Transformative Works and Cultures, special issues: Fan/Remix Video, No. 9 (March 15, 2012)

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Abstract—Editorial for Transformative Works and Cultures, no. 9 (September 15, 2012).

Keywords—Anime music video; Appropriation; Fan production; Fan trailers; Mashup; Political remix video; Vidding


Remix, even moving image remix, is hardly a new phenomenon. Indeed, the buzzword has gathered such momentum in cultural discourse that it begins to seem retrospectively that everything is a remix (http://everythingisaremix.info). Copying and overpainting in the Renaissance (http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2105928,00.html); the ascendance of pop art; Bach’s “Goldberg Variations”; the analog techniques of early hip-hop turntablists (http://thomson.co.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/infographic/interactive-music-map/index.html); the repertoire of folklore; surrealist films of the 1930s—as these varied examples indicate, remix as a trope converges with our idea of creative production itself. At least, this is a common refrain among advocates of copyright reform, who have argued that culture always builds on the past (figure 1).

Figure 1. Screen shot from "RIP: A Remix Manifesto," by Brett Gaylor (2009) (http://ripremix.com/). [View larger image.]
Joseph Cornell - Rose Hobart (1936)


[1.2] Remix thus perhaps embodies our more pervasive sense of a postmodern repudiation of artistic principles like originality, authenticity, or aura, to the degree that it can characterize our audiovisual culture as a whole. Nonetheless, as a practice that extends beyond music subcultures, the term is most closely associated with the historical specificities of our contemporary moment at the level of technology, powerful personal computers, consumer digital media devices, and Web 2.0. Remix video in particular has only recently blossomed into a widespread popular phenomenon. Vidding, political remix, DIY media, trailer mashups, tribute videos, memes, machinima, fan films—we are in the midst of an explosion in vernacular creativity that appropriates, celebrates, critiques, and transforms commercial entertainment. Technological innovations and Internet platforms support a developing ecology of video remix forms with unprecedented reach, richness, and cultural influence. At the same time, the value and legitimacy of this popular production is hotly contested on the basis of artistic merit, traditional literacies, and intellectual property.

[1.3] In this special issue, we zoom in on questions foregrounded by the proliferation and mainstreaming of remix video over the past decade. Not coincidentally, this summer will mark the 10th anniversary of VividCon (http://vividcon.com), a convention founded at a time when the fan vidding community was weathering the transition to digital editing and an associated influx of new devotees. It would have been difficult then to anticipate the scale of this transformation, both in the prevalence of fan music videos (which are now a YouTube staple) and in their new interchanges with a vast ecology of remix practice. As mashup video genres increasingly coexist, cross-pollinate, and collide online, emerging scholarly canons and debates on these distinct traditions can become similarly intersectional and mobile. We aim to bring diverse critical engagements to this conjuncture by fostering connections between scholars and fans across disciplines and subcultures.

2. Remix culture

[2.1] It's hard to believe we're only 7 years out from YouTube's early days in the spring of 2005 (http://infographiclabs.com/infographic/history-of-online-video/). While this Web startup was far from the first or last venture in Internet video, its pioneering features (including encoding, streaming, and embedding) and critical mass of users (facilitated by social components) rapidly positioned it as the destination for video online. With YouTube, the capacity of digital technologies to popularize all links in the video chain—production, distribution, appropriation—came to fruition. It's already hard to imagine our culture without ubiquitous access to audiovisual content from across the amateur-professional spectrum and the ensuing predilection to share, modify, and spread it. In less than a decade, video has become a media vernacular in unprecedented ways. As an example, consider both the content and the form of video responses to Jean Burgess's 2008 essay "All Your Chocolate Rain Are Belong to Us'? Viral Video, YouTube and the Dynamics of Participatory Culture" by students in the course Studies in Digital Culture at De Motfort University (http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL690C70E82197ECC2).
It's important to remember that remix and participatory media are not synonymous with the digital. Appropriation has been a hallmark of 20th-century art practice, customarily dated back to Duchamp's readymades (http://kiki-miserychic.livejournal.com/192417.html). And a succession of innovations in more affordable and mobile recording technologies from 16mm film (1930s) to the Portapak video camera (1970s) have supported visions of independent grassroots media production. Digital media, however, represents a qualitative change in the possibilities and implications of popular video making. According to Lev Manovich's axiomatic textbook *The Language of New Media*, the two fundamental principles of computerization are numerical representation and modularity (2002, 27–31). It follows that audiovisual content is today subject to quantification and algorithmic manipulation based on the decomposition and recomposition of its discrete units. What we now understand as media on any screen is essentially premixed by the processes of digitization into modular elements (the smallest of which are 0s and 1s), underpinning the explosion of what we have come to think of as remix culture.

In this present-day context, Eduardo Navas (2010) defines remix culture as "a global activity consisting of the creative and efficient exchange of information made possible by digital technologies...[and] supported by the practice of cut/copy and paste." In this more precise definition, remix, which originated as a term in hip-hop and disco subcultures, is based on sampling: taking excerpts of one or more existing works and recombining them into a new work. Before computerization, various forms of remix relied on specific technical practices dependent on distinct media. The digitization of media allows remix to function as a generalized principle of cultural production. Although software interfaces may vary, "cut/copy and paste"—a corollary of "numerical representation and modularity"—is now an intuitive operation to anyone who has used Microsoft Word or cropped a profile pic. For the purposes of this special issue, we consider remix video to include not only reedits of appropriated footage but other styles with a clear transformative logic. This might encompass Internet memes, machinima videos that use recorded game play, and live-action parodies, remakes, or fan films. Navas emphasizes that "a rearrangement of something already
recognizable” is fundamental to remix as a “meta-level” genre. We believe this point supports adopting a conceptual rather than purely technical definition.

[2.4] Thus, we can understand remix culture as an intersection of technological developments and creative tendencies that catalyzed a tipping point in our mediascape. The threshold of storage, processing capacity, and bandwidth we crossed in the 2000s, exemplified by the YouTube era of virtually infinite video, has catapulted remix into mainstream consciousness. The ensuing aesthetic, ideological, and legal questions have been taken up in venues from Businessweek (http://www.businessweek.com/technology/the-war-between-copyright-and-remix-culture-12122011.html) to The Colbert Report (http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/216595/january-21-2009/stephen-s-remix-challenge). The appearance of university courses on remix tied to faculty research interests in digital and participatory culture—including our own offerings: Copy This Class at Stanford University (spring 2011) (http://edu.j-l-r.org/pg/groups/29998/remix-copy-this-class/) and Writing About Remix at Muhlenberg College (fall 2011 and 2012) (http://writingaboutremix.mirocommunity.org/)—is another testament to the currency of this configuration (table 1).

**Table 1. Overview of selected remix courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>Remix Culture (fall 2009), Jill Walker Rettberg, University of Bergen (<a href="http://jilltxt.net/?p=2418">http://jilltxt.net/?p=2418</a>)</td>
<td>&quot;This semester the focus is on remix culture: the ways in which artists, writers and creators of all kinds of cultural artifacts today borrow, appropriate and remix content created by other people. We'll be interpreting works where this happens, we'll read about cultural and legal implications of remixing, study historical examples of earlier cultural appropriation (we are far from the first remixers) and think about the theoretical and practical implications of a culture where the original genius is no longer the dominant cultural myth.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Source Culture (every year), Mark Tribe, Brown University (<a href="https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/mcm1700n">https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/mcm1700n</a>)</td>
<td>&quot;Where do we draw the line between sampling and stealing? What does it mean to call a urinal a work of art? This course explores the tension between artistic appropriation and intellectual property law, and considers recent efforts to use open source software as a model for cultural production. We will trace a history of open source culture from Cubist collage and the Readymades of Marcel Duchamp through Pop art and found footage film to Hip Hop and movie trailer mashups.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Media and Participatory Culture (fall 2010), Melanie E. S. Kohnen, Georgia Tech (<a href="http://lcc.gatech.edu/~mkohnen3/index_tp_syllabus_participatoryculture.html">http://lcc.gatech.edu/~mkohnen3/index_tp_syllabus_participatoryculture.html</a>)</td>
<td>&quot;In the second half of the semester, we will focus on how we use digital media to participate in culture. Our focus here will be on remixing, mash-ups, digital video production, and other forms of transforming existing media&quot;</td>
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We will also consider how copyright regulations impact remix cultures.

"Writing, in our highly mediated culture, is remixing. Complementing this mode of writing are low-tech, low-cost, user-friendly technologies, such as the Flip Video Camera and YouTube. This installation of student videos will challenge viewers to rethink traditional concepts so often fixed in meaning: text, research, writing, and composition, among others."

"With the spread of digital technologies, remix has come to the forefront as a major form of artistic work and of cultural and political commentary. We will examine how digital technologies shape transformative creativity. Drawing on the work of theorists such as DJ Spooky and Lawrence Lessig, we will consider the creative and legal ramifications of remix logics" [description from course catalog].

We hope that this special issue, alongside other recent journal publications and several new or forthcoming books on remix culture (Appendix D), will contribute to a growing scholarly discourse on our contemporary conjuncture of digital media, online communities, and grassroots creativity.

Beyond spurring academic and journalistic interest, however, the technocultural innovations that have escalated remix have intensified and transformed creative communities and practices themselves. As an all-encompassing video portal, YouTube has brought subcultures into contact and encouraged aesthetic, conceptual, and personal connections between creative communities that were relatively isolated and distinct in the era before social media. The 24/7 DIY Video Summit (http://video24-7.org) in 2008 was an event exemplary of these new formations and a watershed in forging alliances among academics, artists, activists, legal advocates, technologists, and enthusiasts across the online video spectrum. In particular, 24/7 DIY placed fan vids, anime music videos, and machinima as pop cultural remix styles in dialogue with political and artistic remixes and independent video. This thoughtful curation initiated fresh conversations about popular remix as a legitimate artistic practice and about the evolving relationships between traditions and genres in the memetic context of the Internet.

Such an inclusive lens is important for supporting coalitions and affinities given the technical and legal challenges facing remix video today. While we are witnessing a sea change in typical attitudes and activities around appropriation and intellectual property, both old and new media industries are actively resisting these changes to ideas and systems of ownership. Hosting streaming video online still requires significant resources and expense, which has been an obstacle to the development of a community-supported, nonprofit platform. As a result, creators must choose among several corporate portals to distribute their projects. (The two exceptions we're aware of, The Internet Archive [http://archive.org] and Critical Commons [http://criticalcommons.org], are appreciated but less user-friendly options.) Under pressure from Hollywood, most Web video companies disavow all copyrighted material, with little recourse for transformative works. Although YouTube has been the milieu for much of the vibrant creativity of video remix, it also has the most highly developed infrastructure for preemptively and indiscriminately blocking content flagged by automated filters. Paradoxically, the same scale and diversity that make YouTube the primary destination for watching, mashing, and spreading video have led the site to prioritize professional and commercial interests, leaving it a poor archive for remixes (Juhasz 2011).
Fan vidders, as a relatively cohesive and organized community, adopted the site Imeem en masse in 2007 for video hosting because it had attractive policies and social features. However, in 2009, the company announced a sudden decision to remove all user-generated content, stranding vidders with no centralized home. Today, streaming vids are scattered across several imperfect platforms (including Blip.tv, Vimeo, Viddler, and Vidders.net [built on Ning]), and the group relies on external posts at personal Web sites, blogs/journals, or the text-based Archive of Our Own (a project of the Organization for Transformative Works [OTW]) for archival functions. This is only one example of the demand for advocacy to preserve and protect remix subcultures and their creative works. Initiatives that support the rights of remixers like fans include the Electronic Frontier Foundation's "No Downtime for Free Speech" campaign, the Center for Social Media's fair use resources, and the Participatory Culture Foundation, which develops free and open video technologies. OTW, the sponsor of this journal, has collaborated with the Electronic Frontier Foundation on successfully petitioning the US Copyright Office for a DMCA exemption for noncommercial remix. This special issue aims to extend alliances across the practices and perspectives of distinct remix communities because these connections are vital to safeguarding remix as a widely accessible creative practice.

3. Multimedia

Transformative Works and Cultures and the OTW have particular ties to the largely female and feminist traditions of media fandom, including fan vidding. The journal and the organization have also been at the forefront of efforts to build affiliations among contiguous or compatible forms of fan production, activism, and scholarship. Vidding, which customarily involves editing clips from TV or movies to the soundtrack of a song in order to "comment on or analyze a set of preexisting visuals, to stage a reading, or occasionally to use the footage to tell new stories" (Coppa 2008, ¶1.1), has been practiced in fan communities since the 1970s. In the more recent era of Internet video, vidders have found points of aesthetic and subcultural intersection with other strands of fandom (e.g., anime music video), with memes and other appropriations of mass media (e.g., spoof movie trailers), and with the critical commitment of political remix. Our topic for this special issue on Fan/Remix Video deliberately highlights the distinctiveness and hybridization of fan vidding and other remix genres. Styling it with a slash alludes to the convention in media fandom of marking erotic or romantic couples in this fashion, as in the paradigmatic Kirk/Spock pairing. Thus, our title suggests that fan video and remix video are engaged in an ongoing relationship, a networked narrative of which this special issue may be one component. We would thus like to present, as part of our introduction, a vid that articulates this episode in the tale we are collectively telling. Video sources are drawn from the citations in this issue, the oeuvre of authors in this issue, and from 24/7 DIY screenings in 2008.

4. Contents of this special issue

[4.1] This introduction has integrated various scholarly and multimedia sources through the modalities of remix, culminating in the original video component in video 5 above. As such, it can exist only online, where the capacities of the Web (as deployed by the developers of the open-source software the journal uses, OJS [http://pkp.sfu.ca/node/473], and TWC's layout team) support hyperlinks and media embedding. To further mobilize both the topic and the form of this special issue, we feature a substantial section of curated video exhibits documenting remix practices including queer video remix, anime music video, and political remix video. Both Ian Roberts's "Genesis of the Digital Anime Music Video Scene" and Jonathan McIntosh's "A History of Subversive Remix Video" focus particularly on establishing the predigital, pre-YouTube history of remix. McIntosh's extensive collection starts in 1941, with Charles A. Ridley's parody of Hitler and the Nazis, and ends in 2005, the year of YouTube's creation, with a remix reflective of our own political climate: Jackie Sollum's "Planet of the Arabs." Similarly, Ian Roberts chronicles the evolution of AMVs from 1990 to 2003, focusing on the development of both technological practices and aesthetic standards within emerging anime music video communities. In her exhibition, "Queer Video Remix and LGBTQ Online Communities," Elisa Kreisinger considers remix itself as a queer act that "challenges, questions, or provokes," and her collection of videos encourages the viewer to "gaze through a queer lens, identify with queer(ed) characters, and be sympathetic to their struggles." Like these three online exhibits, our fourth multimedia piece, Alexandra Juhasz's "Fred Rant," takes advantage of the new potentialities of digital scholarship even as it demonstrates a critical approach to more utopian models of (aca)fandom and participatory culture. Juhasz argues that the cruelty and shallowness of many of the amateur videos responding to famed vlogger Fred suggests that not all participation is empowering and not all speech is edifying. Her video essay, constructed in the same immersive, multimodal online platform as her video book, Learning from YouTube, takes us through the juvenile work of Fred's fans and then asks us to ponder: "But did they learn anything, grow, become artists or citizens?"

[4.2] Scaffolding the debates that play out across these multimedia pieces, the essays in the Theory section step back from particular works to articulate broader implications of read-write video culture in thought-provoking ways. In "Mashup as Temporal Amalgam," Paul Booth considers how remixes frequently mash together two time frames; moreover, often an older work is juxtaposed with a newer one, and reinterpreted or reinvigorated by the connection. Booth therefore argues that remixing alters the value of various cultural products by altering their place and time in the social world; one may need to know yesterday's movie to understand today's remix. Tisha Turk and Joshua Johnson claim that scholars of remix typically paint vidders as articulate consumers rather than as producers in their own right—that is, as artists who have their own enthusiastic audiences and are working within a collective art world of shared meanings and collaboratively developed tastes. Influenced by composition studies, "Toward an Ecology of Vidding" recharacterizes the vidding community as a vast and complex ecosystem of creative and interpretive activity in which a vid is a statement as well as a response. Like Turk and Johnson, Virginia Kuhn insists that remix is an active discursive act rather than a responsive or secondary work. In "The Rhetoric of Remix," Kuhn argues against definitions of remix that implicitly valorize an original author or text and discusses several fan vids and remixes that would benefit from a more robust understanding of remix as speech. The Theory section closes with a provocative essay from Kim Middleton, whose essay remixes two contemporary academic topics: the crisis of the humanities and the rise of the remix. Like any good mashup, Middleton's juxtaposition gets us to see both sides differently; in "Remix Video and the Crisis of the Humanities," she suggests that the skills and values of the humanities—close reading, critical thinking, the interrogation of authorial and authoritative voices, and the ability to produce new interpretations—are amply manifested in remix culture.

[4.3] The Praxis essays in this issue offer in-depth discussions of videos that demonstrate remix's potential as a sophisticated critical and artistic response. In "Vidding and the Perversity of Critical Pleasure: Sex, Violence, and Voyeurism in 'Closer' and 'On the Prowl," Sarah Fiona Winters argues that these metacritical fan vids examine the pleasures of media fandom and its practices while reinscribing those same pleasures for the spectator, constructing complex texts that seduce even as they question and subvert expectations. Agnese Vellar analyzes Lady Gaga's mastery of Web 2.0 and the unparalleled spreadability of her image and brand in "Spreading the Cult Body on YouTube: A Case Study of "Telephone" Derivative Videos." By positioning herself as both a user and a producer of audiovisual media and social media, Gaga legitimizes and participates in the fertile creative fan culture that surrounds her. Last, Kathleen Williams explores "Fake and Fan Film Trailers as Incarnations of Audience Anticipation and Desire," showing that these trailers are akin to architectural desire lines, creating trace versions of stories that may never exist or express anticipation of particular film events or interpretations.
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<td>DJs from Mars</td>
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<td>Doki Doki Productions</td>
<td>AMV (meme)</td>
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8. Appendix C: Online resources

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<tr>
<td>Fair Use Remix Institute</td>
<td><a href="http://remixinstitute.net">http://remixinstitute.net</a></td>
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9. Appendix D: Further reading


Turk, Tisha. 2010. "'Your Own Imagination': Vidding and Vidwatching as Collaborative Interpretation." *Film and Film Culture*, no. 5: 88–111.


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10. Works cited


Abstract—The mashup video is examined as a specific textual component of remix culture. Mashup videos represent one particular type of remix and require an intricate base of knowledge to understand and appreciate the complex reworking of textuality engendered by the form. The mashup video becomes a key symbol of the engaged 21st-century media creator because it speaks to a media-literate and active audience. If we are to particulate in a fully autonomous media environment as scholars and as practitioners of participatory media, then it behooves us to speak not just to the salience of the mashup through a particular methodology, but also with a Media Studies 2.0 knowledge base. The temporal fluidity of the mashup video is explored as it relates to the concept of social and cultural taste. Analyses of the mashup videos "Virgin O'Riley" (Mark Vidler), "Vogue" (Luminosity), and "The Grey Video" (Fauchere and Tinguely) show how mashup videos remix new genres of cultural activity.

Keywords—Danger Mouse; Luminosity; Remix; Temporality; Video; Vidler


1. Introduction

In his essay for Remix Theory, Lev Manovich (2007) calls our current epoch a "remix culture," following on from the postmodern culture of the 1980s (Lessig 2008). Unlike the pastiche commonly encountered in postmodernism content (Jameson 1991), today's remix culture features content that has been recycled, changed, adjusted, and solicited from other artists. Originality stems less from the ability to create than it does the ability to use (note 1). Call it what you will, Manovich says—sampling, appropriation, quoting, or remixing—it all amounts to the same thing: new aesthetics, based on remixing existing content, engender a new appreciation for older texts.

I want to focus on one particular aspect of remix culture, the mashup video, as a site of remarkable cultural confluence. I will show that the power of the mashup video to enact social change stems from the way it juxtaposes two different time frames. Although commonly conceived of as a cultural artifact, the mashup can also be articulated in a more general way: as a metaphor for larger cultural changes that envelop remix aesthetics, fan practices, convergence culture, and transmediation (Booth 2010). In concrete form, the mashup takes data from two or more different inputs and mixes them...
together in such a way as to create a unique, third form without loss to the meaning of the originals. For example, the video "Trailer for Toy Story 3: Inception" (ScreenRant 2010) represents a mashup of the video from the trailer for the film Toy Story 3 (2010) with the audio from the trailer for Inception (2010). On the textual level, the video and the audio reference wildly different texts, but the mashup works as an art form because the viewer must recognize each element as well as what happens when they are mixed (we must be familiar with both Toy Story and Inception to understand the joke; for example, that when the Toy Story elephant sneezes fluff, there is a direct analogue to the award-winning special effects of Inception). Yet there is a larger social significance here as well. The mashup of Toy Story 3 and Inception highlights ideological similarities between the two texts that can be read in many ways: for example, connecting the notion of dreaming with children's imagination and play; articulating a link between star Leonardo DiCaprio and the plastic Ken doll; or focusing on the way the toys fall asleep as related to the notion of inception in the film. Multiple interpretations exist, and we as viewers must be knowledgeable about both sources, as well as the convergence of them, in order to make sense of the final product.


[1.3] This notion of media convergence has been taken up by Henry Jenkins (2006) in Convergence Culture, but I contend that a mashup is qualitatively different than a convergence of media practices. For Jenkins, a convergence culture emerges when media content flows across "multiple media platforms," when media audiences will "go almost anywhere in search of the kind of media experiences they want," and when "multiple media systems coexist and where media content flows fluidly across them" (282). Thus, a converged media text exists as dispersed across the transmediated environment. In contrast, the mashup exists as a single text with multiple meanings. The convergence highlighted by Jenkins finds a home in situ with mashups. A similar focus on the creation
of alternate meanings and readings of media objects has been examined as part of fan studies through the examination of amateur production.

[1.4] I want to argue, therefore, that an analysis of mashup videos as entities can reveal an aspect of the very contemporary cultural processes that led to the creation of those videos. In this way, my argument is based on the work of William Merrin (2009), who argues that the discipline of media studies has reached a turning point in its focus and methodology, a change led by the digital articulation of media users who demonstrate mastery over their media environment. Prompted by a transformation in our "social, political, cultural, and economic worlds...media studies has to transform itself to understand this environment" (22). To understand new media texts, outlets, and audiences, we need to revise our basic methods of analysis.

[1.5] To that end, I examine how the mashup revises traditional notions of time and taste. Specifically, I use the work of Pierre Bourdieu to examine how mashups demonstrate different tastes of their audience amalgamated through temporal juxtaposition within the video text. For Bourdieu, the value of a particular work is mutable, and depends not so much on the makeup of the artist or of the creator but rather on the interest and knowledge of the audience. A work that previously may have been thought valueless in a culture ruled by aristocrats may become revalued when discussed by or in a larger population. Bourdieu's theories of taste have been usefully appropriated by Jenkins (1992) to look at the place of popular texts in fan cultures (16–19). Bourdieu's theories represented a turnabout from previous conceptions of how value was earned in society, many of which depended on a sense of history with media objects. The older something was, the more valued it became. As Bourdieu (1984) describes, "Legitimate manners owe their value to the fact that they manifest the rarest conditions of acquisition...to possess things from the past...is to master time" (71).

[1.6] If taste and time are linked in traditional theories of taste, this relationship is complicated by the complex play of temporality in the mashup video. There are many cultural aspects of the mashup that deserve, and indeed have had, scholarly attention, including notions of authorship, copyright (Grobelny 2008), politics and social action (Howard-Spink 2004), and identity (Booth 2010). But the temporal interstitiality of the mashup, existing between two different time frames, has been little examined. Of interest to those studying remix culture, Bourdieu's discussion of taste offers a useful mode for investigating the temporal power of the mashup as a cultural activity. In sum, the process of viewing a mashup video is one of active and, importantly, constant construction. As John Shiga (2007) notes, this discussion of the activity of the mashup can be usefully integrated with taste: "subcultural developments can be understood in terms of the circulation of cultural, economic, and social capital" through time (96). That is, mashups exist both as objects with subcultural value and as activities that help construct that subculture. Indeed, the fact that mashups are based in a highly localized sense of temporal discontinuity is perhaps the most crucial factor for understanding the
roles time and taste play in mashup textuality, as temporality can be usefully understood as a component of an audience's tastes.

[1.7] If Media Studies 2.0 (Merrin 2009) asks us to refine our study beyond broadcast models, then examining the aesthetics of contemporary content becomes crucial for furthering our understanding of today's remix culture. In the following analysis, I examine three exemplar mashup videos as emblematic of this time/taste amalgam. "The Grey Video," "Virgin O'Riley," and "Vogue" all use the inherent temporal flux of the mashup to make statements about sexuality as a theme. I note this theme both to create a sense of topical unity among my texts and to compare the social significance of disparate mashup texts. Ultimately, through these analyses, I arrive at a remix understanding of how taste and temporality filter through the text of the mashup video.

2. Time is of the essence: Temporality as a key component of mashup

[2.1] If we take Manovich at his word and mark a shift from the postmodern to the remix, then the issue of how we perceive time and contemporary temporal structure becomes paramount. We can see this issue represented in the way the mashup video plays with time within its text. Specifically, I examine how Laurent Fauchere and Antoine Tinguely's (2006) "The Grey Video" (video 2) illustrates a remix culture's view of temporal complexity as a critique of two different time periods' different views of sexuality and fandom (see also Reid and Patel, with Calloway and Dukes 2007). Itself a fan creation, taken from the song "Encore" on DJ Danger Mouse's The Grey Album remix, the video highlights the temporal discontinuities present within the song. Famously, DJ Danger Mouse mashed up an a cappella version of Jay-Z's The Black Album with tracks, beats, and samples from the Beatles' self-titled album, usually called The White Album. The resulting The Grey Album was prominently featured in the mid-2000s as a quintessential mashup album, and it faced its share of notoriety because of various lawsuits and acts of civil disobedience (note 2). Using both appropriated texts as the source material, Danger Mouse mixed the two albums together to make a unique sound. Both Jay-Z and the Beatles were instantly recognizable within the mix, but the sound itself was an amalgam of the two. The video similarly merges Jay-Z with the Beatles and uses the images of the artists to focus on the sonic and aesthetic similarities between them. We watch the "The Grey Video" and hear both the original Beatles' and Jay-Z's music, and we see their images as an amalgam. It is a holy trinity of textuality.

[2.2] "The Grey Video" expounds on the temporal juxtaposition of the song, and in doing so, it references and critiques the sexualization of fandom of two time periods. Clips from the Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) are interspersed with Jay-Z in concert. Already temporal confusion occurs: the music of the Beatles comes from their 1968 album *The Beatles*, but the video is taken from the 1964 film. Other temporal juxtapositions become apparent as the video progresses. For example, as the Beatles begin their song, portrayed as an appearance on a television program with their producer behind the scenes watching them on monitors, there is a momentary jump in the soundtrack and Jay-Z appears on the monitor, timed to coincide with his first vocals. Fans of both artists are prominently displayed, screaming orgasmically at the Beatles and dancing sexually to Jay-Z. The discrepancy between two time frames—the Beatles in the 1960s and Jay-Z in the early 2000s—finds resolution in the video as the vocals begin to match the video.

[2.3] As Jay-Z starts to sing the lyrics to "Encore," the video opens up a third temporal discrepancy. Behind the Beatles, playing on stage, a large sign displays his lyrics in lights: "Can I get an encore / Do you want more..." Mashed up on screen, the Beatles' music (represented visually) encounters Jay-Z's lyrics (represented textually). "The Grey Video" highlights such breaks with classic temporality throughout the text: at times, John Lennon puts down his guitar and pops and locks, Ringo uses his drum kit as a turntable to mix tracks, Paul and George are replaced by two hip-hop dancers, and dancers from the 21st century are placed at the Beatles' concert.

[2.4] Even the audience gets into the act. Because part of the text of the video is taken from *A Hard Day's Night*, the concert footage features hundreds of screaming girls; at the height of Beatlemania, the audience of young female fans could become hysterically...
height of Beatlemania, the audience of young female fans could become hysterically sexual (Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs 1992). At the 1:15 mark of the video, for example, when Jay-Z sings "One last time / I need y'all to roar," the footage shifts from the screaming 1960s fangirls to a 2000s young hip-hop dancing girl, complete with barely-there shirt and obvious cleavage (figure 1). The linkage between the hysterically sexual screaming of the 1960s and the sexuality of the 2000s is made clear through the textual fragmentation.

Figure 1. "The Grey Video," contemporary dancing fan. [View larger image.]

[2.5] Ultimately, if we can claim any meaning from "The Grey Video" as a remix video, it is because it exists as a mashup of two distinct sounds, two distinct artists, and two distinct time frames. The video becomes meaningful because of, not despite, the distinct temporal fragmentation. The references between the sexuality surrounding the Beatles and the sexuality surrounding Jay-Z seem different when juxtaposed with each other, but when mashed up into one video, the contrast becomes clear. Namely, whereas the fans of the Beatles seem to target their sexual energy toward the Beatles themselves, the fan of Jay-Z becomes a target of sexualization by the viewer of the video. Of course, because both fan types, 1960s fangirl and 2000s dancer, come from their respective time periods, the viewer is thus invited to see the shift in sexual focus as an aspect of the text itself. Sexualized frenzy becomes part of the text of a musical act, regardless of time period, artist demographics, or musical genre. But through this juxtaposition, a clear critique of a modern to-be-looked-at-ness emerges from the sexualization of the 2000s fan when compared to the idolization of the 1960s fan.

[2.6] One might be tempted to view this video through a postmodern lens—after all, it mixes high and popular culture, it blurs the line between art and commerce, and it in many ways elides its placement within a historical continuity. As Jameson argues, the postmodern subject "has lost its capacity...to organize its past and future into coherent experience"; in other words, the postmodern citizen resides in an ever-changing now that moves and flows with little reference to the past or the future (25). Indeed, Jean Baudrillard (1983) has argued that all time condenses on the present, becoming little more than "the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things" (133). As I have previously argued (2011), the result of this postmodern pessimism is that "there is no sense of the 'past' or 'future' but rather an instantaneous and vacuous sense of the
But what of viewing the video as a component of remix culture? If postmodern culture saw such dire consequences for temporal flux, what, if anything, has changed with the advent of remixability and the modularization of media (Manovich 2005)? The mashup does not fracture a sense of history or historicity into nothingness but rather relies inherently on viewer knowledge of specific temporalities to create a definite sense of history. By inscribing a "new" video with temporal characteristics from different time periods, mashups reinforce historical and temporal boundaries, relying on the audience to create meaning. The meaning of "The Grey Video" emerges through knowledge of two distinct time frames.

3. Time for a taste: Bourdieu and temporality

As a specific aspect of temporality, Fauchere and Tinguely's "The Grey Video" also relies on inherent assumptions about the taste of its audience. Traditionally, taste rests on a linear sense of temporality, not the multifaceted system demonstrated by mashup videos. But in a remix culture, it is only through a redefinition of that marker of value that we can see mashup videos as components of a larger media environment. Mark Vidler's (2010) mashup video "Virgin O'Riley" becomes a meaningful exploration of taste in a remix culture, through its symbolical linkage of the related notions of sexuality and violence (video 3).

**Video 3.** "Virgin O'Riley," by Mark Vidler (2010).

Vidler, a mainstay on the remix scene, has a history of remixing classic rock songs with more light-hearted pop music, as well as creating complex remix videos as appropriations of both (see, for example, his "Carpenter's Wonderwall" and "Ray of Gob"). As with the fannish art of vidding, Vidler uses the mashup to underscore a salient
As with the fannish art of vidding, Vidler uses the mashup to underscore a salient yet sublimated meaning that emerges from his source texts. Two temporalities exist simultaneously in this video: the work of the Who (specifically, using clips from their concerts and the film *Quadrophenia* [1979]) and the music and lyrics of Madonna's "Like a Virgin." Vidler's mashup song "Virgin O'Riley" fuses Madonna with the Who seamlessly, creating a synthesis of 1960s rock and 1980s pop-synth. But what is perhaps most salient about this mashup video is not just how the layers of images and music create a new sound (a mashup object), but also how they create an active reading of two different cultural tastes (a mashup of practice): the violence of the Who and the sexuality of Madonna become salient only because the audience of the mashup is continually in the process of juxtaposing these disparate tastes.

The issue of taste is never far from the activity of deconstructing Vidler's "Virgin O'Riley." Specifically, as the song opens on the video, the recognizable chords of "Baba O'Riley" trilling on the keyboards, images of the Who appear on the screen superimposed on each other. At the 1:05 marker, text reading "Who's next" floats on the screen, surrounded by clouds, as if to signal the coming synthesis of Madonna's face onto what had been the Who's video. The two groups dissolve in and out of each other, confusing not only the temporal placement of the text but also the taste level of the audience.

