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Editorial

History and fandom

TWC Editor

[0.1] Abstract—Editorial for Transformative Works and Cultures, no. 6 (September 15, 2011).

[0.2] Keywords—Fan community; History; Walter Benjamin


1. The work of fandom in the age of mechanical reproduction

[1.1] This special issue of Transformative Works and Cultures, guest edited by Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein, focuses on the intersection of history and fandom. The title of the special issue, "Fan Works and Fan Communities in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," evokes Walter Benjamin's famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935). Reagin and Rubenstein are academic historians who have also been active fans for decades. They have included essays that discuss only a sampling of the many fan communities that arose over the course of the twentieth century. Each group reflected the time and culture it was embedded in, and yet in all of them, we can see parallels to and reflections of modern fandoms.

[1.2] As Reagin and Rubenstein note in their editorial essay, "'I'm Buffy, and you're history': Putting Fan Studies into History," despite the mass-produced nature of popular artworks such as cinema, "large numbers of people shared similar experiences: they saw the identical film at the same time (or nearly), or danced to the same piece of popular music, or attended the same sporting matches, or read the same installments of a story that was being published serially in a popular magazine or newspaper" (¶4.6). Fans forged communities within a context of a shared activity or simultaneously consumed artwork, and historical analysis of these moments often occurs against the backdrop of technological change (such as the advent of cinema or the advent of the Internet).

[1.3] As Reagin and Rubenstein point out, fandom did not start with Star Trek. This special issue addresses such varied topics as fan letters written in the early twentieth-century United States, rock-and-roll fans in mid-twentieth-century Germany, movie
star magazines, and female football (soccer) fans in postwar England. But the importance of the issue lies beyond the topics themselves: the sources and methodologies used by the historians stand as examples to suggest new lines of research.

[1.4] "The Fan Letter Correspondence of Willa Cather: Challenging the Divide between Professional and Common Reader," by Courtney A. Bates, studies fan letters to Willa Cather (1873–1947), which Cather saved and which are now held by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Special Collections. In her analysis of the author-reader relationship, Bates concludes, "As an alternative to professional formulas for writing, these letters are lived histories of the fans. Together, author and fan exchange the emotional resonance of a place and moment" (¶4.8).

[1.5] Stacey Pope and John Williams, in "'White shoes to a football match!': Female Experiences of Football's Golden Age in England," through orally conducted interviews, explore gendered and classed responses to football (soccer) fandom, thus retrieving the experiences of an important subset of fan. Lisa Rose Stead also deals with gender concerns in "'So oft to the movies they've been': British Fan Writing and Female Audiences in the Silent Cinema," which offers analyses of female fannish expression articulated through fan letters published in Picturegoer magazine from 1913 to 1928, concluding that such work on fans is needed because it highlights them as engaged, debating consumers.

[1.6] In "John Lennon, Autograph Hound: The Fan-Musician Community in Hamburg's Early Rock and Roll Scene, 1960–1965," Julia Sneeringer explicates rock-and-roll fans' relationships with musicians and club owners in the Beat scene in Hamburg, Germany. She concludes that fan activity "generated a cross-class, cross-national solidarity among fans in which the social meanings of authority, respectability, and democracy could be questioned and eventually reworked. Fans' active role in this scene was a crucial element in the larger transition away from a youth culture...to a new culture, generated by youth for youth, that strove to be something more than just disposable entertainment" (¶5.1).

[1.7] The rest of this special issue—overseen by the regular TWC staff—continues the historical focus begun in the section edited by Reagin and Rubenstein. Several essays in the Symposium section of this issue of TWC focus on fannish archival concerns. Regina Yung Lee, in "Textual Evidence of Fandom Activities: The Zine Holdings at UC Riverside's Eaton Collection," describes the impressive physical zine holdings at UC Riverside, acquired in 1969 from a donated personal collection and significantly added to since then, and provides an interview with the library's head of special collections, Melissa Conway, who hopes some day to digitize the physical artifacts. This treasure trove of fan artifacts is open to the public and awaits historical research. Versaphile, in
"Silence in the Library: Archives and the Preservation of Fannish History," discusses not only the history of fan fiction archives, from APAs to Usenet to mailing lists to LiveJournal blog platforms, but also the implications of access and archiving in terms of fan-creator control and privacy. Similarly, Alexis Lothian, in "An Archive of One's Own: Subcultural Creativity and the Politics of Conservation," discusses the Organization for Transformative Work's fan archive project, the Archive of Our Own (http://archiveofourown.org/), in terms of not only its importance in archiving a broad array of fan works, regardless of fandom, but also its limitations: "[W]e cannot restrict fannish politics to the easily archivable...[I]f the Archive is our only model for fannish politics, we risk losing sight of ephemeral practices that can work transformatively" (¶3.4).

[1.8] One Symposium writes a history of a fan event. Using interviews with informants and published zine accounts, Catherine Coker provides a fascinating recap of "The Contraband Incident: The Strange Case of Marion Zimmer Bradley," a famous 1992 incident in which a fan-written work in Bradley's shared Darkover universe caused Bradley to kill a book and stop engaging with fans by reading their works. The last Symposium piece, Mark Soderstrom's "Bowlers, Ballads, Bells, and Blasters: Living History and Fandom," discusses the role of historical reenactment in fandom, making explicit the link between fan expressions at events as diverse as Renaissance festivals and fan conventions and identifying them as sites of not only fellowship but material exchange, of interpretation and representation.

[1.9] The essays in this issue all deal with historical concerns: archive, access, fan expression, gender, class. Additionally, the five videos in this issue provide first-person accounts of fan engagement: longtime superfans Paula Smith and Rusty Hevelin, both known for their work within their respective fan communities; fan vidders Sandy and Rache, who vid as the Clucking Belles; and Robert DeSimone, who appears in costume as Darth Vader and Boba Fett with the sanction of Lucas Arts. Also included is a cutting from a longer video project about The Bronze, the now-defunct official site for Buffy, the Vampire Slayer, which was populated by a group of fans whose activity drew them close.

[1.10] Two book reviews round out this issue. Boys' Love Manga, edited by Antonia Levi, Mark McHarry, and Dru Pagliassotti, addresses fans and fannish activity around boys' love manga, with an emphasis on cross-cultural concerns. A Comics Studies Reader, edited by Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, is designed to be used in courses on comics and thus includes an historical overview, their social significance, and close readings of comics.

[1.11] As this issue makes clear, engagement with endlessly replicated mass-produced artworks and texts provides opportunities for shared meaning making. Applying
historical methodologies and thinking about historical concerns in a fan context reveal much not only about the historical moment, but about how fans engage with one another and with their chosen field of interest in that moment.

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Editorial

"I'm Buffy, and you're history": Putting fan studies into history

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Abstract—This essay kicks off the special historical issue of Transformative Works and Cultures by offering an overview of the ways in which fan communities have been studied by academic historians, and how fan studies has written the history of fan communities. The essay discusses historical work done by amateur fan historians throughout the 20th century; what academic historians can offer fan communities; why academic historians could benefit from studying fandoms as part of the history of popular culture; and what fan studies as a discipline might gain from a broader historical analysis of fandoms.

Keywords—Fan history; Female fan; Tarzan; Karl May; Science fiction; Wiki; Zine; Sherlockian; Fan letter; Music fan; Sports fan; Cultural exchange; Cross-ethnic identification; Cold war; Lord of the Rings; Tolkien; Copyright; Walter Benjamin


1. Introduction

In 1934, pulp fiction writer Edgar Rice Burroughs signed over the rights to his most popular character, Tarzan, to a brand-new production company that had promised him that it could translate his novels to film more accurately than had been done in earlier Tarzan productions. Burroughs fared about as well in his dealings with Hollywood as most authors who sell the rights to their imaginary worlds, however. The movie producers promptly announced that Tarzan was moving from Africa to Central America, and set up an expedition to film an eight-chapter-long serial in Guatemala. Guatemalan authorities welcomed this new industry to their Depression-ravaged nation with alacrity, investing government funds in the production and offering newly excavated ancient Mayan ruins as locations for filming.
Local audiences already knew Tarzan very well through widely distributed comic strips imported from Mexico, and from earlier Hollywood Tarzan movies shown in Guatemala: Tarzan had a substantial fan base in Guatemala by the 1930s. Local people turned out to be far less welcoming than their government was, however. No protest accompanied the film crew's use of archaeological sites, but when they dared to enter the cathedral in the market town of Chichicastenango, a small riot ensued. The skimpily dressed stars, the director, the cameramen, and other crew members, along with all their equipment and—for good measure—a visiting anthropologist and the local hotelier, were all chased out of town by a machete-wielding crowd. Only the hotel manager ever returned to Chichicastenango, and although the serial was completed, no other Tarzan movie was ever filmed anywhere in Guatemala.

This story—like the case studies analyzed in far more depth in the articles included in this issue of the *Journal of Transformative Works and Cultures*—hints at what sustained historically focused research might have to offer fan studies: new ways of understanding the vast range of fan activities and audience responses as they shift between places and change over time. Tarzan's Guatemalan fans, for instance, were quite pleased to see him as a tourist visiting the ruins left behind by ancient civilizations. But they were angered to the point of violence when it appeared that the movie crew were trying to depict (and probably misrepresent) important aspects of their real lives. For reasons having to do with local economic, cultural, and racial tensions and recent land grabs by German immigrant coffee entrepreneurs, as well as a long history of exploitative employment practices by huge US corporations operating in Guatemala, the residents of Chichicastenango did not want to be perceived as "natives" like the bit players in the background of the Tarzan movies they had already seen (Rubenstein 2003).

In order to understand why these particular Tarzan fans behaved very differently from other fans of Tarzan, we have to understand them in their historical context. Like the other fans discussed in this special issue, Guatemalan audiences of Tarzan had their own interpretations of important works in popular culture that had originated elsewhere (such as Tarzan), and their reactions were shaped by broader trends in economic and cultural history (such as the history of US corporations operating in Guatemala). And like all the fans discussed in this issue, they were willing to defend their interpretations passionately.

This special issue of TWC represents, as far as we know, the very first published collection of historical studies of fan communities and activities (note 1). When we discuss "fans," we are referring to people who were active participants in popular culture, often decades earlier than is often acknowledged in modern fan studies. The groups discussed in this essay and issue include people who joined fan
organizations and attended conventions; enthusiasts of a particular sports team, movie series, musical artist, or literary series who traveled to visit sites of particular importance to the object of their enthusiasm; those who made or collected artifacts (costumes, published programs and other texts, art) associated with their cherished hobby; those who exchanged letters in the columns of magazines catering to particular groups; and those who were involved in small, less formally organized groups of fans.

[1.6] We hope that this edition of the journal initiates a conversation among scholars and fans (and people who are both) around a series of questions about the past: How did changes in the material conditions of leisure, entertainment, and play relate to changes in ordinary people's worldviews? What difference did the rise of mass media make in everyday life? How did changes in seemingly trivial everyday practices connect to larger social and cultural transformations? What was the relationship between participation in leisure activities and participation in politics? How did communities of fans contribute to historical change? Historians (and others) have been puzzling over some of these problems for many years; we expect that studying communities of fans ("fandoms") will bring new evidence and new perspectives to old debates. But some of these are newer questions; we believe that scholarly conversations about the 19th and 20th centuries are shifting in interesting directions, and we hope to encourage that process.

[1.7] Above all, we hope to encourage fans—many of whom have written their own histories, while eagerly editing and correcting other narratives about themselves—to think about themselves in a broader historical context. Many fans have thought of fandom as separate from "the real world," the mundane realm in which we must earn a living and survive the daily pressures of our lives. We often cannot control the conditions under which we work, and we all live in societies where power, wealth, and influence operate within hierarchies that often seem far beyond our control; fandom, by contrast, can be an egalitarian haven in a heartless world. But we think it is possible for fans to experience their lives as fans in that special, separate world while understanding the ways in which fannish communities and activities are still entirely part of "the real world"—and are a part of the transformative forces that made the world what it is.

2. Every fan her own historian? What fan historians offer to fan communities

[2.1] "There and Back Again. And What Happened After"...compiled by Bilbo Baggins

—J. R. R. Tolkien, The Return of the King
Communities of fans often are well aware of their own histories and dynamics. Like Bilbo Baggins writing the story of his adventures, individual fans sometimes write their own detailed accounts of key events and personalities in their community's history, and many are also deeply engaged amateur historians (note 2). But academic historians can offer something quite different: research and narratives that enable fans to connect their own particular fandom's story to much broader changes over time, locating themselves and their communities in a global history of culture. We can trace important social, legal, and economic changes that set the stage for the emergence of fan communities and show how fans participated in and had an impact on broader cultural change.

The sort of historical work that individual fans and small groups have undertaken varies considerably. Fans have occasionally written extremely detailed "insider" histories (or, more accurately, genealogies) of their fannish communities. These insider histories, most often, are nostalgic in tone. Rich in fascinating detail, they usually trace the rise of one particular fandom, recounting the names of the key first fans of the team, story, or star around which the fandom centers; the fans' first encounters with each other; the obstacles that the organizers faced in linking fans with each other; the earliest meetings of groups of fans; the technological framework (e.g., mimeographs) that a fandom's founders had to operate within; or the first cons (if these were held), along with the names of those who attended. And of course such histories often include details about decades-old disputes within the fandom, since fans' passionate engagement with their chosen hobbies often leads to energetic and even acrimonious debates. One of the best insider histories of fans of the German popular author Karl May spends many pages on conflicts of all sorts. There were quarrels between organized May fans and May's estate, which held the copyright to his works. There were tensions between West German May fans, who wanted to make pilgrimages to May's birthplace and other places he had lived, and the East German state, where those places were located. And of course there were both spats and long-standing grudges among different May fan groups (Heinemann 2000).

Insider histories like these are essential and sometimes wonderful sources for those who come later, both academic historians and younger fans. Fans have never needed help from anyone else—no matter what their professional credentials—to produce these histories, and the articles in this special issue are not intended primarily as contributions to the ongoing production of insider histories by fans.

Fans engage in many other sorts of amateur historical work as well. They may create or rehabilitate important memorial sites. Fans of Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie series have founded memorial societies in several locales associated with the author's life or those of her relatives; these memorial societies
have painstakingly refurbished or maintained homes—often carefully furnished with recreations of household activities—associated with the Wilder family (for instance, two houses in De Smet, South Dakota, where Wilder's parents lived), which have then become popular pilgrimage sites for fans of the series (note 3). Science fiction fans have built impressive collections of thousands of "zines" (amateur fan magazines), while music collectors have built stunning archives of bootleg recordings of their favorite artists. During the last decade, fan historians have developed a substantial online presence, often building wikis to document the histories both of their own communities and of the authors, film stars or musicians, movies, books, sports teams, or musical forms that they are engaged with (note 4). The predilection of fans to collect or reconstruct sites or artifacts that are important to their particular interests has often led them to build treasure troves that form rich testimonials to the history of material and popular culture.

[2.6] Academic historians have something else to offer fans. Historians are interested in the ways that communities develop over time. We study individuals' struggles for survival and their efforts at making more interesting, exciting, or satisfying lives for themselves, because we understand that these efforts can add up to or reflect transformative changes in the world. Thus, we can see not only how changes in the wider world changed fans' practices, but also how fans' actions helped change the world.

3. What professional historians offer to fan communities

[3.1] For the world is changing: I feel it in the water, I feel it in the earth.

—Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh, and Phillipa Boyens, The Fellowship of the Ring

[3.2] In a voice-over during the opening credits of the 2001 film The Fellowship of the Ring, elf princess Galadriel laments the changes she senses in the world, noting the rise of humans and the retreat of magic. And indeed, in the novels on which the Lord of the Rings films are based, the author reserves his most scathing condemnation for those, like the evil wizard Saruman, who turn to industrialized mass production (note 5). But although fans have long loved the idyllic, preindustrial world of Tolkien's elves, hobbits, and Ents, it was the very social, legal, and economic changes that Tolkien deplored that made the emergence of modern fandoms possible.

[3.3] Copyright is a good example. There is no such notion in Tolkien's Middle-earth: elves tell and retell their histories over centuries and aeons. The concept of an individual author who could create a literary text and lay sole claim to the right to reproduce it did not exist in the human cultures that first created the Iliad and the Arthurian legends (both of which include contributions from multiple authors), either.
The legal idea of copyright, and the broader body of intellectual property rights law that it belongs to, first emerged in the English-speaking world during the 18th century—the first British copyright law was passed in 1709—and an international agreement on copyright was only established in 1886 (Sherman and Bently 1999). The creation and enforcement of copyright was key to the development of novels as a literary form during the 18th and 19th centuries, since it meant that more people could now aspire to make a living by writing.

[3.4] Copyright law joined with a new understanding of an individual author or artist as a creative genius—especially among the early 19th-century Western European Romantics—to make possible the understanding that a particular text, song, or work of art could be owned. This was a precondition for the later opposition between fans and copyright holders, and between the "original" works, often called "canon" by fans, and fans' own interpretations and reworkings of these now-copyrighted forms of popular culture. If there were no single author-owner of a text, then the term "fan" wouldn't have much meaning, either, at least in many literary, musical, and artistic fandoms. Similarly, sports fandoms depend on the existence of professional teams—often with trademarked logos or names—which began to emerge during the late 19th century in many parts of the world (note 6). Fans could then begin to organize into communities during the early 20th century, united by their enthusiasm for (or sometimes by their opposition to) the author, artist, team, or band. "Fanon," the set of beliefs about a beloved object of fannish attention that are shared within a fannish community, could only form in opposition or contrast to canon (the original texts, art, music, or team that inspired the fandom). To use Walter Benjamin's analysis: the original was the work of art, and the fan works were the copies, and merely making the copies brought into question the original creator's ownership of (or authority over) the original.

[3.5] Intellectual property laws were only the first of a series of broader social changes that began around 1850 and laid the foundations for modern fan communities. Other prerequisites for modern fandoms included the growth in literacy rates that followed the spread of public education in the mid- and late 19th century in Western Europe and parts of North America, urbanization, a rapid decline (resulting from technological innovations and the opening of the New World forests) in the cost of papermaking and printing, the reduction or abolition of special taxes on newspapers and some other sorts of printed works, and the increasing ease and affordability of transportation in many parts of the world, so that publications could be mailed and national—even international—reading markets could develop.

[3.6] These changes underlay the explosive growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries of many kinds of cheap printed materials that became interesting reading for fans. Newspapers reported on events important to fans, especially those of sports and
films. Magazines did the same. Pulp fiction and genre fiction of all sorts was published in North America and Europe, and, after 1900, in many other parts of the world: detective stories and lurid "true-crime" periodicals; westerns; comics, which started in newspapers but soon escaped to form a genre of their own; sports journalism and novels dealing with polo, rugby, cricket, baseball, horse racing, and football; romances; and what became known as "weird fiction" during the early 20th century and developed into the genre of science fiction. Additionally, calendars contained chromolith printed illustrations, and music lovers collected sheet music.

[3.7] Migrations also set the stage for the emergence of global and local fandoms. In the 19th century, nation-states in Europe and the Americas created national cultures as part of the process of state formation, inventing and refining "traditions"—regional costumes like the Scottish kilt and the German *Tracht*, national holidays such as Thanksgiving in the United States—as a way to explain what it meant to belong to these societies. But this process was challenged by massive movements of people across borders and from rural to urban settings. Beginning in the second half of the 19th century and continuing into the present day, immigrants came to the New World from Europe and Asia, indigenous and African-descended people moved within and between the nations of the Americas, European colonialists entered and withdrew from large parts of Asia and Africa, and rural people all over the world moved to cities. All these people carried with them the ideas, memories, and material goods in which their cultures and identities lived.

[3.8] We can see conflicts between such traveling cultures and new local realities, and sometimes even resolutions of such conflict, in the ways that ordinary city dwellers responded collectively to mass media and made popular culture of their own. For example, the Portuguese-born singer Carmen Miranda rose to fame in Brazil in the early 1930s as the greatest singer of samba in its first decades as a recorded (and therefore national) art form: she made herself Brazilian by singing local music, while costuming herself as a local stereotypical and sexualized Afro-Brazilian food vendor. In Carmen Miranda's later career as a Hollywood icon of exoticism, she was rejected vehemently by most Brazilians; it was only after her death in 1955 that Brazilian fans claimed her as their own once again, turning her funeral procession in Rio de Janeiro into a celebratory parade. By returning Carmen Miranda to her status as a true Brazilian in such a public way, her fans claimed a cosmopolitan, urban Brazilian identity for themselves while rewriting the history of the most important local musical form. Carmen Miranda's career, and the ways in which her fans "repurposed" her image after her death, is a good case study full of interesting material for historians to study: how Hollywood used exotic "others" in popular culture, the commercialization of folk cultures by mass commercial media, and the nationalization of regional cultures.
by the Brazilian state; but also how Brazilian fans used her and the music she popularized to create new identities and to promote a globalized musical genre.

[3.9] More broadly, the global history of recorded popular music and its fans exemplifies the complexities of fan identification across racial, as well as national, boundaries. For example, rock music famously developed out of African-American forms rooted in the rural southern United States, but developed in the context of the African-American migration to the cities of the north. The cold war–era extension of US culture globally, through radio as well as tourism and, crucially, US military involvement around the world, created music fans who grew to understand the roots of this music in the southern United States. Such famous fans as British rockers from Mick Jagger through Elvis Costello ended up searching Memphis or New Orleans for "authentic" older African-American musicians with whom they could make music (sometimes while criticizing similar efforts by white US musicians as "inauthentic"). These wealthy white English men temporarily imagined themselves as working-class African Americans, an act full of cultural contradictions and political possibilities for music fans in the United Kingdom, the United States, and around the world.

[3.10] Cross-ethnic and cross-racial identification was not limited to music fans: in Germany, enthusiastic fans of Karl May and other German western novelists sometimes formed "cowboy and Indian" clubs, researching and crafting their own costumes and artifacts in order to reproduce the material culture of an (imagined) American West. Like the British rockers, German "cowboys and Indians" throughout the 20th century (under quite varied political regimes) went to enormous lengths to create an "authentic" experience, immersing themselves in ethnological collections and (when they could) getting advice or even training from Native Americans. The political possibilities, ironies, and contradictions were profound in this case, too, as (astonishingly, from some points of view) German "Indians" frequently saw themselves as possessing hard-earned cross-ethnic authenticity, which they could use in varied ways to challenge German political authorities (Reagin 2009a; Borries 2008).

[3.11] By 1900, large and enthusiastic audiences had developed for all these new forms of mass media and popular culture, and the preconditions were there for the emergence of organized fan communities, as the most deeply engaged fans began to seek each other out. Literary fandoms, like early science fiction fan groups and the fandom that organized around Sherlock Holmes stories, are probably among the best known today, but fan communities coalesced around other interests as well during the early 20th century, including music, dance, and sports. Literary fandoms' histories are probably the most interesting to those who seek to understand the origins and history of fan fiction, but academic historians do not restrict their interests only to literary fandoms. There were and are a huge variety of fandoms whose transformative
engagement with their objects of fannishness does not take the form of writing fiction or making visual art, but which have contested ownership of the canon and formed vibrant and mutually supportive communities around a variety of art forms and sports.

[3.12] It is at the point where individual enthusiasts become organized groups capable of participating in historical change that historians—even those who are not themselves fans and who previously paid little attention to audience reactions—should begin to pay some attention to fan communities.

4. What does studying the history of fans offer historians?

[4.1] Spock: Captain, I never will understand humans. How could a [historian] as brilliant, a mind as logical as John Gill's, have made such a fatal error?

Kirk: He drew the wrong conclusion from history.

—Star Trek, episode 2.21, "Patterns of Force"

[4.2] The historical study of mass media has been curiously atomized, in three ways. First, historians of modern media often write as though the particular phenomenon they study is limited to a single nation and a brief time period, even though ethnomusicologists, archeologists, art historians, anthropologists, and other scholars have repeatedly demonstrated how human cultural practices and material goods—including stories, sounds, and images—travel across centuries and between continents (note 7). For example, histories of cinema in Mexico generally ignore movies shown in Mexico but not made in Mexico, even though those frequently were the most popular movies in the country (note 8). Second, the ordinary practice of media historians has been to pick a single form of media and stick with it, even though literary critics, cinema studies specialists, art historians, and many other scholars have repeatedly demonstrated how ideas, imagery, sounds, and narratives are shared among many forms of media. Third, historians have tended to analyze audiences and consumers as though they exemplified historical processes unrelated to media. Thus buyers of pornographic lithographs in revolutionary Paris could be understood as politically engaged citizens mocking or protesting the decadent aristocracy, while 19th-century New York theatergoers throwing rotten vegetables at an unpopular actor and his fans could be seen as enacting rituals of popular nationalism (Hunt 1996; Levine 1990).

[4.3] Historians have worked this way for good reasons: limiting our topics enables us to deal with the vast quantity of documentary evidence generated by mass media and popular culture, and interpreting cultural events as political actions helps us show readers that these events have historical significance. These analyses were
groundbreaking and persuasive, but they can also sometimes obscure the understandings that audiences, consumers, and fans had of themselves: they make it easier to see such phenomena as the growth of revolutionary sentiment in Paris or the rise to consciousness of the New York City working class, but harder to understand groups of fans as communities in themselves with their own histories, and as participants in their own right in larger historical processes.

[4.4] Historians have delimited their studies of media in these ways because we are always limited by the sources we use, and we usually try to insert our research into those metanarratives that already exist in our fields. In addition, it can be difficult to uncover what audience members or fans themselves thought, while many sources document the ideas, emotions, and intentions of the producers of commercial entertainments. So historians have tended to concentrate on the topics for which the richest veins of evidence exist. Some of the existing historical scholarship on media and its audience is nonetheless wonderfully well researched, subtle in its interpretations, and profound in its implications. The history of music reception offers a particularly rich body of examples, including the reception of American jazz in interwar Europe, the history of swing music fans in the Soviet Union, and the rock-and-roll fans in both East and West Germany who took their inspiration from James Dean (note 9). But if historians were to study mass media and popular culture more holistically, and try to understand fans on their own terms, there is more we might gain.

[4.5] Walter Benjamin's 1935 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" describes what is at stake for historians and social critics as we try to make sense of a media-saturated world (Benjamin 2006). Benjamin wrote at a historical moment when silent film had achieved massive global popularity, while modernist music and painting—which used an aesthetic and ideology similar to those of the movies Benjamin admired—had not. He offered a hopeful and historically minded account of why this might be so. Benjamin wrote that, in an accelerating process that began in the early 18th century, new technologies such as lithography combined with the industrialization of papermaking and printing to make it possible for nearly anyone (at least in Europe) to buy persuasive copies of artworks. In response, European elites had invented the idea of the "original" artwork, from which a magical "aura" of authority could never be removed or transferred. As photography, color printing, and sound recording made copies ever more perfect—ushering in the era that Benjamin referred to as "the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"—the authority of the original artwork "withered." Avant-garde paintings, which retained their status as valuable, unique objects with an aura of authenticity and authority, failed to impress the masses; meanwhile, Charlie Chaplin's movies (which even at the time could be viewed as high art, but which, like all film, lacked the aura of the unique and uniquely
valuable object) achieved wild popularity even though they were no easier to understand than Picasso's paintings.

[4.6] This withering worried Benjamin, who respected the revolutionary intentions of some of the European avant-garde, but it also encouraged him. Chaplin's fans, he observed, might be seen as participating in dismantling a whole structure of ideas about property and power. That such participation would be a collective affair—undertaken by groups of enthusiasts—would naturally flow from the fact that, as Benjamin noted, mechanically reproduced mass commercial art was usually experienced in groups. Now large numbers of people shared similar experiences: they saw the identical film at the same time (or nearly), or danced to the same piece of popular music, or attended the same sporting matches, or read the same installments of a story that was being published serially in a popular magazine or newspaper.

[4.7] And that is why it makes sense for historians to study fan communities in themselves, as well as seeing fans as representative of other kinds of historical processes: the story of the changing relationship between fans and the objects and narratives they love helps to explain certain aspects of the modern world. Twentieth-century elites promulgated a large but limited set of entertainments, including apocalyptic movies, love songs on the radio, TV cop shows, and cheap paperback thrillers. And fans took those stories and made something else out of them. As they did so, intentionally or unintentionally they were also pushing back against the boundaries of their times, the constraints imposed by gender, race, class, culture, or politics: the articles in this special issue include several good case studies of such interactions. Intentionally or unintentionally, fans were building alternative societies to the ones they lived in. This has important implications for the study of other kinds of historical transformations and processes. For example, the articles in this volume touch on the involvement of fan communities in the rise of the New Woman in the 1920s, the renewed idealization of domesticity after World War II, and the politics of the cold war in Europe and the United States, as well as discussing how these broader changes affected fans of particular forms of popular culture. But fandoms matter in themselves, for their own sakes, as well.

[4.8] Disorganized groups of fans become visible to historians by the mid- to late 19th century, writing to favorite authors, cheering on performances of works by favorite composers, and collecting things. During the serialization of Charles Dickens's Bleak House in 1853, for example, the Illustrated London News observed that "What do you think of Bleak House?" is a question which everybody has heard propounded... [which] formed for its own season, as regular a portion of miscellaneous chat as 'How are you?'" (quoted in Hayward 1997, 31). By the late 19th century, fans were protesting developments they disliked, and sometimes letting the author know in no
uncertain terms: when Arthur Conan Doyle killed off Sherlock Holmes (whom he'd grown tired of writing) in 1893, pleading and abusive letters arrived at his publishers by the sackload, and fans badgered him for years to bring Holmes back (Booth 1997, 190).

[4.9] Networks of organized groups of fans first appeared in Europe and the United States during the 1920s and 1930s, exchanging letters and then forming clubs with complicated rules and—luckily for historians—detailed record-keeping. These groups were at first composed, by and large, of elite men. Spectator sports were a lowbrow pastime, but the first organized groups of sports fans were composed of local elites, as C. L. R. James recorded in his memoir of cricket in colonial and postcolonial Trinidad, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963). This had changed by the mid-20th century. Movies and recorded music attracted fans from many class locations—and from many geographical locations, as these were portable (and exportable) fandoms.

[4.10] Technological change in the 20th century shaped fan history—or, to put it better, fans were quicker than most groups of people to make creative intellectual use of new technologies. Over the course of the century, forms of mass media multiplied, media became ever more ubiquitous, costs declined, and, globally, literacy rates increased enough to make it possible for many more people to read comic books and follow movie subtitles. New technologies made it simpler for ordinary people to produce, edit, and distribute their own media narratives. Long before the Internet, fans used hobbyist photographic setups, telephones, film cameras, tape recorders, mimeograph machines, home movie cameras, industrial staplers, and other innovations to organize themselves and to make and distribute their own creative transformations of the media they loved (note 10). The advent of relatively cheap leisure travel and the infrastructure that supported it—and even the global dislocations of the world wars—set fans into motion on a broader scale after 1945, making it possible for them to meet more often in person, and even undertake fan pilgrimages, as well as corresponding by mail.

[4.11] Obviously none of this was a simple or linear process, nor did it take place in the same way in rich parts of the world as it did in poor ones. And we are talking here about, at first, only very small groups of people, widely dispersed. But around the world, throughout the 20th century and into the present day, people organized themselves to struggle to participate in mass media narratives, putting impressive amounts of energy and thought into increasing their control over their chosen hobbies—although these entertainments might be legally owned by foreign corporations, like Hollywood studios—and thus making more pleasure available to themselves and each other in their daily lives.
5. What academic history has to offer fan studies

[5.1] "Now," said Holmes, when the rejoicing lackey had disappeared, "having secured the future, we can afford to be more lenient with the past."

—A. Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Priory School"

[5.2] Much scholarship in fan studies has emphasized the importance of a single historical change: the advent of the Internet within some fandoms, starting in the early 1990s. But awareness of this recent history has not always resulted in an appreciation of the significance of other, much earlier social and economic developments for earlier fan communities and for popular culture as a whole (note 11). And while fan studies usually acknowledges the existence of science fiction fandom before the 1960s, other early literary fandoms are seldom mentioned (note 12). Moreover, fan studies has often—for understandable reasons—focused on fan communities that did specific kinds of transformative creative work. This sometimes narrow focus has led scholars to ignore well-organized fan communities that indeed contested cultural authority, especially if these originated outside of the United States and Western Europe.

[5.3] As a result, the novelty of modern fan communities is often overestimated in research that sometimes seems to assume that fandom began with Star Trek. The ways in which fans formed appreciative and mutually encouraging audiences for one another's creativity, the fact that fans often contended with the producers of commercial mass culture or copyright holders over the "moral ownership" of a particular canon, and the tendency of fans to offer their own interpretations and critiques of their objects of fandom: these patterns all were well established in a variety of fandoms well before World War II, as the articles in this issue, as well as other recent work on the history of fan communities, demonstrate.

[5.4] A more nuanced appreciation of the history of fan communities also offers the benefit of disrupting and usefully complicating what has been a simplified shared historical narrative within fan discussions. Many media fans trace the origins of their fandoms to groups organized around TV shows of the 1960s, like The Man from U.N.C.L.E. and Star Trek. These groups formed during the late 1960s and 1970s—some of their members had been active earlier in science fiction fandom—and much of their efforts went toward zine publication during this initial period. The watershed moment in their history—which inaugurated the Second Age of fandom—came with their transition to the Internet in the early 1990s (note 13). Fans' accounts and fan studies scholarship, then, have reinforced each other in acknowledging only these two time periods. While we agree that these two developments were important, they do
not constitute a complete history. If we fail to develop a more complex, careful, and detailed understanding of the past, we risk misinterpreting the present and underestimating the ways that fans have shaped the world.

6. Conclusion

[6.1] [Hermione] sighed, turning back to the books. "You know, I think I will take *Hogwarts, A History*. Even if we're not going back there [to Hogwarts, their magical boarding school], I don't think I'd feel right if I didn't have it with—"

—J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

[6.2] Research on the history of fans and the communities they built will be fruitful and interesting for many audiences. It will help fans to place their own groups' histories within a much broader historical framework, and will make clear the parallels with fandoms in other times and places, as well as the ways in which their own communities might be unique. It will help historians to appreciate the cultural phenomena they study more broadly, tracing the evolution of particular forms of entertainment across varying media forms, and better understanding fans without forcing them into ill-fitting interpretive frameworks. And it will usefully complicate the somewhat simplified historical narrative that often predominates in fan studies, as well as bringing to the fore the ways that global migration, cultural exchanges, and broader social change influenced the playing field upon which fandoms operated.

[6.3] Two of the articles in this special issue highlight this sort of cultural exchange in fine-grained case studies, showing how fans reinterpreted popular culture from abroad within their own social and historical contexts, claiming it as their own. Julia Sneeringer's research on early German rock-and-roll fans in Hamburg discusses how they repurposed commercial forms of entertainment offered to them, forming cross-class and transnational forms of generational solidarity in the process. Sneeringer's study is firmly situated within the context of cold war-era West Germany, as well, and shows how fans' actions are best understood when analyzed against their particular historical backdrops. Lisa Stead's study of female British fans of silent movies shows how they tried to engage in similar negotiations and alliances with those who produced or promoted the movies that they loved; these movie enthusiasts appreciated American models of gender and style, while still celebrating specifically English actresses whose performances and personal presentation they identified with more closely. Stead analyzes this fandom within the larger transnational history of the rise of the "New Woman." Both Stead and Sneeringer show how local fans attempted to "talk back" to local cultural authorities, defending their tastes and choices and
asserting a sort of moral ownership of their objects of fandom (movies and music, respectively).

[6.4] The article by Courtney Bates offers us a historical framework for fans' interactions with both the copyright holders and each other. Bates's work examines the fan letters sent to American author Willa Cather, making it clear that fan letters from this period need to be analyzed against other modes of reading and responding to texts that were popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Fan letters, she argues, became an attractive option for many readers because they assumed repeated readings and emotional responses to the text, and they ultimately developed into their own genre.

[6.5] Finally, two of these articles focus on ways that changes and continuities in gender have informed fans' experiences, and how fans' actions have responded to—and even challenged—gender ideologies. Stead's article argues that choosing a favorite movie star, as well as the nature and intensity of a fan's engagement with her favorite, was a way for some English women to choose among newer and older models of who an Englishwoman might be. John Williams and Stacey Pope use oral histories to examine the experiences of a group—female soccer fans in postwar England—who were almost erased in later work on English sports fans. In their article, we see some female fans making a claim to male prerogatives, while others used their activities as fans to reinforce their status as feminine caregivers. Both these articles belong to a strand of historiography that views women (and non-gender-compliant men) as surviving in patriarchal societies by building communities, reinventing themselves, and finding private escapes as readers and fans (see Russo 1987; Smith-Rosenberg 1975; Radway 1991; Laqueur 2004).

[6.6] These articles hint at what a research agenda that included historically grounded, fine-grained studies of transformative works and cultures might bring both to fan studies and to the history of popular culture. Such research might help fan studies to expand its focus beyond late 20th-century fandoms in the English-speaking world—where fans produced primarily literary transformative works—to examine fandoms in other linguistic and cultural contexts. Historically grounded case studies would also reveal the interactions among fandoms, since ideas, entertainments, and pastimes crossed national boundaries and were incorporated into the lives of people who often pursued more than one hobby or enthusiasm (note 14). Research conducted along those lines could also contribute greatly to our knowledge about the interactions between fan communities and what is called "Americanization" in some national histories and "cultural imperialism" in others: the importation and reworking of material goods, narratives, imagery, ideology, and other aspects of life and thought that originated in the United States.
Political struggles around popular culture and mass media characterized the cold war era. Some scholars and political activists feared that television, rock and roll, and especially comic books would corrupt impressionable youth, turning them into—depending on the political orientation of the person doing the worrying—capitalist automatons or morally weak communists (note 15). Meanwhile, many governments tried to strengthen national cultures by banning some forms of imported media and funding locally made equivalents.

Some fan communities engaged in these cold war–era battles by developing passionate attachments to hard-to-get material goods from far away—sometimes from the "other side" of the Iron Curtain—and others by showing wholehearted support for local sports teams or movie idols. Such support sometimes took complicated and ambiguous forms. In East Germany, passionate fans of Karl May's westerns convinced East German Communist authorities to allow them to dress up and do role-play as Native Americans by arguing that "Indians" were oppressed indigenous peoples, and that cowboys were upstanding members of the American rural proletariat; East German officials were frustrated by the US-centric nature of this fandom, but generally allowed members of the community to create costumes and do role play nonetheless.

In the United States, controversies among science fiction fans reflected cold war politics as well, particularly around the morality of and policy for the use of nuclear weapons, and paralleled the rise of the libertarian branch of the right wing in US politics. The popularity of Robert Heinlein and other libertarian science fiction writers during the 1950s is yet another example of how fan communities are always products of a particular time and place. As the cold war deescalated in the early 1970s, changing fannish identities intersected with the rise of identity politics in the United States. The controversies surrounding the increased visibility of female and gay and lesbian fans in science fiction was an early example of this trend; by the middle of the decade, tensions around racialized identities were all too visible in the split between fans of disco and fans of heavy metal music. In all these cases, communities of fans should be understood in the context of the cold war, to help us both understand fans better and make better sense out of the cold war.

And of course many other lines of inquiry suggest themselves as we start thinking historically about audiences, fans, fan works, and fan communities. We expect that interactions among historians, other scholars, and fans (and those who fall into more than one category) will inspire research that uncovers new sorts of evidence and helps us to ask new questions of those sources. We're confident that this work will offer fans a broader context for their own communities and can demonstrate that fan communities have always contributed to cultural and social change. Participatory culture is, in fact, a deeply rooted phenomenon—more than today's fans might realize.
—and historically grounded research can uncover how fans' participation helped shape the world we live in.

7. Notes

1. There have been several historical studies of fan communities and activities published in other contexts; the works cited in this introduction, we hope, will serve as a guide to some of the most interesting of these.


4. One of many examples is the substantial historical wiki built by Karl May fans at http://karlmay.agerth.de/wiki/index.php/Hauptseite. The Organization for Transformative Works has even built a wiki that seeks to preserve the history of a variety of fandoms, although this wiki excludes history of the canon itself and is generally focused on fandoms that center on "transformative works," which can be a problematic limitation. See http://fanlore.org/wiki/Main_Page.

