative possibilities for change and agency within—and often out of—prohibitive, and even damaging cultural conditions" (2). While Palmeri, Garrett, and Landrum's notions of reinvention have some similarities in that the practice is in making something new out of existing, often disparate, conditions, repurposing, in Stenberg's conception, is about specifically responding to damaging ideas and narratives. Writers do this first by highlighting existing conditions, then analyzing social contexts in which possibilities for change exist, and finally, repurposing what has been damaged for newer purposes (Stenberg 2015, 10). While reinvention and repurposing could be synonymous, reinvention is about exploration while repurposing is about *intentional disruption*. Fan fic writers who work with reinvention may undo damaging conditions by playing with their own identities, inserting a myriad of unconventional characters or conditions into a canon work, and/or collaboratively answering Larson's wh-questions to disseminate canon narratives. Fan fic writers who work with repurposing do the same, but with the intention of disrupting conditions within canon works that trouble them, making repurposing a more potent example of critical thinking and writing.

[2.12] As such, repurposing was the central theme of the final assignment. In the final five weeks of class, which comprised Unit #3, students read on repurposing and rhetorical/cultural analysis. Additionally, students also read a few notable examples of repurposing in fan fiction, like the popular reconception of Hermione Granger as black to make intentional parallels between muggle-born prejudice and white supremacy, or the genderbending of superheroes in MCU to fight sexist conventions (note 3). I included specific examples within this final unit because I wanted to give students a good idea of all the imaginative possibilities they could enact within their final assignment—the repurposing assignment. This third assignment functioned first as a space for analysis and then as a space for students to push themselves to
creatively repurpose an aspect of their personal fandom that they found damaging. Basic instructions included:

[2.13] In this assignment, you will return to your personal fandom and choose a cultural artifact from within it. First, in a rhetorical analysis, identify the rhetors, situations, audiences, and messages that define this artifact. Also, identity any sociocultural connections (race, gender, sexuality, class, dis/abilities) and what these connections say about the fandom it was pulled from. Second, using repurposing, suggest ways to improve or make new any of the potentially damaging conditions found within the various aspects of the artifact.

[2.14] By giving students a space to deeply analyze an artifact within the first half of the assignment, they worked with the first steps of repurposing through investigating and disseminating existing conditions. When they suggested improvements in the second half, they worked with the latter steps of repurposing by moving away from damaging conditions and proposing new ways that they could resist within institutions (in this case, the fandom that the artifact was pulled from).

[2.15] Although I was worried that students would resist repurposing aspects of a fandom they had strong affections for, many of them really embraced this assignment. For instance, Erin had much to say when repurposing her favorite TV show, *Friends* (1994–2004). She analyzed and repurposed an episode with a transgender character who was mocked and belittled by the lead characters in the show, delivering a succinct analysis of the cultural harm this does to marginalized LGBT+ people. For repurposing, Erin suggested three things: that the transgender character should be "incorporated more frequently in the show," that she should not "be described as a woman wearing man's clothing," and finally, that the show should "candidly talk about the difference between drag and being transgender." Erin's suggestions were solid, and demonstrated that she truly grasped the theme of repurposing in this assignment—to undo any potentially damaging conditions that an artifact had done. Erin was one of many who happily embraced this assignment and seemed enthusiastic when it came to repurposing an aspect of their personal fandoms.

[2.16] The repurposing assignment pushed many students both creatively and critically. For instance, in writing on the song "The Weekend," by her favorite singer, SZA, Megan analyzed the way the song promotes competition between women that is "detrimental to the young girls listening." To repurpose this, Megan quite literally rewrote the lyrics of the song, changing them to a message that was "less competitive and more empowering." Megan was one of many students who made creative repurposing choices. Like Erin, many offered suggestions or rewrote episodes of their favorite television shows or scenes from their favorite movies. Others, like Megan, reworked song lyrics or music videos by their favorite singers/bands. Others had even more creative solutions, making tangible suggestions for how their own communities could be more inclusive, offering ways that sports controversies could have been handled better, or questioning the ways favorite actors/actresses acted in interviews. In allowing them to choose their own fandoms, students were able to produce a wide array of repurposing solutions, building their own archive of fic-like materials. Scaffolding these three assignments allowed students to work with reinvention and repurposing through ongoing inquiries into subjects of interest. It also allowed students to better understand self, talk through differences and build community between converging fandoms, and intentionally produce something new on a subject they were passionate about.

3. Beta reading over peer review

[3.1] While the larger practices of repurposing and reinvention are thematic of the fan fiction pedagogy used in this case study, this class also reflected the fan fiction community with use of beta reading. A beta reader is someone who reads through chapters of a writer's stories and gives feedback before they are published. The relationship between a writer and their beta reader is one that is collaborative and recursive, affording more
reciprocity than any other relationship in the fan fiction community. In "I Write. You Write. They Write: The Literary Works of Fandom as a Factor of Integrating the Community," Agnieszka Oberc (2016) outlines the typical process of the beta reader–writer relationship, saying:

[3.2] The relationship between the author and their beta-reader is that of cooperation. The beta-reader's task is to point out potential mistakes and problems, and to suggest solutions. The author attempts to take those into consideration, then the story is discussed again. The whole process bears resemblance to negotiations, and ideally, it should lead to creating a text both the author and the beta-reader deem good. (68)

[3.3] Through the sharing and collaboration on a work, writers make themselves vulnerable by offering up a piece of reckless, often messy writing to which beta readers offer critical, yet caring, feedback. This method of collaboration is usually transparent, as both writer and beta reader are equally invested in the outcome of the fic. The beta reader is not a cold editor; they are an active participant in making a work of fan fiction possible.

[3.4] Beta readers and writers are not randomly assigned, as peer review partners in first-year writing classrooms typically are; instead, they come together over a shared project of interest. While peer review typically comes in the form of assigned writing pairs or groups who give feedback on projects students may or may not be interested in, beta reading is about mutual interest and shared passion. In "The Role of Feedback in Two Fanfiction Writing Groups," Chad Littleton (2011) says that "fanfiction communities are, in essence, self-sponsored writing groups…they are autonomous, unlike the nonautonomous groups found in a classroom setting" (8). The autonomous nature of the fan fiction community demands that feedback must be consistently reciprocal, as "writers [are] motivated by forces besides grades and tangible rewards"; instead, they "are built on trust" (8). In many ways, this communal trust fosters a more authentic, enthusiastic response than feedback delivered in a nonautonomous community, because participants only deliver such feedback when and how they want to do so (note 4). I refer to this type of authentic, enthusiastic, mutually passionate feedback as a form of pedagogical intimacy. I used this term because it "offers a different approach to the review itself, recommending a more holistic, social view than what we often assign in class" (Clemons 2015). Rarely would a beta reader or writer work with a fic that is not within a fandom they are both interested in. This shared interest and knowledge of the canon cultivates a sense of intimacy because it drives equal investment in the work. Because the work that a beta reader and writer do is often more comprehensive than the typical feedback received in peer review, they partake in a pedagogically intimate relationship.

[3.5] In this class, beta reading was not defined by a solidified assignment; instead, it was more of an ongoing collaborative process between two students throughout the semester. Early in the class, students were assigned a beta reader—another student whose drafts they read and vice versa. I paired students through an in-class activity where they shared lists of both conventional and unconventional fandoms they were part of. Students with multiple, overlapping fandoms were paired together. I did this to best mimic the passion that both writers and beta readers put into projects in the fan fiction community, working under the assumption that students with shared fandoms will work together better. Just as beta readers do, these students collaborated throughout a period of time (the semester), during which they shared feedback, dissected each other's work, and reflected on their relationships throughout the process. Beta reader pairs were required to meet six times during the semester, for three in-class workshops (one per major assignment) and three times outside of class (also once per major assignment). Each time they met outside of class, students took a selfie with each other and wrote a brief report about what they did during the meeting. Though students were guided as to how to act as a beta reader early in the semester via readings and practice activities, what they did during their meetings was entirely up to them (note 5). This relationship mimicked the typical relationship between a beta reader and a writer because pairs came together through similar interests, and
feedback was adjusted to the needs of each student, varied from assignment to assignment, and was freely determined by those within the relationship.

[3.6] At the end of the semester, each student wrote a reflection on their beta reader relationship. It included commentary of their own progress in the feedback they gave as well as commentary on feedback given to them by their partner. Students were encouraged to thank their partners for the efforts they made or critique partners who they did not feel put adequate effort into building a collaborative relationship. The grade for these final reflections was determined half by what the student said about themselves and half by what their partner said of them. Although this form of grading seems manipulative, it was done to help invest students in this relationship. Knowing that what their partner said about them determined half their grade, while reflection of their own efforts served as the other half, seemed a proper motivation for students to take this assignment seriously. For the most part, these reflections produced positive results. Very few pairings seemed to have problems working together. In their reflections, many students responded positively to the beta reader relationship, noting the different ways they bonded with and tried to help their partners as the semester went on.

[3.7] For instance, in her beta reader reflection, Maggie commented on the ways that she and her partner, Simone, were able to strike a balance in their partnership. "It was a very equal situation back and forth. It was never just telling each other mistakes, it was a conversation on how things were going, it all came very natural because we worked well as a team." Maggie also added that "Working with Simone was a great learning experience because I got to see a different editing and writing style. We were able to learn from each other and I think I grew from it." Meanwhile, when writing about Maggie, Simone reflected on the ways they bonded. "My beta reader and I have a close bond now because we see the similarities that we have to one another, that weren't so obvious in the beginning of the semester. These similarities have helped us a lot in the semester to better our writing and better ourselves." Here, both Maggie and Simone described what I had hoped this ongoing beta reader assignment would produce: that two students could build a reciprocal relationship based on the foundations of similar interests and motivations to do well in the class, and that ultimately, that relationship could lead to a pedagogical intimacy like that within the fan fiction community.

4. Resistance and reflections

[4.1] However, even though there were a multitude of positive results within this class, my study still had its limitations. In both classes, a handful of students resisted the notion of being a fan of anything. During the first few weeks of class, it was a struggle to convince some students they were fans themselves. I would ask them about their favorite television shows, video games, sports teams, or hobbies; even in answering all those questions, they still resisted my insistence that liking a subject made them a fan of that subject. Perhaps this resistance came from cultural connotations of fans. While fandom and fannish behaviors have become increasingly mainstream over the last two decades, fans themselves are still largely thought of as antisocial outcasts. I also wonder about the way cultural conceptions of gender and fandom played out in my classroom. Though I had a higher ratio of female students in both sections, it was a handful of male students that were most resistant to thinking of themselves as fans. While there were several exceptions, this dynamic of male resistance and female embrace was present within both sections of this class. Historically, the fan fiction community is statistically more female than male, and more teenage than adult; that association often paints a gendered picture of fandom as silly or childish (note 6). Perhaps the resistance came from this gendered misconception. Regardless, the point here is that I did indeed encounter resistance to notion of being a fan, and that seemed to be at the core of the troubles I faced in this fan fiction pedagogy.

[4.2] This resistance was most present within the first assignment, the personal narrative. Early in the course, many students were still grappling with the ideas of fandom itself; so for them, it probably felt premature to examine self in relation to a personal fandom. However, many of the same students who struggled with the
personal narrative did quite well in the outsider narrative. Students like Caleb, who provided mere surface-level analysis in their personal narrative, suddenly provided in-depth looks to fandoms they were not part of (note 7). While I believe the five weeks between the due date of the personal narrative and the outsider narrative gave them a much more grounded understanding of fandom, I also think it is more than that—it is easier to analyze and unpack something you are not part of because there is no risk there. The outsider narrative was easier for the students who struggled to consider themselves fans because they did not have to grapple with issues of self, only with that of others. To me, the transition from personal narrative to outsider narrative made sense because it moved from invention to reinvention, but I worry about the type of vulnerability I was asking of students so early in the semester with the personal narrative. Perhaps these two assignments would be better-suited if they were swapped, using examination of other as an example to later lead to examination of self, moving through reinvention first from its chaos and then to its simpler form of invention.

[4.3] The beauty of fan fiction pedagogy is that like fan fiction and fan studies itself, it has the ability to adapt as time goes on. Rearrangement of the first two assignments is not the only consideration within this pedagogy. Perhaps, to combat resistance that may be situated in cultural constructions of fan and gender, early lessons plans could include readings and activities dedicated to undoing those constructions. Additionally, in both the beta reader reflections and final class evaluations, many students commented on how much they valued the outside class meetings with their beta partners. While I initially feared that students would resist having to meet outside of class, I learned that many of them actually met up more times than was minimally required. As such, a revision of this aspect of fan fiction pedagogy could include more suggested meeting times for beta partners, or incentives for students who go above and beyond to building that pedagogical intimacy in their relationship. I was also surprised at the sheer enthusiasm students showed in their final repurposing assignment. Many students produced repurposing suggestions that were thoughtfully crafted and intelligently formed. As such, the repurposing assignment could be restructured to act as a multimodal project, in which students present their repurposing ideas to the classroom rather than merely writing them as papers for me to read. In this way, their ideas could be shared, heard, and amplified in the same way that repurposed fan fiction is shared, heard, and amplified in fan fiction communities. Although these are only a few ideas, I happily embrace the many ways I can transform this pedagogy.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] Overall, both sections of this class felt like productive spaces that made use of the best aspects of the fan fiction community. I would also like to note that there were many more fan fiction practices that we used within this classroom, but as with many pedagogy case studies, a single paper cannot capture all the readings, discussions, and day-by-day minutia of what went into creating this fan fiction pedagogy. Instead, what I have attempted here is to highlight the overarching themes that defined my fan fiction pedagogy and give examples of the students who best succeeded within it. While most fan fiction pedagogies are defined either by having students write their own fan fiction or use fan fiction as texts for analysis, I chose to create a pedagogy based on the practices of the fan fiction community, not on the subjects of it. I did this in part because of my own history with fandom. As someone who has long been part of both fandom and academia, the fan fiction community served as my secondary learning space outside of the classroom. In my teenage years, fan fiction helped me to both grow and know myself. It also helped me better understand the meaning of community and what it takes to be an active member in one. Finally, it taught me the many different imaginative possibilities that I had the power to make true when writing on a fandom I love. I wanted, perhaps selfishly, to bring these same things that fandom taught me into a classroom where I could teach others.

[5.2] Of course, I wanted to do this in a way that felt new and connected to my academic home place of composition and rhetoric. I landed on the terms of invention, reinvention, and repurposing not only because
they are important to composition and rhetoric, but also because they feel like the best expressions of the hands-on grappling of self and community that fan fiction is always doing—the work that many like to call transformative. Additionally, I landed here because while I delight in being a fan myself, not every student shares the same fandoms as me and I cannot assume that materials from even the most popular fandoms would be eagerly consumed by first-year writing students. In some ways, fan fiction pedagogy can be risky. If you're forcing your own fandoms into the classroom, you leave very little space for students to find their own voices, understand themselves, or participate in the communities they are part of. A fan fiction pedagogy where the teacher's own fannish passions are the only subjects of study feels antithetical to the democratic, autonomous nature of the fan fiction community itself. In finding the bridge where fan studies and composition studies meet, I was avoiding a classroom that might deliver such a limited understanding of fandom. In short, I wanted a fan fiction pedagogy that allowed students to be fans within their own rights, not the type of fans I expected them to be.

[5.3] Which brings me to my final conclusion, that an essential factor to a fan fiction pedagogy that suits the needs of a first-year writing classroom is a pedagogy that must be willing to continually transform. I developed this pedagogy to uniquely fit the needs of institution and participants, one that aligned with UNL's requirements for first-year writing classrooms as well as accounted for students' own subjects of interest. While the fan fiction community, and its many autonomous, democratic practices, felt like a good place to begin, the pedagogy still needed to move through a filter of composition scholarship. This case study was a good starting place to gain some insight into what happens when you ask students to address themselves as fans and then grapple with self, community, and each other. In other words, you could say that my interest in fan fiction pedagogy is an ongoing WIP, centered around my own love of fandom and my initiative to help students better understand self and their larger part in the world outside of the classroom. There are still a few chapters left to write, but it will get there, one transformation at a time.

6. Notes

1. Not all scholars who implement fan pedagogy regard themselves as acafans, and the terms itself has carried different connotations from it creation to current times. More about it can be read on Henry Jenkins's blog (http://henryjenkins.org/blog).

2. Students signed permission forms early in the semester for their writing to be shared; however, all student names featured in this paper are pseudonyms.

3. The racebending Hermione fan fiction I gave students to read can be found here: https://archiveofourown.org/works/8210656. The genderbending MCU fan fiction they read can be found here: https://archiveofourown.org/works/5718715.

4. The overlap between peer review and beta reading has been tackled by many fan scholars across a variety of platforms. I would like to note that my explanation of the beta reading relationship cannot encompass all of that scholarship, and instead, I am seeking to highlight what most served my creation of this fan fiction pedagogy.

5. I really wanted to model the way beta reader relationships worked in the fan fiction community, so the students were given no specific set of directions/assignments/instructions for how to be a beta reader. Instead, we read about and discussed roles of beta readers early in the semester. Students were directed to refer to their reading list (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qvkQUVZcZ7795tuzAcVYejXSL-yTqmlt5Rh36O4hb4A/edit?usp=sharing) to guide their beta reader relationship.

6. As a whole, the fan fiction community is so disparate that to perform a complete census of demographics
would be impossible. This sentence about being majority female and teenager refers to a 2013 census of Archive of Our Own (AO3) users via Tumblr (http://centrumlumina.tumblr.com/post/63208278796/ao3-census-masterpost). In total, the census yielded over 10,000 responses. These numbers reflect only a portion of the fan fiction community; but since AO3 is one of the largest archives of fan fiction online, these limited numbers work as a sample size of the typical fan fiction community's populace.

7. Caleb is the same student whose outsider narrative on *The Bachelor* was featured above.

7. References


Praxis

Evaluating fandom: Using blogging and a grade contract to promote fan labor in the classroom

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[0.1] Abstract—Grade contracts offer a way to transform the relationship between labor and assessment in classrooms. By turning attention from evaluations of quality to labor completed, grade contracts make space for students to shift from a grade-driven extrinsic motivation to an interest-driven intrinsic motivation for completing coursework. Such an assessment model is well suited for fan studies classes where instructors ask students to engage in fan behavior. I share how I built an upper-division course about anime and anime fandom centered around a student-authored, publicly viewable blog. I discuss the synergy between the blogging project and a grade contract that enhanced student learning, engagement, and enjoyment. I also share my course design philosophy, approach to blogging, and student reactions to the grade contract.

[0.2] Keywords—Anime; College coursework; Pedagogy


1. Introduction

[1.1] A specialist in Composition and Rhetoric by training, I have the good fortune to also regularly teach courses on popular culture, using methods shaped by New Media writing pedagogy and the standpoint that all writing is social. My upper-division Film and Anime course, ENG 345, has been particularly popular, drawing students from majors across the university. The course serves as an introduction to basic film theory and fan studies, with a focus on feature-length anime and the international fandom that surrounds it. In the course catalogue, ENG 345 is a topics course with broad student learning outcomes that allow instructors a great deal of latitude: specifically, "Students will use critical and creative thinking" and "Students will communicate effectively." One way I have enabled critical thinking, creative thinking, and effective communication has been through use of a class blog for hosting discussions about readings, reviews, and reactions to the assigned films, as well as news and thoughts related to anime and fandom.

[1.2] As of Spring 2020, I have taught ENG 345 three times, each time using a course blog hosted on WordPress. For the first two semesters, I kept the blog closed and password protected, viewable only by students in the course. In evaluations, students regularly note how much they prefer the blog to the discussion boards found on our university's learning management system. The blog improved in-class discussions because conversations had already begun online—classes could take right off from posts and comments. As an instructor, at first I couldn't be happier with the results. Yet, I knew I was only scratching the surface of the potential of classroom blogging.

[1.3] When planning to teach ENG 345 in Spring 2019, I began a significant redesign of the course. Instead
of just a more friendly stand-in for a discussion board, the course blog, viewable at https://eng345anime.wordpress.com/, would become a public performance space where students would write knowing that their audience extended beyond the classroom. Such a public space can create what Rebecca Black (2007), drawing from James Gee, calls an affinity space (387). In a study of "language, literacy, and social practice" on the site FanFiction.net (384), Black describes a "writing space that engenders affiliation with and facilitates access to literacy and language learning" (385). While nowhere near the size of a site like FanFiction.net, a fandom-facing course blog can foster the kinds of interactions present in affinity spaces. Especially relevant to my course goals, Black notes that in an affinity space, "'newbies,' or novices, and experts share the same activities and participate in the same space" and that "a wide range of expertise and many forms of knowledge…are valued; thus, the roles of 'expert' and 'novice' are highly variable and contingent on activity and context at any given moment" (389). Such an open space, with many avenues for entry and opportunities for participation, is exactly what I wanted for the course blog, knowing that students would have widely varying levels of familiarity and interest in anime, anime fandom, and writing for the web. However, I worried that the interactions necessary for such a space to emerge could be hampered by traditional grading, which often focuses on quality and so is friendlier to the expert or experienced writer over the novice; to help all students maintain openness to the risk of trying new things and admitting to being a novice, I decided to use a grade contract, an idea I return to shortly.

[1.4] Due to the shift from a private to a public blog, I spent more time discussing online privacy and netiquette. These discussions went beyond the basics of protecting private information of self and classmates. Students majoring in Education shared what their professors taught them about maintaining a professional online presence; journalism students discussed the pros and cons of using one's real name or a pseudonym in online writing and how that might vary by context. We discussed the technical issues of how students with an existing WordPress account could create a new account if they wanted to keep their profiles separate. I also provided students with alternatives to making posts to the blog if they were concerned about privacy—either by posting to the university's learning management system (LMS) where only their classmates and I could read them or emailing posts to me, which I would post on their behalf to the blog using my username. Ultimately, all students chose to make their own posts. As the semester went on, we discussed ways of editing, hiding, and deleting individual posts and comments, so that students remained in control of their content.

[1.5] To provide opportunity for creativity, I asked each student to create an individual project that would function as a running column or series on the blog—this student-directed project, or SDP, was required for students who were aiming for a B or an A; for students earning a C or D in the course, the SDP could be used as a way to make up for other missing work. Students who did not wish to write publicly on the blog could instead share their work on the LMS or email it to me. For the SDP, each student would propose a topic and determine as part of that proposal a schedule for how often and how much they would write; each student set the terms of success for their own project.

[1.6] Finally, the course was held together by what Danielewicz and Elbow (2009) describe as a "unilateral grade contract"—a contract designed by the instructor that laid out expectations for the final course grade (for A, B, C, etc.), but that did not make use of individual assignment grades. Course expectations were measured by labor, influenced by Asao Inoue's (2014; 2015) contract model. Students aiming for a higher letter grade—A or B—had to do more labor in the form of a completed SDP, posting and commenting more to the blog, and meeting a higher bar for attendance. Each tier of the grade contract lays out the different expectations (see Appendix 1 for the full contract).

[1.7] The result? Over the sixteen-week semester, twenty students made a total of 179 public posts, shared over 800 comments, and wrote 138,003 words on the course blog—the equivalent of nearly 500 pages of double-spaced prose. Site views grew steadily, as post titles and subject tags helped to draw in search engine
queries: traffic increased from sixty-four visitors (including the twenty students and myself) and 321 views in January of 2019 to 209 visitors and 632 views for the month of May, when the course ended. At least two anime bloggers wrote brief reviews of our course site (Irina 2019; RisefromAshes 2019), which drove more traffic our way. Although students stopped creating new posts when the semester ended in early May of 2019, the site continues to draw visitors. With a high point of 701 views and 478 visitors in August 2019 (though visits are now declining), February 2020 still saw 587 views and 359 visitors to the site. The students in the class successfully generated meaningful content that continues to appeal to fans internationally—while the United States is home to the largest group of viewers, according to WordPress's analytics, viewers from fifty-two different countries visited the site in February 2020 alone.

[1.8] While the blog is the result and the record of success for the course, I believe the grade contract is what enabled that success. The contract helped me as the instructor to get past a thorny ethical issue that often needles academic courses that focus on enacting fandom—how to evaluate student-fans' participation in the fandom. By shifting the grade calculation from quality of work to the labor put into it, students were freed to take risks and experiment with their posts and writing. Put another way, the contract let them geek out about things they loved and rewarded them for it. Further, students did not need to come to the course as self-professed anime fans; indeed, many came for the film-studies element of the course, and a few signed up simply because they needed an English elective that would fit their schedule. All of these students—self-professed anime fans, film buffs, and those driven by curiosity or necessity—were able to participate in their own, self-directed ways.

[1.9] In what follows, I share details about my course design; provide an overview of scholarship about grade contracts and how it pertains to my own contract; and share student reactions to the course, drawing from course reflections written at the end of the semester, use of which is approved by my university's Institutional Review Board (note 1).

2. Course design

[2.1] In ENG 345, the shared course blog became the platform for building community within the class and connecting to the larger anime fandom. It became a space for experimenting with academic concepts and connecting students to fannish interest—such as by posting reading responses to academic texts that made connections to popular anime. Through the blog and the student-designed projects, the students themselves produced a significant portion of the course content—what they blogged about became part of in-class discussions.

[2.2] As for the instructor-chosen content, I began with a list of feature-length anime films, which the university library purchased and kept on closed reserve for students in the class to check out and watch. We would watch portions of these films in class for close analysis of scenes. For texts, I chose an introductory film studies text—Sikov's (2009) Film Studies: An Introduction—and Ian Condry's (2013) The Soul of Anime, along with links to several journal articles and book chapters about anime and fandom. Sikov's introductory text provided general film concepts and language for the class to use when discussing the films, and I encouraged students to use these concepts in their blog posts. One student especially took up this challenge and worked with the terms in their SDP, creating a multiweek, episode-by-episode review of a Japanese action-horror game, The Evil Within (2014) (wordofthejesseday 2019). Condry's (2013) anthropological study delved into anime studio culture and the notion of anime as inherently collaborative not only within and between studios but driven by collaboration between fans and studios as well. His study makes apparent the interconnectedness of fans and industry that helped the class think more deeply about fans as not just consumers but also as active participants and coconstructors of culture.

[2.3] The thrust of the course, then, was toward practicing both academic study and active engagement with
the texts as members of the fandom, to do the labor of being a fan in a way that reinforced the idea that fandom itself is also deserving of respect and study. That is, to carry on the effort of cultural studies to challenge the artificial divide between high and low art. Again, the blog served as the bridge or network to hold these concepts and the work of the course together.

3. Copyright considerations

[3.1] While a majority of the student-developed projects engaged with visuals in some way, only a few of those images were directly created by the students. Even the created content could be considered derivative rather than original: as an SDP, one student created a DIY crafting column featuring anime-themed crafts; another built Gundam models and photo-documented his process. The majority of projects engaged with images that were undoubtedly copyrighted, although their uses of them meet several of the fair-use thresholds: not-for-profit; for reporting, commentary, or critique; using a small portion. I felt it was important to give students latitude in their image use, as sharing screenshots, scans, and fansubbed video has long been a component of the fandom we were studying in the course (note 2). Just as moving the course blog from a closed space to an open space necessitated discussing public writing, working with a fandom that is so closely tied to copyrighted images required more discussion with students. What is copyright? When and how can we use copyrighted material in our projects? What is the relationship of the fandom with copyright? While general notions of fair use could be addressed through instructional materials provided by our university library, the larger issue of fandom's—especially anime and manga fandom's—relationship with copyright became an ongoing discussion point.

[3.2] The copyright infringing nature of many of the students' projects resonates with what Ian Condry (2013) calls the "dark energy" of anime fandom. In one chapter of his study, Condry addresses fansubbing, "the translation and dissemination of anime online by fans," and argues that "to see the world of fansubs simply in terms of copyright infringement" is an oversimplification of a complex social practice (161). He explains the concept of anime fandom's "dark energy" thus:

[3.3] An ethnographic perspective on fansubbing clarifies the value of the energy that circulates through peer-to-peer sharing. This is what I call "dark energy," a reference to the hidden cosmological force pushing apart the galaxies of our universe; the effects are observable, but the source is poorly explained by current theory. Similarly, the dark energy of fandom is measurable but poorly explained by theories of economic motivation. (163)

[3.4] Although no students in ENG 345 created fansubs, their interactions with images and intellectual property related to anime had much in common with the practices and energy that Condry describes in his chapter about fansubbing. His discussion of fansubbing groups' sense of ethics, which includes a not-for-profit approach and respect for content creators, was instructive for the class. In blog posts and discussions about the chapter, students wrestled with the ethical complexity:

[3.5] I found the discussion on ethics in fansubbing to be the most interesting part in this chapter… I see how companies can be mad about their missing out on money, and how fans see a need to spread anime that they are passionate about. I think it gets hard to define the ethical standard fansubbing should adhere to because it is centered around an art. Anime is an art form and due to that aspect, the sharing of its work by traditionally illegal means can be seen as a distribution of art work… Most see art as something that should be available to all so all can interpret it and find their own meanings. However, anime is also a company-based endeavor, which is what makes fansubbing potentially unethical. (kcarpenter842 2019)

[3.6] Other students extended the discussion to other kinds of fan production and appropriation. One who
created animated gifs for their SDP and who also expressed an interest in fan fiction came back to the topic of ethics and legality of fan creativity in their final reflection:

> [3.7] Another thing that stuck with me [from the course] when discussing fan culture is the legal aspect of it. I am aware that fan creations are using characters who belong to someone else, but I think I take for granted that most content creators are cool with fans making things. Reading the chapter on fansubbing reminded me that legal action could be just around the corner for all fans, not just ones who directly use [e.g. pirate] content made by others.

> [3.8] Intellectual property, copyright, fair use, derivative works, and fan creativity are important topics to explore in a fandom-based course. While I purposefully included course readings that helped to open up the discussion, students' own work on the blog drove the discussion further and helped to make the topic more relevant and concrete for them.

4. Grade contract

> [4.1] How was all this work assessed? I've mentioned the grade contract at several points, and I believe it to be an essential component in encouraging the kind of experimentation and the embrace of fun that occurred while still maintaining a rigorous course. My experience with ENG 345 demonstrates the method's effectiveness for fan studies or fandom-based courses. The reason for this fit is that a grade contract can move the class beyond a concern with evaluation to focus instead on doing. Being part of a fandom is to engage in the practice of that fandom; a grade contract enables student-fans (and teacher-fans!) to bring the energy and practice of their fandom into the course and gives the instructor a way to still meet the obligation to assign course grades that do not involve subjective, quality-based assessments of fan labor. In what follows, I briefly survey the literature that guided my grade contract design and then explain my implementation.