Madonna and the Who have different fan bases: one can be a fan of both, but in the grand scheme of musical stylings, one can't get much farther apart than the grand rock aesthetics of the Who and the playful dance pop of early Madonna. Each artist appeals to a different group of people: people separated by generation, by social class, by musical history. I say this not to place either group on a hierarchy of value but to note that both groups fit into a particular social order, a habitus of their own, which helps determine (and is determined by) the social sphere of those who listen to them.

Vidler's video synthesizes these spheres in a sophisticated amalgamation that inherently relies on our social understanding of both values. Watching Pete Townsend (1:17–1:34) pounding his tambourine to the beat of Madonna's seductive "I made it through the wilderness / Somehow I made it through" is incongruous, to say the least. Yet at a certain level, it simply works: we read Madonna's lyrics as a comment on the Who, just as we start to see the Who as a pop act as well.

Vidler then shifts his video remix technique to emphasize a connection between the two groups, positioning Madonna on the left side of the screen and *Quadrophenia*'s young protagonist, Jimmy, on the right. She sings "I didn't know how lost I was until I found you," mirroring the look in Jimmy's eyes (1:39). One could almost picture the two of them hooking up, perhaps in a romantic comedy. The connection is made through both the music and the video text, linking the two pieces through a network of meaning. A repetition of a mob breaking a shopwindow (1:53–2:00) echoes with Madonna's lead-in to the chorus, creating a dramatic overlay of violence (from the Who's rock song) and sexuality (from Madonna's pop song). The chorus begins and the image shifts to
sexuality (from Madonna's pop song). The chorus begins and the image shifts to Madonna, sexily attired in her wedding dress and seductively caressing a bedsheets. A dramatic tension highlights the mashup of rock and pop sensibilities, creating a decided connection between taste and image.

[3.7] The connection between rock violence and pop sexuality continues, thematically linking Townsend's aggression with Madonna's sensuality. The buildup to the chorus after the bridge (2:53) features a repeated booming, as if of a cannon firing, with the text "The Who" flying on beat onto the screen numerous times. To the sound of heavy drum beats, Townsend's famous guitar-destroying antics take over the screen, as clips of him throwing his ax and breaking amps, strings, and necks contrast with Madonna's repeated lyric that she is "like a virgin." As the video continues, the drums kick in and Townsend's dramatic strumming mirrors the chorus Madonna sings. The contrast could not be clearer: the violence of the Who matches and equals the sexuality of Madonna.

[3.8] It doesn't take too much extrapolation, then, to see the different taste levels of the two pieces of music mashed up. The rock sensibilities of the Who, seemingly at odds with the pop-synth dance music of Madonna, find a home when juxtaposed within the viewer's linkage of sex and violence. The mashup here doesn't just link two different time frames; rather, it takes the activity of the audience to intertextually reference deeper meanings of the texts to construct a mashup in all its complexity. Bourdieu offers one particular reading of taste as a marker of social history that, in a way, helps elucidate the separate meanings of both Madonna and the Who. But to see the mashup meaning, the remix value, of these two pieces requires a more complicated view that integrates the temporality and the varied taste of remix.

[3.9] In a traditional postmodern sense, taste has always had a temporal quality, as Bourdieu (1984) describes:

[3.10] The objects endowed with the greatest distinctive power are those which most clearly attest the quality of the appropriation, and therefore the quality of their owner, because their possession requires time and capacities which, requiring a long investment in time...cannot be acquired in haste or by proxy, and which therefore appear as the surest indications of the quality of the person. (281)

[3.11] But rather than being dependent on a historical presence, this version of value and taste is based on, as Williams (1976) describes, "a particular way of life" (80). Although the question of temporality is never far from Bourdieu's mind, it is also rarely directly articulated in his model of taste. In Bourdieu's philosophy, time becomes a way of understanding the development of larger aesthetic and philosophical temperaments, not a key element of taste in and of itself. Although some attempt has been made to connect Bourdieu with a tradition of historical sociology, time is a constant for Bourdieu, serving larger ends without affecting issues of taste (see Steinmetz 2011). His work sees time
larger ends without affecting issues of taste (see Steinmetz 2011). His work sees time not just as an external object, but also as an activity that structures and is structured by our construction of taste just as much as taste is constructed by time. "Virgin O'Riley" works because the viewer must reconcile the aesthetics of the Who and Madonna; but in doing so, the viewer also links violence with sexuality, creating an amalgam of tastes that reflects back on the original artists.

4. Fandom and mashup culture

[4.1] After looking at "The Grey Video" and "Virgin O'Riley," we can construct a more fleshed-out analysis of Manovich's (2007) remix culture. By focusing on the mashup video, however, I imply that there is more to the remix than just "samples which come from already existing databases of culture" (5). Rather, if we look at remixes as decidedly pointed activities rather than just as objects or collections of samples, then we can form a more robust understanding of the cultural value of contemporary remix theory.

[4.2] Conceptualized as objects, mashups can be seen across the diverse fields of popular music and software programming (Manovich 2007). For years in the music scene, contemporary artists have been using samples of other artists' work to reference within their own music. One trend in mashup culture has seen the complete remix of songs from other musicians to create something new and unique: The musician Girl Talk, a prime example, mixes hundreds of samples from other people's works to make a fresh sound that references but also subverts the meaning of the original work. In software studies, a mashup is similar, in that it refers to any software that uses or remixes data from two or more sources to create a new service: for example, Earth Album mixes the software for Google Maps with the software from Flickr and YouTube, so users can log on to Google Maps and view images and videos that have been tagged from these locations (Brinkmann 2007). Manovich (2008) has shown how "most major Web 2.0 companies—Amazon, eBay, Flickr, Google, Microsoft, Yahoo and YouTube—make available their programming interfaces and some of their data to encourage others to create new applications using this data" (39). Amber Davisson (2011) argues that Google Maps mashups played an important role in the 2008 presidential election, leading to a larger cultural innovation in our understanding of the role of civic engagement.

[4.3] Although mashups can thus be seen as objects, they also can be interpreted usefully as a combination of specific and deliberate activities across a range of cultural responses. Video mashups have become integral to the contemporary media environment, and have become fixtures of discussion about Web 2.0 media (Tryon 2009, 158). Indeed, Chuck Tryon illustrates the crucial role that mashups have played, not only in the legal fields of copyright, authorship, and fair use rules, but also in political campaigns. Mashup videos that remix political content and advertising function as "satire, commenting on current events rather than remaining content to focus on genre conventions" (Tryon 2009, 167). These political mashups often take audio material from
one source and mash it up with content from another, as in David Morgasen's 2008 video "Obama and McCain—Dance Off!" (video 4). In this video, audio from fake speeches and interviews made by Obama and McCain are mashed up with images of their faces superimposed on dancers' bodies. The 2008 election between Obama and McCain impersonators becomes fodder for a dance-off, in which both candidates compete to see who has the slickest moves. Morgasen effectively satirizes the spectacle of the 2008 presidential election with this juxtaposition, calling into question our delineation of entertainment and news through the mashup.

![Obama and McCain - Dance Off!](video-4)


[4.4] If the mashup represents a larger cultural imperative, then it makes sense for us to examine those spots in culture that suture this meaning together. Fan studies is a natural place to start, as fans represent the sort of creator/audience that holds a spotlight up to our culture. We've seen how mashups create new modes of temporality and new understandings of taste; in a practical sense, then, where can we see the effects of this remix culture? What would a Media Studies 2.0 analysis look like? How can we turn the lens of fan studies onto traditional media theories?

[4.5] One such examination could take place in genre theory. Although different mashup videos utilize different strategies for textual creation, in many instances the text of the online video actually serves to mash up popular generic conventions. Remixing to change the genre of a particular work is a practical application of the de Certeauan notion of tactical reading, where alternate readings become externalized (de Certeau 1984, 37). One popular mashup video, "A Hard Day's Night of the Living Dead" (video 5), features a remix of the Beatles' film *A Hard Day's Night* with a slew of zombie movies to depict the Beatles being chased by the undead (Clates 2006). In this video, the mixture of genres
leads to a cultural critique of popular fandom: the orgasmically screaming girls, earlier seen in "The Grey Video," here parallel the zombification of popular culture. Another example is the mashup "Ten Things I Hate about the Commandments" (video 6), a mix of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and the genre of high school comedy (Vayabobo 2006). Here, the mashup doesn't mix two texts but rather mashes up a text and a genre to create a new reading of the Moses story as a parable for high school cliquishness.


**Video 6.** "Ten Things I Hate about the Commandments," posted by Vayabobo (2006).
Fan studies has articulated this externalization of tactical reading, seeing it applied in fan fiction (Jenkins 1992), consumerism (Hills 2002), gaming (Crawford and Rutter 2007), and social networks (Booth 2010), among others. For example, one fan of the original Star Wars trilogy, Mike J. Nichols, upset at the presence of Jar-Jar Binks in the first prequel, loaded the footage of 1999's *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* onto his computer and "edited the entire movie, eliminated story redundancy and cut some extraneous...scenes" (Shulgan 2002, 67). Other fans distributed his new film, titled *The Phantom Edit*, over the Internet. Remixing the Star Wars movie allowed Nichols not only the creative input to change the film, but also the ability to create a new film entirely. Nichols's *Phantom Edit* sits in the middle of Manovich's remix culture, putting the creation of cultural products in the hands of amateurs, of users, of audience members, and of fans.

The now-famous "Vogue" video from Luminosity (2008) also serves as an exemplar of this new understanding of remix culture (video 7). "Vogue" has been described before in terms of its gender politics (Cupitt 2008; Turk 2010), links to fandom (Jenkins 2007), and relation to copyright (Tushnet 2010). In the popular press, Luminosity has also become relatively well known as a fan, thanks in part to her profile in *New York Magazine* (Hill 2007). The reason for her celebrity is not hard to fathom. For "Vogue," Luminosity selected scenes from Zach Snyder's film *300* (2006) and then digitally reedited them to synch with the 1990 Madonna song "Vogue." Luminosity first calls into question the generic positioning of both the two external texts, referencing a fluid understanding of sexuality (see Cupitt 2008). But by linking the very hetero maleness of *300* with the queer politics of Madonna's song, Luminosity highlights how the blending of two tastes can critique traditional assumptions about sexual politics (Turk 2010).
What scholarly attention has been paid to Luminosity, however, has not discussed the mashup of temporality and taste within her video remixes. There is a complexity at the heart of "Vogue," one articulated by the interaction not just of the two texts at its core, but also in the interaction between the past and future. The misogyny of 300 is easy to dismiss, given the "historical" nature of the drama—one can imagine a student's retort that "that's the way it was in ancient Greece." Luminosity's juxtaposition of a 1990s gendered sensibility, however, reveals the underlying heteronormativity of 300 and articulates a mashup retort.

Like her "Like a Virgin," Madonna's "Vogue" fits into the dance pop category of music with its catchy hooks, heavily bassed drumbeat, and vapid lyrics. As is common to most dance music, there is an underlying theme of posture: "Don't just stand there, let's get to it / Strike a pose, there's nothing to it." As he stands there, literally with nothing to him, King Leonidas follows Madonna's command by actively striking a pose. Using the generic power of the dance pop genre of music, Luminosity challenges and ultimately undermines the genre of 300. The temporal mix here—threefold, as the action depicted in the 2006 film takes place in 480 BCE but is set to music from 1990—hearkens to a more nuanced reading of the spectacle of the film. The action-adventure movie retells the story of the Battle of Thermopylae. Told in a kinetic style that relishes the spectacle, however, the movie skips over much of the historical basis for the battle (the unification of Greece against the invading Persians, the sociopolitical strife amongst the Athenians and Spartans) and instead focuses on the blood and carnage of the battle, as well as the oiled abs of the Spartan army. In 300, the warriors who conquer the Persians in this film adaptation of Frank Miller's graphic novel look like perfect masculine specimens. Their muscles ripple and undulate in the film, while their scantily clad loins hide only enough to prevent an NC-17 rating. In Luminosity's video "Vogue," however, we see these Spartan
warriors in a new light. Set to the tune of Madonna's song, these warriors are more than sparring machines: they represent the essence of beauty and fitness when they dance to the nondiegetic beat. 300 thus exemplifies the generic spirit of the action-adventure movie, which in general thematically links to a highly visual spectacle and barely veiled patriarchal, hegemonic ideology.

[4.10] By juxtaposing the two genres, Luminosity parodies the original genre of both texts. "Vogue" calls for a sexually charged playfulness, while 300 argues masculinity and action. As we listen to the song, we hear the lyric "strike a pose" again just as we see the image of the evil Persian king Xerxes step from his carriage with his hands outstretched, striking a pose himself (figure 2).

![Figure 2. "Vogue," Xerxes striking a pose. [View larger image.]](image)

[4.11] Though this juxtaposition, Luminosity highlights the instability of traditional genre analysis in a digital environment, and the focus of the video becomes less textual and more cultural. By this I mean that the video focuses on the larger meaning behind our cultural construction of gender via the mashup of a hypersexualized film with a hypersexualized musical performer. "Vogue" offers a self-conscious emphasis on sexuality: the triptych at the beginning features an undulating woman with breasts heaving in slow motion (figure 3). Shots later in the video mark the violent masculine sexuality of the Spartan soldiers; rippling abs match decapitating swords ("Look around," Madonna sings at 1:03, as a head spins off its neck). By both connecting the gender characteristics of the source texts and playing each off the other, Luminosity presents a dual reading of gender that highlights not only the way our cultural taste has changed (in a Bourdieuan sense) but also how the multimix of temporalities (1990s mashed up with 2000s mashed up with a fictionalized 480 BCE) coheres and offers a solid critique of the mediation of misogyny.
different temporalities within the mashup becomes a vehicle through which multiple critiques could take place: the juxtapositions of times can highlight issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, body image, capitalism, and so on. What's important to take away from this is that remix culture enables, rather than inhibits, the production of meaning through temporal fluidity.

[5.2] In postmodernism, the perception of time as a unifying or overlaying structure on our life has become less meaningful. To turn a Lyotardian phrase, the concept of time itself is a metanarrative, one that shapes a person's relationship to his or her environment (Lyotard 1979). And postmodern culture is defined by a loss of metanarratives. It's not that there's a new type of temporality in the world, but rather that, as postmodern theorists might argue, our understanding and cultural response to the issues of temporality has shifted. Unlike this temporally uncertain view of culture, however, remix culture highlights a stability within our sense of temporality, manifested through the temporal juxtapositions seen within mashup videos. The mashup ushers in a new moment in Media Studies 2.0, reinterpreting the discourse within contemporary cultural theory.

[5.3] Postmodernism, that most pessimistic of cultural theories, suggests that individuals are losing control of their own lives. With a lack of historical knowledge or desire to learn history, everyday people become lost in the flow of time. Remix culture indicates a different shift: the flow of time is complicated, but by being able to construct meaning from and through it, individuals take control over their own lives. As we become more reliant on technology, we begin to find our cultural identity stemming more from that technology and less from content. And when we do it ourselves, we become active participants in our own media construction. Taking a lesson from Bourdieu, we can instructively see our contemporary culture as an amalgam of different tastes, different temporalities, and different genres, all productively synthesized into a larger cultural metaphor. Remix doesn't stop at the object, but rather becomes a cultural activity, performed at all stages of cultural investigation, that has an immediate and profound effect on the individual. It's through the symbolism of a network of temporality that the mashup can foster meaningful discourse, and unlike the dire warnings postulated by postmodern prognosticators, our sense of time and history is still intact. The breaks in temporality seen by these postmodern theorists resurface in remix culture as concrete manifestations of historical stability.

[5.4] The mashup as a cultural object offers moments of exquisite joy: who among us hasn't enjoyed sharing a clip on Facebook or marveling at a fan's unique interpretation of a text? But when viewed as something larger than a text, when viewed as a moment of cultural rupture, the mashup video can take on a significance beyond a simple juxtaposition of image and music. By juxtaposing different audiences' tastes, the mashup also symbolizes the coming together of different viewpoints and ideas. To mash up is to invite cooperation: when different tastes mingle, new ideas form and vast differences can be bridged. In an already fractious culture, we need more cooperation. We need more
be bridged. In an already fractious culture, we need more cooperation. We need more dialogue. We need more mashups.

6. Acknowledgments

[6.1] Portions of this essay were previously presented at the 2011 Cultural Studies Association conference in Chicago, IL. I am indebted to June Deery, whose comments and feedback on an early version of the essay were invaluable.

7. Notes

1. Obviously, there is a great deal of slippage between terms here—using can be seen as a form of creation as well.

2. Grey Tuesday, held on February 24, 2004, was an online act of electronic civil disobedience, when numerous Web sites hosted The Grey Album for free download, in protest of EMI’s attempt to limit access to the album (see Rimmer 2007).

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Theory

Toward an ecology of vidding

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[0.1] **Abstract**—Despite the fan studies emphasis on participatory culture, much of the current work on vids (and in fan studies broadly) treats fans more as readers than as producers. To help us examine the relationships between fannish reading practices and fannish creative processes, we turn to composition studies and Marilyn Cooper’s concept of an ecology of writing. We argue for an ecological model of vidding, an approach that enables us to explore the collaborative nature of vidding without erasing individual authorship; to investigate the relationships not only between vids and media texts but also between vidders and their audiences; and to treat fan conversations both as responses to mass media and as sites for the generation and circulation of interpretive conventions that guide both the creation and reception of vids.

[0.2] **Keywords**—Audience; Collaboration; Composition studies; Context; *Hawaii Five-0*; Participatory culture; Vids


1. Introduction

[1.1] One of the central points of interest within fan studies has been the idea that media fans were among the earliest spectators to shift from passively consuming or even actively reading media texts to creating works of their own that extend or comment on those texts. As Henry Jenkins explains in *Textual Poachers* (1992), "Fandom blurs any clear-cut distinction between media producer and media spectator, since any spectator may potentially participate in the creation of new artworks" (246–47). Fans were thus early adopters of the practices that characterize participatory culture. For many scholars, fans are interesting precisely because of these participatory and creative practices.
Yet even as we celebrate fans' propensity to make things, scholars have often paid more attention to fans as spectators than to fans as producers. Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson observe that in the decade or so following *Textual Poachers*, "most essays in fan fiction studies focused on fanfic as an interpretive gesture, thus using fan fiction to gain further insight into a particular source text" (2006, 20)—an approach that foregrounds fan reading and downplays fan writing. We can see a similar tendency in recent work on vids: Francesca Coppa's history of the development of vidding, for example, argues that vids function as media criticism—"thousands of vids have been made analyzing popular source texts" (2008, ¶1.4)—and specifically as responses to the "representational tensions" (¶2.20) at the heart of *Star Trek* and still present in many subsequent shows. Coppa does represent fans as creators—her essay is an indispensable account of the inventiveness, hard work, and technical skill that early vidding required—but her emphasis is ultimately on vids as fans' reactions to media texts.

Given that many academics working in fan studies have backgrounds in media studies and/or literary studies, this attention to the relationships either among texts or between texts and their readers or spectators is not surprising. But that attention, while valuable in its own right, tends to obscure the fact that while fan creators are audiences, they also have audiences. A vid is, as Coppa has explained, "a visual essay that stages an argument" (2008, ¶1.1), but for whom, exactly, is the argument staged, and what is the role that that audience plays in the argument's construction and reception?

In this essay, we begin to theorize the vidding equivalent of what Marilyn Cooper (1986) calls the ecology of writing, a concept from composition studies that allows us to examine vidding and vidwatching as activities "through which a person is continually engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems" (367). In order to continue Coppa's project of studying "broad continuities in vidding practice" (2008, ¶1.5), we must look at the roles fannish audiences play in shaping that practice: the social and rhetorical contexts for both the production and reception of vids, the constraints and possibilities generated by fannish conventions of interpretation. Creation does not happen in a vacuum; a vid is an individual's (or small group's) argument about a text, but it is informed by, and interpreted in terms of, other fans' ideas about that text, and those arguments and ideas are worked out within the multiple overlapping discourse communities that constitute fandom. Although a complete application of this ecological model is beyond the scope of the present essay, we do examine selected fan discussions of the TV series *Hawaii Five-0* (2010–present) to show how these discussions, in addition to being a form of fannish activity in their own right, establish what counts as evidence for a particular fannish interpretation and thus enable vidders to make effective rhetorical choices, as lamardeuse does in her vid
"Something's Gotta Give.". Such discussions are therefore a key part—though only one part—of the ecology of vidding.

2. Fandom as ecology

[2.1] Cooper's ecological model of writing is grounded in the assumption that "language and texts are not simply the means by which individuals discover and communicate information, but are essentially social activities, dependent on social structures and processes not only in their interpretive but also in their constructive phases" (366). The term ecology "encompasses much more than the individual writer and her immediate context"; it allows us to explore "how writers interact to form systems" and to consider how "all the characteristics of any individual writer or piece of writing both determine and are determined by the characteristics of all the other writers and writings in the systems" (368). The term also registers the inevitability of change: "An important characteristic of ecological systems is that they are inherently dynamic; though their structures and contents can be specified at a given moment, in real time they are constantly changing" (368). The concept as Cooper describes it overlaps in significant ways—including, of course, the metaphor for which it's named—with the idea of media ecology developed by Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman, and Walter Ong (see Strate 2004); because we are primarily interested in the implications of an ecological model for the study of composing (rather than, for example, the more literary concept of intertextuality), our usage follows Cooper's.

[2.2] At the time Cooper's article was published, composition studies needed the concept of ecology as a corrective to the field's narrow focus on the cognitive processes of individual writers; Cooper's work was part of a massive and lasting shift toward thinking of writing as a fundamentally social process. Fan studies in the present historical moment needs the concept as a different kind of corrective: We need more discussions of the social or collaborative nature of fandom that don't erase individual creators by collapsing collaboration into mass authorship, as Paul Booth does when he insists that "the 'author' of a blog fan fiction is not a fan, per se, but rather a fandom" (2010, 6). As Alexis Lothian points out, vids are too often "perceived as an undifferentiated feature of the online 'public' domain" (2009, 131). Such erasure of fan authorship, with its troubling gendered implications, is a real danger in a culture that tends to regard YouTube videos as a genre rather than as individual authored works, and it has been a real feature of academic work that, Deborah Kaplan observes, "elides the texts in favor of the community" (2006, 135). At the same time, however, many analyses of individual fan works privilege individual authorship: They address collaborative meaning making only at the point of reception, not as a condition of production. Thinking of fandom as an ecology will, we hope, encourage
scholars to articulate how fandom's "individual voices, creative works, philosophies, resistances, and cultures" (Cupitt 2008, ¶4.4) not only coexist but interact.

[2.3] The ecology metaphor helps us to think of fandom as a system (or series of systems) within which all fans participate in various ways: as readers, writers, vidders, vid watchers, posters, commenters, lurkers, essayists, artists, icon makers, recommenders, coders, compilers of images and links, users and maintainers of archives and other fannish infrastructures, and so on. An ecological model thus offers an alternative to the theoretical models of fandom that, as Matt Hills has shown, define fans solely as producers and so "attempt to extend 'production' to all fans" (2002, 30). Further, it provides a framework for thinking about the ways in which, as Kristina Busse has argued, "people as well as stories become central to fannish interaction" in LiveJournal-based fandom (2006, 214). It gives us a way of describing relationships among fans that is simultaneously broader and more precise than the concept of community, which, as James Paul Gee observes, "carries a rather romantic connotation which it should not have" (http://henryjenkins.org/2011/03/how_learners_can_be_on_top_of_1.html). Because it directs our attention to real social contexts—contexts that are, as Cooper (1986) points out, not unique or idiosyncratic but connected with other situations (367)—it encourages us to observe the relationship of vidders and other fannish producers to their audiences, to consider the ways in which those audiences are not abstract rhetorical constructs but real people with whom vidders may interact and communicate in a variety of capacities.

[2.4] Much has been written about the conversational and communal nature of fandom in general (Hellekson and Busse 2006). Busse and Hellekson (2006), for example, explain that they are less interested in the psychology of individual fans (a trend seen in the work of Matt Hills and Cornel Sandvoss) than in "the collective nature of fandom, its internal communications, and the relationship between fans that arises out of a joint interest in a particular text" (23). While we share this interest, we prefer the term collaborative, which implies individuals working together for a common purpose, to collective, which suggests an undifferentiated group, and we resist Busse and Hellekson's insistence on "the ultimate erasure of a single author" (6). Nevertheless, we take our cue from them and from scholars such as Rebecca Black (2008), whose analysis of the composing practices of three specific fan fiction authors locates those practices within larger fields of literacy. Like them, we aim to discuss fan works as "part collaboration and part response to not only the source text, but also the cultural context within and outside the fannish community in which it is produced" (Busse and Hellekson 2006, 7).
While the collective nature of fandom has been much discussed, considerably less has been written about the social nature of vidding. Jenkins notes that vids "focus on those aspects of the narrative that the community wants to explore" (1992, 249); Coppa calls vidding "a form of collaborative critical thinking" (2008, ¶5.1); Tisha Turk describes making and watching vids as processes of "collaborative interpretation" (2010, 89). But to date, research on vids has done relatively little to illuminate how that collaboration works or how those conversations happen. Indeed, we may talk most about this collaboration when it fails to happen—when, as Jenkins (2006) and Julie Levin Russo (2009) discuss, a vid is removed from its "interpretive landscape" (Russo 2009, 126) and misunderstood by a nonfannish audience unprepared to make sense of it. Many readings of vids therefore focus on what a viewer must know in order to understand a particular vid. In her analysis of Counteragent's "Destiny Calling," for example, Cupitt establishes that the vid is "a snapshot of the fannish zeitgeist of that moment" (¶3.9) and it "requires a large body of contextual knowledge" in order to be fully understood (¶3.10). Similarly, Katharina Freund's examination of "Still Alive," also by Counteragent, emphasizes that "the viewer must be extremely familiar with Supernatural, vidding, and online fandom in order to separate all these shots and their contexts" (2010, ¶4.1) and the vid "will always be meant for a very specific audience at a very specific time in this fandom's history" (¶5.1).

Our argument is intended to amplify and extend these ideas. Cupitt's and Freund's discussions of context, and especially their shared emphasis on historical context, focus on the reception of vids; we wish to suggest the value of also looking at the fannish ecology as a condition for the production of vids. What can a vidder anticipate about how an audience will make sense of her vid? What can she assume, or how can she learn, about the significance her audience will ascribe to particular clips? We are interested not only in the knowledge fans must have in order to interpret a vid, but also in how fans acquire and share that knowledge, because vidders make creative and aesthetic decisions based in part on the readings and interpretations in circulation within a fandom. Busse and Hellekson's model of fan creations as works in progress, in which the work ultimately shifts from creators to readers, can thus be understood as having an earlier phase, which Busse and Hellekson imply but do not articulate: the collaborative work of sharing interpretations that precedes and enables the composing of a particular text. In an ecological model, context is not something that simply exists; it's something that the participants in the ecological system create through their various fannish activities and, importantly, the textual traces of those activities.

3. Interpretive conventions
One element of this ecological system is the set of interpretive conventions that guide the creation and reception of texts. As Cooper reminds us, these conventions "are not present in the text; rather, they are part of the mental equipment of writers and readers, and only by examining this mental equipment can we explain how writers and readers communicate" (365). In fandom, these conventions are generated, contested, updated, and circulated through the discussion and analysis of media texts and the creation and consumption of fan works (see Kaplan 2006, 135–36). As we've seen, such conventions are important for vid watchers (Jenkins 2006, Russo 2009, Cupitt 2008, Freund 2010), but they are as least as important for vidders, because vidders who want their vids to be understood must work with—which is not to say blindly conform to—at least some of these conventions. As Peter Rabinowitz observes, "There are no brute facts preventing an author from writing a religious parable in which a cross represented Judaism, but it would not communicate successfully" (1987, 24). Vidders, like authors, must negotiate the interpretive conventions present in their ecologies.

Some of these interpretive conventions are grounded in fannish responses to individual shows and movies, in specific arguments and discussions about how characters, relationships, and story lines ought to be interpreted. Others have to do with patterns across media texts: When fans read certain interactions in, say, *Hawaii Five-0* as indicating that the two main characters (both male) are romantically or sexually interested in each other, they draw not only on the interactions of those two characters but also on similar interactions between characters in *Star Trek, The Professionals, Star Trek, The Sentinel, Due South, Stargate: SG-1, Stargate: Atlantis*, and so on. Still other conventions, such as ways of signaling which character's point of view is being expressed, are specific to vids as a genre. Our analysis in this essay will focus primarily on the first of these three sets of conventions: those having to do with how established fannish readings are used by both vidders and vid watchers to generate a great deal of meaning out of small collections of short clips.

Vids require audiences to process many different kinds of information, including the visual content of clips (what's happening in the frame), the context of clips (what's going on in the original source), and the juxtaposition of clips within the vid (why one clip precedes or follows another). The meaning of purely visual content is generally accessible to a casual fan or even a nonfan: when characters argue or smile, when they punch or kiss each other, the significance is usually clear, and additional interpretive guidance is usually provided by the lyrics against which the visuals are set, the tone of the music, and the mood or message of the song as a whole (see Coppa 2008, ¶1.1). Understanding the contextual meaning of clips, as Cupitt and Freund suggest, requires considerable familiarity with the source. And making sense of
the juxtaposition of clips requires viewers to recognize whether a particular sequence of clips is intended as a narrative, a plot summary, a comparison, a representation of cause and effect, an establishing of mood or theme, or any of the other functions the sequence might serve within the vid.

[3.4] Most vids include both clips whose significance is primarily visual and clips whose significance is primarily contextual; exact proportions vary depending on the nature of the vid and the goals of the vidder. The Clucking Belles' "A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness," for example, relies almost entirely on visual information rather than context because, as Coppa explains, the vid "isn't about people; it's about tropes" (2009, 108). Rowena's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Abridged)," by contrast, is made up almost entirely of clips that encapsulate events and even whole story lines from Buffy in order to produce the effect of covering all seven seasons in under three and a half minutes.

[3.5] Of course, visual and contextual meaning are not mutually exclusive; many clips convey visual information even to a casual viewer and call up for fans specific conversations, interactions, emotions, relationship developments, or plot points. To illustrate, we provide two examples of clips frequently used in vids for their respective fandoms.

[3.6] First, in Buffy the Vampire Slayer vids, Buffy's dive into blue-white light is a striking visual regardless of whether one knows the significance of the shot in the original show.

![Figure 1. Image from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 5.22 "The Gift" (2001).](View larger image.)

[3.7] In context, this image carries considerable emotional as well as visual weight: Buffy is jumping to her death to save her sister and the world.
shorter. And the relative brevity of clips means a viewer's process of making meaning must happen so quickly as to be nearly unconscious.

[3.13] What we wish to emphasize is that, in most cases, this meaning-making is not purely individual; rather, it involves a certain amount of collaboration and consensus. Recognition of context requires familiarity with the source, and familiarity requires repetition. That repetition may take the form of an individual fan rewatching entire episodes or specific scenes (see Coppa 2009 on the pleasures of the VCR), but it can also be communal or collaborative: for many fans, it includes reading and/or posting episode recaps, fan fiction, or informal analyses. All of these interpretive acts help not merely to define fan readings of a text but to establish particular on-screen actions and conversations as evidence for those readings. Repetition is thus one of the key ecological processes by which a group of fans comes to some consensus about which moments and visuals are critical to their reading of the show (note 2). This consensus is likely to influence a vidder's choices about how best to arrange her narrative or present her argument to that interpretive community.

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4. Case study: "Something's Gotta Give"

[4.1] A complete discussion of the ecology within which lamardeuse's "Something's Gotta Give" was created, distributed, and viewed would need to consider the relationship of vid, vidder, and audience not only to fannish discussions of Hawaii Five-0 but also to the other shows the fans have watched, the fan fiction they have read and written, the other vids they have watched and made, the reception histories of those stories and vids, the growing body of fan discussions of vidding practices and aesthetics—all the social and discursive systems within which the fans and the vid are situated.

[4.2] Because such a discussion is not possible within the constraints of this essay, we will instead focus on a small subset of these topics. First, we briefly address some of the interpretive conventions, both general and fannish, that lamardeuse invokes by including clips that require no particular contextual knowledge. Second, we identify selected clips from the vid that require or reward contextual knowledge; we examine representative fannish discussions of those moments in order to highlight the shared repetition those discussions enact and the associations that they create between dialogue and visuals as evidence for a particular fannish reading. Third, we analyze an instance in which lamardeuse uses largely undisputed clips, effectively decontextualizing those clips in the service of her own narrative and reminding us that fannish consensus informs but cannot determine a vidder's decisions about how best to communicate with her intended audience.
[4.3] Our examination of fannish discussions of Hawaii Five-0 draws primarily on posts and comments on the LiveJournal and Dreamwidth sites (note 3). These sites are major locations for fannish discussion in general, and because they are sites to which the vidder herself posts and on which she publicizes her vids, they are central to the ecology within which this particular vid was produced and received. Posts to LiveJournal and Dreamwidth may be either short or quite long and can include text, images, and embedded video; comments range from single short sentences to several long paragraphs. In these posts and comments, we can see fans compiling evidence for their readings of the show. This work is collective: consensus emerges as individuals identify particular scenes as significant and other fans ratify that significance (with varying levels of universality and enthusiasm) in their comments, echo it in posts of their own, and reiterate it in various ways, including the creation and use of user icons.