5. J. R. R. Tolkien, though English, exemplified a way of thinking that was not uncommon among intellectuals in Canada and the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: a valorization of an imagined rural past combined with intense alienation from the industrialized urban present. Jackson Lears named this discourse "antimodernism" in No Place of Grace (1994, 194). See also McKay (2009). For a discussion of how this rejection of modernism and an ironic, playful embrace of a historically nostalgic world worked among Sherlockians, see Saler (2003).

6. There is a rich body of work on sports fans, although most of it has been done by sociologists, anthropologists, ethnologists, or cultural studies scholars and is thus usually focused on fairly recent developments. See Levi (2008), Magazine (2007), Archetti (1999), and Sandvoss (2003). For US baseball fans, see Dewey (2004), Seymour and Seymour (1989), and Tygiel (2001).

7. A good example of a study of the diffusion of one musical trend across cultures is Klein (2007). Since almost all of the work on transnational cultural exchanges has been done by anthropologists, ethnologists, and literary critics, it often focuses on recent events and does not put them into the context of social and economic changes in the early 20th century.
8. As one instance out of hundreds of this phenomenon, consider Emilio García Riera's magisterial *Breve historia del cine mexicano* (1999). In part, this is explained by the fact that, like all historians, cultural historians are sometimes so preoccupied with mastering the historiography and sources for one time and place that they feel unable to broaden their focus (and readings). But when addressing a topic like the history of fans and popular reception, which must be aware of global cultural exchanges, diffusion, and reworkings of transnational narratives, a limited focus can produce particularly uneven results.

9. Historical research on how fans used popular music (often originating in the United States) as a vehicle for rejection of constraints of gender and class, and of social and political norms in a broad sense, has been quite fruitful. Among many examples, see Poiger (2000), McDonough (2001), Starr (2004), Fenemore (2007), Modern Girl around the World Research Group (2008), Zolov (1999), McAnn (2004), and Dunn (2000).

10. See, for example, the self-descriptions of science fiction fans in Broyles (1961), which included information on what sorts of tape recorders some fans possessed, included presumably for the purposes of noting what sorts of tapes they could make (or receive) for filk or con reportage. Sherlockian enthusiasts began to make their own radio shows and phonograph recordings, and by the 1980s had moved on to making video retellings of favorite stories; Karl May fans in Nazi Germany were also filming short sequences of their favorite scenes in his westerns (see Reagin 2009a, 2009b).

11. As with all such generalizations, there are some excellent exceptions to this rule: see Fuller (1996), Kuhn (2002), Cavicchi (2007), and Hayward (1997).

12. An exception here is the work of Rebecca Pearson (1997, 2007); see also Brooker (2005). None of these is historically focused, but all offer excellent insights into literary fandoms that focus on older literary canons.

13. This periodization is used, for example, in Coppa (2006). While Coppa's essay offers a brief but accurate narrative (and is, after all, a short account of the recent history of only one branch of fandom), it is difficult to find work that goes beyond this periodization when discussing the broader history of fandoms.

14. For a typical example of how individuals might combine more than one fandom in their lives, see the epilogue to Flanery (1981), in which the author discusses how she and a friend produced SF zines and attended conventions together—but also belonged to a bowling league.

15. For campaigns against comic books and rock music around the world, see Beaty (2005), Barker (1992), Hadju (2009), Dorfman and Mattelart (1976), Poiger (2000),
8. Works cited


Abstract—Although literary scholars, including those who study American novelist Willa Cather, typically have drawn distinctions between real and professional readers, this article over turns the assumption that Cather's fan letters are merely the purview of common readers. Since both common and professional readers appear in her archive, I argue that the misplaced emphasis on who writes fan letters would be constructively replaced by treating fan letters as a genre used by many kinds of readers. Both professionals and nonprofessionals wrote fan letters to Cather and used its rhetorical methods, since it offered an attractive alternative to professional reading modes popularized by English departments of the 1890s and magazine discourse of the first quarter of the twentieth century. The fan letters create an author-reader relationship based on repeated readings and affective responses to the text as well as personal familiarity with its locations and characters. Moreover, I argue that the letters in Cather's archive are not a random sampling but are the letters that she preserved, enjoyed, and encouraged. Within the period's fraught debates about the purpose and nature of literature and the qualifications needed to interpret and judge it, the fan letter exchange creates a more detailed understanding of Cather's relationship with her audience—what reading methods she sought and preferred over others.

Keywords—Common reader; Fan mail; Professional reader

1. Introduction

"I am confessedly a Willa Cather fan," begins Dorothy Canfield Fisher's 1932 Book-of-the-Month Club (BOMC) review of Obscure Destinies, a collection of short stories by American writer Willa Cather (quoted in Madigan 2007, 77). Today Cather is perhaps best known for A Lost Lady (1923), The Professor's House (1925), and Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927), as well as O Pioneers! (1913) and My Antonia (1918), which are regularly taught in high schools and universities. During their lives, Canfield was Cather's friend, correspondent, and roughly her professional equal. And while Cather has achieved an iconic status that Canfield lacks, each had widely published short stories and nonfiction works and both were best-selling authors.
Canfield's works included *The Brimming Cup* (1921) and *The Home-Maker* (1925). Cather's best-selling work included her World War I novel *One of Ours*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1923, and *Shadows on the Rock*, which was published in 1931—the same year she appeared on *Time* magazine's cover (Woodress 1987, 433). While Cather might have had more standing as a major American author, Canfield was also recognized as an educational reform activist and a literary critic with national voice in the BOMC. As a judge for the Club, Canfield certainly had the authority to declare or profess her support for Cather. She might have also reviewed Cather from the position of a fellow author or friend. Yet she positions herself in a confessional and intimate position, implying that she imagines recommendations are felt more strongly when they come from a fan.

[1.2] This article focuses primarily on unpublished announcements of fandom found in the 54 fan letters sent to and saved by Cather, which are held by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) Special Collections and which have received little scholarly attention.

[1.3] Nevertheless, I begin with Canfield's statement because it helps me extend the work of fan studies scholars like Henry Jenkins and Matt Hills, who describe the subject-position of the acafan, which blurs the distinctions previously made between the academic and the fan. Today's literary scholars often draw a sharp distinction between common readers, usually located in private diaries, letters, and book marginalia, and professional readers such as university academics and magazine reviewers, who had public platforms for publishing their trained and influential opinions. I would like to use Jenkins's and Hills's momentum to challenge that division. Unlike many current scholars, Cather recognized the flexibility of the two categories when she asked Canfield to critique a draft of her World War I novel *One of Ours* by "read[ing] simply as the general reader might, in order to spot errors or false notes" (Stout 2007, 36). Canfield likely would have appreciated such directions since she also corresponded with her own fans throughout her career. Jennifer Parchesky's "'You Make Us Articulate': Reading, Education, and Community in Dorothy Canfield's Middlebrow America" offers a thoughtful analysis of Canfield's fan letters. Parchesky briefly acknowledges that fan letters were "a genre of amateur writing that was widely accepted and even conventionalized" (2002, 232), and even notes that Canfield's archive contains "admiring letters from publishers, editors, critics, professionals, and other writers [who] use much the same enthusiastic rhetoric as those from Canfield's other fans." Yet Parchesky mostly uses fan letters as a reflection of a developing third mode of reading, neither high- nor lowbrow but belonging to an emergent middle class' reading values, which emphasize reading as a project of lifelong learning. Parchesky focuses on readers' attitudes toward reading as reflected in the letters, in
which they see themselves as an important cultural middle ground between the entertainment-focused masses and the pretentious literary elite.

[1.4] The existing single-author studies of fan letters grapple with the idiosyncratic nature of the available archives, including what the author or publishing house intentionally saved while acknowledging what might have also been lost. No single-author study can illustrate every available trend or mode within the genre of fan letters, but the scholars who have studied these collections offer compelling arguments for the ways in which single authors can also illuminate the wider period and authorial context. In addition to Parchesky's work on Canfield, Reading Acts: U.S. Reader's Interactions with Literature, 1800–1850 (2002) includes Barbara Ryan's "A Real Basis from Which to Judge': Fan Mail to Gene Stratton-Porter," which demonstrates how the nature writer and her daughter resisted professional reviewers by respectively saving and republishing her letters from common readers. Continuing Parchesky's exploration of middlebrow readers, Amy Blair's "Main Street Reading Main Street" (2007) explores the fan letters of Sinclair Lewis, suggesting that many readers short-circuited reviewers' analyses of the novel as a critique of small-town life by instead identifying with the characters and town. Scott Sandage's "The Gaze of Success: Failed Men and the Sentimental Marketplace, 1873–1893" (1999) explores the "begging letters," which we might consider a subgenre of fan letters, sent to John D. Rockefeller. Scholars of British modernism Anna Snaith (2000) and Melba Cuddy-Keane (2005) each offer analysis of the fan letters of Virginia Woolf.

[1.5] My own project, however, focuses on the fan letter itself as a platform appropriated by many kinds of readers who are attracted to its practices, discourse, and the possibility of a more personalized reader-author relationship. This article will demonstrate that although the methods of reading and readerly values of fan letters were at odds with professional approaches taught at the time, this difference made the format attractive to professionals, nonprofessionals, and Cather herself. The letters sent to Cather reveal an alternative mode of reading equally approachable and attractive enough for both groups. In some cases, such as Canfield's review, professionals appropriate the methods of fan letters when its rhetoric promises to engage or persuade the reading public. At other times, professionals, whom we would imagine as having some degree of satisfying cultural influence, supplement that position by corresponding with authors in private fan mail. Fan letters offer a specific, gratifying mode of reading and authorial interaction unavailable elsewhere.

[1.6] To be sure, individuals that we might consider common, nonprofessional readers appear in Cather's archive, whether self-identified as soldier, nurse, mother, or lawyer. Professionals—teacher, professor, published author—write her as well. Rather than merely acknowledging that Cather's archive holds letters from a mixed
company of individuals, I argue that we should attribute her varied readership to the attractions of fan letter discourse. By this time, the conventions of fan letter discourse were relatively well established. Educators often assigned students the task of writing fan letters as a way to practice their letter-writing skills and learn lessons of moral value from worthy public or published figures (Ryan 2002, 169; Parchesky 2002, 253). Fans often declare themselves as fans in the opening lines of their letters. The announcement takes many forms, such as imagining that a letter by such an appreciative stranger would be perceived as a welcome pleasure or, as in Annie Kimball's letter, a "trespass on the time of a busy author, even in the form of 'bouquets and thanks' for literary pleasure enjoyed" (Slote Collection).

[1.7] Although professional and common readers often used the format and rhetoric of fan letters, contemporary scholars set the two in opposition with one another. In her essay "Becoming Noncanonical: The Case against Willa Cather" (1989), Sharon O'Brien argues that fan letters promoted an alternative reader relationship, which concludes as a zero-sum game between common and professional readers (note 1). She contends that Cather treated fan letters as "evidence that the reader/writer relationship could resemble the private bonds of affection and friendship; her letters from readers doubtless helped her to keep writing by offsetting the criticism of her professional readers" (253–54). At the time she wrote her article, O'Brien did not have the benefit of reading the actual archival letters, but only had brief quotations as they appear in the memoir Willa Cather Living, written by Edith Lewis (1953), Cather's partner and literary executor. More recently, Charles Johanningsmeier (2010) has called for a historicized analysis of Cather's readers by offering two possible interpretive experiences based on whether a reader encountered Cather's The Professor's House as a widely circulated, serialized novel in Collier's or a finely printed book. He suggests that "the physical form of Collier's encouraged its reader to read its contents quickly...they expected fictions in the magazine to provide easy entertainment," whereas the book form would appeal to more formally trained readers. Those readers, more sympathetic to the main character of the professor, would exhibit a willingness for "extended perusal" and "arduous exercises in literary interpretation" (92). Yet as we will see, the letters Cather chose to keep and her preferred reading practices eschew both the disposable and exegete reading methods that Johanningsmeier attributes to each form.

[1.8] Cather's exchange of letters with her readers should be attributed to more than an ego-driven expression of mutual admiration; both reader and author have complex reasons for engaging with each other. For fans, the attraction may seem obvious, since the platform allowed readers personalized, direct contact with an admired author. Despite readers' assertions that their experience of the text was somehow complete, emotionally or aesthetically, the fan letter reveals the desire to supplement
that experience. Readers mitigate their own sense of anonymity by writing back to the author their own story—the fan letter is an attempt to make the author inhabit the reader's space and experience. Fan letters can assuage the disconcerting contradiction that readers are both deeply familiar with and also unknown to their favorite authors. The subsequent reply allows readers to test the reality of their connection with an author and possibly reassure them they had read the text rightly. Yet Cather herself valued the experience, as seen in her career-long engagement with readers. For Cather, fan letters created an individuated author-reader relationship and supplied criteria for evaluation based on the knowledge available to a general reader: their emotional responses and familiarity with scenes that Cather describes and their devoted, repeated readings of her texts. Further, she used them to confirm her writings had elicited emotional response from her readers, since Cather preferred estimating the value of a work based on its emotional impact rather than a more formal assessment of its craft. In some cases, they facilitated Cather's enjoyment of a kind of writing-back, in which fans gave her the chance to return imaginatively to places that she had written about or hear more about subjects that she had depicted.

[1.9] Though it is impossible to get an exact count of Cather's reader correspondence, she received hundreds if not thousands of fan letters. Lewis noted that a "flood of letters...poured in to her" (1953, 187). Cather took steps to moderate the deluge (publishing open letters, creating biographical pamphlets for her editor to distribute, hiring a secretary to screen her incoming mail), but she nonetheless devoted a great deal of time to replying to her fans. Cather began replying as early as 1913, though the existing correspondence suggests that the volume of mail dramatically increased after the publication of *One of Ours* in 1922. She often replied to readers in the military, noting to her editor Ferris Greenslet in 1945 that she had "so many letters from soldiers that they became emotionally wearing" (Cather 2007, 1693). Janis Stout's *A Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather* includes summaries of over 50 surviving letters in which Cather seems to be replying to fans. As we will see, Cather thought of such correspondence as expressly private and disallowed readers' requests to publish her replies. This refusal has its reciprocal for today's scholars: current Cather scholars struggle with a continued inability to quote directly from any of her personal correspondence, which she prohibited in her will. In this article, the third-person paraphrases of Cather's private letters, made available more broadly by *Calendar of Letters*, must substitute for direct quotations from her private letters (note 2).

[1.10] These fan letters are not a random sampling of the letters from readers that Cather received, although it is important to acknowledge some of the mystery of how these letters survived after Cather's death. Rather, Cather enjoyed these kinds of letters enough to preserve them during her life. In a short response to a request from
1922, she wrote, "Sorry she is not at home and can't provide letters from ordinary readers," indicating that she saved mail from those she considered general readers (Jewell and Stout 2007, 0611). Her guidelines were clear cut, as suggested by an answer to a fan in 1931: "Out of many fan letters, it is easy to recognize one of substance" (Jewell and Stout, 1033). Though we do not have the specific directions that Cather gave to her secretary Sarah Bloom, Bloom sorted through and forwarded certain letters, which suggests they shared an understanding of the fan letters Cather considered worthwhile. Though Lewis writes that Cather tried to answer all letters herself and only used Bloom for "the routine part of her correspondence," it seems Bloom's task was to actually pick which letters would interest Cather and then forward them on to her (1953, 188). She writes to Charles McAllister Wilcox, for example, that she is "glad [her] secretary sent his letter on to her" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 1067). When Lewis composed her memoirs of Cather, she excerpted from several readers' letters, showing that they were important documents available to Lewis, perhaps set aside by Cather herself as instances of exemplary reading. Of the 12 favorite letters Lewis used in her memoir, half are excerpts from letters in the current UNL archives (Lewis 1953, 122).

[1.11] Cather certainly received a number of negative letters; some she forwarded to friends and family to illustrate and decry their offensive nature. One reply indicated that she occasionally answered such notes, as she wrote in 1924 to a Mr. Miller: "Sorry he is irritated by her writing, but he will go on being irritated. Does not agree with his standard of judgment. Writes to please herself. Reason she took the male point of view in Antonia was certainly not to try to sound like a man" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 0750). Evidently Cather did not preserve negative letters, and they do not appear in the UNL archives. Although after the publication of One of Ours (the book most represented in the UNL archive) Cather complained to a friend that she "keeps getting accusing letters from pacifists who think the book extols war," no such opinion is preserved in those fan letters (Jewell and Stout 2007, 0620). Largely it seems she ignored and discarded negative letters. Each surviving letter in the UNL archive testifies to the readers' enjoyment of Cather's works, whether written as long panegyrics or in a few, appreciative sentences.

2. Not "dry-as-dust" professors but the warmth of readers

[2.1] In the 1890s, Cather's college coursework at the University of Nebraska in English and composition exposed her to the first professional mode that she rejected—philology, which replaced an emotional response to the text with an objective study of minute linguistic patterns. This relatively new, scientific approach to language focused on the analysis of single sounds, words, and grammatical construction, along with historical facts such as bibliography, sources, and translation (Graff 1987, 39). Using
these formalized methods of a developing discipline, English departments distanced their own academic methods of reading from the evaluative "criticism of taste" written by reviewers airing their refined literary opinions in print (Shumway 1994, 108). Cather's experience led her to conclude in a letter to a friend, "she had decided she could never be a scholar, that she was not meant for that" (Lewis 1953, 32). Cather felt, according to Lewis, that such elaborate, even mathematical textual analysis "reduced all that was great in literature, the noblest flights of the human spirit, to dry-as-dust, arbitrary formulae" (1953, 34). The vestiges of philological methods—and Cather's aversion for it—remained after it fell out of wider academic fashion in the following century. For example, in a 1928 letter to Burgess Johnson, an English professor of whom she seemed to approve, Cather derided this larger tendency: "Most English teachers have never actually written a thing and think being scholarly means avoiding any taint of common sense. One critic makes a big point of the broad a sounds in female names in her books. Could quote others equally foolish" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 0933).

[2.2] Her antipathy toward academic habits would reappear in her admission that she "mostly sends a form letter to students and to English teachers" in reply to their letters, a particularly canny response to those who appear to build their career around "arbitrary formulae" of literary analysis (Jewell and Stout 2007, 1490).

[2.3] Those instructors and students deserved such treatment, according to Cather, since they also had the distasteful habit of explaining a text through outside information. Her comment in "On Death Comes for the Archbishop" that "it is foolish convention that we must have everything interpreted for us in written language" seems to also apply to the aversion she felt toward the English instructors' role of exegete (1949, 6). At a time when Cather was arguing that great literature could speak directly to the reader, other authors, critics, and publishers were making the case that highbrow literature could only be approached with the help of another trained individual who had a grasp of the text's technique (Travis 1998, 26). Cather resisted the assumption that readers needed special training to enjoy a text; replying to one fan, Mr. Phillipson, she asserted that it was "not a disaster to miss out on a college education" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 1539).

[2.4] Rather than elite interpretive training, Cather and her selected fans based their readerly authority on descriptions of emotive response to a text. Cather said in a 1925 interview, "A writer's own interest in a story is the essential thing. If there is a flash of warmth in him it is repeated in the reader. The emotion is bigger than style...An artist has an emotion, and the first thing that he wants to do with it is to find some form to put it in, a design" (Cather 1986a, 78). Cather's confirmation that she has gotten to the essential thing depends on its reception and reflection by readers. For some fans,
the signs of their visceral responses evince their careful reading. Elmer Ellsworth wrote, "I turned the last page [of One of Ours] several hours ago, but my throat still dully aches—choked by all the things which 'Claude's' simple story has made me feel" (Southwick Collection). Sallie Neve wrote of Death Comes for the Archbishop, "I shed many tears of course—who wouldn't—but best of all I caught the spirit of courage from brave Father Joseph Vaillant and a new peace with God from Dear Bishop Latour. Never have I read a more beautiful story and one which left so lasting an impression on me" (Macdonald in Southwick Collection). Langston Hughes, whose literary star had been secured in the firmament in the 1920s during the Harlem Renaissance, certainly could have found an audience for a published review of Cather's novel on a slave-holding family and one slave's ultimate escape to Canada. Instead, he sent a private, single-sentence letter. He, too, uses the rhetoric of emotional sensitivity: "Thank you for your moving and beautiful book of 'Sapphira and the Slave Girl,' and for the sympathy with which you have treated my people" (Southwick Collection, photocopy, figure 1). While these fans may write at varying lengths and with differing methods of illustrating their relationship to the text, their consistent description of their emotional response assures Cather that the mark she aimed for had been struck.

Figure 1. Hughes’s letter to Cather dated March 21, 1941. Hughes, himself a recipient of fan letters that are now held in at Yale’s Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, must have understood the attractions of the genre both as a receiver and author of fan letters. [View larger image.]
3. Not how-to but "how do you..."

[3.1] Although fans undoubtedly found direct contact with an author enticing, Cather's expectations for her readers—and their methods as reflected in the fan letters—showcased the importance of reading obliquely. In Not Under Forty, Cather says about the reading experience and artistic creation: "Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there—that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel" (1939, 50). Long before 1936, when Cather would write the preceding in "The Novel Demeuble," Cather's fans suggested that they listened for this impression while reading. Further, the rhetoric they use to describe its detection is often as indirect as "the thing not named" in the novel. Fans often describe their vigorous effort to see a pattern in the prose through analogy rather than a clear explanation of the craft itself. Using the metaphor of a "rare piece of lace woven with an intricate design," Robert Raines wrote to Cather in 1922 about One of Ours, calling its pattern "more discernable to some than others—each according to his appreciation and understanding" (Southwick Collection, figure 2). In the same year, Coleman McCampbell would describe Cather's writerly voice using the metaphor of "a buoy held under water—restrained but exerting a constant pull" (Southwick Collection). In the same gesture, the readers affirm their closeness to Cather, praise her writing, and assert their own discernment of the text's meaning without risking or compromising it.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

**Figure 2.** Although Robert Raines's 1921 letter to Cather uses a typical greeting, "My Dear Miss Cather," other readers' salutations were more formal. The published fan letters addressed to S. S. McClure in "Letters about My Autobiography" (McClure's, June 1914) demonstrate that readers addressed men in the same range of manner. [View larger image.]

[3.2] While some fans used the indirectness of analogies to praise rather than explain their own reading of Cather's work, many others expressed the challenge faced by any attempt to articulate the impact of her work by showcasing their own linguistic
limitations. Suzanne Chapin likened herself to a character at the outset of her letter, "I don't know how to express myself—I feel like Claude after his talk with Mademoiselle de Courcy" (Southwick Collection). Coleman McCampbell wrote that he "can't shout the usual words of extravagant praise like 'extraordinary,' 'remarkable,' 'revelation,' 'masterpiece,' 'superb'—for they fall flat and colorless" next to her book, much like the understatement of "isn't it wonderful?" when applied to the Grand Canyon (Southwick Collection). A former soldier said he "cannot express the emotions which you have aroused" from his days of camaraderie (Southwick Collection). They depict their emotional response to Cather's written word as so profound that it limits their ability to speak to her. This failure of self-expression actually demonstrates their emotional sensitivity and apprehension. The frequent expression of deep emotional resonance and the humble gesture of their own writerly lack suggests that these are features that Cather thought worthy of collecting.

[3.3] The fans' habit of offering praise as an inability-to-say occurs within another emerging professionalization: the composition and the creative writing teacher, each of whom proposed to teach individuals how to become articulate authors (note 3). After the turn of the century, the academic vogue of philology declined as English departments recognized a limited need for trained philologists. Instead, they shifted to the larger task of educating a growing professional-managerial class, who required specialized writing skills required for their jobs (Shumway 1994, 101). Between 1900 and 1925, and concomitant with this utilitarian trend, was the growing instruction of creative writing, which focused on self-expression rather than journalistic skills (Myers 1996, 61). Such creative writing courses were available in the classroom, correspondence courses, and by self-taught instruction; the rise of the magazine industry at the time encouraged many to imagine themselves as potential contributors if they could master a short-story formula (Myer 1996, 67–68). Thus, like the dry-as-dust formulas of the philologists, the creative writing books and courses had their own how-to idiom describing the winning techniques required for publication (Myers 1996, 69).

[3.4] In 1922, Cather experimented with creative writing instruction at the three-week Bread Loaf Summer Writer's Conference. Though her letters indicate that "People at Bread Loaf were very friendly" and that she "enjoyed her three weeks at Bread Loaf," she refused invitations for a second visit for the rest of her career (Stout 2007, 93). Creative writing instruction, which treated writing as a quickly learned practice, contradicted Cather's idea of slowly developing an individual's inherent artistry. Nonetheless, some readers wrote to Cather asking for writing advice, a request she found annoying. She wrote succinctly to Henry Chester Tracy in 1922 that she could not "give him any advice on how to write a story except to wait until he feels compelled by his material" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 0606). In 1934, likely after many
more such requests, she replied irritably that she was "Too tired of answering questions from men writing books on creative writing to answer his. Silly to try to teach it anyway. People should be taught to write clear, correct English and let creative writing take care of itself" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 1243). The movement toward creative writing instruction was the latest iteration of such taxing requests. As managing editor for McClure's from 1906 to 1911, Cather also had reviewed poorly written manuscript submissions and answered inquiries for writing advice, tasks she found enervating (note 4). When corresponding with her own readers, she continued to avoid letters that echoed the magazine grind and threatened to slip into the public sphere via textbooks or other forms of circulated advice (Woodress 1987, 203). Cather evaded both the academic asking her to interpret her own work and the composition teacher, student, or aspirant asking her to explain her own techniques.

[3.5] By the 1920s, Cather's career was no longer boosted by reviewers as an excellent example of local color writing. Concomitant with the concern of technique in creative writing was the call among literary reviewers for technical experimentation (Acocella 2000, 22). Cather refuted such priorities in a speech given at Bowdoin College in 1925: "There is much talk in the critical magazines and in colleges about the technique of the novel. I never hear the talk among writers. Sometimes I think it is something the critics invented for the sake of argument" (Cather 1986b, 155). Within the fan letters, a space outside colleges and magazines, this concern for technique is secondary. For example, Stanley Weiser wrote in 1926, "There is no one whose technique I admire more, Miss Cather [than yours,] but to feel that technique is of more worth than Claude is to feel that theology is greater than God" (Southwick Collection). When fans acknowledge that her expressive ability exceeds their own, they may offer Cather sense of security for her own position as author at a time when competition among publishing authors was growing. I imagine one of the most satisfying letters in light of this concern must have been that of Calvin Lewis, an English composition teacher at Hamilton College. Though he used Cather as a model in the classroom, he acknowledged that his students can become good writers only "if they have enough natural ability and determination to begin with" (Southwick Collection). He detailed which of Cather's techniques he encourages his students to try—an unintrusive narrator, vivid details paired with concise description—yet he recognized something ungraspable beyond craftsmanship. "How do you..." becomes a refrain used five times throughout the letter, concluding: "How you manage to make everything seem as if you had a hand in it is beyond my ken. How do you do it?" (figure 3). One who might have positioned himself as an academic interpreter instead becomes a fan expressing his awe.
Figure 3. Calvin Lewis's 1922 letter to Cather balances the formal properties of professor, a typed document on university letterhead, with the more personal, handwritten note, "Will my poor eyes excuse the machine made letter?" The mention of her lectures at Bread Loaf suggest that he may have seen her—even met her—at the conference, but the mode of the letter suggests he is more comfortable approaching her as a fan than an acquaintance. [View larger image (1).] [View larger image (2).]
4. A timeless rather than timely or momentary reader

[4.1] Although several letters mention Cather's critical reception by reviewers, one pair of letters from James Magee offers a telling glimpse of how she responded to fans who wished to discuss her public treatment by critics. In 1940, Magee wrote that he was spurred to contact Cather after reading a review of Cather's Shadows on the Rock, since it suggested what he called the first word of "even near-criticism" of what he considered one of her "loveliest books" (Slote Papers). How did Cather reply to the fan's understanding of the critic's response? She didn't. Magee began his second letter to Cather by showing his initial puzzlement at her answer: "In your letter you did not comment on that review in the New York Times Book Review which I did not like very much. That was the occasion for my letter to you." Since Cather had been silent, he went on to supply some of his own ideas as to why the review received no comment, "You probably take things in their stride and were not too disturbed. For that matter I guess it was not awfully uncomplimentary" (Slote Papers). In the 34 letters that can safely be assumed to be replies to fans, Cather does not once mention any critical review of her work. She willingly discusses what parts of her writing have nonfiction counterparts, or comments on authors she also enjoys reading, but nothing suggests that Cather engaged with her fans in a discussion of her critical reception. Since Cather did write to family and friends about such reviews, this pattern seems to support O'Brien's claim that these fan letters were a place apart from the professional conversations and estimations.

[4.2] Instead of the timely estimates of published reviews, readers' letters more often emphasize their evaluation of Cather's work based on a longer history and connection with the work. In over 25 letters from the archives, fans use firsthand knowledge to judge positively Cather's authorial skill. As Wendell Beiser wrote, "As one who served in France as well as a book lover I want to thank you for your truthful account of things as they really were in France" (Southwick Collection). Several Catholic ministers wrote to Cather because of their connection to the location and historical antecedents to the characters of Death Comes for the Archbishop, stating that Cather had "drawn a picture which in beauty and accuracy has seldom been excelled" (Malone Kurth Collection). These readers base their credibility as critics not on their formal training but on the experiential resonance they feel—if Cather wanted proof that her texts were favorably received and read in what she considered the right manner, these are the letters that do so.

[4.3] More than just validating the accuracy of Cather's work, some of these fans relate their own story of a location or event on which Cather had written. Perhaps the saddest is from Kirk Bryan, the soldier who wrote of his emotional recognition of his days in the service while reading One of Ours. Like Cather's character Claude, Bryan
shipped out by rail. In *Willa Cather Living*, Lewis quotes his exhilaration at the outset of his service, which also uses the emotive rhetoric of self-recognition that exceeds his expressive powers: "I cannot express the emotions you have aroused—I have not felt them since I went through Hoboken in a troop train" (1953, 123). Yet the remainder of the letter, which Lewis does not include but can be found in its entirety in the original letter in the archive, is fraught with frustration, and offers a vision what might have happened if Claude had lived to return home:

[4.4] Now what has our effort gained? That we the fighting men of a great nation should find the "Baylisses" are great and powerful. We do not envy them their power. We did not, do not want anything for ourselves, but they bunk the people and they bunk us. This seems to be the great land of bunk. Even our buddies are lead astray by the bonus bunk...Those who died in action are lucky.

[4.5] Other examples are largely a happier continuation of Cather's texts. The nephew of Annie Adams Fields, a social center of the literary scene in Boston, wrote to Cather after reading her description of Fields in her essay "148 Charles Street" in *Not Under Forty*. He not only thanked her for capturing his deceased relation so clearly but also shared some of his own memories (Kurth Collection). He combined original quotations by Cather with his own: "The 'short laugh from that same fragile force' which could possibly do 'police duty' was so very characteristic, particularly when there had been something said which offended what Miss [Sarah Orne] Jewett used to call the 'May' grandmother inheritance." In this way, Cather's story is echoed back to her as something new even while such a credible source confirms the veracity of her description.

[4.6] Although fans may not offer an academic's close reading, they show that they attend to fine details. Janet Masterton, for example, opened her letter by saying "This is the story of a clause [that appears in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*]—'beyond that was Rommey, where people of some account lived'" (Kurth Collection). A six-page handwritten letter follows, detailing a trip she took to Virginia that was inspired by several readings of the novel. She describes for Cather the changes that have occurred to its buildings, streets, and current residents. Like the inability-to-say gesture, she closed her relation of the trip by remarking, "I don't think it is necessary for me to tell you how much I enjoy your books—this letter speaks for me."

[4.7] Cather's reply to Masterson is effervescent, describing her letter as "marvelous, with a true sense of personality. People have been traveling to Quebec by *Shadows on the Rock* and New Mexico by *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and now Virginia by *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Hasn't been back since completing it, or to Quebec since
Shadows or New Mexico since Archbishop. Loses a place once she writes about it" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 1662).

[4.8] These fan letters offer more than just the pleasure of knowing that people have been inspired to travel to or remember a location Cather has written about. Instead, they allow Cather a method of recovering those places, too, by hearing about them through her readers. In 1932, she wrote to a fan in Nebraska that she "doesn't answer all the letters she gets, but enjoyed Mrs. Carstens's [so much that she is replying, since her letter is] almost like a visit home" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 1133). As an alternative to professional formulas for writing, these letters are lived histories of the fans. Together, author and fan exchange the emotional resonance of a place and moment. Thus, Cather reads some of her fan letters for the same reason that readers enjoy Cather's works—she too is looking for an opportunity to connect to a place through an evocative depiction of it.

[4.9] Cather announced a special antipathy for disposable reading, stating in her 1925 Bowdoin speech that the current state of the novel had "resolved into human convenience to be bought and thrown away at the end of a journey" (Cather 1989, 155). Cather's deep involvement in the production of her books demonstrates their importance to her as objects and the ways she attempted to orchestrate readers' relationships with the text through its physical features. She selected not only illustrations and cover design but also the finer details such as page format, paper quality, and ink color; she believed that the form of the book should correspond to its mood and thus she directed its creation accordingly (Rosowski 1992, ix). In her collection of fan letters, then, Cather preferred those that exhibit reading habits that reject the prominent quick-read for a long-term relationship with the text. The letters that Cather kept frequently demonstrate how readers treated her books as objects worthy of repeated enjoyment and special treatment. One spectacular example of rereading appears in a fan letter by British Officer George Bullock, stationed in Borneo—the same one Edith Lewis excerpts from in her memoir on Cather. Lewis shares the following from his letter: "if I have read [Death Comes for the Archbishop] once I must have read it a hundred times" as one of the single texts he has to read at his station (1953, 187). Fans describe well-used books to substantiate their claims of careful reading. Cather must have been particularly satisfied when Bullock wrote that his copy "has reached a state when it can no longer be described as other than a tattered remnant of its former self, but, although I shall certainly buy another copy for my small library it will never be discarded" (Slote Papers).

[4.10] In a second example of using readers' reception as a criterion for professional judgment, Dorothy Canfield supported her promotion of My Antonia for the BOMC's April 1929 selection for "Outstanding Older Book" by describing physical evidence of
repeated reading. She describes routinely looking in public libraries for copies of *My Antonia*; the results of her investigation have been so consistent that "by this time I know beforehand that it will bear witness to long and hard use" and that its "worn and shabby [aspect demonstrates the] lasting love of our people for that beautiful book" (quoted in Madigan 2007, 10). Canfield suggests that when readers recognize the book's value through a library copy, they should buy a copy of their own for continued use as devotional object: "The next step should be to move it from the public library shelf to the home shelf, to see it in every American's house as the stuff of Life." Often Cather's fans use just such stories to demonstrate their connection with Cather's works. Harriet McKibben, who most often read copies from the library, mentioned that she bought her own copy of her favorite, *One of Ours*, "this Christmas as a present to myself. I am reading it for the second time" (Southwick Collection). Stanley Weiser, a fan who wrote to Cather twice, said in 1922 that he was so displeased with Edmund Wilson's review of *One of Ours* that he purchased a second copy: "I decided I must have one of Knopf's special editions if there were any to be had. I forthwith went over my bank account and I am now the proud possessor of number 307" (Southwick Collection). His countermeasures suggest that he imagines using these devoted and private reading practices in opposition to public and critical professional reading methods.

[4.11] As I have shown, professionals poached fan letter methods when they promised to be effective, whether they offered the personal satisfaction of a private letter or seemed a good public stratagem for enticing a purchase. At the same time, Cather's preference for fan-letter-like relations also informed her professional choices. Cather's decision to move from publisher Houghton Mifflin to Knopf is described by Erika Hamilton in "Advertising Cather during the Transition Years (1914–1922)" (2007). Hamilton demonstrates that Cather selected Knopf for many reasons but foremost because she preferred his advertising methods. Knopf's book advertisements often used direct quotations of warm praise, as opposed to Houghton Mifflin's distanced and "academic" phrasing. Hamilton argues that "Cather wanted advertisements to exude sincere enthusiasm and excitement" rather than "impressive formality...She believed a reviewer's enthusiastic tone was more important and influential than words of commendation"; Alfred Knopf's business style, which focused on expressing his own admiration for an author and maintaining a personalized and long-term relationship with those he represented, appealed to values that also fueled Cather's fan letter relationships (Hamilton 2007, 14). Knopf's book advertisement offers another example of a professional using the rhetoric of fan letters as a means of promoting an author (figure 4). Cather preferred a fannish editorial voice, suggesting an overlap rather than a strict dichotomy between the two groups.
Figure 4. Knopf New York Times book advertisement from September 3, 1922. Erika Hamilton notes that some of Knopf’s advertisements look “like personal letters to a friend complete with paragraphs and his signature in script” (2007, 14). I would suggest that they look like fan letters—addressed to Cather and to fellow readers. The first-person “I have the honor” emphasizes Knopf’s own emotional response, while his description of readers' response, “Here you will say...,” frames and anticipates many of the letters that appear in the archive, which indeed respond to Cather’s work as “an authentic masterpiece—a novel to rank with the finest of this or any age.” [View larger image.]

[4.12] In a further blending of public-professional and common-private readers, Cather used private letters to preface the reading of her work by her contemporary professional reviewers. Today, through archival materials, scholars have rediscovered Cather’s efforts to influence her reputation through book production and self-promotion. Janis Stout details one aspect of this image-making when describing what she calls Cather’s "campaign" to favorably influence reviewers, including Dorothy Canfield, Carl Van Doren, and H. L. Mencken, prior to the publication of One of Ours. Cather's self-promotion among professionals was not a wide success—only Canfield's review was positive. Scholars have used Cather's forms of self-promotion to counter what Stout calls "the once widely accepted image of Willa Cather as...withdrawn from
society in general" and nearly compulsive about her privacy. Yet Stout acknowledges that although Cather carefully developed her public persona, she "continued to chafe when her public got too close" (Stout 2007, 40). Cather strictly monitored her correspondence for possible breaches in privacy. For example, Cather quickly rebuffed a professional's request when he sought to break the boundaries of private fan mail. Cather wrote to Carlton Wells, a professor at the Department of English at the University of Michigan: "No, can't allow him to publish quotations from her earlier letter. Assumed the writer of such an intelligent letter as the one he wrote would know better than to try to use it for publicity. P.S.: Had not realized she was writing to an English teacher who meant to read her letter to his class. Is usually cautious, but apparently not cautious enough" (Jewell and Stout 2007, 1294).

[4.13] We might see fan letters, then, as a well-suited (though not always perfect) venue for Cather's attempts to maintain the boundary between artist and promoter. Fan letter correspondence diffused many of the troubling aspects of self-promotion. When fans write, usually the readers' purchase of and connection with the work is already complete. The bounds of privacy assumed (but not always realized) in epistolary exchange allowed her to continue to court readers' goodwill as well as agree or disagree with their interpretations. If Cather was only moderately successful at shaping the prereading of her professional readers, fan mail shows that she continued shaping an individual's reading and interpretation after the initial act of reading, whether that reader was a professional or common reader. Moreover, if the latest trend among Cather scholars uses archival material to uncover the degree to which Cather crafted her public, authorial persona, then it seems only fitting that the same archive would show that she imagined an ideal reader and maintained a personal collection of letters that reflected an idealized reader-author relationship.

[4.14] Cather applied to herself the same reading standards she had for her audience, as exemplified by one of the few personal editions from her private library. Charles Mignon offers a close reading of her copy of Death Comes for the Archbishop, which he describes as a "personal scrapbook" (1999, 172). After carefully directing the printing and illustrative features of this 1930 English edition, Cather treated it with the kind of devoted readerly usage that fans of the archive also describe. Indeed, a fan letter pasted onto the back of the book indicates the value Cather placed on this copy as well as correspondence with her readers. The letter from Agnes Thompson, dated 1928, begins with a rhetorical gesture common to such letters, which often assert that the value of the book exceeds its market price: "Death Came [sic] for the Archbishop has given me such great pleasure that I should like to make a return more personal than the royalty on my copy." As a gift, the letter enclosed a picture of Kit Carson, who appears as a character in the novel. Also in this copy, Cather adds pictures of herself on horseback in the southwest, leading Mignon to conclude, "she has placed
herself imaginatively in the scene...an outward sign of her spiritual kinship" with the main character, Father Latour (174). Thus the proximity tightens between author and reader as well as fictional and historical persons as they become incorporated into the same bound object and imagined landscape. Cather's personal copy emphasizes repeated reading, a personal connection to a text, and travel based on the text.