> [4.2] Grade contracts are not something new; they have been used in various instructional settings since at least the 1970s (Poppen and Thomson 1971; Parks and Zurhellen 1978; Hassencahl 1979). In writing studies, Ira Shor and Peter Elbow were two early and influential proponents of contracts, each using contracts in slightly different ways. An adaptor of Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy to college writing classrooms in the United States, Shor cocreates grade contracts with his students as one way of sharing power and authority with them in the classroom (1996). Shor sees direct student input into the contract as essential to making it a critical tool and as necessary for such a document to truly be considered a contract (2009). Elbow (1996), and later Danielewicz and Elbow (2009), developed a "unilateral grading contract" for their writing classes. Such a contract is defined by the instructor and presented to the class; Danielewicz and Elbow describe it as still empowering students because it holds the instructor just as accountable to the contract as it does the students. Elbow (1996) finds that "a contract helps me put students into the ideal learning situation: they have to listen to my criticism and advice, yet they get to make up their own mind about whether to go along" (4). In this way, students have control over their work. Danielewicz and Elbow (2009) note that the contract is a way to move students from an extrinsic motivator for their work—the grade control of the contract—toward a more intrinsic motivation—their own interest in their work and desire to write (257).

> [4.3] Asao Inoue (2014) takes inspiration from Shor, Elbow, Danielewicz, and others in designing his labor-based approach to grade contracts. Motivated by social justice, Inoue (2015) sees labor-based contracts as an assessment tool that can make classes more equitable for students of all backgrounds, particularly members of minority and underrepresented groups. Inoue presents his students with sample contract language at the beginning of the semester; after several class sessions that involve readings and discussion about contracts, students can propose changes to the contract. The defining point about his contract is the labor-based approach: all grades are determined by whether students complete the labor agreed to in the contract, with different expectations for each grade tier. Importantly, Inoue (2014) found that when first-year composition
classes used a labor-based contract instead of traditional quality-based assessment to determine final grades, the resulting work was of higher quality when compared to work produced in traditional courses; that is, in a setting where student work was not graded based upon quality but instead based upon labor, the quality of student work actually increased (343).

[4.4] Common to all these approaches is that their contracts make course expectations explicit up front; they give students the autonomy and responsibility to decide what grade they will aim for and to make choices about what work they will do—knowing that those choices will have results (grades) that are defined in the contract. The potential for using a grade contract to reward fan labor is that the course and accompanying grade contract can be designed to put certain fan behaviors front and center. Forms of participation and interaction can make use of technologies and platforms used by fans; as I have done in my class, discussion boards and reading responses can be replaced with posting to a course blog. Common assignment genres can mirror fan-used genres rather than academic genres. Most importantly, these contracted tasks can be set up to be evaluated based upon labor, essentially as complete or incomplete, removing instructor subjectivity and replacing it with an opportunity for student creativity.

[4.5] My own contract (see Appendix 1) rewards labor and is unilateral in form, while allowing students individual control over one major course component, the student-directed project or SDP. The SDP is the major opportunity for students to engage in fan labor in the course because it is the component that individual students have the most control over. Completion of an SDP is required for students aiming for a final course grade of A or B; a student who might fall below the requirements for a C or D could also complete an SDP as a way to make up for other missing work. In the second week of class, each student provided a project proposal that included a justification for how the project fit the course learning outcomes and a plan for how often they would post and how substantial these posts would be. Students posted to the blog about their plans, so the rest of the class had a preview of what to expect. In Spring 2019, all students submitted plans for an SDP, although two ended up not beginning their projects and two others did not reach the outcomes they set for themselves.

[4.6] Since students submitted plans for an SDP in the second week, they had to plan their project before really knowing what grade they would be aiming for in the course—in other courses I teach with a grade contract, those courses’ equivalent of an SDP are not begun until after midterm, when students have a clearer sense of their own grade expectations. This is part of the reason that while the SDP is required for a grade of A or B, a completed project can still benefit students who are moving toward the C or D tiers because they could use them to substitute for other late, incomplete, or missed work. In actual practice, the students who kept up with their self-set SDP goals also kept up with the other course requirements. Students met with me one-on-one twice to discuss their SDP progress—once at midterm and again during the last two weeks of the semester. During these meetings, we also discussed the grade each student expected based upon their compliance with the grade contract and what additional work they might still do; these discussions helped students stay on track and ensured that we were in agreement regarding midterm and final course grades before they were officially posted.

[4.7] Other required components of the course included discussion lead posts for readings and reviews of assigned films, all of which had dates preset in the course schedule; each student chose from the reading list which sources they were responsible for and their names were added to the syllabus for those dates. These reviews were another opportunity to enact fan behavior and started with some informal genre analysis by looking at samples of book, film, television series, and game reviews posted on fan sites suggested by students. Through discussion, the class developed a loose template for the reviews and responses, which the class followed and further developed over time. All students were required to comment weekly on other posts. Students who were in charge of a discussion lead or a review were expected to respond to questions posted by their classmates. Again, blog engagement was a way to practice fan behavior; as shown in the
student comments in section 5, involvement in the blog through the reviews and SDPs was critical to building affinity and developing communication skills. Also included in the course was a midterm exam and a research paper. There was no final exam; instead students submitted essay revisions and a final course reflection.

[4.8] Reflecting on the course design and contract, I plan to change two things in the future: end use of a midterm exam and redesign the research paper to be a part of the blog rather than a stand-alone academic piece. When designing for Spring 2019, I was hesitant to give up the midterm exam—in previous semesters, it was an effective way to check students' understanding of key concepts from the readings, which told me what I needed to return to during the second half. However, it does not fit with the ethos of the grade contract—and students noted this. As the only traditionally graded component in the course, it was a cause for anxiety; one student said the midterm score requirement created a block he felt he couldn't get around, which for him made the entire grade contract a source of anxiety. In the future, I may ask students to instead work collaboratively to develop a glossary page for the blog or to create an attached wiki where they explain the terms as a way to achieve the learning goals of the midterm without needing to assign an exam. The stand-alone research paper, which followed the norms of academic research conventions, did result in many excellent essays. However, aside from the two in-class peers who read them during peer review, I ended up being the only audience for those works—this was too much of a departure from the rest of the course's focus on writing for a public, web-based audience. Smaller, research-driven projects written for the blog will likely replace these papers in future seasons of the class.

5. Student reactions

[5.1] The final course reflection assignment asked students to think about their learning in the class, experience with the blog, and reactions to the grade contract. Although the reflections were neither anonymous nor voluntary—they were turned in as a required part of the course at the end of the semester—they provided valuable feedback about the course all the same. By that point, students understood how the course contract guaranteed their grades, which I hope allowed them to be more forthcoming with their comments. In selecting examples, I focus on passages about what can be categorized as fan behaviors, even if not exclusive to fandom: interacting with the community through blogging, writing about their fandom, and growth in understanding about issues related to fandom, such as copyright. I also include passages about the grade contract, particularly examples that show how it enabled fan behaviors and developing affinity, as well as things that may have gotten in the way of individual students' learning. These students' thoughts about the course illustrate both the benefits of this model of course design and potential complications that other instructors interested in implementing a similar approach should consider. Use of these reflections is approved by my university's IRB; to protect the confidentiality of the writers, I include neither real names nor their blog user names when quoting from the reflection essays and refer to them using gender-neutral pronouns.

[5.2] Students had a lot to say about the blog—not surprising, as it served as a central hub for the course. Several mentioned how the blog helped them to get to know their classmates better; for example, "This is one of the first classes in a very long time where I feel that I actually know my classmates, not only by name, but by personality, opinion, and writing style." Another valued the opportunity to practice their informal writing skills in a college class:

[5.3] This helped me practice writing in my personal voice instead of my academic voice. I think as college students we are not prompted enough to simply write and say what we want to say. We are often given rubrics which outline exactly how our writing should go. Though that may be a beneficial skill to have, I think writing things such as movie reviews or discussions about reading material allowed me to take what I read and write what I wanted about it.
[5.4] Comments such as this show how students are meeting the course outcomes of critical and creative thinking and of effective communication.

[5.5] One student wrote about how the blog shifted from something that was extrinsically motivated to something intrinsically motivated: "People started contributing, first out of obligation to the grade contract but then as something more individually directed. The blog became something that was valuable to the class and enriching to those who contributed." Interestingly, this student noted exactly the kind of shift that Danielewicz and Elbow (2009) identify as one of the great benefits of a grade contract—that the contract at first compels participation but offers the flexibility needed for students to begin to be driven more by their own desire to write and communicate. The observed transformation also demonstrates the development of the blog into an affinity space, showing the "interplay between engagement, active participation, a sense of belonging, and the production of social space" (Black 2007, 387). The student comment points to a synergy between the two pedagogical tools of blog and grade contract, suggesting that both support a shift toward intrinsic motivation.

[5.6] Students also addressed the student-directed projects in their reflections. One addressed how the SDP helped them to become a more engaged fan and how the contract supported that creativity:

[5.7] It was great to interact with each person on their projects, and see what their passions were. It was also a great way to develop my own hobbies, as my student-directed project was on the model figures that were born from the very popular mecha anime from the '80s. I was doing more research on each kit I bought, and, realizing I was creating for an audience for the first time, I took much more pride with my work. I made sure to take my time and make each model look as great as possible to the best of my abilities...It was even better that I didn't have to worry too much about my grades, as the grade contract ensured that as long as I participated in the class, I would get that A by participating in interesting discussions and posting about things I have a passion for.

[5.8] This comment shows how the grade contract and SDP allowed students to define their own measures for success and that the results can carry beyond the traditional bounds of academia. This student was already enjoying what they were doing—model building was something they were doing outside of the class anyway. However, the SDP gave them an opportunity to do more with their hobby and to see that work anew as something that wasn't just a source of individual pleasure but as something that others would be interested in and take pleasure from as well. Their project is not a case of a student subordinating or reshaping their fan interest to fit with the needs of a class. Rather, here the student could make the class project their own. The grade became secondary, and engaging in and documenting the hobby to share with others—their labor as a fan—became the ascendant cause of motivation.

[5.9] Many students recognized how the grade contract supported creative thinking and expression in the class. One contrasted what they experienced in the contract class with courses that use traditional grading:

[5.10] If the class had been structured around points and concrete assignments, I don't feel that I or many others would have been able to create and contribute as freely as we did this semester. For a class like this that focuses on a topic that is partially an expression of creativity and the energy of many coming together to make something unique, restraining the students to a point-based system could have been discouraging and dampening to their contributions.

[5.11] Not all students liked the contract. Part of their discomfort came from the SDP. As one wrote, "I feel like the grade contract made the course less serious and more of a 'do it if you want to' type of course, which I did not like at all. This does not hold students accountable for their work and does not show [their] true understanding of concepts learned throughout the class." However, this student's response suggests a
misunderstanding of how the grade contract worked. On the one hand, they are correct in that the course is "do it if you want to," but they ignore in their comment that those choices have consequences, codified in the grade contract. For example, students didn't have to complete a student-directed project, but if they didn't, they would cut themselves off from earning grades of A or B for the course.

[5.12] Another student expressed discomfort with the flexibility of due dates; this particularly applied to the SDP because students were responsible for setting their own deadlines. They wrote, "Personally, I don't think grade contracts cater to how I work. I am very good with due dates and making sure things get handed in on time, and the grade contract kind of made that not as attainable for me, especially for the student-directed projects."

[5.13] The students who were active with their SDPs and likewise developed interest in their peers' projects are the ones who, like the student quoted in paragraph 5.5 above, grew to see the blog as their own, as an affinity space that their contributions and interactions helped to shape. As Black (2007) notes, being able to interact with a space in such a way "contributes to users' commitment to the site and its concomitant literacy-related activities" (387). For students who found a strong enthusiasm for their projects, the energy of being a fan seemed to help maintain their momentum and complete the necessary labor called for by the grade contract. The challenge is to adequately support students who have trouble finding that enthusiasm; giving them more checkpoints to demonstrate success may help to motivate them. Looking ahead to future semesters, I plan to include more guidance for students in regards to setting their own deadlines. Although I met each student at midterm to discuss their SDP progress, students like the two quoted above may likely benefit from more regular check-ins. Asking students to submit occasional brief progress reports, a practice used in many professional and technical writing classes for longer projects, may help them to better track their own progress.

6. Conclusion

[6.1] Course blogs and grade contracts are a powerful combination. Grade contracts are almost revolutionary by nature, as their use requires teachers and students to think differently about labor, grades, and what grades mean and are for. New Media pedagogy, of which class blogs are but one facet, likewise has the potential to reshape thinking about what kinds of labor count as school work. Similarly, courses that focus on popular culture and fandom, and especially those that engage with fandom or being a fan as part of the labor and the learning of the course, can challenge students', teachers', and administrators' thinking about what constitutes learning and success.

[6.2] The approach I’ve shared here emphasizes the power of pleasure in the classroom. Students in my class enjoyed what they were learning, they enjoyed the labor, and they willingly made choices that often resulted in their doing more for the class than they might have done in an equivalent but traditionally focused and graded course. Further, they enjoyed expanding their ideas about what counts as academic work and research—for many, this course was an eye-opener into the realms of cultural and fan studies. As one student noted, "I hate the stigmatization that is placed on anime, and watching these movies and taking them in a serious context really helps remove the idea that it can't be taken as an art form." Another wrote, "The main thing I learned about fan culture in this class is that fandom as a whole is a topic that can be talked about in academic settings and sound legitimate. To see fandoms and fan culture discussed not only neutrally in an academic setting, but to see that the author [Condry 2013] was given government grants to do so, still boggles my mind a bit." I see this mind-boggling as a good thing, a challenge to many students' concept of what is deserving of attention, labor, and recognition.

[6.3] Finally, students enjoyed seeing their work and words—their hard but beloved labor—moving beyond the bounds of the classroom. I share their excitement and feel a great pride for each of them, seeing how their
blog continues to draw views long after the class is over. I look forward to the next time I can teach the course, to bringing in the next set of bloggers who will reshape that space with their own ideas and interests.

7. Notes

1. This study has been reviewed and approved for exemption by the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Kentucky University as research protocol number 2372.

2. Students did not have the option to host scanlations or fansubs to the blog; while Condry questions whether such works constitute piracy, it would still violate our university's policy on intellectual property.

8. References


Appendix 1: Grade Contract for ENG345, Spring 2019

To earn an A in the course, students should:

- Complete a substantial student-directed project; the project should be revised and edited for clarity, contain accurate information, and engage a public audience. It should contribute meaningfully to the course and to the course blog. It must meet or exceed all requirements for the project laid out in the assignment sheet.
- Post two discussion lead posts to the blog by the date and time they are due, and respond substantively to the comments made by others on those posts.
- Write and post a film review by the date you’ve signed up for; the review should meet all the requirements on the assignment sheet, use concepts covered in class in ways that help readers gain a richer appreciation of the film, be written in a way accessible for a public audience, and be revised and edited; responds meaningfully to reader comments, through clearly marked edits and/or as replies in the comments section.
- Go beyond the minimum requirement of one weekly response to blog posts—comment regularly on others’ posts in ways that contribute meaningfully to the conversation.
- Correctly answer over 80 percent of the questions on the midterm exam.
- Write a film analysis essay that demonstrates critical thinking, exemplary use of source material, and that while building upon ideas covered in class, pushes or develops those ideas in insightful ways; the paper may engage with sources that exceed the minimum number required and/or engage with more lengthy or difficult sources. The essay must
satisfy all the requirements for the assignment, as laid out in the assignment sheet; the student may undertake substantial revisions across drafts.

- Attend both the midterm and final conferences, coming prepared and using the discussion to further revise and/or develop your work in the class.
- Submit a final reflection that engages with a range of ideas from the course and addresses your growth as a writer, communicator, and critical thinker.
- Attendance: Does not accrue more than three unexcused absences; completes alternative assignments or other make-up work to make up for days missed due to an excused absence, as laid out in the attendance policy in the course syllabus.

To earn a B in the course, students should:

- Complete a successful student-directed project; the project should be revised and edited for clarity, contain accurate information, and engage a public audience. It must meet all requirements for the project laid out in the assignment sheet.
- Post two discussion lead posts to the blog by the date and time they are due.
- Write and post a film review by the date you've signed up for; the review should meet all the requirements on the assignment sheet, be written in a way accessible for a public audience, and be revised and edited; responds meaningfully to reader comments, through clearly marked edits and/or as replies in the comments section.
- Go beyond the minimum requirement of one weekly response to blog posts—comment regularly on others' posts in ways that contribute meaningfully to the conversation.
- Correctly answer over 70 percent of the questions on the midterm exam.
• Write a film analysis essay that demonstrates critical thinking; uses source material in formally and ethically correct ways; the essay must satisfy all the requirements for the assignment, as laid out in the assignment sheet. The student may show significant revision across drafts.

• Attend both the midterm and final conferences, coming prepared and using the discussion to further revise and/or develop your work in the class.

• Submit a final reflection that engages with a range of ideas from the course and addresses your growth as a writer, communicator, and critical thinker.

• Attendance: Does not accrue more than four unexcused absences; completes alternative assignments or other make-up work to make up for days missed due to an excused absence, as laid out in the attendance policy in the course syllabus.

To earn a C, students should:

• Post two discussion lead posts to the blog by the date and time they are due.

• Write and post a film review by the date you’ve signed up for; the review should meet all the requirements on the assignment sheet, be written in a way accessible for a public audience, and be revised and edited.

• Meet the minimum requirement of one weekly response to blog posts.

• Correctly answer over 50 percent of the questions on the midterm exam.

• Write a film analysis essay that satisfies all the requirements for the assignment, as laid out in the assignment sheet, such as source use and length requirements.

• Attend and come prepared to both the midterm and final conferences.
• Submit a final reflection that engages with a range of ideas from the course and addresses your growth as a writer, communicator, and critical thinker.

• Attendance: Does not accrue more than five unexcused absences; completes alternative assignments or other make-up work to make up for days missed due to an excused absence, as laid out in the attendance policy in the course syllabus.

• A student-directed project is not required to earn a C for the course; however, a student who might otherwise earn a lower grade (such as due to absences or because of not completing the required blog posts and responses, for example) might negotiate with the instructor to complete a student-directed project as a way to improve their grade. A student-directed project used in this way must still meet all the requirements for the project, as laid out in the assignment sheet.

Students may earn a D for the course if they:

• Post only one discussion lead to the blog, or make posts that are off-topic, underdeveloped, or late.

• Write and post a film review by the date you've signed up for; the review might be late, and may contain significant clarity, grammatical, or typographical problems that interfere with understanding.

• Do not meet the minimum number of weekly posts, but still meet at least 50 percent of that required number.

• Correctly answer over 30 percent of the questions on the midterm exam, but less than 50 percent.
• Write a film analysis essay that shows signs of engaging with most of the requirements for the assignment, as laid out in the assignment sheet, but does not succeed at meeting them.

• Attend and come prepared to both the midterm and final conferences.

• Submit a final reflection that engages with ideas from the course and addresses your growth as a writer, communicator, and critical thinker.

• Attendance: Does not accrue more than five unexcused absences; completes alternative assignments or other make-up work to make up for days missed due to an excused absence, as laid out in the attendance policy in the course syllabus.

• A student-directed project is not required to earn a D for the course; however, a student who might otherwise earn a lower grade (such as due to absences or because of not completing the required blog posts and responses, for example) might negotiate with the instructor to complete a student-directed project as a way to improve their grade. A student-directed project used in this way might attempt to meet all the requirements for the project, but may not succeed at doing so.

Students will earn an F for the course if they:

• Post one or no discussion leads to the blog.

• Do not write or post a film review; the review may be significantly incomplete, unedited, off-topic, and/or not meet other significant assignment requirements.

• Meet less than 50 percent of the minimum required weekly responses to blog posts.

• Correctly answer 30 percent or less on the midterm exam.
• Do not complete the film analysis and/or do not meet the assignment requirements (for example, by using not enough scholarly sources; not meeting the length requirement; not engaging the topic of the prompt).

• Do not attend one or both of the conferences; or come to the conferences unprepared and remain unengaged during the conference.

• Do not submit a final reflection, or a reflection that is off topic or incomplete.

• Attendance: Miss six or more class session and/or does not make up work for excused absences, such that those absences put you over the allowable number, as laid out in the attendance policy in the course syllabus.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty: In cases where student work and/or other conduct in class violates the university's Academic Integrity policy, consideration of that student's work will be moved outside of this grade contract and instead be responded to in accordance with the Academic Integrity Policy.
Critical pedagogy and visual culture art education in a cosplay-based curriculum

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[0.1] Abstract — Although cosplay may be defined simply as the act of dressing up as a popular culture character, this definition fails to convey the criticality, identity exploration, and craft involved. Critical pedagogy and visual culture art education can together form the bases of a cosplay curriculum designed to promote critical thinking about interaction with popular culture and fandom, to explore the construction of identity, and to use cosplay as a form of artistic practice.

[0.2] Keywords — Costuming; Craft; Fandom; Popular culture; Studio art


1. Introduction

[1.1] "It just sounds like a preteen lusting after posters of Luke Skywalker in her bedroom." Heat rose in my cheeks at this comment, and I frantically looked around for support among the crowd of my peers and professors in attendance at my critique. It was not going well before this particular comment. At the time of my fourth semester in graduate school, my work consisted of heavy and, admittedly, dated necklaces that were intended to be artifacts from a world I was creating as an expression of my interest in fantasy and science fiction fandom. The narrative I presented during the critique was in progress, and at one point I attempted to describe this world as having a "Star Wars vibe," meaning, futuristic yet old. Rather than adding clarity, my offhand comment resulted in my work and narrative being relegated to the stereotypical conception of the oversexualized, obsessed fan girl making out with posters of Luke Skywalker. Embarrassed and disheartened I abandoned this particular narrative not long after.

[1.2] The experience I described would not be the last time I encountered resistance to my fan-based art among my professors and peers. In the following semester I continued to explore the concept of fandom and cosplay through the creation of masks and hoods that combined my academic identity and my fan identity. I was often told these pieces were more interesting when I did not talk about the fandom influence integral to my work. I felt frustrated and alienated but persisted in my insistence that the fandom aspect of my work was as important as the formal qualities. My experiences brought to light a lack of acknowledgment of fan art and cosplay within the academic art world. I often felt that fan art was viewed as juvenile, boring, and derivative.

[1.3] Historically, popular or mass culture, of which fandom is a part, was regarded as a form of low culture that the proletariat engaged in because of a lack of aesthetics and taste. Fine arts, on the other hand, was a form of high culture that the bourgeoisie engaged in because of its perceived originality and cultural value (Sturken and Cartwright 2018). However, the line between high culture and low culture has often been
challenged. Within fine art, artists have used comics, images of celebrities, and even kitsch to redefine and challenge the aesthetics and taste of high culture. Similarly, within the discipline of art education, scholars have championed Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE), which focuses on aspects of visual and popular culture in the arts classroom. In these cases, popular culture is accepted as a meaningful form of artistic expression.

[1.4] Despite the acceptance of visual culture as a pedagogy in art education, forms of popular culture such as fan art and cosplay are relatively unexplored as art and as a methodology for teaching. My experience during an art critique shows that there are still misconceptions and dismissal of fan culture within higher art education. My purpose here is to explore the potential of cosplay as a means of student engagement in the college level arts classroom through critical pedagogy and VCAE. Using critical pedagogy and VCAE as a foundation, this curriculum will theoretically allow students to critically explore their own experiences with popular culture and how it may have helped shape their identities.

2. Cosplay as artistic practice

[2.1] Cosplay, a combination of the words costume and play, was coined in 1983 by Nobuyuki Takahashi (Crawford and Hancock 2019; Winge 2019). In simplest terms, cosplay can be defined as the act of dressing up as a character from popular culture. However, "defining what cosplay is, who cosplayers are, and understanding its history and contemporary context is far from straightforward" (Crawford and Hancock 2019, 17). Cosplay is a complex fan practice that combines the act of making and performing in a manner that is unique to each cosplayer. For most cosplayers, the act of cosplay does not begin when they first don their costume and enter the convention space. Rather, cosplay often entails first choosing and researching a character. Then the cosplayer engages in the time-consuming act of crafting the costume, which can involve learning new skills and working with new materials to fully realize a costume. During the act of wearing the costume, cosplayers negotiate and combine their identity with their interpretation of the character's identity (Winge 2019).

[2.2] In order to develop a studio art curriculum that centers on the craft and performance of cosplay, it is useful to describe cosplay in terms of studio art practice. Cosplay is undertheorized as a form of studio art in both fan studies and art history. Crawford and Hancock's book Cosplay and the Art of Play (2019) comes the closest to discussing cosplay in terms of fine art by relating the act of cosplay to the act of painting. Cosplay is described as being similar to painting because both are "performative and slow processes; developed overtime, usually by a solitary individual, but ultimately designed to be consumed by an audience" (Crawford and Hancock 2019, 72). Relating cosplay to a legitimized form of studio art practice reveals the potential to begin to see cosplay as a form of legitimate studio art practice. To do so, the act of cosplay can be related to studio art through craft practice and performance art, which entail acts of labor to create objects or moments. Similarly, cosplay is also an act of labor that produces objects (the costume) for the purpose of creating moments during fan conventions.

[2.3] Craft practice and cosplay share similar processes in terms of designing and crafting a finished product. Constructing costumes and props for cosplay is a labor-intensive act of creation and craft that is as technical and time consuming as the creation of a professional theater costume (Hansen 2018). Hansen (2018) points out that both cosplay and theater costuming engage in "research, swatch, choose materials, pattern, build a mockup, and do fittings" (38). However, unlike the costume designer or theater technician, the cosplayer has full creative freedom over all aspects of the project, including choice of character. After determining the character to be portrayed, the cosplayer designs a costume that mimics the character's appearance, including the clothing, hair, and props such as weapons, wings, or other objects.

[2.4] Once a costume has been designed, the cosplayer selects the materials best suited to realizing the
costume. This is usually determined by the type of costume (e.g., armor, style of dress, types of props) and the budget of the cosplayer. Cosplayers use a variety of innovative materials such as ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA) foam, leather, a variety of fabrics, spray foam, and silicon to craft highly detailed costumes. In order to create the costumes, cosplayers learn skills like sewing, prop making, leather working, and design. In the same way jewelers, sculptors, and painters learn the skills of their trades, cosplayers devote time to learning different skills to suit their needs. Cosplayers create their costumes out of a "love for sewing as an activity and their passion for learning new skills," (Lamerichs 2015, 111). Passion for the act of making is integral for most professional artists—people rarely choose an arts-based career unless they have a desire for making and creation. Similarly, "a Cosplayer demonstrates creativity when she selects a character, designs the costume," and "problem solves to construct the costume," (Winge 2019, 85). The labor, materials, and time necessary for crafting a single costume can be as intense as a studio artist creating a painting or sculpture.

[2.5] Along with the artistic act of crafting, cosplay can also be seen as "a performance art in which the participant masquerades as a character" (Gn 2011, 583). The performative aspect of cosplay is intimately intertwined with the identity of the character being represented and the cosplayer. As stated by Nicole Lamerichs (2011), cosplay "is a form of fan appropriation that transforms, performs, and actualizes an existing story in close connection to the fan's own identity" (¶ 1.2). Cosplayers often choose a character because they identify with some aspect of that character. Some cosplayers even attempt to fully emulate the identity of the character. However, because the identity of the character is not only artificial but also constructed by someone else, the cosplayer must infer aspects of the character's identity by supplementing it with their own. Winge (2019) notes, "The character's identity is fantastic and ephemeral, which is intimately enmeshed in the Cosplayer's identity" (56). Therefore, the character becomes a blend of known personality traits and inferences combined with the cosplayer's identity. Instead of hiding the cosplayer's identity, that identity combined with the character's creates a unique, one-of-a-kind character.

[2.6] Cosplay's ability to engage a person in the act of making, performing, and identity exploring are paramount in my decision to use it as the focus for fan practices in a curriculum. As Lamerichs (2011) explained, "Through the acts of constructing and wearing a costume, the fan constructs his or her identity in relation to fictions and enacts it" (¶ 3.1). Asking students to engage in the process of cosplay through character choice, costume design and crafting, and performance can enable them to explore a character in relation to their identities. However, for most cosplayers the negotiation of identity is a subconscious act, whereas the purpose of this curriculum is to engage students in the conscious act of identity construction through popular culture and fandom. As such, critical pedagogy and VCAE provide a useful framework for encouraging critical thought in the cosplay process.

3. Critical pedagogy

[3.1] Critical pedagogy has been written about by a number of philosophers, educators, and scholars, which makes an exhaustive account of all text, forms, and practical applications of critical pedagogy difficult, if not impossible. Similarly, reducing critical pedagogy to a single definition is equally challenging, but there are key aspects that unify each iteration of the pedagogy. First is the recognition that knowledge is political (Giroux 2011; Monchinski 2008; Jacobs 1997; Freire [1970] 2014). Second is that it uses a democratic structure (Giroux 2011; Monchinski 2008; Tavin 2003a). Third, it seeks to implement change and social justice (Monchinski 2008; Tavin 2003a; Freire [1970] 2014). Fourth and last, it recognizes lived experiences as a focal point of education (Giroux 2011; Monchinski 2008; Tavin 2003a). As such, critical pedagogy is "rooted in a democratic ethos that attends to the practice of teaching and learning and focuses on lived experiences with the intention to disrupt, contest, and transform systems of oppression" (Tavin 2003b, 198). In the context of this discussion, lived experiences refers to student interactions with popular culture through fan practices—specifically, cosplay.
Paulo Freire's book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1970] 2014) is a logical starting point for a discussion of important texts in the formation of a critical pedagogy framework. In his book, Freire outlines a model for what he terms "problem-posing education" (79). Problem-posing education disrupts the hierarchy of education that consists of the teacher as the head or leader of the classroom whose purpose is to impart their knowledge and wisdom into their students. In the teacher as the head of the classroom model, the students are passive receivers of the teacher's knowledge, often with no voice of their own. Freire described this type of education as "banking," saying "instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits... a student then receives and memorizes" (72). As a result, the classroom becomes a dictatorship rather than a democracy. In contrast, problem-posing education places the teacher on equal terms with their students. Freire described this as, "the teacher-of-the-student and the student-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges; teacher-student with student-teacher" (80). Thus, the teacher and students both become the imparters and receivers of knowledge.