[4.4] In the case of "Something's Gotta Give," the vidder's own LiveJournal is an especially important part of the fannish ecology. Because of her geographical location, lamardeuse usually sees episodes of Hawaii Five-0 several hours before most other viewers. Immediately after a new episode airs in her time zone, she posts reactions and spoilers in her journal. For many fans, especially those who enjoy getting a sneak peek at new episodes, these posts are ground zero for an explosion of fannish excitement. In addition to these preview posts, lamardeuse posts detailed recaps of most episodes, usually featuring dozens of screen caps; these recaps, too, are quite popular, typically generating more than 40 comment threads between the LiveJournal and Dreamwidth posts. As a result, lamardeuse's audience for her vids includes a significant number of people with whom she regularly communicates about Hawaii Five-0; she can be fairly confident her intended viewers will not only share her general perspective on the show's characters, but also recognize certain visuals as strong textual support for the pairing featured in "Something's Gotta Give."

[4.5] The microblogging platform Tumblr is another increasingly important locus for the expression of fannish enthusiasm. Tumblr posts are typically quite short—a single image, animation, quotation, comment, or short video clip—and the proportion of images to text is much higher than on LiveJournal and Dreamwidth; uptake is usually signaled through "liking" and reblogging rather than commenting. Because post dates are sometimes relative ("3 weeks ago") rather than absolute, it can be more difficult on Tumblr than on LiveJournal and Dreamwidth to track responses to specific episodes after the fact. But when followed in real time, blogs such as http://fuckyeahhawaiifive0.tumblr.com/, which accepts submissions of content from all over Tumblr, offer venues for fans to recirculate key images and scenes and thus establish their interpretive value.
bottles together, shake hands. And lamardeuse maintains the tension between these two aspects of the relationship all the way through the vid's final clips.

[4.9] But for fans of a show, much of the pleasure of watching a vid lies in supplying more meaning than the visual information alone conveys. At the end of the first verse (0:31), for example, Danny gestures dismissively at Steve and walks away while Steve lifts his hand and furrows his brow inquiringly.

Figure 3. Danny walks away from Steve. Hawaii Five-0, 1.09 "Po'ipu" (2010). [View larger image.]

[4.10] The visual conveys information on its own: a disagreement of some kind, Danny irritated for a reason he doesn't want to explain. But fans of the Steve/Danny pairing have established this scene as important because Danny's irritation has to do with Steve's interactions with an old buddy from the Navy and can be read as jealousy—a reading that the show's dialogue supports. In her recap of the episode, lamardeuse (2010f) quotes the dialogue from this clip:

[4.11] Steve: Are you jealous?

Danny: No.

Steve: That's jealousy!

Danny: (storming off in a huff) NO!

[4.12] What's important here is not just that the vidder perceives this theme and moment as meaningful (and includes multiple screen caps from the scene in her episode recap), but that other fans share this perception. In a response to lamardeuse's preview post (2010e) on the episode, gottalovev sums up the reaction of Steve/Danny fans when she remarks that "seriously. the jealousy, it could be seen from SPACE." Nearly a third of the commenters on the episode discussion posts for the LiveJournal SteveDannoSlash and Hawaii5-0Slash communities mention the jealousy as well: as alicebluegown16 comments, "I mutter to myself, 'Jeez, Danno. Jealous
more into the dialogue than is actually said and because this line and Danny's response make explicit the characters' fondness for each other; as such, it produced considerable fannish excitement when the episode first aired. In her initial reaction post about this episode—the one posted hours before most of her fellow fans had even seen the episode—lamardeuse quotes this line and then comments: "THAT IS THE ACTUAL LINE. I AM NOT SHITTING YOU. I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP. OH MY FUCKING GOD. DYINGGGG HERE" (2010a). (In keeping with the tone and excitement level of this post and lamardeuse's preview posts in general, many of the comments also feature caps lock and multiple exclamation points.) The somewhat calmer follow-up post (2010b), a fuller recap of the episode, features five screen caps from this scene: one of Steve gesturing, two of Danny responding and then smiling, and two of Steve beaming at Danny—a reinscription that helps ensure fans will be able to identify the scene even without dialogue. "I HAVE PLAYED THIS FIFTY TIMES NOW AND I STILL CANNOT BELIEVE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED," lamardeuse notes, and her commenters agree: "I totally had to rewind several moments multiple times because, WOW!" (ionaonie); "And then that final Steve&Danny scene that I had to rewatch 2 or 7 times" (giddygeek). And leupagus and her commenters concur: "I can't even tell you how many times [we] watched that scene, but it was a lot, and it got better EVERY TIME" (leupagus 2010); "And that look Steve gave Danny at the end, over the 'term of endearment' line? I rewatched that like, 5 times, I'm sure" (and_ed in leupagus 2010).

[4.20] It's no stretch, then, to suggest that fans of the pairing would recognize this scene, know it well, and find it an appropriate emotional climax to this section of the vid; many fans clearly rewatched the clip, and even those who didn't are likely to have reencountered it in episode reviews on LiveJournal or Dreamwidth or screen caps on Tumblr. This willingness to rewatch key scenes and the resulting ability to recognize even small snippets of those scenes in vids is an essential part of the fannish ecology within which vidders work.

[4.21] But in addition to drawing on context that fans already know, lamardeuse also recontextualizes certain clips by combining them in ways that deemphasize their connection to the original episode plots and contribute to her own narrative of antagonists moving toward romantic partnership. We see this recontextualizing most clearly at the instrumental bridge (1:38–2:01). The bridge, as we've seen, concludes with clips from the contextually important conversation about terms of endearment. It opens, however, with scenes of action rather than conversation; what matters here is not which bad guys Steve and Danny are fighting but the fact that the two of them are functioning effectively as partners. These clips set the tone for the rest of the bridge: beating up bad guys together, walking side by side, working as a team. The fight scene that yields a relatively long sequence of clips in the vid (1:44–1:48) doesn't rate even a single screen cap in lamardeuse's recap of the episode; for fans focused on the
Steve/Danny pairing, it's a scene that's not particularly interesting on its own. But in the context of the vid, lamardeuse makes it interesting: the shots mean something different in the vid than they do in the episode. These clips are dictated not by what the audience already knows or remembers about this relationship but by the needs of the vidder's narrative. "Something's Gotta Give" is not a haphazard collection of greatest hits clips; in lamardeuse's selection of song, her use of that song to structure the vid, and her strategic juxtaposition of relatively undiscussed clips at the song's instrumental bridge, we see the choices of an individual artist.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] Scholars within fan studies have generally maintained, with varying degrees of insistence, that fan texts are collaborative, but our understanding of the mechanics of fan collaboration, especially in vidding, is still incomplete. An ecological model of composition lets us have it both ways; it encourages us to pay attention to both the individual and social aspects of authorship and, perhaps more importantly, to the interactions between them. Studying the ecology within which vidders produce, including the generic and show-specific interpretive conventions that guide audience perception and thus vidder creation, allows us to think in new ways about vidders' creative processes and the rhetorical work that goes into vidding.

[5.2] Developing an ecology of vidding can also begin to strengthen our understanding of the roles of audiences outside fandom. Contemporary composition scholars such as Erin Karper (2009) and Traci Zimmerman (2009) have already begun the project of reimagining audiences, but their work tends to reify the distance between composer and audience that they are attempting to reduce. A model of an audience who is active in and even integral to the composing processes of online authors would begin to alleviate this problem. As a field of inquiry, composition studies has much to offer the study of online fandom, but we suspect that it also has much to learn.

6. Acknowledgments

[6.1] We are deeply grateful to lamardeuse for her gracious permission to discuss her vid; to the many fans cited here for permission to quote from their posts and comments; to Cate for the vid recommendation, the whirlwind introduction to Hawaii Five-0 fandom, and the indispensable list of links; and to Laura Shapiro for invaluable conversations about vidding and audience.

7. Notes
1. For an example of a vid that makes exceptionally effective use of audience familiarity with this clip, see gwyneth's "Polaroid Millenium" (2005).

2. For more on the value of repetition, see Coppa (2006).

3. Neither of us was familiar with *Hawaii Five-0* or its fandom when we began this essay. We chose to write about a *Hawaii Five-0* vid precisely so that we would have to rely on existing fan discussions of the source in order to understand the vid.

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Theory

The rhetoric of remix

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Abstract—The affordances of digital technologies increase the available semiotic resources through which one may speak. In this context, video remix becomes a rich avenue for communication and expression in ways that have heretofore been the province of big media. Yet recent attempts to categorize remix are limiting, mainly as a result of their reliance on the visual arts and cinema theory as the gauge by which remix is measured. A more valuable view of remix is as a digital argument that works across the registers of sound, text, and image to make claims and provides evidence to support those claims. After exploring the roots of contemporary notions of orality, literacy, narrative and rhetoric, I turn to examples of marginalized, disparate artifacts that are already in danger of neglect in the burgeoning history of remix. In examining these pieces in terms of remix theory to date, a more expansive view is warranted. An approach based on digital argument is capable of accounting for the rhetorical strategies of the formal elements of remixes while still attending to the specificity of the discourse communities from which they arise. This effort intervenes in current conversations and sparks enhancement of its concepts to shape the mediascape.

Keywords—Digital argument; Fan vid; Fair use


1. Introduction

Although the practice of recontextualizing found footage—previously recorded sound and image—long predates YouTube's 2005 birth, the sheer volume of video available online today is staggering. Hosting sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, Revver, Viddler, and Blip.tv not only serve as vehicles for dissemination, but also offer unprecedented access to the raw materials for remixing. Paired with widespread editing tools, video remix has become an important form of communication and expression heretofore confined to the printed word alone, and as the semiotic field grows increasingly complex, so does the need for critical attention. Although recent attempts to define and categorize video remix are elucidating in some respects, ultimately, they prove limiting, and this is due in part to their nearly exclusive reliance on cinematic, rather than rhetorical, theory. These methods give rise to genres based
on cinema, a medium that until recently remained a broadcast vehicle, a one-to-many endeavor, rather than a dialogic one.

[1.2] The invention of the camera made cinema possible, but the evolution of recording technologies fostered the widespread ability to speak with images. Similarly, the invention of the alphabet made written texts possible, while innovations in writing technologies led to the widespread ability to write with words. And although it is commonplace to name the Gutenberg press as a touchstone in print literacy, that invention permitted creation of texts for mass consumption. The pencil is a far more important technology for the advancement of large-scale print literacy because it allowed individuals to construct writing (see Baron 1999).

[1.3] I explore the limitations of current formulations of remix, particularly those based in the visual arts, and argue for a rhetorical approach that can help illuminate the various registers of sound, image, and words, as well as the interplay of all three, which are available to the digital remixer. An important aspect of this rhetorical inquiry is that it does not cling to the dominance of narrative that infuses literature studies, which, like most cinematic theory, asserts the primacy of an originary text and valorizes the single author. Further, I suggest that a rhetorical approach can ameliorate some of the problems associated with applying generic conventions that separate fact from fiction and literature from argument. Examining other large-scale shifts in communication and expression, I expose the roots of these dichotomies and argue for a breakdown of the boundaries between them to foster the transformative potential of this emergent discursive space. Therefore, rather than framing a totalizing or definitive theory of remix, I propose a method for examining it as a digital argument, suggesting a fuller sense of the word argument than is commonly used. Rather than seeing argument as merely polemical in nature (e.g. two people arguing), I use the term to indicate a claim for which evidence is provided, that also retains a dialogic or conversational nature. This usage bears some resemblance to conceptions of academic writing, which is often seen as an argument that contributes to a larger conversation, but it also draws from a broader notion of pathos, logos, and ethos than that which has been reified in the age of print literacy.

[1.4] The literacy of print culture is shifting, and following Walter Ong (1982), many scholars suggest that we are in a time of secondary orality because the affordances of the digital carry some of the immediacy and sonic features of the oral, as well as some of the abstraction and permanence of the written. The line between speech and writing blurs in this environment, as does the boundary between discourse and argument. In other words, conversation, which is typically ephemeral, is stabilized in digital space and embodied in its attendant artifacts. However, insofar as verbal language is not the only available semiotic resource, I affiliate my stance with that of John Berger, whose
seminal 1972 BBC television series and later book, *Ways of Seeing*, insists that the advent of recording technologies, like color photography, transformed the art of the past into a language of images (note 1). "What matters now," Berger contends, "is who uses that language for what purpose" (1972, 5).

[1.5] I define remix as a digital utterance expressed across the registers of the verbal, the aural, and the visual. The affordances of the digital create a broader range of available semiotic resources through which one may speak; thus, remix is a form of digital argument that is crucial to the functioning of a vital public sphere. Competent control of the available semiotic resources is key to digital fluency (aka media literacy), and although this control begins in discursive analysis of remix, it requires a concomitant practice to be fully actualized. Therefore, the focus of critical attention to remix is best served by analyzing the registers it uses and by using a flexible theory that does not reify it by linking it to conventional genres.

[1.6] Remix scholarship to date invokes the visual arts and some poststructuralist theory, but it is largely rooted in cinema studies and establishes categories based on that approach. Scholars point to remix's roots in the Soviet montage approach associated with Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, and Lev Kuleshov, as well as the avant-garde collage work of French artists and filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard (see Wees 1993, Arthur 1999, Horwatt 2010, Navas n.d.). Both montage and collage are important rhetorical strategies, but these analyses center almost exclusively on visuals to the exclusion of sound and the interplay between the two; they also consign remix to the realm of art rather than to the domain of speech, and in so doing, privilege certain artifacts while devaluing others. This view also reinforces the professional/amateur binary and elides consideration of community, for although art engages in an implicit conversation with other art, culture, or both, speech absolutely depends on a shared lexicon and the intent to communicate.

[1.7] In his 2011 book, *Technologies of History: Visual Media and the Eccentricity of the Past*, Steve Anderson notes the ways that the discussion of image appropriation, particularly that which enlists the buzzwords of postmodernism, remains bogged down by speculations about appropriation's consequences for authorship, originality, and authenticity at the expense of analyzing the rhetorical strategy of found footage use, which would be "more productively viewed as a speech act in its own right" (72). Citing William Wees's dismissal of "postmodern appropriation" as using random images, Anderson argues that even those artifacts that seem unsophisticated are actually worthy of critical attention because "one cannot select an image to be reused without creating a historiographical argument" (70). If remix deploys an existing lexicon of images, then it also relies on a verbal lexicon, and its relative criticality ought to be gauged according to its participation in a discourse community. However,
to the extent that remix uses any vocabulary, it clearly also holds the potential to transform the discourse, particularly with the addition of textual effects, sound effects, and layering that digital technologies allow. However, this transformative potential is stymied in many ways if we create taxonomies that are based on existing genres.

[1.8] For instance, in *Recycled Images*, one of the few books focused on found footage, William Wees (1993) provides categories that seem promising because they offer a way of grouping different types of found footage use (table 1). Yet these categories are also limited because they fail to account for work that deploys more than one strategy—the avant-garde documentary films of Trinh Minh-ha, for instance, or fan song vids. Moreover, the relationship of documentary to reality (as its signification) implies that certain filmic practices are not mediated. Yet film stock choices, color-timing processes, and the acts of framing shots and editing footage are all ideologically imbued endeavors (note 2).

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*Table 1. Chart of types of found footage use.*

*Based on Wees (1993).

[1.9] Certainly, the scope and nature of video remix is worth documenting for many reasons: to contextualize practices of contemporary culture, to chronicle artifacts that tend toward the ephemeral and are thus in danger of being forgotten, and to foster critical awareness of the potential for semiotic manipulation in a highly mediated world. However, such taxonomies also carry risks: they have the potential to exclude individuals, groups, and practices from history, and they threaten reification of a form that implicitly questions generic conventions and grand narratives. In doing so, they also foreclose possibilities, particularly when seen through the lens of preexisting genres and conventions, which carry their own cultural baggage. Finally, these taxonomies often perpetuate the unequal power structures that exist in contemporary culture.

[1.10] A case in point: I was introduced to fan studies by way of its explicitly activist efforts—those that intervene in issues surrounding fair use and copyright to ensure freedom of speech and a thriving public sphere. Thus, although I am not widely conversant in the discourse of fan studies, engaging with its practices has been important in crystalizing my thinking and forcing me to confront certain assumptions
about the nature of digital texts. I find the fannish approach attractive because it comes from a place of making. To make, one must pull texts apart, treating them as distinct registers but also as contributing metonymically to the whole. At the same time, however, I see no way of adequately accounting for fannish texts through the lens of current remix theory.

2. Remix as discourse

[2.1] What does it mean to read video remix as a speech act, and how does this view provide a more nuanced account of digital artifacts of all stripes while still respecting the discrete communities from which these texts arise? What is to be gained by viewing remix as discursive, as an argument that is assembled by units of meaning that, when stitched together, become a larger statement? Moreover, whose interests might be served by this endeavor? At a basic level, viewing remix as a digital speech act would rid us of terms like *appropriation* and *recycling*, which suggest the primacy of an original author or text. This view resists the hierarchies that champion big media and make fannish efforts a second-class mode of discourse, the realm of the amateurish and the trivial. Indeed, language cannot be language unless it is both understood and used among its members. This approach can also open up a space for considering artifacts that defy easy categorization and, as such, are left out of the burgeoning canon. There are, however, some obstacles that prevent us from seeing remix as discourse, and I believe that they are encoded in the values and assumptions of a print-literate culture. Investigating the origins of print-based literacy and the roots of current conceptions of discourse can expose these obstructions.

[2.2] The concept of secondary orality advanced in Walter Ong's (1982) work is premised on his chronicling of the progression of oral culture to literate culture and, finally, to current secondary or residual orality that combines characteristics of each. In looking at Ong's list of features that characterize orality, we can see many overlaps with remix: "additive rather than subordinative; aggregative rather than analytic; redundant or 'copious'; conservative or traditionalist; close to the human lifeworld; agonistically toned; empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced; homeostatic; situational rather than abstract" (37–49). However, Ong's work has far more to offer to digital scholarship. In particular, his analysis of Homer and Plato can help reveal the roots of current epistemological boundaries between genres considered to be factual and those seen as fictive.

[2.3] The collectively authored and formulaic nature of Homeric epic poetry is old news; it is key to Janet Murray's (1997) notion of cyberdrama, for instance. However, the link between Homer and current conceptions of collaboratively authored narrative (or digital storytelling, as it is increasingly being referred to) is more tenuous than has
been acknowledged. Milman Parry's research on Homeric extant texts in the 1930s dashed the prevailing view of Homer as a genius who single-handedly constructed masterpieces such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, although his work was not expanded on until about 30 years later, when Albert Lord extended Parry's research on Homer to consider its implications for performance and literature, and Eric Havelock, Ong's frequent collaborator, used it to explore speech and literacy. The difference in approach leads to differing conclusions about the boundaries between literature and rhetoric. Parry's careful analysis of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* revealed them to be highly formulaic, and as Ong explains, "The meaning of the Greek term 'rhapsodize,' *rhapsoidein*, 'to stitch song together,' became ominous: Homer stitched together prefabricated parts. Instead of a creator, you had an assembly-line worker" (1982, 22). Immediately we can see that the current connotation of *rhapsody* is far more romantic and poetic than its original meaning; indeed, this view of rhapsody evokes sewing and its analogy to film editing as well as to remix (as clips are stitched together), none of which have traditionally been seen as particularly creative endeavors. From a discursive view, however, these prefabricated parts are necessary when one must transmit knowledge orally; it must be repeated to be remembered and passed on to others, so formulaic thought was "essential for wisdom and effective administration" (Ong 1982, 24). In this light, Homeric epic was not the province of entertainment but of governance. These prefabricated parts also change slightly with each retelling over the centuries, and so the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, when analyzed, are shown to be a patchwork of "early and late Aeolic and Ionic peculiarities" (23) whose forms were reified during the centuries after the invention of the Greek alphabet as they were written down. It would be misguided to see Homeric poetry as consonant with the current conception of literature, which is framed as distinct from rhetoric. In Homeric times, these distinctions did not exist. It would be equally misguided to view this collective authorship as the sort of crowd-sourced democratic practice many of us hope to attain in digital space; the changes to the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* took place over centuries, as is evidenced by their blend of alphabetic conventions, and these blended wordings were not accomplished by people using language, as idioms are, but by the few who had the means to write: poets and scribes working for the ruling classes. In this sense, it was a broadcast medium: it could not be interrogated, only consumed.

[2.4] Similarly, Plato is widely known for having banished the poets from his ideal Republic as well as for having condemned writing. Scholars cite passages from Plato's *Republic* in the former case, and the *Phaedrus* and the *Seventh Letter* in the latter. For instance, in *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Janet Murray (1997) posits Plato's attack on Homer as merely one instantiation of the perennial fear of "every powerful new representational technology," noting that "we hear versions of the same terror in the biblical injunction against worshipping graven images; in the Homeric depiction of the
alluring Sirens' songs, drawing sailors to their death; and in Plato's banishing of the poet from his republic" (18). Citing Parry and Lord, she goes on to argue: "A stirring narrative in any medium can be experienced as a virtual reality because our brains are programmed to tune into stories with an intensity that can obliterate the world around us. This siren power of narrative is what made Plato distrust the poets as a threat to the Republic" (98). For Murray, then, Plato was simply terrified by narrative and its immersive quality. This allows her to champion cyberdrama as merely an extension of older forms of literature and a universal human need for stories. However, even as current readings of ancient texts are destined to be somewhat anachronistic, certain facts are difficult to dispute. One such fact is that far from being a new form of representation, the oral structure of the Homeric epic was a centuries-old form by the time of Plato. As Ong's work reveals, it was actually the tropes of orality that, after the invention of the alphabet, no longer functioned as noetic (that is, being of the thought world, or of intelligence); instead, they called attention to themselves as mediated and dogmatic. Indeed, once these epics were written down, they essentially became obsolete. Their forms and attendant iconography, so useful for oral delivery, seem rudimentary and jingoistic when the repetition no longer served.

[2.5] In this light, Plato's derision of Homer was actually a denunciation of the outdated and counterproductive structures of knowledge transmission characterized by oral epics because their mythos blocked, rather than encouraged, the acquisition of real knowledge. The grievance was not intrinsically about narrative but rather an indictment of an inferior and ineffective example of the exteriorization of knowledge in a form that is static. Indeed, for Plato, wisdom came via a dialogic process, not from simply absorbing a text whose veracity could not be subjected to interrogation. This view is strengthened by looking at Plato's notorious attack on writing, which needs qualification, particularly because it was done in writing—and, some would argue, often poetically at that.

[2.6] Plato's 30-plus dialogues did not faithfully represent an actual conversation but were instead used as epistemological and pedagogical guides, using the voice of Plato's teacher, Socrates. The Phaedrus, one of most prominent of the Socratic dialogues, is presented as the script of a conversation between Socrates and his frequent interlocutor, Phaedrus, while walking through the countryside on the outskirts of Athens. It is clearly dramatized, with characters named, although there is no narrator to intrude on or mediate the conversation. Phaedrus has just attended a speech on the nature of love, which sparks a conversation about knowledge, learning, and wisdom. When the talk turns to writing, Socrates notes, "I cannot help feeling, Phaedrus, that writing is unfortunately like painting: for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question, they preserve a solemn silence" (Jowatt 2006, 278-12). As we see from this passage, the complaint is less
about writing per se and more about the incomplete nature of the representation, compounded by the inability to speak back to a text, to be an interlocutor. One must simply accept what the text says without the veracity achieved by understanding the process by which it came to be, and without the ability to gauge the credibility of the author. For Plato, this process was most important because real wisdom was deeper than its exteriorization in speech, writing, or images. In other words, the shortcomings of any form of representation can be mitigated by the ability to question, interact, and evaluate utterances. If these texts could be conversational, there is little reason to conclude that Plato would not also view them as pedagogical. Indeed, Plato himself wrote a great deal, and perhaps the naming of interlocutors in his dialogues was an early form of citation. Further, the analogy to painting is interesting, not least because visual texts have remained nondialogic until recently. Today, however, the remixer becomes an interlocutor in the digital conversation, one who can question the formal boundaries of a print-literate culture and one whose efforts often expose the process of creation.

3. Digital argument

[3.1] My point is not to valorize Socratic dialogues, for they are both formulaic (often relying on syllogism) and arise out of an uneven, class-based society. Rather, given the extent to which Platonic and Aristotelian concepts infuse current Western culture, their examination proves vital for understanding how that process occurred and how the concepts varied in their translation over time. Plato's student Aristotle taxonomized argument; the traces of that effort are with us today, particularly in academic discourse, with its thesis-driven prose. However, modern conceptions of argument tend to elide Aristotelian notions of the pathos (emotion) and ethos (credibility) that join logos (logic) to form an argument.

[3.2] Nearly all academic writing marshals the rational but ignores the affective. Sophistic rhetoric, by contrast, has enjoyed a resurgence in rhetorical theory, particularly since the culture wars of the late 20th century, and this work challenges the logocentrism of academic argument, complicating notions of objectivity and valorizing pathos and ethos (Vitanza 1994; Jarrett 1998). Even as current notions of argument may seem limiting, and even as the hierarchical structures that characterize most forms of written argument do not translate perfectly to the layered texts of remix, in my view, digital argument remains the best way to characterize this work. My use of the term digital argument is partly strategic; argument is key to academic efforts, and as such, the term holds resonance for the scholarly community. Remix can be a scholarly pursuit: it cites, synthesizes, and juxtaposes its sources. Argument also contains connotations of the dialogic quality of communication that is not anchored to either speech or writing, and so digital argument can extend its features to writing
with sound and image in addition to words. It is the embodiment of a speech act. Further, although in common parlance the word *argument* connotes something like polemics, there are many forms of argument; the term is not limiting, and it can help break down the boundaries between fact and fiction. A poem can be an argument, as can a narrative, each deploying different rhetorical strategies. Moreover, viewing remix as digital argument can intervene in issues of copyright and fair use, particularly if we posit its use of source material as citation—a form of evidence necessary to make one's point.

[3.3] However, the use of words to investigate the extratextual registers of remix is inadequate, so we ought to tread carefully and lightly. To escape some of the pitfalls of mapping current notions of argument onto digital space, a form of the Toulmin method for analyzing practical argument is a productive apparatus for reading remix, one expansive enough for explanatory purposes but open enough to permit further nuance. Stephen Toulmin (1958) created this model because he thought that absolutist or theoretical models of argument were difficult to actually apply. Toulmin's model includes several elements: claim, grounds, warrant, backing, rebuttal, and qualifiers. I offer a modified version of the model and suggest that a remix can be seen as including a claim or multiple claims, supported by evidence. This is not strictly a formal method, because knowledge of a specific discourse community serves to assess the efficacy of the evidence. The ethos of the remix can be evaluated in those terms. Reading remix as digital argument has the potential to call formal boundaries into question, interrogating current generic conventions and notions about what is factual and what is fictive, recognizing that all such work is mediated. Indeed, the term *media* evokes quasilegal terms like *mediation*, the purpose of which is to bring two sides together. The mediascape overflows with both claims and evidence that may be deployed in ways that have not often been brought together.

[3.4] In attempting to actuate this theory of remix as digital argument, I explore three artifacts that defy analysis using current media studies–based remix theory. Although they seem disparate, they are all uniformly compelling discursive pieces worth considering. My hope is that this analysis might make room for voices too often silenced, even as it expands the digital vocabulary from which remix might draw, which may, in turn, help to level the discursive playing field. I see this as an initial foray that could be built upon with more sophistication and nuance as the conversation proceeds.

[3.5] Francesca Coppa (2008) documented the history of fan culture with regard to the specific televisual texts of *Star Trek* and *Quantum Leap*, arguing that older fan endeavors gave rise to current vidding practices and aesthetics. Vidding, she explains, "is a form of grassroots filmmaking in which clips from television shows and movies
are set to music" such that the images are read through the interpretive lens of the song (¶1.1). Coppa recounts a misreading of a song vid by entertainment reporter Jake Coyle, in which Star Trek images centering on the character of Spock are remixed to the soundtrack of Nine Inch Nails's song "Closer." Grouping this piece with a "best of" list of fan-made music videos, Coyle discusses the genre as revisualized music video—one in which images are used to illustrate the music—failing to appreciate this piece as an act of media criticism rather than music criticism (¶1.3). Coppa's analysis reveals the conflicted nature of the character of Spock, a role that began as female in the pilot, as well as the ways in which the "Closer" vid represents an older strategy deployed by scientifically savvy female fans to reconcile fragmented depictions of women in the show. Spock, she contends, "is a kind of visual marker, a scar indicating a series of conflicts meaningful to the scientifically minded, technologically oriented women likely to become vidders, especially in the early years of vidding" (¶2.15).


[3.6] Reading "Closer" as a digital argument, one can say that the soundtrack also functions as evidence toward the visual claim that Coppa's analysis reveals. This Nine Inch Nails song is a perfect lens through which these vidders read Spock, whose character, Coppa demonstrates, ultimately embodies the conflict between opposing gendered depictions of the desiring body and the rational mind. In other words, the song provides strong support to the claim made by the images. The lyrics are sexually explicit, but they also speak to conflicted identity. Trent Reznor sings, "I want to fuck you like an animal," but also "I want to feel you from the inside," suggesting if not role reversal, then certainly affinity. This sentiment is furthered with the lines, "Help me; you make me perfect, / Help me become somebody else" and "My whole existence is flawed." The complication of male subjectivity (and the compilation of gender
characteristics generally thought to be at odds with standard gendered meanings) becomes the backdrop for the Star Trek images that depict a similarly conflicted Spock, who is shown both fighting and desiring Captain Kirk. It is also noteworthy that Reznor is both a political and digital activist, rendering the vidders' association all the more compelling.

[3.7] Reading the rhetorical strategies of "Closer" as issuing from both its visual and aural registers does not violate Coppa’s analysis, nor does it defile the piece’s status as song vid; rather, it can provide further context without resorting to the simple lumping of the piece into the category of music video, as Coyle did. Indeed, as Coppa showed, and as Henry Jenkins earlier noted, "Fan artists insist that their works bear little or no direct relationship to MTV's commercial music videos" (Jenkins 1992, 232). We thus might more productively compare "Closer" to a 1965 remix by Santiago Alvarez, the Cuban found footage filmmaker who supported Castro's regime. Alvarez's "Now!" culls news footage of US race riots cut together in time to music and orchestrated to the eponymous song by Lena Horne, the remarkable performer who was a vociferous civil rights activist and who was blacklisted by Hollywood because of it. The song "Now!" is itself a remix. Horne sings it to the tune of the Hebrew folk song "Hava Nagila," but she changes the lyrics to stage a scathing commentary on US race relations; the lyrics suggest the founding fathers would disavow their legacy. Because this song was banned in the United States, Alvarez strengthens his indictment of the government whose constant critique of oppressive regimes is accompanied by the suppression of the voices and bodies of its own citizens for the crime of being black.

![Now! (1965)](Video 2. "Now!" by Santiago Alvarez (1965).)

[3.8] "Now!" opens with stills of Martin Luther King Jr. in a meeting with Lyndon Johnson. These dissolve into footage taken from the point of view of policemen in riot
gear as they rush the streets to break up a protest. After several more clips from their point of view, and as the song moves into the line "We want action now," we see what sort of action is occurring: stills show police brutalizing black protestors who are always pictured as unmoving bodies, either lying injured on the ground or simply immobilizing themselves in the mode of peaceful protest. One does not fight or resist, but merely fails to act and goes limp. Interspersed in this footage are stills of the Ku Klux Klan, a Nazi gathering, and Abraham Lincoln's statue. The images of victimization eventually give way to views of the protesters' strength as their joined hands and determined faces are highlighted. The 5-minute piece ends with the word "NOW" being typeset by gunshots, the bullets piercing holes to construct the dotted letters. Although this piece may seem heavy-handed in today's sophisticated media climate, its subject is more important than ever. The power differentials of society are hugely disparate, and access to and control of the field of representation is a crucial mechanism for any type of liberatory potential.