[4.15] A well-loved book stands as an alternative to professional reading. Fan letters might well have been a refuge from professional methods of reading, if not from professionals themselves, since they occasionally switch readerly methods. Fan letters illustrate the circulation and appreciation of her work; they also offer a continuation of her narratives by adding their work to hers. These fan letters reveal that throughout her career, Cather was interested in the reception of her work not only in published reviews but also by her readers in the broadest sense. Her replies to fans praised their sensitive, emotional readings, and engaged them in descriptions of their own experience while ignoring comments about professional criticism. In contrast with reviews, which usually only appear directly after publication, these fan letters allowed Cather to confirm that her texts were considered and reconsidered well after the initial response that appeared in print. In these letters, we see professionals recognizing, using, and appreciating fan letter rhetoric. We also find an author's appreciation for common-reader approaches to her work. The very structure of this journal, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, proposes to be a place where academics and fan communities can speak to each other, share or swap subject positions, and "come together" (TWC Editor 2008). Just as this journal is one platform for such mixed interaction, we see in the fan letters that this not-so-new interaction can appear in other fan-centric mediums as well.

5. Acknowledgments

[5.1] Images and letter excerpts from the Archives & Special Collections of University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries are used with permission. I am especially grateful for the help of Joshua Caster, Kay Walters, Mary Ellen Ducey, and Andrew Jewell. Reproduction of the Langston Hughes letter is also with permission from Harold Ober Associates, with special thanks to Craig Tenney for his assistance.

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6. Notes
1. Estimations of Cather's literary importance by reviewers varied widely during her career; literary scholars subsequently had long debates on her place within the literary canon; the most recent iteration of this debate has been longer studies of the history of her treatment by reviewers and scholars. In addition to O'Brien's "Becoming Noncanonical," see Susan Kress's "Who Stole Willa Cather?" (2002); Joan Acocella's *Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism* (2000); Elizabeth Ammon's "Cather and the New Canon: 'The Old Beauty' and the Issue of Empire" (1996); Deborah Carlin's *Cather, Canon, and the Politics of Reading*. John J. Murphy's *Critical Essays on Willa Cather* (1984) includes critical reviews from her life as well as an introduction to scholarly trends. Conversely, we might follow the lead of biographer James Woodress, who, among others, acknowledged that the general reading public kept Cather afloat and in print while she suffered various valuations by reviewers and critics (1980, 334). I acknowledge that later in Cather's career the reviews tended to be less appreciative, but my main argument uses the fan letters to demonstrate that the boundaries between the two groups are less rigid than previously depicted.

2. Janis Stout's *A Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather* offers summaries of all those known letters by Cather at the time of the book's publication in 2002. In June 2007 the Willa Cather Archive, with editor Andrew Jewell, began an expanded digital edition including new letters as they became available. All citations from Cather's letters are the paraphrases made available by Stout and Jewell's digital edition; a four-digit identification number, which can be used to locate Cather's paraphrased letter online, are given here. On occasions when Cather published open letters or gave interviews, the words from those texts that appear here are Cather's own. The direct quotations from the fan letters that appear here are permissible. For more information on the history of Cather's archived letters, including Jewell's reversal of the widely held belief that Cather burned a large portion of her letters before her death, please see Jewell's "'Curious Survivals': The Letters of Willa Cather" (2008).

3. Cather taught English as a high school teacher from 1901 to 1906 while living in Pittsburgh. She distinguished between teaching students how to write clearly and creating room for students to become writers on their own. In a 1925 interview, Cather asserted, "Without a doubt the schools develop good mechanical writers, and if a born artist happens to take the course it won't do him any harm. In my opinion, you can't kill an artist any more than you can make one" (Bohlke 77–78).

4. Working for McClure also exposed her to some of the pleasures of fan letters. In 1914 she was the ghostwriter for his autobiography, which concluded with a selection of fan letters sent during its serial appearance. Cather subsequently incorporated some of them when she revised the magazine pieces into a book. Many of the letters exhibit the values of Cather's own fan letter collection—evaluating the success of the story
based on personal experience or emotional resonance, for example. Additionally, the autobiography exhibits how the seemingly private genre of fan letters can easily slip into the public realm, thereby popularizing both the impulse to write and the rhetorical patterns used to give that urge expression.

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"White shoes to a football match!": Female experiences of football's golden age in England

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Abstract—Although many British historians claim that English football in the post–World War II period was substantially the passion of working-class men, oral history accounts also reveal a largely hidden history of active female sports fans, women who keenly followed football. These female fans often faced opposition from fellow supporters and from other women. In many ways, academic research on sports fandom has worked to omit serious discussion of the role of women. Taken from a wider project aimed at making more visible the historical experiences of female spectators in sport in Britain, this paper draws on interviews with 16 older female fans of the Leicester City football club based in the East Midlands in England. It explores their experiences in the so-called golden age of the game with regard to the football stadium, styles of female support, and relationships with and perceptions of football players. Via oral history research, the paper offers a wider context for understanding the sporting experiences of female fans. But it also analyzes and explicates the meaning of sport in the lives of female fans during a period when football players were paradoxically glamorous and unobtainable local figures, but also, in some contexts, still accessible, ordinary members of local communities.

Keywords—Female; Football fans; Golden age; Oral history; Soccer; Stadium cultures


1. Introduction

If there is a golden age in the history of football spectating in England (better known in the United States as soccer), it can be argued such a period stretches from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, although recent trends in English football spectatorship suggest that, in a very different sociocultural climate, the current era offers something of a renaissance for the return of very large crowds to football (Williams 1999). In the 1948–49 season, in the postwar glow of recovery and the
search for collective leisure diversion in a society that boasted full employment but was still experiencing rationing and offered few leisure options, English football generated a record 41.3 million League match admissions (Walvin 2001; Taylor 2008, 194; Phelps 2005). The majority of these attendees would have been working-class men supporting their local football clubs—the story was less clear-cut in other European countries—but there was also a sprinkling of middle-class support at English football, as well as early signs of out-of-town support requiring private travel to watch embryonic "super-clubs" (Mellor 1999).

[1.2] As social attitudes and patterns of weekend leisure slowly changed in the postausterity Britain of the 1950s, and as the new affluent worker of postwar Britain became more individualistic and more consumerist, communal sport began to lose its grip on the public imagination. Car ownership in Britain rose from 2.3 million vehicles in 1950 to 5.6 million a decade later. Television barely registered in British households in 1950, but by 1961, three-quarters of all homes had a TV set (Taylor 2008, 195). By the late 1960s, Football League admissions in England had fallen to 30 million, though these figures were bolstered by crowds at new domestic and European competitions. But from the mid-1960s, the national picture for football in England began to change in other, largely unanticipated, ways.

[1.3] As crowds continued to fall, English football began to suffer a series of crippling financial crises, and the behavior of some young male English football fans gradually evolved into a form of highly ritualized intergang violent sporting rivalry, one centered on territorial conflicts and masculinity testing in and around the country's football stadia. These same types of trends were also occurring in other parts of Europe, with crowd disorders being reported in a number of other countries, including West Germany, Greece, and Italy (Dunning, Williams, and Murphy 1984). These modern versions of historical football rituals further damaged the national and international public image of the English game (Dunning, Murphy, and Williams 1988). English football stadia introduced enforced segregation of fans by physical barriers and "pens" (Bale 1993) in order to deal with this emerging fan hooliganism in the 1970s and 1980s, but failed to keep pace with prevailing public demand for generally improved (and pacified) leisure provision. English football was also struggling to hold on to its traditional audience in the face of increasing social mobility, class dealignment and new leisure options, so that it "could no longer hold the centre of the communal stage as it once did" (Allison 1981, 134–35). By the 1985–86 season, following a catastrophic hooligan incident that resulted in the deaths of 39 supporters (note 1), the annual League attendance figure for football had almost halved, to just under 16.5 million, the postwar nadir for English football (Foot 2006, 328–40).
A slow but persistent recovery in the sport's fortunes since 1986 was accentuated by the reflexive aftermath of another major stadium disaster, in the city of Sheffield in 1989, in which 96 Liverpool fans were killed (Taylor 1991), and by a new relationship established in 1992 between the top English football clubs and the European satellite television conglomerate BSkyB (note 2). As a result, the late-modern version of English football has been radically repositioned in terms of its preferred audience, consumption patterns, market appeal, and global reach, as well as its cultural significance (Williams 2006). New television money has also meant that many major English football stadia have been modernized or rebuilt, with seats replacing standing areas at all major venues. Fan behavior has also been modified and better regulated by the new, albeit rather suffocating, micromanagement regimes established inside English football stadia (Williams 2001a). By 2009, annual League football crowds in England had climbed close to the 30 million mark once more, with some evidence that gentrification and a recent surge in female attendance at football had contributed disproportionately to this revival in the sport's public fortunes. In typical English sports locations, such as the East Midlands city of Leicester, local fan surveys suggest that more than a quarter of regular football fans today are women and girls (Williams 2004).

2. Sports fan research

Much of the recent growth in academic research on sports fandom has been characterized by a focus on changing patterns of sports consumption and, especially in the United States, quantitative studies driven mainly by the disciplines of social psychology and sports marketing: a largely statistical concern with unveiling the primary motivations for fandom (Wann et al. 2001; Smith and Stewart 2007; Chen 2010; Clark, Apostolopoulos, and Gladden 2009; Robinson and Trail 2005; Funk, Ridinger, and Moorman 2004). In the United Kingdom, sports fan research has been rather more theoretically informed, more qualitative, and perhaps a little more sociological. But it has also had a rather narrow base. It has typically focused on how traditional male working-class sporting fans—usually football fans—and the local audience for live sport have been challenged by recent changes in the football nexus, thus producing their recent alleged marginalization or even their exclusion from active sport spectatorship (King 2002; Nash 2000 and 2001; Williams and Perkins 1998). This is due, it is claimed, to the connected processes of gentrification, commodification, and the TV-promoted spectacularization (and consequent cultural "emptying out") that have allegedly characterized new directions in the production and consumption of much late-modern English professional sport, especially professional football (Conn 1997; Giulianiotti 1999; Sandvoss 2003).
These are important developments in the new agendas for sports fan research, but in our view there is also a tendency toward nostalgia in some of these accounts, especially concerning British sport's often exclusionary masculinist and cultish past. Moreover, relatively little attention has been focused here on the fan careers and normative experiences, over time, of female sports fans, perhaps because it is assumed that so few women challenged the male dominance of football in the 1950s—a Mass-Observation survey of British women in 1957 found that 79 percent agreed that "A woman's place is in the home" (Kynaston 2009, 573), or perhaps because it is argued today that some women have been unfairly usurping some men in the late-modern sports stadium (Crolley and Long 2001). Existing studies typically style women sports fans as dysfunctional sexual predators (Crawford and Gosling 2004), subordinate subhooligans (Cere 2003), or spectators negotiating historic forms of male sports opposition to their presence at sports events (Jones 2008). Typically, female fans are stereotyped as lacking detailed knowledge about sport or their club and, consequently, are often considered as inauthentic in their support (Crawford and Gosling 2004; Crolley and Long 2001; Kim 2004; Llopis Goig 2007). Women often emerge here as incomplete ciphers, as decidedly nouveau consumers of sport, with no identifiable or authentic sporting histories. In short, they often appear as highly contingent and, at best, highly marginal ersatz new members of the national sporting community. Our contention is that an excavation of the sporting histories of long-term female football fans in England adds more balance to this typified depiction and also to the research agenda and cultural positioning, more generally, of active female sports spectators.

3. Context and methodology

Hill (1996, 3) suggests the overall aim of contributions to Holt's Sport and the Working Class in Modern Britain (1990) is to "investigate popular sport 'from below' and thereby gain a perspective on working-class culture and social relationships that could not be acquired by studying dominant national forms of sport." Thus, in the 1980s, some historians began to rethink their work on British sport, especially in relation to issues of social class. Indeed, Hill (1996) argued that important contributions from scholars such as Holt (1986), Jones (1986, 1988), and Taylor (1987) were actually written from a class perspective. But gender issues remained largely marginalized because many historians presented a "male version of history" (Hill 1996, 12). Oral history accounts of sports fandom in England often excluded or invisibilized women. Football historians have certainly tended to assume that accounts provided by male working-class supporters are the only available means of illuminating and understanding fan cultures in the postwar period (Holt 1992; Fishwick 1989).
Feminist academics have challenged this masculinist version of sports history. Langhamer (2000), for example, argues that the preoccupation of historians with certain types of leisure has ignored or misrepresented the experiences of women, and she proposes a more holistic approach to the history of women's leisure. Parratt (2001, 2–3), in her discussion of working-class women's leisure between 1750 and 1914, argues there is a need for an approach to history that "draws women in from the wings and puts them at center stage, that acknowledges that they were historical agents and deserve to be the subjects of historical research." In Wimbush and Talbot's *Relative Freedoms* (1988), women's leisure experiences have also been brought more to the fore (see also Deem 1986; Green, Hebron, and Woodward 1990). But while research of this kind makes women's leisure experiences more visible, it still largely neglects the experiences of female sports fans. Hargreaves (1994), for example, recognizes how the importance of sports for women has been largely neglected in research, but her own excellent work still focuses primarily on women's experiences of playing sport.

A more recent contribution from Lewis (2009) on female spectators in early English professional football (1880–1914) offers a potentially important new direction and illustrates that women do have a history of sports fandom, even if they usually made up only a small minority of the typical sports crowd. The present paper centralizes the historical experiences of female sports fans in England. In doing so, it seeks to supplement the existing literature on sports history regarding gender and leisure. Historical accounts of active female football fans in postwar England are rare, although Watt's (1993) valedictory popular history of the north London club Arsenal's North Bank standing terrace does examine the memories of some female Arsenal supporters. Not only have the experiences of female sports fans been largely invisibilized here, but also the changing demands and the increasing domestic power of women, relatively speaking, have been widely blamed for the declining attendance of some men at English football from the postwar spectator high of 1949.

For instance, the historian James Walvin (1994) claims that from the 1950s onward, British women began to exert more control over how men spent their leisure time and money, thus inexorably drawing respectable married men away from active spectator sport. Fishwick (1989) also argued that English football had always encouraged men, collectively, to spend time away from women, and the trend toward more family-based leisure pursuits in Britain in the 1950s coincided with a major decline in English football attendances—aggregate League crowds fell by 11.25 million (around 30 percent) between 1949 and 1962 (Russell 1997; Walvin 2001). It is perhaps a telling aside that the role of women in English sport in this period is often measured by their alleged negative impact on male attendance rather than by any
These golden years of English football are usually assumed to have ended in the early 1960s, when crowds start to decline quite rapidly. A popular marker here is when, after a bitter struggle between the sport's employers and the footballer players' union, the constraining maximum wage for football players in England was finally lifted in 1961 (Harding 2009). The term "golden age" often appears in popular and media accounts of the history of English football, and it is certainly clichéd. For example, both hooliganism and stadium safety were clearly underplayed in this period; English football fans were very poorly served by the responses of the authorities to routine instances of the dangers of overcrowding, and they suffered inadequate and badly resourced fan provision as a result (Ward and Williams 2009; Williams 2010). But this label also seems surprisingly appropriate here, not least because of the obvious warmth with which this period is often recalled by older female football fans. Most football players in England at this time still earned plausibly ordinary wages compared to the employed mainstream in Britain, and they mixed regularly and relatively easily with local supporters, partially as a result of this fact. In this sense, professional football players of the time in England were clearly and definitively "class located," in Critcher's (1979) terms. In the late 1940s and for much of the 1950s in Britain, mass car ownership, home-based leisure, the new consumerism, and organized fan hooliganism all lay in English football's uncertain future. The English football professional of the 1950s was a sporting hero known largely to, and embraced by, his local communities for both his character and loyalty; the football player as a truly national or global celebrity, a sports and media star identified mainly by other, more transient, attributes, was generally yet to emerge (Giulianotti 1999).

Our subjects for this research come from a wider, comparative semistructured interview study of female rugby union and football fans in a single location, the English East Midlands city of Leicester (Pope 2010). Using systematic sampling techniques, our respondents were originally drawn from existing local sampling frames for the two sports, which had been generated by fan surveys undertaken previously in Leicester (Williams 2003; Williams 2004). They were selected to try to reflect the experiences of different generations of female sports spectators from three distinctive age groupings: 15–30 years (younger fans), 31–50 years (middle-aged fans), and over 51 years (older fans). This produced a total sample of 85 female sports fans who were interviewed. But this paper concentrates on the 16 Leicester City fans who make up the older fan group for football. The original case codes used in the research (F40, F46, etc.) have been utilized to protect participant anonymity; "STH" below means the fan concerned is currently a Leicester City season ticket holder—someone who attends all the club's home matches. At the time of the research, Leicester City was competing...
in the second tier of English football, but the club routinely attracted more than 20,000 spectators to home games (note 3).

The recorded interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, although some went on for up to 4 hours. They were usually conducted in the homes or the workplaces of our respondents. All were conducted by the female researcher and coauthor of this paper (also a Leicester City fan), who was occasionally challenged in her work by male (usually husband) intrusions or other forms of male "policing" of female research (Deem 1986). This is a further indicator, of course, of the highly marginal role still allocated by some men to some women in the latter's role as sports spectators (Pope 2008). Thus, our findings draw on oral history accounts that explore women's experiences of the so-called golden age of English football in the 1950s and early 1960s. Because of space constraints, we explore just three main themes: English football and a sense of safety; styles of female fan support; and women's relationships with football players.

4. English football and a sense of well-being: "It was safe"

Fishwick (1989) describes how Football Association (FA) records show there were only 22 cases of football crowd trouble demanding FA consideration in the years 1948 and 1949, when Football League attendance peaked in England. It is also remarkable that so many millions of people entered what were clearly unpleasant and even dangerous environments each week—crowded postwar football stadia—and yet the vast majority returned unscathed (Walvin 2001; Williams 2010). Moreover, older female football fans describe their relative lack of fear of attending during this period, with some attributing this, on reflection, either to youthful indifference to potential danger—"When you're young, you don't care"—or the idea that any risks involved were acceptable—"All part of the afternoon, the entertainment" (F45, F47). If women (or other fans) ever needed assistance at football matches during this period, they were also protected by the much-mythologized and eponymous postwar British bobby (police officer):

[4.2] It was safe; there was none of this aggression. We didn't have loads of police, just didn't have that, no nastiness, none at all...[But] obviously if you did anything wrong, they'd [the crowd] get the bobby to come and see to you. And everybody was frightened of policemen. Now they're not the least bit [frightened]. (F46, age 73, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked as a nurse)

[4.3] This is an idealized picture, of course. But the police presence at football matches—or the relative lack of it—only served to reinforce the notion that, in the
main, 1950s English football grounds were regarded as safe spaces for both men and women. For example, F43 remembers the "good times" of attending matches in the years from 1949 with a certain nostalgia when the "policeman would take off his helmet, so you could see [the match]." This is perhaps an especially powerful image, strongly signifying the prehooligan period of relative crowd harmony—though other accounts clearly suggest that male supporter violence was already a subterranean feature of postwar English football culture (Williams 2010).

[4.4] A range of positive terms or phrases were used by female fans to describe their early football experiences, implicitly making comparisons with a more fractious, less tolerant, present: a "friendly atmosphere"; "You never saw any trouble" or heard "bad language"; one never felt "scared," "intimidated," or "afraid" (F40, F43, F45, F46, F47, F50, F51). Johnes and Mellor (2006), similarly, argue that a real sense of national cohesion and togetherness developed around the shared experiences of spectator sport in Britain following the recent privations of World War II. A key moment here perhaps was the live television coverage of the coronation of a new young British queen in 1953 and the first mass TV audience for the so-called Stanley Matthews FA Cup final of the same year. Matthews, the heroic, deferential old England international forward, achieved a life's ambition, to national acclaim, by helping his club Blackpool defeat Lancashire rivals Bolton 4–3 in a coruscating struggle. The early 1950s were also a period of relative national optimism in Britain, when its people assumed the nation would enjoy greater "social solidarity and attain global significance and glory thanks to the Commonwealth" (Johnes and Mellor 2006, 269). In football crowds, this was reflected in rather more prosaic terms:

[4.5] People were more careful about the way they treated each other. You didn't rush along and knock people over, the atmosphere was sort of friendly...And people were more...well, I certainly didn't see any sign of people being rude or aggressive. (F40, age 64, STH, long-term fan, community social worker)

[4.6] Hood and Joyce (1999) have tracked similar sentiments among men and women growing up in London working-class neighborhoods in both the 1930s and 1950s. Their subjects stressed that still-binding structures of family, community, and class solidarity seemed more important and more stable in these periods than they are today. Respondents in our own research seem to share similar ideas about supposed greater communal trust in others, a point perhaps best illustrated when F47 described how large numbers of football supporters were happy to pay local residents threepence to look after their bikes while they watched the match.

[4.7] This was also a period when generational relationships in public are remembered as being experienced rather differently than they are today. A number of
respondents, for example, described how they witnessed children being passed down to the front of large football crowds in the early 1950s, over the heads of other crowd members—or how they experienced this themselves (F32, F40, F43, F46, F47, F51). There was little apparent fear that children might be abused, crushed, or lost in these potentially chaotic public contexts. There seems to have been relatively little public concern or panic expressed about relations between children and stranger adults in sports crowds. As F43 recalls:

[4.8] I thought it was very exciting, I mean they were big crowds in those days. I've been down at one time at half past seven in the morning to get on the wall for a cup match [...]. We were there early, but if I wasn't you were passed down. If you wanted to go [to the] toilet you were passed up, coz they [the toilets] were at the back (laughs). You made friends and they'd save you a place on the wall, you know? They'd spread out. (F43, age 69, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked as a school meals cook)

[4.9] English football culture at this time was also less prescriptive and certainly less profit-focused. Watching football was described as a form of cheap entertainment that would often be combined with dancing in the evening (F45) to complete a Saturday of simple, local leisure pleasures. Football grounds seem to be viewed, broadly speaking, as friendly and safe spaces in this period by female supporters—places characterized by the easy mixing of rival supporters in the stadium. Some respondents suggested that mixing with rival supporters—more difficult today inside segregated stadia—was also an important part of the essential sociability of the event (F48, F49, F51):

[4.10] The atmosphere could be absolutely electric. And both sets of fans were together. I mean, that was part of it: conversing with them. You'd say things like "He's a good player." Or "What's so and so like, I've not seen him play yet?" to other fans. [emphasis added] (F49, age 70, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked as a secretary)

[4.11] As well as the term "electric" used here, descriptions such as "buoyed up," "elated," "enjoyable," and "excited" were generally used to describe the tightly packed postwar audiences that, like great creatures, were often remembered as surging forward with the crowd swaying (F45, F47, F49, F51). This sociability and easy familiarity inside football crowds operated across the sexes. One of Watt's (1993, 275) male interviewees described, for example, how male fans at Arsenal used to warm their hands under the arms of unfamiliar females, with no objections. The sense that there was rather more sexual innocence and more mutual trust between the sexes at postwar football was also touched upon by our own respondents. Those older women who were terrace (standing) fans claim not to have been threatened at all by being
stationed for hours on end, "body to body" (F50); instead, such corporeal proximity with men helped women keep warm (F47, F50).

[4.12] Social class relations also shaped the football stadium crowd, of course. F50 recalled how, in this period, stadium seating was assumed to be for "the hierarchy"; only a relatively small part of the stadium capacity was made up of seats, and this was where the higher classes, club directors, and shareholders sat—the "posh people" (F47), in other words. Thus, perhaps a more strongly shared class identity added to this greater community spirit and a greater sense of common purpose and solidarity at the stadium, and indeed, to stronger feelings of collective solidarity in British society more generally.

[4.13] This generally friendly match day climate at postwar English football would be challenged, of course, by developments among young male supporters in later decades. Walvin (2001, 156), for example, notes that by the end of the 1960s, fan behavior at football in England was being discussed as a rising social problem, and more serious incidents soon pitched rival groups of male hooligans against each other. Women's experiences at football stadia in the 1970s and 1980s were certainly different from those in the earlier golden age. F40, for example, described how her dad first took her to watch Reading Football Club when she was 13 years old, and she continued to attend matches throughout the 1950s and 1960s, before moving to Leicester in the 1970s. Here, experience of male fan violence meant she would soon resort to watching sport on television:

[4.14] Going home after the match there would be really running street battles almost with crowds like surging forward, and things being thrown [...]. I was frightened of a bottle on the back of the head really you know, stuff was being lobbed about the streets, it was really quite awful [...]. I never saw any of that when I was a child certainly...you just mixed in you know? It didn't matter who [...]. I thought well why am I putting myself through this? Being frightened to go somewhere...And I just stopped going. (F40, age 64, STH, long-term fan, community social worker)

[4.15] Other respondents who continued to attend during this period also recalled instances when they were fearful for their own safety. This fan violence would indeed represent the end for some of the modernist optimism and collective solidarities at sport of the golden age.

5. Styles of support: "Everybody was in tune"

[5.1] Exactly how did women support their sports clubs during this period? Some sense of the carnivalesque and a rejection of the banality and anonymity of everyday
life are clearly apparent. Turbin (2003, 45) argues that dress is highly gendered and that clothing gives both shape and meaning to the bodies of men and women. Dress is inherently both public and private, as "an individual's outwardly presented signs of internal or private meaning are significant only when they are also social, that is comprehensible on some level to observers." Some of our respondents discussed their own match day football costumes, outfits they had made or purchased especially for this purpose. These seemed to be important for individual (private) identities and for exhibiting a public face for their fandom. For example, F47 described her public parading of Leicester City's blue and white colors for the 1949 FA Cup final while traveling with a female friend:

[5.2] We were teenagers and we dressed alike...And we had this whitish coat with a belt round. We had royal blue trousers [...] and we had head scarves, I had them made on the market [...]. We thought it was very smart...and, you know, the thing of the moment. We were—we're somebody; we're on the bus and we're going to Wembley. (F47, age 78, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked in sewing)

[5.3] FA Cup Finals—the culmination of the English football season and the most historically important domestic knockout football tournament in the world—were very special community occasions in this era, a welcome opportunity for the demonstration of local female craft and for ostentatious public display in a generally gray public arena. The FA Cup seemed to demand more expressive forms of local support, and we can perhaps speculate that this opportunity for public display may have been even more important to female fans. This was an era before the mass production of football replica kits and goods, so outfits were original—individualized and designed by fans. F49 described how she prepared her costume for weeks prior to the final, and that she would even wear her outfit to work to seek the approval and opinions of her colleagues. Dressing up for football may also have been a way of seeking male fan approval, a publicly legitimated way for females to express both their (hetero)sexuality and their support and club and civic loyalty. F47 remembers receiving compliments for her final costume from the male fan group she stood alongside at matches. F38, and three other young women from Leicester, wore their outfits to all home and away matches, including the 1963 FA Cup final:

[5.4] F38: We'd be the only girls on the train. Oh, it used to be fabulous (laughs). We used to have white skirts, royal blue tops, white shoes...I mean, white shoes to a football match! But that's how it was (laughs). [And] blue and white scarves...we all wore the same hair; hair all up here. We must have looked a sight!

Res: Did you get much attention from men then?
F38: Oh yes, yes! Wonderful! (laughs)

(F38, age 60, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked as a clerical worker)

The figures included here demonstrate the importance of fan memorabilia for our older sample of female fans. Figure 1 shows a football head scarf made at the local hosiery market in Leicester for one of our subjects. Players from Leicester City and Wolverhampton Wanderers are hand painted on it for the 1949 FA Cup Final. Figure 2 shows a cabinet at the home of one of our respondents. It contains football products, including a number of foxes (Leicester City's club logo and nickname). Many female fans had football photographs on the walls of their homes, including shots taken with players from previous decades. Some had also decorated parts of their homes in Leicester City blue.

Figure 1. Fan's head scarf painted for 1949 FA Cup Final. [View larger image.]
After losing the 1953 Matthews FA Cup final, the mayor of Bolton praised the club's players for promoting and adding luster to the town (Johnes and Mellor 2006, 267). A local football club reaching the FA Cup final at this time contributed to a palpable sense of civic pride and a strengthening of local communal identities for both men and women of the city. It generated a sense of community affiliation that affected female supporters as much as it did men—though relatively few fans, male or female, had the opportunity to attend the final because of restrictive FA ticketing policies. F38 described how "tickets were few and far between" for FA Cup finals, but also noted that such matches engaged not only active football fans, but the city as a whole:

You could go in the shops; they'd got flags up, even in the little villages, "Good luck City." It was the community, this is what I mean. It makes the whole city, because you'd walk round Leicester all trimmed up blue and white. Oh it was a wonderful sight to see [...]. It was great; it was
good for the city, good for the city of Leicester, because everybody was in tune. (F49, age 70, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked as a secretary)

[5.8] The image of the English football stadium of the 1940s and 1950s as a safe—if highly masculinized—public space was expressed very strongly by those who confirmed that women were a distinct minority at matches in these early postwar years (F36, F37, F38, F40, F47, F51). But some female attendees also found the sheer numbers and habits of men intimidating. For instance, F36 went to one football match as a child but then was deterred from attending by the large numbers of men present who were smoking; she did not return to the stadium until the late 1990s. This oppressive, smoky atmosphere was mentioned by other older female fans (F37, F47). Of the 11 older fans who regularly attended matches during these years, a number attended at some stage (usually as teenagers) in all-female groups (F38, F43, F47, F49).

[5.9] But gender also presented some special privileges in the stadium—improved access to star players, and being chaperoned and generally protected by chauvinistic men. For example, F40 described how, because hardly any of her female friends went to football, she enjoyed some local distinction. She could boast to female friends, "Oh, I saw him. Oh and he's so handsome, this man. This footballer." Others discussed how, as teenagers attending matches in 1940s and 1950s, they had player favorites (F40, F43, F45, F46, F47, F49, F50) and some stayed behind with other female fans after games to collect player autographs. Players, it seems—even modernist and modest class-located, postwar sporting heroes—had something of a sexual aura surrounding them, although the typical profile and lifestyle of the English professional football player has changed dramatically since.

6. Women's relationships with football players: "They were just like one of us"

[6.1] First team football players in England were lauded in the 1940s and 1950s, but they were also strongly located in the local community (Critcher 1979). They could be met by fans at the local food market, in shops, or at one's place of work; some women fans had relatives who were friends with players (F45, F50, F51). There was a strong sense that players were "Leicester people" who would typically walk to the home ground along with everyone else on a match day (F49). Terms such as "approachable," "closer," "one of us," and "ordinary guys" who lived in "ordinary houses" (F37, F40, F43, F46, F47) were frequently used when discussing players of this period.
A number of older respondents either lived near Leicester City players or knew people who did; players were a part of the local working-class or lower-middle-class communities of the city (F25, F39, F40, F43, F46). Some recalled seeing players socially after important matches. F39 remembered how her pub-owning parents gave lodgings to a Sunderland player who was on loan at City in the 1950s; lodging a football player was no great social marker at the time. F43 even described how, later, the Leicester City and 1966 England World Cup–winning goalkeeper Gordon Banks had living and child care arrangements in Leicester, which meant that he maintained strong daily connections with ordinary women's lives, including mixing regularly with local mothers:

I used to take her [daughter] to school, and I used to walk with Gordon Banks when he took his chap to school. [...] He was just in an ordinary semi-detached house up the road near the school, and mixed with all the mothers. [Be]cause there weren't that many men that took the children to school. He was a very nice chap. (F43, age 69, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked as school meals cook)

Thus, women fans in the city may have been in awe of footballers to a degree, but because players mixed locally and were not earning wages that were notably superior to many other local people in professional jobs, they were socially and culturally located; they did not "think they were up on a pedestal like some [players] do now" (F37). Football players today were seen as being more "cut off" because they live separately from fans, in "big mansions" (F40, F43). Holt and Mason (2000, 122), commenting on football culture in the 1950s, similarly suggest that "This was a world where local heroes were still ordinary men. Great players were often seen on the street or in the pub." Some players in England had part-time jobs in addition to playing football professionally; and despite attendance increasing after World War II, the existence of a maximum wage meant that most players did not benefit from this rise in club income (Walvin 2001). Players may have been "football slaves" in this period (Russell 1997, 92), but their modest earnings offered a greater "moral sense" to their established position as engaged and located figures in the local community (F19, F29, F30, F36, F37, F40, F45, F46, F49, F51).

Older female respondents fondly remember this era, partly because of the imagined greater sense of stability, but also because—perhaps less likely today—football was perceived to be an important local site for the expression of local belonging as well as national virtues. These were often defined, in part, by a sense of certainty about local traditions and place and cultural continuity: a social homogeneity and a common ethnicity. In today's more global game, Leicester City, like most
English football clubs, recruits players from around the world. This new direction for football was rather more difficult for some respondents to identify with and accept:

[6.6] I'm a big believer in local talent [...]. I mean in Leicester City now—don't get me wrong, I'm not racist—but you've got nine "internationals," I'll call them, in that team and probably two or three white players. None of them are from Leicester, probably. Are they going to be loyal to Leicester City as a club? [...]. Their loyalty is probably with their salary. They think "I'll play for Leicester but I don't live here, I've got no interest in the city, I don't care." (F36, age 68, occasional attendee, new fan, retired, worked as a secretary)

[6.7] In this sense, local (white) players of the past were generally deemed to have been more dedicated to local clubs, and hence fans got "better value for money" from them, compared to the more transient and wage-focused football professionals of today (F19, F36, F40, F45, F46, F49). Today's superstars are detached and are "not really hungry enough for the game" (F40). Because their loyalty is market-driven—strictly to the best payer—they do not show the same levels of attachment, commitment, and physical effort—a willingness to "die for the shirt"—as players of the golden age once did:

[6.8] It was football [then], it isn't today...It was better then, because they were working hard and they weren't just thinking about the money [...]. They were all good players in those days, as I say. They'd got to play good otherwise they wouldn't get the money. But now they get the money anyway, it doesn't matter whether they earn it or not. (F45, age 80, STH, long-term fan, retired, worked as a personal assistant)

[6.9] It seems like a long time ago now; the changes are fairly subtle all the way through. But it's gone, from ordinary working class lads who kicked a ball about, who lived in the community, to players that are no longer part of our community, but belong to their own. (F40, age 64, STH, long-term fan, community social worker)

7. Some conclusions

[7.1] The recollections and views expressed above are, of course, partly couched in nostalgic reflection, and sometimes dimmed by memory. Social and economic change—the impact of globalization—is difficult to accept, perhaps especially as one gets older and, arguably, more conservative. Were all football players in England of the 1950s really "class located" and as committed to their clubs and local supporters as is suggested here? Do all foreign players today lack the commitment that is somehow
deemed as being more inherent in locals? This seems doubtful. But these comments, we assert, reveal wider discomforts and anxieties about the neoliberal sports and economic order of today—about the perceived "chaos of reward" of Jock Young's (1999) disorienting late-modern world. Here, the widely held perception seems to be that society today is less obviously fair and meritocratic, and that showing loyalty and working hard—in any sport, business, or company—is no longer a guarantee of just rewards and opportunities as perhaps it once was. Players of this golden era of football are thus idealized for their supposed love of the game, and for their more visceral connections with a people and an occupation that was "their hobby, as well as their sport and their profession" (F49).

[7.2] The probably mistaken idea expressed by some respondents that "there were no super heroes years ago; they all played as a team" (F43) also echoes Phelps's (2001, 47) suggestion that the ethos of the "starless" southern Portsmouth championship winning teams in England of seasons 1948–49 and 1949–50 embodied the same sense of player commitment and industriousness that was so widely admired then in the working-class cities of the English North and Midlands. Richard Holt (1992) has suggested that English football is rooted in working-class traditions of collective endeavor. Playing football provided male factory workers of the 19th and 20th centuries with a sense of release, belonging, and solidarity. The capacity to work hard, take punishment, and play your role in the team—all features of manual work—were the qualities the working-class male sports crowd most admired.

[7.3] Thus, the male working classes in England identified strongly with football because it seemed to reflect a working-class experience back to them. The division of labor within a team could be compared to the "specialization of skills that went into the production of iron and steel or, perhaps more appropriately, the manufacturing of machinery" (Holt 1992, 162–63). Our own interviewees—like those of Phelps (2001)—also confirm that the key qualities admired in players of this period included a sense of fair play and a gentlemen's reputation for being reserved; for showing courage, and exhibiting heroic forms of traditional working-class loyalty and toughness. Thus, it seems that female fans also identified strongly with traits more typically associated with English identity and *masculinity*. While some of our female fans recalled identifying strongly with individual players, there was little room in supporters' affections—male or female—for fancy Dans or faint hearts. In many ways, such sentiments endure in England today.

[7.4] In more recent times, it can be contested that women have a slightly more respected role as fans in the game. It has been suggested that football fandom in England (following the changes in the sport after 1989) has become more "feminized" (Crolley and Long 2001). Changes such as the introduction of all-seater stadia
contributed to the so-called post–hooligan era in football in England, producing a safer and more civilized environment at matches (Williams 2006). This may have led to some female (and male) fans returning to the sport or being newly recruited as fans—recent surveys have shown that the average number of female fans at Premier League matches has steadily increased, and is now around 15 percent of all fans (Williams 2001b). Yet rather than offering a serious discussion of women as knowledgeable, committed fans, the research focus in football often remains on women in subordinate or sexualized roles or both. For writers such as Clayton and Harris (2004), this might be seen as an encouraging sign of the postmodern era in the sense that women are visible at all in the sporting culture, but there is clearly a long way to go if women's role in football, as fans, players, administrators, officials, and so on, is to be taken seriously.

[7.5] Our findings here offer but a brief historical snapshot of women's experiences of English football's golden age. We have concentrated on their perceptions of football crowds, on styles of female support, on local identities framed through sport, and on their relations with, and perceptions of, football players from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. We contend that women fans have been largely ignored by male sociologists and historians in their accounts of the cultural and social significance and meaning of football. The oral history research presented here can make some claims to try to "retrieve" the experiences of women fans in this context and to explore, in some greater depth, the various ways in which women once connected with the sport in both its production and consumption. This was before wider social changes from the late 1960s onward—including male fan hooliganism—began to offer new challenges to the role of women as active fans at English football matches.

8. Acknowledgment

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9. Notes

1. In 1985, at the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus at the Heysel Stadium, Brussels, Liverpool supporters broke into a section of the stadium containing Italian fans; in the ensuing panic, 39 supporters died following a wall collapse. In addition to the action of English fans, the European football governing body UEFA and also the Belgian authorities were widely criticized for the poor state of the stadium and the inadequate control exercised at the venue. As a result of these incidents, English football clubs were banned from playing abroad, an exclusion that lasted 5 years, with an additional year for Liverpool FC (Williams 2010, chap. 17).
2. The Hillsborough Stadium disaster occurred on April 15, 1989, during an FA Cup semifinal between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Sheffield's football ground, Hillsborough. Holt and Mason (2000, 159) discuss how the match was abandoned shortly after the start, when overcrowding on the terraces led to Liverpool supporters being crushed against perimeter fencing. Ninety-six people died and many more were injured. The tragedy was primarily the result of police mismanagement of the crowd; it led to the British government commissioning Lord Justice Taylor to investigate the causes of the accident. The Taylor Report of 1990 made 76 recommendations—most of which were implemented—including the removal of all perimeter fencing; the elimination of standing accommodation by August 1994 from the grounds of all clubs in the top two divisions in England and Wales and the top division in Scotland; and the establishment of a football licensing authority with statutory powers, which would inspect grounds and give out safety licenses (Williams 2010, chap. 17).

3. Leicester City FC currently (2010–11) competes in the Championship, the second tier of English football, and was playing at this level while the research was being undertaken. For many of the years following World War II and into the 1950s, the club competed at the second level of English football (Division Two), but between 1957 and 1969, Leicester City enjoyed its longest-ever unbroken period in topflight football (Division One). Thus, in the period our respondents are discussing, the club was fairly successful, and made four losing FA Cup Final appearances, in 1949, 1961, 1963, 1969. After its relegation in 2004, the club has aspired to return to topflight English football, the Premier League.