Through this model, the teacher and student communicate as equals and take part in critical dialogue. However, as Jacobs (1997) notes in his thesis, "Freire stresses that educators should not attempt to solve students' problems for them, but rather by beginning with students' specific contexts, educators can engage students in dialogue about problems within their own worlds and help students to come up with their own solutions" (6).

Although teachers should avoid ownership of knowledge they also should not simply provide students with the answer. Rather, problem-posing education suggests that teachers "pose problems that arise from students' realities so that students can come to be more critical thinkers about their own situation" (Jacobs 1997, 7). Students become critical thinkers who do not passively absorb information but instead consider it carefully and skeptically.

Henry Giroux has used Freire's problem-posing education model to explore popular culture. In 1994, Henry Giroux's book, *Disturbing Pleasures*, attempted to apply critical theory to popular culture in the classroom. Giroux (1994) suggests that teachers ask students to critique cultural texts such as the United Colors of Benetton ads, Disney, popular films, and photographs. Although Giroux (1994) does acknowledge popular culture as a site "where struggle over knowledge, power, and authority translate into a broader battle over the meaning of pleasure, self-formation, and national identity" (x), he often portrays popular culture in a negative manner. For example, Giroux (2016) describes Disney as a "corporate assault on kids" (236) that is "eager and ready to transform them into full-fledged members of consumer society" (234). His portrayal of popular culture is problematic because it fails to recognize that students are not only consumers of popular culture but also producers, capable of transforming and recontextualizing popular culture to suit their creative needs.

### 4. Critical pedagogy and fandom

Fans are the opposite of the passive learners Freire describes in banking education. Kristina Busse (2017) in her book, *Framing Fanfiction*, indicates that "rather than being passive consumers, these television viewers engage critically and creatively." Through fan practices such as fan art and fan fiction they "not only critically analyze the texts but also actively write back, creating their own narratives to fill in the plots, characters, and emotions they find lacking in the source text" (7). While this engagement is born out of the pleasure derived from the fan object and is therefore often positive in nature, fans are not uncritical of their fandoms. Fan discourse often critically analyzes the motives, actions, and the believability of characters and plotlines. This is shown through blog posts, fan fiction, and fan art that is created to reflect the fan's interpretation of the fan object.

The active and critical participation of fans can be related to the basic tenants of critical pedagogy. First,
just as critical pedagogy recognizes knowledge as political, fan practices are also political. For example, slash fan fiction (fan writings that involve the romantic paring of two same-sex characters, denoted by the / [slash] between their names) can be seen through numerous political lenses such as masculinity, misogyny, and sexuality (Green, Jenkins, and Jenkins 1998). Second, democracy in fandoms is a complex topic. On the surface, fandoms can appear as sites of "equality, tolerance, and community" (MacDonald 1998, 136) but in actuality they operate within a complex hierarchical structure. The positions within this hierarchy are "constantly contested and never fixed" (Chin 2018, 249), thus leading to democratic debate, dissemination of new ideas, and the production of fan texts. Finally, fandom can seek to implement social justice and change. Fandoms such as the Harry Potter fandom promote progressive ideologies such as tolerance and equality. In particular The Harry Potter Alliance is a nonprofit charity organization run by Harry Potter fans who "use the power of story and popular culture to make activism accessible and sustainable" (Harry Potter Alliance 2019, under "What We Do"). Each of these examples demonstrates fandom as a critical pedagogy.

[4.3] Critical thinking has been used by fan scholars and educators such as Paul Booth. In his article "Waves of Fandom in the Fan Studies Classroom" Booth (2018) states "it's important for them [students] to recognize the place of fandom in the media environment and the way fandom has become more visible and more mainstream today" (114). He suggests that even students who do not identify as fans are participating in fan activities when they "post GIFs, and memes on Tumblr" and "talk about and critique the media texts they love" (113). In order to encourage students to actively and critically consider their fan identities in relationship to their everyday lives, Booth asks his students to engage in fan practices such as writing fan fiction and creating fan vids. It is important to note that Booth is asking his students to engage critically with media texts that students have a connection with. Ashlyn Keefe (2018), a student who participated in Booth's class, states "this was taking a critical eye and playing with a media text that was near and dear to me" which pushed her to have a greater engagement with fan activities and created an enjoyable experience. Booth shows that it is not enough to simply ask students to critically engage with a fan practice. In order to create a connection between fandom and their daily lives, educators may find it more effective to ask students to choose their own texts to engage with.

5. VCAE and fan art

[5.1] As shown, critical pedagogy is a useful teaching method for encouraging students to analyze their lived experiences in relationship to fandom. However, the majority of the scholars thus far do not use critical pedagogy in combination with art education. Furthermore, fandom itself is traditionally studied within the context of media and cultural studies rather than art. However, fans are producers and consumers of art, as such, art education should explore fan art as a means of engagement with students. Laura Hetrick (2018) writes in her article "Reading Fan Art as Complex Texts," "the value in this type of artwork is not necessarily about technical skills…rather it is more about the cleverness of intertextuality, appropriation, juxtaposition, and recontextualizing" (61). One way to approach fan art in art education is through a critical pedagogy lens.

[5.2] The exploration of popular culture within art education has been implemented by several art educators such as Paul Duncum, Kevin Tavin, Laura Hetrick, Jin-Shiow Chen, and Marjorie Cohee Manifold. Duncum's work over the last two decades focused on VCAE. VCAE explores "critical understanding and empowerment" (Duncum 2002, 6) through the exploration of popular culture. Similarly, Tavin (2003a) concentrated on critical pedagogy in relationship to popular culture within the fine arts. Both of these educators provide a framework for the analysis of inclusion of popular culture within art education. Hetrick, Chen, and Manifold on the other hand, transition from popular culture to fandom as a means of student engagement. While popular culture and fandom are related they should not be used interchangeably. Popular culture is a complicated and multifaceted word that has been defined in a multitude of ways but in this case I use the definition put forth by Duffet (2013), "popular culture…tends to be seen as the fraction of commercial culture that the audience takes to their hearts, usually because it contains aspects that resonate with their own
world or attitude" (62). In other words, popular culture is the what audiences forms a connect with. Fandom, on the other hand, relates to the rituals and behaviors that audiences engage in to express that connect they feel with popular culture.

[5.3] Critical pedagogy within art education is often used for student engagement with popular culture through art. Critical pedagogy within art education should not focus solely on teaching students technical skills. Instead, a critical pedagogy approach to teaching art education "recognizes the critical and political power of visual imagery and then channels that power to reveal worlds and ideas that are sometimes hidden from view" (Yokely 1999, 20). A critical pedagogy-based art education recognizes the inherently political position art inhabits. VCAE does this through critical examination of imagery. Duncum (2001) explains the term visual culture as "an interest in the social conditions in which the artifacts (visual imagery) have their being, including their production, distribution and use" (106–107). Visual culture, then, is a critical examination of the visual objects produced by culture. This broad and overarching definition allows for VCAE to be inclusive of both fine arts or elite culture and popular culture within an arts curriculum. VCAE focuses on the "social worlds of visual imagery as they are constitutive of attitudes, beliefs, and values" (107). Through VCAE, popular culture is critically examined and engaged with by students. By allowing popular culture to exist in the same space as fine arts, Duncum (2003) believes that VCAE will help "students to ground studio activities in an understanding of a wider context" (24).

[5.4] Similarly, Tavin also examines using critical pedagogy through a VCAE lens to bring popular culture into the arts classroom. In Tavin's (2003a) dissertation, *A Critical Pedagogy of Visual Culture as Art Education: Toward a Performative Inter/Hypertextual Practice*, his research "reveals that critical pedagogy, visual culture, and hypertextuality enabled both students in the study to change their perceptions about art, art education, and the pedagogical power of popular culture" (iii). Pushing further than Duncum, Tavin indicates that popular culture should be explored for both its critical place in mass culture and its role in the construction of student identities:

[5.5] When art educators focus solely on art from the museum realm they ignore these profound changes in culture and discount the pedagogical power of popular images. They continue to rely on high cultural artifacts to teach from while their students are constructing their very identities and subjectivities through visual culture. When art educators place high art at the center of their curriculum they act as if their students are unified beings, unaffected by visual culture, living in a modernist sanctuary. (40–41)

[5.6] By acknowledging the role of popular culture in the creation of student identity, Tavin acknowledges each student's voice and lived experiences. The complexities of meaning and pleasure created by popular culture affect each student's everyday life. Thus, by using critical pedagogy to examine popular culture "students are encouraged to critique popular culture texts in order to reconstruct meaning and develop agency" (Tavin 2003a, 71). As such, the use of VCAE allows students to develop their own agency and identity utilizing aspects of popular culture.

[5.7] Jin-Shiow Chen (2007) conducted early research into fan culture with a specific focus on anime/manga fan art and cosplay in Taiwan. The resulting article, "A Study of Fan Culture: Adolescent Experiences with Anime/manga Doujinshi and Cosplay in Taiwan," details Chen's research methods and results. Chen interviewed six female cosplayers and fan artist attendees at Taiwan's ComicWorld conventions. After interviewing the participants and performing a content analysis, Chen found that most fan artists are "active cultural producers who are engaged in the reproduction of the materials they consume and in the manipulation of ideas, meanings, and cultural references that they can perceive" (21). Fan artists often seek out new techniques to further the development of their artistic practice. According to Chen, if art educators can engage students using fandom as a means of focus within visual culture, students would be enabled to
"find their [students] sociocultural meanings and values" (22). Chen recommends using fan art as a lens for studying specific artistic techniques of expression and for exploring the meaning of the texts from which students are consuming and producing.

[5.8] Chen's study provides groundwork for critical use of fan art within art education, but the study lacks diversity because of its small number of participants, all of whom are female and Taiwanese. A later study, conducted by Marjorie Cohee Manifold (2009), has a larger participant pool of 69 subjects, although the majority were also female. In the resulting article, "Fanart as Craft and the Creation of Culture," Manifold found that most fan artists began their artistic practice out of a desire to connect to a specific character. Furthermore, most learned to draw by "incessantly copying the commercially-made models of their favorite characters," not through techniques learned in an art class (10). Thus, most fan artist skills and practices are self-taught, implying that fan artists are self-motivated and engaged with their artistic practice. However, copying is only the beginning for most fan artists, once confident in their own artistic ability many fan artists develop their own unique style. Often, this style is influenced by the fan artist's own community, history, and culture. Manifold describes this as "a transcultural exchange of styles—an invigorating mix of imagery and ideas" (15). Manifold advocates for an art education that centers on students as culture participants and producers. Allowing students to engage in self-motivation through fandom will "empower them to become contributors to and crafters of culture" (19).

[5.9] Like Chen and Manifold, a recent article by Laura Hetrick advocates for the use of fandom in art education. Hetrick's (2018) article, "Reading Fan Art as Complex Texts," points to the self-motivating and active participation that fan art entails. Through personal experience, Hetrick notes that when she stopped viewing her students' Pokémon drawings as distractions, "everything changed—my students were engaged, shared their homemade artwork with me, and chatted to me about their popular interests" (57). By acknowledging the students' interests and incorporating them into the classroom curriculum, the students became more engaged with the classwork and teacher. From this experience, Hetrick encourages art educators to investigate student fan art as complex and meaningful text which can be a site for critical thought.

6. Curriculum and cosplay

[6.1] The scholars in the previous section use popular culture images and fan art as a site of student construction and reconstruction of identity through critical pedagogy and VCAE. The same pedagogy can be applied to a cosplay-based curriculum. To do so, I propose a semester project where students craft a cosplay that combines aspects of the student's identity with that of a popular culture character. The project would require students to choose a character and then transform the character by exaggerating, transforming, omitting, juxtaposing, and/or adding to aspects of the character in order to highlight the parts that they see or want to see in their own identity. The purpose of this project is to introduce students to new skills through basic cosplay construction, to critically engage with a character from popular culture in terms of identity formation and construction, and to participate in critical dialogue with other students in regard to cosplay, fandom, popular culture, and identity.

[6.2] When introducing this project, educators should emphasize that students need to critically consider their choice of character in relationship to their identity. Crawford and Hancock (2019) suggest "cosplayers are not simply trying to be the character they dress as, but rather they are using this [cosplay] to create and play with different identities" (135). Cosplayers often choose characters that they see aspects of themselves in, either in personality or physical characteristics (Crawford and Hancock 2019; Winge 2019). However, educators should be cognizant that not all students will be fans or possess the in-depth knowledge of popular culture characters often need to craft a cosplay. It would be helpful to suggest students create a list of the first five to ten popular culture characters they think of. Once students have created the list, recommend they choose
three that elicit the strongest emotions for initial research in order to determine their final choice.

[6.3] Once a character is chosen, students can begin to explore the "intimate and complex relationship between fan and the character" (Lamerichs 2018, 210) through research and in-class discussions. Students can conduct in-depth character research by watching or reading the source the character originates from, reading fan blogs and websites, and viewing images. Students should look for behaviors and/or physical appearance that they have a strong response to in order to begin making connections between their own identity and the character's. The educator can then use Freire's problem-solving education theory to facilitate dialogue between students to share their research with one another through a series of prompts or icebreakers. Encourage students to use these discussions as a way of verbalizing their thoughts and gaining outside perspective on the relationship between fandom and identity.

[6.4] Character research and class discussions are critical to the development of the relationship between student and character needed for crafting a transformative, identity-based cosplay. Connections students make between their identity and the character's through research and dialogue should serve as inspiration during the process of designing and crafting their cosplay. The process of crafting a cosplay will require the students to carefully consider the necessary skills and materials needed in order to realize their vision. Bainbridge and Norris (2013) note that "the authenticity of the costume very much depends on the craft that goes into its making" (¶ 9); as such, cosplayers spend time learning and improving crafting skills including but not limited to, sewing and patternmaking, prop construction, and leatherwork. Many of these skills are self-taught "through the assistance of online forums, cosplaying sites (for example cosplay.com) and other peer communities" (Bainbridge and Norris 2013, ¶ 9).

[6.5] Given the wide variety of popular culture characters and seemingly endless range of techniques used by cosplayers, it is not possible for an instructor to either know or teach every skill needed for each student's cosplay. Thus, it is recommended that educators focus on teaching basic skills such as sewing, patternmaking, and EVA foam construction. For specialized or in-depth tutorials, encourage students to use online cosplay tutorials and forums. Not only will this stimulate students to participate in the larger cosplay community, it is also an opportunity for the educator to enact critical pedagogy in a twofold manner. First, the educator is guiding the student to their own creative solution rather than solving the problem for them (Freire [1970] 2014; Jacobs 1997). Second, the educator learns from the student and vice versa (Freire [1970] 2014) because both are engaged in learning an unfamiliar skill.

[6.6] At the conclusion of the project, a day can be set aside for students to wear their costumes and perform as their character. Cosplay is typically a site-specific act that is intimately tied to the fan convention space (Lamerichs 2015; Winge 2019). Fan conventions such as Comic-Con, Naka-Kon, and Dragon Con can act as a temporary setting for cosplayers to perform and interact with one another. Although it would be difficult to achieve the atmosphere of a fan convention (which often features merchandise vendors, famous guest presenters, and cosplaying activities) in a classroom setting, students can interact with one another on a level similar to cosplayers interacting with each other at a fan convention. Suggest to students that they attempt to stay in-character as they interact with their classmates. Finally, allow students to reflect, either through in-class discussion or a brief written statement, on how their mannerisms and sense of self and identity changed throughout the course of the project.

7. Conclusion

[7.1] I have attempted to show the potential for student fan exploration of identity through the creation of a cosplay-based curriculum. Currently, the curriculum I have outlined is theoretical. The next step is to implement the curriculum in the arts classroom. Although there are many pedagogical lenses this curriculum could be based on, I believe that critical pedagogy and VCAE will allow students to engage with cosplay,
fandom, and identity in a thoughtful, critical, and holistic manner. Through critical pedagogy and VCAE, students can begin to explore the way popular culture influences and construct their identities. Cosplay is uniquely suited to the endeavor because as students construct their costumes they will begin to consider their own connections to the character.

[7.2] In the introduction I described the skepticism and rejection I experienced while attempting to share my cosplay-based art with my professors and peers during a graduate school critique. The experience was disheartening, but it led me to consider the possibilities of cosplay and fandom within the greater art education context. Cosplay has the potential to allow students to explore their identities, to critically analyze popular culture, and to engage in an activity that is labor intensive, craft oriented, and enjoyable.

8. References


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Context, cosplay, and (re)configurations: Centering the geek at the heart of science fiction pedagogy

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[0.1] Abstract—The course "Science Fiction: Humanity, Technology, the Present, the Future" uses fandom as a motivator for pedagogical development, promoting participation and engagement by encouraging students to embrace their fan passions. In classroom discussions, website commentary, Geek of the Week presentations, and a final prototype project where science fiction texts are reimagined as nonlinear user-driven experiences, students are given a role in shaping the content and trajectory of the course. Two perspectives are provided, one from a professor and one from a former student, on the course, its syllabus and assignments, and the ways in which the students' participation in fandom helps influence the hierarchies, balance, and flow of the course. By exploring new approaches to course development and more democratic classroom experiences through concepts such as affinity spaces, participatory culture, and design thinking, the course proposes a fan pedagogy that best contextualizes science fiction as a genre, field, and space for cultural commentary.

[0.2] Keywords—Design thinking; Experimental humanities; History of technology; Interactive technology and pedagogy; Interdisciplinary; Participatory culture


1. Introduction

Together

[1.1] Fandom is an extremely generative model for developing flexible pedagogy and for creating more democratic and mutually enriching learning environments. But this requires one to neither other fans as outside of the spectrum of academic thinking nor privilege the work and experiences of fans over other modes of discourse and knowledge production. As Matt Hills has noted, "fandom is not simply a 'thing' that can be picked over analytically. It is also always performative; by which I mean that it is an identity which is (dis)claimed, and which performs cultural work. Claiming the status of a 'fan' may, in certain contexts, provide a cultural space for types of knowledge and attachment" (2002, 11). As such, this performativity enables students and professors in the proper environment to act upon their own sense of subjective positioning relative to cultural and academic texts as consumers, critics, and creators. Learning in this way—
from each other, with each other, and through the visible performance of fannish identity—makes the experience more valuable for students and professor alike and elevates everything from discussions to presentations to writing and creative work.

[1.2] This strategy aligns keenly with the experience of fandom and the creative, participatory nature of fans' engagement with their favored materials. Take the parallels between Henry Jenkins's notion of participatory culture, the progressive ideas of John Dewey, and the liberating pedagogy of Paulo Freire as they all relate to experience-based learning:

[1.3] A participatory culture is one which embraces the values of diversity and democracy through every aspect of our interactions with each other—one which assumes that we are capable of making decisions, collectively and individually, and that we should have the capacity to express ourselves through a broad range of different forms and practices. (Jenkins, Itō, and boyd 2015, 2)

[1.4] The plan, in other words, is a cooperative enterprise, not a dictation. The teacher's suggestion is not a mold for a cast-iron result but is a starting point to be developed into a plan through contributions from the experience of all engaged in the learning process. The development occurs through reciprocal give-and-take, the teacher taking but not being afraid also to give. The essential point is that the purpose grow and take shape through the process of social intelligence. (Dewey 1938, 85)

[1.5] The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication...Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors—teacher on the one hand and students on the other. Accordingly, the practice of problem-posing education entails at the outset that the teacher-student contradiction to be resolved. Dialogical relations—indispensable to the capacity of cognitive actors to cooperate in perceiving the same cognizable object—are otherwise impossible. (Freire 2018, 70–77)

[1.6] The framing of the three is startlingly similar. Participatory experiences in fandom are about expression, creative discovery, and a kind of communal collective educative practice. Similarly, education built around experience and the breaking down of knowledge hierarchies can harness the organization of a group's knowledge through democratic discussion and process-based learning. These structures promote social intelligence and liberated education, thereby engendering within the classroom the same sense of community and learning together that fandom implies.

[1.7] To buttress this idea of a classroom space constituted of participants working creatively and collectively to develop communal and social intelligence, we have elected to delve into both sides of the student–professor dynamic in order to reveal through our two voices the different perspectives that came to fruition in a particular pedagogical experience. We employ participant observation, an articulated methodology within fan studies. Our study's emphasis on the dual-voice asserts a dynamic apparent within fandom, which was purposefully generated within the course structure as well. Furthermore, we show how the seemingly stark distinctions between a fan-scholar and scholar-fan (Hills 2002, 19) can be collapsed through an experimental and participatory environment that questions generalized perceptions of what it means to do academic work. Through the generation of a place where students and professor can work together, the passions usually ascribed separately and differently to fandom and academic pursuit can be seen as if not in fact the same then at least similar, complementary, and mutually beneficial.
"Science Fiction: Humanity, Technology, the Present, the Future" (SF:HTPF) (note 1) is a course taught regularly at XE: Experimental Humanities & Social Engagement (http://as.nyu.edu/xr.html), a stand-alone Master of Arts program in Interdisciplinary Studies housed in the New York University (NYU) Graduate School of Arts and Science. One author (Kimon Keramidas) discusses the course from the professor's perspective and the other author (Fiona Haborak) from that of a student in the class and graduate of the program. We feel that the most important points are made in our descriptions of those moments of in-between where student and professor come together and find a place undefined by roles. We discuss how this condition comes to be not because of educational structuration, course design, or academic pretense but rather because of the enthusiasm of being hopeless, helpless, passionate fans.

2. The course

Fiona

[2.1] Participation in the graduate classroom expresses how a person might experience fandom by maintaining a studious balance between fan studies and active involvement in fan practices. SF:HTPF uses the experience of fandom as a model to develop a pedagogical approach that embraces participatory and creative approaches to project development. Participation and interactivity influence the development of a think-space project where students flesh out a prototype that reimagines a science fiction text. Website commentary, prototype progression, and conceptualization of the project demonstrate how a fan might experience content. Student workspaces on the SF:HTFP website illustrate the capacity by which we can use fandom as a model for the development of academic practice in the classroom. Fannish practices and students' connections to different realms of fandom are encouraged through Geek of the Week presentations and the final project, which reimagines canonical material as a digital, interactive experience.

[2.2] As a result of pursuing higher education, I yearned for a program like XE to grant me creative freedom within an academic setting. Through scholarship, I aimed to apply praxis to critical research. I enrolled in SF:HTPF to foster my love for science fiction lore. Reflecting now as an XE graduate and independent scholar, I sought out cumulative experiences by studying fan practices to influence the development of my MA thesis. I was interested in how to examine and flex theory to dismantle and deconstruct the canonical texts drawn from the classroom. Passionate enthusiasm motivated my desire to engage in this type of play.

Kimon

[2.3] "Science Fiction: Humanity, Technology, the Present, the Future" came to be at the fortuitous intersection of programmatic experimentation and professorial enthusiasm fueled by the fires of fandom. XE explores sites of inquiry where interdisciplinary study can be combined with pedagogical experimentation. Furthermore, by encouraging graduate student projects with creative components, the students and faculty work in an environment where a range of different media can be both a field of study and a platform for intellectual expression. In this way the freedom of creativity is combined with academic rigor, encouraging knowledge production that addresses a complex range of cultural, social, political, and economic circumstances in a wide variety of media forms.

[2.4] My colleague Robin Nagle and I developed SF:HTPF by using our disciplinary specializations as a starting point to explore our fan interests. Robin is an anthropologist, and I am a cultural historian of media and technology, so we decided to approach science fiction through a frame proposed by Ursula K. Le Guin in the introduction to The Left Hand of Darkness:

[2.5] This book is not extrapolative. If you like you can read it, and a lot of other science fiction,
as a thought-experiment…The purpose of a thought-experiment, as the term was used by Schrödinger and other physicists, is not to predict the future—indeed Schrödinger's most famous thought-experiment goes to show that the "future," on the quantum level, cannot be predicted—but to describe reality, the present world.

[2.6] Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive. (1980, xii)

[2.7] Embracing the notion of science fiction as descriptive, the course asks students to not only read, listen to, and view a variety of texts but to think about the historical contexts within which each author was working and how the author might be describing their present in their depictions of the future of humanity and technology. More than a comparative literature review, the course is meant to consider the historical role of science fiction as a genre for commentary.

[2.8] The syllabus is broken into weekly topics such as "Human?," "Machine?," "Intersectionality," and "Utopia/Dystopia" with science fiction texts from a variety of media accompanied by theoretical essays and commentary (figure 1). The students begin by reading about the history of science fiction and the contested nature of the term and then encounter a session dubbed "War of the Worlds, Three+ Ways." This week highlights the contextual approach of the course by showing that each text not only bears the markers of the author(s)' perspective at the time of composition but that the same text adapted by multiple authors can show different contextualizations based on the time and place of each adaptation. Students read the original The War of the Worlds by H. G. Wells from 1898, listen to the 1938 radio play adaptation by Orson Welles, and watch either the 1953 movie directed by Byron Haskin or the 2005 film directed by Steven Spielberg. Combining reading, listening, and watching, this assignment introduces students to the different kinds of texts and media experiences that we engage with during the semester. Furthermore, the class gets to see how the different producers/directors of the 1938, 1953, and 2005 versions reinterpret and adapt the same text to make it more relevant to the world in which they and their audiences are living.

Figure 1. Screenshot of the syllabus page for the fall 2018 iteration from the course website (http://kimon.hosting.nyu.edu/sites/science-fiction/syllabus-2018/).

[2.9] In Orson Welles's 1938 radio play we see this classic invasion story used to highlight the global tensions and apprehensions being felt around the world at that time. Welles's choice of staging his adaptation over the radio also highlights his awareness of the rapid expansion of media culture at the time. The 1953 movie takes us into the nuclear age and the burgeoning Los Angeles metropolitan area. The walking tripods have been made more futuristic as hovering craft, and the effects used for the Martians' deadly heat rays evoke the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Spielberg's 2005 version brings us a film occurring in the tristate region around New York City, and it is clearly marked by the trauma and imagery of 9/11 (including collapsing
buildings, crashed planes, and the visible deaths of scores of civilians). Furthermore, the biological implications of the invasion are more heightened in an era of biowarfare and increased knowledge of DNA and immune system frailties.

[2.10] Although these works come from institutional media production companies and are not works of what is considered fan fiction, they nevertheless open the students' eyes to the new possibilities that individuals imagine when they encounter a text they feel passionate about. In fact, this week in part serves to blur the line where possible between overly codified categorizations of institutional adaptations versus resistant fan works. Students can for themselves begin to think more critically about how fandom is experienced in different levels of cultural production and how they may wish to situate their own work as fannish. As such, "War of the Worlds Three+ Ways" accomplishes two things to consider the influence of fandom as a motivator for intellectual engagement and creative expression. First of all, it shows concrete examples of how the same core story can resonate so differently during different eras. This framing provides students with a methodology by which to approach the texts covered in the class. Second, the three adaptations are models for the course's final project, a prototype of a nonlinear user-driven experience based on an existing science fiction text. Later on we discuss further how the finesse of institutional adapters has analogs in more fan fic–based adaptations, particularly in Fiona's work on the H. G. Wells novel The Island of Dr. Moreau ([1896] 2002) for the prototype assignment.

Fiona

[2.11] As per my impression, the student experience resulted in animated class conversations similar to the roundtable discussions that often occur at mainstream fan conventions. The students conveyed enthusiasm for the media objects they adored while others contributed to the conversation by applying critical theories as relevant to personal interests. The course's structured rigor and critical pedagogy were enhanced by Geek of the Week student presentations (to be discussed in more detail later) through which the class was exposed to material beyond the syllabus and instructor's guidance. Through this journey, we came to see that by imposing a vast cultural influence, science fiction can operate as a conduit for commentary and change (Gunn and Candelaria 2005).

[2.12] As we mentioned in the introduction, the classroom embodied elements of a participatory culture: "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices" (Jenkins, Itō, and boyd 2015, 4). This solidarity serves as a lively undercurrent for the communal component of participatory cultures. Additionally, participatory culture "describes the new role users have assumed in the context of cultural production" (Schäfer 2012, 10). Encouraged to prosper and to share content from their respective fandoms, the students encompassed the role of media users, drawing connections from the assigned texts and showcasing the rigor of fans. The classroom thrived on sharing content, contributing to the website by posing questions online, and hosting a series of animated discussions pertinent to the course material. The solidarity exhibited within fandom became apparent in the classroom as well. As a result of this exposure, the students cultivated both the interest and the inspiration to drive forward their passions in the conception of the prototype and the Geek of the Week assignment.

3. Geek of the Week

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[3.1] The Geek of the Week assignment Fiona has alluded to was developed as a fan pedagogy solution to a
fan pedagogy problem. As Robin and I eagerly set out to select texts for each week, we realized almost immediately that our particular lists of must-sees and must-reads did not have much overlap. Despite being equally ecstatic about the genre, we were not fans of enough of the same things, were loath to let go of our darlings, and so had a list of over one-hundred books, films, TV shows, and games that each of us insisted had to be included. We were in need of a solution. We knew that we were fans of the genre, but more importantly we knew that the classroom would also be full of fans who were eager to express their fannish identity in myriad ways. So we checked our academic egos at the door and came up with the Geek of the Week.

[3.2] For the Geek of the Week (GotW) assignment each student was responsible for leading part of the discussion for one class meeting. In preparation for leading this discussion, each student would select one additional text from any form of media to be added to the syllabus and would prepare questions to begin the conversation in class. These student choices would be added to the one or two core texts and theoretical essays Robin and I were able to agree upon for each week. For the sake of time, GotW selections were necessarily limited in length to short stories, films, one or two episodes of a TV show, or a video clip, but their connections to the students' fannish passions would make them invaluable.