[3.9] Like "Closer," "Now!" uses both the song and the visuals as evidence to support the claim about the hypocrisy of the US political system in general and President Lyndon B. Johnson in particular. This film joins the ranks of Alvarez's other such efforts; indeed, Alvarez frequently featured Johnson, whose administration Alvarez implicates in the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy. Alvarez's remixes were not constrained by filmic conventions of length: consider the 18-minute LBJ (1968), the 38-minute Hanoi, Tuesday 13th (1968), or the 25-minute 79 Springs (1969). Moreover, he considered himself a news pamphleteer, and not a filmmaker (Malcolm 1999). Alvarez's discourse community includes Octavio Getino and Fernando E. Solanas, founding members of Third Cinema (aka Third World Cinema), a group whose found footage filmmaking was motivated by both economic and ideological concerns. They remixed footage to decry colonialism in Latin America and to resist dominant Hollywood genres. They also published tracts about their work, adding nuance to their practice; these include "Towards a Third Cinema" (1969) by Getino and Solanas, and "The Aesthetics of Hunger" (1969) by Glauber Rocha.

[3.10] "Now!" and "Closer" share formal properties: they are similar in terms of length and technique, and they both use images culled from a larger archive. Likewise, they are both grassroots efforts, and they offer resistance to dominant narratives. The two pieces are further linked by their inability to fit definitively into any of the categories erected by current remix theory. Eli Horwatt (2010) argues that there are two dominant modes of digital remixing: political remixes and trailer remixes. Digital remix deserves its own taxonomy, he continues, but because taxonomies risk oversimplification, he has purposefully extended the two approaches to found footage use that Paul Arthur (1999) identified: surrealist estrangement, which Horwatt links to trailer remixes, and Soviet reediting, which he links to political remixes. Although the
strategies Horwatt names are valuable, the limitations of this taxonomy are apparent when looking at vidding, which seems to fall into neither category. Further, the discussion of political remix is weakened by its reliance on the discourse of art, which leads Horwatt to make assertions such as this one: "As works of art, political remixes can be critiqued for their parroting of hegemonic visual discourses in mainstream media, rather than adopting less authoritarian modes of speaking back to the media" (7). This statement begs several questions: Should political discourse be gauged by the standards of art? What are those standards, aside from being "less authoritarian" than mainstream media? Is this a question of aesthetics? Might differing rhetorical situations call for differing levels of "parroting"? Finally, what does it mean to parrot a discourse when working in a preexisting vocabulary of images? These are politically charged and value laden questions worth asking, but they are difficult to frame when art is the only referent.

However, Horwatt's discussion of particular strategies of remix is valuable. After noting that Soviet reeditors are distinguished by the fact that their "transformations occur clandestinely," he considers other work in this vein, asserting that "these works of détournement are marked by the artist's desire to camouflage their transformations, almost as if to insinuate them back into the mediascape as authentic and original works" (2010, 7). This description sounds very much like fannish efforts, because vidders work with original texts but create new possibilities. Indeed, "Closer" might be seen as using the strategy of identity correction that Horwatt assigns to political remixes (quoting Jonathan McIntosh; http://www.rebelliouspixels.com/), but to get there, we have to stretch and blend his two categories. Moreover, the affective level remains a source of concern for many scholars, and fannish work, given its presumed admiration for its source text, can be easily misconstrued as being apolitical and/or pandering at first glance. Indeed, Horwatt cites Hal Foster's castigation of appropriation art that reveals a "festishism of the spectacle," before adding that that such work can fall prey to "an unwitting passion for the materials appropriated" (2). But anyone who has ever edited video clips would likely attest to the fact that one must have passion for the footage; editing demands extensive playing and replaying of clips. Whether this passion issues from a fannish impulse or is one born of righteous indignation (or both) matters little. To argue, one must take a stand, not be disinterested. Further, the very notion that a remix intent on being overtly political should somehow lack passion seems untenable. Perhaps the issue is one of critical distance; emotions are traditionally seen as opposed to logic and reason, and thus having passion seems to interrupt intentionality and criticality (which may be why Horwatt calls it "unwitting"). However, this is also a holdover from a print-literate world in which the myth of objectivity reigns. It is all logos, with no pathos or ethos.
[3.12] Where would "Closer" fit into a taxonomy that consists of either political remix or trailer remix? Certainly the more grassroots form is the trailer remix, for which Horwatt creates the subcategories of trailer mashup and trailer recut, noting that they are "easily the most popular form of digital remixing" (2010, 8). Although I have my doubts about this claim, his notion that trailer remixes not only comment on individual films, but also parody the whole media marketing machine is an important one, though it seems mired in the view that cinema is superior to television's serial texts. His larger discussion gestures toward a more expansive view of the trailer remix: If we imagine a trailer as analogous to an abstract or a summary of a film or a television series, we can see how "Closer," with its scenes pulled from the larger archive of the Star Trek original series, might function this way. In the final analysis, however, although Horwatt makes many incisive and valuable points, especially about rhetorical strategies deployed by remixers, the overall value of a taxonomy based exclusively on cinema is limited.

4. Digital argument plus voice-over

[4.1] Insofar as I want to draw comparisons between conventions of written argument and filmic ones, it remains difficult to use words to investigate sound and image, occupying as they do differing registers of meaning making. There are multiple and overlapping claims made by the various components of remix that are difficult to discuss in text. This obstacle is compounded by a lack of available tools that make it particularly cumbersome because digital platforms tend to be media friendly or text friendly, but seldom both (note 3). That said, there is also cultural baggage to these comparisons, particularly in academic circles: the registers of image and sound are seen as the exclusive province of the expressive and the creative, while words are viewed as the optimum vehicle for critical engagement. This is the main source of struggle in current discussions of remix, and it is certainly one that I find myself continually working through, attempting to escape my own inability to understand the relative complexity of these extralinguistic registers and to articulate them in words.

[4.2] Rick Altman argued that sound has been neglected in film theory, maintaining that "the complexity of the cinema experience derives from [its] ability to serve as the intersection of a variety of discourses," and that even as these discourses share the same space, they "commonly hide one another," and it is therefore only through repeated viewings that a film will reveal bits of each individual discourse (1992, 10). Although these repeated viewings are now accomplished with unprecedented ease, sound continues to be elided in many discussions of remix (note 4). However, sound, already crucial to cinema and television, increases its importance in remix because it often provides the glue that holds disparate clips together. Both "Closer" and "Now!" demonstrate this well; the songs provide a type of coherence to the images. Indeed, it
seems no accident that one of the pioneers of film editing spent several years as a sound editor. Dede Allen, who was the first editor to receive a single editing credit on a Hollywood production, broke new ground with the practice of extending the soundtrack from one scene into the image track of the next (Block 2010), a practice that has since become widespread. Whether by musical score or by voice-over, the extended track knits the narrative action together. An extension of this practice characterizes my next example of remix.

[4.3] In *Queer Carrie*, Elisa Kreisinger exploits the voice-over narration of the show, *Sex and the City* (1998–2004). By pairing it with segments from disparate episodes, she creates a counternarrative in which the four lead characters, finding heteronormative expectations for their lives untenable, come out of the closet. Working exclusively with evidence from the series, with no additional sound or images added, Kreisinger manages a nearly seamless story—one that is, in her words, queer positive. To completely transform a narrative this way lies at the very heart of remix as a resistant and subversive practice, one that intervenes in the Hollywood machine and complicates the very form of big media construction.


[4.4] My initial reaction to this piece was one of ambivalence, however. I saw it as more queer negative than queer positive because it is only after these women have failed relationships with men that they choose women. Carrie and crew are not choosing to be with women because they love women, but because they do not love men. This fact only reinforces dominant structures of gender inequity: women are inferior, and heterosexuality prevails. I felt conflicted about this reaction, so I discussed it with Kreisinger. She suggested that I look more closely at the first clip of
the Queer Carrie sequence, during which Carrie finds validation for her work from another woman. Indeed, after a repeated viewing, I came to appreciate and admire the way that Queer Carrie transforms a meeting with a romantic rival into an event that sparks an affair with another woman—one who is equally accomplished, who respects her work, and who notices her appearance. What more could one want in a partner? The feat is even more impressive because in the original scene, Carrie arranges the meeting under false pretenses. She feigns a book project to meet with an editor who is the ex-wife of Mr. Big, Carrie's aptly nicknamed boyfriend, so she can assess her competition. She is driven by a sense of inadequacy because Big has resisted commitment for years, a fact that Carrie has attributed to his not being the marrying kind, only to find out that he was indeed married before. In the source material, the type of dysfunctional competitiveness bred by contemporary US culture that encourages women to battle each other for that big prize—the man—is writ large. 

[4.5] This is precisely Kreisinger's point. As she notes in the introduction to the project, "The original show appropriated the language of radical feminist politics only to retell old patriarchal fairy tales," and it is exactly this facet of the show that Queer Carrie subverts. Moreover, as the introduction continues, "while it may have taken 6 years to complain about men, by minute 2 of the remix they've done something about it" (http://elisakreisinger.wordpress.com/projects/queercarrieproject/). Rather than simply complain, Queer Carrie's characters take responsibility for their own sexuality, as well as their lives, just as Kreisinger takes control of the protagonist's sound and images, "bending them to her will" (Coppa 2008, ¶2.19). I have never been a fan of Sex and the City, but I am certainly a fan of Queer Carrie.

[4.6] My initial reaction—and it really was a reaction, rather than a sustained analysis based on textual evidence—was flawed because it failed to attend to the formal elements of the remix. My reading relied on the indexical relationship of the remix to life, rather than seeing Queer Carrie as making a statement within the confines of originary show, Sex and the City. Key to this latter reading is a view of the registers of sound and image, and the dominance of the former over the latter. The claim is made in the oral register, and the images provide supporting evidence as they illustrate the voice-over. As with "Closer" and "Now!," this reading would be difficult to enact using available remix taxonomies, although when considered as digital argument, the claim and evidence are far more apparent.

[4.7] One last effort at taxonomy holds more promise. Eduardo Navas (n.d.) defines remix culture as the "global activity consisting of the creative and efficient exchange of information made possible by digital technologies that is supported by the practice of cut,copy and paste." He identifies three types of remix: extended, selective, and reflexive. Although copy and paste are not the only activities used by remixers who
layer sound and images and who play with volume and opacity, this approach is attractive in its emphasis on human activity (for example, rhetorical strategy), rather than on the tools themselves or on established genres.

[4.8] Navas associates these three types largely with those found in sampled music, although he also links them to the practices of avant-garde (visual) artists. Although he does not distinguish between video remix and sonic remix, and even as his definition is a bit thin (the equivalent would be to refer to essays as those texts constructed by use of keystrokes), his discussion of the reflexive remix is interesting. He applies the concept of the reflexive remix to networked sites formed by communities such as Wikipedia and YouTube, and he extends them to suggest a mixing of the modular components of Web 2.0 technologies. Although that portion is not yet fully realized in his work, the reflexive remix could prove a productive avenue for thinking about all three of the examples discussed here because it can account for the social commentary contained in each. Navas explains that the reflexive remix uses the aesthetic of 1970s music sampling "where the remixed version challenges the aura of the original and claims autonomy even when it carries the original's name." Reading "Closer," "Now!," and Queer Carrie as reflexive remixes, we might say that Spock, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Carrie are rewritten and bestowed with identities that challenge their original essences, even as they claim its name. Ultimately, however, such reflexivity is foundational to all remix, so the better question becomes: How is this particular remix reflexive, and what is to be learned from its rhetorical strategies? These are questions that remix as digital argument can produce.

[4.9] Examining the formal aspects of Queer Carrie, for instance, becomes a valuable lesson in media literacy. Understanding the way its structure exploits the show's narration is a skill that seems sorely needed in today's highly mediated world. It is the same structure so often used in news coverage and in documentary film. These "real" shows have adopted the high production values, engineered drama, and story arcs of entertainment, even as series like Sex and the City include the journalistic trope of the voice-over (unsurprisingly, in the show, Carrie is a newspaper columnist). This pairing of voice-over with found footage is a common practice in both broadcast news and documentary film, where stock footage is used to illustrate the narration. With the recent rise of big box office documentary, there has been a concomitant public debate and alarm about the form and its potential to propagate false information. Reading remix as digital argument reveals the constructed nature of all such forms, whether fictive or factual, and trains one to read all mediated texts critically and skeptically. Citing the intense furor over films such as Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 911 (2004), Amber Day (2011) argues, "While most media consumers have some understanding that all media messages are constructed, it would seem they many people are not convinced of their neighbor's ability to understand this" (103). Although we all think
we are savvy about media and its impacts, it takes sustained effort to understand its complexities. Being forced to confront the rhetorical choices of media production in a structural way is one of the best ways of fostering necessary critical engagement.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] There are many benefits to viewing remix as digital argument. First, the net effect of remix theory to date is the reinforcement of the amateur/professional binary, which on the one hand distinguishes fannish remix from political remix video, and on the other hand sees it as a purely artistic endeavor. This trivializes the amateur and valorizes the professional while it emphasizes individuals over discourse communities. Second, although I do not mean to suggest that there is a single correct reading of any text, a rhetorically valid reading becomes valuable on many levels and contributes to media literacy. If we read remix as digital argument, we could more productively link fan vids to other resistant practices that question the grand narratives of our time—the reified genres that dictate our ways of knowing. By reading them as arguments with claims and evidence, we are better equipped to gauge the veracity of the information presented by all media, particularly that which purports to gives us information, such as broadcast news and documentary film.

[5.2] Today's mediascape both reflects and reinforces our socioeconomically uneven world; by reading remix as a digital speech act rather than consigning it to a preexisting genre, we can help prevent digital discursive space from fostering the type of binaries that inhere in current generic conventions. Language is power. Progressive writing scholars have long argued that in a world characterized by social, cultural, and political disparity, one where language and dialects help keep class distinctions in place, there is no politically neutral use of Standard Written English, just as there is no way to select an image for remixing without implicating oneself in an ideological apparatus. But alphabetic writing practices were formed gradually, unlike the practices and norms adopted by those making digital arguments. With remix, we have a chance to change semiotic privilege by shaping the emerging discursive field to one that more readily reflects an equitable pluralistic culture.

[5.3] As Gunther Kress (1999) argues, in times of sweeping technological change, critique is not a prime academic activity; critique is still necessary, but scholars must do more than simply act as critics. They must actively engage in shaping and transforming culture. When one rips, edits, and renders video, one is transformed into a speaker of that discourse who can intervene and contest its truth claims. The practice of remix can be transformative, yet the theory and history of remix is still the stuff of written texts. Thus, careful attention to the way we name and theorize it is crucial, for these acts also shape the digital discursive field and dictate whose stories
get told and who is authorized to speak. Therefore, before we reify a genre such as remix, where the discursive terrain has not yet hardened, it is useful to dissolve the formal boundaries between fact and fiction and read remix as a digital argument, the components of which exist in the same discursive space and occupy the same field of representation.

[5.4] One of the most interesting aspects of remix is its tendency to subvert the dominant discursive field and its reified genres: Hollywood film, broadcast television, documentary, journalism, ethnography. Remix lays bare the constructed nature of the original and often calls attention to its own construction. This holds true for genres that endeavor to represent reality as well as those that make no such claims. The boundaries between fact and fiction, problematic since Homer and Plato's time, break down yet further in digital media. Our readings of them must do so as well.

6. Notes

1. Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972) is a distillation of the Frankfurt School and Walter Benjamin's work in particular. It is also a remix, as Berger adds in footage from *Man with a Movie Camera* over which a voice reads Dziga Vertov's manifesto, that Berger notes was written several years earlier. In a transmedia move before its time, *Ways of Seeing* was then released as a book, but it was not printed in traditional fashion. There are five essays in total, and of the five, two comprise visuals only. The textual chapters that wrap these two visual essays use both word and image. The main font is boldface, with emphasized words and phrases in nonbold type, thus visually signaling the argument contained within. In addition, based on a critique of the BBC series by an art historian, Berger (1972) adds the critic's rebuttal in the book before refuting it, a move that presages blogs and their opportunities for commentary.

2. A good example of this ideology is revealed by Trinh Minh-ha when she explains that films shot in Africa are typically color timed on the blue side of the chart, a convention that is appropriate for light-skinned people but that makes African people's skin color a "dull charcoal black" (1992, 120).

3. Emerging platforms like Popcorn JS (http://popcornjs.org/) mitigate this tendency to some extent, as one can see the various source materials pop up inside frames as they are deployed in the main narrative. I find this popping fairly obtrusive, though, and prefer applications such as Scalar (http://scalar.usc.edu/anvc/), which allows all assets to be placed in the same frame as the main text.

4. Horwatt (2010) briefly explores the practice of overdubbing, but only to discuss the importing of one soundtrack onto another video track, with little discussion of the nuance made possible by sophisticated sound mixing and editing.
7. Works cited


Remix video and the crisis of the humanities

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0.1 Abstract—The discourses of crisis in the humanities is juxtaposed with an analysis of remix video practices to suggest that the cognitive and cultural engagement feared lost in the former appear with frequency and enthusiasm in the latter. Whether humanists focus on the deleterious effects of the digital or celebrate the digital humanities but resist a turn to computation, their anxieties turn to the disappearance of textual analysis, aesthetics, critique, and self-reflection. Remix video, as exemplified by mashups, trailer remixes, and vids, depends on these same competencies for the creation and circulation of its works. Remix video is not the answer to the crises of the humanities; rather, the recognition of a common set of practices, skills, and values underpinning scholars and video practitioners' work provides the basis for a coalitional approach: identification of shared opportunities to promote and engage potential participants in the modes of thinking and production that contend with complex cultural ideas.

0.2 Keywords—Digital humanities; Fan vid


1. Introduction

1.1 On October 2, 2010, remix artist and pop culture hacker Jonathan McIntosh released his video "Donald Duck Meets Glenn Beck in Right Wing Radio Duck." The video uses 50 clips of classic Disney cartoons in conjunction with audio segments of Glenn Beck's radio programs to tell a story about the political and ideological vulnerability of the American unemployed during the economic downturn. Circulated via social media such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as more mainstream outlets such as AlJazeera.net, Roger Ebert's column, and the Washington Post, McIntosh's remix video garnered well over a million views and has been translated into six languages. In an interview with the New York Times, McIntosh describes the time- and labor-intensive process required to create the piece: "It took me about 3 months in total to complete this project. The first two months I spent collecting, reviewing and transcribing clips—usually a couple [of] hours a day. This last month I spent intensively story-boarding, scripting and editing the footage and audio clips—usually
for about 8 hours a day" (Roettgers 2010). This kind of comprehensive media analysis project, and its reception, were not foreign to McIntosh; a year earlier, his "Buffy vs. Edward" piece went viral as well, spanning Buffy and Twilight fandoms alike as it ignited a conversation about popular media and gender. Pitting footage of the feminist vampire slayer against the stalker tendencies of the vampire heartthrob, McIntosh sought to push critique of Edward Cullen past the academic boundaries that seemed to contain it (Ohanesian 2010). In an LA Weekly interview, McIntosh notes his debt to cultural critic bell hooks for her methods of popular culture critique, explaining: "I'm not standing up and doing an academic analysis necessarily, but I am using the same pop culture world to frame those ideas" (Ohanesian 2010).

[1.2] Five days after McIntosh's New York Times interview, distinguished literary scholar and columnist Stanley Fish declared real of one of academe's worst fears: "The Crisis of the Humanities Officially Arrives" (2010). Fish's contention was a reaction to an announcement from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany, stating that economic shortfalls had forced them to cut academic programs in French, Russian, Italian, classics, and theater. Outcry from faculty members, news organizations, and scholarly associations was swift. Rosemary Feal, the executive director of the Modern Language Association, appealed to the deputy commissioner of the state's education department, predicting the intellectual competencies that would go missing with the programs' removal:

[1.3] Languages are the repository of past and present cultures...The study of language plays a part in developing cognition, sharpening analytical abilities, and understanding sameness and differences of the human race; without in-depth study of languages, literatures and cultures, and the liberal arts, institutions of higher learning should only call themselves technical or professional schools. (Feal 2010)

[1.4] For Feal and many others, Albany's cuts signal the loss of entire landscapes of thought from the topography of a college education. Her appeal focuses on the impact of foreign language learning, but it quickly includes the study of literatures and cultures as endemic to the development of analysis and understanding. Without significant input from humanities disciplines like modern languages, she argues, the institution defaults on its responsibility to develop both cognitive and cultural skills in its graduates. Professors at SUNY Albany echoed Feal's emphasis on the crucial cognitive abilities that would be lost: "The humanities are critique-al knowledge rooted in the 'other'—other organizations of social relations, other modes of thinking, other forms of behavior, other values and ethics of work" (Ebert and Zavarzadeh 2010).

[1.5] Temporal contiguity provides a convenient connection between the phenomena of remix video and one of the more immediate and material strands of the crisis of the
humanities, but I'd also like to suggest there is a more significant thread that links these together. McIntosh is an avatar of sorts for a significant body of remix video practitioners who use the medium to engender conversations about the texts of our day. While McIntosh's videos are far more technically sophisticated than most of the millions of remix videos available online, he shares certain core competencies with even beginner remixers: thorough knowledge of primary source materials; close attention to their contextual nuances and the opportunities to revise those contexts to make new meanings; analysis of the original and the newly created work; and an attention to how that new work will circulate in and across multiple subcultures, fandoms, and audiences. In short, McIntosh's pieces, as well as his metacommentary about them, speak directly to the shared anxieties of cognitive and cultural loss of those who describe the present as a moment of crisis for the humanities.

[1.6] My purpose here is to stage a kind of mashup between the analyses of remix video and those of the crisis of the humanities (note 1). Like any good remix, each of the texts considered here should comment on the other. Why should humanities scholars be interested in remix video? Equally importantly, why should remix video practitioners be interested in categorizing their work as humanistic endeavor? In what follows, I document the discourses of loss and anxiety in the crisis of the humanities—the constitutive cognitive and cultural endeavors its proponents fear are disappearing—and juxtapose these with the formative practices, protocols, and historical developments that subtend remix video's creation and circulation. My aim is to reveal symmetries between the two that may motivate a reciprocal reevaluation of shared intellectual and cultural engagement, and to suggest that these contain the potential for coalition in the service of defending and promoting shared values.

2. Humanities crises in the digital age

[2.1] There's no question that the institutional place and popular evaluation of the humanities is in question at present. For many scholars, academics, and citizens, the exigencies of the digital age—shifts in dominant media, industry, economies, and so on—are most responsible for the shake-up. While the focus on digital effect may vary, the anxiety is the same: the decline of thinking and its attendant processes, and the obliteration of cultural knowledge and critique. Occupying a spectrum of rhetorical positions from rational to hyperbolic, defenders of the humanities prescribe the continued societal necessity of their values and methodologies. Fish, Feal, and their compatriots, for instance, attend to the significant institutional and material losses suffered by academic departments and American culture at large. Their arguments, however, can unintentionally instantiate the apocalyptic beliefs that see program cuts as one more sign of a kind of humanistic suicide—the imminent death of thinking—in the rise of technology. A spate of New York Times articles (e.g., "Hooked on Gadgets
and Paying a Mental Price," June 6, 2010; "Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction," November 21, 2010) joins an inflammatory cover story by Nicholas Carr in the July/August 2008 issue of the *Atlantic*: "Is Google Making Us Stupid? What the Internet Is Doing to our Brains." In *The Dumbest Generation* (2008), Mark Bauerlein, an English professor at Emory University, makes his case for an entire generation's willful evacuation of its humanities heritage: "The fonts of knowledge are everywhere, but the rising generation is camped in the desert, passing stories, pictures, tunes, and texts back and forth, living off the thrill of peer attention. Meanwhile, their intellects refuse the cultural and civic inheritance that has made us what we are up to now" (10). In this pronouncement, Bauerlein draws heavily on the implications of the NEA study that documents declines in time devoted to reading, quality of engagement, and reports of enjoyment. Extrapolating from that data, he goes on to blame the epistemic shift in young people's leisure activities for the perceived cultural crisis: they refuse to acknowledge and revere core humanities values and, by extension, to engage their intellects (note 2). In so doing, he frames the fears of one particular, vocal discursive community: the death of the humanities—its distinctive thought processes, its participatory ethic, its cultural trajectory—comes at the hands of forthcoming generations who substitute digital interactions for brain-building engagement with the printed word.

[2.2] Bauerlein and his ilk are not alone in their cultural panic. Lest we think the narrative of crisis belongs solely to the scions of language and literature, it should be noted that the documentation of dehumanizing tendencies of digital media is an equal opportunity activity. In his 2010 best-selling book *You Are Not a Gadget*, Jaron Lanier critiques some of the fundamental utopian claims about new media. Lanier draws on his own experiences as a computer programmer and pioneer of virtual reality to ask salient questions about the promotion of mob mentality and the unseen limits that software operations sets for cognition. But his concerns stem from a foundational belief in the haecceity of the human individual, an individual whose nature is threatened by the technologies at hand: "The new designs on the verge of being locked in, the web 2.0 designs, actively demand that people define themselves downward. It's one thing to launch a limited conception of music or time...It is another to do that with the very idea of what it is to be a person" (19). In a similar vein, MIT professor and psychologist Sherry Turkle details years of study devoted to the transformation of human experience via digital technologies in her 2011 book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other*. Her conclusion urges readers to choose better futures for themselves than those determined by the "human experiment" to which we've acceded by interacting with machines that "denigrate and deny privacy, seductive simulations that propose themselves as places to live" (296). Thinkers like Lanier and Turkle spend less time attending to the decline of the humanities per se (à la Fish, Feal, and Bauerlein) than...
to the human, but their concerns share both tone and priority with the others. They worry that we are on the brink of losing that which makes us fundamentally human: the particular ways we think in order to understand ourselves, our potential, and our relationships to others. Interactions with and through digital technologies change our predilections and desires, both as individuals and as a culture. For the sake of clarity, we might differentiate the crisis of the human from that of the humanities, yet in many ways, the two tread the same rhetorical ground of loss and decline.

[2.3] The varying discourses of crisis around humanistic ideals, then, share both rhetorical stance and prophecies of an anemic cultural future, regardless of how deeply the authors themselves are entwined with the very technologies they critique. Surprisingly, this same ethos extends into the emerging field of digital humanities, a discipline that ostensibly works to identify and study the developing relationship between humanities inquiry and new forms of analysis made possible by technological innovation. While not a universal concern throughout the field, the potential for their methodological approaches to be overtaken by a logic endemic to technology occupies a growing number of digital humanists and mirrors a tension that was seemingly present from the origin of the discipline itself. Histories of digital humanities by both Matthew Kirschenbaum (2010) and Patrik Svensson (2010), whose disciplinary vantage points include the prestigious University of Maryland's MITH and Umeå University's HUMLab, respectively, point to the 2004 arrival of Blackwell's *A Companion to Digital Humanities* as a paradigmatic, terminological moment for the field. Kirschenbaum (2010) relays this anecdote about the title from the edition's editor John Unsworth: "Ray [Siemens] wanted 'A Companion to Humanities Computing' as that was the term commonly used at that point; the editorial and marketing folks at Blackwell wanted 'Companion to Digitized Humanities.' I suggested 'Companion to Digital Humanities' to shift the emphasis away from simple digitization" (3). Throughout Kirschenbaum's and Svensson's histories, they emphasize the implicit theme suggested by Unsworth's narrative: as scholars researched in the intersection between humanities disciplines and computers, they endeavored to move beyond an anemic view that represents digital humanities as a field devoted solely to print texts made digital and/or assessed via digital technologies, and to move toward the recognition of a panoply of methodologies, approaches, and analyses of digital objects, and the accompanying social/cultural protocols that comprise a wider expression of humanistic thought and study.

[2.4] While this desire, as Kirschenbaum and Svensson suggest, is present from the inception of the field, discourse in and around digital humanities at this moment resonates with the tension between digitization/computing and other forms of study. Anxieties echo from scholars in English, media studies, and composition, and even in computational and digital media. They argue that their work, which by all denotative
rights falls easily within the boundaries of digital humanities (in no small part because it emphasizes the role of cognitive processes and cultural critique), gets elided by the dominant assumptions about the field, which skew toward a narrowed view of computational methodologies. There's good reason for these concerns; large-scale computing projects take up a good deal of the scholarly and growing public imaginary of digital humanities research. In a 2010 *New York Times* article titled "Digital Keys for Unlocking the Humanities' Riches," journalist Patricia Cohen begins her multipage feature by noting the 20th-century attachments to concepts like formalism and postcolonialism, which only serve to set up her predominant point: "The next big idea in language, history and the arts? Data." Cohen highlights a shift away from inquiry informed by theory to one driven by technological methods. The article goes on to interview a series of scholars asking "new questions" with respect to data sets that were heretofore too large to study comprehensively: tens of thousands of letters by Enlightenment thinkers, for instance, or a tapestry hundreds of feet long. As the first article in a series entitled "Humanities 2.0," Cohen gives a public face not just to the digital humanities, but to the future of humanities research in general, as one dependent on, but rarely about, computing. Political and philosophical inquiry, it seems, are artifacts of an earlier episteme, and there's no mention of the ways in which these methodologies might themselves be applied to this emphasis on data as an approach.

[2.5] In the article, Cohen interviews Brett Bobley, the director of the National Endowment for the Humanities's Office of Digital Humanities. Bobley explains the "digital humanities umbrella" to Cohen as one that contains a "wide range of activities," but his examples (online preservation, digital mapping) support her definition of humanities being equal to data. This mirrors the emphasis that scholars find when they seek governmental funding at the ODH Web site, which prominently features the "Digging into Data Challenge" and the "Humanities High Performance Computing" grants. To be fair, the site also features start-up grants, whose broader criteria could embrace a project less dependent on technological tools. But when the NEH describes the office's raison d'être thus: "NEH's Office of Digital Humanities (ODH) takes a leadership role in helping the humanities embrace and use the technology created by the digital revolution" ([http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/divisions/DigitalHumanities/WhatWeDo.html](http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/divisions/DigitalHumanities/WhatWeDo.html)), it's difficult to see the place for Unsworth's call to "shift the emphasis away from... digitization" (note 3).

[2.6] In opposition to, and bewilderment about, this contracting depiction of digital humanities scholarship, writers and researchers offer a wide-ranging series of counterexamples, impassioned arguments, and occasional manifestos. In his postscript to a 2011 issue of *Culture Machine* titled "The Digital Humanities: Beyond Computing,"
Gary Hall asks: "Do the humanities really need to draw quite so heavily on computer science to develop a sense of their identity and role in an era of digital media technology? Along with a computational turn in the humanities, might we not also benefit from more of a humanities turn in our understanding of the computational and the digital?" (2011, 2). Hall posits a reciprocal relationship between the priorities and methodologies of computer science and humanities research here, and he goes on to imagine the ways in which a reconceptualization of digital humanities might allow each to productively identify the blind spots of the other. Composition scholar Alex Reid (2011) takes a less conciliatory position. He frames his commentary with a description of the kerfuffle over paper rejections from the 2011 Digital Humanities Conference—ironically themed "Big Tent Digital Humanities"—and argues for the developments in and of the field that seem to fall outside the parameters imagined by the conference organizers, most notably those that analyze the quotidian digital technologies that "transform human experience on a global scale." He rails against a definition of digital humanities that privileges the creation of tools to analyze reams of obscure erudition from the past. His critique centers primarily on parsing the consequences of an overemphasis on computation that, he argues, elides crucial attention to the study of massive ontological and epistemological shifts in human experience—traditionally, some foundational philosophical arenas for humanities inquiry—and he gestures at the necessity for research that explains, assesses, and represents the implications of these global changes. Reid's impassioned comparison details the losses of a digital humanities definition cut too finely, substituting anger and derision for anxiety over the potential for humanistic loss.

[2.7] Reid's concerns parallel those of media studies scholar Alexis Lothian (2011), who poses a number of questions that address the politics of exclusion in the development of the digital humanities. Citing the digital humanities' emphasis on coding, Lothian wonders (among other important concerns), "Why do only some activities count as properly digital or properly humanities?" As she identifies a series of aspects that have begun to shape the boundaries of the field, Lothian reminds readers that the threat of a computational bias in digital humanities is not only that of a limited set of subjects to study, but also a limited set of scholars to study them. If digital humanists, as she notes above, can only be considered such when they acquire and deploy a certain set of computer-based skills, then what people, and with them, what foci, does the field itself lose? In the summary of a digital humanities conference session on diversity, Lothian's post reminds her readers of the need to attend to difference and otherness in the construction of disciplines and methodologies, whereas rigidly defined requisite experiences, literacies, and skill sets have a tendency to unintentionally shape homogenous and self-perpetuating systems. Among these, Lothian cautions, are the checkered history, applications, and blind spots of the term *humanism* itself. Her metacognitive analysis recollects the ways that self-awareness
and critique are deeply embedded in much humanistic inquiry—a reminder of an important disciplinary contribution that Hall, Reid, Lothian, and others hope to retain in the definition of digital humanities.