10. Works cited


Clark, John S., Artemisia Apostolopoulou, and James M. Gladden. 2009. "Real Women Watch Football: Gender Differences in the Consumption of the NFL Super Bowl


Praxis


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[0.1] Abstract—This article explores the Beat music scene in Hamburg, West Germany, in the early 1960s. This scene became famous for its role in incubating the Beatles, who played over 250 nights there in 1960–62, but this article focuses on the prominent role of fans in this scene. Here fans were welcomed by bands and club owners as co-creators of a scene that offered respite from the prevailing conformism of West Germany during the Economic Miracle. This scene, born at the confluence of commercial and subcultural impulses, was also instrumental in transforming rock and roll from a working-class niche product to a cross-class lingua franca for youth. It was also a key element in West Germany's broader processes of democratization during the 1960s, opening up social space in which the meanings of authority, respectability, and democracy itself could be questioned and reworked.

[0.2] Keywords—Beat music; The Beatles; Hamburg; Reeperbahn; Star Club; Star-Club News; Music fan


1. Introduction: Blurring the fan-musician boundary in early-1960s Hamburg

[1.1] The December 1965 cover of the Star-Club News features a photograph of John Lennon and Gene Vincent, bearing the caption "Autograph Hound" (figure 1). The picture was taken in 1962 when Vincent and Lennon’s Beatles shared the bill at Hamburg's Star Club, long before the word Beatlemania had crossed anyone's lips. It shows Vincent signing autographs while Lennon looks on with delight. The framing leaves no doubt that when this picture was taken, Vincent was the focus, a rock pioneer enjoying a resurgence in Europe and the kind of big-name performer the Star Club showcased in its drive to become Germany's premier destination for live rock and roll. Lennon is off to the side, just one of many young British rockers slogging away on Hamburg's stages, hungry for a shot at the big time. By the time this image was published in 1965, however, it contained a raft of new meanings. Now Lennon was the
star while Vincent's career had been derailed by alcoholism and changing tastes. The caption "Autograph Hound" comments on this improbable role reversal, and it also does something else: it celebrates the role of music fans by pointing out that even a leader of the world's most popular band was once just another giddy admirer angling to get close to his own idol. The message is profoundly egalitarian: fans and musicians appear as equally important members of the scene around Beat music, as rock and roll was rechristened in 1960s Europe.

![Star-Club News, December 1965](image)

**Figure 1.** Star-Club News, December 1965. [View larger image.]

[1.2] Using this image as a starting point, this article explores the close relationship between fans and musicians in Hamburg's Beat music scene in the early 1960s—a scene that not only produced the Beatles but also elevated fans to the status of collaborators in a movement that over the long term helped transform popular culture and society. Hamburg's early rock-and-roll community emerged in a unique spatial context, in clubs around the Reeperbahn, the city's entertainment quarter and red-light district. These clubs erased the distance between performer and audience: fans could press the flesh with musicians as they played onstage or drank with the crowd, and they also experienced this scene bodily through dancing or sexual encounters. The timing of this scene's emergence is also significant: it appeared during a new phase of capitalist modernity after 1960 that granted youth (defined here as those born during or just after World War II, roughly 1939 through 1950) unprecedented access to commercial venues catering to their new economic power and leisure. Teens and
"twens" (people in their 20s) in many classes, regions, and countries used these spaces free of parental supervision to create moments of utopia that offered respite—even if only temporarily—from the postwar era's stifling sexual conservatism and social conformism (Herzog 2005, 101–28). Their voices also emerged through Germany's first rock magazine, the *Star-Club News*. The Star Club's proprietor became an ally of the fans who made up this musical "nation," keeping prices low so that they could afford to come daily—and hundreds did, forming networks that still exist today. While these fans were not formally organized or overtly oppositional—and hence did not constitute a subculture, as the term has come to be used—the ways they deployed musical and material objects, as well as the ways they asserted their right to public space, made them important agents in West Germany's transition to a more open, democratic society in the 1960s.

2. "Take a seat or piss off!" Experiencing rock and roll in Hamburg

[2.1] For a brief moment in the early 1960s, Hamburg was at the epicenter of Western pop culture, nurturing a sound that Beatlemania made famous the world over. This sound originated at a time when rock and roll was moldering in its native land: newly discharged Sergeant Elvis Presley was off to Hollywood, while other rockers were beset by scandal or elbowed off the charts by crooners and vocal groups. The British kept the beat alive in the form of skiffle, an easy-to-play hybrid of rock and country that induced legions of boys and girls to pick up instruments in the late 1950s. Those with talent formed serious bands that needed places to play, which were in short supply in Britain. Enter Hamburg, a bustling port with long-standing connections to Britain and a booming entertainment economy constantly seeking fresh talent.

![Map of Great Britain and North Germany](View larger image)
Hamburg is West Germany's largest city, a northern city with long traditions of independence and tolerance (figure 2). Shipping and, after 1945, media were the key sources of its prosperity, with the port serving both as Germany's "gateway to the world" and as a source of cosmopolitan influences from across the globe. During the postwar occupation the city found itself in the British zone, and British NATO troops maintained their presence after 1949. Along with shipping, Hamburg is best known internationally for its entertainment district, which was (and still is) located in the portside district of St. Pauli and centered on the spectacular mile known as the Reeperbahn, immortalized in the 1962 film Mondo Cane as an outpost of primitive hedonism (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYDz7onjG9k). Since the 18th century, entertainments high and low have nestled here in Europe's most notorious red-light district. By 1945 the area had survived cholera, strikes, blockades, Allied bombing, and Nazi rule, emerging battered but ready to resume its place as "the anchorage of joy" (der Ankerplatz der Freude). The 1950s saw an explosion in the Reeperbahn's popularity as postwar privations receded and the Economic Miracle brought record numbers of Germans and other tourists seeking amusement. While West Germany in this period, governed by conservative Catholic chancellor Konrad Adenauer, was marked by an official emphasis on hard work and the disgraced nation's return to respectability, the Reeperbahn served as the nation's id, a licentious outpost in Germany's most liberal city (note 1). Punters went there to drink themselves silly in its faux-Bavarian beer halls, watch topless "beauty dancers" in its cabarets, and gawk at mud-wrestling Amazons in its nightclubs. Striptease and open prostitution attracted curiosity-seekers male and female, gay and straight, black and white (Sneeringer 2009). Before the jukebox became ubiquitous, live music provided the soundtrack to this human carnival, in the forms of swing and Dixieland (or "trad") jazz. When rock and roll hit Germany, it was only logical that it too would appear on the menu of entertainment offerings.

But rock and roll's entry into Hamburg, and Germany at large, was not a smooth one. It was imported by American and British soldiers, films like Blackboard Jungle (1955), and returning German sailors. In 1956 Bill Haley's "Rock around the Clock" electrified listeners on both sides of the Iron Curtain and Elvis made the cover of Der Spiegel, West Germany's version of Time (http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43064913.html). Rock and roll captivated a segment of the youth market, though its leering sexuality and menacing aura horrified parents, preachers, and politicians. Between 1956 and 1958 violence punctuated rock-related movie showings, while Haley's concerts ended with smashed seats and dozens of arrests (Poiger 2000; Grotum 1994). German broadcasters resolved to keep this "degenerate" noise off the airwaves. Only Chris Howland was allowed to spin British and American chart-toppers for an hour each week on Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk's "Saturday Club"; rock on television would have to wait until 1965 and "Beat Club." The
music industry served up bland substitutes like Peter Krauss, while American-made rock remained a minority taste confined largely to working-class youths. Resourceful fans could catch snatches of their music on the American Forces Network, British Forces radio in the north, or late at night on Radio Luxembourg, Europe's first commercial pop station. Achim Reichel, a Hamburg teen who became lead singer of the Rattles, pestered his parents for a cassette recorder so he could tape songs directly off the radio; such tapes became primers for a generation of German musicians. Fans in Hamburg could sometimes find rock on the jukebox of their local pub if they lived in working-class St. Pauli or Barmbek, and it was sometimes pumped onto the carnival midway at the Dom. But few such records were available for purchase in the late 1950s and early 1960s; those that were became precious objects circulated among aficionados (Siegfried 2003, 86; Kursawe 2004, 322; Nichols 1983; Krüger and Pelc 2006, 136; Fascher 2006, 65–67, 84–85; Articus 1996, 111; interview with Ulf Krüger, December 2008).

[2.4] Ultimately it was Hamburg's entertainment economy and its voracious appetite for novelty that spurred German venues outside of US military bases (which were generally off limits to civilians) to regularly feature live rock and roll. Enterprising club owners realized there was money to be made in showcasing this style, which was, after all, dance music (and thirsty dancers bought more drinks). Starting in the late 1950s Dutch-Indonesian show bands brought a version of rock to nightclubs like the Blauer Peter, playing Ventures-style instrumentals with a South Pacific accent (Mutsaers 1990). These "Indorockers" were soon replaced by acts from England that, as Ulf Krüger, a chronicler of the Hamburg scene, put it, were "cheaper, rawer, and wilder" (Articus 1996, 19). Cheap, raw, and wild fit perfectly with the ethos of the Reeperbahn itself.

[2.5] The first club to feature live rock and roll for German audiences was the Kaiserkeller, situated in a Reeperbahn side street, the Grosse Freiheit—literally, "great freedom." The location was fitting: the Grosse Freiheit had long housed a rougher breed of entertainment, such as bawdy transvestite revues, than the more brightly lit Reeperbahn. The Kaiserkeller sat at number 36 in a building constructed in 1958 as a three-story "dance palace" complete with a 200-car parking garage (a sign of the emerging car culture). The main floors contained the respectable Lido, which featured ballroom dancing to live orchestras and the occasional "Miss Pullover" contest for added sex appeal; the Kaiserkeller, which opened in October 1959, was relegated to the basement (note 2). Its owner was Bruno Koschmider, a gay former circus clown who landed after the war in St. Pauli, where he also operated the Indra strip club and a grind house cinema. Koschmider saw the moneymaking potential of teenagers and installed a jukebox at the Kaiserkeller stocked with rock-and-roll singles (Clayson 1997, 56–57; Miller 1960, 33–36). In spring 1960 he added live bands he met during
scouting trips to Britain, as Germany did not yet have a crop of professional-caliber homegrown acts that could sing in English, which fans demanded as a marker of quality and fidelity to the original source of the genre (Fascher 2006, 85). Koschmider hired performers such as Tony Sheridan and the Beatles, who played their first of over 250 nights in Hamburg in August 1960 at the Indra before being moved down the street to the Kaiserkeller. These acts were instantly popular (figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Poster created by Erwin Ross advertising the Kaiserkeller, fall 1960. [View larger image.]

[2.6] Koschmider was instrumental in launching a trend, but to him the musicians and the music itself were disposable. It was the fans who created a scene, a community brought together by shared tastes, styles, and notions of authenticity (Cohen 1999). Who were these fans? At first, they were only those intrepid enough to venture down a dubious street known for kinky spectacles. The Kaiserkeller's location in a smoky basement—literally underground—also attracted those seeking refuge from the dominant culture's obsessions with cleanliness and respectability (McKinney 2004, 6–7; Siegfried 2006b, 145). Early audiences were the typical mix of seamen, tourists, and workers in the Reeperbahn economy, from "B-girls" and bouncers to strippers, that was found in other nightclubs. All sought release through dance, drink, and sex; as long as the entertainment was wild, they were satisfied. As word of the new bands got around, however, rock fans found their way to Grosse Freiheit 36, including Horst
Fascher, a local boxer who soon became a fixture of the scene as a bouncer and manager.

[2.7] In 1960 the Kaiserkeller became a bastion of the Rockers, working-class devotees of early rock à la Elvis and Gene Vincent. They made the club the stage for their spectacular subculture: with their black leather and brash machismo, "they were the stars," as photographer Jürgen Vollmer put it (1983, n.p.). Vollmer moved in a competing youth subculture of bourgeois students and artists, the Francophile Exis (short for "Existentialists"), who were marked by their own distinctive dress (black turtlenecks, shaggy hair for men) and musical taste (chanson, cool jazz). A contingent of Hamburg Exis joined the Kaiserkeller audience in late 1960 after one of them, Klaus Voormann, chanced upon the club one night. His description of that moment is worth quoting at length:

[2.8] What was this? It came from the cellar club—music like I'd never heard. At home we listened only to classical music; boogie-woogie was obscene and the word "rock'n'roll" couldn't be thought, let alone uttered. Our clique listened only to jazz...But this was different. It went right through me and it pleased me so much I wanted to get closer. I was curious and damn scared. I crept carefully down the steps, closer to the magic sounds. I was used to the atmosphere in jazz clubs; the audiences there were "cultivated." Here, I realized that someone could grab me by the collar and punch me in the nose or snatch my wallet or chuck me out head over heels. I felt someone grab my hand—I pulled it back in horror to see the hand stamp now there. I stumbled further inside and was soon blinded by a ghastly ultraviolet light...Meanwhile, the band had changed. The sound was the same: earthy and fat, it landed in a region below the beltline. On stage, the blondest skeleton on earth tried to swing his long, bony leg over the back of the guitarist; he rocked and bobbed without dropping the mic stand. When a waiter barked, "take a seat or piss off!" I took the nearest stool, close to the stage. With huge eyes under my freshly washed mop of hair I sipped my beer and followed the scene around me. (Voorman 2002, 39–40; this and all translations are my own) (note 3)

[2.9] Voormann later cajoled his friends Vollmer and Astrid Kirchherr to visit the club with him, and they too became acolytes of the British bands banging out American rock and roll.

[2.10] Voormann's account reads like a conversion narrative, complete with powerful mystical forces ("it was like being struck by lightning") and a realization that his life had changed forever. What makes it significant historically is the border crossings it reveals. First, a geographic boundary is crossed: a banker's son out for a walk crosses
into an area marked by sexual transgression and a threat of violence ("I wondered what my mother would have said if she had seen me in such a place"). Intertwined with this geographic boundary is one of class: rock and roll in 1960 was strongly coded as proletarian—lascivious, racially Other, beyond respectability. Once Voormann crossed that border and entered that cellar, he temporarily lost his class power: fear of attack glued him to his seat, meekly sipping his beer. But he soon gained new power through his connection with the music. Rock and roll opened him up to a new spontaneity suppressed by his bourgeois upbringing. He and his friends quickly became regulars, staked out space in the club, and befriended the bands—particularly the Beatles (note 4)—because, unlike the working-class Rockers, they could speak English. Their style in turn influenced the Beatles, who appreciated these "arty" fans and overcame their anti-German prejudices (Davies 1968, 83) (note 5). My sources don't reveal what the Rockers made of these bourgeois fans (Fascher, a working-class St. Paulianer, seemingly didn't care enough to have noticed them), though Vollmer writes that his circle eventually won their respect:

[2.11] Excessive vulgarity and violence was held in check by the cool act everybody put on. The Rockers and Exis shared this desire to appear disengaged...Of course, this somewhat precarious posture could not always hold up to the Rockers' heavy beer drinking...The Rockers wanted to be cool but they could not contain their violent energy. We didn't want to draw attention to ourselves but we could not deny our own sense of style. (Vollmer 1983, n.p.)

[2.12] In hindsight this encounter appears as a crucial moment in rock and roll's transformation from a niche working-class product into the cross-class, transnational lingua franca of youth in the 1960s. What bridged the class divide was not only a shared love of the music but youths' desire to distance themselves, through style, from the prevailing pieties of postwar West Germany, plus a shared sensibility that celebrated spontaneity, physicality, and youthfulness itself. It was no accident that this sensibility incubated in a place that encouraged liberation of the body.

[2.13] Emblematic of youth's growing power as a social and a market force (as well as the passing of older, more class-based entertainment regimes) was the opening of the Top Ten in November 1960. Twenty-one-year-old Peter Eckhorn inherited his family's building at Reeperbahn 136, which for decades had housed a hippodrome particularly popular with sailors, who went there to quaff beer and ride draft animals (Günther 1962, 104; Thinius von Christians 1975, 115). But by 1960 the hippodrome was bankrupt, a casualty of the increasing mechanization of shipping (which meant fewer sailors in Hamburg) and the increasing dominance of sex-oriented amusements in St. Pauli. Eckhorn was persuaded by Horst Fascher that he could make money
selling rock and roll, so Eckhorn had the spacious hall converted into a music venue. He poached Sheridan and the Beatles from Koschmider (precipitating the Kaiserkeller's demise in 1961); musicians even took up tools and paintbrushes to help renovate the space. The Top Ten quickly attracted new fans to Beat music, particularly white-collar workers and young women, who were less intimidated by a club on the brightly lit Reeperbahn. Other new clubs followed, such as the Hit Club, Club o.k., and, in April 1962, the Star Club, which would attract fans by the thousands and attain international renown (figures 4 and 5).

![Figure 4. Original advertisements for the Top Ten, ca. 1961–62. Beatlemania Museum, Hamburg. [View larger image.]](image)

![Figure 5. "The misery is ending! The era of village music is over!" Flyers advertising the opening of the Star Club, April 1962. Beatlemania Museum, Hamburg. [View larger image.]](image)

3. Music fans and social change in West Germany

[3.1] These early Beat fans don't appear to have left behind the kinds of artifacts created by other fan communities prominent in the cultural studies literature—any fanzines or bedroom shrines they may have created are lost to history. But they were
nonetheless cultural producers in the sense of shaping and repurposing the commercial offerings available to them. Hamburg fans, whom musician Ulf Miehe called "the most expert" audience (1985, 97), demanded raw, uninhibited rock sung in English. At a time when the dominant culture was working overtime to cultivate respectability and repress the past, audiences ate up John Lennon's onstage Nazi jokes as if engaging in some cathartic ritual (Sutcliffe 2001, 99).

[3.2] These fans fashioned themselves as texts through the ways they moved and dressed, with teased-up hairdos or rocker jackets signifying their allegiances. Such activities eroded clear-cut distinctions between artist and audience while asserting "outsider-ness" in a society that prized conformism. They also asserted that cultural power was a democratic right available to all who wished to claim it (Fiske 1989, 147–48). I use the term democratic cautiously, but deliberately: cautiously, because it conjures up notions of formal organization or conscious opposition to prevailing economic and political structures, which do not apply here. The scene articulated no desire to stand the outside world on its head—rebellion was temporally and spatially contained. Gender stereotypes, for example, remained largely intact: while fans of both sexes revealed in interviews that they were sexually active, women were more monogamous and their sexual pleasure was an afterthought to their partners (according to Ruth Lallemand and Rosi Sheridan McGinnity, with whom I spoke in 2010). Homosexuals were tolerated but vulnerable to ridicule. Most of the first-generation Beat fans—and practically all of the female fans—would leave the scene and "settle down" into work and family life after the mid-1960s (even as they continued to follow their favorite bands whenever they could, up through the present day). Yet these fans' modes of consumption were a democratizing force in that they illustrated "a mode of radical democratization that put pursuit of pleasure at the heart of citizenship" (Chaney 2002, 145), especially if we accept a definition of citizenship that encompasses the right to speak or to gather in public spaces (as will be seen below in the protests over the Star Club's 1964 closure) (Canclini 2001, 15). This mode of consumption also advanced Germany's opening to the West, with English serving as both a sign of musical authenticity and a marker of identity among fans of all social classes who incorporated fragments of it into their daily speech (a gesture that made particular sense in Anglophilic Hamburg). English was also the language of the black American musicians fans revered: embracing it—and rock and roll in general—allowed these young Germans to distance themselves emotionally and politically from the "old Nazis" who had once banned swing and now demonized rock (Fascher 2006, 65). As young Germans' avid consumption of Americanized popular culture rode—and drove—the country's nascent shift toward a postmodern mass culture dominated by consumerism and mass media, it also promoted individualism and new, informal modes of behavior inimical to the spirit of authoritarianism still lingering in post-Nazi Germany (Maase 2001).
Historian Detlef Siegfried presents Beat as a catalyst of West German liberalization and a precondition of the student movement of the late 1960s. Beat clubs served as "melting pots for unconventional styles and ideas" (Siegfried 2006a, 51), as we can see by looking at the composition of their audiences. For example, young artists and photographers working in media rubbed elbows at the clubs with denizens of St. Pauli's queer subcultures and sexual entertainment milieus, as well as "regular everyday people who liked rock and roll" (interview with Ted "Kingsize" Taylor, May 12, 2009). Siegfried sees the Star Club in particular as the "incarnation of the underground," a place where subcultural impulses crystallized and were then reproduced and popularized in the era's mass media (Siegfried 2006a, 51).

But was Hamburg's Beat music scene an oppositional social force? It was, after all, commercially driven. Theodore Adorno dismissed Beat as a "machine-made product" of a "dirigistic mass culture"; even more sympathetic critics tend to view rock and roll after 1958 as less "authentic" because of its commercialization (Baacke 1968, 45–49). Most fans combined participation in the scene, a leisure activity, with the requirements of school or work, and many reject the notion that they were acting in any consciously political way. Voormann, for example, acknowledges that his clique's style was nonconformist but adds, "politically we were completely passive" (Voormann 2002, 34). An alternative view, however, is held by the sociologist Dieter Baacke, who in 1968 characterized Beat as "the silent opposition." Beat's potency lay not in any directly articulated political critique—Baacke distinguishes Beat fans from politically organized youth—but in the way it offered opportunities for leisure completely emancipated from the world of work. Beat adherents critiqued society by distancing themselves from it through shared signs and symbols (the "silent" aspect). Fans sought—and found—a sense of individual identity and recognition denied them at school and the workplace. Beat clubs simultaneously became places of group solidarity, a solidarity that led some to take on a more active political role. Michael "Bommi" Baumann wrote that Beat clubs (in his case in West Berlin) brought together youths who shared their frustrations and forged a consensus that "everything against the current order" and its "petit bourgeois mediocrity" was good (1998, 22–23). Baumann soon moved into radical leftist politics as a founder of the Second of June (1967) Movement and the Commune II (Kommune II). Günter Zint, a photographer, leftist activist, and son of a former Nazi party member, came from a "good bourgeois home" where authority was never questioned or political engagement encouraged. The Star Club, he says, was "the first place I experienced Widerspruch"—literally, "talking back." He states unequivocally that Beat music prepared the ground for the student movement and "1968" (Bye-Bye Star-Club 1987)

Beat also acquired an oppositional character when adults castigated it as a sign of cultural decline. It certainly appeared socially disruptive to Hamburg authorities,
who closely monitored the "Beat shacks" starting in 1961. Youth Protection Squads—a joint effort of police and welfare authorities—conducted undercover visits, searching for underage patrons and curfew violators. Their reports reveal that concomitant with their mandate to protect youth was a view of it as a social threat, a view that gained currency during rock and roll’s early phase. The squads monitored issues such as underage drinking and "obscene" records in jukeboxes, but their most recurring concern was teenage sexual activity. They wrote up the Hit Club, for example, for having a condom dispenser in the men's bathroom. Young women were thought to be in particular moral danger, as the clubs were depicted as havens for runaways and "wayward" girls who were either working in the local sex industry or heading down that road. This concern with sex appears as part of the greater issue of discipline and social control (note 6). Youths were coming to St. Pauli in growing numbers without adult supervision, lured by a culture of music and pleasure so powerful that some were running away from "good homes" in Hannover, Munich, and even Scandinavia to experience it.

This conflict over the Beat clubs climaxed in June 1964 when city official Kurt Falck ordered the Star Club shuttered because of unpaid taxes, Youth Law violations, and, above all, violence. The violence long associated with rock and roll became linked here with the club's practice of having waiters (many of them, like Fascher, the floor manager, trained boxers) handle disorderly drunks with their fists. Standard procedure in St. Pauli, this way of keeping order elicited grave concern among authorities and the local press when used in a youth-oriented club. While musicians and fans alike attest that this violence was not directed at them, Falck, with support from Hamburg's interior minister (and future chancellor) Helmut Schmidt, deemed the Star Club a "youth-endangering place" and declared war on its "vigilante methods" as part of a broad campaign to "clean up" St. Pauli in the interest of preserving tourism. Persecution had the curious effect of transforming club owner Manfred Weissleder, a tough character who originally opened the venue as a tax write-off subsidized by his more lucrative strip clubs, from calculating businessman into dogged advocate for the young people who made up the "Star Club nation." He fought tenaciously to refute his critics and expand the range of Beat concerts offered to the public. Fans reciprocated, with hundreds protesting the closure with peaceful sit-down strikes in the Grosse Freiheit. Asserting their right to cultural space, one group of female demonstrators brandished pacifiers to illustrate their contention that they were being treated like children with no right to speak. It's unclear whether these protests convinced the city to reconsider—more likely, the negative economic impact of the club's closure at the height of Beat's popularity compelled authorities to work out a deal. By late June Weissleder had transferred the club's license to one of his managers and the club had been allowed to reopen (Weissleder was also officially banned from the premises, but
nonetheless retained effective control over operations). Still, the fight over the Beat scene's right to exist was far from over (note 7).

4. The *Star-Club News*: A voice for fans

[4.1] The same year that Falck tried unsuccessfully to close the Star Club, Weissleder began publishing the first German magazine devoted to rock music, the *Star-Club News*. This was Germany's first pop music publication to bear the direct imprint of fans. Indeed, the *News* offered new languages with which to conceptualize the identity of the generation born in the 1940s. The magazine also took a leading role in constructing youth as a consumer market while simultaneously critiquing the commercialization of youth culture in mainstream media. Through articles on music and other topics, as well as its very style, it questioned prevailing notions of respectability, identity, authority, authenticity, and even citizenship, and the everyday meanings of democracy.

[4.2] The initial rationale behind the founding of the *Star-Club News* was rather utilitarian. Weissleder hoped to use Beatlemania to promote his club, where the Beatles had played some 73 nights in 1962 (by 1964 he was advertising it as "the cradle of the Beatles"). He launched "Star-Club" as a brand with its own record label, radio presence, licensed clubs in other cities, booking agency, clothing, and other merchandise (something common today, but unheard of back then); the *Star-Club News* was the publicity wing of this empire (Siegfried 2006b, 213–16). What began in August 1964 as a 4-page newsletter grew into a 36-page monthly with glossy color front and back covers, affordably priced at 50 pfennigs. Circulation expanded to nearly 100,000 in 1965, reaching readers in Scandinavia and East Germany. While the *News* clearly served Weissleder's business interests, with features on bands he managed and albums on the Star-Club label, Weissleder also used his bully pulpit to critique "the establishment" more broadly and defend the Beat music scene against its critics. This critique was partly business driven: Weissleder often used the magazine to rail against Hamburg authorities who harassed the Star Club. But economic interests alone cannot account for his emotional solidarity with Beat fans and musicians. In the *News*'s first issue, Weissleder, who was 36 at the time, spelled out his view of what was at stake in the clash over youth culture:

[4.3] To every sober thinking person, a Beatle haircut is better than the military crew cut of our recent history. And electric guitars make a more pleasant sound than the drums of the foot soldier or the newly revived fanfares of youth brigades ready to once again march eastward. When these forces claim to be sounding the call for freedom—a freedom in which your
haircut or taste in music will be dictated to you—they are lying. Still! (Weissleder 1964)

[4.4] This statement squarely allied Weissleder with young Beat fans and against the unreconstructed prejudices of an older generation. Weissleder himself had chafed as a teenager under the Nazi yoke and despised the Third Reich for robbing him of his youth (he nearly threw a drunken John Lennon on the next flight back to Liverpool in 1962 for calling him a "Nazi swine," an insult Lennon hurled about freely in Hamburg [Rehwagen and Schmidt 1992, 140]). Weissleder and the News were not antiadult per se but opposed the hypocrisy and ignorance of those who preached authoritarian and militaristic values. Such antimilitarism wasn't entirely new in pop publications—historian Kaspar Maase has documented the subtle antimilitarism of Bravo, which is embedded in West Germans' distancing of themselves, by the late 1950s, from conceptions of a militarized masculinity that had been dominant in the first half of the century (Maase 1992, 155; Moeller 1998, 106). Weissleder's remarks seem to be a logical outgrowth of that development, stated plainly and boldly in a magazine that did not hesitate to ally itself with a new sensibility among German youth.

[4.5] When the Star-Club News was launched, West Germany lacked intelligent publications about pop music. On the one hand there was twen, a stylish monthly aimed at 20-somethings, known for its art photography and progressive tone on issues such as sex, race, and the Nazi past (Koetzle 1997). Its music coverage was driven by editor Joachim Berendt, an influential advocate for what he deemed "authentic" music, from Miles Davis to Delta blues (Hurley 2009). Berendt's tastes, coupled with twen's bias toward a more upscale and slightly older readership, meant an aversion to rock and roll, which it portrayed as an "inauthentic" commercial genre associated with a pimply proletarianism. For example, twen's first piece on the Beatles, in May 1964, offered a bemused look at their "hysterical" fans, while their music was assumed to be disposable; one reader subsequently griped that he didn't need twen to inform him that the Beatles were "coarse and loud" (note 8). Twen did not belong to rock and Beat fans.

[4.6] The other side of the coin was Bravo, which billed itself as a weekly magazine of film, TV, and hit records and had over one million readers (Maase 1992, 104–9). Launched in 1956, Bravo injected American style, values, and body images into West Germany's "miracle years." Popular with not just teens but also housewives, Bravo emphasized pop idolatry, Technicolor modernity, and the supremacy of the Top Ten. Because its music coverage was chart driven, Bravo embraced Beatlemania in 1964, but it was ill-equipped to grasp the larger cultural ramifications of the pop explosion the band represented (note 9). Bravo squeezed the Beatles and other bands, like the Rolling Stones, into a prefabricated template of star worship, with articles on their
favorite foods and their girlfriends, and even a Beatle wig contest. While *Bravo* did not employ the demeaning language of the tabloids or the boulevard press, which at times deployed terms reminiscent of Nazi-era rants against "degenerate music," *Bravo* covered Beat in articles written by reporters who seemed old enough to be Ringo's dad, and who used a breathless, silly style designed to appeal to the broadest possible audience (figure 6, note 10).

**Figure 6.** "Would you like to marry a Beatles [sic]?"]* Bravo, no. 9, 1965. [View larger image.]

[4.7] The *Star-Club News* broke with this kind of reportage, drawing on the enthusiasm of Beat fans to create a publication for discerning consumers of pop music. Its subtitle, "Information Report for Young People," reveals an intention to report seriously on what was still widely considered a trivial subject. Weissleder and his staff commented in every issue on the insipidness and dishonesty of German music journalism (no pieces were signed, but my sources agree that Weissleder wrote nearly everything [note 11]). As one piece put it, "The reader has a right to be correctly informed and, even in the domain of the lesser muses, not to be taken for an idiot" (note 12).

[4.8] The *Star-Club News* celebrated a new democratic culture of youths making music. Fans appeared not just as passive consumers but as active shapers of a music scene, and "fan" became a new identity. For example, fans were celebrated as "making" the stars, such as Hamburg's Rattles, winners of the Star-Club's first band
battle in 1963 and the first German Beat band with fan clubs in Britain and the United States. The News treated fans as confidants and collaborators in an alternative journalistic enterprise. It solicited suggestions and critique while encouraging amateur journalists and young photographers (such as Günter Zint). Readers, whose letters appeared in great numbers in each issue, appear as coconspirators in a project to create something more than a mere teenybopper rag. As Weissleder wrote, "Our young readers are not unworldly, pampered hothouse flowers. They're intelligent, modern, realistic. We reject the stupid, illiterate style that the mainstream press thinks one has to use to address young people" (note 13).

[4.9] The News also spotlighted fans as creators of their own spectacular subculture. A May 1965 photo spread on fans at Liverpool's Cavern Club shows teens displaying their identity through defiant poses and slogans scrawled on anoraks proclaiming "Peace" and "Ban the Barbers!" (figure 7). (In contrast, a 1964 feature on the Cavern in the Marxist student magazine konkret caricatured those same fans as the duped objects of media manipulation.) A photo essay on Star Club audiences shows "how Beat bands see their fans," signifying the interconnections between the two (figure 8). This symbiosis also emerges in articles conveying practical information on being in a band and in advertisements, many of which were for instruments, stage wear, and other utilitarian items for working musicians (or those who just wanted to dress like one). The centrality of the fan-musician symbiosis found full expression in the cover of the News's last issue, the "autograph hound" photograph of John Lennon and Gene Vincent. Within the Star Club community, the fan was a respected, indeed vital, member (note 14).

Figure 7. Beat fans at Liverpool's Cavern Club. Star-Club News, May 1965. [View larger image.]
The magazine also became a forum for debate over changing notions of identity, such as the question of formal address. The July 1965 issue introduced a new editorial column by Ulla, the 17-year-old staff typist. In contrast to the boss's use of formal address (Sie) to readers, Ulla's "Halli-hallo" barges right into the intimacy of Du (you), her observations peppered with teen slang. Her next column reveals that her piece had set off a lively debate in the office over her use of Du. The "old man" objected to this "overly familiar swine-herder manner," which was common in other youth magazines, reflecting Weissleder's intention to elevate the discourse around Beat and his insistence that the News's readers, may of whom were over 18, be addressed as adults. Letters to the magazine continued the debate: one called Ulla's informality a stain on the News's otherwise "noble" style, but another asked, "Why we can't drop the stiffness of 'Sie'?") Weissleder ultimately both defended Ulla and declared that anyone who wished could call him Du—one indication of shifting attitudes toward this issue and a harbinger of the near future, in which young people would insist on informal address as a signifier of egalitarianism (note 15).

Ultimately, according to the News, respectability resided less in forms of address than in intelligence and achievement. In its role as an advocate for fans and bands, the News often criticized inept authorities and established institutions. One piece dubbed the West German music industry a greedy horde that would rather put out novelty records than promote "real talent." Grubby promoters, many of whom were just yesterday "vegetable handlers and coal-Fritzes," reaped a "golden rain" of riches, of which the bands saw little (Weissleder, in contrast, was universally characterized by musicians as a demanding but generous employer). The music press was complicit in this swindle, and the News ran a series exposing the corrupt system through which industry publications rigged the music charts. The News called for a "record parliament" that would accurately reflect the tastes of record buyers—a bid for legitimacy for both the News and for fans, whose interests were not being served by
an out-of-touch music press. The music press was also skewered for its retrograde notions of gender in a piece on the all-female Liverbirds. It showed the band laughing at an issue of Musikparade that assured readers that they were in fact female: "skeptics have asked whether the Liverbirds were real girls because they just couldn't believe the weaker sex was capable of hammering out such a great beat" (note 16). In this and other ways, the News set itself up as a hipper, more democratic publication for a knowing audience.

[4.12] "Knowingness" (Bailey 1994) also marked the News's take on the mainstream press as a whole, which it pilloried for its sensationalism and "glaring lack of expertise" in its rush to "get a lick from the honey pot" of the Beat craze (note 17). The Springer Press—publisher of the mass-circulation right-wing tabloid Bild—earned sustained reproach for its daily menu of horror stories and negative portrayals of youth. The News's gallery of rogues also included Kurt Falck, a stand-in for all those "guardians of youth" who in fact demonized youth:

[4.13] Bureaucrat Falck, celebrated court expert on skewering club proprietors and newly minted knight of an order of fools, was not the cause this time, as Lüneburg's Star-Palast was closed for violations of the Youth Protection Law. But no doubt officials there took their cues from their good old neighbor Hamburg, where dashing prosecutors have long taken aim, under any pretext, at the hated "Twist shacks" ("Twist," by the way, is just as much a misnomer as "shacks"). ("Palast-Revolution," Star-Club News, April 1965)

[4.14] This short article conveys several things. It establishes the magazine's knowingness by mocking the ignorant nomenclature of a hostile press ("Twist shacks"). It aims to evoke sympathy for Weissleder, who appears as the victim of idiotic moral crusaders. Finally, it sets up Weissleder as an ally who fights for youths' right to cultural space (note 18).

[4.15] This antiauthority posture was consistent, appearing in articles describing Beat fans being maligned and even brutalized by unsympathetic adults. When one young reader letter asked why there were no Beat concerts for fans under 16, Weissleder replied that officials "who falsely view Beat music as a manifestation of criminality" put up endless roadblocks. Youth style was another battleground. One piece explained singer Tony Sheridan's new front-combed hairstyle as an attempt to cover up a gash inflicted by a small-town German restaurateur who didn't like the fact that Sheridan's date was wearing trousers. Throughout 1965 the News defended young men who wore long hair, as in a piece blasting Hamburg's Eppendorf Clinic for refusing treatment to a shaggy 24-year-old, and a tongue-in-cheek feature juxtaposing pictures of the "great composers" in all their long-haired glory with ones of Beat musicians ("Beatles cuts
have been around forever!). A piece entitled "Mopp-Kopp" recounted real-life situations where Beat musicians and fans came to the rescue (such as carrying Chancellor Adenauer's luggage at a train station or pulling a wounded driver from his wrecked motorcycle) while adults proved unwilling to help, and urged young people to help their neighbors: "all Red Cross centers are taking blood donations—even from mop-top wearers" (note 19).

[4.16] The News also questioned prevailing notions of respectability in ways that can be construed as political. When Ulla criticized Hamburg police for turning water cannons on fans at a September 1965 Rolling Stones concert, she anticipated a broad debate in the West German press over aggressive crowd-control efforts by police during the Beatles' 1966 tour (note 20). Such commentary constitutes part of a broader discourse about respectability in a society still suspicious of youth as a mass. In hindsight we can see that ideas about youths' rights in the public sphere, generated within the Beat scene, were entering the mainstream even before the student movement thrust them onto the world stage in 1968.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] The image with which I began this article appeared in the last issue of the Star-Club News, which folded after its December 1965 issue because of disputes with the publisher. By then the original community of fans of rock and Beat music had exploded its boundaries, no longer confined to smoky cellars in disreputable side streets. But the Hamburg scene's role in incubating the youth culture pop explosion embodied by the Beatles remained central. Born at the confluence of commercial and subcultural impulses, the scene offered a model of at least temporary emancipation from the repressive conformism of West Germany's "miracle years." It generated a cross-class, cross-national solidarity among fans in which the social meanings of authority, respectability, and democracy could be questioned and eventually reworked. Fans' active role in this scene was a crucial element in the larger transition away from a youth culture defined by adults and designed to protect youth from "smut" and "moral dangers" to a new culture, generated by youth for youth, that strove to be something more than just disposable entertainment.

6. Acknowledgments

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7. Notes

1. Adenauer, of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), was chancellor from 1949 to 1963. The mail-order erotica business also flourished in this period, indicating a more complex sexual history than the period's surface respectability would have us believe (Heineman 2006).

2. The Lido advertised itself as "the largest and most modern dance hall in Hamburg." An October 1958 report from a tax inspector notes that the Lido "makes a clean impression." Records on the building's history to 1961 in Staatsarchiv Hamburg (hereafter StaHH), 442-1/95.92-15/7.

3. This account was written some 40 years after the event, though various versions differing only in minor details have appeared, starting with Hunter Davies's *The Beatles: The Authorized Biography* (1968). Voormann is aware of this story's mythic quality and accords it a prominent place in his memoir.

4. Voormann designed the cover of their 1966 album, *Revolver*, and played bass with Lennon and George Harrison in the 1970s; Vollmer restyled the Beatles' hair into the famous "mop top"; Kirchherr took the first professional-quality photographs of the band and became the lover of Stu Sutcliffe, the Beatles' first bassist, who died in 1962.

5. Lennon and Sutcliffe were themselves art students. Pauline Sutcliffe writes that her brother initially couldn't talk to German girls because he "felt guilty" about the war, but his new German friends subsequently had a profound affect on him artistically and personally (Sutcliffe 2001, 78, 102).


9. This phrase comes from Greil Marcus: "A pop explosion is an irresistible cultural explosion that cuts across lines of class and race...and, most crucially, divides society itself by age. The surface of daily life...is affected with such force that deep and substantive changes in the way large numbers of people think and act take place...[P]op explosions can provide the enthusiasm, the optimism and the group identity that make mass political participation possible" (Marcus 1976, 175).

10. For examples, see "Deutsche Twister in England ganz gross" and "Die Beatles YEAH YEAH YEAH" (*Bravo*, no. 6, February 1964, and no. 16, April 1964). Matheja (2003) surveys newspaper coverage and finds terms such as "baboon" (*Paviane*) and "plague of bugs" (*Käferplage*); pages 242 and 258 show some of these balding, bespectacled reporters.

11. Interview with Ulf Krueger, December 2008. Dieter Radtke, Weissleder's archivist, stated that his boss refused to delegate and "did it all" at the *Star-Club News*, with staff helping primarily with research (Rehwagen and Schmidt 1992, 148).


13. "Liebe Star-Club Freunde!," *Star-Club News*, June 1965. See also "Wer schreibt, der bleibt," *Star-Club News*, February 1965; "Jugendpresse!"; letters to the editor ("Nicht verzagen—Manfred fragen!"), *Star-Club News*, September 1965. Ads were also placed in the April and May 1965 issues asking for submissions from readers, and a column entitled "Leser-Report" ran briefly in August 1965. Had the *Star-Club News* not folded abruptly in December 1965, it's safe to assume that it would have incorporated more fan-generated content.