[3.3] The GotW presentation and its accompanying discussions turned the classroom into what James Gee calls "affinity spaces." Gee's affinity spaces are where fan communities informally gather to discuss video games and share resources online, helping each other to achieve and voluntarily sharing their enthusiasm. Not all of Gee's traits for affinity spaces map to the GotW (mostly because affinity spaces tend to not have the mandatory structures of a classroom), but many do: newbies and masters and everyone else share common space; content organization is transformed by interactional organization; both intensive and extensive knowledge are encouraged; both individual and distributed knowledge are encouraged; and leadership is porous, and leaders are resources (Gee 2004). Henry Jenkins further connects this idea of affinity spaces to the alternative learning environments of participatory culture, noting that unlike traditional top-down academic environments "informal learning within popular culture is often experimental...[and] innovative" (Jenkins et al., 2006, 9). Jenkins's goal here is to note that in such a media-driven culture, cultural consumers can feel comfort and engagement in spaces that provide them with more ownership, agency, and connection to their passions.

[3.4] Incorporating these features of affinity spaces and participatory culture through the GotW made the assignment a hugely important part of what made the class function effectively. The weekly presentations ramped up student engagement, promoted rich conversations, and put science fiction fandom front and center both as a motivator for the class and as an important facet for more fully understanding the genre and its historical and current place in society. Furthermore, the GotW allowed the class to develop into the kind of cooperative enterprise Dewey (1938) described: shaped by the shared social intelligence of all those involved. By purposefully giving over ownership of the class to the students and allowing them a space to participate in fandom, the GotW drove the class on a weekly basis, making each student's investment of time and energy in the class feel more worthwhile.

[3.5] Importantly, opening up the course to the group's individual fannish interests made each student's personal history influential in the classroom. Because NYU in general has a diverse student body—XE even more so, due to the creative and experimental structure of the program—the students' voices represented a wide range of experiences and perspectives from across the intersectional spectrum and from around the world. The course, which admittedly was designed by two cisgender, straight, white, American-born faculty, is changed each semester by the contributions of LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and international students. These students greatly enrich the course materials by sharing texts that they feel represent their view of the world and works of authors that are commenting on places and times that are meaningful to them. The GotW content that has validated the value of this model has included the antidictatorial, anti-imperialistic graphic
novel *El Eternauta* by Argentinian Héctor Germán Oesterheld; queer analysis of the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Rejoined," which televised one of the first kisses between two women; and the diverse, multilayered, pansexual, pangender, android stylings of *Dirty Computer—an emotion picture* by Janelle Monáe. In addition, the significant cohort of Chinese students who have taken the class have provided a unique perspective on the genre. In particular these students have introduced the class to authors such as Cixin Liu—one of the most if not the most highly regarded Chinese science fiction authors—and provided a unique perspective on texts from other countries, particularly Japanese anime. This alternative perspective on Japanese works is particularly important because of the very different historical relationships that the People's Republic of China has had with Japan relative to Western countries.

[3.6] The influence of student contributions and participation through GotW does not cease at the end of the semester—the syllabus is flexible and is adjusted every time the course is offered to respond to texts that students previously presented in class. Furthermore, the discussions factor into alterations based on changes in the understanding of the history of science fiction as well as the increasing importance of global conditions such as climate change, globalization, and human rights. Particularly impassioned and heated conversations about race and sexuality have led to a complete overhaul of the "Intersectionality" week, such that the assigned texts now all come from previous GotWs. In addition, student interest in climate change and so-called Cli-Fi has become increasingly visible and central to class discussions. The week "Urban/Spaces" has shifted from a study of cities to one focused on a better understanding of humanity's relationship to a changing Earth and how authors perceive our ability (or lack thereof) to come to terms with the fact that that change is due to humanity's actions. The contributions of the students' deep engagement as fans through the GotW has been key to the success of the course. The best way to show that is through Fiona's own experience as a participant in and leader of GotW sessions.

**Fiona**

[3.7] Through each GotW, fandom became a useful pedagogical framework within the classroom. Beyond the professor-student dichotomy of the course, fans yearned to teach and to learn from fellow fans. Each presentation exposed me to a multitude of theories and criticisms to be later integrated into my work. With a fixation pulling from experience, students learned through creation by drawing conclusions based on participatory research as exemplified by Axel Bruns's notion of produsage, which depicts "collaborative engagement of (ideally, large) communities of participants in a shared project" (2008). To expand on this concept, the students converged as a community, participating in each of their peers' body of work. In the context of produsage, the student (as produser) cultivates a GotW segment, which allows the presenter to "feel in control of their participation, and in control as participants in the wider community" (Bruns 2008).

[3.8] Connected by the thread of participation, peer cross-disciplinary interests radiated within the articulation of each GotW segment. Surrounded by colleagues engaged in aspects of fandom, our enthusiasm drove the course because, in our nature, "we are fundamentally social beings, and in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, the default hypothesis is like us" (Heeter 2000, 7). The makers of the class shared their personal joys to enrich our involvement, drawn from their lived experiences. As a cosplayer, I shared my appreciation for the craft by providing a personal account and historical context. In fusing my interests with my research, I must maintain a balance between being a fan and being a researcher; in doing so, my work has sought to invoke the working practice of participatory cultures in an experimental nature, exceeding the binaries of "fan-scholar" and "scholar-fan" (Hills 2002, 19) to explore a muddied territory in which my personal interests became supported by a vast array of theoretical analysis and methodologies. Therefore, I composed a model based on the work of my peers in which I learned from the ethos that each colleague shared.

[3.9] To an extent, fandom requires participation. When approaching the GotW and prototype assignment,
students shared their relationship to their chosen cultural texts. Indeed, each student approached the task by crafting "meaningful patterns out of experience and we spend our lives acquiring, refining, elaborating, and reinventing these patterns" (Murray 2012, 17). Building on preexisting modes of thought and social constructs, my peers dabbled in fannish activities by talking through theories grounded in gender studies, sociology, critical analysis, and so forth. Critical theory fosters a relationship through the texts, real-life experiences, intellectual influences, and discourse. Enthusiasm, with intellectual intrigue, strongly shaped the classroom dynamic.

[3.10] As exemplified by GotW and the prototype assignment, the students as "fans expand these artefacts not only by contributing to discussions and debates, but also by creating related media texts" (Schäfer 2012, 46). The students took an object to discuss at length as a digital and verbal presentation. On September 26, 2018, for the "Human?" section, one of our classmates assigned David Cronenberg's 1986 film The Fly. The film, which radiates the failure and hubris of man, depicts a fusion between science fiction and horror. In The Fly, by tinkering with his teleportation device the scientist Seth Brundle manipulates ethical boundaries, thereby pushing and testing the constraints of humanity (Gomel 2011, 339). Using The Fly as a body of work to digest and dissect encouraged my peers and myself to connect these GotW segments to the assigned theoretical texts. Critical analysis, embodied as invigorating discussion during class, paralleled the performative nature of fandom in which canonical material is studied, deciphered, and interpreted in an animated setting.

[3.11] With participation in fandom operating as a pedagogical device in the classroom, another GotW segment painted a portrait of students behaving as fans. For example, one student used the multiplatform, first-person shooter video game BioShock (Levine 2007) as their GotW for "Dogma/Doctrine" on November 14, 2018, and we were encouraged to view a Let's Play video that documented a run-through of the game or to experience the video game firsthand. This demonstrates the vast diversity of access points across fandom alongside the great influence science fiction has over various media formats as a "feedback loop of images and ideas" (Gomel 2011, 340). Herein, explicit participation pertains to modalities of fan cultures (Schäfer 2012, 52). In other words, when they presented a media object, the students controlled the course participation while we examined their personal placement as a fan; in every aspect, the students performed or demonstrated their fannish proclivities. In accordance with Hills's perception of an affective definition of fandom on a cult level, fandom behaves "as an intensely felt fan experience" (2002, 11).

[3.12] Inspired by the interpretations of my peers, driven by my zeal for cosplay, and motivated by my desire to contribute to fan studies, for the theme week of "Sci-Fi Culture" I created a GotW devoted to cosplay—a physical embodiment of fannish activity. In particular, by embodying science fiction as "the literature of change" (McKitterick 2010), the presentation on The Fly inspired my desire to wed the tension between science fiction and horror in my conceptualization of a "scare attraction" for H. G. Wells's The Island of Doctor Moreau.

[3.13] In his 2016 TED talk "My Love Letter to Cosplay, Adam Savage states, "Everything that we choose to put on is a narrative, a story about where we've been, what we're doing, who we want to be." Savage, known for his role on the series MythBusters (Discovery Channel, 2003–2016), has harnessed experimental methodologies to tell stories—and is also known for roaming the convention circuit in costume. Savage attests to the story of the fan paying tribute to beloved fandom. By contrast, Suzanne Scott has addressed how labor is gendered within fan production in the context of cosplay as a site of fan practice (2015, 146). Through media consumption, cosplay presents "a gendered vision of fan participation that problematically assumes that all fans are driven by a desire to professionalize" (148)—that is, the underlying assumption that fans use cosplay as a vehicle for monetization. As a cosplayer, my narrative and GotW presentation emphasized the manipulation of the body, the complications of identity, and practices within fan culture. Wearing a costume insinuates a performance and imposes a relationship onto the cosplayer's body. In
"Costuming as Subculture: The Multiple Bodies of Cosplay," Nicolle Lamerichs argues that to channel this character portrayal "the fan performer relies on multiple bodies and repertoires that are intimately connected to the fan's identity and the performed character" (2014, 113). Overall, my GotW grounded my desire to explore the intersection between performance and fan identity before exploring the do-it-yourself methodology evident within my interactive prototype.

[3.14] Although various fandoms were discussed, dissected, and analyzed, we all remained mindful of the identities claimed and cultural work performed in fandom. By focusing on the subculture, in the merit of self-interest, I echo the sentiments of Henry Jenkins: "Can we, or should we be 'critical'" (2006b, 11). Being critical as fans and as students fostered intellectual discussions to reevaluate our views and ideology. Through these GotW segments, I discovered how I behave as a fan within a scholarly setting; the irony was not lost upon me that "fans, by this definition, are those who gather together regularly to experience mass culture but who also respond to its professionalization by creating local, participatory, and amateur group activities for themselves" (Coppa 2013, 77). By harnessing various pedagogies to embrace the personality of a budding scholar, my presentation sought to historicize cosplay and divulge my personal narrative to welcome discussion. I intended to navigate cosplay beyond the convention space. I investigated theories on performativity, both in my GotW segment and in the prototype phase. Therefore, I assigned two pieces for introspection: a video addressing the heart of cosplay and an article assessing its performative nature. Cosplay exhibits signs of fan labor, production, and participation (Scott 2015). Beyond the example of cosplay as a mode of fan production, my GotW assignment explored performativity identities and the virtuosity of art practices involved.

4. The interactive prototype

Kimon

[4.1] The course construction, selection of texts, shaping of discussions, and GotW all led to the final assignment of the course: the development of a prototype for a nonlinear, user-driven, interactive version of an existing science fiction text. The goal of this exercise was twofold. First, students had to re-envision their chosen text from the perspective of the present using the anthropological, historical, and critical analyses we developed during the semester. Second, students had to think of how they could use their new medium of choice to convey the rich, rigorous, and intellectual ideas of the original text but using nonlinear, user-driven story mechanics.

[4.2] The project consisted of three stages: the proposal, the prototype, and the reflection paper. The first stage, the proposal, comprised a 1,000-word or longer statement that provided a description of the original text and its sociocultural and historical contexts; justification for the alternate version, which explained the new sociocultural/historical contexts; engagement with relevant theoretical perspectives as they apply to the original work and new version; and a work plan. The second stage, the prototype, was the core of the project. This multimedia expression would include visual representations of different locations, plot points, and experiences through the use of audio, video, locational, and other sensory expressions. These features were to be conveyed through a combination of drawing, collage, screenplay, storyboard, or other mode and to be accompanied by textual descriptions for further clarity. Although the prototype did not necessarily have to be interactive itself, it had to explicate how interactive mechanics differentiated the work from linear narrative structures. Finally, for the reflection paper, each student was responsible for a statement describing the purpose of the project in relation to the original text, along with historical placement of the project relative to other texts and theory in the field. Each student also was responsible for reflecting on the process of working on the prototype, including descriptions of how disparate media forms affected her workflow, how she approached the different stages of the project, unexpected obstacles or discoveries, and so on.
This multistage project challenges students to think creatively, to put theory into practice, to work in modes that are likely to be unfamiliar and uncomfortable, and to consider the different audiences and users who are the target of both speculative fiction and scholarly knowledge production. It begins with the two-factor pedagogical premise that (1) if students are to be fluent writers and makers, they must learn how to compose for a variety of media formats and lengths as the digital medium makes traditional writing styles increasingly obsolete; (2) as science fiction expands in the twenty-first century to become more visible (if not dominant) in new media across the cultural landscape, students must be fluent in how nonlinear, user-driven experiences on mobile devices, in video games, and interactive physical spaces are created and developed conceptually and technically, and how those processes shape the relevance and context of science fiction stories.

This framework was drawn from the discourse on interactive technology and pedagogy and design thinking. Having studied and taught in the City University of New York Graduate Center's Interactive Technology and Pedagogy certificate program, I believe in an interdisciplinary, practice-based pedagogy that integrates theoretical, historical, philosophical, literary, and sociological knowledge resulting in praxis-oriented coursework, academic research, and scholarly publication ("Interactive Technology and Pedagogy Certificate Program," n.d.). This combination of teaching, learning, technology, and creativity is vital for contemporary education, not just because of the increase in digital technologies in the classroom but because, like in science fiction, it is important to understand how technologies and media implicitly and explicitly shape our understanding of texts, our communication with one another, and our relationship to the changes in society. In a class that leverages fandom as part of the learning experience, Katherine Anderson Howell notes, "We can invite [students] to participate in their education, to talk back to experts and authorities, and to shape the discourse themselves. We frame teaching and learning as actions, practices to be done, not lessons to be consumed" (2018, 6–7).

The prototype assignment implements classroom practices that challenge orthodoxy in academia and generate creative, participatory affinity spaces for students. As such, the assignment encourages the students in liberating acts of cognition—à la Freire—where there is no right or wrong or facile transferal of information. Rather, the assignment necessitates the student's participation in fandom and assumes that the teacher is more likely than not to be less of an expert on the material than the student. In this environment, the role of the professor is to facilitate the understanding of an often unfamiliar creative practice of process rather than to presume or assert an intellectual superiority. Paul Booth (2018) notes how these kinds of assignments are particularly useful in courses that emphasize fandom as "the classroom moves from a space of membership (all are in the class because they signed up) to a space of interaction (students learn from one another and from their own experiences)" (122).

To facilitate this approach to thinking and learning, students were introduced to design concepts and approaches to creating alternative experiences in a week titled "Interactivity," with Janet Murray's Inventing the Medium (2012) as a primary text. Few students came to the class having practiced thinking like a designer, but as our culture generally and science fiction specifically become imbued with more designed experiences, these skills are more relevant and important for passionate fans and more passive consumers alike. The best way to go about this has generated lively debate concerning the difference between a generalized design thinking as a way of approaching creative problem solving and a more formalized approach to design thinking used by design firms in corporate environments (Moggridge 2007, 2010; Brown 2008; Norman 2010, 2013, 2019). Tim Brown (2008), head of the famed design firm IDEO, calls for a cycle of Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation. Others follow the five stages proposed by Stanford's d.school: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test (Dam and Teo 2019).

No matter what the specifics, the core values transfer well to courses and classrooms looking to develop affinity spaces. As renowned designer Bill Moggridge has stated, "[Designers] learn by doing, assembling a
rich and intuitive understanding of restraints, knowing how to create alternatives, developing representations and building prototypes, evaluating solutions and choosing directions, rejecting unsuccessful solutions and trying another cycle of the process" (2010, ¶ 3). The prototype assignment encouraged students to embrace these traits and processes from design and connect them to creative thought, experimentation, and knowledge production. The proposal connected their passions and research to an initial inspiration or idea. Then discussions with myself and classmates and midstage presentations moved along the process of prototyping, testing, getting feedback, and refining.

[4.8] Once this framework of interactivity, design, and knowledge production was laid out for the students, the cooperative participatory space of the seminar and the individual fannish impulses of each student created a fruitful cycle of inspiration, experimentation, and critique. The students were encouraged to pick a text that they really are a fan of or that they really feel challenged by so that this exhilaration of affinity could drive them through difficult moments in their process. It was not the length or canonicity that made the text they chose important but its relevance to how the students wanted to highlight what they are a fan of in the piece. As a group the students also acted as a test audience of critical fans. Through presentations of proposals, early drafts, and end-of-the-semester versions, the students had to make the case for their choices, describe what they found compelling, and convince the rest of the class to be fans of their work.

[4.9] During these critiques the students also came together as a creative unit—sharing advice, highlighting what was compelling, exciting, confusing, or off-putting, and brainstorming revisions, improvements, and innovative divergences from early plans. The students often worked together between presentations if they found affinities between their projects, and asides during weekly discussions or conversations during breaks often came back to exciting challenges and new ideas with which the students were grappling. The class soon became as generative and supportive a community as those that can be found on sites such as Archive of Our Own. Because graduate students are already versed in the complications of academia, they are capable, as Katharine Anderson Howell (2018) has noted, of finding "meaningful community that addresses both the practical academic need and the relational affinity need within the remix classroom" (6). This coming together of the group generated the authentic communication that Freire (2018) calls for in liberated education that is vital not only to the students' work in the classroom but to how that work connects to reality in the world beyond. As the semester progressed, the students found their projects dragging them further down fascinating rabbit holes as their scholarly minds combined with their fannish dedication to create more complex, more creative, and more detailed projects.

[4.10] Most importantly, students were constantly reminded that the end goal of the project was not a fully polished prototype ready to take to production. Rather, however far they could get in fifteen weeks was how far they would get. So long as they showed endeavor and commitment throughout the semester—which was often not difficult to motivate because their investment in fandom pushed them along—the project would be considered a success. The materials they handed in were considered a work in progress, a midpoint in what were almost always ambitious, aspirational projects. More often than not the projects were shockingly successful, as you will see in Fiona's work.

5. A prototype: A scare house

Fiona

[5.1] As emphasized by Ursula K. Le Guin, science fiction offers another way to describe reality (1980). In this course, the power of speculation allowed for the student to devise a prototype. The student prototypes behaved akin to the remixing or adaptation of a preexisting text (Schäfer 2012, 46). For my project, I converted a linear narrative into an immersive experience juxtaposed to fan engrossment over canonical material. As I proceeded with my project, "Enter the House of Pain," I grounded my work in the narrative of
H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* to transform science fiction literature into an interactive think-piece. This contextual, interdisciplinary approach reconfigured the text to develop a design process and to digitize the presentation through social media to foster audience engagement. Representations of the prototype exhibited attributes of explicit participation in which technology was subverted, or appropriated, with technical skills undergoing evolution or becoming a cause for improvement (Schäfer 2012, 52).

[5.2] To propel my tinkering, I compiled a critical study of H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* for our class assignment, the second essay, which critiqued anthropological, historical approaches (note 2). On a remote island, relentless experimentation through vivisection pushes against scientific limitations; half-beast, half-human hybrids are created by the cruel hand of Doctor Moreau, a mad scientist turned creator-god. In his evolutionary quest, Moreau aims to test "the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape" to manipulate nineteenth-century notions of biology (Wells 2002, 102)—in the "House of Pain," Moreau's laboratory, agony celebrates evolutionary progress. Thus impacted by Darwinism, the Beast People possess "the accompanying fear of devolution (along with a growing mistrust of science itself)" (Graff 2001, 33). Civilization, unable to process tumultuous adaptation, thus unravels. Viscerally, the reader experiences the horrors of change through the viewpoint of the novel's narrator Edward Prendick; similarly, guests navigating my theoretical attraction are exposed to sudden, unexplainable atrocities.

[5.3] My case study presented a multimedia experience where fandom is *experienced* by an audience and fannish activities are embodied by performers reimagining H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* as a twenty-first-century scare house. I identify a scare attraction (alternatively referred to as a scare house) as an attraction meant to simulate fright in an artificial, theatrical environment. In other words, the scare house offers an immersive experience postulating a relationship between the participants and the actors to elicit terror. The framework for this concept resembles the construction of fan fiction within fan spaces. In fact, this prototype mirrors a reconstruction of canonical material as made apparent in fan fiction (De Kosnik 2015, 1). In the realm of fan fiction, readers and writers "understand that they should create mental images of specific actors performing scenes that the fan author describes" (1). During the development process, I transcribed my theoretical scenes as a creative writing piece. The scare house environment became a fic-like riff on Wells's original work.

[5.4] By translating a two-dimensional text into a three-dimensional experience, the prototype synthesized research, secondary analysis, critical theory, and peer engagement. Designing such an experience engaged both my interest as a fan and promoted interaction among fellow fans, and during this process I employed an interactive narrative to depict a modern societal relationship immersed in "digital technology" (Brown, Barker, and Del Favero 2011, 213). Using the social media platforms of Twitter (figure 2) and Instagram (figure 3), I encouraged user interactivity through the perpetuation of artificial advertisements.

![Figure 2. Screenshot of the House of Pain attraction's Twitter feed. The primary motivation was to promote social engagement](https://twitter.com/enterthehouseo1)
[5.5] On one hand, the act of manipulating Instagram playfully and intentionally by curating a digital archive for the "House of Pain" calls to attention how fan labor has become exploited by corporations and companies alike. As Kristina Busse has commented on the capitalization of fan labor, the consumer is "rebranded as fans, and as fannish modes of sharing and spreading interest get rebranded as viral marketing, entire companies are dedicated solely to mimicking and replicating fannish passions as user-generated content" (2015, 112). In the example of my prototype, there exists a murky uncertainty over the use of social media as it either mirrors capitalized fan activities or recognizes these modes of engagement.

[5.6] On the other hand, participatory culture incorporates the technological into these representations and reworkings of media (Schäfer 2012, 52). Rooted in fandom practices, I implement a do-it-yourself (DIY) praxis by replicating aspects of a haunted house attraction. For the flyers I created (figure 4), mixed media art simulated information about a theoretical attraction. To complement this narrative, I used Instagram and Tumblr (figure 5) to simulate an artificial reality in an online space, which simultaneously functions as a future archive, similar to "online fan archives" which "offer visible evidence that audiences actively and imaginatively engage with media texts" (De Kosnik, 2015, 1). In line with Abigail De Kosnik's work on fan fiction, "fans appropriate the repertoires of bodily performances that they see on screens, and reenact those repertoires in different spaces" (2016, 247). These sites allude to a performative interaction with a virtual audience. The premise of a scare house invokes participatory culture structured as a type of performance where guests react to the interactions shared with the actors.
As an attraction, the House of Pain simulates civil unrest apropos to contemporary society's ails in the embodiment of sheer chaos. Promising a wicked fright, the House of Pain assumes a sensorial experience. Situated in an experience akin to immersive theater, the participants confront fears, anxieties, and tensions. Reminiscent of immersive theater, a scare house fuels a narrative where the spectator endures an illusionary experience to question interactions that might occur between "an artifact, system, or environment...and a human" (Janlert and Stolterman 2017, 113). In the circumstance of the House of Pain, interactivity occurs between the actors and their stage, the actors and the guests, the guests and the attraction, as well as the guests and social media. In the context of this scare attraction, audiences roam "meticulously-designed spaces, fully encompassed in the fictional world created for the performance" (Howson 2015, 115). Through participation, immersive theater encourages an audience to respond to senses and spaces; immersive theatres "address current societal concerns and the imposed 'fearful state' of 21st-century civilization" (122). Just as the H. G. Wells novel poses moral dilemmas pertinent to Doctor Moreau's mistreatment of his victims, my scare attraction questions what is ethical in regards to actor–audience interactions.
Directed under the pretense of a linear narrative, my guests stroll along a trail while the story adapts in response to interactions with guests. Here, speculative fiction supports the prototype as a haunted attraction. Indeed, "the speculative nature of science fiction allows its writers to explore that which is not currently possible or is not aligned with current morality" (Clements 2015, 181). By granting participants freedom to interact, the experience is tailored as a personalized account. Analyzing immersive theatre experiences, scholar Olivia Turnbull notes that "one of the most familiar techniques employed in immersive theatre is to offer spectators agency" (2016, 153). In my theoretical scenario, the scare actors in the House of Pain construct a believable portrayal of the Beast People (figure 6).

Figure 6. Prosthetic mold hand sculpted out of clay, intended to depict the Sayer of the Law character in the H. G. Wells novel.

Furthermore, dramaturgical theories interpret human action as performative: social life behaves akin to a theater or a theatrical experience (Hałas 1987, 23). Perhaps the guests interacting with my attraction would elicit a reactive performance to parallel this speculation. Immersive theaters engage with narratives to "offer a new way of encountering familiar plot lines through a first-hand sensory experience, where the space cannot only be seen but smelt, heard, felt and touched directly" (Howson 2015, 124). Although a scare attraction might provoke discomfort, relief follows thereafter. As a scare house, the immersive theater of the House of Pain promises a therapeutic catharsis, after the adrenaline rush.

Propelled by passion, the labor of this project incorporates my emotions in an attempt to make "the work meaningful" (Deuze and Prenger 2019, 24). My appreciation for the DIY ethos allowed me to translate the proposal into a feasible prototype (figure 7 and figure 8). The DIY approach invokes a sort of affective play: "affective play 'creates culture' by forming a new 'tradition' or a set of biographical and historical resources which can be drawn on throughout fans' lives" (Hills 2002, 79). Driven to replicate a self-made attraction harnessing available resources, these handmade items encapsulate the crudeness often incorporated into low-budget horror attractions. I chose to reconfigure H. G. Wells's text due to the proverbial fan fiction that I had internally developed. I envisioned a malleable, three-dimensional space based on my previous
encounters with scare attractions; this imaginative task echoed how "people have to make emotional maps of media in order to decide, of the overwhelming number of possible media performances presented to them, which ones they will consume and become involved with, which ones they will become fans of, which ones they will use as the bases of their own performances" (De Kosnik 2016, 278). For the development of this prototype, I embraced Wells to present an immersive landscape that not only testified to my engagement as a fan but pushed my critical thinking as a scholar by contextualizing the project's design with various theories.

Figure 7. Screenshot of the student's attempt to render a three-dimensional model of one aspect of the House of Pain scare attraction via Sketch Up software. (Images are not to scale.)

Figure 8. Model of the scare attraction that emulates the House of Pain. An exterior view is shown of Moreau's home, which the student assembled and painted.

[5.11] In distinguishing fans from scholars, "the ideology of fandom involves both a commitment to some degree of conformity to the original program materials as well as a perceived right to evaluate the legitimacy of any of those materials, either by textual producers or by textual consumers" (Jenkins, Itō, and boyd 2015, 55). In the classroom, the solidarity often apparent within fan spaces became evident in the sources exchanged among my peers. My prototype did not seek to undermine the original text but rather sought to modify and redistribute The Island of Dr. Wells as a reinterpretation. The act of peer participation, in this instance, elicited empowerment by "adding greater diversity of perspective, and then recirculating it, feeding it back into the mainstream media" (Jenkins 2006a, 257). Feedback from other students gained me valuable connections to Cinema Secrets and Woochie FX that facilitated my progress. A fellow student's involvement with Frost Valley's Haunted House Events allowed me to interview staff on the experience of operating a scare trail. Thus, my prototype paints a picture of how fan consumption produces fan objects (Jenkins 2006b).

[5.12] Influenced by the work of my peers and the source texts, my final project produced a digitized,
interactive presentation to detail the design process. At the crossroads between science fiction and horror, I relied on a contemporary context to shape the project as an immersive experience. I sought to produce an artificial "designed experience" in which I would "structure an environment to create affordances for a human participant" (Heeter 2000, 7).

**Kimon**

[5.13] Usually, when I create a new course or new kind of assignment, I think I have a good grip on the range of projects I will receive, the quality of those projects, and the kinds of nonlinear experiences the students will devise. But the work that students produce in SF: HTPF never ceases to amaze me. Here is a list of some standout projects:

- [5.14] A tabletop role-playing game based on *The Twilight Zone* TV series that has players make moral decisions based on minimal knowledge of a given situation.
- An exhibition based on a *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode known for its challenging take on ethical decisions where user choice can change the ending.
- A choose-your-own-adventure style rewriting of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*.
- A series of Twitter bots that represent the early X-Men team and respond to tweets in ways that reveal the gender and sexuality biases present in 1960s comics.
- A text-based adventure version of *Rick and Morty* that eschews graphic richness to focus on parallel universe exploration and understanding the show's theoretical physics.

[5.15] Even with all these projects, I had never thought of something on the scale of a scare house as a possibility, and Fiona's choice and execution went beyond all expectations. The quality, expansiveness, and thoughtfulness of her prototype was a testament to the power of a commitment to fandom to act as a motivator for exceptional work. In fact, students often tell me that they spend far more time on this assignment than those in other classes, but they rarely notice or resent the extra effort—rather, they enjoy it as fans of their own work. That is music to a professor's ears.

**6. Conclusion**

**Together**

[6.1] In the quest for meaning-making within society, we are always seeking to "expand our ability to understand the world and to connect with one another" (Murray 2012, 2). "Science Fiction: Humanity, Technology, the Present, the Future" encourages students to make meaning by analyzing and reconfiguring texts with the enthusiasm and rigor of a fan. This engagement proves to be an invaluable learning and teaching tool as professor and student alike embark on a cultural exchange of thoughts, theories, beliefs, and ideas. Through the development of an elaborate participatory thinkspace that encourages dialogical communication and cooperative learning, the course combines the most aspirational goals of progressive education and fandom. In this environment, the passion of fandom becomes a powerful motivator and a source of encouragement for students, whether they are leading the GotW assignment or working on the prototype project.

[6.2] As a result of their shared investment in the fandom that is the foundation of the course, both instructor and pupil become more deeply immersed in the content and contexts of the course materials. As the participants' experiences, preferences, and passions enrich the class, they encounter a wider array of methodologies and fandoms than the interests of one or two professors could possibly provide. This rooting of the course in a diverse range of science fiction expressions that are closely related to vibrant fans and fan
communities develops an affinity space and "a participatory learning environment…that respects and values the contributions of each participant, whether teacher, student, or someone from the outside community" (Jenkins, Itō, and boyd 2015, 95). It further strengthens the argument that science fiction has an important role to play in describing our culture and society and enhancing our capacity to question and investigate the present. Through the course, all involved can walk away with a richer understanding of ourselves, our peers, our passions, and our world.