[2.8] As an emerging field, then, digital humanities is constituted and renegotiated through hotly contested priorities, boundaries, and working members. What should the digital humanities study? How should it study? And who should count as a digital humanist? What is to be gained as these questions are answered definitively, and what could be lost? For many, there is a deep concern that the field will become, in Unsworth's term, "simple digitization," and in so doing elide or even forfeit its perceived charge to address the experiences of living in the digital age, existence vis-à-vis digital technologies, and deep reflection on their implications. Digital humanities, many argue, is in danger of losing the characteristic patterns of thought that are fundamental to the necessary analysis and critique of culture at large. These concerns echo the broader panics in the humanities at large: how will the cognitive approaches endemic to humanistic inquiry survive? Without them, what will become of our values and of our ability to think, analyze, critique, and assess as we move forward into a digital future? "The crisis of the humanities," often denoted in the singular, is actually articulated in an array of keys. Despite some significant differences in these accounts, however, the permutations of crisis point to a unified sense of potential loss and imagination of a future without recourse to the informed criticism, whether scholarly, social, or cultural, necessary for a fully functional society.

3. Remix and the humanities

[3.1] In Chuck Tryon's 2009 book *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media Convergence*, he declares that we've entered an age of digital cinema, one marked by the complicated and intersecting actions and reactions tied to making, consuming, and critiquing film (4). As opposed to a film culture driven by studios and critics—the model of a previous age—Tryon charts the ways that participatory culture shifts the experience of film for filmmakers and audiences, professionals and amateurs alike. In his analysis of this shift from analog to digital, and the cognitive and cultural changes that accompany it, Tryon notes that remix video registers paradigmatic elements of the practices and protocols of the new era. Here, he describes the complexity of tracking the implications of this single thread of digital cinematic participation:

[3.2] This chapter seeks to trace out the practices of intertextuality deployed in video remixes and delineate the ways in which these textual strategies can simultaneously be used to "talk back" critically to Hollywood marketing discourse while also embracing many of the remixed films and television shows. In addition, the trailers, even without the additions of
original content, can become direct expressions of a semiotic solidarity with others who share similar cultural tastes and values. At the same time, these seemingly unruly texts also become part of a larger marketing chain, in which audiences become involved in the very processes of production for the studios themselves. (154)

[3.3] Tryon's careful analysis of the protocols and tendencies of remix, mashup, and response videos charts important skills and interactions that inhere within the digital cinema's networks and audiences: critique of, and simultaneous appreciation for, mainstream texts; the production and maintenance of symbolic and aesthetic solidarity with others; and the management of a seemingly inevitable complicity with studio priorities. As such, it provides an overview of the ways that remix culture models a profound engagement with contemporary media. Digital technologies for viewing, commenting, editing, and disseminating function as necessary tools, while the users' deep knowledge of the social protocols that accompany each condition their success. To consume, critique, discuss, produce, circulate, subvert, or comply with corporate control—each of these, and sometimes all at once, comprise remix video's contribution to the practice of living with and through the digital. In its history of practice, remix culture interrogates the transformation of human experience through a sophisticated approach to the texts that project our cultural desires, assumptions, and expectations. Access to digital technologies—whether via LiveJournal, iMovie, or YouTube—allows fans and amateurs to express and share their analysis of, and investment in, canonical texts. In other words, if Tryon's analysis holds true, then remix video functions as a particularly popular and powerful engagement with cognitive and cultural work that parallels the formative humanities/digital humanities agenda.

[3.4] Tryon is one of many scholars who argue that remix video methodologies exemplify a sophisticated approach to the cultural/social/personal impacts of digital technologies. In a 2009 Flow TV article, Louisa Stein outlines the cognitive processes brought to bear in fan vids, noting the array of complex film editing techniques vidders use, both to remind viewers of the original contexts of footage and simultaneously to shift those contexts. They craft new relationships and meanings among video and audio clips with reference to the archive of affects of various communities of viewers. The most skillful of remix artists, then, create a delicate equilibrium between the poles of "constraint and creativity" (Stein 2009).

[3.5] Stein's article condenses the results of decades of study on the practices of fan video. Even the most pedestrian remix depends on a host of composition skills. First and foremost, remix depends on an extensive knowledge of canonical texts. Francesca Coppa (2009) describes vidders' relationship to their source texts as obsessive, a comprehensive practice of viewing and making meaning so as to review and remake
meaning in their works. Cornel Sandvoss (2007) describes this as the constitutive relationship for fans, noting that fans (and literary critics!) exist "in a state of constant audienceship in which we consume mediated and fragmented texts and reconstitute textual boundaries in the act of reading in an intertextual field" (31). Fan video, then, is grounded in a practice of reading and rereading in the service of image juxtaposition that maintains some trace of the original while it simultaneously suggests new themes and subtexts (Jenkins 1992). At the same time, with her mention of "shot alignments," Stein implicitly gestures at vidders', and by extension remixers', knowledge of, and ability to replicate, the formal and genre elements of film that are appropriated and deployed to shift the meaning of the original text (Tryon 2009; Horwatt 2009; Middleton 2010). In short, those who remix are, in many ways, the quintessential readers of the digital age: focused and willing to repeatedly return to their source material while simultaneously attending to the affective and structural aspects of the multiple media—video, audio, text—that they engage and reference.

[3.6] More central to Stein's discussion and the history of vidder practices, however, are the ways that vidders attend to the conventions, expectations, and desires of their communities. As Karen Hellekson (2009) writes in her description of fandom's gift culture, "To engage is to click, read, comment, write, make up a song and sing it; to hotlink, to create a video, to be invited to move on, to come over here or go over there—to become part of a larger metatext, the off-putting jargon and the unspoken rules meaning that only this group of that people can negotiate the terrain" (114). The social protocols that govern participation in communities where fan vids are exchanged can, as Hellekson points out, appear byzantine to outsiders. Yet while it may represent the most extreme example, fan vid cultures typify the specificity of responsibilities, knowledge, and practices that mark the circulation of remix video across a variety of audiences. Participation in these communities requires careful attention to the expectations of one's peers, and to the ability to imagine new retorts and audiences for the remix. As an aspect of digital cinema, then, remix video is not only a text produced by an author literate in a number of cognitive competencies. It is also a text that acquires meanings through its manifold social systems of circulation, and its cultures and subcultures, composed of knowledgeable community members who know what do with it, and how to respond in a myriad of ways that add new layers of context to the video.

[3.7] One of the most pervasive thematics both embedded in remix video and accumulated throughout its circulation is the state of its own critical pleasures vis-à-vis the authority of the medium from which its source material springs. In Cultural Borrowings: Appropriation, Reworking, Transformation, Eli Horwatt (2009) observes that early political remix video "demonstrates a deep suspicion of media itself—specifically the authoritative voice of journalism and the persuasive techniques of
advertising" (80). To illustrate his point, he cites as an example Jonathan McIntosh's use of a Kodak commercial to draw attention to the contrast between corporate advertisements and Iraq war coverage. In a different key, Kristina Busse's (2008) reading of Lim's fan vid "Us" describes the vidder's representations of fandom's own engagement with its texts, the intervention of copyright claims, and a critique of the outsider academics who stare at fans. Some of the most well-circulated remixes and vids, then, undertake the responsibility of metacognition. Implicitly or explicitly, complex remixes reflect on and assess the habits, beliefs, and values of communities of practice, and at the same time encode questions/critiques of the media that engender the form itself. If, in its most accomplished works, remix manages to encode both self-reflection and media critique, then it echoes Lothian's desire for disciplinary self-assessment as the digital humanities go forward. Who gets to remix? What kinds of remixes count? At the same time, this metacognitive dyad asymptotically approaches a form of intellectual engagement suggested by cultural studies scholar Douglas Kellner in 2002. In an attempt to return the critical impetus of Frankfurt School politics to cultural studies, Kellner constructs a three-part analytic that requires attention to the production and political economy of the text, close textual analysis, and audience reception (19). Grounded in textual analysis, remix video often exercises its potential to address the production exigencies of its texts (present even in the ubiquitous disclaimer to ownership and copyright) as well as direct appeals to its audience. In short, the form and community protocols of remix engender a model of intellectual engagement as critique, even as the works circulate as pleasurable and entertaining artifacts.

The cognitive and cultural practices marked above—reading, rereading, analyzing, critiquing, recontextualizing, reflecting—are not, obviously, deployed with reference to a classical canon of intellectual history. At the same time, we do have evidence of a culture founded on a form of digital reading; a consistent attention to aesthetic organization and social values; and critical faculties exercised in the production and circulation, and meta-analysis of, remix practices and sources. As modes of thinking about texts, remix practices quite clearly represent competencies endemic to humanities discourse, and ubiquitous in the parlance of its crisis and loss. Moreover, scholarly work on vids and remix genres shows the ways in which the most sophisticated compositions may already be developing forms of reflexive, self-conscious engagement that resemble ideational structures of critical and intellectual work.

4. Conclusion

In Alan Liu's 2011 MLA conference paper, he describes the formation and mission of an advocacy group, 4Humanities, inspired by the draconian budget cuts to
higher education in the United Kingdom. Like Fish (2010) and Feal (2010), Liu (2011) approaches the crisis in the humanities by way of the significant economic threat to its institutional future; likewise, he focuses on the now-endangered indispensable content: a flexible and continued discussion of the human, and by extension the humane. In the face of the high stakes of humanities decline, Liu notes that 4Humanities singles out the digital humanities, attributing to the field "special potential and responsibility to assist humanities advocacy." Arguing that the field is uniquely qualified to reposition the significance of humanistic values with reference to contemporary technologies, he goes on to suggest that in order for the digital humanities to assume the responsibility he describes, it must find a way to activate its legacy of cultural criticism and devise effective means of assisting humanities to communicate in "the new arena of networked and social public knowledge"—a milieu, he notes, in which the academic monograph critical to traditional humanities conversation is both alien and ineffective. Liu's 4Humanities call to arms suggests a classic coalitional model wherein two aligned bodies seek to promote and defend shared territory, bringing to bear their respective strengths and targeting their respective audiences. The "potential and responsibility" Liu assigns to the digital humanities, then, is one that addresses many of the material and abstract elements of anxiety and loss in the crisis in the humanities, but one that also insists on a manifestation of digital culture that is in alignment with, not in opposition to, core humanities values and priorities.

[4.2] Liu (2011) makes two important moves: first, he takes seriously much of the rhetoric of crisis and loss; and second, he proposes one (implicitly, among many) means of counteracting that crisis. His approach pragmatically acknowledges the cachet and relevance of digital humanities, but insists it cannot hope to intervene on behalf of threatened humanities values and programs without drawing on the key processes and priorities (e.g., cultural criticism) that have thus far been absent from its own development. The suggestion, it seems, is the possibility of two fields reciprocally acknowledging inheritance and relevance to advocate for a shared concern. This possibility—a certain manifestation of coalition and reciprocity—is one I'd like to suggest could bridge the gap between the discourses of crisis in the humanities and remix video.

[4.3] To be trained both in the humanities and the consumption and production of remix video is to occupy a position that is, as described above, an exercise in balancing "constraint and creativity." Humanities and remix are not immediately obvious bedfellows; to care deeply about the longevity and evolution of one does not necessitate the same investment in the other. Both legitimate and paranoiac visions of the humanities in crisis share a commitment to a set of cognitive practices and approaches that subtend crucial cultural formations, habits, and values that both
contend are fundamental to the way we understand ourselves, our actions, and our possible futures. The juxtaposition of the discourses of crisis in the humanities with that of remix and fan video is not to suggest that vernacular remix is the bright and shining answer to the anxiety of loss surrounding humanities inquiry or its attendant echo of loss in the digital humanities—remix culture will not save *The Iliad*. Nor am I suggesting that humanities/digital humanities scholars pillage remix video for new research forms or content, or that remix practitioners and/or vidders should claim academic status, even assuming that they'd want to; significant material differences separate humanities scholars from remix video practitioners, academic enclaves (yes, and even acafans!) from vider fandoms. In short, it's exceedingly simple to identify the constraints that catalog all of the very real and abiding differences between work in the humanities and remix. It may well be worth the creative effort, however, to recognize a common set of practices, skills, and values that underpin a spectrum of enthusiastic, sophisticated efforts in these two fields and begin to imagine activities and texts that provide shared opportunities to promote and engage potential participants in the modes of thinking that bring us pleasure and frame the ideas and processes that matter to us, as a collective investment in the creation of an amenable cultural future.

5. Notes

1. Throughout, I use *remix video* as a broad umbrella category under which a variety of genres, practices, and participants fall. This is not to ignore the fundamental and material differences between communities as varied as YouTube audiences for trailer remixes or feminist vidder collectives; there are of course significant questions concerning gender, legitimacy, and power that need to be taken into account. For the purpose of highlighting the commonalities with humanities discourse, however, I hope to identify skills and priorities that are, at the very least, implicitly shared in the act of remixing video for an audience.

2. N. Katherine Hayles recently provided a thoughtful and complex reevaluation of this data in the service of the development of new methodologies of analytical reading in "How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine" (2010).

3. While some scholars seek to complicate this divide—see, for example, David Berry's "The Computational Turn: Thinking about the Digital Humanities" (2011)—a significant portion of the informal, formal, and popular discourse remains attentive to the divide and its perceived consequences.

6. Works cited


Vidding and the perversity of critical pleasure: Sex, violence, and voyeurism in "Closer" and "On the Prowl"

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[0.1] Abstract—Analysis of two fan vids ("Closer" by Killa and T. Jonesy, and "On the Prowl" by Sisabet and Sweetestdrain) in the context of theories of vidding reveals that vids have a unique ability to combine analytic detachment and pleasurable investment. I analyze these two vids through Roland Barthes's provocative suggestion that reading criticism demands from the reader a perverse voyeurism of the critic's pleasure in the text to argue that they are examples of the ways in which many vids function as pleasurable criticism that invites viewers of such vids to enter voyeuristically into that pleasure. Both vids use tropes of sexual violence to characterize not only the mass media they respond to, but also the nature of fandom and of transformative fan readings. "On the Prowl" criticizes and celebrates the fan through constructing different audiences for a series of self-portraits; "Closer" does the same thing by constructing Spock as a portrait of the fan. The narratives of sadism and rape constructed by the vids both disturb and seduce the viewer, thus forming perverse texts that that problematize pleasure while simultaneously reinscribing it.

[0.2] Keywords—Fan vid; Roland Barthes


1. Introduction

[1.1] "Where is our line?" the makers of "On the Prowl" ask viewers in their vid summary. The pronoun our is ambiguous, inviting the viewer both to analyze the two vidders from a critical distance and to collapse that distance by turning the question on herself. The vid's destabilization and shifting of the lines between sex and violence, voyeurism and sadism, perversity and pathology work also to foreground the unstable lines in fandom between reading and writing, consumption and production, the deconstruction and reinscription of pleasure. This instability of textual pleasure is the central subject of Roland Barthes's The Pleasure of the Text, in which he asks, "How can we take pleasure in a reported pleasure...How can we read criticism?" (1975, 17). Barthes could not have known that one answer to his question arose the same year
that he asked it, in Kandy Fong's first *Star Trek* slide show. Five years later, she made "Both Sides Now" (Fanlore 2011), a work that indicates in its very title the two sides of fannish viewing that many fan vids inscribe: the critical analysis of pleasure in a fan text and the simultaneous reinscription of that pleasure. Indeed, Barthes's own answer to his question describes perfectly the relationship between the vidding fan and the fan of vids, the latter of whom takes the position of the "I" in his scheme:

[1.2] Only one way: since I am here a second-degree reader, I must shift my position: instead of agreeing to be the confidant of this critical pleasure—a sure way to miss it—I can make myself its voyeur: I observe clandestinely the pleasure of others, I enter perversion; the commentary then becomes in my eyes a text, a fiction, a fissured envelope. The writer's perversity (his pleasure in writing is *without function*), the doubled, the trebled, the infinite perversity of the critic and of his reader. (1975, 17)

[1.3] The viewer of fan vids (the reader) makes herself the voyeur of the critical pleasure experienced by the vidder (the critic). She or he enters into the vidder's pleasure, forming what Barthes characterizes as a "trebled" perversity (*perversity* in this context defined both as the erotic pleasure taken in anything other than potentially procreative heterosexual intercourse, and therefore, metaphorically, as pleasure "*without function*"): the perversity of the fan text (the source), the perversity of the fan work (the vid), and the perversity of the fan (the viewer of source and vid) (note 1).

[1.4] *The Pleasure of the Text* is very much about writing, about the language of written texts. To apply its ideas to fan vids rather than fan fiction, I turn to the deliberate ambiguity of Barthes's diction in passages such as the following: "What pleasure wants is the site of a loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation, the *dissolve* which seizes the subject in the midst of bliss" (1975, 7). Barthes is writing here about the literary text, but the words *cut* and *dissolve* do suggest the filmic. Although Armine Mortimer argues that "dissolve...has a Lacanian meaning, not a cinematic one," she nevertheless admits that in Barthes, "everything is significant, including ambiguities" (1989, 29). Chad Bennett seizes upon the ambiguity in this passage to argue that Barthes provides "a distinctly cinematic vocabulary for the erotically charged moment" (2010, 30) in his analysis of the representation of fandom (specifically queer fandom) in *Velvet Goldmine* (1998). But to read Barthes as providing a cinematic vocabulary in this way is to read Barthes against himself since Barthes distrusted the cinematic, "arguing that the cinematic signifier is by nature always 'smooth,' whatever the rhetoric of shot and montage, and that the acute joys of fragmentation are impossible because the viewer is obliged to receive and read a continuum of images" (Williams 1998, 47). Indeed, Barthes claims in "The Third Meaning" that the film still is more
truly filmic than the film from which it comes because its "obtuse meaning" (1970, 56) "disturbs" critical metalanguage (61). But vids employ neither the continuum nor the still, but, in a linguistic paradox that would surely have delighted Barthes, the *moving still*, the continuous fragment, and even while they form a critical metalanguage, they do so through an excess of pleasure, thus reinscribing pleasure ("the acute joys of fragmentation") into the critique of pleasure, and disturbing that critique.

[1.5] In order to avoid becoming lost among the proliferating pleasures of *The Pleasure of the Text*, I do not attempt to distinguish in Barthesian terms between vids of pleasure and vids of bliss (*jouissance*), although I think such a distinction could be made and the results of such an attempt would be fascinating. I use the words *text* and *work* in their fandom meanings (*text* is the mass-media source; *work* is the fan fiction or fan vid that responds to the source) and not their Barthesian meanings.

[1.6] My argument that Barthes's concept of reading as critical voyeurism provides an exciting and pleasurable way to theorize the reading of fan vids forms part of what Kristina Busse calls "one of the most important shifts in fan studies," the movement away from a quasi-ethnographic focus on fan communities to close readings of the texts those communities produce: "Recent scholarship on media fandom in particular has attempted to take into account the ever-growing diversity of fans and fan works, often focusing on a particular fandom or even a single fan work. In fact, legitimizing fan works as objects of study in their own right rather than merely products of an interesting subculture, may be one of the most important shifts in fan studies" (2009, 105).

[1.7] In this essay I analyze not fandom, but the ways in which two fan works characterize fandom, and the type of investment they invite viewers to make in both the fan text and the fan work. Theorists of vidding have repeatedly made the point that vids blend criticism and pleasure. Francesca Coppa's claim that "a vid is a visual essay that stages an argument" (2008, ¶1.1) points to the critical function of transformative fandom (note 2). Cathy Cupitt's statement that "a songvid can be a feminist discourse in addition to an ode to male beauty, or an expression of joy as well as a snapshot of a subculture's politics; that a story can be critique, erotica, and/or history; and that one person can simultaneously be an author, academic, filmmaker, and fan" (2008, ¶3.11) suggests that pleasure is inseparable from that critical function. Tisha Turk argues that while many vids are "literary/cultural critiques," a vid like Luminosity's "Vogue" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNRjzUB7Afo) also invites the viewer to "adopt the female gaze, to re-imagine the bodies before her as objects displayed for her pleasure, to claim the privilege of looking" (Turk 2010, 101). Kristina Busse (2010) pays tribute to vids as a "merging of love and inquiry, affect and analysis, celebration and criticism." In my close reading of the two vids through the
figure of Barthes's perverse "second-degree reader," the voyeur, I focus on how this merging is achieved.

[1.8] "Closer" and "On the Prowl" both brilliantly demonstrate how vids simultaneously critique cultural perversity, reinscribe that perversity, and invite the viewer to enjoy the pleasure of both the critique and the reinscription in the way suggested by Barthes. "Closer" by T. Jonesy and Killa is a Star Trek vid that was premiered at a Star Trek convention, Shore Leave, in 2004 (http://fanlore.org/wiki/Closer_%28Star_Trek_vid%29). It was posted to YouTube without the vidders' consent by eetstomoch on August 1, 2006, and alexanderadb on September 8, 2006. The vid's title is taken from the song that forms its soundtrack, "Closer" by Nine Inch Nails (1994). "On the Prowl" by Sisabet and Sweetestdrain is a multifandom vid premiered in August 2010 at VividCon (an annual vidding convention held in Chicago since 2002). Sisabet posted it to both LiveJournal and YouTube on August 10, 2010. Sweetestdrain posted an entry on "The Making of 'On the Prowl'" to LiveJournal on August 12, listing the 63 sources used in the vid. The 2003 song that gives the vid its title is by the underground artist Lydia Lunch. I analyze these two vids in particular because although both construct the viewer as a Barthesian perverse voyeur, "Closer" does so primarily when ripped from its particular fannish context, while "On the Prowl" does so primarily when embedded within its particular fannish context. As a result, "Closer" implies what "On the Prowl" foregrounds and makes explicit: While "Closer" hints at a perverse and voyeuristic side to fandom, "On the Prowl" screams about it.

2. "Closer"

Vid 1. "Closer."
The portrait "Closer" paints of fandom anticipates in many ways the argument of "On the Prowl," but unlike the later vid, it is a portrait more clearly seen when the vid is viewed outside its original fannish context. "Closer" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PwpcUawjK0&feature=fvsr) is based on an episode from the original series of Star Trek, "Amok Time" that tells the story of pon farr, the Vulcan mating imperative. In the episode, Spock must return to his home planet in time for this ritual or he will die. The vid begins with the question "what if they hadn't made it to Vulcan in time?" and knowledge of the episode is essential to understanding the narrative the vid constructs as the answer to the question. That answer, that Spock would rape Kirk, takes place in a sequence lasting from 2:25 to 3:00. Only knowledge that Spock is suffering from pon farr allows the viewer to identify both men as victims of a lack of control. The vid was made for those with such knowledge: It was first shown at a Star Trek convention.

But it was not made for all fans of Star Trek: "Closer" is a slash vid. Slash, the romantic or sexual pairing of two same-sex characters who are not canonically a couple, began with Kirk/Spock stories; much K/S slash uses pon farr both for plot and characterization. Moreover, the vidders' intent in "Closer" was to react to a trend in K/S that used pon farr to cause Spock to become not Kirk's lover but his rapist, and then go on to make Kirk respond by easily forgiving Spock and even romanticizing the rape (T. Jonesy, pers. comm.). Knowledge of this context allows the viewer to read the last sequence of "Closer" as the argument of the vid: From 3:01 to 3:24, Spock grimaces with pain and remorse and leaves the Enterprise, while Kirk stumbles about the ship wounded, traumatized, and alone. Neither the characters nor their relationship recover from the rape. Ironically, "Closer," which creates meaning by ripping images out of context, loses this meaning when ripped out of its own context and placed on YouTube without the consent of its makers. The vid creates pleasure rather than distress at the narrative; that is, it becomes pleasure without the ethical and political function of challenging the romanticizing of rape—in Barthesian terms, it allows for the infinite perversity of the viewer.

In "Closer," the vidders take on the avatar of Spock in order to enact violence upon the fictional body of Kirk. The fan is visually one step removed from the violence, but the lyrics of the song invite her to enter the perversity of Spock. For while those lyrics work for Spock's relationship to Kirk, they also serve as a commentary on the fan's relationship with the fan text. (Indeed, "Closer" vids can be found now in almost every fandom.) The first four lines of the song speak to the erotic relationship between fan and text: The singer desires to "violate," "desecrate," "penetrate," and "complicate," all of which the vidders do to the footage. What Spock wants to do to Kirk, the vid wants to do to Star Trek. Slash vids in particular desire to "violate" and "desecrate" the cultural norms of heterosexual masculinity constructed in fan texts by
manipulating images of the male actors into montages of desire. But this desire transcends slash and gender; it stems from the critical impulse to "penetrate" the subtext of canon and "complicate" the superficial text.

[2.4] "Closer" tells a story of the fannish experience of taking control of the text while simultaneously feeling in thrall to that text. In many pon farr rape stories, Spock is characterized as not morally guilty of rape because he does not consent to it with his conscious self; he is out of control and as helpless as Kirk in avoiding the rape. The entry on rapefic at Fanlore contextualizes this trend, or trope: "Many of the first K/S stories used pon farr to begin their relationship, often leading to a variant of rapefic where one partner doesn't want to hurt the other, but is driven to by his own alien metabolism." Fans often joke about helplessness in the face of overwhelming desire to do creative violence to the fan text (violence of course is metaphorical; texts are not persons and cannot be hurt or damaged), and indeed, vidders use the construction vid farr to refer to creative obsession. Spock stands in for the fan who forces canonical characters to submit to her desires and to the vidder who rips, cuts, and slashes footage out of its context to create a new text of pleasure for the viewer to enter into.

[2.5] The technical brilliance of "Closer" coupled with the dance beat of the song seduces the viewer into pleasure; the aesthetic overwhelms the ethic, transforming Spock's desire from violence to eros. Barthes's famous passage on intermittence in textual pleasure works even better for the visual pleasure of "Closer":

[2.6] Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes? In perversion (which is the realm of textual pleasure) there are no "erogenous zones" (a foolish expression, besides); it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve): it is this flash which itself seduces; or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance. (1975, 10)

[2.7] "Closer" creates its eros through gaping and intermittence, through the flashing of images. It begins with some almost hidden images of the pon farr ritual on Vulcan, at 0.06, 0.07, and 0.09. These images flash by so quickly that the casual viewer of the vid is likely to miss them on first viewing. However, the fetishist, the lover of detail, sees them in the flashes. Here is the canonical story of the episode, flashing out in tiny glimpses between two edges of the credits for the vid, sepia-toned writing on black background. This effect of intermittence never ceases: The quick cutting combined with the flashes of light and dark, the vertical lines, the blurring of focus, and the encroaching darkness at the edges of some shots, all to the dance beat of the song, create a Barthesian erotic. And the seductive flash is literalized and foregrounded in
the three flashes of pornography at 0:49, 1:28, and 2:18–20. Here both the flash and what it contains are sexual; form embodies content. "Closer" also turns violence erotic by editing its rape sequence to music without sung lyrics (2:30–3:01). Not all viewers of the vid will react to this sequence identically, but it seems likely the dance beat gives pleasure to many bodies in chairs in front of computer terminals watching the rape play out, even those bodies belonging to viewers who position themselves as ethically and politically opposed to sexual violence. As Barthes puts it, "the pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas—for my body does not have the same ideas I do" (1975, 17).

[2.8] Moreover, this sequence begins with Spock breaking his bounds and then, tellingly, pushing Nurse Chapel aside as he sets off in search of Kirk (2:28–2:30). Chapel is played by Majel Barrett, who, in the pilot episode of Star Trek, had played the role of Number One, only to be replaced by Leonard Nimoy as Spock. Francesca Coppa (2008) argues that vidders are drawn to Spock partly as a reaction to this textual history:

[2.9] Mr. Spock is a ghost, the shadow of a missing woman. This visual substitution of the alien man for the rational woman is at the heart of much of the art produced in response to Star Trek, though it is among the least-discussed aspects of the show. Mr. Spock has been read in many ways...but the original Spock shape in the Star Trek canon is female. Spock is a kind of visual marker, a scar indicating a series of conflicts meaningful to the scientifically minded, technologically oriented women likely to become vidders, especially in the early years of vidding. (¶2.15)

[2.10] Majel Barrett was relegated to the two minor roles of nurse and the voice of the ship's computer, and Coppa's reading of these two roles invites a Barthesian analysis of the moment in "Closer" when Spock pushes Chapel out of the way:

[2.11] In these two guises—Nurse Chapel and the Enterprise computer—the displaced character of Number One serves as the model for two archetypical fan positions: the woman who embodies visible desire, and the disembodied but all-controlling voice. The former is often presented as a negative fan stereotype: the groupie, the stalker, the shrieking Beatlemaniac, the "Mary Sue" who dreams herself into the story, the girl with the embarrassing public crush on a movie star. The latter, I would argue, is the voice of the vider: the woman behind the camera, slide projector, VCR, or computer, the technological woman who controls the machine. The disembodied voice is also the voice of the slash writer (who writes about bodies not her own) or the omniscient and controlling fan artist who takes control of the protagonists' images and bends them to her will.
But most fan works seek to unite the analytical mind and the desiring body in order to create a total female subjectivity. (¶2.19)

[2.12] Spock rejects Barrett as fan (Nurse Chapel) in the rape sequence, and of course the only voice heard in the vid is the male one of Trent Reznor. While the vidders may have sought pleasure with function—that is, to make an argument attacking the romanticization of rape in fandom—the vid, ripped from its context, seduces the viewer into pleasure without function, into perversity, into reinscribing the same pleasure in sexual violence that it critiques: The vidders embody themselves as Spock, not Chapel. In Coppa's words, the vid "unite[s] the analytical mind and the desiring body" (as does the song in the juxtaposition of "You get me closer to God" with "I wanna fuck you like an animal") but this union is achieved by the body of the analytical Spock pushing aside the woman who wants to stop the violence, and (in the rape sequence that follows) the pleasurable music pushing away the language of criticism. The male textual pleasure in sexual violence overcomes the female critical resistance to it. The viewer of the vid, then, becomes voyeur, entering the perversion of culture.

[2.13] Neither fandom in general nor vidding in particular can be reduced to Barthesian practices of pleasure for pleasure's sake, because fandom embodies and embraces conflicting ways of experiencing mass media culture. For example, Transformative Works and Cultures' forthcoming issue on "Transformative Works and Fan Activism" includes in its call for papers a request for "discussions of how fiction and fantasy can captivate us on an emotional level, providing a narrative structure that can motivate us to seek change in the real world." But "Closer" demonstrates how the ripping of images from their context, whether that context is the original source or the original fannish community, may result in perversity, whether the sexual perversity of slash (pleasure without procreation) or the ethical/political perversity of pleasure in sexual violence (pleasure without "seek[ing] change in the real world").

3. "On the Prowl"
[3.1] "On the Prowl" makes explicit what "Closer" leaves implicit: it is a self-portrait of fandom in general and the vidders in particular, and it deliberately reinscribes the cultural pleasure in sexual violence that it exposes. As noted above, "On the Prowl" can be found on the Web in two different contexts: Sisabet's LiveJournal (http://sisabet.livejournal.com/400014.html) and YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M392_kRIxjA). The YouTube version has no description available and the variant title, "prowlweb1," is cryptic, leaving viewers without context or guidance in understanding what they are seeing. Sisabet's journal, by contrast, introduces the vid with the words "New Vid! VVC Challenge: Self Portrait." Clearly the LiveJournal audience is expected to know that VVC stands for VividCon and that the 2010 VividCon included a self-portrait challenge; that is, this audience is constructed as a knowledgeable one. Only when the vid is viewed embedded in its fannish context, then, is the viewer invited to read what she sees as a self-portrait. The casual YouTube viewer may read the vid as a portrait of mass media rather than as a portrait of the fan.

[3.2] The first of the 161 comments in response to the vid on Sisabet's page (as of November 16, 2010), however, indicates a disagreement over the exact meaning of "self-portrait": "Yikes! I am very disturbed (and I mean that in all ways). Can't exactly say you're wrong" (Gianduja Kiss), to which Sisabet responds, "Hey, is it possible to be wrong in a self portrait?" Clearly Gianduja Kiss understands the term self-portrait as referring to fandom—on her own LiveJournal page (http://giandujakiss.livejournal.com/1094550.html), she says of the vid that it is "another look at fandom"—while Sisabet responds with a perhaps disingenuous implication that the self-portrait applies only to the two makers of the vid. This
disagreement highlights the complexity of the vid: Much of the meaning of "On the Prowl" lies in its construction of multiple selves being portrayed and the different perverse pleasures available to those selves.

[3.3] The first and smallest group of selves portrayed in this self-portrait are the two people who made the vid, Sisabet and Sweetestdrain. In her post on the making of the vid, Sweetestdrain insists upon the emotional and visceral reactions she and Sisabet had to the clips they used: "There isn't a single source used in the vid that doesn't come from a 'this really gets/got to me' place for either or both of us. It's a self-portrait for sure, and we found a surprising amount of overlap in the things that made us go '...yeah, that's going in the vid,' even if one of us wasn't previously familiar with the clips in question" (August 12, 2010).