15. See "Intern," *Star-Club News*, August 1965; letters page, *Star-Club News*, September 1965. Interestingly, informal address was already being used in ads for the Star-Club record label ("Eure Musik ist da"), in accordance with the established advertising tactic of appealing to consumers through easy familiarity.

17. "Konjunktur im Beat." Elsewhere, "Ente" (Star-Club News, May 1965) blasts mob-inciting reporters for repeating the myth that in 1962 the Beatles had urinated off the balcony of their rooms next to the Star Club onto a passing group of nuns. Ironically, that myth found its way into the "respectable" Beatles literature, such as Philip Norman's Shout! (1981, 164).

18. Indeed, in this period Weissleder began a fruitless battle with Hamburg officials to have certain concerts at the Star Club designated "cultural events," and thus subject to lower taxes. See StaHH file 95.92-15/9 Band 5 (January–September 1966); also Siegfried (2006b, 224–25).


8. Works cited:


Praxis

"So oft to the movies they've been": British fan writing and female audiences in the silent cinema

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Abstract—This article aims to address the ways in which working-class and lower-middle-class British women used silent-era fan magazines as a space for articulating their role within the development of a female film culture. The article focuses on letter pages that formed a key site for female contribution to British fan magazines across the silent era. In contributing to these pages, women found a space to debate and discuss the appeal and significance of particular female representations within film culture. Using detailed archival research tracing the content of a specific magazine, Picturegoer, across a 15-year period (1913–28), the article will show the dominance of particular types of female representation in both fan and "official" magazine discourses, analyzing the ways in which British women used these images to work through national tensions regarding modern femininity and traditional ideas of female propriety and restraint.

Keywords—1910s–20s Britain; Fan culture; Fan magazine; Female stars; Nationality; Women's writing; Costume; Performance


1. Introduction

Women's fan writing about silent cinema as it appears in British fan magazines presents one of the most interesting generative aspects of film culture as female cultural practice. Fan letters are an example of women's involvement in creating film culture as a topic to be written about. British women found a platform to express their interpretation of their nationally specific cinematic encounters within the fan magazine as a new form of extratextual print ephemera shadowing the growth of cinema culture.

The affirmation of cinema as a topic worthy of written debate engaged notions of high- and lowbrow cultural divisions in the early 20th century and the place of cinema within this divide. Fan theory has analyzed the deconstruction of this high/low binary of cultural forms in fan activity, which proceeds by "treating popular texts as if they merited the same degree of attention and appreciation as canonical texts" (Jenkins 1992, 17). Breaking with approaches to fandom that have sought to
"construct a sustainable opposition between the 'fan' and the 'consumer,'" Matt Hills suggests that fans are capable of "simultaneously 'resisting' norms of capitalist society" while also being "implicated in these very economic and cultural processes" (2002, 29). Hills suggests that the status of fans as "ideal consumers" who at the same time "express anticommercial beliefs" constitutes a necessarily irresolvable contradiction that needs to be "tolerated" by the researcher, rather than subsumed under a banner of totalizing resistance to commercial discourses (2002, 29).

[1.3] Hills's attention to this contradictory positioning of fandom is valuable for exploring the ways in which female silent-film fans embraced the commercialized discourses of the fan magazine as a way to "write back," creating alternative readings from within commercial forms. By discussing and debating film in fan letters, female fans articulated a knowledgeable authority on the subject of cinema culture, entrenched within a national fan community linked by the shared consumption of fan magazines.

[1.4] Fan magazines allow the researcher to explore female fan culture beyond the confines of the exhibition site, reading silent cinema as a phenomenon that reached, influenced, and fundamentally was used by women in multiple representational spheres. In her 2000 study, Perverse Spectators, Janet Staiger argues that contextual factors primarily determine the experiences of spectators and how these experiences are put to use in everyday life. Crucially, Staiger removes the "meaning" of a film from the film text itself. Following Staiger, a key methodological impetus behind this article is the desire to move beyond theoretical readings of gendered silent audiences derived primarily from the analysis of film texts. Fan letters help the researcher move closer to unearthing a range of examples of the voices of actual female spectators.

2. Cinema and women's popular press in early 20th-century Britain

[2.1] Adrian Bingham's work on gender and the popular press in interwar Britain has been significant in acknowledging that popular products like magazines have more to offer than patriarchal dictations on the appropriate role of contemporary models of femininity. Daily journalism of the late teens and twenties did not "unthinkingly champion housewifery and motherhood; its pages debated and explored what these roles meant for women and society, offered a range of perspectives, and explicitly and implicitly contrasted them with other possible roles" (2004, 17).

[2.2] What is interesting about the fan magazine's place within these journalistic discourses is its construction of a space for women to write back alongside the presentation of differing ideas about modern womanhood. Published fan letters testify
to the personal resonance that filmic encounters held for working-class and lower-middle-class British women in the immediate postwar era. Further than this, they challenge the superficiality of leisure experiences, emphasizing the way in which ephemeral traces of women's engagement with leisure forms insist upon themselves as historically significant traces of a period of cultural transformation for British women.

[2.3] As the cinema rapidly established its place within British leisure practices, progressing from shop-front spectacle of the early 1900s to the city-center picture palaces by the teens, femininity as both a personal and social construct had transformed just as fundamentally within British culture.

[2.4] Lower-class British women of this period were "constituted in a matrix of factors: improved educational opportunities, new employment prospects, higher wages...[and] increased leisure time" (Giles 2004, 48) (note 1). In tandem with these changes, working-class and lower-middle-class women were experiencing greater independence in the public arena, and the cinema was increasingly a focal point for women's public leisure.

[2.5] By 1916, the UK cinema audience was estimated at 20 million, with 5,000 purpose-built cinema venues and 5,400 regular film shows (Hiley 1998, 97). Roughly half the population were regular cinemagoers by 1917, when some 21 million tickets were being sold each week at an average price of fourpence (Hiley 1998, 101).

[2.6] How, then, did the fan magazine figure within these cultural and industrial developments? Targeting a female readership, fan magazines were aligned with the turn in British print journalism toward "the private sphere of home and family" in an attempt to solicit a broader female audience (LeMahieu 1988, 33). The creation of the successful women's journal *Forget-Me-Not* in 1891, followed by the popular weekly magazine *Home Chat* in 1894, assisted in pushing print journalism toward a realization of a mass market of working-class and lower-middle-class women. From the turn of the century on, the British press began to make "intense efforts...to attract female readers" (LeMahieu 1988, 26) (note 2).

[2.7] It made economic sense, therefore, for the creators of fan magazines to similarly cultivate a female readership. In doing so, fan magazines paralleled women's magazines and the women's pages of daily newspapers in targeting a female audience as the figures of financial control over leisure and consumption within the family unit. As LeMahieu assesses, "it was women who shopped for food, bought clothes, paid the rent, and made the daily financial decisions" (1988, 33). Newspapers and advertising became firmly linked as a way of targeting female readers in the recognition of this
female control over disposable income. Fan magazines similarly attempted to strike a balance between original content and advertising space.

[2.8] British fan magazines appeared on the UK market from the 1910s. Publications such as Pictureshow (1919–60), Picturegoer (1913–60), and Girls Cinema (1920–32) were among the most popular national periodicals. Magazines like Girls Cinema were extremely close in tone and content to the cheapest women's magazines of the era, such as Peg's Paper, which explicitly targeted working-class young women. Picturegoer (figure 1) combined elements of these working-girl magazine formats (note 3) with higher-quality production values, featuring illustrated cover images (regularly in color by 1924), fashion spreads, and an array of advertising addressing domestic labor.

![Picturegoer, April 1922, vol. 3, no. 16.](image)

**Figure 1.** The Picturegoer, April 1922, vol. 3, no. 16. [View larger image.]

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3. Picturegoer

[3.1] Picturegoer was selected as the main focus of this study for several reasons. Archival holdings of the magazine (note 4) constitute one of the most complete and accessible collections from the silent era, offering greater scope for the recognition of trends and changes within the publication across larger periods of time. In terms of its status as a popular artifact, Picturegoer was also one of the longest-running magazines of its kind, founded in 1913 and remaining in circulation for nearly 50 years. It was in the late teens and twenties that the magazine laid these long-lasting
foundations as Britain's leading cinema periodical, marketing itself as "the screen's most popular magazine" (March 1928, 3).

[3.2] Published weekly initially and later monthly at a price of twopence, the same price as other working-class to lower-middle-class women's magazines like *Home Chat* and *Women's Weekly*, the magazine was cheap enough to ensure a steady readership across a wide community of women. Although *Picturegoer* was not exclusively a women's magazine, the tone of the publication was overriding geared toward female readers—increasingly so across the decade—with an excess of women's articles, female fan contributions, and female-targeted advertising. The format of the periodical fell into a generally standardized structure by the late teens and changed little till the end of the silent era, following a basic layout that included news of present and forthcoming features, reviews, star gossip, fashion spreads, interviews, star portraits, short story adaptations, and poetry and letter pages. Beginning as the "Bouquets and Brickbats" (or occasionally the "Our Letter Bag"/"The Letter Box Editors") section in the early teens, *Picturegoer*’s letters page became a far more established section by around 1921, adopting the "What Do You Think?" heading and receiving a fixed page number and personality editor under the title "The Thinker," who called upon readers to keep the page "filled with letters that reflect credit on the high intelligence of all film fans" (January 1928, 60). The poetry page, too, which began as a rare addition in the early teens, was given a more fixed position within the magazine by around 1922 under the heading "Kinema Carols."

[3.3] The nature of the silent cinema experience created a void of extratextual knowledge that *Picturegoer* readily filled, providing primary access for female readers to such coveted information as the eye and hair color of stars, and insights into their speaking voices. A *Picturegoer* fan letter by "Hilary" from 1924 underscores this fan desire to know more about screen personalities:

[3.4] It would be a boon and a blessing to many if the cast were shown at the end as well as the beginning of films, because no one but an expert Pelmanist can memorize an entire cast in the short time during which it is shown, especially if some of the names are new. (December 1924, 102) (note 5)

[3.5] Another fan writing in the same issue of *Picturegoer* goes further:

[3.6] I should like to mention one little point with regard to the film which, I have no doubt, would be a great improvement in the eyes of the audiences in our picture houses...My suggestion is this. That after each film of any importance, a few feet of film be used to show the chief actors and actresses as they appear in real life. I have mentioned this point to several of my
friends and they approve of it...If, in any way, we could influence the taking-up of this idea, I'm sure it would improve the kinema greatly. (December 1924, 102) (note 6)

[3.7]  Picturegoer's ability to portray, however fabricated, some sense of how stars "appear in real life" was a key reason for the pull that silent-era fan magazines held over women's imaginations in their ability to offer greater intimacy with screen stars. Picturegoer created a primary position for itself at the heart of cinema culture in this way.

4. Negotiating British femininity

[4.1]  In its mediation of female representations, the official content of Picturegoer attempted something of a balancing act, allowing space for the exploration of female self-expression while simultaneously affirming more conservative gender values. Advertising bordering almost every page of the publication constructed narratives of domestic and heterosexual female independence in relation to narratives of consumer desire.

[4.2]  Picturegoer advertisements for Persil washing powder across the 1920s, for example, promised to have "abolished wash-day" (December 1923, 17) and given "the freedom to a million women...to call your day your own," (April 1927, 68) while Perservene boasted that washing could be finished in "record time...to dress and off to the pictures in the afternoon" (December 1923, 17). Khansana lipstick promotions, echoing dozens of cosmetic advertisements in the magazine, guaranteed "a new thrill for every women—in her mirror" (January 1928, 55). These narratives of "thrill" and free time were safely contained within domestic structures, which ultimately led the consuming female gaze from products designed to create leisure opportunities and personal allure back to home, family, and female domesticity (improving the routine of "wash day," and so on).

[4.3]  The written content of the magazine fed into the construction of these narratives of temporary liberation by excessively foregrounding the "voice" and self-expression of female stars. One of the most prominent aspects of the magazine is the dominance of the pronoun and the possessive in interview and article headings—"What I Should Like to Be" (January 1920, 40); "Mainly About Me" (October 1921, 22); "Why I Like Work" (October 1918, 343); "How I Got a Start" (February 1918, 173); "When My Chance Came" (April 1921, 22); "How I Felt in Pictures" (March 1918, 227)—along with direct questions to the reader—"Why Should Women Propose?" (May 1920, 533); "Have We No 'It' Girls?" (December 1928, 39); "Who Is the Most Popular Film Star?" (February 1925, 4).
A strong sense of the importance of female opinion can be gleaned from these articles. Yet while bestowing apparent self-definition with one hand, the magazine paralleled its advertising in efforts to reinforce the temporary nature of such discourses with the other, affirming a heterosexual domestic focus within much of its sustained writing about the private lives of female stars.

A regular crop of "star home life" articles praising the domesticity of female stars appeared across the decade. Interviews with the stunt star Ruth Roland, for example, while acknowledging her abilities in boxing, riding, shooting, and fencing, stressed that the title "homebody Ruth" (January 1921, 34) was much closer to her real personality. Articles offset her "masculinity" against the more feminized image of a "pretty, dainty, and winsome" (February 1918, 173) star who professed to "love cooking" (June 1921, 43) and represented "as much of a home-girl as the most old-fashioned of our grandparents could desire" (June 1921, 43).

Articles with headings such as "What Women Want" (June 1925, 1) and "The Happy Ending: Is It Really Wanted?" (April 1920, 490) could therefore sit alongside more traditional topics concerning clothing, cooking, child-rearing, and homemaking, emphasizing domesticity and familial responsibility in the offscreen lives of female stars.

5. Writing back

Through written interaction with the magazine, however, female audiences were able to show their awareness of the compromise implicit in such contradictory constructions of modern femininity. Letter writers demonstrated, to use Gaylyn Studlar's phrase, an "I-know-but-nevertheless" (1996, 269) attitude toward such representations and the discourses of emulation they promoted. The fan magazine's ability to offer a platform for the female fan's own voice ensured there was at least a possibility for women to demonstrate an understanding of the ideological trade-off inherent within the consumption of popular female culture.

To illustrate this attitude, I offer an example of a fan letter written by "Irene" in 1926:

Can you tell me why all interviewers rave and sigh about how simple, sad and sweet are all the stars they ever meet? Apparently the poor young dears are almost driven to hot salt tears because they earn so much each week. Their voices break when they try to speak of the ravishing gowns they hate to wear...and how they loathe the horrid glare publicity forces them to bear! They'd love to live in a small back street and have to fight to make ends meet; they'd sooner wear a gingham frock than queen it in a "Paris
shock." Where *did* they learn this courage pray, that hides their heartache day by day, at having to drive in imported cars and live in mansions (poor little stars!) when all the time they long and pine for floors to scrub and wool to twine...Perhaps some day a kinder Fate—will let some sweet star clean my grate, at six in the morning—and light the fire...then, then she will gain her life's desire! (January 1926, 66)

[5.4] Irene's letter foregrounds a central irritation with the hypocritical presentation of film stars who profess to detest their material wealth and success. The interviewers she discusses are able to list and thereby emphasize the various examples of star prosperity and luxury—"ravishing gowns," "Paris shocks," "imported cars," "mansions," and so on—while framing them as points of burden in the lives of female stars, depicting screen personalities as reluctant consumers.

[5.5] Irene taps into the double bind whereby the representation of women as pure consumers was encouraged within commercial products like the fan magazine (in order to ensure continued purchase) while at the same time framed with disapproval where such pure consumption endangered notions of appropriate female modesty. As Sue Bruley has shown, in the postwar era it was "single women who were especially vilified in the media as being useless members of society," while "married women workers were not tolerated" (1999, 62). The female star as independently successful working woman, therefore—single or married and on constant display as an object of consumer desire—directly provoked these attitudes.

[5.6] Jackie Stacey's work on Hollywood cinema and British female spectatorship in *Star Gazing* (1994) explores the way cinema and consumption were linked as discourses that relied upon the construction of a desiring female gaze. Stacey argues that the female consumption of star images was intertwined with the British experience of "the expansion of consumer capitalism" from the turn of the century onward (1994, 179). Erika D. Rappaport has shown, for example, how "new images of femininity which highlighted the centrality of women in urban life were integral to the development and success of mass consumer culture in early twentieth-century England" (1995, 149). Star images formed an important part of this network of new female representations interrelated with consumer culture.

[5.7] Stacey argues that cinema "shaped consumer habits" by aligning itself with consumer culture developments through "the display of the female star as commodity" (1994, 180). She emphasizes the strong parallels between "goods and stars...on display to spectators as desirable spectacles" (1994, 179).

[5.8] Irene's letter would seem to support this view, dealing explicitly with the subject of her own consumption of the extratextual marketing of female stars in fan
magazines, where the discussion of female stars often focused upon the translation of high earnings into the display of consumer goods ("ravishing gowns," "imported cars," etc.).

[5.9] The fan magazine's attempts to mask the direct display of women's enjoyment of their earnings as professional performers speaks to the paradox of a consumer culture. Relative female economic freedom was required in order for women to engage with consumer culture and the commercialized images of female lifestyle it constructed, yet unease persisted within British culture about the excessive commodification and display of the female image.

[5.10] In letters like Irene's, lower-class women were able to challenge the fan magazine's way of dealing with this paradox—in Irene's case, refusing to accept what she perceives as the false humility of stars. Other female letter writers discussed the problematic representation of female performers as domestic laborers within film narratives. Some expressed frustration with attempts to construct points of identification between working-class viewers and actresses, just as Irene expresses frustration with the attempts of interviewers to construct star personas in sympathy with working women.

[5.11] A letter writer in 1923, for example, complains about films focusing upon "domestic troubles which most of us can see for ourselves outside the movies" (September 1923, 66). An earlier reader in 1918 expresses a similar attitude:

[5.12] One goes to the picture shows to be amused, not to be dragged through reels of someone's troubles, and I think when our producers realise this, and give us something lighter and brighter, they will have all the successes they, and we, desire. (August–September 1918, 234)

[5.13] Writing seven years later, another female fan expresses the persistence of the same irritation, insisting the trade was "pathetically wrong" (June 1925, 12) in expecting "women in the audience to prefer homely stories and domestic ventures" (June 1925, 13). (note 7)

[5.14] The attempts of the industry to appeal to working-class values was not always a point of irritation, however. Some female fans applauded the filmic representation of the modern female experiences of laboring women. One fan identifying herself as a working girl, for example, praises the presentation of female experience in a Pauline Frederick film amid an audience of "women, experienced in the drama of life, who closely follow the great actress as she works out a problem or question of to-day" (March 1918, 283).
Women across the spectrum of working-class and lower-middle-class British femininity, therefore, used the letters page to debate both the appeal and the problems of points of identification between female audiences and female stars within a network of film texts, magazine representation, and personal experience.

6. Fan community

As the letter from 1923 demonstrates in its discussion of the "us" and "we" of the female audience, fan participation allowed readers to independently reach out to other women for their thoughts and opinions on these kinds of issues. One reader describes the letter-writing community of Picturegoer as a "delightful debating society, open to all readers" (August 1928, 56), highlighting the significance of the page as a site for communal discussion and analysis. Many contributing Picturegoer fans were keen to establish their interest in debating cinema culture as separate from a stereotypical image of the obsessive film fanatic. Picturegoer reader Greta Gray, for example, begins her letter by asserting:

It has always been my opinion that continual raving in print over a favourite star is injurious to his or her interests rather than otherwise, and for that reason I have refrained from writing to you before...I am not a "hysterical flapper." (December 1925, 98)

Another reader similarly asserts she is "NOT a 'fan,' but keenly critical" (July 1926, 66); another, on discussing Rudolph Valentino, says, "I am no silly flapper" (February 1923, 66). Fan poetry also often mocked the image of the fan as one whose "critical sense / comes lagging behind!" (March 1925, 64).

Rather than simply writing "carols and mush / To the stars that they worship" (October 1924, 50), therefore, women used the letters page to discuss their understanding of the cinema as an industry as well as a leisure-time experience. Some female contributors debated such subjects as the problems facing British film production, particularly in relation to its seeming inability to create successful internationally appealing female stars. Others railed against the lack of sophistication of films for women in general, reacting negatively to objectified feminine images in favor of more plot-heavy pictures, since, as one fan explains, "in nine out of ten pictures the story is absolutely nothing; all one sees is a set of photographic poses" (June 1924, 66).

There was considerable disagreement among fans over what exactly it was "the public really wanted" (May 1920, 568). Some called for greater realism in the cinema with films "which deal frankly and truthfully with life" (March 1918, 282), while some wanted the screen to present purely escapist fantasies enabling the viewer to be
"carried away from this workaday world and its troubles" (September 1923, 66). Women were united in these debates, nonetheless, in the general assertion that the industry's conception of the ways in which women identified with cinematic female representations was out of step with actual female audiences. Fan letters often called upon the collective influence of fans in an attempt to reconcile their preferences with the types of films produced and exhibited by the industry and the quality of the cinemagoing experience.

7. Virtual community

[7.1] The virtual community of the letters page further offered an alternative access point to the enjoyment of film, far less fraught with the potential physical hazards of cinema space. Numerous British postcards of the era drawing upon the experience of cinemagoing for their humorous illustrations emphasized cinema space as an arena of courtship. Such examples often tended toward a depiction of male coercion, showing male characters enticing innocent female companions into cinema space with the hope of engineering a romantic or sexual encounter (figures 2 and 3). Female community within the cinema venue itself may have been difficult to disentangle from such encounters, or from the exposure to a male audience "just above the breadline" (Dewes 1983, 18), who used film theaters as an escape from the cold and a cheap refuge from the street.
Figure 2. "They that go in darkness." Comic cinema postcard, circa 1913. (Image taken from University of Exeter's Bill Douglas Centre archive, item BDCEXE 87541.) [View larger image.]
[7.2] Attempts by exhibitors to appeal to working-class audiences by welcoming the family into cinema space may be a further reason for women investing in the female-centered virtual community of the fan magazine. The rise of purpose-built cinemas attracted "whole families of industrial classes" (Calvert 1911, 4), and as such may have often denied women independent escapism from familial and domestic interaction.

[7.3] Fan writing, therefore, facilitated the creation of new communal spheres distanced from the cinema-going act itself. Letter writing encouraged women to identify themselves as part of a virtual fan community, creating and sustaining social networks. The following extract highlights the way women felt the cinema magazine brought them together in its ability to unite women across broad class and geographical origins:

[7.4] I have read PICTURES every week for nearly two years, and I find that in nearly every issue there are letters from folks from different parts of the country giving their ideas—admiring and criticising every part of the film
industry. It is only through PICTURES that we are able to express our opinions, and I think that we should be brought even closer together...Let's have more public opinion. (May–June 1918, 518)

[7.5] Many such comments by contributing fans seem to indicate that, although the viewing experience was a shared one spatially, written fan interaction offered something unique and valuable, disengaged from the potentially fraught environment of cinema space.

8. Picturegoer stars

[8.1] Female reception as it emerges from fan magazine discourse, therefore, is made distinctive by the magazine's ability to offer a platform for the expression of female choice, desire, and community. Fan letters illuminate the ways in which cinema functioned in women's lives not simply as passive involvement within mass consumer culture, but as a practice that served emotional and intellectual needs, embraced by many female readers as offering an active, self-reflexive female reception.

[8.2] The central focus of women's discussion, however, remains the figure of the female star, which functioned as a keystone for contested ideas of contemporary female behavior and appearance. Mapping those stars most featured and discussed in Picturegoer tells us several things about the way British fan magazines operated financially in relation to the commodification of female stars. Fan magazines relied heavily on financing from both the film industry (publicists offered money in exchange for coverage of the stars whose movies they were promoting) and external companies, whose non-cinema-related advertising littered the pages of fan publications.

[8.3] Such advertising compelled publishers like Odhams, which produced Picturegoer, to balance what they perceived as the demands of their readership with their need for funding. Picturegoer featured a large amount of advertising, as already touched upon, promoting a range of female-targeted domestic and cosmetic products, yet was also dotted with star promotions. The twopence cover price of the magazine placed it in the midrange of film magazines on the market at the time—not cheap enough to force an overwhelming reliance on advertising finance, but enough to make these factors prevalent in the presentation of female images and the commodification of actresses as product promoters.

[8.4] These factors obviously cast doubt on direct relationships between how often stars appeared in the magazine and their popularity with British audiences. Nevertheless, looking at letters—and their comments on such advertising—does allow us to gather a sense of women's engagement with particular stars. There are a handful of early stars who have been the subject of silent film studies—particularly those seen
to represent stereotypical twenties types, such as the flappers Clara Bow (Orgeron 2003) and Colleen Moore (Landay 2002; Hastie 2007) and the vamp Pola Negri (Negra 2002; Butler 2002). The critical use of these particular personalities has often been based on their popularity with American audiences, however.

[8.5] In an attempt to approach a fuller understanding of British fans' interaction with female star images, therefore, an initial step has been to record and tally the appearance of individual female actresses in Picturegoer across the period under study (1913 to 1928), marking where they feature in pictorial forms (posters, photographs, covers, advertisements) and written forms (interviews, articles, features written by the stars themselves, competitions, fan letters, and poetry). The aim here is to establish a more relevant groundwork upon which to explore the range of feminine types circulating in fan discourse to which British women would have been most exposed and most prone to respond (note 8).

[8.6] Tracking stars in this way offers a detailed insight into the context in which they regularly appeared. This methodology enables the researcher to explore the significance of results that show how certain stars received next to no formal magazine coverage, yet scored highly purely on the basis of fan writing. Stars like Pola Negri, for example, whom fans speak of as "the finest emotional star on the screen to-day" (December 1924, 102), and Marie Doro—"the spirit of a faery, an angel, an idol" (February 1925, 82)—rarely feature in the official pages of Picturegoer, and yet remain in the higher bracket of popular stars, purely based on their continued debate and discussion by contributing fans.

[8.7] Tallies of star appearances in the magazine offer a basic framework for understanding the popularity of female stars among female fans. Of all the stars tallied, 69 percent were American and just 20 percent British. Of the 20 most featured stars, the ratio of American to British was 14:3, and the remaining 3 actresses—Greta Garbo (Swedish), Pola Negri (Polish), and Alla Nazimova (Russian)—were American-based stars by the late teens and twenties. This is in contrast to the featured British actresses, who remained almost exclusively on the British screens, with the exception of Betty Balfour, one of Britain's few successful international actresses.

[8.8] American actresses, therefore, dominated British female fan experience. Industrially, there are several factors that justify this conclusion, such as the perceived failure of the British industry to emulate American production values; the temporary shutdown of all British production in 1924; and American block-booking tactics forcing domestic production from the cinemas.

[8.9] A more detailed exploration of the fan discussion and treatment of the nationality of stars, however, reveals that the British female appreciation for and
interaction with American star images was complex. Fan interaction was not simply a matter of embracing the imported personalities of an American-saturated industry, but a relationship that engendered cultural tensions regarding models of female propriety and restraint.

[8.10] The conflict between traditional and new forms of femininity played out in many of the magazine's commercial discourses reverberates within fan discussion of female performances and personas. Stardom and the circulation of star images fed into the disruption of a traditional concept of a gendered public/private divide under threat in this period. The cinema as new public leisure form encouraged the consumption of public female images and the reciprocating display of the female body as an industry whose extratextual discourses relied heavily upon marketing the possibility of imitating star personas.

[8.11] The increasing grandeur of the public cinemagoing experience with the rise of the larger Picture Palaces in the teens also meant that cinemagoing itself was more than ever an opportunity for self-display, fashion, and film-star emulation. The fashion-dominated pages of the fan magazine supported female-targeted consumer discourses by encouraging fans to publicly flaunt "Mary Pickford curls" (July 1927, 60) and wear star-endorsed cosmetics, promising "what it does for her it will do for you if you would be beautiful and admired" (July 1927, 60).

[8.12] Such activity posed a threat to traditional values dictating women's modesty and restricted urban mobility. The British woman as public spectacle and public consumer was therefore a figure whose precarious transition from private to public acutely played out in the cinematic environment, in which women encountered "idealised images of femininity on screen" (Stacey 1994, 183).

[8.13] These issues were embodied by the image of the female star, who represented female economic power and emancipation divorced from inheritance, class privilege, or marital status—a fact often commented upon in the British press of the era, which was prone to attack what it saw as a new breed of working women free to "revel in unaccustomed luxury and squander their fabulous wage with extravagant recklessness" (Brémont 1917).

9. Problem of British female stardom

[9.1] British female stars in particular problematically exacerbated these debates about modern femininity. Bruce Babington has explored the ways in which British culture in this period—"more tradition-oriented, more class-bound and less materially wealthy" (2001, 19)—was reflected in British models of stardom. Babington argues "the education, the middleclassness of British stars, an intellectual society in which the
cinema ranked low beside the theatre...all inclined British stars towards an anti-star inflection of stardom...close to dominant social ideologies" (2001, 20).

[9.2] This "anti-star inflection" is particularly evidenced in Picturegoer's conflicting presentation of stars as both consumers and nonconsumers, as echoed in the Irene example. The ease of class ascendance in the rags-to-riches fairytale narratives of many American films, and the vast salaries of American stars with working-class roots, painted a fantasy portrait of modern femininity that was a far cry from British women's everyday experiences of gender inequality and class division. Such films, as one fan puts it, depicted women who, "even when they have been brought up in the slums" could easily enter society by "putting on an evening dress" (August 1918, 211).

[9.3] Stardom for aspiring British girls was seemingly unattainable in light of the postwar backlash against working women, the British industry's reliance on theatrical performers with middle-class roots, and the more limited opportunities for the domestic promotion of national stars. Fans were thus wont to complain that "anyone with talent and grist has a far better chance of being recognised in America than is the case in England" (August 1918, 178); as a pair of female fans lament in 1919, "girls in America have more chances of becoming cinema actresses than we English girls" (November 1919, 111).

[9.4] Fan writing responded to these debates in the discussion of nationally specific forms of female representation on the screen, revealing conflicting efforts to reconcile notions of the appropriate behavior, appearance, and performance of female screen stars.

10. Costuming

[10.1] Screen costuming and fashion were a frequent focus for fan debates about the differing constructions of British and American stardom and their appeal for women. British trade papers were quick to acknowledge that "dress nowadays has a powerful attraction for most women" (Bioscope, October 1921, 45), with cheaper and more physically liberating 1920s clothing trends facilitating universally popular and achievable fashions across different classes of women. Accordingly, fashion was a key element of the film-fan magazine's mediation of female screen images.

[10.2] Despite the radical changes in women's dress, many British stars were depicted as avoiding fashion altogether. Alma Taylor in particular (figure 4) was often portrayed as the antithesis of the glamorous American film personality in her choice of simple dress, homemade clothes, and refusal to wear makeup off the screen. Jonathan Burrows has shown how the Taylor star persona, under the tight control of leading British filmmaker Cecil Hepworth, represented an attempt to remain "faithful to certain
privileged icons and ideals of British womanhood and local cultural traditions" that "led to a great many discursive contradictions and ambivalences in the content of...[her] star image" (2001, 31).

Figure 4. Alma Taylor on the cover of the December 1918 Picturegoer. (Image taken from University of Exeter's Bill Douglas Centre archive, item BDCEXE 21268.) [View larger image.]

[10.3] Taylor was frequently represented as a star who professed a "complete distaste for the emergent culture of consumerism" (Burrows 2001, 36). This construction of the nonconsumer persona took place particularly in relation to Taylor's clothing and fashion choices (note 9). This stood in direct contrast to the representation of American stars like Gloria Swanson, who were characterized almost entirely by their indulgence in fashion and consumer goods. Articles with titles such as "Why Gloria Swanson Is Always Broke" and "Gorgeous Gloria" perpetuated the glamorous image of the star. In the former, Swanson explains: "All my salary goes for clothes or furniture. I buy much more expensive clothes than I should; much more expensive than I ever did before" (Theatre Magazine, July 12, 1919).

[10.4] A female fan letter from 1918 responds directly to the specific nature of Taylor's persona, reporting a recent sighting of the star:

[10.5] To-day I had a special treat. I attended the Trade Show of a Hepworth film, and at the end of this particular film...I came across the slim
figure that I love to see on these occasions. Looking altogether charming in a simple cotton costume came Alma Taylor, passing on her way with a word of greeting here and there to friends and acquaintances. As I watched the figure of the girl who is beloved by thousands of British picturegoers, the account I had read a few days previously occurred to my mind—American enthusiasm and British reserve. Here and there, I caught words of admiration and affections—but for the most part very few appeared to recognize the girl with the dainty, unassuming manner, who obviously preferred not to attract notice...the embodiment of charming, unspoilt British girlhood. (September 1918, 301)

[10.6] Taylor's dismissal of fashion and glamour, opting for a "simple cotton costume" and appearing "dainty" and "unassuming," here garners the respect and admiration of the female film fan. Another Picturegoer fan letter similarly praises the actress for her naturalness, exclaiming "Alma Taylor was simply Alma Taylor. How artificial and unreal many of the transatlantic luminaries are beside her!" (April 1920, 402). National reserve is here an asset rather than a hindrance; the quality of Taylor's star persona is measured by an avoidance of self-display.

[10.7] As Burrows notes, however, the coded reserve and restraint of British female costuming was not universally popular with female fans. As ever, fans used the letters page to spur debate, and accordingly, a large number of fan letters condemned the failure of British stars like Taylor to mimic their American counterparts in modern, sophisticated dress and style.

[10.8] A letter from 1920, for example, observed that:

[10.9] English films are handicapped by the very ordinary faces, clothes, style and acting of the English film stars. I witnessed a British play the other evening—a really good film—with plenty of plot and go in it—but oh, dear! The heroine! She was plain to an extent of positive ugliness at times and atrociously dressed and shod, and she was ridiculous at times as to draw forth very uncomplimentary remarks from the young bloods in the cheap seats. (March 1920, 268)

[10.10] For this fan, narrative sophistication is a wasted effort when British films remain unable to cast actresses of appropriate aesthetic star quality to carry such stories. A similar letter from later in the decade rehashes these arguments:

[10.11] Our actresses are the biggest handicap. They may be talented, but they certainly are neither beautiful nor chic. Put an American actress beside
an English one, and you can tell at a glance the American, by her clothes and the smart way she has of wearing them. (May 1928, 54)

[10.12] Appearance, performance, and nationality are here inescapably linked, underscoring the inability of British screen stars to fully embrace the aesthetic modernity of both appearance and performance necessary to create successful filmic incarnations.

[10.13] Of the most regularly featured *Picturegoer* stars, few adhere strongly to this conception of the more austere British image. The prominent names—Mary Pickford, Norma Talmadge, Constance Talmadge, Pauline Frederick, Lillian Gish, Clara Kimball Young, Mary Miles Minter, and so on—present an appropriate blend of a more modern offscreen image with a less radical on-screen persona, with stars such as Pickford and Norma Talmadge (figures 5 and 6) praised as "sweet," "pretty," or "dainty" in appearance. This kind of balance seems to have been appreciated by an audience of female fans who would likely have been attempting to reconcile ideas of feminine progress and traditional norms in their own lives. One fan describes Pickford, for example, as "an everyday little person living in a dream" (May 1928, 15).

*Figure 5. Mary Pickford on the cover of the May 1922 *Picturegoer*. (Image taken from University of Exeter's Bill Douglas Centre archive, item BDCEXE 24196.) [View larger image.]*
11. Performance style: "British reserve" versus "American enthusiasm"

[11.1] Clothing debates tied into issues of national modes of performance. However progressive and modern they might have appeared, female stars were often chastised in fan writing for popularity founded entirely on glamour, wealth, and self-display where it overshadowed acting talent. A letter from 1928, for example, complained:

[11.2] Many of the genuine stars seem to me to be so superficial and lacking in real emotional power: they are wrapped in lip-stick, Marcel Waves, and complexes! (January 1928, 60)

[11.3] Like the Irene letter writer, this writer is aware of the commercial imperative behind star representation in industry and advertising-supported discourses like the fan magazine (here making specific reference to the popular Marcel Wave hair fashion) (note 10). The blatant commercialization of star images on and off the screen often provoked this kind of frustration.

[11.4] The exotic Pola Negri, for example—"one of the actresses most associated with vamping" (Negra 2002, 374)—attracted fan criticism along these lines. Female
fan letters demanded the actress "stop posing and being a fashion plate" (October 1925, 66) and take on less "artificial roles" (September 1925, 66). Gloria Swanson comes under fire continuously for her poor acting. As one fan complained, "the change is only in her gowns, she is the same, always" (September 1925, 66).

[11.5] By privileging acting ability over aesthetic appearance, such letter writers posited performative skill as an essential element of an appealing female star. How women performed for the screen came in for just as much criticism and debate as how they dressed for the screen. A strong value placed on restraint as a discourse of performance—in terms of both performance style and costume style—was a concept that resonated within the British industry, and one that seemingly proved problematic for female stars like Taylor.

[11.6] Chrissie White, another Hepworth star, recalls, for example, how Hepworth "didn't like publicity—we [Hepworth's contract players] weren't allowed publicity at all" (Sweet 2006). Although Hepworth used studio magazines to promote his actresses and their films, none of them were allowed to give interviews or appearances early in their careers, again going against the grain of the American model of stardom more closely aligned with discourses of self-promotion.

[11.7] An advertisement for White's film Broken Threads in a 1918 Picturegoer is typical of Hepworth's approach. The insert features no images, instead displaying only a small replica of the Hepworth company logo beside a brief block of text on an empty white background, humorlessly explaining: "Chrissie White is one of the Hepworth picture players. She has acted for Hepworth since she was ten years old. Her years of experience help to make her pictures what they are today" (August 2–10, 1918, 185).

[11.8] The restraint and reserve evidenced in Hepworth's approach to advertising was a quality deeply embedded both in the British dramatic tradition and as a wider social norm for British women in this period. Performative restraint, as Christine Gledhill has extensively discussed, is "rarely approved without its contrary, 'power' or 'passion'" in the tradition of British performance (2003, 62). Gledhill argues it is this logic of oppositional values that has long fueled complaints "about the repression of the English character, unable to express feeling" (2003, 63).

[11.9] British theatrical practices still held substantial cultural influence in the early 20th century as a site for "playing out the tensions in British culture between...private emotion and public presentation" (Gledhill 2003, 16), a tension which further placed emphasis upon issues of feminine decorum and self-display. The cinematic reworking of this tradition in female film performance in particular brought the "playing out" of social tensions to the screen as a representation of, and catalyst for, women's increasing physical, social, and urban mobility and visibility. Yet what the cinema
called for in acting style was in many ways fundamentally incompatible with the theatrical tradition. Cinema required a mode of performance that broke with the dramatic craft of theater acting in demanding a less mediated representational discourse, tied to the fundamental notion that film stars "did not really act but passively offered authentic ontological being to the recording apparatus" (Burrows 2001, 33).

[11.10] What was praised and revered on the stage, therefore—reserve, restraint, and representation, rather than simply being; as one fan puts it, screen stars need to "live, and not act it" (May 1928, 55)—translated awkwardly onto the screen and seemingly proved problematic issues for audiences in their experience of many British female star performances.

[11.11] Such issues run through both criticism and praise of English films by female fans. On one hand, British actresses were applauded for their "dainty unassuming manner" (September 1918, 301) and "British reserve" (September 1918, 301), while on the other they were criticized for being "too restrained" (May 1928, 54), their acting "heavy and labored" (October 1921, 62).

[11.12] The following extract from a Picturegoer article late in 1928 entitled "Have We No 'It' Girls?" sides with the latter attitude:

[11.13] The two—personality and reserve—cannot possibly go together for a girl who wants to succeed on the screen. On the stage reserve is an asset. It lends dignity and stateliness. But dignity on the screen does not register as it does on the speaking stage. It makes a beautiful woman appear cold, haughty, unemotional. That is why most of our English screen actresses are often called "dumb." There is proof of this in the fact that Hollywood producers do not favour English girls in their productions...She looks hard and cold on the screen and, of course, that typical English reserve predominates. (December 1928, 39)

[11.14] The British actress was, in the view of many fans, too often unable to navigate this incompatibility between modest British womanhood and the culture of personality that stardom embodied. The negotiation that American stars seemed to achieve appeared to hold greater appeal to British fans and may be one of the reasons for Mary Pickford being the most regularly discussed star within Picturegoer letters and poetry, along with the clear dominance of American stars featured in the fan-written content of the magazine.