7. Acknowledgements

[7.1] We would like to acknowledge Robin Nagle for all her work and inspiration helping to shape and teach the first iteration of this course, and the faculty and staff of XE: Experimental Humanities and Social Engagement at NYU for their continued support. We would also like to thank all the students from the first three iterations of the course (fall of 2016, fall of 2018, and spring of 2020) who fully embraced the fannish aspects of the syllabus and assignments and helped it evolve from year to year: Austin Anderson, Zemí Yukiyu Atabey, Lina Barkawi, Madison Blecki, Bryan Bove, Hongyuan (James) Dai, Matthew Dischner, Jane B. Excell, Joseph Figliolia, Francis Ge, Andrew Harding, Brendan L Heldenfels, Dawn Howard, Yilang (Kisum) Jiang, Wei Kang, Arline Lee, Jessica MacFarlane, Ivan Martinez Autin, Johnathan McCauley, Alexandra Mcle, Dylan Miller, Sophie Mishara, Sharon Onga, Samantha Paul, Charlie Peterson, John J. Petinos, Nathaniel Savoy, Valeria Seminario, Stacy D. Shirk, Nick Silcox, Colleigh Stein, Alex Sullivan, Daniel Torres, Sigrid von Wendel, Sarah Jane Weill, Quan Zhang, Mengjia (Jun) Zhao.

8. Notes


2. Along with GotW and the prototype, students have three essay assignments. The first is for students to each write their own definition of science fiction. The other two ask students to choose two texts in the genre (one a book and the other not a book) and write a critical study using the course's anthropological and historical approaches. All assignment information is available on the course's website (http://kimon.hosting.nyu.edu/sites/science-fiction/assignments/).

9. References


Symposium

Second language vocabulary acquisition through fan fiction on the Archive of Our Own

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[0.1] Abstract — With the widespread diffusion of the internet and online archives, fan fiction is increasingly consumed by fans who do not speak English as a first language. It is therefore relevant to argue that fan fiction, especially as found on the fan-run Archive of Our Own, may work as a space for second language vocabulary acquisition. The high motivation and extensive engagement with forms of reading of fans who read and write fan fiction helps with vocabulary acquisition.

[0.2] Keywords — English language learners; Extensive reading; FLA; Foreign language acquisition; SLA


[1] Fan studies scholars have expanded on the potential of fan fiction to support queer female spaces (Lackner, Lucas, and Reid 2006), women's writing (Derecho 2006), and queer imaginations (Rodenbiker 2014), as well as of retoolings of masculinity (Penley 2014) and of identity performativity (Busse 2006), among a plethora of similar issues. Few scholars, however, have regarded fan fiction as a tool for language acquisition, and the present work aims to discuss the ways in which fan fiction may support language acquisition within the context of a globalized internet. This work is concerned, in particular, with the possible role of fan fiction posted on Archive of Our Own (AO3) as a highly motivating form of extensive reading (Krashen 1989; Coady 1996) aiding the acquisition of vocabulary in an additional language.

[2] Fan fiction was cemented as an object of scholarly relevance by Joanna Russ's (1985) Pornography by Women for Women, with Love, as well as by Camille Bacon-Smith's (1992) Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth and Henry Jenkins's (1992) Textual Poachers, all three of which are dedicated to discussing and defining the fan practices that developed in the sixties in the United States around cult television show Star Trek (1966–69). Bacon-Smith (1992) and H. Jenkins (1992) alike consider the emergence of fan fiction to have resulted from the active negotiation of meaning between fans and television text, an interpretive shift that positioned fans as active media consumers rather than passive spectators. Their research focused mainly on Western media and fan practices in Western, anglophone countries. The authors recount that fan fiction was published and distributed in zines and was thus regarded as a subcultural, niche activity, mostly undertaken by educated, English-speaking women who created networks in which to share fannish materials and enthusiasms. Throughout their works, Bacon-Smith and H. Jenkins understand the reading and writing of fan fiction as a collaborative endeavor—fannish activity is particularly marked by the existence of a community, of and around which the rules and specific consensuses are set and traced by the fans themselves. As such, reading and writing fan fiction are connected to both personal expression and the development of a collective identity.

[3] Although plenty has changed about the distribution of fan fiction since the publishing of Bacon-Smith's
(1992) and H. Jenkins's (1992) seminal works, the notion of community remains central to fandom. It was through this collaborative lens that AO3—an online, unrestricted archive that hosts over 6.5 million fan works and 2.5 million users (note 1)—was created. Part of the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), a nonprofit organization established by fans in 2007, AO3 hosts a large number of the fan works published online, including works published before it was created. In light of the aforementioned numbers, as well as of H. Jenkins's (1992) assertion that sharing fan fiction is a social process connected to the development of identity, it seems fair to infer that reading and writing of fan fiction are both extensive and deeply motivating.

[4] In addition, the reading and writing of fan fiction has, in the last twenty years, become a global endeavor. While both Bacon-Smith (1992) and H. Jenkins (1992) assert that early fan fiction was consumed by educated, English-speaking American women, nowadays, readers and writers access digital fan fiction from around the world. However, a substantial proportion of the works on AO3 are in English, with nearly 6 of the over 6.5 million works archived there published in English.

[5] Regarded as a global language, English is often used as a lingua franca, that is, as the common language used between speakers of different languages and with varied cultural backgrounds (J. Jenkins 2009). Because of this, it works to broaden the communicative possibilities within fan communities. Nonetheless, Angelina Karpovich (2006) asserts that a large number of fans do not have English as a first language. One of the first to study this in depth was scholar Rebecca Black (2005, 2006, 2008) who claims that a substantial part of fan fiction readership is now composed of English language learners and users of English as an additional language. Further studies have shown the central role English plays for fans with other mother tongues, such as Švelch's (2013) "The Delicate Art of Criticizing a Savior" and Duggan and Dahl's (2019) "Fan Translations of SKAM." Earlier examples include the work of Leppänen and colleagues (Leppänen 2007; Leppänen et al. 2009), in which they recount how Finnish fans usually opt for writing in English, recognizing that it allows their practices to reach a broader audience. Anne Kustritz (2015) similarly discusses how speakers of other languages identify as "fans," often using the English term to describe both transnational and local practices as well as using English in transnational fan spaces (¶ 3.1).

[6] Among the few scholars to have explored the potential of fan fiction as a tool for English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) acquisition, Black (2005, 2006) argues that online fan fiction communities can provide English language learners with significant opportunities for language development. Black's work focuses on English language learners' involvement with anime-based fan fiction posted on the website FanFiction.net and how this fan fiction allows English language learners to interact extensively with the English language. Online fan fiction communities are particularly valuable spaces of learning because they are rich with authentic, meaningful use of language and literacy (Warschauer 2000) and feature numerous discussions in which both meaning and identity are negotiated. Indeed, identity is performed through many choices within these communities: the inclusion of specific characters, pairings, tropes, and writing styles are all ways through which fans' identities can be negotiated. Fans' choice of language, too, can be considered a mode of identity performance as language can be used to demonstrate specific expertise, cultural affiliations, or personal values (Thorne, Sauro, and Smith 2015). Thus, Black (2005, 2006) concludes, online fan fiction communities are environments in which reading is deeply embedded in social interactions with other fans, often using English as a lingua franca, and this provides both content and motivation for English language learners.

[7] Although Black (2005, 2006) does not discuss the possible role of fan fiction as a tool for the acquisition of English vocabulary, her conclusions support such a claim. The literature touched upon so far posits that the consumption of fan fiction is a form of extensive reading that is highly motivated, as it is connected to matters of individual and collective identity, as well as part of a specific subculture that uses English as a lingua franca. Within studies of language acquisition, motivation has been considered to have a central role in
learners' mastering of an additional language: for example, Dörnyei (2005), in his conception of motivation, speaks of the existence of an ideal self in which all the desired attributes that one wishes to possess are encapsulated, including the mastery of a new language. Similarly, Gardner (2007) considers motivation to be both conveyed through learners' attitudes and ideals and responsible for the way learners relate to their additional language and the cultures of which it is a part. If English, in this case, is the language required for engaging with a community whose culture and activities are deeply connected with the development of individual and collective identity, motivation can be perceived as vital both in the reading of fan fiction itself and in the process of mastering English.

[8] Motivation is an important concept found in Coady's (1996) discussion of Krashen's (1989) claim that vocabulary can be acquired through the extensive reading of texts within learners' areas of interest. Coady (1996) highlights that beginner-level language learners do not have the vocabulary required for reading well enough to acquire new vocabulary through reading, a conundrum that was then named "the beginner's paradox" (229) and which suggests that language learners require a certain amount of language input or instruction before they are able to enlarge their vocabulary through extensive reading. For intermediate-level learners, however, extensive reading can be a key site for vocabulary acquisition—once a learner has mastered medium- to high-frequency words, the acquisition of low-frequency vocabulary can be achieved through incidental contact in the context of extensive reading. Likewise, Nation (2015) contends that the acquisition of vocabulary through extensive reading depends on repetition and a number of encounters with the target words. He further argues that extensive reading should involve the reading of level-appropriate texts, as linguistic challenges in the form of unknown words and structures can hinder word acquisition. However, Coady (1979) demonstrates that interest and motivation can be more relevant to the comprehension of a text than linguistic knowledge and ability, showing that the most effective input for language acquisition is compelling input. More recently, Krashen and Bland (2014, 2), quoting Nell (1988) and Atwell (2007), have argued the same, proposing that ideal input is not only interesting but also so compelling "that the acquirer is hardly aware that it is in a different language, so compelling that the reader is 'lost in the book'… or 'in the reading zone.'" They build upon Krashen's (2011) compelling input hypothesis, which suggests that compelling input removes the conscious aspect of language learning and rather transforms acquisition into a nearly unconscious, pleasurable process.

[9] Similarly focused on the role of extensive reading in vocabulary acquisition, Pigada and Schmitt's (2006) "Vocabulary Acquisition from Extensive Reading: A Case Study" describes how French learners participating in an extensive reading program were able to improve their comprehension of target words, spelling, and knowledge of overall text meaning and grammar. Kweon and Kim's (2008) "Beyond Raw Frequency: Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition in Extensive Reading" describes how previously unknown words could be acquired through the extensive reading of authentic texts, while Judge's (2011) "Driven to Read: Enthusiastic Readers in a Japanese High School's Extensive Reading Program" focuses on the motivations of avid readers inside an extensive English-language reading program in Japan. These findings further corroborate Krashen's (1989) and Coady's (1996) works.

[10] The examples mentioned above work with the idea of authentic texts—that is, texts that were not written specifically for language learners, such as graded readers, but which were instead published for a general readership in the target language, such as novels. Fan fiction, although written by both native and non-native English users (Karpovich 2006), is also a form of authentic text, produced according to its own set of genre-specific conventions (H. Jenkins 1992). A great deal of scholarship on vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading (e.g., Judge 2011; Kweon and Kim 2008; Pellicer-Sánchez 2016; Pigada and Schmitt 2006) reinforces Coady's (1996) claims that English vocabulary can be acquired incidentally through the extensive reading of authentic texts by intermediate-level language learners. It follows, then, that fan fiction, which has so far in this work been established as a form of authentic text that is consumed extensively, can play a relevant role in the acquisition of vocabulary by language learners. Moreover, it is fair to suggest that more
scholarly attention ought to be given to fan fiction as a form of authentic text and to its function as a site for the acquisition of vocabulary in learners' additional languages. It is possible that fan fiction may play a larger role in language acquisition than commercially published literary texts due to the inherently motivational aspect of fan fiction, as well as to the ease with which it can be accessed online through archives such as AO3.

[11] Sauro (2020) has reviewed the scholarly attention paid to fan fiction as a tool of language learning in informal contexts and found that the reading and writing of fan fiction have been the foci of case studies exploring how these practices improve reading and writing skills in fans' mother tongues and additional languages. Although the studies reviewed by Sauro touch on vocabulary acquisition and development as a consequence of reading and writing fan fiction, they do not use the lens of extensive reading in their analyses. Future case studies focusing on vocabulary acquisition through the extensive reading of fan fiction, as well on how the high frequency of vocabulary specific to fan fiction (Stasi 2006) might affect vocabulary development and retention, would further develop our understanding of how fan fiction aids language acquisition. Research on fan fiction should include considerations of language acquisition—it can broaden research horizons for scholars all over the globe and provide both fan studies and applied linguistics with valuable interdisciplinary insights.

Note

1. Numbers and information retrieved from AO3 in October, 2020.

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Roundtable

Transcultural fan studies in practice: A conversation

Lori Morimoto, Paul Booth, Ross Garner, Melanie E. S. Kohnen, Bethan Jones, E. J. Nielsen, Louisa Ellen Stein, and Rebecca Williams

[0.1] Abstract—At the end of 2018, a group of fan scholars led by Lori Morimoto journeyed to Japan for a fan studies field trip. The purpose was multifaceted: to speak at a symposium on transcultural popular culture; to bring together fans and fandom studies from both sides of the Pacific; and to augment their classrooms with practical experience. Eight participants share their experiences and reflect on what it means to be a transcultural fan scholar at the dawning of the 2020s.

[0.2] Keywords—International; Japan; Manga; Pedagogy


1. Introduction

[1.1] Lori Morimoto: In practical terms, the 2018 Japan fan study trip arose out of a casual conversation between Louisa Ellen Stein, E. J. Nielsen, Paul Booth, and myself at the 2017 SCMS conference in Chicago, which basically began, "Wouldn't it be cool if…," and ended, "Let's do it!" In pedagogical terms, however, it's something I had been mulling over for several years as a result of witnessing a seemingly unbridgeable divide separating scholarship on Japanese popular culture on the one hand and fans and fandoms on the other. Mark McLelland (2018) has written about the challenges that existing fans of Japanese popular culture bring to increasingly "convergent" Japanese studies classrooms; similarly, the Japan fan studies tour was driven in part by the growing presence of such fans in mainstream media and media fandom classrooms and the challenges they present to instructors unversed in Japanese popular culture. Simply put, it was my hope that experiencing Japanese popular culture firsthand would give media studies faculty the basic knowledge needed to address these students' interests.

[1.2] At the same time, the Japan fan studies tour was equally intended as a means of affording participants the opportunity to make connections between their own research and aspects of popular culture that are seldom addressed in mainstream fan studies (and effectively marginalized when they are), as part of my own broader interest in transculturating fan studies. There's a scene early in the NBC TV series, Hannibal (2013–15), in which serial killer-cannibal Hannibal Lecter imitates the style of another serial killer in order that the contrast between his copy and the original might help illuminate the other's patterns and tells. It was this kind of contrast I hoped would be of use to participants in the tour, particularly where heretofore familiar objects (theme parks, film franchises, etc.) were experienced in unfamiliar contexts. Given what participants in the tour have written here, I could not be more pleased with the outcome.

2. Context is everything

[2.1] There was a heady mix of familiar and unfamiliar cultural elements and iconography on the trip. Only
one participant had been to Japan prior to the trip, although all of us were familiar in some ways with aspects of Japanese popular culture (through our own explorations of transcultural fandom). Yet, seeing familiar icons of Japanese popular culture taken out of our immediate context and thrust back into their original context was, perhaps, the most unfamiliar of all. Our own Anglocentrism was reflected back on us.

[2.2] Ross Garner: What stood out to me were the differences in terms of how fan consumption is positioned and appropriated by institutions, and the effect this had on performing being a fan. Looking back I feel a little bit sad that I didn't quite have the time to prepare myself as fully as others for the trip and experience. I came straight from teaching to flying out and then being in Japan, and I wish I'd had more time to research a little bit about where we were staying in Shinjuku. Seeing the Godzilla hotel blew my mind (as someone who's currently researching fandom for prehistoric mediations), and learning that this area of Tokyo specifically branded itself via associations with Godzilla was incredible. Had I known, I'd have set aside a little time to try and meet with people and research this in more detail from an ethnographic point of view. In terms of what made it feel like home, that Rebecca and I went to Tokyo Disneyland on the Saturday really brought this into focus. This place should have been quite familiar as we've visited the Florida and California parks before. To say this wasn't the case was an understatement! The first thing I remember noting was the character headwear that many of the visitors had on. However, the parades seemed so much more elaborate than those that we'd seen before (I'll never forget the giant Baymax!), and the merchandise was very, very different in that there was less focus on the branding of individual attractions (as is the case in Florida) and more on the park itself and the Fab Five Disney characters.

[2.3] Bethan Jones: I did a lot of research before I went to Japan but more on what have historically been termed highbrow rather than pop-cultural objects. I was really interested in art and finding the best museums and galleries to visit. I also wanted to find street art and skate culture, so I spoke to friends who had visited Japan previously and did a lot of internet searching. There were specific prefectures I wanted to visit, and I spent a day on my own wandering around and looking for graffiti and alternative stores and spaces. I found a couple of amazing shops selling goth and punk clothes—spaces in which I find myself at home—and also found one store where the owner spoke English, had lived in the UK for a while, and had visited Cardiff! It was a slightly surreal experience—you don't expect to find someone so far away who knows your closest city—but it brought home the similarities as well as the differences.

[2.4] Garner: Can I also just mention tea in a can. It was simultaneously different and homely, and it instantly made me fall in love with Tokyo even more!

[2.5] Louisa Ellen Stein: Oh, tea in a can, how I miss you! That was one of my first discoveries, off the plane, and yes, it was love at first vending machine (figure 1).
[2.6] Stein: Seriously, though, I was so excited when Lori began to plan this trip because over the past decade, I'd been becoming more and more deeply a fan of Japanese media and of anime specifically. I'd started as a high school student with *Sailor Moon*, but it wasn't until I started showing my daughter magical girl anime (*Cardcaptor Sakura*, for starters) that I became more fully immersed—and a Crunchyroll subscription pushed us both in more deeply. I'd also been trying to learn Japanese—with not much success—and had been reading translated work of Japanese fan/otaku studies scholars. So going to Japan with a group of fans/fan studies scholars was pretty much a dream come true. But of course consuming (mostly animated) representations of a fantasy Japan is very different from actually being in Japan.

[2.7] Stein: Initially, I felt some strange and exciting dissonance—things that felt niche and marginal at home in Vermont were everywhere, and things I experience as subcultural at home seemed on the surface mainstream in Tokyo, although I'm very aware that as a new tourist, I was of course missing many nuances and gradations of culture and subculture. But the presence of anime images everywhere, not to mention the wondrous supply of stationary, ramen, sushi, Muji, and Uniqlo did make me feel at home, even as it was strange that I didn't really have to go out of my way to seek them out. I remember standing on a train that was plastered with *Detective Conan* posters (another favorite of mine, as a long time Sherlock Holmes fan) and feeling just how surreal it was that this thing I had always experienced as obscure was everywhere (figure 2).

![Figure 2. Detective Conan on the train. Photo courtesy of Louisa Ellen Stein.](image)

[2.8] Stein: And certain things seemed to click into place—the beginnings of new understandings that came out of being in the spaces—like being in Animate and moving through various sections that had mainstream merchandise (which would have been not at all mainstream in the United States), and then through the areas filled with moe imagery, and then yuri, and then yaoi, and all the cases and cases of dōjinshi (fan-published comics). The endless amounts of dōjinshi for everything from *Yuri on Ice* to *Hetalia* to *Sherlock* left a very deep impression on me. It was a lot to take in.

[2.9] Jones: It was a lot to take in! I was so grateful to be with this group of people though. Not just because we all study fandom so could talk to each other about things we were experiencing and how we were theorizing them but because we are fans ourselves so I didn't have to feel yet another form of outsiderness—if I'd done this trip with nonfan friends, I think it would have felt very different. The language was one of the big barriers for me, and I was glad to have Lori there and to spend time with her. I tried learning—not very
well!—but one of the things that really sticks out is when we went to have lunch in Kyoto one day. We found a place which had an English and Japanese menu and one of the dishes was chicken with Welsh onions—otherwise known as leeks! Of course that made me happy. I was also wearing my Kojima hoody (bought because Norman Reedus, who has worked on the Death Stranding videogame made by Hideo Kojima, owns one, and I'm a fan) which caught the attention of two women sitting next to us. I understood enough to know they were talking about the hoody but not enough to understand the context. Turns out Kojima is a big brand in Japan, but Lori also taught me how to say I've got it because of Hideo Kojima, a videogame developer.

3. Pedagogy and scholarship

[3.1] Our first stop in Japan was a symposium at Sophia University: "Intersections: Japanese and Western Fan Studies in Conversation." Our dialogue at the symposium helped develop new connections between Japanese fan studies scholars and Anglo fan studies scholars working on similar topics: audience studies, fan tourism, theater fandom, and manga readers (note 1). Our intent was to bridge the great Pacific divide and bring both groups of fan scholars into conversation about pedagogical and scholarly concerns. Similarly, finding aspects of fan work helped develop new avenues into our research, like our conversation with Professor Rachel Thorn about the history of manga.

[3.2] Melanie E. S. Kohnen: While we had many informal conversations about fandom and fan studies during the trip, I also found it helpful to discuss ideas at the Symposium at Sophia University, in a more formal setting.

[3.3] Stein: It was exciting to come together with scholars studying fandom from such a range of perspectives and contexts; our group itself brought together different foci and institutional contexts, and to engage in a daylong dialogue in turn with Japanese scholars of fandom highlighted continuities and opened up new perspectives for me. I was especially fascinated by Akiko Sugawa-Shimada's presentation on "Female Fandom of 2.5-Dimensional Theatrical Performances." I hadn't heard the term "2.5-Dimensional" theater before (that is, theatrical production based on anime) nor realized what a strong tradition it is, with thriving transcultural fan practices; now I am absolutely intent on attending a production on my next visit to Japan. Another highlight was visiting Professor Rachel Thorn; she welcomed us into her office, spoke about her research and translation work, and shared with us her collection of early shōjo manga and yaoi manga magazines.

[3.4] Paul Booth: Yes, Dr. Thorn's presentation was a highlight for me as well. As someone almost entirely unfamiliar with manga, it was eye-opening to see how it had been developed since WWII. I was particularly invested in the way manga developed into girls' manga and boys' manga and the highly stratified reading environments of the 1960s and 1970s. This is something else I've been able to bring into my teaching, as many of my students are highly invested in manga and anime.

[3.5] Jones: Dr. Thorn's talk was so interesting, especially coming off the back of our visit to the Manga Museum and our attempts at drawing manga ourselves (figure 3)! I haven't read any manga but there are certainly works I'm adding to my list now.
[3.6] Booth: It's the pedagogical connections that were the most important for me. It's one thing to read about Japanese popular culture, or to see it in videos and documentaries, but it's entirely different to experience it firsthand. A lot of what I do in my classes is ethnographic work, and bringing in images and ideas from the trip has benefited my courses on fandom, popular culture, and technology. One example really stands out: in reading about Japanese fan cultures, it's clear that the Akihabara district is a mecca, of sorts, for collectors and fans of Japanese media, classic sci-fi, technology, and more. But actually going to the district and wandering around a twelve-story building and among the glass cases filled with action figures, dōjinshi, and costumes made real the practices that one only reads about. I can bring that into the classroom in a more visceral way than simply having students read about it. But at the same time, this shines a light on other transcultural fandoms—we can discuss how fans from other countries or cultures might view US fandom and fan cultures simply by the remnants of our culture. I've found that students respond to this reflective teaching strategy by opening up about their own tunnel vision when it comes to metacultural analysis.

[3.7] Stein: I want to second what Paul's getting at here: increasingly I am incorporating a wider diversity of media into my courses, including anime, and teaching about transcultural fandom. This trip without question helped me think about transcultural frictions in new, more tangible ways, and that's something I will bring into my classroom discussions as I encourage my students to think about their own location and experiences within transcultural fan frameworks.

[3.8] Rebecca Williams: For me, I think I would like to be able to draw on the experiences a little more in the classroom, but in the UK system I have limited chances to do that. I've talked a little about the differences between cultural experiences of fandom before in class, and I think if anything, this trip gave me more confidence in being able to want to address some of that. It's hard to step outside of the dominant Anglophone white middle-class experience, especially with students who are usually from pretty homogenous backgrounds, and I hope that the experiences from the trip will continue to make me feel like we can challenge our own experiences, and that I can continue to push my students outside of their own comfort zones as much as possible.

[3.9] Kohnen: So far, the only thing I've incorporated is the Captain Marvel promotion I noticed/photographed in Tokyo (and the mini-poster I got at the pop-up Marvel store in Narita). I tracked the promotion of Captain Marvel in a class last spring, and it was helpful to include examples from Tokyo to show Marvel's global reach, especially because the promotional material didn't look different from what I encountered in, for example, Times Square.

[3.10] Garner: In terms of scholarship, as a result of the trip, I've reconfigured my monograph manuscript to be solely about how Saban Brands has rebooted the Power Rangers (1993–96) franchise via nostalgia. Although there's not the time or space to address this overly in terms of transcultural debates, it's certainly brought me an additional angle for thinking about how intergenerational nostalgia migrates between different
areas (and Pokémon can sit very well with that as well).

[3.11] Williams: I've been working on a chapter on fashion and clothing in themed spaces and talked a bit in that about the differences between Disney and Universal theme parks in the United States and what I saw in Japan. I would never have considered thinking about that without the firsthand experience of seeing how people dressed and how that mapped onto the idea of kawaii culture and cuteness in Japanese culture more widely. I ended up reading a lot about the history and development of kawaii for that chapter, and I really hope I can do some more comparative transcultural work in the future.

[3.12] E. J. Nielsen: While I haven't yet been able to incorporate anything from the trip directly into my scholarship, it was an important reminder for me of all of the incredible work being done by non-Western scholars that for various reasons (access, language barriers, Western-centrism in scholarship, straight up racism) we aren't always aware of and that I need to make more of an effort to seek out. Dr. Thorn did a fantastic job of giving us an overview of the history of women's manga, and the presentation by a senior scholar on his efforts to have manga, dojinshi, and related merchandise archived by the National Diet Library was incredibly interesting to learn about, especially in the context of work I'm doing on material object culture and fandom. He argued that the merchandise is so much a part of the text that to archive the text without it is to destroy necessary context. More broadly, seeing Japan with a group of fan studies scholars who were themselves also fans meant being simultaneously unselfconsciously letting our fan flags fly while also being able to take critical steps back and look and discuss more broadly what we were seeing and experiencing. I can't imagine a better group to travel with.

4. Bringing and seeing fannishness in Japan

[4.1] Everyone in the group had their own fannish interests, but most of those interests center on Anglo-American media. Throughout the trip, though, various manifestations of these fandoms appeared in Japanese contexts, highlighting the ubiquity of transcultural fandom. In particular, the idea of space dominated our thinking about our own fannishness.

[4.2] Kohnen: I've been interested in San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) and its spaces for a few years now, and I've written about how fans conceptualize and discuss the space of the convention center and the surrounding downtown area. It was striking to go to Akihabara and Otome Road and see how strongly gendered these fan spaces were. Even though we encounter gendered spaces all the time, I had not had that experience in terms of fannish spaces before. At SDCC, there might be single booths that may sell merchandise targeting traditionally masculine or feminine fan interests, but those booths still appear next to one another. The idea of separate neighborhoods that are quite far apart geographically was eye-opening.

[4.3] Nielsen: It was fascinating to visit Universal Studios Osaka (since I am familiar with the Florida park) and see the differences and similarities in how the experiences were constructed for different (US and Japanese) audiences. It made me think about how both American and Japanese audiences approach otherness in media. For example, the JAWS ride (RIP Florida JAWS ride, you are missed) featured a young Japanese woman as our captain, and her narration was entirely in Japanese. However, everything in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter (WWHP) section featured white, costumed performers speaking first in English with British accents, then following that with Japanese translations of their speeches. It was clear that in the park, the magic experience and aesthetic of Harry Potter is tied in with the exotic otherness not just of a fictional Wizarding World but of a real (white) Great Britain. This is in contrast with JAWS, which is set in the far-off space of New England, a place also full of white people speaking English but that the park did not feel the need to recreate through language and race, or Jurassic Park, which while still a fantastical setting was also not explicitly signposted as other. This use of language as an exotic aesthetic in the creation of a fantasy setting is especially interesting; the closest US equivalent might be the World Showcase in Disney's Epcot,
but there the spaces being recreated are real (albeit heavily stylized) places. The Florida Universal Studios
does use performers with British accents in the Wizarding World, but I can't imagine a US park
foregrounding a language other than English even if it were thematically appropriate. US audiences seem to
view English as such a default that we expect it in all settings and would be more likely to feel excluded than
magically transported by the use of another language.

[4.4] Williams: I was also interested in the differences in the theme park spaces I visited, both Universal
Studios and the Disney parks in Tokyo. Guest behavior was very different to that in the North American and
French parks I have visited; there was a much more controlled use of space, people were more polite, and the
fannish behaviors common in the Western parks were either missing or quite different. The ways that people
dressed or Disneybounded as characters was interesting since it seemed to draw on an established style and
the idea of kawaii culture as much as it utilized clothing and accessories from the parks and from the Disney
and Universal brands themselves.

[4.5] Nielsen: Absolutely. I loved people-watching in the theme parks. Couples or groups would match or
coordinate their outfits in ways I haven't seen in US parks, sometimes in ways which were clearly
performative but not directly related to the park itself. For example, I saw a number of younger couples
performing couplehood through matching outfits. But there were also park-themed outfits, including Minions
kigurumi and Minions-bounding at Universal.

[4.6] Stein: To build on what others have said about WWHP, I bought my five-year-old son a wand from
Ollivanders Wand Shop in Osaka as a souvenir. The wands from WWHP come with maps of the park
indicating where you can perform spells. But of course the maps are specific to each park, and I found it
fascinating when I got home to spread out the one from Osaka beside the one from WWHP in Orlando,
Florida, where both my and my daughter's wands come from, to see the same shared space mapped across
different geographical and cultural contexts. WWHP Japan was both familiar and distinct in such a striking
way. I felt at home both in the fantasy world being created and because of my previous experiences of
WWHP Orlando but also experienced it as something new. This was accentuated by my (excellent)
company—it was wild, I have to say, to be at WWHP with a group of fan studies scholars and fellow fans
who were simultaneously analyzing and embracing the experience together.