[3.4] Of course, since this vid is a collaboration, the self-portrait is a selves-portrait, and as such is perhaps more open to multiple selves seeing their own reflection in it than a single-authored vid would be. Like the two vidders, many viewers may find "a surprising amount of overlap" between the vidders and themselves. Nevertheless, Sisabet responds to some of the feedback on the vid by restricting the selves being portrayed to two: When Wemblee compliments "On the Prowl" by commenting, "I'm not sure if I agree with your thesis—basically, we live in a patriarchy, and they're fictional dudes, so, when it comes to morality, I'm not bothered about 'the line'—but I think this is fantastically done," Sisabet responds,

[3.5] Thank you so much! As far as agreeing with our thesis—I don't know if that is even what we are attempting to do. I mean, I am FASCINATED by all the differing readings the vid is getting and kinda love how everyone brings their own interpretation but at the end of the day it is a self portrait. We went in search of our line. What that line is and what it means is kinda open to interpretation I am sure.

[3.6] Whereas many viewers experience the vid as a mirror of themselves, Sisabet argues that it is a mirror of the vidders only, and primarily a window for other viewers into the fannish experience of herself and Sweetestdrain.

[3.7] Yet Sisabet later repudiates the intentional fallacy of "I suspect authorial intent does not matter, at least not in the model I use," thus accepting her audience's widening of the concept of self-portrait to include more than two selves. I argue that the second smallest group of viewers for whom "On the Prowl" is a self-portrait consists of vidders, and read this way, "On the Prowl" paints the portrait of the vidder as sadist. If Lydia Lunch stands in for the vidder in particular, and not just the fan in general, the lyrics of the song point to the vidding practice of cutting scenes of male suffering out of context to erotic effect. (For example, scores of Harry Potter vids take
the scene of Harry suffering a nightmare at the beginning of *Goblet of Fire* [2005] and place it in a context that suggests he is experiencing an orgasm from masturbation or fellatio; many of the same vids do likewise with the scene of Draco writhing theatrically in pain from Buckbeak's attack in *Prisoner of Azkaban* [2004].) "On the Prowl" takes this vidding trope and twists it so that the men's expressions of pain remain as pain, so that the characters' suffering is not transformed into the characters' enjoyment, but allows instead for the viewer's enjoyment. In so doing, it makes the point that most vids that decontextualize male pain do so in order to celebrate and enjoy it, that most vids cut male bodies for pleasure.

[3.8] The vidder as sadist complements Francesca Coppa's figure of the vidder as fetishist: "Vidding, as an art form made through editing, also complicates the familiar symbolic characterization of women sewing and men cutting. Vidding women cut, slicing visual texts into pieces before putting them together again, fetishizing not only body parts and visual tropes, but the frame, the filmic moment, that they pull out of otherwise coherent wholes" (2009, 107). The fetishist is one of four types of readers of pleasure that Barthes proposes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, the others being the obsessive, the paranoiac, and the hysteric. While this typology could provide a fascinating point of entry into mapping out the different pleasures of fandom, Barthes's characterization of the fetishist as the reader who "would be matched with the divided-up text, the singling out of quotations, formulae, turns of phrase, with the pleasure of the word" (1975, 63) lines up perfectly if "word" is replaced by "image" with Coppa's vidder. "On the Prowl," however, suggests that vidders cut not only visual texts but the bodies inside those texts, that they divide not only texts but the men in those texts, that they are not just fetishists, but sadists.

[3.9] The third group of viewers for whom "On the Prowl" is a self-portrait constitutes the largest knowledgeable group of readers for the vid: fandom. The juxtaposition of lyrics and images challenge any fan to accept or reject the vid's characterization of what she does as a viewer and reader of source texts and what fandom as a whole does to canon. For example, the first line of the song, "I was thinking about picking up some young boys," characterizes fandom as privileging the female subject's gaze at the male object, an assertion most certainly open to debate. Less controversially, the first lyric after the repeated "on the prowl" is "and then I wanted more." The very existence of fandom is predicated on this desire, although the lyric here contains a fascinating ambiguity; Sheenagh Pugh quotes an unnamed fan fiction writer as theorizing that "people wrote fanfic because they wanted either 'more of' their source material or 'more from' it" (2005, 19). This distinction between "more of" and "more from" is blurred in "On the Prowl," where a literal reading of the escalating images suggests the fan watches television and film because she wants more of the suffering that source texts give her, but a metaphorical reading implies that the reason she
reads or writes fan fiction, or makes or views fan vids, is that she wants more from—she wants something the text did not give her.

[3.10] "And then I wanted more" is matched in "On the Prowl" with the images that escalate from the relatively benign removal of Hercules's shirt, leaving him bare chested (0:28–0:29), to men being struck by lightning, men fighting each other with fists, men stripping off their clothes and ripping off their skin, and a branding, culminating in a final sequence of extreme torture scenes (3:07–3:22). The vid invites us to read these images simultaneously literally and figuratively: Both fan texts and fan works abound with scenes of literal violence where men are stripped, beaten up, wounded, and tortured; but fan works also metaphorically do this to characters whether or not they are physically harmed. The removal of clothing in the vid points to the fan's desire to see the real, "naked" character; the lightning that then strikes the naked bodies could symbolize the attempt of the transformative fan to "illuminate" the character's obscurities and darkness; the breaking of skin could figure the desire of the fan to get under the character's skin; the brand on the skin is the mark she leaves there, maybe changing that character for other fans watching or reading him in canon. The ending of the third verse of the song makes the commentary on transformative fandom even clearer. The singer declares that in her encounter with the "young boy," she "twist[s] the edge just enough to almost / Hurt, to almost hurt," and her motivation for doing so is essentially analytic: "Just testing...oh... / See what he's made of." The images that accompany these lines are of torture and violence until the line "See what he's made of," where the vid gives the viewer four close-ups of a tear falling from a male eye (2:33–35). The popularity of angst as a genre in fan works stems partly from its dual function in constructing both an emotionally affecting story and an analytical piece of literary criticism: Putting a character through pain and suffering is one way to examine exactly what he is made of in terms of emotion as well as of blood and guts; it reveals the emotional and vulnerable dimension to that character that canon insists on hiding or denying. In their analytical function, fan works (to paraphrase Wordsworth) torture to dissect (note 3).

[3.11] "On the Prowl" also confronts the prominence of the hurt/comfort (or h/c) genre in mass media fandom's transformative works. This genre involves one character being hurt and another character comforting her or (far more often) him. A fan watching "On the Prowl" might well expect all the hurt to be followed by comfort at perhaps the halfway point but is confronted with its persistent absence, as several comments in response to the vid point out:

[3.12] It definitely resonates with the slightly disturbing parts of my fandom preferences too. (I like fictional torture and hurt without comfort...). (Ratcreature)
OMG. This is absolutely amazing! Somehow seeing it all visual is so much more unsettling than reading hours of h/c (or just hurt!). (Cathexys)

I felt this was hurt without comfort, but not necessary without care or love—the connotation for me being that we love to hurt the characters we love. (Kat_lair)

I am not so much an h/c fan in fandom, except when the emphasis is on the "c," because if I love a character I generally feel that they're getting enough hurt in canon. As in many of these clips. Which doesn't mean I turn away from the screen, and in a way I feel I'm right there with Marion at the end, because that's kind of why I want the comfort fix from fandom—because it doesn't often come in canon. (Innocentsmith)

For the full emotional payoff I desire I need great big dollops of C with my H, so as much as this is a turn on, it leaves me with this kind of empty ache that I have to imagine away with fantasies of all the pretty tortured men being tenderly cared for. (Mswyrr)

Anne Kustritz, in her work on BDSM (bondage, discipline/dominance, submission/sadism, masochism) narratives in fan fiction, argues that "even in its most brief, sexually oriented forms, fan fiction BDSM occurs between characters individuated by richly detailed psychological and interpersonal backstories and who exist within a particular cultural and historical context, not between blank social types in a privileged space outside law and society" (2008, ¶2.7). This contextual richness may be true of fiction, and of single-source vids, or even many multifandom vids, but the cramming of 63 sources into the 3 minutes and 38 seconds of "On the Prowl" violently rips context away from image, and the aurally present but visually absent torturer (the fan as Lydia Lunch) does occupy a truly privileged space outside the frame. Until the final clip in which she appears as Marian, we never see her face; unlike the characters in Kustritz's characterization of BDSM fan fiction, she is perverse in that she does not direct her pleasures to any kind of social relationship, to any cultural or historical end, to any function. Moreover, her visual absence for most of the vid allows her to occupy simultaneously the position of two readers: the vidder as sadistic viewer of fan texts, and the vid watcher as voyeur of the vidder's sadistic pleasure.

However, as Innocentsmith's comment indicates, the vid does close with a brief moment of comfort: Marian Ravenwood from Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) kissing a wounded Indy. The 3-second clip (3:23 to 3:26) shows Marian kissing Indy's face to the last words of the song, "momentary fix," thus transferring the meaning of "fix" from the realm of addiction to the realm of comfort.
In the film from which the clip is taken, the scene between the two lasts about two and half minutes: Marian enters the ship's cabin wearing a silk nightgown loaned to her by the captain; Indy calls it "lovely"; she moves to one side of the cheval glass to see if it is indeed lovely while he inspects his wounds on the other side; she cannot see herself through the condensation on the glass and, not knowing that he is on the other side of mirror, she spins it on its frame, hitting him in the face and causing him to howl in agony (figure 1). Marian then moves to his side of the mirror and attempts to dress his wounds, until he tells her that he does not need a nurse, that he wants her to go away, and that she is hurting him in her efforts to comfort him. When she snaps, "Well godammit, Indy, where doesn't it hurt?," he offers her first his elbow, then his forehead, then the corner of his eye, and finally his mouth, all of which she kisses. "On the Prowl" captures the third of these kisses, the one on the corner of his eye. As the only woman in "On the Prowl" (apart from a couple of crowd shots), Marian represents the fan who watches fictional men get hurt in fan texts in order to watch them be comforted, or the vidder or writer who actually hurts them in fan works in order to then comfort them. (Marian works beautifully as a representation of this second type of fan: in her first encounter with Indy in the film, she punches him in the jaw.) But clearly her comfort is superficial and her kisses are more foreplay than medicine because she is not kissing any of the parts of Indiana Jones that actually hurt. Moreover, Karen Allen plays the scene with manic glee rather than solicitous tenderness; she seems more aroused and energized than disturbed by his pain. The viewers of "On the Prowl" are invited to fill the space left by the absence of comfort with sadism, with pleasure in the hurt.

Figure 1. Marian hits Indy with the mirror in Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981). [View larger image.]

[3.19] By ending their vid with this clip, Sisabet and Sweetestdrain conflate narcissism and sadism; just as Marian does in the film, they use a mirror of themselves to hurt men, and they do so in order to both criticize and celebrate the fan as sadist. Cornel Sandvoss argues that fans are drawn to fan texts because they see themselves reflected there: "The relationship between fans and their objects of fandom is based on fans' self-reflective reading and hence narcissistic pleasure, as fans are fascinated by extensions of themselves, which they do not recognize as such" (2005, 121). Sandvoss's characterization of the fan here matches Barthes's type of the
hysteric reader, one of his four types of readers of pleasure, the one who "takes the text for ready money, who joins in the bottomless, truthless comedy of language, who is no longer the subject of any critical scrutiny and throws himself across the text (which is quite different from projecting himself into it)" (63). Sisabet and Sweetestdrain, by contrast, do subject themselves to critical scrutiny and do project themselves into their vid through Marian; they are closer to the fetishists of Barthes's typology than his hysteric. If they are narcissists, taking pleasure in their own cruelty, they are critical narcissists, taking pleasure in their own self-criticism.

Sandvoss's reduction of fans to one reading type glosses over the variety of reading approaches and dismisses the sophisticated critical intelligence of fandom, as well as overlooking the popularity and long history of self-reflexive meta in fan works: Fans do recognize themselves, and they both question and affirm what they see.

[3.20] "On the Prowl" therefore appears to argue that one of fandom's characteristic modes of reading and viewing is sadistic. But the trope of BDSM in fandom as delineated by Kustritz invites us to consider the fan as masochist as well as sadist, and to align masochism with Barthes's treatment of Desire, sadism with his treatment of Pleasure. Gianduja Kiss's 2006 vid to Elvis Presley's "A Little Less Conversation" constructs fan texts as sadistically torturing fans in an ambiguously pleasurable, ambiguously consensual relationship (vid 3).

Vid 3. "A Little Less Conversation."
While every fan of a television series has probably wondered why he or she continues to put him or herself through the pain of betrayal by inconsistent characterization and confused storytelling in later seasons of the very show that caught his or her interest in its early seasons, the masochism of "A Little Less Conversation" is specifically sexual. The vid edits scenes in which couples from different television series interact: The couples are all work partners and feature men and women, men and men, and women and women in moments of flirtation, bonding, and conflict set to Elvis's growl of sexual frustration. These relationships were either never consummated in canon or took a long and torturous time to get there, and the vid pays tribute to the disappointment and exasperation not only of some of the characters (Mulder and Scully are shown in scenes of flirtation followed by scenes of frustration), but also of the fans who invest in both the canonically possible (read: heterosexual) and canonically impossible (read: homosexual) pairings. Fans, the vid suggests, are masochistic in their desire to watch a couple with chemistry interact every week without ever kissing each other. "Satisfy me!" the fan demands along with the characters in the vid in several sequences where one of the characters joins Elvis in becoming a figure for the fan's desires: Spock thumping his computer as a fan might wish to do to her television (1:56–1:58); Mulder lying naked in bed pointing his remote at the television (2:09–2:10); Bayliss from Homicide: Life on the Street (1993–99) smashing the interrogation room window as a fan wants to break the television screen (3:05–3:08). The last 20 seconds or so of the vid allow the viewer to indulge in a wish-fulfillment fantasy by presenting couples getting dressed, drinking together and looking satisfied and postcoital, but the vid ends with an audio reminder of the frustrations of the fannish experience:

**Remington Steele:** I think someone's shooting at us!

**Laura:** Why?

**Remington Steele:** Because we're kissing! Someone always shoots at us when we're kissing!

This exchange works brilliantly as an end to the vid because shooting here carries the second meaning in the context of the vid of shooting television footage with a camera. Because this exchange is audio only, the vid suggests that couples in fan texts do most of their kissing (and other erotic activities) in the dark spaces between and after episodes, seen only in the imagination of the fan who quite possibly has her eyes shut at the time. The fans who write and read fantasies of fulfillment are in fact interrupted in their pleasurable viewing of the characters kissing by the weekly episode that contains those characters shot only in the acts of arguing or flirting. Surely the only fannish pleasure to be had here, the vid suggests, is masochistic. In both "On the Prowl" and "A Little Less Conversation," the characters in the vid suffer (albeit in far
different ways), but in the latter, the fan suffers with them—a suffering that is, of course, enjoyable.

[3.24] The differences between these two vids align with Barthes's distinction between Pleasure and Desire as well as Kustritz's distinction between characters who "are blank social types" and those who "exist within a particular cultural and historical context." Barthes argues that hedonism is repressed by Western philosophy, that Pleasure is "continually disappointed, reduced, deflated, in favour of strong, noble values: Truth, Death, Progress, Struggle, Joy, etc," (1975, 57). These are the values that characterize the narratives of mass media fan texts, the "richly detailed psychological and interpersonal backstories" of characters in fan fiction BDSM, and the barriers to sexual fulfillment in "A Little Less Conversation." The narratives that block Pleasure give rise to, in Barthes's words, Pleasure's "victorious rival," Desire. "We are always being told about Desire, never about Pleasure" (1975, 57), he claims, arguing that even "so-called 'erotic' books...represent not so much the erotic scene as the expectation of it, the preparation of it, its ascent; that is what makes them 'exciting'; and when the scene occurs, naturally there is disappointment, deflation. In other words, these are books of Desire, not Pleasure" (1975, 58). The inclusion of Moonlighting (1985–89) (infamous for losing viewers once the characters consummated their relationship) in "A Little Less Conversation" suggests Barthes's commentary on "erotic" books illuminates also the excitement of mass media texts and the nature of much fannish involvement: masochistic Desire, not Pleasure. "On the Prowl" breaks this pattern and cuts mass media texts into the representation of the erotic scene, rather than the preparation for it, into Pleasure, not Desire.

[3.25] The second-largest group of viewers for whom "On the Prowl" might be a self-portrait is of women consumers of mass media, an audience constructed and portrayed not through the images, but through the song. Any song with the pronoun "I" gives a vid its point of view; in this case, the pronoun is sung by a female voice, and is the first word of the song, in the line "I was thinking about picking up some young boys." The song tells the story of the "I" bringing a man (we are not told his age) back to her apartment and having her way with him. The official video for the song on YouTube (Lunch 2008) shows a dressed-up Lydia Lunch wandering city streets at night. She does not pick anyone up, but she certainly does a lot of looking. Thus the vid can be read as a self-portrait of women in general: The juxtaposition of the song with the footage suggests that it is women who want to see these images of tortured men on screen, although of course it is predominantly men (writers, directors, producers, film and television executives) who give it to them. Some viewers read the vid, therefore, as primarily a comment on power relationships between genders. Themadpoker, for example, comments, "[It] says something about my own double standards since I'm pretty sure my line would've been drawn a whole lot earlier if the
genders on this vid were switched," to which Amonitrate replies, "This! Great point that I hadn't immediately considered when watching this, but it's entirely true. I think it says a lot about the amount of violence we just expect dudes to take and get over, that we would never accept for ourselves." Trinity-Clare responds, "Oh my god, even *imagining* a vid with this much gore and the genders switched is making me sick to my stomach. I did not know that about myself, wow" (note 4). These viewers do not read this vid as necessarily empowering women or as feminist in its aims or effects, and they worry about the possibility of reductive readings of power relations in the straightforward gender swap.

[3.26] Their concerns about the strategies of power available to women echo current theories about fandom. In their introduction to *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007), Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington identify three waves of fandom studies: the first, associated with the work of Michel de Certeau, John Fiske, and Henry Jenkins, read fandom as consisting of disempowered communities that used strategies of transformative reading to fight back against hegemonic ideologies. The second emphasized not resistance but replication in fandom, analyzing the "replication of social and cultural hierarchies within fan- and subcultures...rather than seeing fandom as a tool of empowerment they suggest that the interpretive communities of fandom (as well as individual acts of fan consumption) are embedded in the existing economic, social and cultural status quo" (2007, 6). The third studies fandom "no longer only as an object of study in and for itself...[but] as part of the fabric of our everyday lives...a taken-for-granted aspect of modern communication of consumption in a mediated world" (9). The commentary surrounding "On the Prowl" includes what can be read as a self-reflexive second-wave reading of female fandom problematizing a first-wave reading as potentially naive and ethically suspect (although perhaps emotionally gratifying): replicating acts of violent domination, these viewers suggest, may not be the best strategy to resist them. Yet these viewers still take pleasure from the vid, and in so doing, they enter perversity.

[3.27] The final and largest group of selves being portrayed in "On the Prowl" is everyone who watches mainstream, commercially successful American (and British) film and television, of any gender, age, race, class, sexual orientation, and level of fannish investment. In its function as a portrait of all viewers, the vid doubles as criticism of its source material because it suggests that mass media gives us something we all want: the eroticization of male suffering. Arguably, the unusually high number of sources in the vid, 63, invites viewers to read it as a vid about the sources rather than one about fandom. Indeed, many of the comments on Sisabet's page construct the vid as an argument about the source material:
[3.28] This vid is amaaaazing, and to get meta, it is really interesting to me that so many people in the comments are so disturbed that they are responding to this kind of eroticized violence and finding it sexy. Because if anything, this vid felt to me like an essay about how deliberately sexual, and also completely ubiquitous and standardized, these scenes of male torture porn really are. They're in so many action/fantasy stories! They have such standard formulas! (Scalesandfins)

[3.29] Viewers who read the vid this way might—and do—turn to another vid by Sisabet, "Women's Work," co-created with Luminosity and premiered at the 2007 VividCon (http://sockkpuppett.livejournal.com/442093.html). A selection of Supernatural clips to the song "Violet" by Hole (1995), "Women's Work" argues that the show is predicated on violence against its (disposable) female characters.

Vid 4. "Women's Work."

[3.30] Responses to "On the Prowl" on Sisabet's journal (http://sisabet.livejournal.com/365275.html) that refer to "Women's Work" include this conversation between three viewers:

[3.31] Something that really strikes me about this is how Sisabet was also involved in "Women's Work," the utterly upsetting and rage-making attack on eroticized violence against women on SPN [Supernatural]. And while I still believe the reverse is more *rare* in media, it's definitely something we also consume (and create), sometimes gleefully, and worth exploring in the same way. So with that background I think this vid is especially interesting. Is this just as bad/disturbing? Can you hate one and justify the other? Or is our violent objectification of men "earned" in an equal-opportunity way? (Nicole_anell)
Ethically, I don't think you can justify it. But emotionally, I find it hard to feel guilty. Also, I think you have to consider that most eroticized violence against women is targeted at men. I'm pretty sure the reverse can't be said about fictional violence between men (after all, it's probably most prevalent in genres like action). The fact that women get off on it seems to be more accidental. This vid is so awesome that I want to write cultural studies essays about its subject. (Bagheera_san)

We live in a world where...violence by women against men is comparatively rare. So I do tend to think that media portraying sexualized violence against women is more offensive, because it's perpetuating an existing oppression, whereas media containing sexualized violence against men is less offensive because it's a reversal of the dominant paradigm. That said, it also makes me think that if we lived in a matriarchal society instead of a patriarchal one, women would be just as likely to abuse their power as men are. (Rusty-halo)

When Rusty-halo refers to the patriarchal society we live in and the media that portrays and contains sexualized violence, she is reading the "self" in "self-portrait" to mean the culture that produces and consumes the texts used in the vid rather than the one that produced the vid. When Nicole_anell suggests that viewers in that culture both consume and create sexualized violence against men "gleefully" and Bagheera_san separates those viewers' ethical responsibilities from their emotional responses, they suggest that Barthesian perversity is just as much a part of the reading practices of culture in general as it is of fandom in particular.

As a commentary on its source material, "On the Prowl" shares significant similarities with "A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness (Hot Hot Hot!)") by the Clucking Belles (http://vidders.net/video/multi-a-fannish-taxonomy-of). Francesca Coppa analyzes this vid as a commentary on both "how some women watch television" (2009, 107) and on television itself:

The vid builds to a narrative and sexual climax. The end of the song features a frenzied call and response ("How you feeling? "Hot, hot, hot!") while we see a montage of characters hung in chains and whipped—a pure erotic spectacle of beaten and bruised men...In each individual storyline, the moment of beating is one of intense drama, but taken together—when the viewer can't help but realize how many mainstream television shows and movies regularly features scenes that look a lot like bondage and domination—the inherent kinkiness of plain old broadcast television becomes evident. (2009, 109)
"Taxonomy" submits men to torture for a few seconds only, from 3:20 to 3:31; in "On the Prowl" the full-on torture starts at 1:26 and continues—with some interludes for fistfights and flirtations with suicide—until 3:22. If "Taxonomy" makes this point about mainstream television, "On the Prowl," with its much longer sequence of "beaten and bruised men," hammers it home.

"On the Prowl" examines the perversity of sadism both in the source (mass media) and in its transformative viewers (producers and consumers of fan fiction and fan vids). But this examination is both critical and pleasurable; it invites the viewer to look with a critical eye and a voyeur's eye. As Counteragent writes, this conflation is in itself troubling: "I'm not sure what it says about me that I'm really looking forward to watching it again. I'm hoping it means that 'I like meta and respect this vid a lot' vs. 'I'm fascinated and attracted by male suffering' but I think that fact that I'm not entirely sure is the whole damn point." The line between critical respect and erotic attraction has been blurred.

4. Conclusion

Barthes's privileging of the perverse pleasures inherent in critical reading and reading of criticism open him up to being characterized as, in Jonathan Culler's words, "the sensitive, self-indulgent man of letters, who writes about his own interests and pleasures without in any way challenging fundamental ways of thinking. Strategic and radical in certain ways, Barthes's hedonism repeatedly exposes him to charges of complacency" (2002, 84). This portrait is one fandom also paints of itself: The commentary on "On the Prowl" consists of fans questioning themselves and their own pleasure in the vid, querying whether it is strategic, radical, or complacent to take pleasure in, as Rusty-halo puts it, a "reversal of the dominant paradigm" of sexualized violence. Of course, many vidders and their viewers simply do not care, but the vidding communities to which the vidders of "Closer" and "On the Prowl" belong tend to present themselves as left wing and feminist, concerned with challenging and transforming those social structures that enable and eroticize sexual violence. Graham Allen writes of Barthes's challenge to political discourse in words that also apply to Killa, T. Jonesy, Sisabet, Sweetestdrain, and their viewers:

The body of the writing subject is that, according to Barthes, which seems most scandalous to both bourgeois and petit-bourgeois culture (with its ideas of perversity and sexual deviance) and Marxist-inspired left-wing discourses (with their ban on the personal, the sentimental, that which is pleasurable). Conservative and left-wing discourses seem to conspire together to ban the writing subject from indulging in the pleasures and perversities of the body. (2003, 101)
While conservative discourses might attack the pleasures fandom takes in reinscribing the pleasure in the sex represented in mass media, left-wing fandom worries at its own pleasure in reinscribing the pleasure in violence. Yet the tools and vocabulary of transformative fandom are those of violence: Vids rip characters and images from television and film out of context and out of the control of those who made them, and they do this not only to critique and analyze but to create pleasure.

Vids are arguments, but arguments that effect an excess of pleasure in the viewer. "On the Prowl" and "Closer" both invite a critical detachment and a pleasurable gaze; they can be read as both critiques and celebrations of the perverse intersections between sex and violence in mass media and in transformative fandom. In casting the relationship between mass media and the viewing and reading public on the one hand, and fan vids and the viewers of fan vids on the other, as perversely conflating critical distance and voyeuristic investment, they illustrate Barthes's contention that the only way to take pleasure in a reported pleasure, the only way to enjoy criticism, the only way to get "closer" and have "more" is to enter perversion.

5. Acknowledgments

My thanks go to Killa and T. Jonesy, Sisabet and Sweetestdrain, and Gianduja Kiss for permission to write about their work. I am particularly grateful to T. Jonesy for her help in understanding the authorial intent behind "Closer."

6. Notes

1. When Barthes writes "I" in the passage above, he also means "you"—that is, the reader who is engaging with The Pleasure of the Text. He invites that reader to become a voyeur of his, Barthes's, pleasure in reading. The vidder, in my argument, therefore occupies the same position as the writer of, and the viewer of the vid the same position as the reader of, The Pleasure of the Text.

2. This reading of vids as arguments can also be found in fandom meta; for example, Here's Luck points to the prevalence of coexisting genres within the same vid: "In thinking about different vid structures, I've noted three broad types, separable but not mutually exclusive: the narrative, the lyric, and the argument." She goes on to define the lyric mode as "a sustained evocation or exploration of mood, images, emotions, or possibly character" (http://heresluck.livejournal.com/99138.html).

3. "Sweet is the lore which Nature brings; / Our meddling intellect / Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:— / We murder to dissect" (1798, 25–28).
4. A fascinating experiment along these lines is listening to "Women's Work" and "On the Prowl" with switched soundtracks. Watching men suffer to the song "Violet" works rather better (at least for me) than watching women suffer to the song "On the Prowl."

7. Works cited


Praxis

Spreading the cult body on YouTube: A case study of "Telephone" derivative videos

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[0.1] Abstract—This case study of spreadability analyzes the Lady Gaga music video "Telephone," which has been appropriated and reworked by YouTube users sharing derivative works online. What properties of the music video stimulate user appropriation? What hybrid audiovisual forms are emerging from its reworking by users? In order to answer these questions, between January and August 2010, I conducted participant observation on Lady Gaga's official social network profiles and collected 70 "Telephone" derivative videos on YouTube. I identified three main categories of video creativity: (1) music (which includes covers, "me singing" videos, music mashups, and choreography); (2) parody (in which YouTube users and comedians humorously imitate Gaga, creating spoofs); and (3) fashion (in which makeup artists and amateurs appropriate the star's image to create makeup and hair tutorials). "Telephone" has become spreadable because it integrates dance music and choreography, costume changes, cinematic references, and product placements that work as textual hooks meaningful to different target markets: live music, dance, chick, and postmodern cinematic cultures. In particular, Gaga is a cult body that explicitly incorporates previous cinematic and pop music icons. Users are stimulated to reenact Gaga's cult body online. On YouTube, spreadability is thus strictly related to the appropriation of cult bodies. Fans, comedians, independent musicians, fashionistas, and pop stars construct their own cult bodies by deliberately borrowing characteristics from previous media icons and reenacting them in online videos in order to fulfill their expressive and professional needs.

[0.2] Keywords—Derivative works; Lady Gaga; Spreadable media


1. From viral video to spreadability

[1.1] New participatory forms of audiovisual production are emerging on Web 2.0. Cultural industries design media brands in order to create emotional relationships between brands and consumers. This marketing technique has been termed "affective economics" (Jenkins 2006). With the aim of constructing a loyal audience of emotionally engaged fans who are active in the promotion of the brand, media producers create contents that seek to be both cultural attractors and activators.
Cultural attractors stimulate the aggregation of people with similar interests and tastes, while cultural activators prompt audiences to do something related to the brand itself (e.g., produce a video or organize a promotional campaign). In this way, companies give consumers both something to talk about and also the cultural references that enable consumers to talk through their contents. When consumers are emotionally involved, they appropriate and re-create the professionally produced contents; they share the reworked material and comment upon the brand online. They thus become brand evangelists working as grassroots marketers. Hence, whereas the entertainment industries used to react to fan appropriation with prohibitionist strategies, today they exploit work by fans for promotional purposes, their aim being to create "grassroots marketing campaigns" (Russell et al. 2008, 62).

[1.2] The grassroots marketing technique is enhanced by the structure of social network sites (SNSs) (boyd and Ellison 2007) and by the nature of digital information. In digital public spaces, information is persistent, searchable, replicable, and scalable (boyd 2008). Word of mouth can enable multimedia contents such as videos to acquire huge visibility and thus go viral. Viral videos have been exploited by companies as marketing devices because they serve as low-cost promotional campaigns aimed at attracting consumers to a specific branded site. The assumption behind viral marketing is that advertisers and media producers shape a message that will be replicated through online channels. However, "viral" metaphors do not account for how fans appropriate and rework media. For this reason, Jenkins et al. (2009) have proposed a model of spreadability to describe an open-ended participation process that maps the flow of content through SNSs. From this perspective, users are active consumers who produce derivative works specific to their own social and cultural contexts.

[1.3] I describe the spreadability of the Lady Gaga music video "Telephone" (2010). "Telephone" was produced and distributed by Interscope Records in order to promote the second single on *The Fame Monster* (2009), Gaga's first EP. Gaga is the best example of a music star who exploits opportunities for audiovisual spreadability on Web 2.0 to construct affective economics. *New York Entertainment* puts it thus: "As Madonna and Michael Jackson were to MTV, Lady Gaga is to YouTube: the killer app" (http://nymag.com/arts/popmusic/features/65725/). In fact, Gaga has an emotionally engaged and active audience because of her strategic production of multimedia content published on SNSs. In order to understand how Gaga works as both a cultural attractor and cultural activator, between January and August 2010, I conducted participant observation on Gaga's official profiles in Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Vellar 2010). Gaga's digital profile works as a cultural attractor because it aggregates fans around a celebrity persona. However, understanding how media products work as cultural activators requires more detailed analysis of the characteristics of media texts. What properties of a music video stimulate user appropriation? What hybrid audiovisual
forms are emerging from reworking by users? In order to answer these questions, I analyzed the "Telephone" primary text and categorized 70 "Telephone" derivative videos posted on YouTube. I chose to conduct a case study of "Telephone" because of its popularity on YouTube and its many derivative videos. In fact, on July 3, 2011, the official "Telephone" video became the 39th most watched video on YouTube, with 113,932,286 viewings (http://www.youtube.com/charts/videos_views?t=a&p=1). The analysis of the primary text and the categorization of derivative videos enabled me to identify the textual elements that make a video more likely to spread, which I interpreted by applying the concept of a media cult.

Lady Gaga - Telephone ft. Beyoncé

[1.4] Spreadable videos are multimedia productions that fulfill their viewers' communicative and creative needs and stimulate those viewers to redistribute and re-create the primary text. Although marketers believe that they are able to encode a message that will spread by word of mouth with no modification, texts are culturally adapted in different contexts to satisfy different needs. The members of a social group appropriate and share elements that are meaningful for their culture. Successful videos have textual hooks that users select for repetition and that become part of the cultural repertoire of YouTube (Burgess 2008). As Burgess states, textual hooks cannot be identified in advance. However, I suggest that the concept of a media cult can aid analysis of spreadable video because it enables us to focus on the characteristics that stimulate a text's appropriation by users.