[11.15] Although the innocence and charm of the Pickford persona played to more typically English norms, seemingly devoid of the aggressive and sexualized femininity
of the more glamorous female stars, her star image overall fully embraced the self-promotion and commodification of her persona. The ratio of images to written material within *Picturegoer*, for example, shows a substantial dominance of pictorial material—portraits, posters, covers—over articles and interviews with the star, while in terms of film performances the number of Pickford films produced in the period under study greatly outweighs those of leading British stars such as Betty Balfour (note 11).

[11.16] While fan writing retained a shrewd awareness of the constructed, fantastical nature of these prevalent star personas, therefore, the appealing fantasy of screen glamour and sophisticated screen performance style was positively upheld by American stars—some of whom, like Clara Bow, were themselves "picture girl" competition winners, and as such clearly marked as former fans.

12. Conclusion

[12.1] Fan debate suggests that models of feminine behavior, appearance, and personality were not as straightforwardly accepted as either film texts or magazine articles alone might indicate. The debate implies that the cinema offered women an environment in which consumer choice enabled them to build a composite of their own preferred form of contemporary femininity, privileging and discarding aspects of both traditional and progressive womanhood embodied by particular female stars.

[12.2] The popular culture that female fans navigated through their letter writing was not dominated inescapably by a set of determiningspectatorial positions of resistance or passivity, but was by its nature a concept, as John Storey surmises, "of ideological contestation and variability, to be filled and emptied, to be articulated and disarticulated, in a range of different and competing ways" (2006, 155).

[12.3] Analyzing fan letters is thus a way of offering greater sensitivity to British women's participation within the "contestation and variability" of popular culture. The sheer variety of fan debate and opinion on display within *Picturegoer* demonstrates that female engagement with silent film culture refused to fall easily upon either side of an active/passive reception binary. The vitality and variety of fan writing would seem to exceed its status as an ephemeral by-product of commercialized leisure culture.

[12.4] Bringing fan letters to the forefront of archival silent film research, therefore, assists in the writing of women "back into film history" (Hastie 2006, 229) in a manner that gives voice to the diversity of female film culture in this period, highlighting women’s awareness of their primary role within popular culture more broadly as engaged consumers, who were capable of debating, contesting, and embracing the female representations they consumed.
13. Notes


2. When *Forget-Me-Not* and *Home Chat*‘s founder Alfred Harmsworth founded the hugely successful *Daily Mail* in 1896, for example, he insisted upon the inclusion of women’s columns and held that the magazine page of the paper "ought to be almost entirely feminine" (LeMahieu 1988, 33).

3. Particularly in its inclusion of numerous short stories and dressmaking patterns, which characterized many working-girl story papers and magazines.

4. A nearly complete run of *Picturegoer* is held on microfiche at Southampton University Hartley Library.

5. Pelmanism was a system of training the mind for greater memory retention popular in the UK in the early 20th century, devised from a memory system developed by William Joseph Ennever in the 1890s and taught via correspondence from the London Pelman Institute.

6. Higher page numbers for *Picturegoer* quotations (generally above 80) relate to instances where individual issues have been accessed via microfiche copies of yearly anthologies of the magazine. These hardback editions were bound volumes containing a year's worth of *Picturegoer* issues, with page numbers accordingly adjusted to run consecutively from issue to issue.

7. The ability to threaten the industry with the public power to make or break a movie—a fan letter typical of many urges the "kinemagoer" to "wake up to the fact that they alone can operate the machinery which will bring us 'Better Pictures'" (May 1920, 568)—or to insist upon the production of particular types of films, may have less to do with a true desire for reform and more to do with the pleasurable act of voicing such assertions. However inconsequential such fan writing may ultimately have appeared to be, the powerful sensation of threatening the movie producer by setting pen to paper may have been an appealing notion to female viewers.

8. It is important to assert that the statistics drawn from this process give only a very general indication, as factors have to be taken into account concerning the availability of the magazine across the period. One or two individual issues and pages are missing
from the collection; the results drawn reflect the most detailed compilation of the magazine available for research.

9. Burrows cites a report on Taylor's fashion habits in *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine* that painted the star as a nonconsumer, reporting that "When Miss Taylor goes to London, which she does very infrequently, it is to do some simple shopping, for her wants are few" ("Alma: A Cinema Genius," May 1915, 328). A similar story in *Pictures and the Picturegoer* reported Taylor's view on fashion: "I'm not frightfully fond of clothes...At home, I enjoy myself in the oldest thing I can find" ("Pink and Periwinkle: An Afternoon's Shopping with Alma Taylor," *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, September 15, 1917, 329).

10. Throughout the 1920s, imported Marcel curling irons (created by Frenchman Francois Rene Marcel) were on sale in the United Kingdom, enabling women to create this fashionable hairstyle. The wave look, created by applying heated curling irons to mold hair into S-shaped curved undulations, became synonymous with the Marcel brand and was hugely popular in the 1920s, with the hairstyle often sported by movie stars.

11. Pickford appeared in some 244 films between 1913 and 1928, compared to Betty Balfour's 23 (figures taken from the Internet Movie Database filmography listings; again, these figures give a general indication drawn from the best available resources).

14. Works cited


Symposium

BOWLERS, BALLADS, BELLS, AND BLASTERS: LIVING HISTORY AND FANDOM

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Abstract—In many people’s lives the disposition to create community around historical interest or reenacted historical community practices, or even just entertainment in a mythic-history setting, intersects with a related and similar interest in science fiction/fantasy literature and participation on some level in the related fandoms and social activities of SF/F. The bowlers, ballads, bells, and blasters of my title come together not just in current steampunk scenes but also in the storied and genred lives of many reenactors and fans. Or, as a friend of mine suggested when discussing this essay, "historical reenactment is the trade secret to fandom."

Keywords—Fandom; Filk; Folk; History; Morris dancing; Reenactment; SF/F


1. Introduction

As Scottish SF writer Ken MacLeod said, "history is the trade secret of science fiction." The two disciplines cross paths often and sometimes even seem to merge. In many people’s lives the disposition to create community around historical interest or reenacted historical community practices, or even just entertainment in a mythic-history setting, intersects with a related and similar interest in science fiction/fantasy literature and participation on some level in the related fandoms and social activities of SF/F. The bowlers, ballads, bells, and blasters of my title come together not just in current steampunk scenes but also in the storied and genred lives of many reenactors and fans. Or, as a friend of mine suggested when discussing this essay, "historical reenactment is the trade secret to fandom."

There are significant interactions and shared discourses between reenactors and fandom. I use the word reenactors to include not just the people who reenact battles, fur trade camps, or other historical events, but also Renaissance festival participants and traditional musicians and/or dancers. Reenactors and fans are not just focused on text or time periods. In thinking about the continuity of these groups we should not overlook their lived social and cultural relationships, both productive and
reproductive. The intersections of these interests in the lives of many individuals, and the way these activities organize community and create relationships of reciprocal exchange, function to create social networks that offer an alternative to modern patterns of consumptive leisure and the alienated marketplace.

2. Shared patterns of sociality

[2.1] My interest in these issues is more than academic. My passport into all of these communities was American and British traditional and political folk music. Historic musicians, historic dancers, historic reenactors, SF/F fans, and SF/F authors all moved in the same circles, and often were the same people and engaged in similar conversations across specific interests and social circles. These communities overlapped and came together at official and institutional gatherings such as the Renaissance festival and SF/F conventions, but also gathered at recurring traditional but less formal gatherings like parties for Twelfth Night, Mayday, equinox, and solstice, as well as ceilidh, square, and contra dances.

[2.2] I have observed the intersections of SF/F fandom and history firsthand. While there may be no single individual who spans all of these, looking at a few examples from Minnesota—one convention based, one an SF/F writer who grounds her work in historical events, and one a reenactor with an affinity for SF/F—shows ample evidence of the way these multiple interests create articulated relationships across a wide variety of interests, activities, and social groups. Traditional Appalachian Shapenote hymn singing used to be a part of Minicon, the longest-running SF/F convention in Minnesota. Convention participants came together to sing four-part traditional shapenote hymns as well as clever filk parodies such as "Bound for the Promised Land" reset as a BART journey from Oakland to San Francisco. Similarly, all-night music sessions were common at Minicon, with fans and established authors of science fiction, urban fantasy, and sword and sorcery fantasy all sharing an interest in folk as well as filk music. SF/F fans can have multifaceted commitments to history, as in the case of one of my former singing partners, who is not only a traditional musician but also a core organizer of local conventions and a committed fan in the community. She is writing her own fantasy novel complete with elves and dwarves set in a local historical setting—1881 southern Minnesota. Our conversations move from music to politics to the news of the local and extended fan community; lately, as she is working on her novel, we've been discussing minute details of Minnesota historical culture and politics. The affinities also work the other way: the Facebook profile of an active Minnesota-based reenactor that I recently viewed had a portrait of him at a ship’s wheel in 19th-century Jack Tar garb. His activities include Revolutionary War historical reenactment and morris dancing, his music includes local traditional and folk bands, his movies mix the Lord of the Rings trilogy, V for Vendetta, and Star Wars with Master and
Commander and The Last of the Mohicans, while his reading mixes history, historical fiction, alternate history, and science fiction.

[2.3] Now when I go to cons, I expect to hear folk music and have conversations not just about books but also about the latest politics in the Scottish dance community. I expect to have conversations about new fantastic literature but also the history behind it. My life as a professional cultural historian is still tied to my life as a fan and reenactor. I have recently joined a morris dance team after I moved for an academic job. I am gratified to find that even in my new location the overlap of interests remains the same: historic dancers are often fans not just of history and traditional music but SF/F as well. For example, one dancer is also a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, and had recently attended DragonCon as part of the 76th Independence Brigade, a "reenactment" group of the rebel forces as portrayed in the science fiction TV series Firefly and the film Serenity. It seems that shared dispositions bring these interests back into orbit with each other—witness the British YouTube videos of Daleks morris dancing (for example, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80363Ezsjvc&feature=related&hd=1 and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHm2b_huTnM&hd=1).

3. Communities of exchange: Fandom and historical economy

[3.1] Historical reenactment, music, dance, and fandom function as communities in more than just gatherings to share abstract interests; they also organize material exchange. Renaissance festivals are an obvious example where many of the performers travel the circuit to make their living in entertainment, food, or craft. As such, Renaissance festivals are a commercial enterprise. However, all these communities (even the least commercial) also function to support a cadre of small tradespeople and artisans who serve the community’s needs, both esoterically and generally. Reenactment groups create a thriving trade for costume and historic gear that is often served by local artisans, jewelers, and merchants.

[3.2] In reenactment there is also a professional cadre who work in living history museums. The same goes for fandom. On the one hand, there is the professional cadre of editors and authors who interact with fans at conventions, whose job it is to produce the literature, film, Web sites, fanzines, and other material fans consume. There is a second tier of trade in the dealers' room where jewelers and merchants sell their crafts and collectables next to publishers selling their books. These professional communities are not separate from each other. Many jewelers move easily between Renaissance festivals, historical reenactments, and cons, selling their wares in all contexts; one jeweler I knew sold both at Minicon and local fur trade rendezvous.
Additionally, festivals, fandom, musters, and rendezvous provide social and cultural connections where fans meet and form relationships that create material and economic exchanges outside the larger formal market mechanisms of mainstream society. As a painter, carpenter, and roofer, I met work partners and clients through my life in all of these circles. In fact, my painting partner and I never had a business card and never advertised, but we kept busy through word-of-mouth networks of fans, festival participants, and morris dancers.

In Polanyi-esque (http://homepage.newschool.edu/~het/profiles/polanyi.htm) economic terms, fan communities I have been involved with have functioned to organize economic relations as well as social relationships (Polanyi 1957). I have been among a large number of artisans whose jobbing network was based in these social groups, but I have also seen the network link people to each other in roles such as personal secretaries, mechanics, personal assistants, lawyers, medical professionals, and informal aides. These extended relationships fulfill people's needs for services outside modern impersonal market channels or social work bureaucracies. These social networks of affiliation, discourse, and material interaction account for at least some of the longevity and continuity of fandom. It should also not be ignored that people involved in reenactment and fandom also often find their romantic relationships there. As such they truly function as communities organizing both productive and reproductive relationships.

All these social networks function as mutual benefit societies. In reenactment, Renaissance festival, and fandom communities, members organize events or collections to provide assistance to members in need. As a musician, I have performed in such benefits that served to raise money for medical expenses or to provide legal aid. Some informal local community practices have lately become more formal and institutionalized; for example, a Renaissance festival emergency fund, RESCU (http://rescufoundation.org), formed in 2004, has offered financial and other assistance to "any participant of a Renaissance festival, past or present, anywhere in the country."

4. Community economies offer exchange, not escape

I have had a difficult time explaining my interest in SF/F literature, con attendance, and my personal history as a reenactor to some of my colleagues in both history and literature. These colleagues perceive SF/F and reenactment literature and culture as lacking serious social engagement and products of stunted development—communities frozen in an adolescent state, brought together by escapist fantasies. Looking at these economic exchanges in the SF/F and reenactment communities shows a completely different picture: these independent economies suggest a mature
community that operates as an alternative to the dominant economy and not merely as an escapist social form that mirrors modern consumptive leisure. The communities organize face-to-face exchanges that create economies that are the antithesis of the modern alienated market of TV commercials and the yellow pages. Instead, these economic exchanges are grounded in organic communities and in turn help sustain those community members and bonds.

[4.2] More than just bringing people together through shared affinities to specific texts (books, films, comics in SF/F fandom) or common interests in specific time periods (historical reenactment), these groups are formations of sociality and networks of support. People do not engage in historic dance communities because they are trying to escape 20th-century alienated life and want to live in 19th-century England, Scotland, or Ireland. Rather, these are gatherings of people who want to come together to participate in a common activity (dance) but then also want to socialize together in the bar after rehearsal or performance, at house parties on holidays or nonholidays, and sometimes engage in other activities together (thus my own morris team recently put together an evening of caroling/wassailing). The Renaissance festival is the same. Rennies do not want to live in the real Renaissance but rather to create sociality with fellow performers, crafters, and festival workers. Relationships forged during the festival endure during the off seasons. All these communities from fandom to living history serve as sites of social gatherings, economic exchange, and other interactions. In this social realm the lines between these groups become very blurry. At fan parties, I have discussed historical politics and at reenactments after hours discussed fantasy and science fiction. The parties themselves are one of the sites that show most plainly how interconnected these communities are in sharing interests and participants, with many members who live across these imposed divides.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] My experiences in Renaissance festivals, historical music, dance, reenactment, and fandom—far from being an alienated product of modernity, a parasocial interaction, or a simulacrum of conversation (as some critics might suggest)—were the antithesis of those things. Convention fandom sparks intense and long-running conversations in person and online. Historical arts and performance necessitate deep engagement with historical texts and engender passionate conversations about issues of interpretation and representation; both historical reenactment and fandom engender deep and genuine intellectual and social interactions. Moreover, as social groups and affiliations, both these communities facilitate exchanges of goods and services that function in a person-to-person medium that bypasses the impersonal conventions of the modern marketplace. Shared dispositions to envisioning and exploring alternate realities historic, future, or fantastic are complemented by social
and material exchanges that result in overlapped history and SF/F fan communities that endure through time.

6. Work cited

Symposium

The Contraband Incident: The strange case of Marion Zimmer Bradley

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Abstract—The late Marion Zimmer Bradley once said of her own most famous fictional world, "I didn't invent Darkover, I discovered it." Unlike most authors, who at best enjoy their admirers' activities, and at worst try to end them, Bradley and her sizable community of fans collaborated in the publication of a large body of work fairly harmoniously for over two decades. However, this collaboration came to an abrupt end in 1992 with an event that can be referred to as the Contraband Incident. As this overview will explain, it is a cautionary tale which illustrates how fan activity can do real emotional and monetary damage to the creator-author.

Keywords—Fan fiction; Copyright


1. Introduction

When fans create a new work from the preexisting material of their fandom, they are doing so for their own, sometimes disparate purposes. And while most authors at best enjoy their admirers' activities, and at worst actively try to force them to end it, very few are interested in engaging with it meaningfully. Most restrict themselves to short statements in interviews or on their official Web sites. The late Marion Zimmer Bradley, however, was quite different. She said of her own most famous fictional world, "I didn't invent Darkover, I discovered it." From the 1970s through the early 1990s, Bradley actively engaged with her fans by editing their stories and publishing them in fanzines, holding contests for fan works created in her universe, and finally professionally publishing, with DAW Books, 12 anthologies of fan-written stories. In most of these works, the fan authors did not seek to subvert Bradley's writings. On the contrary, many of them wanted her to approve of their works—which she largely did. In a few cases, she would even say of a story that it was now part of the canon of Darkover (note 1). The truly remarkable thing about Bradley and her sizable community of fans, especially the group called the Friends of Darkover, is that they not only collaborated in the publication of a large body of work but did so fairly harmoniously for over two decades.
1.2] This collaboration ended abruptly in 1992 when a fan named Jean Lamb wrote a novel titled *Masks*, starring one of Bradley's minor characters, Danvan Hastur, and published it in an issue of a fanzine called *Moon Phases*, edited by Nina Boal. The custom at the time was to send Bradley a copy of such a fannish work; Bradley wrote a response to Lamb, commenting on what she thought worked and what didn't, and closed saying she had enjoyed the novel. Reportedly, Lamb felt spurned, and when Bradley announced the forthcoming publication of her next Darkover novel, tentatively titled *Contraband*, she threatened to sue, saying that Bradley had stolen material from her fan novel. Nervous, Bradley's publisher dropped her contract, and *Contraband* was not published. Heartbroken, Bradley moved to dissolve the Friends of Darkover as well as other, less organized fan groups, and fans ceased trying to professionally publish their Darkover fan fiction. Currently, the DAW anthologies are out of print, possibly due to lingering legal issues. In November 2009, I interviewed Nina Boal, who edited Lamb's novel. She described Lamb as feeling "convinced Marion wasn't paying enough attention to Danvan. And it was like he was a real character, a person" whom she had to rescue from the author in order to "do right by him." As this overview of what can be called the *Contraband* Incident will explain, this cautionary tale illustrates how fan activity can do real emotional and monetary damage to the creator-author.

2. The Friends of Darkover: A short history

2.1] The group known as the Friends of Darkover began as a way for fans to maintain contact with one another; its newsletters listed members' full addresses. The group was born in the 1970s, when Bradley's Darkover novels were appearing regularly—approximately one a year after 1974. Bradley herself worked closely with the group, promoting it in the back of her books and both editing and contributing to its publications. Members could keep each other apprised of upcoming conventions and Bradley's appearances at them, and exchange opinions and theories about her works, while she wrote comments, provided excerpts from her own forthcoming works, and kept them informed of what she was up to in op-ed pieces that read a lot like modern blog posts.

2.2] The group was prolific in its output, publishing a wide variety of material, including 70 issues of its newsletter, over a dozen collections of fiction and poetry, numerous nonfiction zines that collected essays on both Darkover and a variety of other topics, including *Star Trek* and linguistics, and a poetry pamphlet that appeared closer in format to letterpress print work than the mimeographs and photocopies of most traditional zines (Coker 2008). Altogether, the group probably issued over a hundred unique publications, several of which were in such demand that they were reprinted.
In 1988 Bradley and her staff founded a professional publication, Marion Zimmer Bradley’s Fantasy Magazine, and their time and effort were diverted to it. (It was published quarterly until 2000, just after Bradley's death.) The Friends of Darkover suffered as a result of continuing fallout from the Contraband Incident. The group was officially dissolved in 1992. Many of the Darkover fans continue to keep in contact, however, at the yearly DarkoverCon meeting. Around 300 fans attend each year, including a number of those who were at the first conventions, back in the 1970s.

3. The Contraband Incident

3.1 The case of Bradley and of Contraband has perhaps attained the status of a fable whose moral is "Be careful, because this could happen to you." Though the incident has been discussed in fandom, the trade journals, such as Locus and Science Fiction Chronicle, do not appear to have taken notice of it. Thus the information I present here is taken from interviews I conducted and from accounts I was able to locate in the Friends' fanzines like the Darkover Newsletter.

3.2 In 1992 Bradley was working on her novel Contraband, which, according to Nina Boal, was to be the story of "the two Raphaels," who are mentioned as historical background characters in several Darkover novels. "We were all looking forward to it," said Boal, "and there was a little bit about Danvan" in it. This was the character who had captured Lamb's imagination. Bradley, having read and enjoyed Masks, contacted her. According to Lamb, Bradley offered her money to use portions of her book in Bradley's own work. She told me via e-mail that

3.3 I was unable to determine how much of the novel I wrote was going to be used. The offer consisted of a few hundred dollars and a mention in a dedication, in exchange for my signing an agreement not to sue for copyright infringement. This seemed a bit open-ended, and I consulted with my agent...he didn't think much of it, given that my agreement not to sue did not mention how much or how little of the book was going to be used. I then responded with a counteroffer, which asked for either more money or a shared byline, unless the amount of my work being used could be clarified. If Ms. Bradley was going to use some ideas from the book, then she was free to do so without any cost, but if there was going to be a lot of my writing used, then I wanted to be compensated fairly.

3.4 According to Boal,

3.5 Jean told me this first-hand on the phone. There were lots of letters I wrote to the Darkover Newsletter. I said I'd be honored [to have Bradley use
her work] and others wrote the same thing. And Jean crossed me off her list of friends and was outraged, and she was outraged after the letters we published...Fans get wrapped up and it's like [the characters are] real people, and they're ours. You have to be very careful about characters—they aren't in the real realm.

3.6 Brad said in 1992,

3.7 I'm sorry that things have come to this. I never wanted to have to keep a "professional distance" from my fans, and for more than twenty years I didn't need to. But I guess even the longest streak of good luck runs out eventually, and sometimes one bad apple does spoil the whole barrel. I regret having to give up a novel that I had already started work on, and I apologize to all of you who wanted to read it. (Darkover Newsletter, no. 58, 5)

3.8 In 1993 she announced that DAW Books had canceled its contract for the novel. It is not known how much of the novel had been completed, though Bradley had been working on it for 2 years: it has been described as consisting, at that time, of a set of notes, an outline, or a completed draft. Allegedly Bradley gave her material to Mercedes Lackey, so that Lackey might complete it after her death, but this has not been substantiated (note 2).

4. The fans' view of the Contraband Incident

4.1 After DAW Books announced its decision to cancel the publication of Contraband, Bradley wrote several summations of events in consecutive issues of the Darkover Newsletter, and fans continued to discuss them for several months in that venue. Early letters were particularly passionate in championing Bradley and in offering her support. Later letters published in the zine focused more on the legal ramifications of the incident, such as fans no longer being able to send Bradley fan works and she no longer being able to read them. Ann Sharp, then the editor of the Darkover Newsletter, directed those fans still publishing zines to send them to Boston University, where Bradley deposited her manuscripts; a bright side of the incident is that a number of fanzines that might not otherwise have been collected are thus now in library holdings.

4.2 As is not uncommon after such events in fandom, the blowback against Lamb was immediate and vitriolic. A typical comment in the Darkover Newsletter in 1993 read:
I was delighted to see the collection of letters in this DNL about that Person who spoiled it all for the rest of us. I hope someone has sent her a copy. She needs to know just what she has done to so many people in addition to Marion. Where else can we submit stories and get rejection letter [sic] that we keep and cherish? Who else is there to encourage new writers? There are more writers out there, only needing a Marion to give them the boost they need to get started. I wonder how many unwritten/unpublished books will have died aborning because they didn't have MZB to encourage them? There are always the S&S anthologies, and Fantasy, but somehow, playing in Marion's world was special.

Ann Sharp responded (in italics), "The Person's subscription hasn't expired!" (Darkover Newsletter, no. 62, 8–9).

It took almost a decade for tempers to cool over the issue. The incident came up on the alt.tv.highlander newsgroup in 2001, in a discussion of fan use under the subject line "Copyrighted stuff/unauthorized/etc." (and also on rec.arts.sf.written that March, in a thread in which Lamb posted her own version of events). A poster named Shomeret recounted the following version of events on alt.tv.highlander on May 2:

Darkover fanzines were routinely sent to MZB and she read them. She asked a fanfic author if she could use an idea from her fan novella in exchange for an acknowledgment. The fanfic author demanded full collaborator's credit and 50% of the royalties. Neither MZB nor her publisher were willing to consider this ultimatum. When MZB refused, the fan threatened to sue. At that point, MZB consulted with a lawyer, withdrew her permission for fanfic and destroyed her novel. This incident has had an ongoing impact.

Another poster, named Leslie, responded:

*Sigh* That does sound like Marion. I knew her, back when I lived near Berkeley, and yes, she always did have a tendency toward hysteria—and a touch of paranoia. Damn, all she had to do was say: "Okay, fool—I'll just cut your idea out of the book and write around it, and you don't even get a mention. Goodbye." And if the book was so dependent on the fan's input that it couldn't be rewritten, then she damn-well should have given the fan collaborator's credit—but negotiated about the percentage of royalties. Either of those options would have been sensible. *Sigh* But Marion really wasn't a sensible person.
[4.9] In the past decade, the incident has periodically come up in discussions of fan activities, but Bradley is now usually seen as being as much at fault as Lamb. This evolution of attitude is notable given the period of time involved, and it will be interesting to see how it will continue. Since the attitudes of most authors toward fan works have been largely (if not entirely) shaped by Bradley's example, the admission that even beloved authors can be as culpable in events as their fans may continue to change how we think about fan works. Recent developments such as Napster and YouTube have fundamentally shifted the public's idea of how artistic work should be treated, and transformative works are becoming increasingly accepted. In 2008 the unpublished draft of Stephenie Meyer's work in progress, *Midnight Sun*, was leaked and placed online by fans. In retaliation, Meyer announced that she was killing the book and posted a copy of the text on her own Web site. In 2010, Diana Gabaldon posted (and subsequently deleted) a lengthy blog entry decrying fan fic and asking fans not to write or publish it. However, an increasing number of authors, many of whom once read or wrote fan fic themselves, see fan works as a phenomenon that simply exists, neither good nor evil. Perhaps that is the best way to view it.

5. Acknowledgments

[5.1] I cannot thank the following individuals enough for their help with this essay: Judy Gerjuoy, for organizing the annual DarkoverCon meetings, at which fans can still gather to enjoy science fiction and Bradley's work in particular; Nina Boal, for talking with me at several DarkoverCons as well as consenting to being interviewed for this project (November 26, 2009), and for sharing several e-mail conversations; and Jean Lamb, for allowing me to interview her via e-mail and for speaking frankly about a topic which is still a source of contention for many.

6. Notes

1. Bradley discussed the canonical status of fan stories fairly regularly in her introductions to the DAW anthology volumes; see, for example, Floss (1987).

2. In 1993, Bradley wrote, "I'm afraid that *Contraband*, the novel involved in this unfortunate affair, is dead—at least, for my lifetime. The fan tried to get Mercedes Lackey to read it [the novel] but she refused, so it's possible that Misty could write it after my death. I'm leaving her the notes I made on it before I read the fan's story" (*Darkover Newsletter*, no. 60, 10).

7. Works cited

1. Introduction

Figure 1. The Eaton Collection Reading Room at UC Riverside's Rivera Library. Photo by Sarah Allison. [View larger image.]

[1.1] The Eaton Collection at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) is one of those nexus places, an archival cantina straddling several different functions in its daily uses and visitors: there's something for everyone, whether student, scholar, archivist, or enthusiast. Located on the fourth floor of the Rivera Library, past the
operational printing presses and the glassed-in displays of SF novel covers, its sunlit reading room and cheerful student help render the Eaton Collection vaguely unintimidating—until one gets past the small anteroom and into the collection itself. Then, the holdings stretch out across dizzying, dusty rows, bearing silent witness to the quiet exclamation from someone who just found the dust jackets carefully arranged over, say, the first few impossible-to-find editions of her favorite comic. Or the frail cover of some sfnal treasure in its first translated edition—or perhaps the first edition itself. This vast array of papers, drafts, novels, anthologies, and other print matter evinces a long history of accumulated fandoms, material evidence of lifetimes of passionate enthusiasm all accumulated and accounted for, archived for anyone with a library pass, a yen for context, and a good eye for buried treasure.

2. The Eaton Collection

[2.1] The original Eaton collection was a group of science fiction and horror novels amassed by Professor J. Lloyd Eaton during a lifetime of active fandom (http://eaton-collection.ucr.edu/JLloydEaton.htm). Full of first editions, often signed, the collection numbered in the thousands by the time UCR acquired it in 1969. By 2005, at the end of Curator Emeritus George Slusser's tenure, the collection had grown to more than 100,000 volumes through processes involving both careful cultivation and acquisition, as well as sudden, unexpected beneficence (http://eaton-collection.ucr.edu/About.htm). Today, the collection reliably acquires the latest works of sfnal fiction published in English, while continuing to amass prodigious amounts of archival material, which includes accumulated papers from Gregory Bedford, David Brin, and Anne McCaffrey, a concentrated group of Philip K. Dick texts in various languages, and the 1517 edition of Sir Thomas More's Utopia (http://eaton-collection.ucr.edu/CollectionsAndArchives.htm). Through events like the annual Eaton Conference, the collection seeks to continue opening access by a combination of mixed public and scholarly activities in order to simultaneously foster fan enthusiasm and increase academic consideration, not least because they are often so tightly linked.

[2.2] From its inception, the Eaton Collection has relied on the generosity of fans. In addition to the books, comics, manga, magazines, and various professional and semiprofessional documents that make up its holdings today, the Eaton's fanzine collections in particular come with their own storied provenances. The collections, named after their donors (Carr, Sneary, Pelz), contain over 100,000 individual documents, and record fan activity in the United States stretching back as far as the 1930s, making it one of the largest archives of this nature in the world (http://library.ucr.edu/?view=collections/spcol/fanzines.html). Slusser's homage to the fanzine as a specific medium of fandom involvement, foreshadowing the rampant interpenetration between canon and fanon today, can be found at the fanzine exhibit.
online (http://eaton-collection.ucr.edu/fanac/Index.htm). Proudly flying its fanac fan history roaring-rocket banner, the exhibit roots itself through replicas of the twilltone paper and rusty staples of its subject matter, and details the history of the science fiction fanzine while linking to covers of specific examples from Eaton's own holdings. But the immediate involvement of fandom at large in the fanzines' archival preservation remains somewhat obscured, even in Slusser's careful mosaist's rendering. Melissa Conway's expert recollection helps flesh out the interstices.

3. Interview with Melissa Conway

Figure 2. Shelves full of unprocessed fanzines from what would eventually become the Pelz collection, and disgruntled student, name unknown; dated 2002. Photo by Melissa Conway. [View larger image.]

[3.1] "When Fred Patten had a stroke, he was in the hospital for a long time. His landlord came by and said, 'You're not coming back, clean this place up or I'm going to put everything on the curb.'" Dr. Melissa Conway is the head of special collections for UCR, and came to UCR after stints with Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the Library of Congress. I interviewed her at UCR on December 8, 2010. She vividly recounts the Patten collection's storied arrival at the Eaton Collection:

[3.2] The fans organized themselves. I got a call from the fans. Will you take it?...Within days they had everything here, boxed beautifully, they helped Fred get a right wheelchair, they did his legal and taxes...They were really there for him in a time of just incredible stress. I had not been aware of the fandom community before this job, so six years ago, and this experience was almost the first. It was beautiful.

[3.3] Conway's work with the Eaton Collection has brought her into some strange new worlds; as she put it, "I was at a bar mitzvah once and mentioned that I worked with the largest science fiction collection in the country...Suddenly I had a tableful of
17-year-old boys asking me questions out of nowhere!" Conway's involvement with the Eaton Collection began with an immediate introduction to the vagaries of fanac, or fandom activities: "Bruce Pelz was a librarian at UCLA—he hoarded every fanzine that came his way. He died very sudden." They had met, briefly, and spoken only a little of what at the time was Conway's new job. A medieval scholar and specialist in rare texts and archives, Conway's expertise had not previously led her to the shoals of involvement in SF fandom, although she was already quite familiar with the idea of a learned community of response. Pelz's huge collection, already famous during his lifetime, had an uncertain future after his passing. She continued, "I was away at a conference when I got a message from his wife: he was sending us the collection. In they came...They had been stored in all different ways, they were in boxes," and a powerful manyness of them, too. John Hertz of *File 770* describes the numbers this way in May 2009: "Eaton [the Eaton Collection] had kindly made a flier which spoke of 50,000 Pelz fanzines. Was this a typo? We had long heard of 250,000. Actually there are about 70,000—someone rounded down—but indeed something happened. Space. Pelz had a lot of fanzines, like many collectors had acquired others' collections, and had never gone all through to organize the lot" (http://file770.com/?p=1105).

[3.4] So the Pelz collection arrived, unbidden, bringing with it the widespread attention of extant fanzine scholars, as well as one of the major difficulties of archiving fan works. "They came in," said Conway in well-remembered dismay, "and there was no way to catalog them." The UCR libraries currently include the entire Carr fanzine collection; the Carr collection came earlier, and is currently organized under "fan magazines" within the general library database. By contrast, the Pelz collection has its own database, an annex housed under "Fanzine Collections Search" (http://library.ucr.edu/?l=fanzine&browse=true). It serves as a rough guide to a mass of text that, according to both Conway and Hertz, its amasser had never managed to fully chart (http://file770.com/?p=1105). The Pelz collection's arrival may have spurred Conway's already developed archival passion toward the kind of fanzine cataloging event that could happen only with massive input from various sources—of funding, of knowledge, and most of all, of time.
Conway's biggest hope for the fanzine collection is a catalog—not just a serial catalog, not least because serial numbers have no applicability in this case, but an analytics catalog, with individual entries for each part of every fanzine's table of contents. The catalog would be an integral part of a larger digital fanzine project, something she has seriously discussed with Professor Rob Latham, whose responsibilities include editing *Science Fiction Studies* and hosting the annual Eaton Conference. Scholars, readers, and fans worldwide would be able to find individual contributions, opening fanzines to the scrutiny of the curious. The level of precision desired is equaled only by the amount of work required to achieve it; Conway's estimate of the cost, for all fanzine holdings across the United States, is in the millions: "That's a level of cataloging that doesn't exist for most things, not even journal articles."

However, the opening of fanzines to a wider audience would mean that for the first time, these fan made documents could travel well beyond their intended readership. Beyond issues of copyright, discussion of digital reproduction of the fanzines gives rise to a series of difficult, fandom-centric questions about exposure, access, agency, and decision making. Open access to the fanzines could expose fans who cherish the relative anonymity of limited off-line production, and disregard fans who want their work or their names to remain within the fandom—and that's just for a start. When I broached the issue with her, Conway's response was immediate: "The [fan]zines are public. But that is a good point."

Conway sincerely doesn't want to unthinkingly replicate the privileged stance of unquestioned knowledge-access. Instead, she says, she would want to hear from the fans before she proceeds: "If people feel threatened, we would adjust for that. I want
to hear from [the fans]. I want to do this in a way that people don't feel threatened or destabilized by that [process]." Ideally, the archivist would straddle the same set of worlds as the fanzines themselves, and be conversant with the creators' visions, as well as the fans' fears: "My dream cataloger would be someone who knows the fan community as well as the texts...[Someone who] would talk to the fan communities: 'Do you like this? Is this helpful?'"

[3.8] Despite her digitized dreams, Conway refuses to consider giving up the originals. Beyond their status as often unique copies, which she champions with a true archivist's zeal, she considers their physical instantiation a crucial part of the critical imprint of the fanzine's historical significance. Asked to expand, she grew near rhapsodic as she detailed the ways in which the physical fanzine yet holds the trace of the enthusiast:

[3.9] Maybe it's because I am a rare book person, but touching a rare manuscript and touching a facsimile, there's an extra dimension that I learn from seeing the actual gold leaf, the tempera paint, the brush textures; to me that's a whole different sensual experience as well as a different level of education. It's the same way with the fanzine. I think I would not have the same experience of relationship with the author who created the zine [without that physical copy].

[3.10] She paused, long enough that I feared a dropped phone or a lost connection. "I would always want to have that extra layer, that extra texture, of the relationship with the manuscript," she finally concluded. "There's a similar sense of the immediacy." Her value for this persistence is something she readily admits might well be romanticized, but it sounds suspiciously familiar. One could say I recognize her enthusiasm.

4. Conclusion

[4.1] The complex issues of provenance and archiving may seem like a side note to many, perhaps even to many of the fans themselves; why bother with the letters and opinions from decades ago, what worth their preservation? Conway's answers to these questions reveal that she considers her work with the Eaton Collection a modern-day form of her work at Beinecke. "What makes the fanzines distinctive is that they are essentially ephemera, produced by the fans for the community, and give incredible insight into what nonpro people in the fandom community were talking and thinking about across more than 70-80 years. As someone who has worked on medieval texts, my god, what wouldn't I do [for something similar]...Dear Lord, what could that tell me about the medieval ages?" Slusser's exhibit points the preservation question forward
again, positing the question concerning fanzines' archiving (and potential propagation) as a question concerning fankind. Slusser's historically focused, fanzine-centric enthusiasm leads him to posit the fanzine as the precursor to the currently Internet-driven fandom paradigms of near-instantaneous call and response: "The essential function of the fanzine is to generate and disseminate the interaction of an optimal number of participants, pushing the limitations of the print medium to its maximum speed and range in terms of its ability to produce interactive dialogue. In this sense, the fanzine is the forerunner of the Internet" (http://eaton-collection.ucr.edu/fanac/Page68.htm). Perhaps more specifically, the preservation of the fanzine could be seen as a kind of recognition, an acknowledgment of contemporary fandom's inheritance of the fanzines' tight focus and critical response toward a set of genres whose popularity once stood somewhat askew from accepted mores. This curatorial stance allows for concentrated action as well as scholarly consideration; indeed, for material evidence of fanac under stringent conditions, surely today's communities of enthusiasts need not look too far.

5. Acknowledgments

[5.1] With thanks to Dr. Melissa Conway for her time and expertise, and to Prof. George Slusser, for letting me back there in the first place.
Abstract—Media fandom is an ephemeral culture, and online fandom even more so. A printed zine from the 1970s may last longer than a story published online in the last six months. For some, fandom is a private endeavor, and that very impermanence a desirable feature. But for those who seek to read and be read, to build on and be inspired by the collective history of fannish creativity, there is nothing so vital to authorial fandom's survival as the archive. In the following, I intend to give a brief overview of the main online interfaces fans have used to share their works and how these have affected authorial control, reader accessibility, and general permanence.

Keywords—Archiving; Fan fiction

[1] Media fandom is an ephemeral culture, and online fandom even more so. A printed zine from the 1970s may last longer than a story published online in the last six months. In fact, continual changes in publication preference and fannish infrastructure have impacted the accessibility and permanence of fan fiction: zines may have a much lower initial circulation, but hard copies have a permanence that newsgroup posts, mailing-list e-mails, or blog posts may lack. Even as fandom as a whole has become more widely accepted and openly public, distribution patterns have moved away from public archives toward individual fan archiving, which allows writers to maintain greater control.

[2] For some, fandom is a private endeavor, and that very impermanence a desirable feature. But for those who seek to read and be read, to build on and be inspired by the collective history of fannish creativity, there is nothing so vital to authorial fandom's survival as the archive. Moreover, if we think of the fan community as a whole, and less of individual writers, losing our stories may indeed mean losing parts of our history.

Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future.

—Ray Bradbury
The nature of online archives has long reflected the environment and technology they occupy. In the following, I intend to give a brief overview of the main online interfaces fans have used to share their works and how these have affected authorial control, reader accessibility, and general permanence. In so doing, I suggest that privacy and customizability are often traded off in favor of general accessibility and permanence; while I clearly prefer the archival structure that will allow those coming after us to access the wealth of stories that media fandom has created through the decades, I also fully understand why some authors prefer to retain tight control over their writings.

Media fannish production in the 1970s and 1980s, its initial two decades, was mostly shared via zines and amateur press associations (APAs). With the rise and expansion of the Internet, however, some migration from off-line fandom to online fandom became unavoidable. Online interaction allowed fans to connect without direct contact, bringing together international fans, younger fans, and fans who might have never encountered fandom had it not been for the Internet. One early home for media fandom was Usenet (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usenet). First created in the early 1980s, Usenet newsgroups were completely public, and content was viewable by anyone who had online access. However, this was possibly the most ephemeral platform of all. Posts would expire within days or weeks, and it wasn't until 1995 that DejaNews (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Groups#Deja_News), now part of Google Groups (http://groups.google.com/), began the first service to retain newsgroup content. In this environment, the loss of fiction and discussion history was practically guaranteed, unless individuals made a purposeful and concerted effort to preserve them.