[4.7] Booth: I don't think I speak for everyone here, but finding the gashapon machines totally cemented my
understanding of how fandom and popular cultures can be transcultural. Gashapon machines sell little toys in
bubble-like containers—you've probably seen them in supermarkets selling tiny trinkets for a dollar. But it's a
whole order more impressive in Japan, where gashapon machines are found on most streets and overflowing
in malls. Entire rooms are devoted to them, and some of the things in them could be rather expensive—five
dollars for some of the more adult items, for instance. But what I found most connective to my own fan
experience is the commodification of collecting. Most gashapon machines randomize what you get from a
selective group—so there may be ten different Shiba Inu models in different poses, but you never know
which one you'll get. This encourages consumption and a collect-them-all mentality, much like a recent
American focus on blind box purchases of action figures. At the same time, many gashapon machines don't
even sell what we might traditionally call cult objects—I remember Ross on the hunt for the elusive five-foot
model of a tuna fish in a gashapon, and I found the everyday office supplies gashapon fascinating (a tiny
stapler! A tiny file folder! A tiny tape dispenser!). This definitely linked to my own love of fannish collecting
and the game of trying to find that one piece that you're missing.

[4.8] Garner: About the gashapon: this really kicked in my OCD, I'm afraid to say. (I don't use the term OCD
in an offhand or derogatory manner here; I actually suffer with OCD.) There seemed to be very interesting
franchise mash-ups within these collections, and the chief one that caught my eye was the Minions-as-
Universal Monsters range. We only saw these once, and the machine was jammed, so I always went to where
they had dispensers to see if this collection was there. It was only on the very last day in Osaka airport, where there was a dedicated area introducing *gashapon* to non-Japanese tourists, that I found this particular range again. However, the scope of different properties that were represented and the different takes on characters and character aesthetics made it like a hunt or a quest to try and find what you were looking for.

[4.9] Garner: But, for my Jurassic Park fandom, Nakano Broadway was a real find. I distinctly remember that there was a specific retailer that had multiple outlets across each of the floors—some seemed to be specialist for specific franchises like Disney, Super Sentai, or Marvel while others were more general—and it became a case of trying to identify (and then remember) which one had the broader content where Jurassic Park goods were stocked. There wasn't much in the particular outlet, but I remember being surprised—and as someone who studies licensing I shouldn't have been—that there was a replica of the Park Explorer jeep (the green one from the tour) there. The movement of this item from mass-produced merchandise to fan collectible in the UK is fairly normative (see eBay for example) but seeing it in Nakano Broadway seemed to add additional meaning to it—perhaps as a potential souvenir?

[4.10] Garner: Alternatively, at Universal Studios Japan I was struck by the extent to which there seemed to be an emphasis on linking Jurassic Park to educational/natural history discourses to an extent that is absent at Universal IoA in Florida. For example, there was a parade of dinosaurs that moved through the themed space that was accompanied by a Japanese actor (dressed similar to Alan Grant) who was giving out information about the dinosaurs. Secondly, in the shops there was an emphasis on collectibles that could either extended the franchise's boundaries (e.g. you could buy boxed fragments of dinosaur bones or teeth) or placed an emphasis on building (e.g. the JP Park Gates). The key point is that there were a lot wider points for being a fan than only plastic dinosaurs, vehicles, or T-shirts with the JP logo emblazoned across them (although these were also there).

[4.11] Stein: One of the things that really stood out to me was the bookcases of *dōjinshi* for Western media texts—*Sherlock*, *Supernatural*, *Harry Potter*, and others. It was a moment of recentering for me, seeing what I've experienced as central in Western fan culture here as niche, and not just niche but rather transformed into the aesthetics and narrative structures of Japanese *dōjinshi* traditions and practices.

[4.12] Williams: For me, the thing I came away with was becoming a fan (of a sort) of Pokémon which I had zero interest in before the trip. Visiting the Pokémon stores and the Café really made me interested in how the themed spaces worked, and now I have a favorite Pokémon, and I'm quite interested in certain aspects of the franchise. I remember, too, a trip to the Sega Café where customers who were clearly fans of a specific Japanese text were engaging in forms of what we'd likely consider fan pilgrimage or tourism; supporting their teams or character and taking important objects with them to the Café and placing them on the tables. It was really transformational for me to see how normalized that kind of fan activity was and also to be an outsider to what was going on, since we had no idea what fan object was being celebrated. I found that a really fascinating experience, even if at first it felt quite uncomfortable to be an outsider in that space.

[4.13] Nielsen: I spent some time in Japanese bookstores looking at *dōjinshi* and of course the sheer volume available was incredible, as was the variety. These are Japanese fans producing content for other Japanese fans, and it was fascinating to see what media, characters, pairings, and more are popular. Plus, of course, the strangeness of seeing fan comics, many of them very explicit, openly offered for sale in bookstores.

[4.14] Kohnen: I was also amazed by the *dōjinshi* selection in bookstores—as someone who is interested in copyright and remix cultures, it was exciting to see fan-authored texts and traditional publications in the same store. It was also fascinating to see which characters from American media texts like Star Wars or the Marvel Cinematic Universe featured prominently in *dōjinshi*.

[4.15] Garner: Yes to the Sega Café! I went from feeling completely out of my depth to gaining an
appreciation for what was normative fan behavior in themed restaurants as a result of this happy accident. I'll remember that for a long, long time. I suppose I'd also say that about Pokémon. I played the games through an emulator in the late '90s/early '00s and enjoyed them and had also watched a lot of the early cartoons. The interest had waned over the years—likely associating it with growing up—but I've retained knowledge of the initial Kanto characters and saw visiting Japan as an opportunity to reengage with this; I'd marked visiting the Pokémon Cafe as a must do and also wanted to adopt my own Pokémon (my favorite has always been Jigglypuff) via visiting a Pokémon Centre (store). The fact that I narrate the latter act in terms that detach it from any sense of commercial underpinning probably says a lot! However, the way I performed my fan identity during the visit to the Pokémon Cafe was completely influenced by what I'd previously seen at the Sega Cafe. I proudly sat with Jigglypuff on the table as my/our mascot (as others were doing with their own), and it enhanced the experience by allowing affect for the franchise to coalesce with the newly acquired merchandise so that the character became a souvenir on many levels and of many events. I should also say that it was great to be travelling with another person who was a massive Pokémon fan as this helped to legitimate my interest and they got me playing Pokémon Go again. I'm still playing now!

[4.16] Stein: At lunch on the day of the Symposium, one of our fellow presenters, Yukari Fujimoto, who does work on shōjo manga, told me about a temporary exhibit for the manga and anime series Cardcaptor Sakura (1996–2000) at the Mori Arts Center Gallery. Cardcaptor Sakura is one of my very favorite series and was my introduction to the wonderful manga artist group Clamp. I dragged Melanie with me to the exhibit, though she didn’t (yet) know Cardcaptor Sakura. As we were standing in line, I had this crazy thought—"they'll have Sakura's costumes!" Of course this made no sense, since Cardcaptor Sakura is an anime and there are no real costumes. Or so I thought. Because as it turned out they absolutely did have the costumes—they were indeed a key part of the exhibit. The clothes were stunningly beautiful, and it was wild and wonderful to see them in material, 3D fabric reality, which prompts all sorts of questions about my investment in and experience of the aesthetics, narratives, and characters of Cardcaptor Sakura. I was also moved by the exhibit's address of the series inclusion of queer romance. The exhibit read "The way Cardcaptor Sakura addresses love is slightly different from the way most girls' comics feature teenage crush-like feelings. As the relationships chart shows, the characters' relations with each other go beyond gender, social class, age, nationality, and ethnicity and are solely based on care for each other." I'd always felt this sentiment as I watched Cardcaptor Sakura, but to see it rendered here as something intentional and collectively shared changed my feelings about and understandings of the show. Not to mention the simple thrill of wandering through the exhibit with others for whom Cardcaptor Sakura was also meaningful and important, if no doubt in different ways than it was for me. (Plus, I got to have my picture taken with a gigantic Kero-chan.)

[4.17] Jones: I was also at the Sega cafe! And it was an odd experience to be the outsider in that fannish space. I'm used to attending conventions and the like in the UK and the United States, but the norms of fandom in those spaces are different to that of superficially similar spaces in Japan. What strikes me as really interesting listening to what everyone else has to say is that no one has mentioned the Studio Ghibli museum! This was a real highlight for me, having been a fan of Ghibli since a friend introduced me to Laputa: Castle in the Sky in the early 2000s, and to say I was excited when we got there is an understatement. Seeing the robot from Laputa on the roof when we were waiting to get in made me actually squeal with excitement in a very fannish way. There are obviously nods to the fandom and fan tourism in the way the museum positions itself—tickets are offered for sale once a month and are strictly limited; the bus that took us from the train station is bright yellow and branded with Ghibli characters; with the entry ticket you get a unique Ghibli film cell—but in many ways there also seemed to be a deliberate attempt to move away from the collectible nature of fandom and become immersed in the physical space of the museum. Once we were in the museum there were strictly no photographs allowed. On the one hand I could understand this because honestly, there were so many amazing things I could have taken photos of and having hundreds of people stopping at random to take a photo of something would have been a nightmare (the museum is pretty small); but on the other I know
there are things I'll forget about the museum that I'd love to be able to look at, so not being able to take photos was tough. The one exception is on the rooftop garden where you can find a life-sized robot from Castle in the Sky and have your photo taken with it. Unsurprisingly there was a queue for this, but despite that and the fact I hate having my photo taken I stood in line, just so I could touch this incredible machine (figure 4).

Figure 4. Studio Ghibli Museum. Photo courtesy of Bethan Jones.

5. Beyond fandom

[5.1] It wouldn't be a fan scholars' trip to Japan without some geeking out about specifically nonfannish things. What were some of the nonfannish things we found most enjoyable?

[5.2] Morimoto: I'll say now that I had never once passed by Mount Fuji on the Shinkansen on a clear day like we had, and that really stood out for me (figure 5).

Figure 5. Mount Fuji from the Shinkansen. Photo courtesy of Lori Morimoto.

[5.3] Garner: Definitely Kyoto. The architecture, the accommodation, and the dining experience made it feel like another world. I really want to go back and spend more time there.

[5.4] Stein: Kyoto without doubt. Wandering Kyoto's Nishiki market and eating the most delicious takoyaki of my life, or wandering the back streets of Kyoto where our house was; it killed me to leave Kyoto after only
a couple of days, and I want to find a way to spend a semester there in the future! Also conveyer belt sushi is pretty much my definition of heaven.

[5.5] Nielsen: I hiked part of the Fushimi Inari shrine at dusk. It was quiet enough at that time of day that there were often no other people in my field of vision, a contrast to the huge crowds we encountered in so many other places on the trip. The air was damp and cool, and the thousands of torii cast strange patterns of shadows in the growing darkness. The atmosphere was uncanny enough that I kept expecting to run into fox spirits (figure 6)!

![Fushimi Inari shrine](image)

Figure 6. Fushimi Inari shrine. Photo courtesy of E. J. Nielsen.

[5.6] Kohnen: I wish I had been there for the Kyoto portion of this trip! A stand-out experience for me was visiting the *Cardcaptor Sakura* exhibit with Louisa and eating at the themed cafe there. I didn't know anything about *Cardcaptor Sakura* before attending the exhibit, and I really enjoyed seeing other visitors' excitement at interacting with a beloved text. Also, the hot tea in cans from vending machines, as Ross already mentioned.

[5.7] Williams: I think the food! I'd always had a strong sense of what I imagined food in Japan to be like, and it did not disappoint. One of my highlights will be wandering into a traditional sushi place near Nakano Broadway and muddling through ordering and paying, being seated at the sushi bar while the chefs worked, and the dishes being prepared that I'd never seen before in a sushi restaurant in the West. I'm really glad we got the chance to experience that.

[5.8] Booth: Visiting Nara, the city where deer roam the streets freely and where a giant Bronze Buddha statue (at Tōdai-ji), was standout for me. Being able to walk among the animals, feed them little cookies and things (totally fine—they were for sale on the street) and then visit one of the oldest shrines in existence put our everyday concerns really into perspective. (Literally. The statue is so big [over 500 tons] that you have to be standing pretty far away to see it all.) Plus, I made best friends with deer (figure 7).
[5.9] Jones: There's so much I don't know if I could choose just one thing! The food, like Rebecca says, was incredible. Lori, E. J., and I went to Ninja Akasaka, a ninja-themed restaurant, which was just so much fun. We got to be ninjas in training and say a spell to raise a drawbridge, ate a ten-course meal of the most amazing food I've ever had, and had a sleight-of-hand magician entertain us. Of course, we chose to go there because Hideo Kojima took Norman Reedus and Mads Mikkelsen there when they were in Tokyo making *Death Stranding*, but we're fans—can you ever truly turn the fandom off?

[5.10] Nielsen: Then again, would you ever really want to?

[5.11] Jones: The other highlight for me, though, was wandering around Shimokitazawa with Rebecca and Ross. The streets were pretty quiet—though we were there relatively early and according to my research most places didn't open until 10 a.m. or later anyway. But there was so much street art! And vintage stores, art galleries, record shops, more art galleries. I think I took more photos there than possibly anywhere else on the trip (figure 8). Plus there was good weather and good friends—what more could I have asked for?
6. Note

1. The speakers at the symposium can be found online (http://icc.fla.sophia.ac.jp/html/events/2018-2019/Intersections_schedule.html).

7. Reference

Abstract — The Covid-19 pandemic caused a number of instructors to move to emergency remote teaching. In the process, many instructors worried about being able to replicate the instruction of their face-to-face courses. Instructors can use strategies used by fans to promote engagement with course material, build community, and deploy technology in ways that promote their learning goals and enhance learning in online courses.

Keywords — Affect; Blogging; Communities of practice; Covid-19; K-pop; Student engagement

1. Introduction

For many teachers, emergency remote teaching became their primary teaching modality as the Covid-19 pandemic spread in early 2020. Instructors used to face-to-face teaching felt daunted by the prospect of recreating the engagement of their classroom environments. These concerns mirrored attitudes toward online teaching that predate the pandemic. Robert Ubell (2016) observed that many faculty "believe that virtual instruction offers little interaction with and among students" and that "online content is inferior." Teaching modalities that include an online component are likely to continue to be part of the pedagogical landscape as the pandemic continues, and likely will remain long after. In light of this, it's necessary to explore how instructors can cultivate student engagement by using strategies drawn from fandom and fan practices. We can motivate students by viewing our course content as fan objects and encouraging students to engage with them as such. We can draw on their shared passion to encourage collaboration. We can emulate the ways online fan communities use technology to leverage the affordances of online teaching to reach our learning goals.

2. Cultivating affect using course materials

The overall response to emergency remote teaching during the pandemic has been less than stellar. Students, instructors, and higher education commentators reduce teaching to little more than dull discussion boards with dispassionate students zoned out in front of a screen. However, recontextualizing course materials as fan objects can motivate students to engage with them in meaningful ways.

Course content plays a major role in student engagement. Students are more likely to become invested in the material if they engage with and relate it according to their own preferences. This engagement with material contributes to long-lasting student learning. Michael Moore (1989) identified "learner-content" interaction as essential for effective learning: "Without [it], there cannot be education, since it is the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in changes in the learner's understanding, the learner's
perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner's mind" (2).

[2.3] We can achieve student-content engagement by looking at our students as fans (or potential fans) and our content as fan objects, thereby leveraging fan affect. Mark Duffett (2013) notes that "at some initial point the fan has to deeply connect with, and love—or at least be fascinated by—the object of their interest" (25). We know that fans' love for something will motive them to engage more fully through fan activities. Fans do what they love even if it requires labor. Duffett also argues that affect "make[s] text matter in a specific historical situation and place" and "guides the whole possibility of emotion and is meta-emotional" (136). This relationship between fans and fan objects also has a critical dimension, which is crucial for the kind of critical thinking we want to see from our students. Lawrence Grossberg (1992) reminds us that a relationship exists between the audience and popular texts: "People are constantly struggling, not merely to figure out what a text means, but to make it mean something that connects to their own lives, experiences, needs and desires" (52). Our students can engage in this kind of critical thinking with our course materials if they view them as fan objects.

[2.4] One way we can establish a fan-object relationship between our students and content is to create assignments that simultaneously allow them to explore topics related to their interests and support our learning goals. In one learning goal for my course on Korean popular culture, students learn how to find and analyze Korean popular culture and related media. I require students to choose their own topics, but I also provide a mind map of Korean popular culture at the beginning of the course to help them see the relationship between their topic and Korean popular culture as a whole (https://www.mindomo.com/mindmap/hallyu-korean-wave-2-333bdeca3a5141aeb0a34e2f01bb556). For example, a student can pursue an interest in fan subtitling, but will also understand it as an activity connected to a larger global fandom. Because students focus on their topic the entire semester, they get multiple opportunities to see their interests in different contexts and develop critical skills with less anxiety. In other words, by engaging them in their own learning by using what they love, we can allow students to see themselves in the content of the course.

3. Cultivating community through collaboration

[3.1] It is great to get students to engage with the material, but we also know that learning is a social activity. David Boud (n.d.) explains that "students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from peers." Yet online teaching poses a challenge in that it could, as Peter C. Herman (2020a) explains, contribute to feelings of isolation: "There is no immediate interaction between the professor and the students, no immediate interaction among the students." We can promote a dynamic community among our students in our online classes by encouraging collaboration that is based on their shared passion as fans of the course material.

[3.2] Collaboration represents student-student engagement, providing a social context for learning. In face-to-face courses, this can take the form of project-based learning where students learn together. John W. Thomas (2000) argues that such projects represent "a goal-directed process that involves inquiry, knowledge building, and resolution" and activities that "involve the transformation and construction of knowledge (by definition: new understandings, new skills) on the part of students" (3). Such collaboration features student-student engagement, which occurs "between one learner and other learners, alone or in group settings, with or without the real-time presence of an instructor" (Moore 1989, 5). On the other hand, communities of practice go further by drawing on a shared passion as part of the project. Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner (2015) describe communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." Unlike project-based learning, communities of practice leverage the power of a shared passion to learn something.

[3.3] Communities of practice resonate with the kind of community that exists among online fans, which are
often based on shared passion and collaboration. Fandom provides models for online collaboration and community building: "Social networking is a central part of the continuation of fandom for many millions of people, and there is therefore a circular relationship involved: fandom facilitates networking, so those looking for friends with a common interest will utilize the fan community for support" (Duffett 2013, 27). As an online community, members of K-pop fandom are comfortable sustaining community in the online environment and working together virtually to accomplish a goal. They use social media apps to link to other like-minded fans and squee about their favorites. They come together to support comebacks by their favorite artists and to participate in philanthropic endeavors, such as raising money to build schools and planting rain forests.

[3.4] Instructors can harness such community building by designing opportunities for students to work collaboratively on something they care about, as I did for KPK: Kpop Kollective (https://kpopkollective.com/). KPK is a cocurricular research project where undergraduate students create online resources featuring information about K-pop music and culture. Developed by me and Kaetrena Davis Kendrick (dean of Ida Jane Dacus Library and Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections at Winthrop University), along with several undergraduates, KPK provides an opportunity for students to work together and create knowledge. We maintain a Facebook group where members post about their favorite K-pop artists, and we meet virtually to talk about the work. Through these activities, students participate in a community of practice in a way that validates their own fan knowledge and promotes critical thinking. As Kendrick (2013) notes, "This kind of lay information resulting from direct participation as a fan community member is just as valid as understanding rules of classification or applying the rigor of qualitative data analysis." Creating opportunities for students to collaborate in ways that validate their passion creates community.

4. Cultivating technology to reach learning goals

[4.1] The swift move to emergency remote teaching required many instructors to rely more on technology in unfamiliar ways. However, technology can be used to support community building and student engagement with content in ways that mirror the way fans use technology.

[4.2] In our courses, technology can be used to create virtual experiences "that are unavailable in physical learning spaces and can enrich the student experience" (Keppell and Riddle 2011, 8). Such virtual environments should be seen in terms of their affordances, or the way technology such as online discussions, blogs, wikis, and podcasts can be used in a given situation (Keppell and Riddle 2011, 8). Rather than just using technology because it looks exciting, we can use it help students to gain knowledge or develop skills. We can also build in time into our courses to teach students how to use the technology in the way we want them to use it. Such tools should be cheap (or free), easy to use, and accessible to students.

[4.3] Online fan communities like K-pop fans rely on technology as part of their fan practice. Tamar Herman (2020b) explains: "K-pop in 2020 is very much about the organizational skills of different fandoms. Who can stream more? Who can buy more albums? How many trends can you trend worldwide in any given month? Organizing and navigating digital spaces are old hat for K-pop audiences nowadays." K-pop fans use messaging apps like WeChat and LINE to communicate with each other. They form online communities through Tumblr and Amino Apps. They use social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to share information, organize philanthropic projects in the name of their favorite artists, and support comebacks. K-pop fans also use blogging platforms like WordPress to organize information in the form of profile sites and artist archives, and to write commentary about various aspects of K-pop.

[4.4] For one learning goal in my Korean popular culture course, I want students to learn how to use digital tools to write for a broad audience. As a result, I have students write short web articles on their topics in Journo Portfolio, a web-based platform that allows students to use multimedia. My students utilize the
affordances of online communication in ways that build community. They can see and comment on their fellow students' work; they are tickled when they received praise from strangers in the form of comments and likes. Technology also provides opportunities to engage with the course material. Using sources related to their interests, they learn how to write using a web-based text editor, and they learn how to locate, embed, and attribute digital images and video. They use technology for knowledge creation, just like fans do.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] Teaching online, or incorporating an online component into your face-to-face course, may seem daunting. Yet drawing on what we know about fans and fandom, we can reach our students and help them meet our learning goals. When we exhibit fan-level enthusiasm for the course material, it signals to students that we want them to have fun as they learn. Doing so does not sacrifice rigor. Instead, it fosters an engaged and collaborative atmosphere that students will remember.

6. References


Symposium

Teaching fan fiction: Affect and analysis

Kathryn Conrad and Jamie Hawley

University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, United States

[0.1] Abstract — We reflect on the design and first iteration of an asynchronous online university English course focused on fan fiction, with a particular focus on the anticipated challenges of negotiating affect and analysis in the classroom and the structure of the course.

[0.2] Keywords — Acafandom; Identity; Pedagogy; Positionality


1. Introduction: "Please teach that! I would totally love that course!"

[1.1] Katie: As I began to envision teaching a course on fan fiction, an increasingly large chorus of enthusiastic students suggested that any such offering would certainly surpass enrollment minima. That was as far as I’d gotten at that point—a course on fan fiction—but the response was simultaneously enough to strengthen my resolve to start planning but also enough to give me pause. What was the source of their enthusiasm? Were students excited about the opportunity to study fan fiction critically? Were they looking to legitimize a passion that up until that point was outside the sphere of what they and others considered properly academic? Or did they think it would be a course in which I would be primarily encouraging fannish enthusiasm?

[1.2] The role of affect in fandom, fandom studies, and acafandom has been much discussed—and indeed, since before Jenkins's (1992) coining of the term "acafan," the affective component of fandom and fan fiction has been a primary focus of scholarship on fan fiction. Briony Hannell (2020), following a large number of feminist and fandom scholars, has recently articulated the justification for the inclusion of affect as an essential component of feminist methodology within fandom studies. And certainly fan fiction itself, as Coppa (2006) and others have repeatedly noted, has been delegitimized in large part as a result of the perception of it as connected both to affect and embodiment.

[1.3] While Wilson (2016), following Sedgwick (2003), Warner (2004), and others, has suggested the importance of valuing affect as a hermeneutic separate from the critical, I see no bright line between the two. To be critical or analytical is not to disregard affect, or even necessarily to approach it with a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Ricoeur via Sedgwick 2003), but instead to articulate it as an epistemological position, a way of knowing that has value.

[1.4] Further, affect does not always mean positive affective response. As Wanzo (2015) has suggested, the love that many fans, including acafans, have for their fandoms may not only obscure the range of possible affective responses within fandom and fandom studies but also obscure the ways in which, for instance, "African American fandom is specifically haunted by specters of stereotypical, grotesque representations and
performances" (¶ 4.6). For the acafan, and indeed for the fan in general, a critical approach can—and I would argue should—exist alongside a respect for and embrace of the affective, both the positive affect that fandom can generate (aka the "fandom is beautiful" approach) and the ambivalent or antifan approaches to which Wanzo refers.

[1.5] My serious consideration of the possibility of teaching a course on fan fiction was predicated on a combination of both affect and analysis. My own interest in fan fiction and fandom studies began in the early 1990s, just before Henry Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* was published, when a friend's sister loaned me her precious and irreplaceable Star Trek K/S zines for me to explore for a grad paper on contemporary American writing. I was entranced by the transformative approach to a TV series that was a formative part of my childhood. As a student of feminist criticism as well as the nascent gender studies, queer theory, and postcolonial studies, however, I was eager to think through—and perhaps challenge—the kind of cultural work that these fics were performing. Fandom interest and affect, in other words, tightly coincided for me with academic interest and affect. This only grew in recent years when I began to combine my scholarly interest in technology and literature with the renewed fandom enthusiasms that I and my family had nurtured.

[1.6] The decision to offer the course online rather than in person was a practical, pedagogical one that considered the best way to combine affect and analysis (note 1). First, as I spoke to students informally over the year prior about the possibility of offering a course, I realized that each fandom brought something different to the table—and I was certainly not familiar with all of them. The fandoms in which I had written and read the most fan fiction were likely to provide a touchstone, but I was not invested in teaching specific fics or fandoms. I wanted to provide students with the critical tools to approach their own fandoms, and I wanted them to learn from them what their fandoms could bring to the critical table. I also anticipated that squee—my own and others'—had the potential both to animate but also potentially to derail the critical approach I was hoping to encourage. Without a real-time classroom setting, I anticipated that students would have the time and space to safely and comfortably consider the critical material and explore its relationship to the fan fiction in which they were most interested—and, especially if they were fan fiction novices, to explore fan fiction in their chosen fandom for the first time without pressure to perform enthusiasm and without feeling lost in the language and norms of fandom interaction.

[1.7] That said, I also wanted students to have the possibility of creating an academic community that paralleled those found online on fan fiction and fan fic–adjacent platforms. Because before the pandemic our university's online course offerings were exclusively asynchronous (usually on a weekly lesson model), it seemed that the ideal way to manage this kind of approach would be through an online class that offered opportunities for asynchronous interaction (discussion boards or, in my case, discussion blogs).

[1.8] As I began to design the course in earnest in the spring of 2020, I was joined by an intern, graduating English and communications studies senior Jamie Hawley, who had already written extensively on fan fiction and whose critical interests and investments, I soon learned, dovetailed neatly with my own. Her approach to fan fiction was what I hoped to encourage in the students who took the course, and her experience with fan fiction was valuable in planning because it was much closer to that of my students than my own.

[1.9] Jamie: My introduction to fan fiction came at a young age. In 2009, when I was eleven, I began reading on the site Psychfic.com, a fan site for the USA cop dramedy *Psych* (2006–14). Although I didn't know it at the time, this site was different from multifandom platforms like LiveJournal, FanFiction.net, and Archive of Our Own in that it didn't allow sexually explicit content, and it didn't allow same-sex slash pairings of any rating. While this didn't concern me in the sixth grade, I soon began to branch out, exploring fan fiction in a number of niche fandoms and discovering FF.net in the process. I joined Tumblr around 2013 and eventually transitioned to Archive of Our Own for my fan fiction needs. As my experience in online fandom grew more varied, I began to look back on my Psychfic days with a more critical eye. As a child, I viewed slash as
nonsense crack fic that got in the way of my OTP. As I grew older, I began to see the Psychfic slash ban for what it was: not only homophobic but also a clear example of how various fandoms' treatment of same-sex pairings has differed over time.

[1.10] It was this critical view that I attempted to carry with me as I began studying fandoms and fan fiction in college, which began in earnest after being introduced to scholarship on Shakespeare fan fiction in the spring of 2019. I knew fan fiction was worth studying; I had long accepted there was too much of it to be dismissed as frivolous, despite what the cultural conversation suggested at times. My final paper in my Shakespeare seminar, in which I analyzed Harry Potter/Romeo and Juliet crossover fic, led to my introduction to Dr. Conrad in my capacity as a student intern who was familiar not only with fan fiction scholarship but also with the experiences of my peers and would thus be able to contribute to the design of this online course. We immediately bonded over our shared understanding of both the difficulties and the importance of balancing affect and analysis in fan fiction studies, as well as a desire to frame this study like that of any other form or genre: a legitimate means of expression well worth the scholarship devoted to it.

2. Balancing affect and analysis in course design

[2.1] The course description tried to anticipate and shape the audience of the course by specifying that the course would "examine some of the definitions and characteristics of [fan fiction], the history and controversies that have surrounded it, and the critical work that it does and that it has in turn inspired, particularly (but by no means exclusively) around gender, sexuality, and storytelling." We also specified that students would be expected to think and write critically about fan fiction as well as produce a short fic of their own, including a short "author's notes" paratext. The course's general lesson plan is available in the appendix below.

[2.2] The arc of the course design was ultimately both topical and roughly chronological—that is, it began with definitions of fan fic, which were themselves connected to the larger history of fan fic, then to early fan fiction criticism, primarily feminist fan fic/fandom studies around the 1990s and Jenkins; and it ended with a more contemporary and forward-looking focus. The course also roughly fell into two parts: the first was primarily an exploration of fan fiction as cultural critique; and the second shifted more into critique of fan fiction, fandom, and fandom studies. As we were finalizing our course, we were also influenced by the cultural moment in which it was being designed. The protests and cultural attention to systemic racism precipitated by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black Americans energized our commitment to make sure that race—from the negotiation of race in early slash fic and fic criticism it to the presumed whiteness of fandom—would be interrogated from early in the course.

[2.3] We acknowledged and encouraged affective responses from the start of the course. As the authors did with this essay (and as is the norm in most fandom and fandom studies interactions), we asked students in their first blog post to introduce themselves, their experience with fan fiction, and any fandoms in which they were interested.