[1.5] The notion of a media cult was first proposed by Eco (1986) in order to describe cult movies like *Casablanca* (1942, dir. Michael Curtiz). Eco argues that a cultural product becomes a cult object if it provides a "completely furnished world so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were aspects of the fan's private
sectarian world" (198). *Casablanca* became a cult object because it was full of "intertextual frames," stereotyped situations derived from previous textual traditions that were easily recognizable to cinema fans. Intertextuality is a characteristic of postmodern movies such as *Bananas* (1971, dir. Woody Allen) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, dir. Steven Spielberg). Fans of postmodern movies gain pleasure from exercising their intercinematic (i.e., related to other movies), intermedia (i.e., related to other media, such as books and advertisements), and extracinematic (i.e., related to movie production and gossip) expertise. The concept of the media cult has been thoroughly explored by Hills (2002), who identifies two kinds of media cults, cult texts and cult bodies, both of which depend on characteristics of the text and on the value that derives from its appropriation by fans. Hills stresses that although it is not possible to classify the qualities and attributes of media cults, it is possible to describe some family resemblances, which are characteristics of the texts and bodies that predispose fans to cult devotion. In the case of cult texts, which are fictional products, the family resemblances are auteurism (which establishes authors and stars as quality brands), endlessly deferred narrative (which enhances speculation and re-creation), and hyperdiegesis (a vast and detailed narrative space). Cult bodies are media figures who embody previously subcultural codes well suited to being reenacted. A star is thus a cult body that consciously borrows characteristics from previous media icons and stimulates appropriation by fans, working as a focal point for the organization of consumption-based identities. This means that cult bodies simultaneously empower the identity that they represent and construct it as a target market.

[1.6] The notions of cult texts and cult bodies must be adapted to the contemporary context, where the relationship between fans and cultural products is evolving in the Web 2.0 environment. In pre-Internet fandom, but also during the early days of the Internet, when nearly all online material was text based, fan groups were located at specific sites such as conventions and, online, on newsgroups and mailing lists, and fans constructed closed communities with strong identities. Web 2.0 offers new, networked spaces for social interaction and content sharing. Owing to the adoption of SNSs by fans, online groups are evolving from closed communities to a networked collectivism (Baym 2007). Although fans still build communities in closed environments, they also interact in SNSs like YouTube. In SNSs the search function connects disconnected groups, and contexts collapse as a consequence (boyd 2008). In the case of media consumers, this means that many different fan cultures interact in the same digital environment. The networked nature of SNSs thus promotes spreadability. However, to be spreadable, videos must incorporate textual hooks that are meaningful for different social groups. To gain attention on Web 2.0, media brands must produce cult objects that appeal to different media cultures simultaneously.
The Gaga media brand incorporates the cultural codes of different cultures to fulfill the needs of different target markets (as an attractor) and stimulate appropriation by fans (as an activator). In what follows I illustrate how Gaga constructs her celebrity persona as a cult body and how "Telephone" has been designed as a cult text. I then describe how YouTube users appropriate Gaga's cult body to create another level of performativity in the form of derivative videos, and how the derivative videos contribute to the emergence of audiovisual genres with roots in different media cultures.

2. Gaga's cult body as a cultural attractor and activator

[2.1] Celebrities are a means of advancing transnational branding (Turner 2006). Since the 20th century, cultural industries have constructed cinematic and TV stars with the aim of promoting cultural products and creating a loyal audience for a media genre. Stardom research shows that the construction of a star depends on the dialogue between the public persona and the private person (Austin and Barker 2003). This dialogue is evolving in the contemporary mediascape because of the mass adoption of SNSs by fans. In Web 2.0, celebrities use SNSs to perform their inner selves in a public arena and thus establish an emotional connection with their fans (Nunn and Biressi 2010). TV stars created by national talent shows may achieve international fame because their TV performances are spreadable through SNSs. For example, Susan Boyle's performance on the TV show Britain's Got Talent was discussed on Twitter and Facebook, and the video became the fifth most watched video on YouTube. Enli states that, by means of SNSs, Internet users transformed an ordinary woman into a global music star, and that the rapid spread of the Boyle video demonstrates the power of "collective intelligence" (2009, 489). However, when dealing with the role of users in the spreading process, we must go beyond the notion of collective intelligence. By focusing on the practice of video sharing that gives stars such huge visibility, we miss the process of appropriation and re-creation, thus misconceiving the nature of virality. In order to gain a better understanding of the role of users in spreading, I have analyzed the Gaga media brand as a cult body appropriated and reperformed by different media cultures. In fact, Gaga incorporates previous cult bodies so as to appeal to pop music and gay culture. Moreover, she has produced "Telephone" as a cult text that appeals to a culture related to postfeminism and the postmodern cinema. Finally, she uses SNS profiles as extensions of her own cult body, which seeks to be both a cultural attractor and activator.

[2.2] Gaga is a pop star who exemplifies the recording industry's strategy of constructing music brands around a celebrity persona so as to engage Web 2.0 audiences (Vellar 2010). She takes her name from the Queen hit "Radio Ga Ga" and constructs her visual image and her music production by borrowing from stars such as
Madonna and David Bowie. She thus incorporates the subcultural codes of both pop culture and gay culture. Furthermore, in order to become a gay icon, she performed her first concerts in gay bars and has publicized her commitment to LGBT rights.

[2.3] It is possible to identify in Gaga's creative products the family resemblances that characterize cult texts. The House of Gaga, the creative team that helps Gaga create her performances and musical products, generates an aura of auteurism around the Gaga persona. Furthermore, a hyperdiegetic endless deferred narrative has been created with her music and audiovisual texts. In fact, Gaga's creative production is an ongoing metacommentary on stardom itself, as indicated by the title of her debut album, *The Fame*. Her music videos are parodies of stardom as well. In particular, "Paparazzi" and "Telephone" are short films that incorporate a song and are constructed with a never-ending narrative. In "Paparazzi," Gaga is a rich star who kills her boyfriend because he has sold her to paparazzi. At its end Gaga is arrested, and at the beginning of "Telephone" she is in jail. "Telephone" is the story of her jailbreak with a travel companion, the pop star Beyoncé. The video finishes with the promise that the story is to be continued.

[2.4] "Telephone" incorporates numerous intertextual references taken from Gaga's previous works and cinematic history. It is therefore a postmodern cult text, expressing intertextual and intermedia awareness. In fact, Gaga and Beyoncé are new versions of the female couple in *Thelma & Louise* (1991, dir. Ridley Scott) (figure 1), and they drive another cult icon of pop cinema: the Pussy Wagon, Uma Thurman's car in the feature film *Kill Bill, Vol. 1* (2003, dir. Quentin Tarantino) (figure 2). Those movies are examples of the chick flick, a movie genre targeting postfeminist women (Ferris and Young 2008). Chick flicks advocate girl power and blend hyperfemininity and hypermasculinity, thus appealing to a new generation of women who view femininity, sexuality, and girly goods such as designer clothes and trendy accessories as empowering. By integrating cinematic references and mimicking the cult body of postfeminism heroines, "Telephone" seeks to attract both members of chick culture and fans of postmodern cinema, who gain pleasure from decoding cinematic references.

*Figure 1. Gaga and Beyoncé during the jailbreak as Thelma and Louise.* [View larger image.]
Figure 2. The Pussy Wagon. [View larger image.]

[2.5] "Telephone" incorporates numerous dance numbers with multiple costumes. Costumes have always played an important role in constructing a star's image: they become the supreme marker of the star's identity and at the same time allow audiences to connect with the star by appropriating the costume (Moseley 2005). Gaga's identity is marked by rapid costume changes. For example, in "Telephone" she reinterprets, through clothing, not only cinematic characters but also American icons such as the flag (figure 3) and stereotypical figures such as the waitress (figure 4). Costume changes enable Gaga to incorporate previous cultural codes drawn from powerful female figures and merge them with music culture during her public appearances and dance numbers.

Figure 3. American flag costuming. [View larger image.]

Figure 4. Waitress costuming. [View larger image.]

[2.6] "Telephone" can thus be located within a postfeminist discourse where the gendered body and consumerism converge. Like chick flicks, "Telephone" incorporates
product placement in order to capitalize on the fashion industry. Numerous brands (e.g., Diet Coke, Polaroid, LG) are part of the video's narrative. Moreover, the Pussy Wagon key ring is for sale as "Telephone" merchandise (figure 5). Product placement and merchandising are ways to create additional revenue streams. In "Telephone," however, product placement is taken to a grotesque extreme (Christian 2010) because the boundaries between gendered identity, pop art, and commodity culture are blurred. In fact, consumer goods like Diet Coke cans (figure 6) are not employed in a directly promotional way but are "odd extensions" of Gaga's body (Nasilowski 2010). By objectifying herself, therefore, Gaga enacts gender through excess and irony, merging pop music with a postfeminist discourse.

![Figure 5. The Pussy Wagon key ring—merchandise.](View larger image.)

![Figure 6. Diet Coke product placement.](View larger image.)

[2.7] The self-objectification process is extended in SNSs. In fact, celebrity profiles become "the commodity of Web 2.0" (Beer 2008, 235) because a celebrity's online persona is exploited to simulate a bidirectional relationship with fans. In the case of Gaga, a blood relationship is metaphorically established: on Twitter, she calls herself a "mother monster" and refers to her fans as "little monsters." The perceived immediacy of Twitter, which fulfills users' voyeuristic desires, enables it to generate a real star (Muntean and Petersen 2009). Via Twitter, Gaga performs herself as a whole online persona (private and public, celebrity and fan) and gives fans backstage access to her production. Lady Gaga tweets about her family, her celebrity colleagues (whom she presents both as friends and as idols), and her work as a musician, commenting upon her creative process:

[2.8] So happy, my family surprised me in montreal. In bed with my
so happy, my family suprised me in montreal. in bed with my gorgeous sister. With our matching haircuts! :)

Saw beyonce live, from the stage. She's an amazing performer, and a beautiful person, inside and out...love a strong ass woman.xx;

just woke up, headache and the stink of jameson. ahh but the lyrics on the bedside. it was all worth it

Gaga also uses Twitter to directly and indirectly publicize her work and to thank her fans for their support:

"Telephone" is coming I promise! Still editing. I want it to be perfect. The Haus has dubbed her a "masterpiece."

"Telephone" made history today little monsters! Thank you for all your support of the video, you are the future, you are the kings and queens

Since Twitter doesn't allow users to directly share pictures, Gaga uses the related service TwitPic. She shares pictures that depict her in private situations to give fans access to the backstage of her life and to her body. In particular, she posted a photo of a tattoo on her arm celebrating her fans. The terms "little monsters" and "mother monster" and the exposure of her body to fans have helped her maintain a strong relationship with SNSs users, as demonstrated by the 5,728 comments that the tattoo picture received:

youre the best mother alive <3 i am so proud to be a little monster <3;

OMG GaGa mumma monster! You are so fucking commited to us, you give us soo...much love and we xan't help but give it back!

Finally, Gaga uses audiovisual communication to engage with her fans on YouTube. She uploads secondary content to her ladygagaofficial channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/ladygagaofficial). In the BN video series "Transmission Gaga-vision," she introduces herself to fans and publishes private moments in her life. She also records messages for her fans in a video log, a distinctive communicative form on YouTube. For example, when she became the most followed celebrity on Twitter, she posted to YouTube a video in which she portrayed herself as the queen of Twitter.
[2.18] Gaga's cult body thus functions as a cultural attractor because it is the focal point for the organization of consumption-based identities such as music, gay, postmodern, and postfeminist cultures. However, Gaga's SNS profiles are also intended to be cultural activators. For example, she invited fans to submit their own videos to be reedited and played during her world tour, "The Monster Ball." Internet users also appropriate her videos when they have not been explicitly requested to, creating derivative works. Those grassroots and spontaneous visual productions are appropriated by Gaga, who publishes them in her official profiles, thus giving fans positive feedback and stimulating them to work as grassroots marketers. For example, Gaga used Twitter to thank two fans who had created the derivative video "Soda-do, How to," calling them "GENIUS little fashion monsters."
3. Spreadability on YouTube: A typology of "Telephone" derivative videos

Gaga's cult body works as a cultural attractor for music and gay culture, while her music videos create a parodic metacommentary on stardom with the aim of appealing to fans of both postmodern cinema and chick culture. Furthermore, she extends her cult body in digital space by using SNSs to maintain an ongoing relationship with her fans and stimulate them to re-create her cult body so that it becomes spreadable. However, by analyzing "Telephone" derivative videos, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of spreadability that surround Gaga's audiovisual productions. To this end, I used snowball sampling to collect 70 YouTube videos derivative of "Telephone." Starting with a search on YouTube using the keyword "telephone," I identified unofficial productions, and I followed "related videos" links until I had constructed a sufficiently large data set, stopping when I realized that further sampling would not add more genres. On inspecting the 70 videos, I identified three main categories of video creativity: (1) music, (2) parody, and (3) fashion. In each of these categories it was possible to classify videos along a continuum from amateur to professional. I thus identified audiovisual genres specific to four different media cultures that are related to different characteristics of the primary text (figure 7). "Telephone" is a music video of a dance song, and for this reason it prompts both music covers and mashups tied to live music and dance cultures. The dance numbers performed by Gaga and Beyoncé, wearing a variety of costumes, stimulate users to mimic the cult body in the form of both choreography and fashion tutorials (on makeup and hair), merging dance and chick cultures. Finally, cinematic references and product placements are appropriated by YouTube users, who gain pleasure not just from identifying intermedia references but also from creating parodies of pop cult objects. In
identifying intermedia references but also from creating parodies of pop cult objects. In
the following paragraphs, I will discuss the three categories of video creativity and the
five genres that are related to them. I will start with the music category, in which I've
identified three different genres: (1) covers, (2) video and music mashups, and (3)
choreography. Then I will describe the categories of fashion and parody and their
related genres, (4) fashion tutorial and (5) spoof.

**Figure 7. A typology of "Telephone" derivative videos.**

[3.2] Music is the first major category of video creativity that I will discuss. A common
genre in the music category is the cover (which may be a cappella, acoustic,
instrumental, or a live medley), which is labeled "me singing" if it is created by a fan.
Like the "girl talk" YouTube genre (Burns 2009), "me singing" videos feature a young
woman singing directly to the camera in the intimacy of her home. As Burgess (2008)
states, personal music performances are occasions for play and peer learning. Through
them, users demonstrate their skills, gain attention, and receive tips and tricks.
Professional musicians cover the songs because they hope to create fame on Web 2.0
and then sell their songs on iTunes. Independent musicians, such as The Pomplamoose
(http://www.youtube.com/user/PomplamooseMusic) and The Shures
(http://www.youtube.com/user/theshures), produce both original albums and covers of
pop hits. By covering a hit like "Telephone," they exploit the searchable property of
SNSs: when fans search for the Gaga video, they also find the cover version, thus
discovering the work of independent musicians. YouTube is therefore a space in which
amateurs can play and learn, but at the same time, it is a promotional channel for
musicians.
[3.3] The second genre in the music category is mashups: music videos created by combining the song with video clips or static images. Mashups have a long tradition in the history of participatory cultures. Since the 1970s, fans have appropriated footage from TV broadcasts and reedited it to music. While professionally produced music videos are created to promote songs, fan music videos such as vids (or "songvids") (Jenkins 1992; Coppa 2008; Stein 2010) and anime music videos (AMVs) (Ito 2010; Roberts 2012) are noncommercial derivative works created by amateurs to analyze the primary text, tell new stories, or celebrate popular culture. Vidding is a form of resistant and underground narrative art with a dramatic structure that emerged in
resistant and underground narrative art with a dramatic structure that emerged in media fandom (Jenkins 1992, 223–49). During the 1970s, female fans appropriated *Star Trek* footage to create vids that engage with gender representation (Coppa 2008). With the emergence of Web 2.0, fans still participate in niche peer groups that share a subcultural identity and resist the mainstream. At the same time, however, vids have become more visible, thanks to video sharing platforms like YouTube (Ito 2010). Hence, on Web 2.0, subcultural communities such as Vidders (http://vidders.net/) and AnimeMusicVideos (animemusicvideos.org), where amateur producers share fan music videos, coexist with platforms like YouTube, on which other genres of mashup, such as political remixes and created trailers, are posted (Horwatt 2009). Political remixing originated even before the culture jamming of the 1990s. Activists create remixes to address numerous issues, including identity, power, and consumerism (McIntosh 2012). Conversely, trailer remixes are edited to transform the genre of a movie. By merging cultural elements from diverse sources, they create surprising juxtapositions with humorous results. Mashups derived from "Telephone" can be interpreted as a further genre: that of the music mashup.

[3.4] "Telephone" mashups have been created by sampling music and mashing up images, but without the intent to construct a narrative structure. The origin of music mashing can be located in the dance, techno, and hip-hop cultures characterized by the practice of quoting music. In dance culture, DJs are conceived of as music stars because even if they are not authentic and original creators of music, they create a live experience by reproducing earlier musical works (Thornton 1996). The practice of quoting music developed in the mid-1980s, when personal computers made it possible to record remix performances and to create techno albums using audio samples (Marontate 2005). The advent of the Internet enabled the emergence of a techno chain (Hayward 1995): musicians producing techno music distributed their albums online, inviting fans to download, remix, and rework their music with the aim of including the reworkings in the next release. Mashup emerged as a legitimate genre around 2000, when the practice first took hold in European clubs and then received mainstream attention in the United States. It thus migrated from underground subculture to popular culture, both online and off (Burns 2009). Finally, with YouTube, the techno chain and the practice of DJing have combined with audiovisual culture. Professional DJs create video mashups merging music and video from different sources. For example, "Telephone" has been appropriated by TheMarsAttax (http://www.youtube.com/user/TheMarsAttax) and merged with Metallica's song "Enter Sandman" to create a video mashup.
There are also amateur mashups on YouTube that fulfill expressive or pragmatic needs. Fans create videos that combine the original soundtrack with static images and post them on their profiles in order to express their passion for a music star or genre. Some mashups have subtitles in languages other than English, making them more accessible to transnational audiences. Finally, there are street team mashups. Street teams are a guerrilla marketing technique that emerged during the 1990s as a grassroots promotional activity. Fans take pictures of themselves while they distribute flyers in city streets to promote artists (Vellar 2010). They then mash up these pictures with the "Telephone" soundtrack to demonstrate their commitment to the artists.


The third genre in the music category is choreography. Web 2.0 has redefined the practice of dance culture not just in relation to DJ auteur performances but also in relation to the dancing crowd. In dance culture, dance music is consumed collectively within the public space of the club (Thornton 1996). The dance space on Web 2.0 is multisited. In fact, fans and dance professionals reenact "Telephone" choreography both in the digital environment of YouTube and in multiple offline spaces such as private houses, gyms, and public squares. Professional choreographers like Camillo* Lauricella (http://www.youtube.com/user/FYD86) and Dejan Tubic (http://www.youtube.com/user/idejance) use "Telephone" choreography to teach gym classes or to exhibit their dancing abilities. Gaga fans organize music flash mobs in public squares. Flash mobbing is a grassroots practice that has been popular since 2003. A flash mob is a gathering of strangers who perform a collective action in a public space and then disperse into the crowd (Nicholson 2005; Schepers 2009). Gaga fans video record flash mobs so that they can share the events on SNSs and document their participation. One example is the "Official Gaga Flash Mob Madrid Telephone & Bad Romance" (video 9), which was organized by Spanish fans as a way of asking Lady Gaga to add a tour date in Madrid. In the music category, therefore, I include genres related to live music (covers) and dance culture (music and video mashups and choreography).
Parody is the second major category of video creativity. Parody is an extremely popular expressive form in YouTube and Web 2.0 cultures (Burgess and Green 2009). Lamerichs (2008) claims that parody is a metafictional device that incorporates familiar elements of a media text and then shows its construction, surprising the reader with ironic effects. By imitating certain conventions, parody reaffirms them. Indeed, because it creates awareness of a cultural repertoire, it guarantees cultural continuity. Furthermore, as Jenkins et al. (2009) state, humor allows the members of a group to affirm their taste and to define insiders and outsiders. The cinematic references and product placements in "Telephone" are metafictional devices that incorporate familiar elements of pop culture. They are easily recognizable by YouTube users, who appropriate them to produce spoofs, humorous parodies of pop culture objects such as music stars, movies, and TV programs. Comedians like Barely Political (http://www.youtube.com/user/barelypolitical) have become YouTube stars thanks to the success of their spoofs. YouTube users demonstrate their membership in YouTube culture by identifying pop cults and spoofing them. "Telephone" stimulates the creation of spoofs because of its many intermedia references, which function as textual hooks. Also, the telephone, which appears in different forms in "Telephone," works as a textual hook because it is easily appropriatable. In fact, it has been repeated in many videos, becoming part of the cultural repertoire of YouTube—as exemplified by Peter Coffin's (http://www.youtube.com/user/petercoffin) music parody "Bananaphone (Telephone Spoof/Parody)." This video is interesting because it hybridizes a cover with a parody, and because it has become a spreadable video itself. In fact, it has generated derivative videos such as the Dq231 (http://www.youtube.com/user/cpDq231) "Club Penguin Music Video." which is a mix of Peter Coffin's soundtrack and a self-produced
Penguin Music Video," which is a mix of Peter Coffin's soundtrack and a self-produced video.

[3.8] Fashion is the last category of my taxonomy. The costume changes that characterize "Telephone" stimulate female YouTube users to create makeup and hair tutorials that can be related to chick culture. The fashion tutorial genre is emerging on YouTube for two reasons: the number of women on the Internet is growing, and YouTube's audiovisual format enables the self to be dynamically performed, as makeup tutorials require. Amateurs create tutorials as places to demonstrate and learn a practice that is typically female. Professional makeup artists, however, demonstrate the use of beauty products in order to promote them and become sponsors of beauty brands. Makeup tutorials thus include product placement—a business model typical of chick flicks and music videos like "Telephone."

[3.9] Fashion is therefore an emergent online culture that integrates the traditional dynamics of online participatory culture. First, as in hacker culture (Castells 2001) and fan music culture (Baym and Robert 2009), the digital platform is a space in which to play, learn, and grow professionally. The YouTube makeup artist Michelle Phan (http://www.youtube.com/user/MichellePhan) underlines the ongoing learning process and the interconnected relationship between YouTube stars and users thus: "A good Guru is not just a teacher, but also a student...I don't know everything, but I am willing to learn." Second, makeup artists apply the same strategy as cover groups: they re-create popular products in order to connect with users on a common ground, which in this case is the Gaga cult body. Finally, it is possible to identify in this category a hybridization of cultures and genres. For example, the makeup artist Elessa (http://www.youtube.com/user/pursebuzz) has created the "Telephone Makeup Tutorial" in partnership with another makeup artist, Koren, by mimicking the structure and humorous style of "Telephone." In fact, the makeup tutorial is integrated into a broader narrative video in which Elessa and Koren reenact Gaga and Beyoncé mimicking, in turn, Thelma and Louise.
A broad range of hybrid forms of audiovisual production is emerging on YouTube. This is because if a video is to become spreadable, it must attract different cultures and stimulate different kinds of appropriation. I have separated the categories of music, parody, and fashion for analytical reasons. However, just as "Telephone" merges narrative forms with music video and integrates references to different media cultures, so its derivative videos hybridize different genres with the aim of engaging different social groups, as exemplified by Elessa's parodic makeup tutorial.

4. Spreading cult bodies on YouTube

"Telephone" is a spreadable text that passed through different social groups because it was designed as a cult text intended to perform multiple functions and incorporate the aesthetics of multiple target markets. "Telephone" is a dance song that stimulates users to dance and to create covers and mashups. The costume changes and choreographed dance numbers in the video stimulate both reperformance of the choreography and re-creation of Gaga fashion. Cinematic references and product placements are appropriated by comedians to mock the consumerism and pop culture that Gaga embodies. The properties of "Telephone" that make it more likely to spread are thus dance music, choreographic numbers, costume changes, and cinematic references. These textual hooks are meaningful to different social groups: live music, dance, chick, and postmodern cinematic cultures.

By appropriating and re-creating "Telephone," YouTube users fulfill their expressive and professional needs. At the same time, they work as grassroots marketers promoting the Gaga brand. Thus professional producers, independent stars, and YouTube amateurs benefit from spreadability. "Telephone" has become part of the YouTube cultural repertoire because users re-create a professionally produced text.
Even a YouTube user who is not a fan of Gaga or pop music cannot ignore Gaga's existence, because amateur and professional productions constantly cite her celebrity persona. However, independent artists also benefit from spreadability. By repeating textual hooks from "Telephone," independent musicians, comedians, and makeup artists create derivative works that enable them to reach broader audiences.

[4.3] However, users do not simply replicate "Telephone"; they adapt it by creating new audiovisual genres. By merging codes and aesthetics from the cultural repertoires of different social groups, YouTube users innovate audiovisual languages and canons and, at the same time, construct their own fame. In this way, makeup artists and independent musicians become YouTube celebrities and monetize their work through product placements or YouTube partnerships set up to share advertising revenues (Burns 2009). Finally, amateur producers have opportunities to communicate with like-minded people, learn, and gain visibility. By sharing amateur derivative videos, YouTube users express their passion for "Telephone," receive feedback, and learn by doing. Such users emerge on YouTube through the same process of peer education and professionalization that has always characterized the participatory culture of the Internet, and that has been exemplified by male-dominated social groups such as free software programmers (Castells 2001) and members of Wikipedia (Glott, Schmidt, and Ghosh 2010). The features of YouTube culture that differ from the previous digital culture are users' relationships with the body and with gendered identities. As Nakamura states (2008), a male-oriented cyberculture emerged on the text-based Internet that interpreted the online identity as disembodied. In the new millennium, video sharing platforms enable a broader and no longer male-dominated population to share multimedia material. New genres, such as covers, dance videos, and fashion tutorials, are emerging. These genres express the embodied nature of digital identities and make postfeminism, live music, and dance cultures visible online.

[4.4] On YouTube, therefore, spreadability is strictly related to the appropriation of cult bodies embedded in digital video. Amateur, independent producers and pop music stars construct their own cult bodies by deliberately borrowing characteristics from previous media icons and reenacting them in audiovisual productions distributed online. Gaga has become the killer application of YouTube because she performs her celebrity persona as a postfeminist and gay-friendly cult body that can be easily appropriated by different social groups active on YouTube. However, this is always a contradictory dynamic, for two main reasons. First, Gaga's cult body has been designed to both empower postfeminist and gay identities and construct them as target markets. Second, the Gaga persona stimulates appropriation by fans, while her Interscope Records label—like all other major labels—punishes YouTube users who appropriate copyrighted materials by demanding that YouTube delete their productions or their
[4.5] Spreadability is thus an open-ended but also highly contradictory quality. The spreadability of "Telephone" exemplifies this contradiction: Gaga constructs her body by borrowing from previous celebrities, and YouTube users mimic her cult body with both expressive and commercial intent. Gaga redistributes fans' performances in her own digital profiles, thus exploiting her fans' own bodies. But the digital profiles—and thus the identities—of her fans are in danger because YouTube has the right to remove them for copyright infringement if fans share soundtracks without the permission of the rightful owners. From this dynamic arises the following question: who are the rightful owners of digital cult bodies? I have not set out to answer this complex question. Instead, I would argue that the aim of spreadability studies is to highlight the contradictions that both the general public and entertainment professionals face in the contemporary environment. The public should be aware of the media industry's strategies; at the same time, the entertainment industry should be shown the benefits of fan appropriation, so that it will stop creating barriers to it. From a marketing point of view, deleting a derivative video constitutes deciding not to spread a brand. From a sociocultural point of view, however, it stunts the expressivity of different social groups and denies the existence of consumption-based identities that embody the derivative nature of Web 2.0 media cultures.

5. Acknowledgments

[5.1] I would like to thank Luciano Paccagnella and Nancy Baym for introducing me to the pleasure and challenge of Internet research.

6. Works cited


Praxis

Fake and fan film trailers as incarnations of audience anticipation and desire

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[0.1] Abstract—In the lead-up to the release of some feature films, fake and fan trailers are created by users and uploaded to YouTube and other Web sites. These trailers demonstrate that users are literate not only in the form of the trailer itself, but also in the Hollywood system and how it markets products to audiences. Circulating in a networked environment online, these texts, which play with the form of the trailer, perform and embody users' and fans' desire to see not just the feature film but also the official trailer itself. I discuss these fake and fan trailers in relation to cinematic anticipation and describe how they navigate both spatial and temporal bounds. Using the architectural concept of the desire line, I argue that spatial frameworks can be usefully employed to consider how users navigate online spaces, media, and concepts through the form of the trailer.

[0.2] Keywords—Film; Film advertising; Mashup


1. Introduction

[1.1] Anticipation is key to our understanding of cinema. Film trailers embody (or show our lack of) enthusiasm for the release of an upcoming feature film. The role of the trailer was originally to draw audiences back into the theater to see another film, thus providing a perpetual moviegoing audience (Kernan 2004; Johnston 2009). Buzz follows films, and films follow hype; digital spaces and tools of dissemination such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and blogs allow this anticipation to be a visible trace of a network of audience anticipation. A trailer forms only part of the ways audiences perform cinematic anticipation through consumption and production. But increasingly, the trailer is used across multiple sites as an example of a film to share between friends as an embodiment of enthusiasm and anticipation. The release of a cinematic trailer by studios has also become an event; upon its release, a new trailer will be shared through multiple spheres in a culture of anticipation. Audiences have allowed the trailer to be an "early cross-media text" (Johnston 2008, 145), negotiating the
trailer's existence into new media sites. Furthermore, fans and other viewers have negotiated original trailers into their own online spaces. The ease with which trailers have shifted across different media sites demonstrates audiences' willingness to view trailers, problematizing our understanding of the trailer as existing solely within advertising discourses. The presence of the trailer online represents the ways that audiences not only anticipate a film but also perform their desire to others. The trailers I consider here—trailers created by users and shared online—reflect the importance of trailers in the consumption and production of film. The fake and fan trailers I analyze demonstrate the important role that a trailer plays in the temporality of a film's promotional life and how fans and more casual consumers show, through the trailers they create, a desire to see films in a mode of anticipation and excitement long after they have been released.

[1.2] With this anticipation surrounding the release of a feature film, fake and fan trailers play into cinematic discourses of release and hype. They allow creators and consumers to perform their cinematic desire for a film, which may be focused on an actor, a popular book from which the film was adapted, or a director, for example. In some instances, the fake and fan trailers allow consumers and producers to bypass the typical path of promotion by preempting an official trailer with their own. I discuss the various ways in which fake and fan trailers, as performances of cinematic and digital literacy, play with the notions of anticipation, promotion, and hype. Using two case studies—fake trailers for *The Social Network*, (2010) and fan trailers for *Twilight* (2008)—I will present the ways in which trailers on YouTube and other online spaces have formed networks of literacy and anticipation in the lead-up to the release of a feature film. Introducing the concept of the desire line, I will use spatial frameworks to discuss the ways in which both individual and mass desire play out in online spaces through the form of the trailer. The desire line will be used as a frame of reference to show how the fan trailers for *Twilight* and the fake trailers for *The Social Network* bypass the typical path of film promotion and incite others, both spatially and temporally, to create their own trailers.

2. Defining trailers

[2.1] There is a difference between cinematic anticipation and hype, and fake and fan trailers are useful texts with which to analyze this difference. These trailers are typically created by users to be uploaded to YouTube. They can mash up footage from one or more sources to displace the narrative of a movie or to create a new movie that will never exist, such as *Brokeback to the Future*, a mashup of *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and *Back to the Future* (1985), or *Scary Mary Poppins*. They may also use original footage, shot by their creators in order to create a fake sequel to an existing film or a parody of another film's advertising. They demonstrate a high degree of filmic
literacy and knowledge of both the source texts and the ways in which these texts are sold, as well as of the form of the trailer. Fake and fan trailers can be grouped into two broad technical categories: recut trailers and original-footage trailers.

[2.2] Recut trailers take source footage from one or more texts and recut it, either to displace the film's original genre or to create a new film that will never exist. Their name refers to the use of the word *recut* to describe the editing of cinematic texts. An example of a recut trailer is Neochosen's "The Shining Recut" (video 1). I will discuss recut trailers created in the lead-up to the release of *Twilight* and its official trailer.

![The Shining Recut](image)


[2.3] Original-footage trailers, on the other hand, are trailers that use footage that is shot specifically for use in them. They typically parody an existing film or create a spin-off or sequel. An example of an original-footage trailer is "Minesweeper—The Movie," a 2007 vid by CollegeHumor available on YouTube ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHY8NKj3RKs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHY8NKj3RKs)). I will discuss original-footage trailers in relation to the release of *The Social Network*.