The development of the World Wide Web provided the key platform for fan fiction archives. The mid-1990s saw the flowering of many major archives, such as The X-Files' Gossamer Project (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gossamer_Project), Star Trek's Trekiverse (http://trekiverse.us/), Doctor Who's Panopticon (defunct), and Due South's Hexwood (http://www.squidge.org/dsa/). Authors would post their stories to Usenet, including a header indicator about archive status (Archive: Yes; Archive: Gossamer, others ask, etc.), or submit them directly to the archivists. Archive volunteers would collect and format these stories, file them, and preserve them for viewing. Authors were able to decline archiving, or request removal of stories already archived, but most fiction was stored for as long as the archive was kept alive. Readers could easily find a wealth of stories, and there was little fragmentation within the fandom for a single source material.

One downside of these large comprehensive fandom archives was the difficulty for the reader to find desired content without robust categorization and search. In
fandoms where one pairing's popularity resulted in a flood of stories, fiction about other pairings and characters could easily be obscured. A high intake of new stories could obscure older ones. Poor search functionality might make it very difficult to find anything featuring a wanted character or quality. Moreover, as archivists lost interest in a specific fandom, left fandom altogether, or died, and as domains expired or Web servers needed to be moved, these single-fandom central archives were heavily impacted. Archives could lose their central archivists, making maintenance and other access impossible; archives might move to new hosts or reorganize their structure, thus breaking countless links; and central archives might disappear forever, devastating a fandom by taking years of history with it in one fell swoop. Examples of this include the Smallville Slash Archive, which was for several years without an archivist, meaning that writers lost any control over their stories; the Wolverine and Rogue Fanfiction Archive, which changed its internal infrastructure, thus making hundreds of outside links invalid; and the Pretender fan fiction archive, whose unexpected disappearance all but destroyed the fan community surrounding it.

[7] In the late 1990s, much of media fandom began a migration to a new environment: the custom mailing list. New services such as ONElist (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ONElist), Topica, and eGroups (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EGroups) appeared on the Web; these provided easy creation and maintenance of mailing lists, Web interfaces, list archives, and more. In comparison to Usenet, these services created spaces for fandom that were more private, more focused, and better preserved. However, the ease of creation also produced a great deal of audience fragmentation: while the new platform allowed for a more tailored fannish experience where a fan could focus on a list dedicated to a minor pairing or a particular story trope, the segmentation prevented a more common fannish consensus. Many mailing lists were perceived—not only to outsiders, but even to many inside observers—to cover the same interests. For fans, it often became necessary both to join multiple groups to keep up with new stories and to cross post to multiple groups to gain exposure. Many groups used privacy controls to block access to nonmembers, and membership could depend upon moderator approval. An example of a large fandom that never created a central fannish archive but instead archived by pairings, characters, interests, and tropes was Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Sonja Marie's Buffy the Vampire Slayer site was one of those attempting to index those archives, and even this has since closed.

[8] Most importantly in regard to fan fic, once stories had a "permanent" Web presence in list archives, many authors began to depend upon the list software to preserve their stories. It seemed reasonable to do so; but unlike newsgroups, a mailing list could be deleted at the whim of the administrator. Lists could also be abandoned, meaning that new members could not be approved to join in order to read
the stories within. Private stories could not be linked from outside the group, and readers who followed private links were required to join groups simply to read a single story. And the greatest threat turned out to be that there was nothing permanent about the Web presence of even public list archives. Mailing-list services began to merge: ONElist lasted only two years before merging with eGroups in 1999; a year later, eGroups was bought by Yahoo (http://groups.yahoo.com/). Each merger and rename resulted in broken links and data loss. As a result, mailing-list fandom as a primary culture lasted a scant four years.

[9] At the same time that mailing lists were beginning to show weaknesses as a fannish platform, new Web technologies were making it easier to create Web-based archives. In reaction to the sheer size of centralized archives, it became common for satellite archives to spring up around them, focusing on particular characters, pairings, or themes. This was valuable for finding fan fic, but the smaller the archive, the greater the risk it could be abandoned by its maintainer. Archives small enough for one person to maintain lacked the support that a larger archive had, allowing transition of ownership or control. The WesleyFanFiction.Net archive (http://wesleyfanfiction.net/), for example, went down entirely in 2003, nearly taking hundreds of stories with it before the archive itself was rescued and moved to a new host. Unfortunately, for every archive's happy ending, countless others have vanished entirely. Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel fandoms were especially hurt by this phenomenon, as those fandoms were served almost entirely by small, specialized archives through the late 1990s and early 2000s. Geocities (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GeoCities), which provided some of that early, easy-to-use Web software and hosting, vanished from the Web in 2009. Large-scale and organized efforts were made to preserve these older archives, but even so, much was lost.

[10] The advent of the next new medium, online journaling software, decimated mailing-list fandom. By 2001, waves of migration were bringing fandom to a new home: LiveJournal (http://www.livejournal.com/). Within LiveJournal, fans could maintain their own personal space, with as much or as little privacy for their content as they wished. Groups of fans could track each other's output by friending (http://www.livejournal.com/support/faqbrowse.bml?faqid=61) each other's journals; however, most authors posted their stories amid a flow of many other posts with other topics, personal or fannish or otherwise. LiveJournal communities (http://www.livejournal.com/support/faqbrowse.bml?faqcat=community) were created to provide a space for shared activity, such as fandom-specific discussion or story posting. However, it became common practice for authors to link back to their own journals rather than mirroring their stories in the community space, making those
communities little more than collections of announcements, rather than any sort of central archive.

[11] As of 2011, LiveJournal still has no robust search function (http://www.livejournal.com/support/faqbrowse.bml?faqid=215), and the private nature of much journal content makes users wary of such a feature. Most journal content is blocked from Web spiders, so that even Google will return little in the way of relevant results. The memories function (http://www.livejournal.com/support/faqbrowse.bml?faqid=47) can be used to create an index of posts by content, but often the maintainers of communities do not use this feature or fail to keep indexing up to date. Entry tagging (http://www.livejournal.com/support/faqbrowse.bml?faqid=226), which allows users to tag stories to make them easier to find, became available in 2005. This was an improvement, but the architecture of LiveJournal continued to work against readers: they must know which journals to search, they must figure out which nonstandard, author-determined tag has been used to indicate stories, and they must hope that the stories are publicly viewable and not locked behind a privacy filter.

[12] And then there is the gravest blow LiveJournal has dealt to the preservation of fandom: at last, authors have full control over their own content. They can choose to hide it or delete it. They can rename their journals and break all links to their stories. They may even choose to delete their journals entirely, for privacy concerns or other reasons, as the journals often contain much private information along with the publicly published fan fic. This mixing of content compromises the longevity of every story on LiveJournal, because the needs of each type of content cannot all be met with one technology. Even fannish workarounds like newsletters, and bookmarking sites like Delicious (http://www.delicious.com), don't help if the stories actually have disappeared when journals are deleted or privatized, or names are changed.

[13] But isn't it fair for authors to have full control over their stories? Isn't it their content, and shouldn't it be theirs to control? No one argues that authors should not be able to decide whether their stories should be available to the public. Many have good reasons for taking their work down: they may hold jobs where the writing of certain material would not be considered acceptable; or they may wish to rewrite their stories as original fiction, removing references to characters they do not have the official rights to use. However, most self-hosted stories are lost because of simple neglect or disinterest. An author may no longer care about her older stories when she moves to a new fandom, or she may even forget about stories that were written years ago. Technological difficulties may make maintaining a personal archive too time-consuming or difficult. A central archive that is maintained by knowledgeable admins
may be updated to work with changes in Internet and browser technology, but it is folly to expect every author to also be a Web site maintainer.

[14] The user-friendly technologies that create semipermanent spaces such as LiveJournal and mailing lists are rarely designed for technological longevity. In 10 years' time, who knows what will be compatible, what will be supported, and what will be archaic or even simply broken? LiveJournal itself may even vanish, as so many Web site communities have, because of lack of profitability or business changes. The fandom community cannot depend upon the kindness of corporations to maintain our platforms and tools. We must serve ourselves, and rely on each other, because we share the same collective values and goals, and because we seek to preserve our own culture and history.

[15] No technology is perfect, and nothing can stand alone against the rapid pace of change, with the possibilities of loss so great in the long term. A central archive must be well organized, well maintained, and easily searchable. Maintainers must understand the importance to the entire community so that they hand off responsibility to other maintainers if they cannot continue themselves. Backups must be kept with regularity and, where possible, mirrors on other hosts should be maintained. When a malicious hacker can erase an entire Web site in a moment, hard drives can fail, passwords can be lost, and maintainers can fall ill, it takes more than a single individual to ensure the stories we read today will still be around five years from now.

[16] Outside a central archive, it is important that authors be encouraged to archive their stories and not rely upon technology that is ever more fragile and impermanent. Automated archives, such as Archive of Our Own (http://archiveofourown.org) and those running eFiction archiving software (http://www.efiction.org/), allow authors to submit stories themselves, lightening or removing the burden of manual archiving. Automatic archives also allow authors the same level of control over their content that they would have on LiveJournal or on a personal archive, but without those platforms' vulnerabilities and obscurities. With a consistent repository for stories, recommendation sites and bookmarking services such as Delicious can be used to create targeted subsets of fan fic, just as themed miniarchives do, compensating for the findability problems that even the most well-indexed archives suffer.

[17] The health of authorial and fan fic–reading fandom is best served by strong central archives, and by a culture that recognizes the worth of archiving. Archives, of course, raise their own theoretical issues about quality control, not to mention their actual logistics: whoever runs the archive can impose control over what is permitted and what is deleted. After all, it is rare for admins to deny authors the right to edit or remove their own stories, but this is a power that can become very problematic indeed.
when archivists become curators, choosing to enforce quality and value judgments. And yet I want to argue that for the author, the endeavor is worthwhile: to archive a story is not just to surrender control of it; to archive a story is to contribute it to the memory of fandom, and make it available to those who enjoy the shared source material, whether it be a book or a film or a television series.

[18] Those who enter a fandom learn the culture of the fans through their fiction: the fanon explanations, the subtextual relationships that are made text, the rereading and rewriting of source texts into something nurtured and expanded upon. Those new participants who enter the fandom are inspired by what they read, learn from what they read, and build upon it, creating complex and ever-deepening interpretations that are shared with those who came before and after them. Creation of new narratives within the structure of fan fiction is arguably a primary lifeblood of media fandom. This is the importance of stories, and the importance of preservation, and of not allowing them to be swept away by the very technology that enables them to be enjoyed by so many.
Symposium

An archive of one's own: Subcultural creativity and the politics of conservation

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[0.1] Abstract—In response to a rapidly changing scene of intellectual property in digital media, activist fans have mobilized to develop a communal, nonprofit group to provide fans with an "archive of their own", protecting fan works from deletion by server hosts who believe those works to be in breach of copyright. In 2008, the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW) incorporated as a nonprofit, and the Archive of Our Own went live in 2009. I am a paid-up member of the OTW—and publishing in the journal it sponsors, after being part of the editorial team for the first five issues—because I believe in the artistic and cultural importance of fan works and I want them to be preserved. But I also believe we must look critically at the meaning-making projects that are encompassed within the OTW's goal of legitimatizing and preserving fan works for the future.

[0.2] Keywords—Archives; Fan community; OTW


1. Archives

[1.1] The online world of creative media fandom is a series of archives. Fan writers, vidders, artists, and critics build their subcultural sphere by sharing and storing texts and interpretations. Abigail Derecho describes fan fiction as a literature of archives, relating its production of new stories around old texts to Jacques Derrida's description in Archive Fever of the archive as "always expanding and never closed," where every addition to the archive alters what the archive itself constitutes (Derecho 2006, 61). Derrida also reminds us that questions of archives are always questions of archons, of who controls the structures through which meaning is created and maintained (Derrida 1996, 1). Archives and archiving are always already political. As some online fan practices become part of mainstream media's marketing machine, while others find themselves without a server space to call their own, members of fan subcultures who are particularly invested in the critical properties of their production have sought representation for their community by consciously intervening in archive politics. In response to a rapidly changing scene of intellectual property in digital media, activist
fans have mobilized to develop a communal, nonprofit group to provide fans with an "archive of their own" (http://archiveofourown.org), protecting fan works from deletion by server hosts who believe those works to be in breach of copyright.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

**Figure 1.** Screenshot of "Archive of Our Own" front page, April 30, 2010. [View larger image.]

[1.2] As fans planned the Archive of Our Own, they formed an organization to defend their unauthorized uses of media content. In 2008, the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW) (http://transformativeworks.org) incorporated as a nonprofit, and the Archive of Our Own went live in 2009. I am a paid-up member of the OTW—and publishing in the journal it sponsors, after being part of the editorial team for the first five issues—because I believe in the artistic and cultural importance of fan works and I want them to be preserved. But I also believe we must look critically at the meaning-making projects that are encompassed within the OTW's goal of legitimatizing and preserving fan works for the future.

[1.3] Derecho finds that archontic writing in general and fan fiction in particular appeal to subordinated groups looking to create "ethical projects" that "oppose outdated notions of hierarchy and property" (Derecho 2006, 61). Media corporations are, unsurprisingly, rather attached to such outdated notions, and in recent years have sought to blur the distinctions between subcultural fan activity and the archontic supplements created for media properties by their producers. Fans have been enlarging corporate media's archives for generations, creating fiction and visual art based in the fictional worlds of TV shows, books, and movies. But they have often built their antiprofit world using Web services owned by companies who seek to profit from every byte of data archived on their servers, companies to whom subcultural norms are irrelevant (note 1). Fans' archontic production has been seen by corporations less as a danger, like digital piracy, than as a resource to be exploited—"user-generated content" that enables the selling of advertising space. While fans bring the content, corporations keep the revenue.

2. Ownership
[2.1] The Archive of Our Own emerged as an archontic struggle in the face of corporate media's wish to capitalize on its undercommons. It seeks to protect fan works by giving them a reliable place within the changing world of publishing and property. The politics of this archive are explicitly concerned with legitimizing "transformative" uses under US law, clarifying the uncertain legal place of fan works for the sake of their makers' legal safety. The OTW wishes to halt its archival subculture's reliance on the incidental and unreliable archiving of most online information, which can so easily disappear or be appropriated, and provide a "deposit library" for fan works. The OTW insists that its storage will provide cultural memory that "lasts for a very long time," "preserving fanworks for the future" by producing an organized and searchable memory for the community, solidifying its history and meanings (OTW FAQ, http://transformativeworks.org/faq-277).

[2.2] Derrida writes that "every archive...is at once institute and conservative. Revolutionary and traditional" (1996, 7). The OTW's archive project wears both functions on its sleeve, seeking to build "a future in which all fannish works are recognized as legal and transformative, and accepted as a legitimate creative activity," by pursuing aggressively traditional strategies of permanence and legitimation ("What We Believe," http://transformativeworks.org/about/believe). The OTW tries to protect fan communities by insisting that they are subcultural groupings constituted in support of capital, that "there shouldn't be trouble, because fans are loyal customers." ("Does the OTW Represent All of Fandom?," http://transformativeworks.org/node/82). For all its valorization of fandom's noncapitalist culture, the OTW is keen to point out how the fan works it archives will continue to help others profit.

[2.3] Volunteers have designed and coded an open-source software archive tailored lovingly to store and distribute a collected body of fans' art and knowledge, offering an alternative or supplement to the distributed, chaotic archive culture in which the Internet and online fandom tend to exist. The organization takes a political stance in favor of recognizing digital storage as a form of cultural memory. It seeks to preserve its community and culture as a grassroots print archive might, honoring fan culture's pre-Internet history. But, as Derrida writes, what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way: the OTW may serve its purpose admirably, but it will inevitably fail to account for some aspects of the culture it wants to serve.

3. Wank

[3.1] At least part of this failure will be because, while fandom may be an archive culture—producing archontic texts and keeping them in multiple archival spaces, which are not usually incorporated as nonprofit—it's cultural specificities can't be traced only by looking at the archives designated to be the subculture's public face. The Archive,
like the scholarship presented in *Transformative Works and Cultures*, offers fannish productions a seriousness and a permanence that they have rarely been awarded before. But just as TWC's academia-friendly discourse is not the sum total of fannish knowledge production, neither can the Archive be assumed to record everything of importance. Sometimes ephemeral digital interactions do cultural work as important as that which can more easily be archived for the future. In "Ephemera as Evidence," José Muñoz describes the unquantifiable aftereffects of performances and experiences as "traces, glimmers, residues and specks" that "maintain...experiential politics and urgencies long after those experiences have been lived" (Muñoz 1996, 10). No matter how rooted in cultural communality, an archive framed as a deposit library cannot account for the traces, glimmers, and residues that give the experience of subcultural participation its meanings and its feelings. And so we must also ask: what worlds are made in the digital places the OTW won't be preserving? What alternative archive politics and temporalities does fandom contain?

[3.2] Residues of digital performances might include blog comments, IM messages, and the cached versions of postings taken down by their producers or rights holders; Fandom Wank ([http://www.journalfen.net/community/fandom_wank/](http://www.journalfen.net/community/fandom_wank/)) is probably fandom's most widely read archive of the ephemeral, collecting unseemly elements of online discourse whose range, from "endless flamewars" and "pseudointellectual definitions" to "self-aggrandizing posturing" and "circular ego-stroking," makes the derivation of the fannish term "wank" from the slang for masturbation quite clear. Fandom Wank shares none of the OTW's political impetus, serious valuation of subculture as community, or desire to make fan culture comprehensible and appealing to the outside world. Yet it too facilitates long-term preservation of fan cultural practices, aggregating histories through an endless succession of in-jokes and links. These ephemeral traces are likely to include fannish creations that are tangential or irrelevant, and sometimes oppositional, to the texts, both initial and archontic, around which they cluster. Yet the flows—the institution, destruction, and resurfacing of digital archives on the fly—produce the experiential politics of online fan culture.

![Figure 2. Screenshot of Fandom Wank, accessed April 30, 2010.](image-url)
The wank that fannish ephemera enables includes the sexualized exchange of explicit fiction (note 2). It also includes conflicts around gender, race, and sexual politics that demand participants in fandom's assortment of pleasure-focused textual exchanges accept political responsibility for what they create. Fandom's ephemeral archives produce important repertoires of affect and politics, which can never be reduced to stored stories on a static page. Most recently in online fan culture we've seen this in the series of debates that have become known as Racefail (http://fanlore.org/wiki/Racefail_09), in which fannish discursive practices have enabled a wide-ranging critique of science fiction's racial politics (note 3). Aficionados of online argument as radical critique eschew the term wank for their imbroglios; I suggest that the politics of wank and related modes of engagement might just deserve to be taken seriously.

Both meanings of wank, connoting sexuality and conflict, are welcomed into the OTW's archive under its claim to "value infinite diversity in infinite combinations...while seeking to avoid the homogenization or centralization of fandom" ("What We Believe," http://transformativeworks.org/about/believe). The organization extends its umbrella to cover distributed models of knowledge production as well, including a wiki (http://fanlore.org). Its disavowal of fan cultures' anarchic tendencies is strategic (and the strategy seems to be working, given how much positive attention fan practices like vidding have had in the media since the OTW's advent), and it is not complete. I would not want to suggest that the OTW change the way it organizes its approach to archiving, for all that ephemeral interactions produce experiences and communities of incalculable value. Not every social form, on or off the Internet, can—or should—be transparently intelligible to an archivist's gaze. But if we want to take seriously the possibility that ephemeral conflict and online sex might function to undermine dominant sexual, gendered, racialized, and economic ways of being, both on- and off-line, we cannot restrict fannish politics to the easily archivable. Legal legitimation obtained through an uncritical embrace of the nonprofit structure may make fandom more socially acceptable. But if the Archive is our only model for fannish politics, we risk losing sight of ephemeral practices that can work transformatively.

4. Notes

1. For analysis of fan culture as a gift culture that runs against the capitalist profit motive, see Hellekson (2009).

2. For further discussion of this, see Lothian, Busse, and Reid (2007).

3. I edited a dialogue among antiracist fan scholars that addresses these issues: "Pattern Recognition" (TWC Editor 2009).
5. Works cited


Interview

Excerpt from "IRL (In Real Life): The Bronze Documentary Project"

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[0.1] Abstract—Excerpt from "IRL (In Real Life): The Bronze Documentary Project". One of the first feature-length documentary films to take on the subject of online relationships, "IRL (In Real Life)" chronicles the life, death, and afterlife of an online community called The Bronze, made up of fans from the official Web site for Buffy, the Vampire Slayer.

[0.2] Keywords—Buffy, the Vampire Slayer; Convergence; Fandom; Internet; New media; Off-line; Online; Social media


1. Introduction

[1.1] One of the first feature-length documentary films to take on the subject of online relationships, "IRL (In Real Life)" chronicles the life, death, and afterlife of an online community called The Bronze, made up of fans from the official Web site for Buffy, the Vampire Slayer. The documentary looks at the process and also the consequences that come from making friends through online fandom activity, and explores the integration of those relationships into "real" life.

[1.2] In 2003, I began a video project about the Bronzer community, even as the television series that had drawn the group together was about to come to an end. Traveling across the United States and Canada from 2003 to 2004, I recorded interviews and filmed gatherings, accumulating over 25 hours of footage. The resulting documentary provides an inside look at an early time in the growth not just of online fan groups but of online communities as a whole, providing a unique perspective on the way our interactions with other people on the Internet have changed—or not changed—over the last decade.

2. Interview
3. Note

[3.1] The full version of "IRL" is available for sale through my e-store. A $5 discount off the regular price is available for OTW members and readers here: http://www.dlfilms.com/irl/index.html.
Interview

A conversation with Paula Smith

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1. Introduction

   It isn't every fan who rates a Wikipedia entry (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_sue) and a mention on Salon.com (http://www.salon.com/books/laura_miller/2010/04/21/mary_sue) for a term she invented, but Paula Smith will be forever known as the person who coined the phrase "Mary Sue." The now-ubiquitous Mary Sue first appeared in 1973 as a character in Paula's satire, "A Trekkie's Tale," which appeared in Menagerie 2, a Trek fanzine she edited with Sharon Ferraro. Paula and Sharon also established the FanQ Awards, which are still presented at MediaWest*Con, the fan-run media and science fiction convention held each year on Memorial Day weekend in Lansing, Michigan.
Paula's history in media fandom goes back as far as media fandom itself. She came in on the proverbial ground floor and has contributed to the fannish community—indeed, helped shape it—as an organizer, writer, editor, playwright, publisher, critic, satirist, commentator, and all-around fannish godmother. Although her current position as a lecturer on the mathematics faculty at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, has reduced the time she can spend on fannish activity, one can still find her every year at MediaWest*Con, selling zines and memorabilia in the dealer's room, engaging in avid discussions with new and veteran fan fiction writers, and serving as an auctioneer at the Sunday night art auction.

This interview was conducted on May 29, 2010, at MediaWest*Con 30, Lansing, Michigan.

2. Forty years of Mary Sue

Q: So where did Mary Sue come from?

PS: It all goes back to the early 1970s, when Star Trek fandom was just breaking away from mainstream science fiction fandom. I went to a lot of conventions around that time and I bought every zine I could lay my hands on. It was just an explosion of mimeograph and hectograph and ditto; very few zines were even
photocopied back then. I read everything. Some of it was pretty good. Some of it was extremely good. But an awful lot of it was just plain awful.

[2.3] As Theodore Sturgeon said, 90 percent of everything is crap. The amazing thing was, the crap had so much of a pattern. I'm very much a pattern seeker, and you could see that every Trek zine at the time had a main story about this adolescent girl who is the youngest yeoman or lieutenant or captain ever in Starfleet. She makes her way onto the Enterprise and the entire crew falls in love with her. They then have adventures, but the remarkable thing was that all the adventures circled around this character. Everybody else in the universe bowed down in front of her. Also, she usually had some unique physical identifier—odd-colored eyes or hair—or else she was half-Vulcan. The stories read like they were written about half an hour before the zine was printed; they were generally not very good.

[2.4] Then came along this one story. I don't even remember the title of the zine, but I remember vividly that its cover was illustrated with hand-colored yellow ducks. Well, that didn't seem to have a whole lot to do with Star Trek, but I guess it meant something to the author. This particular one not only had the young teenaged girl who was a lieutenant come on the bridge, where Kirk and Spock immediately fell in love with her—I think Scotty and McCoy did as well—but they all backed off and were very respectful because she only had eyes for Chekov.

[2.5] So during the adventure, everybody beams down to the planet and everybody gets captured by the aliens, and this character manages to spring them because—literally—she has a hairpin. When they get back to the ship, she's sick. She had caught something down there and she dies.

[2.6] And then she resurrected herself... [Interviewer smiles.] I can see by the expression on your face that you're trying to resist making a comment, but I didn't resist. I made my comment in Menagerie 2, the December 1973 issue, which Sharon and I edited. I was absolutely fried from studying in grad school at the time, and tossed off "'Gee, golly gosh, gloriosky,' thought Mary Sue as she stepped on the bridge of the Enterprise." Lieutenant Mary Sue—that's what I called her just to give her a name. And the piece was—what? Probably two hundred words. It was half of one of our reduced columns. It wasn't very much. I really just retold the story of that quintessential Mary Sue. It was a parody. At the time, I was getting very heavily into writing parodies. In fact, for issues of Menagerie, what I did a lot was the so-called Trek primers and parodies of the episodes.

[2.7] Q: That was the beginning?
PS: Yes, and it might have died right there, but I began doing LoCs—letters of comment—and reviews of zines in other zines. Anyway, because this was still the early 1970s, there were still a ton of these stories coming out. So, when we wanted a shorthand to refer to them, Sharon and I began to call them "Lieutenant Mary Sue" stories. We explained why the first couple of times we used it, but the term caught on because she's very identifiable: Here it is, that same character, and isn't it a shame because she's just so tiresome.

And then in the letter columns, we started seeing the writers react: "What's so wrong with my story? I'm just telling a story that I think is great." And we would fire back: "Yeah, but the problem is, the presence of the Mary Sue warped all the other characters in the story away from their known characterization." Because in fan fiction, you aren't writing stories about an unknown universe, and readers expect certain characterizations.

On the other hand, when you think about it, what's so wrong about affecting the other characters? A really great original character in a story might just do that, but she doesn't have to be a Mary Sue.

For example, by 1976, we were seeing Paula Block's Sadie Faulwell in the "Landing Party" series in the Warped Space zine. It was a very loose roman à clef about Paula Block and her friends. They were really self-portrait characters, but for whatever reason, they had more of a sense of proportion about them. She had McCoy fall in love with Sadie, but it did not necessarily change McCoy's characterization, and it didn't change anyone's characterization, and the stories were intriguing on their own. Was this a Mary Sue or not a Mary Sue?

Q: It helped that Paula Block was a good writer.

PS: Yes. As a writer, she gave a lot more than she demanded from the reader. She gave us a character that we could recognize to a certain degree, but did not demand that we fall in love with the character. We could like Sadie or not on our own terms. You and I discussed once how the Mary Sue takes up too much room.

Q: There's only so much room inside a character, and hopefully, you leave enough for the reader to climb in, too.

PS: A story demands headspace, and the Mary Sue wants to come and occupy your whole head, so the writer gets the enjoyment and not the reader. It's a little too much like being used. I suspect that's why an awful lot of people agreed with our assessment.

Q: So people began to pick up the term?
PS: Sharon and I were driving it, of course, by saying this is a Mary Sue story, this is not a Mary Sue story. We did panels at some of the first media conventions, and there would be lively discussion: what does this mean? The concept spread and was taken up by other people. It wasn't always used as a derogatory term. The Mary Sue seemed to almost be a necessary stage for a writer.

Q: I tend to agree that it's a step in writing. When I teach screenwriting, I notice I get two kinds of scripts from new writers: a story based on a favorite show or film, or a self-insertion story. Or something that's both.

PS: Someone once said to me that the presence of a Mary Sue in a story is like a black hole, a neutron star, because it warps everything else out of their normal orbits.

Q: And now you're cited all over the place, in Wikipedia and the recent article on Salon.com. How does that feel?

PS: Oh, good God! When a couple of people alerted me to the Salon.com article, my mind boggled. I do get the point; I simply named a bug, I found a new fern. I identified a piece of humanity and put a name to it, but that's all I did. Everything I know about Mary Sue I was told by somebody else.

Around 1999, Pat Pflieger sent me a copy of an article she had written about identifying the Mary Sue in 19th-century fiction, "Too Good to Be True: 150 Years of Mary Sue" (http://www.merrycoz.org/papers/MARYSUE.HTM). It was still very much the young, very special girl who died: think Eva in Uncle Tom's Cabin.

In all the intervening years, I've thought about what the Mary Sue might mean psychologically. The conclusion I have come to is that she represents the teenage girl suddenly finding power. It is the power of her sexual attraction. There were a lot of Mary Sues written in the 1970s, and these were from writers who were born in the 1940s and '50s, not quite the time of Women's Lib. And suddenly, when a girl becomes mature, people pay attention to her. So, psychologically, it's a stage of development in young girls. Now when it comes to young guys—

Q: The Marty Stu?

PS: More like the Wesley Sue. People never notice the male version so much. I was really struck when the Doc Savage: Man of Bronze movie came out. I thought: that's a Mary Sue, too!

Q: As is James Bond. Superman was created by two teenage boys.
PS: Sure. Any of these wish-fulfillment characters whose presence in any universe warps it way the heck out of reality. But we don't notice that when it involves men.

Q: And yet, if there is no piece of the author in the characters...

PS: It's dead, the story is dead—exactly. The author's personality is a leavening we need. We want it to rise, but we don't want to have to eat yeast.

Q: Why, then, do Superman and James Bond succeed, while we tend to pull back from the female version?

PS: Because the world we live in is not just a patriarchy; it's a puerarchy—what gets focused on in the culture is defined by boys and young men. Psychologically, there's a turning point in men's lives. There's a point where they need to break away from women in their youth, and then later they come back to women as grown men, but many men never make it, never quite come back to a world that includes women as human beings.

Q: What do you think of how people use "Mary Sue" as a criticism of any woman character?

PS: We did that back in the 1970s too, and I was guilty of that sometimes. I did try to make a distinction. I knew—I knew—there was a difference: that when you had created a wish-fulfillment character, you still needed to give the reader room to breathe. But yeah, there was a lot of "You can't do that; that's a Mary Sue character."

Q: It's become very complicated.

PS: There are now two definitions, and the positive one is: Yes, she's a Mary Sue, but the writer's actually doing it right. Paula Block's Sadie Faulwell was a good example. Connie Faddis created a good one, too. So did Barbara Wenk.

Q: How would you characterize "doing it right"?

PS: Two things. First, you have to give the reader somewhere to fit into in the character, and second, it can't warp any of the other characters. You can't change the characterization of known characters and make them unrecognizable. This is the wonderful balancing act of any writer. For any writing, you have to have plot, characterization, setting, theme, motif, all of that stuff—and you have to give it life. You have to create a character who is interesting, who is human with recognizable foibles, but who is intelligent enough and "heartful" enough to be a bit self-aware. It has to be a true hero or heroine that we, the reader, want to be with.
Q: Do you think writers who write unsatisfying Mary Sues are just not self-aware?

PS: I think that's the great part of it. They're so un-self-aware that they think this keen story that means so much to them must mean exactly the same to everybody else. I've thought up Mary Sues—we all do—I just never wrote them down. I lived out my little adventures in my head, wandering around. Now, with the Internet, everyone can publish their stories...and they do.

Q: So things haven't changed all that much with the Internet.

PS: I think the Internet recapitulates the original Trekdom. To paraphrase: "There came a generation that knew not mimeo." The old letterzines are turning into so much compost today, but the same arguments are still being fought out.

3. Present at the creation

Q: Perhaps you should explain what a letterzine is.

PS: A letterzine was a publication that came out, often monthly. People would write in letters to a particular editor who would collect them and publish them and simply send the printed zine back to the people who sent the letters.

Q: Is that how fans mostly communicated before the arrival of the Internet?

PS: As group communication it was common, and, of course, there were cons, conventions. My first con was the Detroit Triple Fan Fair in 1972. It was a science fiction con, held in Cobo Hall in downtown Detroit. I remember that we walked around Detroit at 3 AM—it was certainly a different time. Gene Roddenberry and Majel Barrett were there and that's where I first met them. David Gerrold was there, too. But mainly I got to meet a lot of the Detroit fans, most of them Trek fans.

Q: And how did you hear about it?

PS: I'd seen a flyer. I was 21, in my last year at Kalamazoo College. I'd been in the college's Science Fiction, Chowder, Marching, and Little Green Men Society. It was mostly a science fiction book club by then. It was my dad who had introduced me to science fiction.

Q: I've heard that from U.N.C.L.E. fans. My own father introduced me to the show. I now have this theory that all fandom is traced back to fathers.

PS: Especially for women! Because your father tells you it's okay to pursue something you like. I was 8 years old and I remember an issue of Amazing Stories or
some other science fiction magazine—with a very lurid cover and a Harlan Ellison story inside. My father had a lot of paperbacks and he belonged to the Science Fiction Book Club. He worked as a mechanical engineer for a living and had a degree in electrical engineering from Michigan State University. My mother had a BA, too, but in home economics. The stuff was in the house and I read it.

[3.9] At DTFF, I found zines. *Trek* was off the air by then and this was just after Devra Langsam, who published *Spockanalia*, the first Star Trek zine, organized the first Star Trek convention, which was held in New York in 1972. Carol Lynn, who became my friend and copublisher, was there. The next year, 1973, I went to the Toronto Worldcon and met a lot more people, a lot more fans.

[3.10] There were so many SF conventions during the 1970s and '80s! Almost any little local college group would throw a convention at any little local Ramada Inn, and they would have 30 to 100 people there, depending upon how big the city was. We used to go to Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, for Chambana Con; Columbus, Ohio, for MarCon; Chicago for WindyCon. Those were worth going to because they attracted a lot of fans from the upper Midwest. My stomping grounds stretched from Iowa to New York in one direction, and Ontario down to about Kentucky in the other. I never managed to go to the southern or western conventions.

[3.11] **Q:** How did you know when and where the cons would be held?

[3.12] **PS:** People would write into the SF magazines and post where the cons would be held so you could keep track. You could also find out from mailing lists. We mailed everything—fans went broke on postage—and we had a lot of contact that way. There were also the APAs—amateur press alliances. Fans would get together and, on a monthly basis, make up a small zine of their own. It could be 1 page or 4 or 5 or 20. They'd send 30 copies, or whatever number of people in the alliance, to the OE, the organizing editor. He would staple it all together and mail it out. The postage was paid by members sending in their dues.

[3.13] **Q:** That sounds really time-consuming.

[3.14] **PS:** It was, but on the other hand, we didn't have the Internet. In addition to the APAs and the letterzines, in the 1970s, we realized we could hold cons and we did.

[3.15] Around early 1973, I'd met Sharon Ferraro. I was at Kalamazoo College and she was at Western Michigan University. We got together and formed a science fiction society between the two colleges and called it KWest*—"kwestar." Sharon and I organized a con in 1974 in Kalamazoo called KWest*Con and we got Harlan Ellison as our pro GOH [professional guest of honor] speaker. We had to pay for his flight and room and board, but we didn't have to pay an honorarium. And we got Joan Hunter
Holly as the fan GOH. Joan, of course, was the author of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* Ace #10, *The Assassination Affair.* Although this was an SF con, a lot of those who came liked *U.N.C.L.E.* and *Star Trek* too. Joan came from Lansing and she knew Terry Carr, who was an editor for Ace. She was older than most of us—all of 40.

[3.16] A couple of hundred people attended the con. We made our nut. We brought Harlan to Sharon's house and fed him a chicken dinner. Sharon was a big Ellison fan. She had said, "We can get him," and we did! And we had a great time.

[3.17] The next year, we did a follow-up SF con called ReKWest*Con. Then we went to the New York Trek con in 1975 and met the New York *Star Trek* fans.

[3.18] **Q:** And there were a lot of zines around, too.

[3.19] **PS:** Yes. People were writing a lot of Trek stories, and printing them. There were two routes into Star Trek fandom. There were these rather older women in science fiction fandom already who said to themselves: we can do cons, we can do zines, about *Star Trek.* The original SF zines sometimes contained stories. The big difference was that science fiction had a professional outlet back then. Once you published at the fan level, you could go on to the major leagues if you were good. If you weren't a good writer, you'd get tired of being told, "This is crap," and you'd stop writing after a while. But in Star Trek, there was nowhere else to go. So if you developed your craft, your Trek zines soon had better and better stories.

[3.20] It seemed like there were two age groups in early Trek fandom: 18 and 35. The other route was for the baby boomers who had the feeling, "Gotta write!" They just wanted to do something. As soon as they went to the cons and saw the zines, they'd think, "That's what I can do!" And it crystallized all over the country and there were zines as far as the eye could see. And they kept coming and coming. We used to joke about *Warped Space,* which started publishing around 1975, "Oh, here comes the Tuesday afternoon *Warped Space.* Here's the 3 PM edition." The editor was Lori Chapek [later Chapek-Carleton]. There was the MSUSTC—the Michigan State University *Star Trek* Club. Again, a university club; colleges and universities were where many boomers found out about fandom.

[3.21] But at least half of the 18-year-old cohort didn't go to college; they read Joan Winston's book, *Star Trek Lives!*, and wrote in to the addresses at the back of the book in order to connect. They were working in offices and could get their hands on Selectric typewriters and duplicating equipment.

[3.22] Back then, we'd been taught to write in high school, and we'd also been taught to read books and appreciate a story. I was one of the college boomers but also an SF fan. I thought, "Heck, we can do this too." And Sharon and I published
Menagerie. It was an itty bitty skinny zine, but we had written some stories, so we published them. We charged $1 a zine and it covered the cost. We did the cost analysis—we knew how many hundreds we needed to print at a reasonable price—and we sold them at conventions and through the mail. We also advertised in everybody else's other zines.

[3.23] If you look through copies of the old zines, you will see letters to the editor, you will see ads for upcoming conventions, you will see announcements for new zines coming out. People would send in flyers and they were stapled into the zine.

[3.24] As for cons, Sharon organized the Hole-in-the-Deck gang, to provide gofer service at cons. It was a way of getting into the cons for free. The guys did security; the women did the gofering. We would get a band of people together, the con would give us two rooms, and we'd check badges at doors, ferry things for the guests, help with registration. We did everything. We were the con organizers' hands and feet, and we learned how to run cons ourselves.

[3.25] Q: You mentioned before that Trek fandom broke away from science fiction fandom.

[3.26] PS: The SF guys didn't want to talk about things that women were interested in. Buck Coulson, an SF (and U.N.C.L.E.) writer, used to say, "There is no subtle discrimination against Trek fans in science fiction—it's blatant." And the women said, "The heck with this," and started making their own zines and organizing their own conventions. In addition to Devra Langsam, there were people like Margaret Basta and her twin sister, Laura. They did S.T.A.R., a newszine out of Detroit that went out to literally thousands of people. There was also Dee Beetem in Colorado, and Ruth Berman, who published T-Negative out of Minneapolis.

[3.27] Q: What percentage of Trek fandom were guys and what percentage were women?

[3.28] PS: Trek fandom was the mirror image of science fiction fandom. I would say 90 percent of science fiction fandom at the time was men and 10 percent was women, and there was a reverse 10-to-90 men-to-women split in Trek fandom. The two groups quickly diverged; after a while, only about 5 to 10 percent would shuttle back and forth between the two fandoms.

[3.29] Q: It sounds like that era was a hard-copy version of what it's like now.

[3.30] PS: That's right. Lots of links. A hard-copy, steampunk version. But the structures were essentially the same.
[3.31] **Q:** Sounds like the beginning of what they're calling "social networking" on the Web today.

[3.32] **PS:** But it was in slow motion and there was more face-to-face contact.

[3.33] **Q:** People wanted to meet each other.