[2.4] But we also anticipated the potential for conflict, especially given the emotional investments that some students might bring with them and the lack of experience with fan fiction, fandom interaction, and discourse that other students might bring. Knowing that there would not necessarily be shared experience or community norms, hoping to prevent the worst ad hominem aspects of fandom wars, and hoping to create a productive learning environment for a diverse population of students, we introduced the students to course ground rules in the first lesson, which were presented as a communal contract that students could add to if they chose. Based on principles set out in Ambrose et al. (2010), the ground rules were crafted to allow students to safely craft a space for respectful interaction. Students were given due notice that they would likely encounter—in fic, course readings, and conversation—controversial tropes or themes, and that they should both approach
those topics as neutrally as possible and grant each other the grace to learn from each other and the course material. We also agreed that we would not expect students to read explicit fic, working on the principle of reader choice and an "ethos of consent" (Busse 2017) that informs fan fiction's paratexts (note 2).

[2.5] While the course began with definitional questions (what is fan fiction? What are different ways to "rewrite a television show," à la Jenkins?), the connection between the analytical and the affective was introduced in our exploration of early writing on slash (Lamb and Veith 1986; Penley 1992; Jenkins 1992), our examination of the feminist foundations of fan fiction and fan fiction criticism (Coppa 2020), as well as our exploration of the appeal of fandom genres (Busse 2020).

[2.6] At the halfway point in the course, over two weeks' lessons, we asked students explicitly to consider affect and identity in both fan fiction and fandom studies. In week 7, "Fanfic, Affect, and 'Legitimacy,'" students were assigned a number of readings that asked them to think explicitly about affect, fan fic, and fan fiction studies. They were asked to watch a portion of an interview we had recorded with Francesca Coppa (2020) that connected women's work, affect, and legitimacy; read an excerpt from Coppa's 2006 discussion of the Brunching Shuttlecocks' (in)famous Geek Hierarchy, in which she identifies how the hierarchy reinforces the traditional privileging of mind over body and, in particular, the female body; watch YouTuber KC's discussion of the degradation of fan fiction by "celebrities and influencers" (KC 2018); and read several articles on the role of affect in fan fiction and fan studies (Wilson 2016; Hansal and Gunderson 2020; Wanzo 2015).

[2.7] Rebecca Wanzo's 2015 essay bridged these two weeks. In the first week, students were asked to consider Wanzo's discussion of the acafan and antifan affect in the context of the value of affect in fandom studies. In the second week, students were asked to consider the ways in which representation and identity matter in fandom, following on earlier course discussions of gender, sexuality, and race. Students were asked to return to Wanzo (2015), Pande (2018), and Pande and Nadkarni (2013), and to explore the cultural politics of racebending, genderbending, and other canon identity transformations.

[2.8] The progress between the two weeks also marked a challenge to the notion that fan fiction necessarily always functions as critique, despite Jenkins's claim that "organized fandom is, perhaps first and foremost, an institution of theory and criticism, a semi-structured space where competing interpretations and evaluations of common texts are proposed, debated, and negotiated and where readers speculate about the nature of the mass media and their own relationship to it" (1992, 86). What Jenkins describes is what we considered to be the ideal of the course, but, as the readings and discussion that followed suggested, fan fiction and fandom studies often fall short.

3. Practice

[3.1] As anticipated, we had a range of students in the course, from those who had been reading and writing fan fiction since their tween years to those who had some general fandom interests but were new to the genre. The introductory video, required for viewing during the drop/add period, gave an overview of the course and stressed that students would "need…an interest in the topic and the willingness to think critically about fan fiction" and may have selected out one or two of those who had hoped for a different kind of course.

[3.2] Also as we anticipated, affect was a part of the conversation from the start of the semester, including discussion of the students' own fandom enthusiasms as well as explorations of topics like slash, Mary Sues, and ethics. Students shared a range of reasons why they did or did not share their investments in fan fiction with friends or relatives, with some suggesting that the shame associated with fan fiction was not as pronounced as it was in, for instance, 2002, the copyright date for Brunching Shuttlecocks' Geek Hierarchy (Coppa 2006). At this point in the course, several students made the connection in their blog posts between
the dismissal of fan fiction and the devaluing of emotional labor as a highly gendered one.

[3.3] The assigned material and blog prompts also encouraged students to reflect on the relationship between affect and academia, and the general undervaluing of emotion in the work of the latter. Several students agreed that although affective investments (both positive and negative) could lead to bias, much research is animated by the researcher's passion for a topic. Some students commented that affect, even as an object of study, is often at odds with academic legitimacy. One student noted that, for instance, political science had moved away from a study of affect in a bid to be considered a "legitimate" science:

[3.4] "Real science" requires quantifiable evidence and controlled environments, neither of which is truly possible in the study of the feels. A similar thing may be happening in the study of English and literature wherein, as Wilson herself alludes, fanfiction requires "high level of knowledge of and insight into its source texts." A person outside of a fandom cannot understand the affective hermeneutics of a particular fanfiction work, thus making it difficult to truly study the nature of affect, and by extension, fanfiction. (Lee 2020)

[3.5] Yet even so, as this student and others suggested, avoiding affect in academia is disingenuous at best. As another student noted, "Only a privileged few can convince themselves that their minds are separable from their bodies" (Hays 2020).

[3.6] This latter reflection provided an apt transition to the questions Wanzo (2015) raises about race and antifandom and the following week's goal to "explain and provide examples of some of the ways that fanfiction and its affective investments intersect with author and reader identity" and "articulate some of the critiques of fanfic's and fanfic studies' relationship to identity and representation." Wanzo's article served as a bridge that allowed students to consider how fan fiction authors and readers as well as fan fiction/fandom studies scholars negotiate their own subject positions and affect. It also effectively allowed students actively and thoughtfully to value affective response and situate it as part of a more holistic relationship to textual experience—to consider, in short, how and why feeling matters. Students' nuanced responses indicated that they were able to maintain their affective engagement while simultaneously holding their own affective investments up to critical scrutiny and making suggestions for increasing inclusivity and sensitivity, including several suggestions that fan fiction writers engage sensitivity readers as well as the more traditional beta readers.

4. Conclusions

[4.1] On the whole, from the evidence drawn from student writing and engagement and evaluations, the course appears to have been successful in encouraging students to combine affect and analysis effectively, and indeed to consider affect itself as a worthy object of analysis. Students shared their own enthusiasms and built community, but they also moved easily to the "meta," analyzing their favorite fandoms and fics, including the fics they wrote themselves, with a critical eye. In their final blog post for the class, as they considered how fan fiction might productively be used in assignments for other courses, these students of fan fiction appear to have been inspired to take their skill in combining affect and analysis to animate, complicate, and enrich their academic experience beyond this semester.

5. Notes

1. The decision to offer the course online also preceded the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused many instructors to shift to online modalities for course delivery.

2. We also wanted to make certain that we and our students did not repeat the mistakes of TheoryofFicGate
and specified that students "treat fanfiction or fandom communities outside of this classroom with respect" and "not pretend to be someone else or manipulate fan communities in order to gather research for the class." Students were expected to access fic outside of the class, and the only assigned readings were available through *The Fanfiction Reader* (Coppa 2017), but no students were required to comment on fics.

6. References


## Appendix

### Course description and syllabus, English 329: Fanfiction (Fall 2020)

**Prof. Kathryn Conrad, University of Kansas**

(Course administered on Blackboard; contact me for more information, including readings, videos, assignments, and discussion prompts.)

**Course description**

ENGL 329 Topics in Forms and Genres: Fanfiction. Instr. Conrad. Online. In *Fanfiction Reader* (2017), Francesca Coppa writes that "fanfiction is made for free, but not 'for nothing.'" If fanfiction is not "for nothing," what is it for? What does it do? And why is it, as critic Anne Jamison puts it in the subtitle of her book *Fic* (2013), "taking over the world"? We will examine some of the definitions and characteristics of the genre, the history and controversies that have surrounded it, and the critical work that it does and that it has in turn inspired, particularly (but by no means exclusively) around gender, sexuality, and storytelling. Students will be encouraged to think and write critically about fanfic in general and about published fanfic in the fandoms in which they are most interested, although there will be a few selected examples of fanfiction provided. Students will participate regularly in a course discussion blog as well as produce some written responses to readings, craft two critical essays, and write a (short) piece of fanfiction based on a selection of prompts.

**Syllabus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson One: Introduction to the course</th>
<th>24–28 August</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In our first week, we'll be getting acquainted with the scope of and resources for the course, reviewing the syllabus and expectations for the course, and introducing ourselves and our interests in fandom. For future reference, the ground rules blog lives here.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson Two: What is fanfiction?</td>
<td>31 August–4 Sept</td>
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<td>Lesson Three: Early Fanfic history &amp; criticism</td>
<td>7 Sept–11 Sept</td>
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<td>Lesson Four: Fanfic history &amp; crit cont: slash fiction</td>
<td>14 Sept–18 Sept</td>
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<td>Lesson Five: More fanfic genres &amp; tropes</td>
<td>21 Sept–25 Sept</td>
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<td>Lesson Six: Genres and tropes, cont: the Mary Sue</td>
<td>28 Sept–2 Oct</td>
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<td>Lesson Seven: Fanfic, affect, and &quot;legitimacy&quot;</td>
<td>5 Oct–9 Oct</td>
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<td>Lesson Eight: Fanfic and identity</td>
<td>12 Oct–16 Oct</td>
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<td>Lesson Nine: Fanfic and legal battles</td>
<td>19 Oct–23 Oct</td>
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<td>Lesson Ten: Fanfic, labor, infrastructure, &amp; exploitation</td>
<td>26 Oct–30 Oct</td>
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<td>Lesson Eleven: Fanfic and ethics: RPFs</td>
<td>2 Nov–6 Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson Twelve: Fanfic and ethics pt. 2: content &amp; trigger warnings, censorship</td>
<td>9 Nov–13 Nov</td>
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<td>Lesson Thirteen: Fanfic &amp; fandom trends</td>
<td>16 Nov–20 Nov</td>
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<td>Lesson Fourteen: Fanfiction as/in pedagogy &amp; the academy</td>
<td>23 Nov–25 Nov</td>
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<td>Week Fifteen: Study Week &amp; Course Evaluation</td>
<td>30 Nov–4 Dec</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Sixteen (Finals Week): Revision</td>
<td>6 Dec–11 Dec</td>
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</table>
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ENGL 329 Topics in Forms and Genres: Fanfiction. Instr. Conrad. Online. In Fanfiction Reader (2017), Francesca Coppa writes that “fanfiction is made for free, but not ‘for nothing.’” If fanfiction is not “for nothing,” what is it for? What does it do? And why is it, as critic Anne Jamison puts it in the subtitle of her book Fic (2013), “taking over the world”? We will examine some of the definitions and characteristics of the genre, the history and controversies that have surrounded it, and the critical work that it does and that it has in turn inspired, particularly (but by no means exclusively) around gender, sexuality, and storytelling. Students will be encouraged to think and write critically about fanfic in general and about published fanfic in the fandoms in which they are most interested, although there will be a few selected examples of fanfiction provided. Students will participate regularly in a course discussion blog as well as produce some written responses to readings, craft two critical essays, and write a (short) piece of fanfiction based on a selection of prompts.

ENGL 329: Fanfiction Fall 2020 Schedule

- **Lesson One: Introduction to the course 24-28 August**
  In our first week, we'll be getting acquainted with the scope of and resources for the course, reviewing the syllabus and expectations for the course, and introducing ourselves and our interests in fandom.
  For future reference, the ground rules blog lives here.

- **Lesson Two: What is fanfiction? 31 August-4 Sept**
  What is fanfiction? We'll begin exploring--and possibly contesting--definitions and terms this week.

- **Lesson Three: Early Fanfic history & criticism 7 Sept-11 Sept**
  This week, we'll be engaging with the work of early fanfic critic Henry Jenkins, and applying some of his formulations to fic of your choosing.
Lesson Four: Fanfic history & crit cont: slash fiction 14 Sept-18 Sept
This week, we'll continue to explore some more of the foundational texts of fanfic criticism, with a focus on a popular genre: slash. Note: this week will involve some heavier reading. Ten Ways response essay due this week.

Lesson Five: More fanfic genres & tropes 21 Sept-25 Sept
Last week, we looked at one very popular genre and some of its attendant tropes (e.g., hurt/comfort). This week, we'll explore some more popular tropes in fanfic, and think about genre in fanfic more generally and how it may differ from genre in mainstream published literature.

Lesson Six: Genres and tropes, cont: the Mary Sue 28 Sept-2 Oct
This week, we'll read and talk more about the controversial and oft-derided figure, the "Mary Sue."

Lesson Seven: Fanfic, affect, and "legitimacy" 5 Oct-9 Oct
Continuing some of our conversation about affect, this week we'll discuss the "legitimacy" of fanfic, the reasons it is often scorned, and the shame that does (and doesn't) emerge from writing and circulating fanfic. Note: readings are heavier this week and next.

Lesson Eight: Fanfic and identity 12 Oct-16 Oct
This week, we straddle the line between thinking about fanfic as (cultural) critique and thinking about critiques of and challenges to fanfic as we think about the relationship between fanfic and identity. 
Note: Fanfic + Notes due this week.

Lesson Nine: Fanfic and legal battles 19 Oct-23 Oct
This week, we'll look at some of the legal conflicts that emerged in the early years of fanfic publication, including cease and desist orders, and one contemporary and slightly unusual legal battle that has emerged out of the fanfic "omegaverse."

Lesson Ten: Fanfic, labor, infrastructure, & exploitation 26 Oct-30 Oct
If fanfic isn't part of the usual publishing economy, does it fit into any economy? Does the infrastructure that houses fanfic really matter? Are fanfic writers exploitative--or are they exploited? We'll explore these questions this week.

Lesson Eleven: Fanfic and ethics: RPFs 2 Nov-6 Nov
We'll dig into some of the ethical controversies that have emerged out of fandom with an exploration of the ethics of RPF, or Real Person Fiction.

Lesson Twelve: Fanfic and ethics pt. 2: content & trigger warnings, censorship 9 Nov-13 Nov
This week, we'll read and discuss the ethics of about warnings, tagging, and censorship in and of fanfic. 
Note: Meta due this week.

Lesson Thirteen: Fanfic & fandom trends 16 Nov-20 Nov
This week, we'll probe some of the changes and trends within fanfic as well as how fanfic fits into fandom culture more broadly.
• **Lesson Fourteen: Fanfiction as/in pedagogy & the academy 23 Nov-25 Nov**
This week, we'll be doing a different kind of "meta": we'll be exploring the ways that fanfic might be used in classes other than in a class on fanfic.

• **Week Fifteen: Study Week & Course Evaluation 30 Nov-4 Dec**
I would be happy to meet with folks this week to discuss final revisions. As per University policy, there are no new assignments or course material this week. Use this week to work on any revisions you'd like to make to your assignments. If you have missed any short assignments, you can get partial credit as per the rubrics if you submit by the end of this week.

• **Week Sixteen (Finals Week): Revision 6 Dec-11 Dec**
This week, you'll submit any paper revisions you have (due by Friday, December 11 at 11:59 pm).
Symposium

Chinese celebrity fans during the Covid-19 pandemic

Yang Lai

Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, United States

[0.1] Abstract—Connected learning is a valuable tool that may be used in China to mitigate the stigma of fan activities, as a case study of Chinese celebrity fans' activities during the coronavirus outbreak in China illustrates.

[0.2] Keywords—China; Connected learning; Education


1. Introduction

[1.1] The English-language literature in the fields of fandom and education has grown over the past decades. Recognizing the importance of participating, interacting, and collaborating during learning activities, social constructivism and sociocultural theories of learning have prepared the theoretical foundation that permits a connection to be made between studies of fandom and education. Scholars have demonstrated that fan activities, which may comprise an important part of youth culture, can help participants gain media literacy, develop self-identity, and increase social/civic participation. Fandom provides rich learning opportunities that permit fans to learn and grow.

[1.2] However, academic discussion along these lines remains rare in China, where fan culture is mostly overlooked or stigmatized because fan activities are considered a waste of time, as they distract naive and gullible youth from study and work. During the Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China, in early spring 2020, Chinese celebrity fans banded together to support hospitals by organizing donations and creating fan works for construction vehicles within makeshift hospital construction areas. Although fans' charitable activities were praised by the media, their fannish activities were condemned as being frivolous and even cruel during a disaster.

[1.3] This case, however, illustrates the need for an education-based approach when publicly discussing Chinese fan culture. Using connected learning would help mitigate the long-standing stigma of fan activities.

2. Chinese celebrity fans during the Covid-19 outbreak

[2.1] In late January 2020, the new coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2) turned China, a country preparing for its New Year celebration, into a miserable quarantine zone. In Hubei province, the heart of the epidemic outbreak, the rapid increase of infected people put tremendous pressure on public health resources, including a shortage of hospital medical supplies. To make things worse, in Hubei, the local Red Cross, a state-controlled organization that receives and distributes donations and supplies, was criticized for its inaction, bureaucracy, and even corruption (Hollingsworth and Thomas 2020).
For example, when one of the major hospitals in Wuhan accepting coronavirus-infected patients only received three thousand face masks from the Red Cross, another hospital that did not accept coronavirus-infected patients received eighteen thousand masks (Guo et al. 2020). These reports ignited public ire.

[2.2] Chinese citizens sought their own ways to collect and send supplies to medical staff directly—an arduous task, given the chaos resulting from supply shortages and transportation shutdowns. Celebrity fans became one of the most organized, transparent, and efficient groups that successfully delivered medical supplies to hospitals. Most logistics companies stopped fulfilling personal orders because of the Spring Festival break. Further, purchasing did not mean merely placing orders through online platforms. Self-organized fan groups had to find and contact factories directly, using personal connections to find carriers. Their efforts worked. The state confirmed human-to-human transmission of the virus on January 20, 2020. On January 31, a celebrity fan group successfully delivered supplies worth $40,000 to a hospital in Wuhan. With their ability to mobilize, in a mere ten days, these fans accomplished fund-raising, finding and purchasing medical supplies, contacting transportation carriers, and arranging for delivery (Zhang, Wang, and Wu 2020). Fangirls devoted enormous amounts of time, labor, and money to fight the epidemic. From February 8 to February 20, 2020, a total of 1,869 donation activities organized by 506 fan groups were recorded. In addition to arranging for supplies, celebrity fans also donated about $978,010 for this national rescue attempt (Funji 2020). Figure 1 lists the fan groups that participated in a joint donation endeavor.
Figure 1. List of fan groups that participated in a joint donation endeavor during the Covid-19 outbreak.
Chinese celebrity fans' contribution was reported by media outlets and was praised on Weibo, a popular social media platform in China. These fan organizations, originally founded and operated to support the fans' idols, could quickly be repurposed to engage in disaster relief. "Don't forget them [the fangirls] on the list of contributors!" an official media outlet exhorted (Chen Xiaosong 2020). "Would it be better to donate money to a celebrity fan group [than to the Red Cross]?" a netizen wondered on Weibo (quoted in Sheer 2020). Some news reports also mentioned how fans organized the donations: "All the accounts [for fund-raising] must be open and transparent, accurate to two decimal places, or [the organization] would be scolded by the fans" (Xiaochu and Hejiu 2020). Some fan groups used internships, open defense, and voting to choose their administrators (Zhang, Wang, and Wu 2020). For a while celebrity fangirls were even viewed by other netizens as a hope for democratization—not a far-fetched notion considering the 2005 Super Girls phenomenon, in which many observers regarded voting for pop stars as a kind of referendum (Meng 2009).

However, fans were quickly criticized on Weibo when they watched livestreams during the construction of a makeshift hospital in Wuhan. The construction event, broadcast by state media outlet CCTV and watched by more than forty million people on January 29, 2020 (Shan 2020), was considered proof of the state's strength and commitment to fighting the epidemic. Fans, however, applied their fan-circle memes and practices to this live event, including anthropomorphizing the construction vehicles, producing fan works (figure 2), and building a discussion board (known as a Super Topic) on Weibo. For example, they called a forklift Little Forklift ("fork-chan," a nickname influenced by Japanese popular culture), and called excavators Little Yellow and Little Blue, thus turning the trucks into stars and themselves into the trucks' fans. The Super Topic board for Little Forklift had thousands of followers who chatted and shared fan artworks (figure 3). CCTV (2020) reported the live event as providing "transparency and open information with a 'rumor-dispelling' effect" and fan activities as expressions of "Chinese people's confidence in China speed." It also set up a page for fans to vote for their favorite vehicles (figure 4) (Allen 2020). Because the live event happened at the same time as the questioning of the Red Cross, fans' activities were criticized by angry netizens who were dissatisfied with the government's performance and censorship during the disaster, and who were offended by fans' having fun during an epidemic.

Fans' language was considered to be evidence of the deterioration of civil discourse. One post, which was reposted more than forty-six thousand times on Weibo, called fans' language infantile (@Miaozai_). Others criticized fans for not including the workers in their fannish expressions: "It is weird to treat the machine as a human being but neglect the real people inside the machine" (@Zhujiayin). Jiang Sida, a television talk show host, criticized the fans of Little Forklift as having "no knowledge, no logic, and no decency" (quoted in Liu 2020). One flame post even wondered, "Can we drive the forklift to kill the fan-circle girls under the Little Forklift super topic?" (@Sagako).
Figure 2. Screenshot of an example of anthropomorphized construction vehicles. Source: http://news.cctv.com/2020/01/29/ARTIqshULuOnaGCosUAxzvg200129.shtml.

Figure 3. Screenshot of Super Topic board for Little Forklift on Weibo. Source: https://www.weibo.com/p/10080829f22e00c88097fc42aa80d872d2e9de/super_index.
[2.6] Of course, it is unfair to blame fans for the authorities' performance and decisions during the epidemic. Neither censorship nor bureaucracy in China is a result of fans' infantilization. Also, there was no evidence that producing fan artworks celebrating the construction trucks would cause actual harm, and there was no evidence that these fans did not participate in citizen-driven rescues in other ways. For example, one fangirl helped her fan group donate 2,300 N95 respirators to the Red Cross, but was then angry at the institution's performance. She watched livestreams of Little Forklift as a form of self-healing (Zhang, Wang, and Wu 2020). A main reason why fans focused on construction vehicles was that a live camera used a bird's-eye view, which seldom presented images of workers (figure 4). The controversial practice of focusing on machines rather than on human beings may also partially be a result of fans' attempts to avoid possible disputes caused by the highly controversial genre of real person slash (Lantagne 2016).

[2.7] Nevertheless, celebrity fans became the scapegoat in the resulting disputes. Netizens vented their anger
at the government toward the celebrity fans instead. As a result of the disputes, fans of Little Forklift soon stopped their activities and disbanded their chat group; in total, their activities lasted for about a week. Yet even articles that praised fans' participation in the live event still criticized fans' activities. Zhou and Li (2020) argued that the fannish participation was evidence of how society united to fight the epidemic, but because fans do not need to think but rather only worship, their activities would prevent the public from deliberation and action. Liu (2020) summarized the controversial image of fans as "two-faced fan-circle girls":

> [2.8] When they [the fangirls] fought the epidemic like adults, they were also using childish language…Although the campaign against the virus has significantly increased the public's favorability of the fan-circle girls…it is not enough to eliminate the outside world's stereotypes by just participating in major public events.

3. Connected learning

[3.1] Zheng (2019) observed that Chinese fans are welcomed by the media industry and the state when they create visible revenue but are marginalized and suppressed when they create in fan works. In this case, it seems that Chinese society also held the same attitude toward fan activities. Chinese fans summarized the situation with the following highly popular self-mocking remark: "When something happens [and they need us], they call us fan-circle girls; when nothing happens, they call us fan-circle bitches." Indeed, stigma drove fans to charity. In addition to the prejudice against fans, China also has a long tradition of discriminating against entertainers, who are considered part of the underclass. Hence, an incentive for fans to participate in charity projects is to improve the public image of fans and their fan objects (Jeffreys and Xu 2017; Liu 2020; Yang 2009). Charity is also a safe way for fans to express and justify their love for their fan objects. This is why observers often indicated that fan charity is not genuine civic participation but rather an activity driven by personal and fannish interests (Chen Chun 2020; Jeffreys and Xu 2017).

[3.2] However, it is unfair that young female fans in particular—a group that has been long and easily marginalized in society—must use charity to defend their fannish interests. Furthermore, ironically, on the one hand, Chinese fans were mocked as naive and foolish. On the other hand, fans were examined and criticized from the perspective of expecting them to break the Chinese state's control on civic organizations with their strong ability to mobilize. Apparently the public (especially intellectuals) expected "infantile" Chinese fans to be mature and responsible citizens who could quickly mobilize their way out of state control. Chinese commentators failed to consider the age, experience, and social status of fans, or whether nonfans shared the shortcomings of fans. As Jenkins, Ito, and boyd (2016) note,

> [3.3] It's unfortunate that we limit young people's ability to exercise agency, and then lament they are irresponsible or slackers when they can't step immediately into adult shoes…We highlight certain negative behaviors as part of the developmental stage of teens, and we can be incredibly unreflective about how adults exhibit these same needs and behaviors. (54)

[3.4] What, then, would be a more useful way to approach these fans? I suggest a framework using the educational theoretical framework of connected learning. Such a framework asks (adult) society to perform actions that help and show respect to youth who are connecting personal interests with academic, career, or civic opportunities (Ito et al. 2013, 2020). Such a framework can help the public be more aware of the stereotypes and have a better understanding of fan activities. Compared to other theories that view fandom from the perspective of education, connected learning urges action from adults—that is, people who hold power or who inhabit social institutions. Connected learning demands that organizations and agents "sponsor and legitimize the interests and identities of diverse youth" (Ito et al. 2020, 5). It also asks parents, educators, elites, schools, and industries to "embrace the cultural identities of diverse young people, meeting them
where they are in their communities of interest, and building points of connection and translation to opportunity in schools, employment, and civic and political institutions" (Ito et al. 2018, 3). If the formal school education system seeks to cultivate youth, then connected learning aims to push influential adults to take the initiative to show respect for and sponsor youth culture.

[3.5] For civic engagement specifically, the approach of connected civics as a part of the theoretical framework of connected learning focuses on connecting young people's agency, interests, and affinity networks together with civic opportunities (Ito et al. 2015). Researchers have observed that barriers to civic participation are being lowered for youths as youths themselves apply cultural elements they are familiar with to civic themes, building infrastructure like websites or creating organizations for their activities in which younger members can work with older members (Ito et al. 2015). When youth are already actively engaging in civic actions on their own, it is then society's turn to reflect on their own biases and stereotypes—biases and stereotypes evidenced by the example of Chinese celebrity fans' activities during the Covid-19 outbreak.

[3.6] In the case of Little Forklift, some netizens were angry at the fangirls because fans were chosen by the state media to represent the voice of the people even as criticism of corruption and bureaucracy was suppressed on China's censored internet, thereby elevating supposedly trivial and infantile fangirl concerns above more weighty topics. Under such circumstances, could the state media be considered a sponsor of youth culture and connected learning? I feel such a claim is questionable because it looks more like incorporation than recognition. To ease the Chinese public's prejudice against fans, connected learning tells us that adults and institutions should model a desired connection between fan object and civic connection by engaging positively, rather than negatively, with these fans where they are.

[3.7] The current research on connected learning has mainly focused on the youth culture in the United States (Ito et al. 2020). Compared to China, participatory culture in the United States is growing in an environment where power distributes in a relatively decentralized way. Cultural policy is more directed by industry, not the state, while US society has strong nongovernmental and nonprofit sectors to support people's civic participation (Jenkins, Ito, and boyd 2016). However, media and education in China are both under the state's direct control. This does not mean that the Chinese state automatically rejects all forms of bottom-up civil participation or organization. Rather, it supposes that any form of participation and organization should occur under the government's control. Finding space for connected civics might be quite a different practice in China's particular social and political context.

[3.8] Connected learning ought to be applied in China; an opening exists not only for more research on this topic in China and elsewhere outside the Anglophone world, but also for more adult stakeholders to engage appropriately. For educators and scholars, this case study demonstrates the importance an educational approach in studies of fandom, which inherits the core belief of "fandom is beautiful" of the first wave of fan studies by recognizing fan cultures' vitality and creativity in creating opportunities for connecting and learning.

4. References


Outbreak." [In Chinese.] Matters, February 15, 2020. https://matters.news/@byron808/%E6%96%B0%E5%86%A0%E7%96%AB%E6%83%85%E4%B8%8B%E7%9A%84%E9%A5%AD%E5%9C%88%E4%B8%8E%E5%85%AC%E6%B0%91%E7%A4%BE%E4%BC%9A%E7%9A%84%E5%9B%9E%E5%85%89%E8%BF%94%E7%85%A7-bafyreibj7t553skmynptwsb3fv32ao77qwwum52qiov4ey6kv6sefvdpqm.


Multimedia: Editorial

Alternative pedagogies at Fan Studies Network North America 2020

Lori Morimoto

FSNNA 2020 Co-organizer

[0.1] Abstract—Overview of Multimedia section in TWC No. 35, "Fan Studies Pedagogies" (March 2021).

[0.2] Keywords—FSNNA 2020; Multimedia


[1] The planning committee for the 2020 Fan Studies Network North America (FSNNA) conference was only just beginning to map out the annual October meeting when much of US academia went virtual thanks to Covid-19. As such, we were in the fortunate position of planning the conference as a virtual event, so we immediately decided that we would attempt to exploit our online format as much as possible.

[2] As part of this, we invited proposals for posters, which we broadly defined as asynchronous presentations that could be posted online. Not knowing quite what to expect from presenters, our requirements were flexible. What we received exceeded our expectations. The stylistic leeway given to presenters resulted in a diversity of presentations, some of which appear here in this special Multimedia section. Video essays, infographics, zines—posters communicated complex information in visually compelling formats, generating the kinds of enthusiastic and productive conversations we usually have in the coffee shops, bars, and hallways of conference sites. In keeping with the conference's 24-hour clock, each poster was assigned its own channel (or forum) on the social media app Discord. These dedicated discussion spaces permitted people to comment asynchronously on individual posters throughout the conference.

[3] We're delighted to be able to share some of the posters featured at FSNNA 2020 here. The six submissions hint at the breadth of ways presenters approached the notion of a poster. Video submissions range in presentation style from expository to more revelatory and experiential, each making use of its visual elements in engaging and creative ways. Infographics, too, skillfully combine aesthetics and information in distilling scholarly work to a format that invites engagement. That much of the work here was produced by Brazilian academics further hints at the potential benefits of incorporating visual presentation formats into increasingly globalized conference and classroom spaces.

[4] Not only did these posters offer a tantalizing variety of presentational modes, but they also offer instructors different ways to engage student creativity in the classroom. For my part, I adapted the poster presentations to the course I was teaching that term, inviting students to submit their end-term projects as podcasts, video essays, websites, infographics, zines, and so on, all to equally satisfying ends. Particularly at a time when so many of us are suffering from videoconference fatigue as a result of the novel coronavirus, offering my students the flexibility to digitally engage with an object of interest, both visually and orally, revived interest in—and, critically, ownership of—their research in pedagogically rewarding ways.
Multimedia

Wealth and heteronormative romance tropes in Harry Potter fan fiction

Effie Sapuridis

[0.1] Abstract — Analysis of canon/fanon cocreation focusing on the fetishization of extreme wealth in the fanon genre of "Pureblood for a Day" fic.

[0.2] Keywords — Canon; Fanon; FSNNA 2020; Purebloods; Slytherins


1. Introduction

[1.1] One of the most compelling features of fan works is fanon cocreation, the remix of elements from the source text (or canon) by fans. In Harry Potter fandom, many of these remixed elements have become indistinguishable from canon. An example of fanon cocreation is the assumption that Purebloods and/or Slytherins are synonymous with wealth. These fanon cocreations have always been particularly compelling to me. How do they emerge? What do they do within the context of the fandom?

[1.2] This poster introduces my research into the fetishization of extreme wealth in this fanon genre, which I have dubbed "Pureblood for a Day." The portrayals of wealth in the Pureblood milieu in fan fiction celebrate and fetishize upper-class living. However, they also often enact an inversion of the traditional romance novel tropes, particularly that of the billionaire alpha hero, when a non-Slytherin student is introduced to this setting. In this romance novel trope, a supposedly naive woman from a lower class is introduced to a world of wealth and power by a man as part of his seduction. Instead, these fics place the source text's eponymous hero, Harry, in the woman's place, which might function as a subversion of the romance trope.

[1.3] Ultimately, although these fics engage in radical appropriation, they also represent the infiltration of classist, racist, and misogynistic ideologies in fan communities. The popularity of Harry in the traditional female role subverts the trope's heteronormativity while simultaneously reaffirming class and race oppression. In the end, however, both are oppressed by the logics of late capitalism.

2. Multimedia
Video 1. Pureblood for a day. Effie Sapuridis.
Creative production of Brazilian telenovela fans on Twitter

Daiana Sigiliano and Gabriela Borges

Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Juiz de Fora, Brazil

[0.1] Abstract — Analysis of content creation by fans on Twitter based on the narrative arcs of Lica and Samantha, characters in the Brazilian telenovela *Young Hearts (Malhação: Viva a diferença)* (TV Globo, 2017–18).

[0.2] Keywords — Homophobia; FSNNA 2020; LGBTQIA+; Limantha ship; *Malhação: Viva a diferença; Young Hearts*


1. Introduction

[1.1] Developed since 2017 by the Audiovisual Quality Observatory (Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Brazil), this research aims to analyze content creation by fans on Twitter based on the narrative arcs of Lica and Samantha (aka Limantha), characters of the Brazilian telenovela *Young Hearts (Malhação: Viva a diferença)* (TV Globo, 2017–18). *Young Hearts* was created in 1995, and each season focuses on a different narrative, with different characters, environments, and themes.

[1.2] Analysis of tweets by fans of the telenovela indicates that the show's content elicits critical thinking on the part of fans about the fictional universe as they question how the LGBTQIA+ community is portrayed in the narrative, in particular when represented by the Limantha ship. Fans also comment and riff on the canon, adding new details to characters' trajectories. Such activity is particularly prevalent in issues regarding sexuality and teenage conflicts and insecurities.

[1.3] The creative production conducted by the fans reframes the plot with memes, making fun of the differences about the way Limantha and straight couples are portrayed. It also explores intertextuality through crossovers with other *Young Hearts* narratives, other Brazilian telenovelas, and North American TV shows. Additionally, fans select certain scenes to edit and make them available with subtitles in various languages, such as English, French, and Spanish.

[1.4] After the end of the telenovela in March 2018, fans continued to mobilize on Twitter, especially around social issues such as the criminalization of homophobia in Brazil, the #ForaBolsonaro movement against sitting president Jair Bolsonaro, and the preservation of public universities. Mobilizations around the fictional universe were also directed toward the production of a spin-off based on the original telenovela. Fans campaigned in a variety of ways as they asked Rede Globo to continue the story. In 2019, the network announced the story would come back with a spin-off, *Forever Five (As Five)*, commissioning the production of two additional seasons.
2. Multimedia

Slide deck for poster presentation on Brazilian telenovela fans on Twitter
FOR THE FIRST TIME, IN 23 YEARS IN THE AIR, THE YOUNG ADULT BRAZILIAN TELEVISION WAS LED BY FIVE WOMEN.

LICA
SARAH
SHE-QUE
SHI-MAR

SHIP MONITORING
2017 LIFETIMETODAY
50 TWITTER PROFILES

REFERENCES
Multimedia

Broadway YouTubers and musical theater fandom

Steven Greenwood

McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

[0.1] Abstract—An analysis of the use of visuals to express ideas in a form that has much in common with the medium being studied.

[0.2] Keywords—FSNNA 2020; Pedagogy; Scholarship; Undergraduate education


1. Introduction

[1.1] As media scholars, we study cultural artifacts that rely on visuals as much as (and often more than) words. One of the first things we teach undergraduates is to look at how something is visually framed or shown rather than simply what is being said. The appeal of video essays like this one is that they allow us to practice what we preach. By using them, scholars can show as much as they tell, with visuals used to express their ideas in a form that has a lot in common with the medium they are analyzing.

[1.2] Even with embedded videos in an article or pauses in a conventional talk for clips, there is still a clear divide between the analysis (which is auditory or written) and the examples (which are visual). When planning my poster presentation for FSNNA 2020, I was inspired by popular YouTube video essays like those by Every Frame a Painting or Nerdwriter for their ability to break down the divide between analysis and example by seamlessly integrating the two. The analysis itself becomes visual.

[1.3] Rather than pausing a talk to show a clip, the clip becomes part of the talk itself. Rather than saying, "Props are made from everyday objects. In the following scene, the characters use paper plates and ripped-up paper," I can just say, "Props are made from everyday objects" as I show examples via video.

[1.4] In addition to making the presentation visually appealing, this approach creates a more visual style of analysis. When studying visual media, it makes sense to embrace scholarship expressed in the very form of the texts under study. I encourage scholars to embrace more video essays. If we want to examine how examples show as much as they tell, it makes sense to explore ways that scholarship can do the same thing.

2. Multimedia
3. References


Multimedia

Madonna and her multicultural fan community

Rick Pulos

Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia, United States

[0.1] Abstract — Analysis of Madonna as the center of a community demonstrating how women can exist at the center of life in a deep community structure.

[0.2] Keywords — Anthropology; FSNNA 2020; Matriarchy; Matricultural studies; Rebel Heart Tour


1. Introduction

[1.1] The parameters set out by the Fan Studies Network North America Conference 2020 for the virtual poster session were quite open-ended, other than the instruction to remain under five minutes should time-based media be used. I chose to take my Madonna project and create a short video essay. Intriguing questions emerged as I worked on a project about the Madonna fan community and how Madonna fits into that community. I had trouble figuring out how to position Madonna within the context of the fandom until I realized I was trying to define her within a patriarchal system that she defies. The fan community is dynamic, diverse, multicultural, and global.

[1.2] On the basis of interviews with self-identified fans, I was able to get a picture of how the nature of the Madonna fan community was created, and I show below how it can be seen as a quasi-matriarchal world. Matriarchal or matricultural studies, a nonideological area of research in anthropology, seemed to be the only area of current research that exists separate and distinct from the dominant patriarchal order that explicates how women can exist at the center of life in a deep community structure. Positioning Madonna as the central mother figure in the larger community shows how that particular symbolic position is upheld and perpetuated through a network of fan clans that extends their social reality to individual members and other clusters of fans.

[1.3] For the backdrop of the Madonna video essay, I chose a particularly powerful moment from Madonna's 2015 Rebel Heart Tour when she utilized fan art in her performance. The synthesis of the fandom and the object of the fanaticism is powerful and moving.

2. Multimedia
The reviewer's role in Brazilian K-drama fan subs

Vitoria Ferreira Doretto

Federal University of São Carlos, São Carlos, Brazil

[0.1] Abstract — An analysis of the process of proofreading in communities of Brazilian fans subtitling South Korean dramas.

[0.2] Keywords — Collaboration; FSNNA 2020; Proofreading; South Korea; Subtitle


1. Introduction

[1.1] This case study arose from my wish to understand how the proofreading process takes place within a fan subtitling community. The activity of writing subtitles and timing them with video brings together fans from different fields and with different levels of education. I gathered the thoughts of members of four Brazilian fan sub collectives about the proofreading task in particular within the translation, proofreading, and subtitle teams working on South Korean programs (mainly K-dramas), which the teams translated from Korean or English to Brazilian Portuguese. I noted fans' performance of linguistic maneuvers during proofreading to adapt meanings and expressions, as well as the importance of such maneuvers in the process of developing a project for fan sub consumers. Although the basic activities of all the fan sub groups were the same, the way fans taught new members to proofread varied from group to group, and it is possible to identify this occurrence as a gesture to publishing practices (or to learning editorial genetic rites).

[1.2] As a base for the image below, I used responses regarding the functioning of the fan subs. The variation between the terms "proofreader" and "reviewer" occurs because these two activities seem to merge within the fan subs: Its members both correct (proofread) the subtitles and leave comments to their consumers (in the opposite corner of the subtitles) about characters and scenes. Such images illustrate not instability in the proofreading activity but rather an aspect of simultaneous functions.

2. Acknowledgment

[2.1] The case study is part of the investigations developed in a research line of the Study Group "Comunica —Linguistic inscriptions in communication," in which the researcher participates by studying the functioning of the Brazilian literary field, which focuses on the editorial processes of books and newspapers as well as other editing and publishing activities.

3. Multimedia
The reviewer's role in K-drama fansubs: a case study

Four fansubs - Kingdom Fansubs, Fighting Fansub, Start Fansub (renamed to Life Fansub), and Unnie Fansub - shows us how their proofreading works and is taught.

Vitória Ferreira Doretto - Federal University of Sao Carlos (UFSCar)/Brazil

Who are they?

In total, 6 fan-reviewers answered our questions, mostly women. Education: Literature, Advertising, Cinema, Computer Technician, Journalism. Most do not act as a professional proofreader and do not intend to pursue the profession (exceptions: one does work sporadically, and one wants to invest in it in the future).

How it works

- the translator proofreads: Fighting Fansub; Life Fansub; Kingdom Fansubs
- there is another proofreader: Fighting Fansub; Unnie Fansubs; Kingdom Fansub
- there is final proofreading: Fighting Fansub; Kingdom Fansubs

How is it taught?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW IS IT TAUGHT?</th>
<th>KINGDOM</th>
<th>UNNIE</th>
<th>LIFE</th>
<th>FIGHTING</th>
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<td>learn by doing</td>
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Proofreading

In their editorial genetic rites, there is a relationship between proofreading and grammatical correction, but we realize that there is also the issue of language calibration according to the context and audience.

Fan-reviewers are often also translators of English or Spanish subtitles and, although, for the most part, they do not intend to act as text professionals, they can understand "linguistic maneuvers" necessary to adapt Korean or English expressions, jokes, and meanings to Brazilian Portuguese.
4. References


A brief review of fan studies in Brazil

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[0.1] Abstract — Analysis of the current state of the field of fan studies in Brazil, recognizing the importance of acknowledging social, political, economic, and historical factors when studying fandoms.

[0.2] Keywords — Brazilian fandom; FSNNA 2020; International fandom; Transnational fandom


1. Introduction

[1.1] When I began writing my dissertation, I analyzed Brazilian transnational/transcultural fandoms. My first step was to do a literature review on national research about fandoms, adding to and updating previous work by Giovana Santana Carlos (2015) and Sarah Moralejo da Costa (2018). As I did so, I noticed some patterns that I think define how fan cultures are studied, such as focusing on digital activities and referencing more foreign scholars than our fellow Brazilian colleagues.

[1.2] Along the way, I also encountered Bertha Chin and Lori Hitchcock Morimoto's (2013) work on transculture fandom, which helped me understand the importance of considering every aspect of the subject's context while analyzing them— which, because of the patterns mentioned before, and as shown in the video, is not exactly the case in Brazilian studies.

[1.3] I chose this discussion to present the field of Brazilian fan studies, which has been growing and consolidating itself, to the international arena, and to provide evidence regarding the importance of acknowledging social, political, economic, and historical factors when studying fandoms, a task that must be initiated at the time the topic is chosen and continued to the end of the project. The responses I got from the panel session were enriching, leading me to conclude that the difficulties I encountered may not be exclusive to Brazil, as I had initially suspected, but rather are endemic to many countries outside the Anglophone/Eastern European worlds.

2. Multimedia
3. References


Book review

Theme park fandom: Spatial transmedia, materiality and participatory cultures, by Rebecca Williams

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[0.1] Keywords—Disney; Fan studies; Universal Studios


[1] Prior to being a scholar of themed entertainment or a university professor teaching theme parks, I was an employee of both Disney and Universal parks. Before working in those places, I was a fan of the fascinating and multilayered spaces that are theme parks. I lived in Southern California and then Central Florida, wrote papers on Disney parks in my undergraduate years, and visited those places that delighted me. Yet when I examined the academic conversation in graduate school, I was bombarded with negative and narrow perceptions of theme parks. Writings repeated the themes of consumption, control, exploitation, artificiality, simulacrum, imperialism, childishness, bread and circuses, escapism, and similar strains ad nauseam. The little said about fans pathologized them and reduced them to unquestioning automatons. With equal parts shame and anger, I questioned my choice of profession. As a scholar, I endorse the important roles of criticism and interrogation of culture or media. In the case of theme parks, and especially of their fans, however, there was a predominant narrative and by no means a balanced dialogue; only a few works provided divergence.

[2] One rebuttal comes by way of Theme Park Fandom: Spatial Transmedia, Materiality and Participatory Cultures by Rebecca Williams, a compelling entry into the dialogue. The underlying premise of Williams's book is that much current literature does not take into account the complexity of theme parks or the relationships people form with them. She argues that "theme parks and their fans are worth our attention" and that fan studies is an approach that will facilitate awareness (244). She quotes some of the critics and interacts with common tropes. Broader points about theme parks being a demonstration of transmedia narrative and participatory culture are interwoven throughout individual cases of theme park fan practices, which allows readers to frequently contextualize the examples. Between the introduction and conclusion is a literature review section, followed by six chapters on specific fannish practices that represent theoretical concepts. The variety and specificity of the sections adds value to the discussion. The book's organization is logical, as it is meant to reflect the fan's visit progression: practices in anticipation of the visit, the experiences of "being there," and reflections on the location/"focal point of the fandom" following the visit.

[3] One of the strongest features of the book is Williams's definitions for new ideas or concepts that extend previous notions. Studies in transmedia are peppered throughout the book, especially the work of Jenkins (2006), who has been an advocate for theme parks as texts worthy of media studies attention and who calls
transmedia storytelling "the art of world making" (21), a description theme parks exemplify. Her phrase *spatial transmedia* describes one of the primary characteristics of the theme park medium: its dimensionality. In my investigations of the affordances of media types, it is the spatial characteristic that is the most prevalent when regarding theme parks (through terminology such as environmental storytelling, placemaking, setting, et al.). Theme parks provide the ability to physically move through a built storyworld, something that can lead to heightened experience, especially if one has attachment to the stories presented. Nonetheless, in literature on transmedia or crossmedia, theme parks are often overlooked as nodes in the storytelling infrastructure, despite how publicized some of the installations are (Wizarding World of Harry Potter, Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, etc.). Williams attempts to rectify this, and the text is part of the publisher's transmedia series.

[4] Williams challenges traditional readings of transmedia by emphasizing spatiality (with narrative in "specific rooted locations"), its potential for being led or cocreated by fans, and its reality of not always being established at the conception of a narrative instance. The Haunted Mansion attraction's wider storyline that fans curate, to use her example from chapter 4, was pieced together from canon and fan sources over time, illustrating a more "dispersed and gradual expansion of a storyworld," a situation Williams terms *retrospective transmediality* (122). I was particularly pleased to find her mention of the Society of Explorers and Adventurers (S.E.A.), Disney's "multi-park storyworld" that has been constructed over time and place by park designers and rooted out by curious fans. I find this so indicative of layers of narrative, "forensic fandom" a la Mittell (2013) (who suggests fandoms that "dig deeper" into story layers), and the affordances of the spatial medium (physical clues spread through parks around the world and even the Disney Cruise Line) that I have both written about it and taught it in class several times. As Williams proves throughout the text, those who blindly accept a single narrative of theme parks and their fans miss out on the complexity and uniqueness of these spaces and the communities that interact with them.

[5] Another facet of transmedia can be observed through Williams's reference to *embodied transmedia extension*. In this principle explored in chapter 7, fans who visit parks engage with the physical place through behaviors such as exhibiting merchandise on one's person (and trading of Disney pins) or wearing clothing that expresses fan identities. Chapter 3's concept of *haptic fandom* also includes bodily association, with physical, sensory inputs vital to fan engagement with parks, not only through features of theme park attractions with haptic feedback. She considers Disney's MagicBand and Universal's TapuTapu, both NextGen technology wearables that interact with the theme park space and demonstrate a fan's physical link to the location. Both systems only fully function within a park property, fortifying her position that many of this fandom's practices are inextricable from the places in which they occur. Williams asserts the "centrality of the physical body in fannish practices," something that is rarely discussed in relation to theme parks, despite their materiality (191).

[6] Related to arguments rooted in the body are assertions based on food items and beverages (discussed in detail in chapter 6), things Williams deems *culinary paratexts*. While substantively ephemeral, these goods become objects of fandom themselves and help to "create and extend storyworlds" (168). Amusement park or theme park food has a notorious reputation, but parks now incorporate foodstuffs as essential facets of an immersive guest experience. Fan practices have sprung up around food and beverage items, from full meals at restaurants in the themed lands (e.g., Three Broomsticks or Be Our Guest) to Disney cupcakes (a personal favorite, and blog posts abound on just this one food item). Williams usefully distinguishes between items that gain a cult following because they originate from a text (e.g., Butterbeer from Harry Potter), from a park relating an item to a text that may not appear in it originally (e.g., Freeze Ray from *Despicable Me*), or from fan interest in park-developed products (e.g., Dole Whip at certain Disney parks). Considering merchandise, clothing, and even consumables such as food and drink as paratexts and transmedia extension opens useful lines of inquiry into a number of fandoms.
Several fan practices are investigated in *Theme Park Fandom* and paired with concepts. Even before a fan visits the park, there may be a lengthy and comprehensive process of planning, a form of *anticipatory labor* covered in chapter 3. She explains that putting forth voluntary planning effort is done to achieve a pleasurable experience in the end, so it is not labor in the traditional sense. I appreciate her recognition that annual passholders complicate the idea of travel developing in linear stages, as locals and passholders have distinct practices and often more spontaneous visits. Chapter 5 explains an infrequently discussed group, that of adults who partake in meet and greet character experiences. She sees this as occurring in two forms, *an-embodiment*, or park characters that represent animated characters come to life (such as Shrek), and *metonymic celebrity*, park characters that stand in for live actors and actresses (like Rey from Star Wars, originally played by Daisy Ridley). Fans suspend disbelief to partake in meet and greets, a behavior that may be disparaged by critics but leads to deeper participation and immersion. In *paratextual spatio-play*, a helpful albeit clunky term, adult fans signify characters or park attractions through Disney-produced geek attire or by way of activities like DisneyBounding, wherein fans perform a role through selecting representative clothing. Williams observes the subversive element of this routine, as it circumvents Disney’s in-park costume rules. Unlike cosplay and role-playing that occur in home or convention spaces, these endeavors take place in the park, again allowing for narrative extension and highlighting the situatedness of this fandom.

A final nod to participatory culture comes in analysis of a behavior that largely takes place outside of the parks: fan critique. Williams’s examples in chapter 8 showcase Disney park fans expressing frustration at corporate decisions with new attractions (in one case, Frozen Ever After replacing the Norwegian-themed Maelstrom boat ride) or having a sense of loss at attractions closing down (or whole parks, like her River Country example). I liked the nuance in this section. Fan groups might lament popular intellectual properties replacing original attractions at Disney’s Epcot (in stark contrast to "regular" visitors), but she admits that while some fans find the inclusion of *Frozen* to be in ideological tension with Epcot’s original purpose, others' dislike may be tied to "cultural derision towards girls' media products" (224). This values negotiation is something I witnessed recently with social media posts about the impending closure of Disney’s Splash Mountain. Many understood the reasons behind removing the ride but had a sense of loss because of nostalgia. However, one message complained about the ride makeover because a "12-year-old boy would not enjoy it," presumably because of its being updated with *The Princess and the Frog*, revealing that gender (and presumably race in this case) are issues fan communities continue to grapple with. Whatever the reasons, fans may find their "ontological security" (drawn from Giddens) threatened by the removal or repurposing of theme park attractions. After all, unlike a television show, which can still be viewed after cancellation, a ride is material, located in physical space, and tied to sensory immersion—aspects that cannot be duplicated once removed. Online spaces are used to memorialize or mourn defunct attractions fans formed "affective attachments" to, something Williams tackles sensitively by including extracts from fan voices.

Any gripes with the work are minor but worth mentioning as the discourse continues to develop. The text is at times a bit self-referential, and Williams admits it is Western-centric and Disney-centric. She effectively focused on the "duopoly" of Disney and Universal in Orlando, but I would be interested in seeing more distinctions made between fan communities within the US parks as well as dialogue on how they differ from those in Europe and Asia, something she recognized in the conclusion. Williams (and Pande, as she notes) suggest that fan studies works sometimes default to white, middle class, cisgender norms. The limitations section missed the opportunity to reference socioeconomic status in depth. Financial limitations are a major barrier to entry for theme parks, with few fandoms as dependent on an ability to pay. Movies, for instance, are available through a variety of means, whereas the geographical scarcity and embeddedness of experience in physical space makes the theme park an expensive proposition, especially for nonlocals. While the book has important things to say about fandoms within Disney and Universal, I would say that the title is not wholly accurate, as theme park fandoms outside of those two are hardly mentioned. There is a quote referencing Efteling, for example, a nearly seventy-year-old park with a robust fandom that has cultural and practical differences that could be explored. Finally, it might be worthwhile to note that theme park
scholarship from the tourism, hospitality, and leisure fields (which she cites) simply do not trend as negative as those from approaches like cultural studies. An exciting aspect of interdisciplinarity is locating ways discourses can inform one another, and a strength of this text is a deft use of interdisciplinary literature.

[10] *Theme Park Fandom* is the first book-length work on theme park fans, so it is an essential text for those invested in this area. She cites previous theme park fan studies articles throughout, acknowledging previous contributions and making it a valuable reference in this emerging area of inquiry. Fan studies itself has gained traction over the years, but texts on theme park fans have continued to lag. Using the lens of fan studies as a kind of liberating approach for both theme parks and their fans, Williams provides foundational concepts for understanding them but also leaves the door open for further studies. Rebecca Williams has an extensive background in fan studies, with publications on television and media audiences and frequent service to the field. I appreciate that she states her positionality right in the beginning, self-identifying as a theme park fan and expressing disappointment in previous scholarship (and also facetiously declaring herself a possible "traitor to the Cultural Studies cause") (249). I found the work to be a thoughtful take on a derided fan community whose practices prove instructive for research into participatory culture, transmedia narrative, cocreating immersive worlds, and the theme park artifacts themselves. When I first engaged in studies of academic perspectives on theme parks for my graduate degrees, this is the kind of book I wished to find. Though I am singing in the choir she is preaching to, anyone with an interest in theme parks, fandoms, or transmedia would benefit from the work's careful analysis.

**References**


Book review

_Everybody hurts: Transitions, endings, and resurrections in fan cultures_, ed. Rebecca Williams

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[0.1] _Keywords_—Affect; Postobject fandom


[1] Though the MTV series _Teen Wolf_ ended in 2017 after six seasons and one hundred episodes, Tumblr users who still follow those producing content for the show may see on their dashboards to this day posts tagged, "#eternal sterek," a reference to the show's juggernaut ship that its fans, with a typically fannish stubbornness, have managed to keep alive, continuing to create gifsets, fan fiction, and other works, in defiance of the absence of new material. Rebecca Williams's 2018 edited collection examines similar and related phenomena within fandoms, looking at fans of media properties whose official content has come to an end. The essays, taken together, offer an ostensive definition of what it means for something to end and the different kinds of possible endings. Williams cites her book _Post-Object Fandom_ (2015) in her introduction, noting that "when beloved fan objects end, fans must cope with the potential threat they may feel to their sense of fannish self-identity and their trust in the object itself." She categorizes fans' reactions in three ways: _reiteration_ (maintaining and even intensifying their interest even in the face of the loss, à la #eternal sterek), _renegotiation_ (accepting the loss, modulating the attachment, and in some way moving on from it), and/or _rejection_ ("you can't fire me, I quit"—as in fact many _Teen Wolf_ social media users did, tagging their posts with #teenwolfisoverparty, somewhat spitefully celebrating the formerly beloved show's demise).

[2] Williams also points out in her introduction that media studies often focuses on points of entry, looking at that moment when a person first identifies as a fan, perhaps at the detriment of examining some of what Harrington and Bielby call the "life course" of fannishness (2014), as they mapped that trajectory or journey onto psychological theories of childhood development. This collection aims to look at the entire fandom life cycle and does so with impressive thoroughness, analyzing a wide variety of kinds of media properties. While the individual essays are split into sections divided by precisely these kinds of fandom—music, television, fan adaptations of content, and spatial/site-specific fandoms—their structure also follows Williams's three-part possibility for how disappointed or grieving fans will meet such a loss, what strategies they will use to encounter the absence of content, and how they maintain their fannish identity with or without that initial attachment.

[3] While the essays collectively taken are all strong, a chapter by Bethan Jones is particularly au courant in its addressing of cancel culture, in the sense of what happens when a fan object "has ceased due to immoral or illegal behaviors"—specifically in the case of Welsh rock band Lostprophets, one of whose members was
arrested, charged, and criminally convicted; Jones examines fans' parasocial grief and their "shaken sense of identity," which can result in some fans pivoting into anti-fandom. Other especially kairotic essays include Williams's own chapter on theme park fandom and the Disney brand, and how fans of the classic Maelstrom attraction reacted when it was replaced with a ride themed after the Frozen franchise; and Melissa A. Click's and Holly Wilson Holladay's "Breaking Up with Breaking Bad," which surveys "relational dissolution," and how fans undergo and transition through an ending as if it were a kind of breakup, since parasocial or "imaginary" relationships between a fan and a media text are in fact, per Cohen's 2004 article, "Parasocial Break-Up from Favorite Television Characters," "functionally equivalent to social relationships." Click and Holladay convincingly make the case that fandom studies needs more sophisticated answers to Matt Hills's question, "How do fans move on from fan object to object rather than necessarily defining their fandom through one fan culture/object?" after the grief and mourning that often follow dissolution. While the authors don't examine this process of reattachment, they convincingly offer interpersonal communication and relational models and theories to account for the range and depth of fannish affect. Since many fans of Breaking Bad (2008–13) were eventually offered transitional objects in Better Call Saul (2015–) and El Camino (2019), the creators' own transformative works, perhaps the creators themselves suffered the relationship dissolution and turned to transformative works to soothe the painful affect.

[4] The collection brushes against notions of affect again with the essay "Fan Euthanasia," in which Paul Booth adds a more theoretical look at the phenomena of fans turning against a formerly cherished text, their affect sitting astride "a thin line between love and hate." His chapter notes that fans who persist in following a text that now troubles them may feel dissatisfaction "not because they hate a show, but because they feel betrayed by a show they once loved." Booth's concept of fan euthanasia "reveals moments when fans' desire for an ending overrides the media creator's authority over meaning," a theory which bookends nicely with "Hannibal's Refrigerator," Evelyn Deshane's look at how Bryan Fuller, the showrunner of NBC's Hannibal (2013–15), reacted to fans' criticism and contumely when his narrative killed off a female character of color. In this case, the media creator's receptivity to fan outrage and education yielded an important, even groundbreaking, dialogue between creators and fans, as Fuller and company were "able to ease fans through the transition of losing a pivotal character" while also "aligning themselves with fans and listening to their concerns"—in contrast with Teen Wolf showrunner Jeff Davis, who, around the same time, responded to fan concerns about the loss of a main character by refusing to address any of the larger social and ideological issues at play around the fridging of female characters, particularly characters of color.

[5] Affect is also mentioned by Kristina Busse in her afterword, "Fannish Affect and Its Aftermath," which bookends the collection, as she indicates what conclusions may be drawn and where research is still needed. She observes that "fandom communities not only mirror and intensify our emotions, they also often guide the responses," and further, that foregrounding "the role of community" is necessary, for "the relationship among fans is as important as, if not more important than, the relationship between fan and fan object." Affect, therefore, in Busse's view, is a product of the interpersonal as much as interpellation. While acknowledging this, I wonder whether the literature of affect theory, in particular the work of Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed, could offer fruitful frameworks for further explorations of the inquiries present in this book, offering a fuller account of the sensibilities of post-object fans, examining as they do both relatedness and the depth and plangency of individual emotional register.

[6] Additionally, most of the book's chapters make use of interviews and social media posts, but it would be interesting to see a qualitative take across fandoms on transformative works that continue long after the ending of an originary text, or on the process of reattachment to new fandoms. As of the writing of this review, the long-running genre series Supernatural (2005–2020) has just concluded, prompting fans' public outcries of sorrow, frustration, and, in some cases, relief. The events that ended the series have already fostered a fresh influx of transformative works, which will doubtless continue, as new fans discover the show and/or its fandom, and older ones continue to feel bound up in its characters, controversies, and storylines.
Future writing might take advantage of some of the strategies addressed by *Everybody Hurts*, in examining the possible variety of fannish responses to such a conflicted and conflicting text.