[3.34] **PS:** Yes, and traveling was cheaper then, or at least, it seemed to be. It was cheaper in time spent if nothing else. And oh my God, the telephone bills! I would have $400 and $600 telephone bills! You really had to pay a lot for long distance. You'd call after 11 PM to get the price break. When MCI came in—boom!—we signed up.

4. Let's hold a con!

[4.1] **Q:** Fans were already creating a kind of Web.

[4.2] **PS:** Yes, in multimedia, because we had the paper, we had the telephone, we had the go-to meetings, we had the county and statewide and regional meetings. We also had a kind of yearly meeting: Back in the early 1970s, Devra's New York con was the one to go to. Before Devra shut down in 1975, there were a couple of big professional conventions with all the stars from the show. But those were expensive—$20 to attend! Sharon and I looked at each other and said we should do a *Star Trek* con the way we did our science fiction cons. Since we're hiding it away from the big guys, let's call it "SeKWester*Con." No stars at all—that would be the big difference. So we held it in 1976 in Kalamazoo because the Midwest was where the active fans we knew were. And we thought, let's do a "fan quality" award. We'll call it a "FanQ" to thank all the people who were writing good stuff. One for art and one for writing. It was just for *Trek*. There wasn't anything else.

[4.3] **Q:** How successful was it?

[4.4] **PS:** One hundred people came, which was pretty good for what we wanted. We had a bunch of panels, we had an art show, and we had a dealer's room. We took the same template from the small science fiction cons. We held it at a little motor lodge and posted notices in the zines. We also sent letters to people we knew would be interested. A lot of people came from all over the country. In 1977, for the second one, 200 people—even from as far away as Australia! It was called SeKWester*Con Too.

[4.5] Lori Chapek had gone to SeKWester*Con One and she thought, "That was fun. I can do that too." So she organized a little con at Michigan State in 1978 while she was still a student there. She asked to do the third one and called it T'Con. Gordon
[who would be Lori's husband] was writing around then and he had these characters, the T'Khutians. It was an alien race that was related to the Vulcans, but because he was a humorist, they were all crazy clowns.

[4.6] Lori and Gordon did T'Con and the next year, 1979, they did 2'Con. The mascot was a toucan bird doing a Vulcan salute. And then Devra said she'd like to hold the next one in New York and organized Mos' Easley in 1980 because *Star Wars* was out then. The *Star Wars* fans started to come at T'con, and so it began to morph into a multiple-fandom [con], though at that point, it was still just *Trek* and *Star Wars*. In 1981, Lori and Gordon took what was now the big yearly con back to the Midwest, and called it MidWest*Con.

[4.7] The second MidWest*Con was in 1982 and throughout the 1980s, we began seeing fans from *Starsky and Hutch*, *Doctor Who*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*—fans of all kinds of movies and TV shows. Lori and Gordon decided to change the name to MediaWest*Con because it was for media fandom, to distinguish it from science fiction fandom, which concentrated more on science fiction in books. And of course, MediaWest is still running. The 30th one was this year, in 2010.

[4.8] **Q:** So this is the way media fandom diverged, with a lot of daughters who'd been close to their fathers—

[4.9] **PS:** —fathers who were engineers and scientists, technical types. I doubt that too many were preachers, or politicians.

5. The more things change, the more they stay the same

[5.1] **Q:** From your long perspective, how do you think fandom has changed?

[5.2] **PS:** Well, certainly we've gotten older. We, being the founding mothers, are still socializing here at MediaWest.

[5.3] **Q:** How many founding mothers were there?

[5.4] **PS:** At a wild guess, maybe 200. Depends upon the fandom, of course.

[5.5] **Q:** New fans are still coming in.

[5.6] **PS:** But this con is still largely baby boomers. Just like SF fans, who kept going to cons until they couldn't do it any more. And it was a big part of their lives. I have often thought religion and dog shows and fandoms have something in common. An awful lot of the early history of any given religion sounds like a fandom catching fire.
A lot of activities and practices of fandom—terms like "Mary Sue"—have become mainstream. But the technology is certainly different.

My first computer had transistors, back in 1969. The first monitor I saw was in 1975 and, to show you how dumb I was, someone said to me, look at this screen, and I said, "What the heck do we want a monitor for? We have punch cards!"

Do you think the process of writing has changed?

In writing, there is a crucial step of rewrite which is not regularly being seen these days. This is one difference we noticed in the late 1990s with fans coming in from the Internet. In the old days, I would write the first draft of a story in longhand, type it up, read it again, fuss with it, type it up again. And then the editor would read it, recommend changes, and you would have to type the whole bloody thing up yet again. The stories went through the typewriter more than once, and a lot was changed slowly but crucially. I've noticed the difference in my own writing. Now, you write something, put it aside, write something, put it aside, and then jam it all together.

Access to the audience was different too. You had to get into the zine's queue and it took forever to get published.

Months, at least! And if you couldn't get into the queue, you started your own zine. Another difference is the level of literacy of people coming to it—and the level of entitlement about their level of literacy: "Well, I don't care if this is misspelled because that's how I want it to be." I may sound a bit snotty, but heck, I've seen typos completely wreck the point of a story.

But were the early stories really any better?

Well, not the 90 percent that was crap. But Star Trek fans did some really good stuff. A lot of fan writers later filed off the serial numbers and went pro. Today, the leap is harder because print is dying. If you don't write a blockbuster it's hard to attract any attention, although e-books and print-on-demand may level the field again.

The hierarchy of old science fiction kept things on a ladder. You could be in a zine, and if you were good enough, you could go into a pulp magazine, and if you were better, you could get a book published. When women took over, Trek fandom became more democratized but also more feminized. At its worst we called it "estrogen poisoning": you mustn't say anything negative because you might hurt someone's feelings.

You didn't let that stop you from doing criticism.
[5.17] **PS:** Some of us it didn't stop. I got flamed for it, but that was fine; everybody is entitled to her opinion. I think I was reasonably fair because even when I slammed something, I always said what it was about the *story* I did or didn't like. For example, I gave the *U.N.C.L.E.* zine *Perestroika* five stars, but I said I didn't like certain things about it for personal reasons. I said what was good about it and what I didn't care for and I tried to keep the two separate.

[5.18] **Q:** Was there more critique in those days?

[5.19] **PS:** I think there was, or at least a different kind of critique. If you were going to spend so much time typing up a LoC to send to a zine, and then make them type it up to put in their zine, you might as well make it interesting. I received a lot of criticism for not being so nice and encouraging in my critiques, then I would go to a con and be my usual effusive self and someone would say, "You're so much different from your writing; you're so much nicer!" Somebody told me I have a soft chocolate center.

[5.20] But in my criticism I was very cerebral. My Meyers-Briggs personality type is INTJ. I did ease back a lot when I went to grad school.

[5.21] **Q:** So what happened to the mommas of fandom? Are you the last?

[5.22] **PS:** I'm hardly the last. Part of the problem is, we're at that age where we're cutting down on contacts because we're busy (and tired) and it's hard to keep track. I don't know if, after I retire, things will free up again, as they did for Shirley Maiewski, the godmother of Trek fandom.

[5.23] But we did make a kind of network. In the beginning it was Bjo Trimble in Los Angeles, and Margaret and Laura Basta in Detroit, and Devra Langsam and Joyce Yasner in New York. The August Party bunch who ran the Farpoint cons were in Baltimore. And Shore Leave was down south, Houston. And Sharon and myself were in Kalamazoo.

[5.24] We were part of that early network which took the science fiction fandom template and ran with it. We were the string in this supersaturated sugar solution that allowed the rock candy that became media fandom to crystallize. To quote a famous science fiction writer (R. A. Heinlein), "When railroading time comes, you can railroad."

6. "A Trekkie's Tale"

"Gee, golly gosh, glorio-sky," thought Mary Sue as she stepped on the bridge of the *Enterprise*. "Here I am, the youngest lieutenant in the Fleet—only 15-1/2 years old."

Captain Kirk came up to her. "Oh, Lieutenant, I love you madly. Will you come to bed with me?"

"Captain! I am not that kind of girl!"

"You're right. And I respect you for it. Here, take over the ship while I go for some coffee for us."

Mr. Spock came onto the bridge. "What are you doing in the Command Seat, Lieutenant?"

"The Captain told me to."

"Flawlessly logical. I admire your mind."

Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott beamed down with Lt. Mary Sue to Rigel XXXVII. They were attacked by green androids and thrown into prison. In a moment of weakness Lt. Mary Sue revealed to Mr. Spock that she, too, was half Vulcan. Recovering quickly, she sprung the lock with her hairpin and they all got away safely back to the ship.

But back on board, Dr. McCoy and Lt. Mary Sue found out that the men who had beamed down were seriously stricken by the jumping cold robbies, Mary Sue less so. While the four officers languished in Sick Bay, Lt. Mary Sue ran the ship, and ran it so well she received the Nobel Peace Prize, the Vulcan Order of Gallantry and the Tralfamadorian Order of Good Guyhood.

However, the disease finally got to her and she fell fatally ill. In the Sick Bay, as she breathed her last, she was surrounded by Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott all weeping unashamedly at the loss of her beautiful youth and youthful beauty, intelligence, capability and all around niceness. Even to this day her birthday is a national holiday on the *Enterprise*.

The End
1. Introduction

[1.1] This oral history project grew out of my work in comic cons and fans' costumed representations of characters—in particular, those in Star Wars fandom. I examine how fan practices may, or may not, affect the performance of social identity. The logical extension of my prior TWC article, "'A Jedi like my father before me': Social Identity and the New York Comic Con" (http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0161) would be to conduct further, more detailed interviews with participants in an international fan organization.

[1.2] I wanted to do an extended, in-depth interview with someone deeply involved in Star Wars fandom, specifically a member of the 501st Legion. Robert DeSimone was chosen for his five-year involvement with the Empire City Garrison (New York) of the 501st Legion, where he has served as commanding officer. Currently, he is second in command. DeSimone has always been heavily involved in public relations and appearances for the group, and his efforts have propelled the Empire City Garrison into occasional close work with Lucas Arts. He typically appears as either Darth Vader or Boba Fett, a particular favorite of his.

[1.3] The uncut interview is approximately two hours long and covers a range of questions, including, but not limited to, DeSimone's original exposure to the Star Wars franchise, his past involvement in fandom outside of the 501st Legion, his experiences within the organization, what the 501st does and its relationship with Lucas Arts, and the perception of fans by both the public and scholars.
[1.4] In the interview, DeSimone refers to "the City." This is a term used by New Yorkers for New York City. He also uses the term "trooping" or "to troop." This is a group-specific term used by the 501st Legion when speaking of making appearances at events in costume.

[1.5] Robert DeSimone was born on February 9, 1967, and is the second youngest of five children. He holds an associate's degree in marketing and is currently employed as a sales supervisor. DeSimone is married with no children. His wife does not participate in the 501st Legion, or any other fandom to my knowledge.

[1.6] This interview was conducted on July 26, 2010, at the Panera in Mohegan Lake, New York. Venues for taping were scarce, and the sound quality may not be the best in some portions of the interview, for which I apologize.

2. Interview

Vid 1. Interview with Robert DeSimone.

3. Acknowledgments

[3.1] I would like to thank Bob DeSimone for sharing his experiences, reference librarian Maureen Davis for introducing me to Bob, and finally, Nicole Fellows for her
assistance in taking care of other ancillary concerns so I could do this.
1. Introduction

[1.1] This is an excerpt of an extended video interview with vidders Sandy Herrold and Rachael Sabotini, jointly known as the Clucking Belles and founding members of the vidding collective known as the Media Cannibals (note 1). This interview was done as part of the Organization for Transformative Works' Oral History Project, which aims to record the history of vidding in vidders' own words. Currently the project is documenting the experiences of analog vidders and/or vidders who were working before 2000.

[1.2] Sandy Herrold is one of slash fandom's most influential fans. A fan fic writer and vidder, her contributions to fandom include founding Virgule, the first Internet slash mailing list, and hosting such well-known sites as the "All Jewels Have Flaws" rec list, the "Big List of Fanfic Peeves," and the "Slashfic Hall of Shame." With Rachael Sabotini and others, she created the annual "Vid Review" panel at Escapade, which became the model for other serious and sustained conversations about vidding as an art.

[1.3] Rachael Sabotini is also a well-known fan writer and vidder. She was one of the administrators of the ROG-L Highlander mailing list and her presentations and articles about fandom include 1999's "The Fannish Potlatch: Creation of Status within the Fan Community," the first article to talk about fandom in terms of gift culture, and "The Genealogy of Vidding," which traces what she calls the "three great houses" of vidding.
Together, Herrold and Sabotini founded the Media Cannibals, a loose collection of Seattle-based VCR vidders who produced five tape collections between 1993 and 2002. The Media Cannibals were among the first vidders to "brand" themselves and their vids with a distinct identity and logo. At the height of their popularity—about the time they put on "The Media Cannibals Indulgence Hour" at Escapade—there was a backlash among fans who thought they were getting egotistical. Their response was to print up T-shirts that read, "Media Cannibals: Who Do They Think They Are?" on the back—in Latin.

This video interview was conducted by Francesca Coppa at the seventh annual Vividcon vidding convention, which took place in Chicago, Illinois, in August 2008. An annotated transcript follows.

Vid 1. Five questions with Sandy and Rache, the Clucking Belles.

2. Five questions with Sandy and Rache—Epigraph

[2.1] **FC:** So, in fact, if I have to retitle this, I might call it: "Media Cannibals: Who Do They Think They Were?" [laughter]

3. When did you first discover vids?
1991 Koon-ut-Cali-Con II was happening in San Diego (note 2), and we decided to—what the hell, it's, I don't know, a thousand miles away, and we decided to go. Koon-ut-Cali-Con, I mean it's a Trek con; we were K/S fans. So we get down there, and almost the first thing we see—is vids. And not K/S vids. Man from Uncle, which had been, like, you know, secret baby little loves of ours, and this curly-haired guy and this dark-haired guy who we eventually found out were—

We had no clue.

'Cause there were Professionals [vids]...

When we first saw them—well, the way that we found them was the way fans find each other when they're new at a con: they wander up and down the hallways until they find a place where people are talking! Where the door's open. And so we wandered in and—it wasn't even like "a vid show," it was like, you know, 92 more people than the room could hold, around a really small television with really bad—really bad!—19th-quality vids going on, and we were just totally blown away (note 3).

Yeah.

4. How did you learn to vid?

So a couple other cons, we meet somebody who meets somebody who knows somebody who lives in our area who vids, who's DeeJay (note 4). And we introduce ourselves, and she says "Come on up," and we talk a little more about vidding and she finally says, "I have a song—I have two songs, I have two songs: you can vid one of them. I'll help you vid one of them." And the one we chose was "Don't Put It in Your Mouth," a totally adorable Uncle Bonzai song by a local Seattle band—I mean, it was made for us.

And we were doing The Professionals at that point in time because there were only two fandoms, really: there was The Professionals and Blake's 7.

Life was so simple then.

Both Trek and Starsky and Hutch had kind of moved on, at least in our area, so yeah, it was B7 or Pros. And we chose Pros—

You could have vanilla or chocolate. [laughter]

Exactly! Or actually it was more like—never mind! And "Don't Put It in Your Mouth" was fun, it was totally fun, except it was our vid except when it was her vid,
and we found that a little frustrating. And we said: "We're going to make one, just us."

5. How did you make your first vid?

[5.1] **SH:** I went out and bought an editing VCR, for probably $600, the price of a cheap computer now, and then she [Rachael] got pregnant, and she—fairly soon in—went on—I want to call it house arrest [laughter]—where they tell you you gotta lay down or bad things are going to happen...

[5.2] **RS:** Sandy came over, and she brought all of her vidding setup with her.

[5.3] **SH:** At that point we lived 20 miles apart from each other, and we haven't vidded much, and there are many, many pieces. There's—you know, I have to bring two VCRs, all the cables, remotes for both of the VCRs, and every time—and I'm not a type[A] organized person—every time, I would get over there and I would forget something, and sometimes we could work around it and sometimes I'm like, "Oh my God, 20 more miles home, 20 more miles back again—do I even care? Maybe I should just talk to her for 2 hours!" But I wasn't working much at the time, and yeah, I would just come over every couple of days...

[5.4] **RS:** And we would set it up with my computer—not my computer, but with my TV system, and she would sit there on a wooden hardback chair in front of the TV, and she would push the button, she'd feed in the source and she'd push the button because I could not get off the couch. I couldn't even turn over from on my left side.

[5.5] **SH:** And this set the pattern of our relationship ever since. I do all of the button-pushing; now that we are on computer I still do all the button-pushing. She still sits on the couch and tells me what to do!

6. How, when, and why did you become the Clucking Belles?

[6.1] **SH:** Mid-'90s.

[6.2] **RS:** From my perspective, we vidded with DeeJay in '92-'93, okay, and then 1993 is when we started doing our own stuff, and it was really Escapade that was the knob, basically, because Escapade was the place that required you to submit no more than three vids under a name. So we needed our own name to submit our vids, and then we needed another name—

[6.3] **SH:** We had five vids.

[6.4] **RS:** —for our "group vids" (note 5).
[6.5] **SH:** And the idea that you would pick your three best? Are you kidding? We had worked hard on those! And it's not like there was another place that we could—I mean, you know, Escapade was it until Z-con, that's like 6 months! And it's not like you could put them up on the Web! I mean, yeah, we had to show all five of them, you understand? We had to!

[6.6] **FC:** I do!

7. How did the Media Cannibals shape "vid meta"?

[7.1] **SH:** So, the history that I wanted to tell this year, and it ended up being the other one (note 6), was supposed to be '84–'92—'92 is the cutoff, because '92 is when Escapade starts to influence vidding in a way that just changes vidding forever. That's when we start to talk about vids in large, painful groups.

[7.2] **RS:** Yes. Because before Escapade, you would go to a con, you'd show your vid, but there was nothing afterwards. We were the ones that came up with the vidding comment forms. We were the ones that came up with wanting to do a Vid Review.

[7.3] **SH:** And the Vid Review—that's like 5 years of learning to talk about vids in ways that did not end friendships.

[7.4] **RS:** And it was incredibly fraught. Because one of the things we were interested in was honesty about our reactions to things. And we had people from lots of different disciplines that were attending—we didn't have so much the MediaWest [vidders], 'cause that was all gen, but things that were important to one group were not necessarily important to another group, and we fought like crazy.

[7.5] **SH:** And we also spent a lot of time coming up with vocabulary. I mean, some of the earlier problems probably would have been made easier if we'd been able to talk to each other more aptly. Some of our conversations we're still having at Vividcon started really in the very early '90s talking about vids—I say '92 but it was probably '94 or '5 before we finally got the Vid Review going every year. And it gradually became a 2-hour vid review just like it is at Vividcon. And it moved, just like it does here, it was a different person each time, or a pair occasionally, with different philosophies, which I think was good, but certainly some people were easier or—less willing to get involved.

8. End credits

9. Notes

1. Other members of the Media Cannibals over the decade of their existence included (in alphabetical order): Alexfandra (Alex), Blackbird, Feochadn (Jo), Charlotte C. Hill, Gwyneth Rhys, Lynn C., Megan Kent, Michelle, Michelle Christian, Nicole V, Pam Rose, and Thomas (Katherine).

2. Koon-ut-Cali-Con II was actually put on in 1990.

3. In the days when vids were made with VCRs, most vids were made from source footage that had been copied multiple times. Vids made from *The Professionals*—a show that was never broadcast in the United States—were particularly known for their terrible image quality.

4. DeeJay Driscoll, longtime fan and early vidder. DeeJay was taught to vid by Mary van Deusen (aka MVD), the subject of Henry Jenkins’s chapter on fan vidding in *Textual Poachers* (1993). On account of this, Rachael Sabotini classifies the Media Cannibals as "descendants of Mary van Deusen."

5. Sandy Herrold elaborates, "Clucking Belles was the fluff name we came up with when we needed to send more than 3 vids to Revelcon and Escapade" (personal correspondence, August 24, 2010).

6. "The other one" was the history show/panel Herrold and Kandy Fong comoderated at Vividcon 2008: "Vidding History: 1980–1984."
1. Introduction

[1.1] Rusty Hevelin is a walking encyclopedia of the history of fandom in the 20th century. Beginning with the reading of pulp magazines as a child, he began collecting them at an early age, and has spent the majority of his life involved in fandom.

[1.2] He attended the third-ever Worldcon in 1941, hitchhiking from Southern California to Denver to attend. The only problem was, when he got there he didn't have the money for the membership fee. He found a job as a handyman at a local boarding house in return for food and a place to sleep. Then he went off to meet Lou Martin, the chairman of that Worldcon. He just wanted to talk about fandom things, and Martin allowed Rusty to attend, even though he didn't have the membership fee. (Which at that point in time was $1.)

[1.3] His connections to the "Big-Name Fans" (BNFs) of those early years were based on mutual love for the books and magazines, and it led him to lifelong friendships with many of the early writers, organizers, and fans in all areas of fandom. He watched as conventions changed from small fan-run affairs to huge money-making conventions. He mingled with the BNFs, who then included the likes of Ray Bradbury.

[1.4] Rusty became the driving force of the group that organized and ran PulpCon. This specific con, dedicated to the pulp magazines and books, has become a model for focused cons. It also had the reputation for being the only con where the dealers' room was a safe zone during all the years he ran it.
Except for the period he was in the marines and serving overseas, and a time during which he was in college, chasing girls, and then eventually marrying and having children, his life has always involved fandom in a very important way.

Rusty is a witness to how television fandom changed the nature of conventions and fandom forever. He attended the first Star Trek convention, in New York City in 1972. It was run by the fans, and no one expected the massive crowd that showed up. If it hadn't been for Issac Asimov showing up, the con would have had a dearth of programming. That con changed the face of fandom forever.

One man who attended saw the potential in Star Trek, and from that point forward, the convention became a "money convention." It was no longer run by fans, and it was geared to the masses who had watched the show and become obsessed not just with the stories, but with the actors, the production, and every detail of what Star Trek had been.

But some things never changed about fandom. Rusty says that in 1956 he went to Worldcon in New York City. He had a place to stay, out on Long Island with his wife's aunt, but he never showed up there. He was offered space in someone's room and stayed in the con hotel. Space sharing is still a common factor of fandom and conventions.

Another thing that hasn't changed is the wide spectrum of fans. Age, race, career, none of that mattered. It was what the fan was interested in, the willingness to share, and the joy in the fandom; that made it a world that welcomed all.

For 25 years, Rusty Hevelin and Gay Haldeman have done a panel at fan conventions on "How to Enjoy Your First Convention." It's one of the many ways he shares his knowledge and his experience with new fans.

This interview was conducted on January 7, 2008, at Joe and Gay Haldeman's home in Gainesville, Florida. This grew out of my desire to have some record of the incredible amount of knowledge about fandom and conventions that exists in Rusty's head, and of his deep love of fandom. There are 4 hours of tape, and only a small portion of it is presented here.

It was my desire to make this information available in some permanent fashion. The things that Rusty knows and has seen, and his life of fandom, deserve to be preserved.

If someone wishes to know more, I would welcome the opportunity to provide access to the raw interview footage to anyone who has an interest in preserving this information for fandom history.
2. Interview
3. Acknowledgments
[3.1]  April Steenburgh reviewed the tapes and provided the technical expertise to make the video clips included here. She also made suggestions and was incredibly helpful in developing the specific clips to be used.

[3.2]  Rusty Hevelin is a good friend and a generous man. He sat for 4 hours with me one afternoon and allowed me to record his thoughts, his comments, and his memories. I am permanently indebted to him for that time.

[3.3]  Gay Haldeman allowed me to set up on her patio on a lovely January day and record for as long as Rusty and I wanted. She also verified some details for Rusty during the interview. Her kindness in hosting us is much appreciated.
Boys' love manga: Essays on the sexual ambiguity and cross-cultural fandom of the genre, edited by Antonia Levi, Mark McHarry, and Dru Pagliassotti

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[0.2] Keywords—Slash; Fan fiction; Gender; Sexuality


[1] Editors Antonia Levi, Mark McHarry, and Dru Pagliassotti describe this collection, the first English-language academic volume to focus exclusively on boys' love manga, as follows: "Boys' love, a male-male homoerotic genre written primarily by women for women, enjoys global popularity and is one of the most rapidly growing publishing niches in the United States. It is found in manga, anime, novels, movies, electronic games, and fan-created fiction, artwork, and video. This collection of 14 essays addresses boys' love as it has been received and modified by fans outside Japan as a commodity, controversy, and culture."

[2] The book begins with a dedication to Yonezawa Yoshihiro, cofounder and president of Japan's largest dōjinshi (fan comic) convention, who died in 2006. Antonia Levi's introduction gives a succinct and clear explanation of boys' love manga and emphasizes the pivotal role of fans in shaping not just boys' love fan works, but also the commercial genre of boys' love manga that thrives inside and outside Japan. From there, the focus of the book remains squarely on the fans of boys' love manga, which makes it relevant to anyone interested in fan studies. The majority of the book's chapters concern themselves at least in part with fannish involvement with and
creation of boys' love material. Several chapters do not focus on organized fandom but rather concentrate on reader involvement with boys' love manga. With a few exceptions, the bibliographies attached to the chapters don't reveal a close affinity with the English-language fan studies readers of *Transformative Works and Cultures* may be familiar with, but many of the recurring themes in the anthology align with recent concerns voiced in English-language fan studies. For readers more familiar with manga studies, the volume's intense focus on fans and fannish activities will be informative and perhaps quite novel, although the lack of analysis of actual boys' love manga may disappoint.

[3] The book occasionally seems to lack focus. This is not surprising, given its broad topic base. Nevertheless, there are several themes that recur, sometimes with an emphasis that is quite enlightening. In her introduction, for instance, Levi briefly contrasts slash fan works with *yaoi* fan works. Comparisons between slash and *yaoi* remain similarly brief throughout the book, but several chapters that discuss slash do so in a way that will be new to fan studies researchers not familiar with boys' love. In one of the most interesting chapters in the volume, "Better than Romance? Japanese BL Manga and the Subgenre of Male/Male Romantic Fiction," Dru Pagliassotti offers a comparison of boys' love manga with male/male romantic fiction. Quoting extensively from survey responses from boys' love fans, Pagliassotti identifies a number of similarities and differences between reader experiences of and expectations toward boys' love manga and Western romantic fiction. In "Yaoi and Slash Fiction: Women Writing, Reading, and Getting Off?," Mark John Isola raises the difficult and important question of how slash and *yaoi* can and should be compared, as genres that originated in different cultural environments and that tend to occur in different media—slash as text, *yaoi* as manga. He offers an interesting discussion of the *yaoi ronsō*, a critical debate on *yaoi* that occurred in Japan in the 1990s but is virtually unknown among fan studies researchers.

[4] Another example of a recurring theme is the question of boys' love and appropriation, touched upon by Isola, Neal K. Akatsuka, and several others. Questions concerning the gender makeup and sexual identity of the audience are raised by many of the contributors. Several mention explicitly that a significant portion of the boys' love fan community identifies as queer, and the community includes a sizable minority of men. The old notion that boys' love is by and for heterosexual women is thankfully absent from the book. Three chapters tackle the relationship between fannish activities and commercial boys' love manga publishing from very different angles. There is a basic but solid introduction to the concept of the gift economy (Hope Donovan's "The Gift of Anime: Cooperative Distribution of Boys Love Anime and Manga in the US") and how it operates in North American anime and manga fandom, and an equally basic but conceptually interesting description of boys' love manga production in Indonesia.
In "From BRAVO to Animexx.de to Export: Capitalizing on German Boys' Love Fandom, Culturally, Socially, and Economically," Paul Malone offers a useful analysis of how the online dōjinshi forum Animexx.de is used by both boys' love manga fans and industry professionals in Germany. His account of how several dōjinshi artists came to be recruited by commercial publishers through the forum invites comparisons with the Japanese dōjinshi market, where such recruiting of fan creators happens on a much larger scale.

Numerous contributors revisit the well-worn question, "Why do readers like BL [boys' love]/yaoi/slash?" Some make this the central question of their chapters. In "Uttering the Absurd, Revaluing the Abject: Femininity and the Disavowal of Homosexuality in Transnational Boys' Love Manga," Neal K. Akatsuka attempts to explain the cross-cultural appeal of boys' love manga by locating possibilities for subversiveness in the multiple viewpoints that readers of boys' love can adopt—for instance, by identifying with the uke (submissive partner), seme (dominant partner), or both. It is notable that other contributors, such as Akatsuka and Uli Meyer in "Hidden in Straight Sight: Trans*gressing Gender and Sexuality via BL," also take pains to emphasize that readers of boys' love seem to identify almost as much with the seme as with the uke. The book clearly departs from older assumptions that female readers identify primarily with uke characters. In "Raping Apollo: Sexual Difference and the Yaoi Phenomenon," Alan Williams approaches the topic from a different angle, and discusses the possibility that boys' love manga "speak to aspects of human desire that are, in fact, beyond a single gender and culture"—mainly by examining boys' love manga as possible sites of feminist theory making.

At times, such scholarly attempts at teasing out the functions of boys' love manga in readers' lives feel like a more benign version of the older pathologization of boys' love fans. While this sort of abstract theorizing has its own uses, it fails to acknowledge how readers of boys' love manga consciously experience their fascination with boys' love. Fortunately, a fresher look is provided by several contributors who focus heavily on readers' voices and quote extensively from reader responses to surveys, such as M. M. Blair, Pagliassotti, and Alexis Hall. (Blair devotes a long paragraph to listing reasons given by readers as to why they like boy's love, and drily identifies the most commonly cited reason as "it's hot.") In "Gay or Gei? Reading 'Realness' in Japanese Yaoi Manga," Hall uses survey research to explore a different question: how culturally defined notions of homosexuality influence the way Western readers experience the fictional male-male relationship as "real"—or, as it turns out, not very real at all. This chapter is the only one to touch upon the issue of Western experiences and expectations being privileged over Japanese, a topic that is too rarely addressed in studies on manga. Hall makes an interesting analysis of responses by
Western readers but does not attempt to speculate on how different notions of homosexuality in Japan influence the way Japanese readers of boys' love experience the relationships on the pages.

[7] As mentioned, this book concentrates on the fan community rather than on content research. However, given the very large variety of boys' love manga available to fans, there are some risks in focusing solely on "fans of boys' love manga" without clarifying and considering exactly which works these readers call themselves fans of. It may not be a coincidence that two of the most informative chapters of the collection combine analysis of fannish interactions with analysis of the actual content fans are interacting with and about. In "'She Should Just Die in a Ditch': Fan Reactions to Female Characters in Boys' Love Manga," M. M. Blair gives a fairly extensive description of several manga works before quoting readers' reactions to various female characters in the stories. Not surprisingly, it turns out that differences in the works' portrayal of female characters cause readers' reactions to these characters to differ. This sort of basic acknowledgement of the differences between individual works that are grouped together as "boys' love manga" is mostly absent from the rest of the book. Marni Stanley, in "101 Uses for Boys: Communing with the Reader in Yaoi and Slash," describes how creators of boys' love manga interact with their readers through author's notes, inviting them to develop their imaginations through toying with the manga. Stanley's conclusion that reader involvement with boys' love material is much better characterized as "play" than as an attempt to "resolve sexual or gender-based anxieties" will not sound surprising to many fan creators. However, it contrasts sharply and pleasantly with the more traditional way other chapters in the book approach the "why readers like BL/yaoi/slash" question.

[8] In conclusion, I can say that although Boys' Love Manga contains a few weaker chapters, most offer interesting ideas and viewpoints that should appeal to a readership beyond manga or fan studies. Perhaps the most timely and therefore interesting aspect of the book is its emphasis on cross-cultural comparisons. Isola, Pagliassotti, Akatsuka, and Hall in particular succeed in focusing on the cross-cultural aspect of boys' love manga fandom and suggesting promising possibilities. Indeed, insistence on the importance of cross-cultural approaches is so strong throughout the book that it is surprising and perhaps unfortunate that the anthology contains no contributions from Japanese researchers. Isola's description of the yaoi ronsō debate gives a tantalizing glimpse into the vast amount of Japanese research on boys' love that currently remains inaccessible for fan studies scholars who do not read Japanese. However, most of the contributors do rely on Japanese scholarship on boys' love manga, some extensively. With a conference on the transcultural fandom of boys' love scheduled to take place next year in Fukuoka, and with other recent bilingual conferences in Kyoto and Cologne focusing expressly on cross-cultural research of
manga, it appears manga studies, insofar as there is such a field—the term is subject to debate—is attempting to become more global and inclusive. This volume, with its cross-cultural approach combined with a strong focus on fannish activities, is certainly a valuable contribution to that movement.
and cartooning by rejecting traditional classical artistic values and anticipating the modernist notion that art transforms nature and obeys its own rules outside of nature. Peter Coogan’s "The Definition of the Superhero" tells the story behind the 1952 legal decision that found Wonder Man copied and infringed upon Superman and, in so doing, defined the primary characteristics of a superhero as mission, powers, and identity. M. Thomas Inge's "Two Boys from the Twin Cities" compares the lives of Peanuts creator Charles Schulz and his neighbor, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and discusses the impact Fitzgerald’s work had on Schultz. Under the "Craft, Art, Form" heading, David Carrier's rumination on "Caricature" and its practices and mechanics is particularly compelling, as is Bart Beaty's "Autobiography as Authenticity" under "Culture, Narrative, Identity," which looks at the history of autobiographical comics and why they’ve proven so instrumental in comics' struggle to gain acceptance as Art. Obviously comics scholars keenly interested in the international aspects of comics, manga, and bande dessinée will be most interested in John Lent's "The Comics Debates Internationally" under "Historical Considerations," Robert Petersen's "The Acoustics of Manga" under "Culture, Narrative, Identity," and Adam Kern's "Manga vs. Kibyóshi" and Fusami Ogi's "Beyond Shoujo, Blending Gender" under "Culture, Narrative, Identity." As someone studying comparative media, I found Annalisa De Liddo's "Transcending Comics: Crossing the Boundaries of the Medium," in the book's fourth section, the most intriguing. De Liddo examines Alan Moore's works blending comics with other media, such as the mixed-media performance pieces The Birth Caul and Snakes and Ladders, which utilize the notion of psychogeography in a fashion particularly applicable to location-based entertainment. Slightly disappointing for the Transformative Works and Cultures audience is the general lack of attention paid to fan activity, but that may merely signal an opportunity for a future volume.

[4] A much bigger issue, unfortunately, is how the book stumbles as a reader. While A Comics Studies Reader is indeed, in Dictionary.com's phrase, "a book of collected or assorted writings, especially when related in theme, authorship, or instructive purpose," the book's own back-cover claim to "introduce readers to the major debates and points of reference that continue to shape the field" is not supported by the editors' selections—or, more specifically, their exclusions. In the introduction, Heer and Worcester state,

[5] Our anthology is intended as a starting point for defining comics studies as well as a springboard for further investigation...It is aimed at students, faculty, curators, librarians, and general readers. Our interest is in addressing readers who are engaged by comics of all kinds and from multiple vantage points, whether as product, construct, language, argument or aesthetic. (xii)
The problem is that this portrait is unbalanced by a distinct lack of, well, *comics*. In the introduction, Heer and Worcester note that recent comics scholarship has paid special attention to formal aspects of comics, with Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* and Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*—both comics—serving as touchstones for this turn. However, both Eisner and McCloud are conspicuously absent from this volume. I'd assume that their absence was due to difficulties securing reprint rights if the book weren't permeated by an unsettling sense of prejudice against those comics practitioners who are also comics theorists. For example, although *Understanding Comics* is inarguably one of the most influential texts on comics, Heer and Worcester instead opt to include only an essay by R. C. Harvey "pointedly challenging" McCloud's work—and, more telling, while the editors introduce Harvey as both "a gifted historian" and a "theorist," they describe McCloud only as a "cartoonist" (13–14). Including an essay that critiques McCloud while not including anything by McCloud himself feels as if the editors are shooing artists along so the scholarly adults can get on with their work. This imbalance between comic art critics and practitioners is reinforced by the inclusion of an excerpt from Frederic Wertham's infamous 1954 text *Seduction of the Innocent*: this essay ostensibly functions as a lead-in to Amy Kiste Nyberg's "William Gaines and the Battle over EC Comics," yet its inclusion makes the asymmetric absence of McCloud much more keenly felt. At issue again is the definition of a reader—if one is satisfied with a collection of works that are meant to be merely a sampling of a field, then *A Comics Studies Reader* does a fine job. If, however, one holds that a reader should be a concise, representative snapshot of the touchstone works in that field, then the exclusion of comics theorists working in comics, such as Eisner, McCloud, and James Kochalka (*The Cute Manifesto*), is baffling.

More unsettling is the possibility that this exclusion is the result of some deeper academic insecurity. Nestled between the book's introduction and the first of the book's four sections is a piece called "Why Are Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimization?," a transcript of a lecture by Thierry Groensteen. It's an excellent question, especially given today's widening acceptance of comics as an art form, but it seems to haunt the editors. One wonders if the editors may have shied away from including excerpts from McCloud's *Understanding Comics* or Kochalka's *The Cute Manifesto* for fear that more traditional scholars might scoffingly dismiss the book entirely. Some of the book's essays seem to have been chosen out of such a fear, particularly Inge's comparison of Schultz and Fitzgerald. Add to this the fact that the editors' previous collaboration, the excellent *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium*, was a collection of reflections on comics by well-known intellectuals, and a recurring theme emerges of "Comics are valid subjects of study! Comics are valid subjects of study!" This is exceptionally strange, considering that the editors assert that comics studies are coming into their own:
The rise of comics studies is concomitant with the increased status and awareness of comics as an expressive medium and as part of the historical record. This revaluation is testified to by the commercial and critical success of the graphic novel; the greater attention comics are receiving in museums, galleries, and libraries; and the growing interest in teaching comics in the classroom. A cohort of graphic novels, including *Maus*, *Persepolis*, *Jimmy Corrigan*, *American Born Chinese*, and *Fun Home*, have become standard items on college and university syllabi for courses on memoir, cultural history, postmodern literature, and area studies. The notion that comics are unworthy of serious investigation has given way to a widening curiosity about comics as artifacts, commodities, codes, devices, mirrors, polemics, puzzles, and pedagogical tools. Comics are no longer a byword for banality; they have captured the interest of growing numbers of scholars working across the humanities and historically oriented social sciences. (xi)

If comics have become so popular and comics studies has become so accepted, then why is this book trying so hard?

The exclusion of comics about comics is exceptionally puzzling since, if Heer and Worcester's intended audience is academics unfamiliar with comics, examples of comics tackling deeper theoretical issues can only be intriguing; if their audience is comics fans interested in theoretical issues, such works could help ease them into the thickets of academic discourse. Instead, the unspoken assertion seems to be that "comics can't do comics studies," which is both shortsighted and wrong, for the same reason that an introductory film studies course would be lacking without Orson Welles's *F for Fake*. If the goal of comics studies is to encourage deeper exploration of the theories and cultural practices of the medium, then it should absolutely include works done in that medium about that medium that have sparked significant debate—and a reader that intends to deliver a representative sampling of the field as a whole must do so as well. Contrast this collection to Ben Schwartz's 2010 anthology *The Best American Comics Criticism* (Fantagraphics), which includes a sample of comics on comics from Seth ("High Standards") and is more comprehensive because of it.

In fact, *A Comics Studies Reader* provides only scant illustrations throughout, perhaps another concession as it clutches for academic respectability: its 380 pages contain only 46 black-and-white images. Compare this to the 131 images (also black and white) in the 360 pages of *The Best American Comics Criticism*; the 150-odd images in the 346 pages of Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith's 2009 *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* (Continuum); or the image-saturated 240 pages of Roger Sabin's 1996 *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art* (Phaidon). Granted, the last of these is more a coffee-table book than an example of
rigorous scholarship, but a second edition of *A Comics Studies Reader* might be significantly improved by more illustrations.

[12]  *A Comics Studies Reader* left me with just such an "in the next edition" wistfulness overall. In its current incarnation, the book would make a fine addition to the syllabus of any comics studies course. As it stands, however, it is not in itself an ideal introduction to comics studies, or sufficient as a primary textbook for such a course. A second edition, revised to include samplings from McCloud, Kochalka, and Eisner, an appendix or richer online companion list of resources telling interested readers where to go next (such as conferences, mailing lists, scholarly publications, suggested texts, university programs; the introduction makes some passing references, but more explicit resources would be useful), and a general easing up on the "comics are valid!" hand-wringing could make such an edition an invaluable text. Here's hoping we get one.