[2.4] Fake and fan trailers may each use both recut and original footage. Fake trailers create a film that will never exist and often include footage shot specifically for the trailer. Fan trailers are made for actual movies, use original footage less often, and evoke fan traditions of vidding. Such traditions often involve uncovering a slash storyline, giving a trailer a new soundtrack, or, as I will show, creating trailers for a film before the official trailer has been disseminated to demonstrate the fans' anticipation for the film.

3. Defining anticipation
3.1 The concept of anticipation that I am employing here is not based on one particular study but rather reflects the general use of the word: "I am looking forward to the film coming out; I can't wait for the film to come out." Anticipation is a concept that has not been studied in great detail in relation to cinematic desire and how audiences crave and create texts. I use it in two ways: to refer to how an audience looks forward to a film and actively engages with it prior to seeing it, and to refer to how an audience can predict the content, style, or appearance of the film, and feel familiar with it prior to having seen it. Both of these types of anticipation are present in the case studies I discuss.

3.2 Closely related to the concept of anticipation—and more strongly aligned with cinema—is that of hype. Gray's study of hype for television shows focuses on the role of the advertisement in creating desire for the show. He argues that "hype works best by completely surrounding a text with ads, the goals being not only that as many people as possible will hear about a text, but that they will hear about it from industry-created hype" (2008, 33).

3.3 Two ideas in this passage are important here. First, hype surrounds a text, rather than inhabiting it or existing separately from it. Here, Gray evokes a networked text that hype both takes from and feeds into in a type of feedback loop. Film trailers could be said to relate to a feature film in the same way. Similarly, the unofficial trailers I discuss here surround both the official trailer and the feature film or films they evoke. Second, Gray proposes that the goal of hype and advertising is to allow as many people as possible to hear about a text, while specifying that the hype comes from industry-related sources. The trailers I discuss here do not necessarily reflect either industry intentions to build hype or fan practices. Fans, casual watchers, and people who dislike a film are all able to interact with the hype for it through production and consumption practices. They may simultaneously build hype for a film and deride it, and build hype for a film while portraying another that cannot exist and cannot be advertised but can be anticipated.

3.4 Gray argues that "hype aims to be the first word on any text, so that it creates excitement, working to create frames through which we can make sense of the text before even consuming it" (2008, 34). This is similar to arguments made by Burgin, who claims that film promotion allows a film to "spill its contents into the stream of everyday life" (2004, 14), resulting in a potential viewer being familiar with a film before having seen it. Similarly, Kernan outlines how film trailers can make viewers "nostalgic" for a film that they have not yet seen (2004, 208). Nostalgia for a film that a viewer has not yet seen not only demonstrates familiarity with a film, but also highlights how hype is traditionally understood as being created by studios in order to build anticipation—the trailers allow the audience to enter the world of the film before...
they consume the feature, allowing them both to look forward to the film and to anticipate its contents. I use anticipation to demonstrate the ways in which audiences, as producers, consumers, and sometimes fans, build, enact, and perform their interest in a feature film or trailer.

4. Anticipation and the desire line

[4.1] A "desire line" or "desire path" is a path that deviates from the paved or prescribed path (Tiessen 2007). A desire line can be created for a number of reasons: it may be more direct or more scenic, or it may even be arbitrary. The desire line is determined as much by the individual as it is by mass desire; once one person creates the path, other people are likely to take it, and the path is more likely to become an obvious deviation in the landscape.

![Figure 1. Desire line. Author's own, Sweden, 2010. [View larger image.]](image)

[4.2] The desire line can be used as a framework to analyze the meaning, purpose, and popularity of these trailers. If we take a paved path as a metaphor for the typical path of promotion for a feature film, the desire line can be seen as the ways in which users of the space between a feature, a cinema, and promotional texts wish to perform and enact their desires. One of these ways can be the fake or fan trailer. In this instance, sometimes there is no end product, no feature film that can be obtained and consumed, as is the case with fake trailers. The end point of a fake trailer's desire
line is not to bypass or speed up the typical path of film promotion. Instead, as there is no actual film, fake trailers suggest films that can never exist. Their creators wish only to revel in anticipation of what can never be obtained.

[4.3] According to Carl Myhill, the term desire line "originates from the field of urban planning and has been around for almost a hundred years." Myhill claims that desire lines "are an ultimate expression of human desire or natural purpose" and have been used in urban planning. For example, official paths across New York's Central Park were not laid down until individuals had been allowed to walk freely through it, and the official paths followed their desire lines (2004, 293).

[4.4] Myhill discusses the role of desire lines in understanding potential in design. Tiessen takes the concept of desire lines outside of the bounds of design or architecture, and instead discusses how they "compel...us to follow particular trajectories as we go about our everyday lives" (2007, ¶1). He argues,

[4.5] Conventionally desire lines are defined by architects and urban planners as those trampled-down footpaths that deviate from official (i.e. pre-planned and paved) directional imperatives. These pathways of desire—physically inscribed on the earth due to the passage of people—cut across the fields of university campuses, they carve up the urban grid, they exceed the boundaries of the sidewalk; in so doing desire lines express the excess that premeditated constructions cannot foresee or contain. Frequently, desire lines are regarded as "eye-sores" by city planners—as "scars upon the landscape"; however, they can also be thought of as solutions to the problem of how to efficiently and pleasurably respond to and navigate the terrain that constitutes our sensorially mediated world. (2007, ¶1)

[4.6] The desire line is an important indication of not only efficiency and pleasure, but also play. It indicates anticipation of a path's end point. The desire lines that involve the spilling of people outside the bounds of the paved path to create scars on the landscape are interesting because they also indicate the role that pleasure, popularity, and use play in everyday environments and actions.

[4.7] Tiessen suggests that desire lines not only indicate human desire, or "merely a material expression of some aspect of the human imagination," but that they are

[4.8] the product of an earth—a natural environment—that desires us, an earth that beckons to us and that offers to us new pathways and potential circuits that expand the interconnected network—the interdependent relationship—between us and itself. To trace a desire line, then, is to
respond to an invitation, to accept that a particular trajectory has been revealed. (2007, ¶2)

[4.9] Thus, desire lines reflect the "give and take that already exists between people and their environment" (Tiessen 2007, ¶2). The unique positioning of individuals between their potential as consumers of cinema and their potential as producers of cinematic texts against the space of the cinema can be related to the give and take between the individual and environment that Tiessen discusses. They give by engaging with studio-produced hype and studio-endorsed trailers, and they take by using those elements to create new paths of desire. Trailers do not merely sell cinema to an audience; they are also a space for audiences to enact and perform their desire and anticipation for, and also their rejection of, cinematic modes of technology, narrative, and star appeal. A desire line also is a performance of anticipation: an anticipation of what is to come, and an anticipation of time and space, that come from familiarity with environments.

[4.10] The spatial environment of the cinema and the cinematic is important to consider here. Not only has the space of the cinema traditionally dictated our social and technological understanding of the cinematic, but cinema itself has spilled outside the walls of the theater and is an integral part of urban life. As film promotion is part of the everyday, the cinematic is integrated with the city. As trailers and films moved into the domestic sphere through VHS and television, they became part of our understanding of home cinema. The entry of the trailer into online spaces, and thus its availability for digital manipulation by amateurs, also points to the ways in which we integrate the cinematic into new spaces. This integration is driven not only by technology, but also by consumers and their desires. The typical path of film promotion invites play and pleasure; the methods of dissemination of promotional texts demonstrate and reflect use; and the technological capabilities that online spaces and services provide invite play with modes of anticipation and promotion.

[4.11] The desire line indicates the alteration of our environments by usage and desire. Just as a user who creates a trailer may bypass a paved path of promotion dictated by the studio, so too can a desire line show us the ways that people use space, where they congregate and where they deviate from the expected. The desire line also indicates anticipation or imagination of the content of a space (in order to create a shortcut, for example). We interact with the cinematic space by using a similar imagination. Jonathan Gray argues, "We may in time resist this, by not 'judging the book by its cover' or not 'believing the hype,' but first the cover and the hype tell us what to expect, fashion our excitement and/or apprehension, and begin to tell us what a text is all about, calling for our identification with and interpretation of that text before we have even seemingly arrived at the text" (2008, 34).
Gray's discussion of the way that promotional materials attempt to direct our meaning-making processes can be related both to the trailer and to the concept of the desire line. Gray suggests that we may resist the meanings proposed by promotional materials, but the fake and fan trailers indicate that those meanings can be appropriated, played with, and subverted. Just as, spatially, the desire line shows that prescriptions of meaning and experience can be subverted, the trailers I discuss also show subversion, even if it is slight. Studios wish to direct audiences' excitement, but audiences are also capable of directing and marking their own desire and anticipation.

5. Analyzing networks of anticipation

I next present two case studies through which to discuss the role of anticipation in fake and fan trailers. I analyze the trailers' connection to the release of feature films and the space of the cinema in relation to the framework of the desire line and shifting temporality. Furthermore, I draw upon modes of cinematic anticipation that demonstrate how these trailers belong not just to fans, but also to antifans (those who actively engage in derision of the text), nonfans, and casual consumers. By playing with the genres of film promotion, the fake and fan trailers become performances of knowledge of and intimacy with the Hollywood system. They also evidence a desire to share this knowledge. Capitalizing on the ways in which people seek out trailers, their makers use tags and YouTube's ability to suggest related videos to users to rapidly create a network of knowledge and capital surrounding the original trailer (which itself may not even have been released yet, as was the case with *Twilight*). Fake and fan trailers thus promote what I call a network of literacy. YouTube's "related video" function also creates an instant community; a line can be traced from one fake or fan trailer to others, as well as to the films and trailers they evoke. Each fake or fan trailer is thus situated in the context of others, to which it is linked not only by the films they all invoke but also by the practices by which they are made: recutting or using original footage.

6. Fidelity and temporality in *Twilight* fan trailers

Once the cast of *Twilight* was announced, a number of users on YouTube created trailers, on the basis of their knowledge of the book, that sought to mimic what the eventual official trailer might look like. Collating and editing footage from press spots, advertisements, and other films that the cast had appeared in, and so forth, they employed features of the trailer form, such as nondiegetic sound and text, in order to create an appropriate atmosphere for *Twilight*. Through these trailers, they attempted to embody how they viewed the *Twilight* narrative world, and fans of that world were able to exhibit their knowledge of it in their shared enjoyment of the
trailers. Makers of the trailers used music, title text, and other elements to situate the world of *Twilight* within a mode of anticipation. Their anticipation can be seen both in their looking forward to the release of the official trailer and the film itself and in their confidence, based on their intimate knowledge of the books, about what the trailer would look like. However, the producers of these fan trailers weren't striving for fidelity to the eventual feature film itself. They were concerned with performing their anticipation for it, and with being able to anticipate *Twilight* in cinematic form after anticipating it through the *Twilight* books.

![FAN MADE Twilight Trailer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Video2 "Fan Made Twilight Trailer," Linzellovestwilight, 2007.)

[6.2] Like many fan texts, these trailers were ways their creators performed their status as fans to the community of fans, who would discover the fan trailers as their own anticipation for the feature film spurred them to search for the official trailer. These trailers also provided a space for commentary among fans, showing how anticipation gathers momentum when shared among like-minded people.

[6.3] Kernan argues that

[6.4] as nostalgic texts that paradoxically appeal to audiences' idealized memories of films they haven't seen yet, [trailers] attract audiences not only to themselves (as attractions), nor even only to the attractions within the individual films they promote, but to an ever renewed and renewable desire for cinematic attraction per se. Like magnets, they attract (or occasionally, repel) in an attempt to draw bodies to a center, assembling their assumed audiences in a suspended state of present-tense readiness for a future that is always deferred. (2004, 208)
The fan trailers for *Twilight* demonstrate that audiences have memories of films they have not yet seen, and that these memories are attractions in themselves. Kernan's proposal that trailers draw bodies to a center with a "readiness for a future that is always deferred" does not appear to be as true of fan *Twilight* trailers as it is of other recut trailers that create a film that will never exist. However, *Twilight* and other feature films for which fan trailers are made do not and cannot exist as the fan trailers present them.

The success of some trailers that build or work with anticipation is dependent on the temporal bounds of the way the trailer is watched: as a route between a point A and a point B in a path. The paradoxical nature of this anticipation ensures that much of the cultural capital of the *Twilight* fan trailers is short lived; once the real trailer is released, the fan trailers become antiquated and criticized, although they continue to exist, archived on YouTube. They no longer fit on the typical film promotion path because they no longer promote a forthcoming film, and fans can now compare them both to the official trailer and to the feature film itself. Once the official trailer and the film have been released, comments on fan trailers created earlier tend to deride the lack of knowledge and skills exhibited by their creators. The makers of these trailers often annotate their videos to show that they are aware that their creations are not faithful to the end product but are prescribed and encoded in a particular mode of anticipation. These trailers rely upon certain temporal conditions in order to make meaning for some fans or even for casual viewers.

Categorization of uploaded videos is encouraged by YouTube's architecture, and properly categorizing a video increases its likelihood of attracting viewers. *Twilight* fans tagged their videos in a variety of ways, hoping to reach their intended audience but also to provide caveats to their viewers, encouraging them to encode the video within a specific temporal boundary. Video titles tended not to use the word *fan*; instead, most titles signaled a concern with fidelity by calling the video a "*Twilight* trailer." Most commonly, the video's description, and sometimes its annotations, alerted the viewer that the video was fan made. For some of these trailers, such a note was unnecessary at the time of their release because there was no official trailer.
These annotations and descriptions have been added in response to critiques of the inaccuracy of the videos, such as the following comment left in 2010 on a *Twilight* fan trailer from 2008:

[6.8] Uhh...I hate to rain on your parade, but it sucks! I mean, wtf is going on?!?!?! Nothing is even remotely like the movies, the actors don’t look alike, etc, etc, etc—I could go on FOREVER!

[6.9] This comment is symptomatic of comments I have observed on *Twilight* fan trailers since 2009. They function both as critiques of the techniques used by the creator and as insults to their fannishness; by pointing out inaccuracies, the commenters assert themselves as more intimate with the text, and thus more capable of being a fan. People who are familiar with the practices of fan trailers and fan vids generally leave comments complimenting or debating creative choices in the video (generally in an amicable way), or discussing the types of software used to recut and splice the source footage.

[6.10] The *Twilight* trailers often formed part of a competition started by a YouTube user. These competitions embody the one-upmanship that is often visible in fan trailers. They are similar to the circumstances that generate a desire line, where one person taking a path can incite others to do the same, creating a scar on the landscape as a result of use and desire. While running a competition is an obvious call to arms, summoning other users, as a fan community, to create texts, the spatial elements of YouTube also allow others who are not part of that community to be involved in this type of creativity. Using the metaphor of the desire line, we can say that these consumers follow the path created by others, deviating from the paved or promoted path, and engage in the modes of play and deviation as others have before them. While following that path, the creators of trailers reference the original path but exist on a different one, engaging with each other in a shared narrative and temporal space.

[6.11] The competitiveness of these trailers also indicates the media literacy involved in their creation and dissemination; knowing who the cast members are is integral to understanding the trailers, and the comments on them become a place where users can share information about actors who have been cast and debate their merits, offer alternative casting suggestions, and describe how they pictured the *Twilight* characters while reading the books. Such conversations, then, not only are about fidelity but also acknowledge the differences in aesthetic interpretation among fans, while still subjecting those interpretations to taste judgments.

7. Social networks, speed, and literacy
In 2010, a trailer appeared for the widely anticipated "Facebook movie," written by Aaron Sorkin and directed by David Fincher, which chronicled the life of Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg. Its teasers (shorter versions of trailers that often use only a small amount of footage—if any—from the feature) and trailers presented very different versions of what *The Social Network* would look like and be about; the teasers did not include live-action footage and presented *The Social Network* as a film embedded in Facebook's architecture and history, whereas the trailer introduced live action, depicting the film as a sprawling epic retelling one man's rise to success.


In the trailer, a choral version of Radiohead's "Creep" accompanies scenes of high tension in boardrooms and bedrooms, and text that will become easily identifiable appears on the screen: "You don't get to 300 million friends...without making a few enemies." Before the release of the feature film, many original-footage fake trailers were made and distributed through YouTube as well as some commercial sites, and some recut trailers appeared on YouTube. In this section I discuss the speed of the dissemination of the Social Network trailers, and the ways in which they exhibited and played with notions of online literacy and knowledge of online environments. Furthermore, the Social Network trailers sought to parody a film that had not yet been released and to demonstrate familiarity with not only the story line but also the stylistic elements of the film. The Social Network was being anticipated, in both meanings of the word. Unlike the fan trailers for Twilight, these trailers were created by people who appeared to be skeptical about the content of the film as well as the way it was being sold to its potential audiences.

The fake Social Network trailers, some of which used original footage and some of which recut existing footage, sought to use the stylistic elements of the official Social Network trailer and apply its narrative to other Web sites and services, such as Twitter, YouTube, 4chan, Ping, eBay, and MySpace, as well as to "Facebook the Movie" itself. They differed in the types of humor that they were seeking to convey. For instance, one posited the introduction of Facebook's "poke" and "like" functions into ordinary off-line situations. More commonly, however, the fake trailers sought to create a narrative and mythology for the Web site of their choice based on its architecture and, more importantly, its use. This emphasis reflects the change from the teasers, which presented The Social Network as a film about Facebook, to the trailer, which presented it as a film about Facebook's creator and the intensity of his life. Popular moments in a Web site's history became dramatic turning points in these new imagined films. The trailers were performances of Internet literacy and reflections on Internet culture, historicizing popular Web sites and placing them within the mythologizing that was evident in the Social Network trailer.
The *Social Network* trailers demonstrate the perplexing temporal position that trailers and other items in networked environments, such as memes, enjoy within a network. The *Social Network* trailers were historicized almost instantaneously, with comments on Twitter, technology sites, blogs, and traditional news outlets charting their spread. This occurred before there were a large number of these trailers (there were far more for *Inception* and *Twilight*), and yet it was reported as a phenomenon that had exploded overnight. Such hyperbole perhaps signals more about the authors' attitudes toward Internet-based fads, for which a movie about a site on the Internet is an easy scapegoat. The commentary, particularly from traditional news outlets and technology sites, was generalized, exaggerated, and brief. Rather than reflecting on the reasons why these trailers might be so quick in appearing, it tended to attribute their spread to a "community" (Wee 2010), to "the good people of the Internet" (Abrams 2010), to "comedians" and "pranksters" (The List 2010), or even to "the Internet" itself (Valentino-DeVries 2010). There is a sense in these articles that the trailers had been orchestrated and planned, rather than being made by individuals who fed each other's creativity. The interest in the trailers, as opposed to other recut or fan creations, can be seen as privileging originally shot trailers over those that recut existing footage. Reporters deemed the trailers "hilarious," creative, and clever (Abrams 2010; McCarthy 2010), and credited them with feeding the "hype" for *The Social Network* (Wee 2010; McCarthy 2010). This raises questions about how authorship is understood in the creation and circulation of fake trailers. The disparity between news articles' description of the authors of these texts as a community, or as the Internet itself, and individual authors' and small groups signing their own work with a username reflects the difficulty of defining the trailers and suggests that they
exist beyond the notions of author and text, and exist more comfortably when understood as a network.

[7.5] These reports showed a lack of understanding of both the temporal unfolding of the trailers and their quantity. In the Wall Street Journal, Jennifer Valentino-DeVries wrote about the "evolution" of these trailers while naming only two (The Video Website and Twitter), yet she claimed that "the possibilities are endless—as long as they keep using that awesome choral version of Radiohead's 'Creep'" (2010). On Penn Olson, a technology site, Willis Wee claimed 2 days later that these trailers constituted a "boom" while also only listing the same two (2010). Eight days after that, Drew Grant, a journalist for Crushable, implored the end of the trailers to come soon ("But can we just call it quits now?") while linking to five parodies of the Social Network trailer (2010). Within days of the first fake trailer's appearance, most articles discussing them put forward the "best" examples, often only listing two or three. This selectivity indicates that the authors expected the trailers to spread and multiply on YouTube, together with the hype that surrounded them. Just as the trailers give "free publicity" to The Social Network (Wee 2010), so too do articles anticipating a "boom" of trailers appearing so rapidly "we can hardly keep track" (Huffington Post 2010) create publicity and viewers for trailers, which in turn are likely to encourage others to create their own.

[7.6] The speed at which the Social Network trailers appeared and were discussed is fitting for a film about online culture. The story's manipulation into an epic by the film's screenwriter and director was destined to be met with cynicism, particularly as the film's promotional discourse altered so greatly in the lead-up to the film's release.

Referred to simultaneously as both the "Facebook movie" and the movie about the life of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, the film appeared to also historicize something that was currently happening; this attempt to both be nostalgic for the present and anticipate the past demonstrates the complex temporality behind the trailer.

[7.7] Considered within the framework of the desire line, the *Social Network* trailers blazed a path away from that of the official trailer and teasers. However, unlike that marked out by the *Twilight* trailers, this path did intersect with the official path at several points, responding to the change in the film's marketing between the teasers and the trailer. The creators of the fake trailers took elements of the official trailer and applied them to different online spaces, suggesting that Zuckerberg's story was universal where the official trailer attempted to sell it as exceptional. The *Social Network* trailers that applied the template of the film's story, as told in the trailer, to the story of other Web sites drew audiences' attention to other online spaces.

[7.8] Comparing the *Social Network* trailers with the *Twilight* trailers, we can see two very different types of competitiveness and improvement at play. The *Social Network* trailers that imagined a similar movie about another Web service, such as Twitter or YouTube, were limited in the scope of their paths; there are only so many Web sites that can be used in such a story line for comic effect. The comedy in them was created by the absurdity of the idea of a film about such Web sites. The *Twilight* trailers, however, were made to enact and perform fannishness for a text, and to allow their makers to share with other fans how they pictured the world of *Twilight*. The two sets of trailers perform two different types of literacy. The *Social Network* trailers were concerned with demonstrating literacy in film and intimate knowledge of the official trailer, as well as knowledge of online culture and the history of popular Web sites, and the ability to create humor. The *Twilight* trailers, by comparison, were concerned with performing insider knowledge about the casting of the upcoming feature, knowledge of the books, and knowledge of previous films that the cast members had appeared in, as well as demonstrating technical capabilities to other fans. In both cases, we see anticipation played out both in the expectation of the upcoming film and in playing with the notions of cinematic desire and anticipation for a feature film. While the fan trailers for *Twilight* demonstrate anticipation among fans who obviously want to consume the film itself, in the fake trailers for *The Social Network*, we can see anticipation for the film but also, increasingly, anticipation for the spread of memes. The official trailers for *The Social Network* were themselves anticipated, in that they were looked forward to and expected, and this reflects the importance of the trailer to our understanding of cinematic desire and anticipation.

[7.9] Tryon argues that "instead of anticipating upcoming films, most fake trailers mock the rhetoric of anticipation using the clichés commonly associated with movie
trailers and advertisements" (2009, 161). While I've argued that the fake and fan trailers for The Social Network and Twilight do exhibit anticipation for the release of the feature films they correspond to, those for The Social Network in particular rely upon mocking trailer rhetoric—that is, mocking the ways that a story is sold to an audience. Fake trailers, however, can also show anticipation, even if that anticipation is played with. By differentiating anticipation from hype as something that comes from audiences (rather than, like hype, from studios) and is encouraged by spatiality and temporality, we can see anticipation at play in these trailers, whether they mock or demonstrate only deep adoration.

8. Conclusion

[8.1] There are many different ways in which anticipation can be performed and enacted and embodied. I have considered how anticipation relates to both temporality and space and have argued that anticipation should be considered when discussing how audiences interact with filmic texts, rather than how studios create hype. This anticipation need not be focused only on a film that can be released in cinemas; it can also be directed toward a fake film that is created by the trailer. This creation of anticipation is different from the creation of hype by studios (for example, by releasing a new DVD edition of an older film) and demonstrates audiences' desire to see the film not only in new spaces, but in new narratives and temporal bounds as well. Although trailers are often thought of as advertising an end product, these trailers function beyond the realm of the advertisement and instead suggest that the trailer lasts beyond the release of the feature, not only as an artifact but as a cultural object that can be integrated into new spaces and as a form in which to enact desires for future texts.

9. Works cited


1. Introduction

[1.1] In an interview with Henry Jenkins, Jonathan McIntosh named fannish vidding (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vidding) as a key influence on two of his more recent video remixes: "Buffy vs Edward: Twilight Remixed" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZwM3GvaTRM) and "Donald Duck Meets Glenn Beck" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfuwNU0jsk0) (McIntosh 2010). And I think it's worth looking in more detail at precisely how these two videos intertwine vidding (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vidding) practices with those of political remix video (http://www.politicalremixvideo.com/what-is-political-remix) (PRV), and to what effect.

[1.2] By combining a vider's eye for narrative and characterization with the critical media pairings typical of PRVs, McIntosh achieves an effect that I'm describing here as a two-source illusion. He mines choice bits from the noisy barrage of commercial media and sculpts them into a pair of evocative fictive worlds that can be critically weighed against each other. This two-source illusion demonstrates for PRVs what scholars like Francesca Coppa have long noted about vids: that affective and critical
relationships with mass media do not have to cancel each other out, but can in fact be leveraged in each other's favor.

2. Critical pairings

[2.1] McIntosh operates principally within the formal traditions of political remix video—a term in fact coined by McIntosh himself, but that fits into a history that long predates his work (McIntosh provides a history of PRV in this issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures*). Eli Horwatt (2009) has written in detail about a number of the traditions of politicized appropriation art that have come to inform today's PRVs. He traces the practice back to Soviet Union propagandists of the early 20th century, who reedited Hollywood films to transmit communist ideology. Through the Situationists of the 1960s and the culture jammers of the 1980s, Horwatt eventually reaches the performance groups Negativland and Emergency Broadcast Network (EBN), whose work in the 1990s popularized a set of remix approaches that McIntosh took up himself and that still characterize PRVs today.

[2.2] Many of Horwatt's examples share a particular formal technique that is common to PRVs: they organize their subject matter into sets of two. Horwatt's own focus is on "incendiary juxtapositions of pop-culture and the military industrial complex" (2009, 79), with examples that include EBN's 1991 mix of gulf war footage with overproduced corporate entertainment (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_KAkENkfqg), and McIntosh's 2003 juxtaposition of Kodak commercials with images of Iraqi victims of the second gulf war (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFesRfyFrrY).

[2.3] These sorts of critical pairings can involve other types of footage, creating opportunities to highlight the media's ties to forms of systemic power besides the military-industrial complex. Bryan Boyce's "Special Report" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t382xJWGwvs) skewers media fearmongering by remixing television news with the overblown horror dialogue of '50s B movies (Horwatt 2009, 79). Elisa Kreisinger confronts the patriarchy of the culture industry with a remix that mashes, in her words, "corporate medias over sexualized depiction of women with a trailer for the misogynistic horror flick, 'Captivity!'" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7EfhumL4yo).
All of these remixes have this in common: each juxtaposes two different media sources in a way that condemns them both. Hollywood spectacle is paired with imperialism and patriarchy; hyperconsumerism is linked with wars of aggression; for-profit news reporting is implicated in sensationalist and alienating propaganda. By pairing the media representations, the remixer highlights their collusion in the project of domination, and both sources are damned as "the repressive fictions of corporate media's Magic Kingdom," as culture-jamming theorist Mark Dery put it in 1993 (11).

These critical pairings characterized McIntosh's earlier work: 2003's "War on Terror Sports" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pj1MHXBWq2A) sets the US occupation of Iraq to the audio track of a football commercial. Another 2003 video mixes George W. Bush's military aggression with a Burger King advertisement (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ic3yEfx93M) (as a voice-over narrator describes Bush as a man who "fights for something more," the remix cuts to a pair of sizzling hamburger patties). McIntosh's later remixes still feature critical juxtapositions (Buffy the Vampire Slayer paired with Twilight, Disney cartoons paired with Glenn Beck). But these remixes no longer completely condemn both their sources. Instead, they engage in a more intricate form of criticism by drawing on the formal strategies of vidding.

3. The vidder's eye

I'd like to focus on two practices that McIntosh borrows from vidders in his later PRVs: narrative and characterization. Narrative is rare in PRVs, which often imitate montage-oriented forms like commercials, music videos, or channel surfing. All of the PRVs I mentioned above do so, except "Buffy vs Edward" and "Donald Duck Meets
Glenn Beck." Henry Jenkins offers a useful description of how this sort of pastiche differs from vidding practices:

[3.2] If MTV is a postmodern art of pastiche that isolates images from their original context(s) and unmoors them from their previous associations, fan video is an art of quotation that anchors its images to a referent, either drawn from the fans' meta-textual understanding of the series characters and their universe...or assigned them within the construction of a new narrative. (1992, 234)

[3.3] One great recent example of such a reworked narrative is Laura Shapiro's 2010 vid "Hurricane," which Anita Sarkeesian tidily describes in a recent blog post (2011): "Hurricane combines source material from the reimagined Battlestar Galactica and the cult hit Farscape, to create an alternative universe in which Kara 'Starbuck' Thrace and Aeryn Sun, both fighter pilots on their respective shows, meet in an intergalactic bar" (video 2). If you watch this vid, notice how its two characters are made to interact with each other by means of carefully edited cutaways. This is one of the techniques I'm referring to when I talk about a vidder's deployment of characterization.


[3.4] By characterization, I mean that salient realist concept that still fuels so much prose fiction, poetry, cinema, and other art: aesthetic conventions that relate "people's attitudes and actions to the customs and climate from which they spring" (Gardner 1991, 47).
Characterization in vids often requires the vidder to mine countless hours of footage in order to isolate brief moments of emotion or interaction that can then be hacked to either celebrate or modify a favorite character (Coppa 2008). Two popular vids by Killa and T. Jonesy offer a good indication of the extent to which characters can be hacked through the practice of fannish remix. Working with the same characters—Kirk and Spock—Killa and T. Jonesy have produced both "When I'm 64" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDyguTDEkyw), a disarmingy sweet and goofy portrait of the two characters' long-standing love, and the widely discussed "Closer" (http://www.blip.tv/file/2289542), described by the Organization for Transformative Works as "a Star Trek vid that eroticizes violent encounters between the characters Kirk and Spock...It is a disquieting vid for many fans, but it is meant to be" (OTW, n.d.).

Characterization, especially that which portrays characters with the kind of sympathy we see in vidding, is also rare in PRVs, perhaps because of the genre's descent from traditions of appropriation (like culture jamming) that take an antagonistic stance toward their source material. Indeed, when McIntosh (2010) himself mentions that, unlike vidders, political remixers "often have a relationship of ridicule or animosity to their source," he touches on a tension between fans and culture jammers that has come up before.

In a response to Mark Dery's 1993 article on culture jamming, Jenkins (n.d.) offers one description of how their attitudes toward the media have distinguished fans from jammers:

Unlike the other jammers he discusses, however, fans do not see television content as "ugly, dull and boring" or necessarily see themselves as acting in opposition to dominant media institutions. Fans would strongly disagree with Mark Crispin Miller, who Dery quotes sympathetically as explaining, "TV has no spontaneous defenders, because there is almost nothing in it to defend."

But perhaps Jenkins has drawn the line a little too thickly between jammers and fans. Why can't we preserve the project of disrupting TV's injustices while keeping the parts of it that we love, even if Dery's article offers little help with doing so? In her discussion of several of the women who pioneered vidding practices, Francesca Coppa reminds us that visceral affect and critical analysis not only can coexist, but can work together in tandem: "While vidders make an infinite variety of arguments about the television shows and films they love—theorizing about characters, fleshing out relationships, emphasizing homoerotics, picking apart nuances of plot and theme—these arguments frequently articulate alternative perspectives, particularly in terms of
gender and sexuality" (2008, ¶5.1). It is this sort of interplay between affect and criticism that we see in "Buffy vs Edward" and "Donald Duck Meets Glenn Beck."

4. The two-source illusion

[4.1] Immerged in the traditions of PRV, McIntosh has only been able to borrow from vidding in very broad terms. Coppa (2010) has named poetry as the artistic form that best resembles vidding's narrative style—vids navigate the tensions and connections between lyrics, images, and shared fandoms to engage in a range of meaning making that covers both the narrative and the lyrical. In "Buffy vs Edward" and "Donald Duck Meets Glenn Beck," McIntosh employs a comparatively prosaic means of building his narrative: the closest structural equivalent for both remixes is the narrative short film, complete with a three-act plot that reaches a climax. McIntosh is not the only remixer to take a "short-filmish" approach to his PRVs (see, for example, Elisa Kreisinger's Queer Carrie series) (http://elisakreisinger.wordpress.com/projects/queercarrieproject), but the remixes do deviate from the typically montage-oriented formats of many PRVs.

[4.2] "Buffy vs Edward" lifts the character Edward Cullen out of his role as the lead vampire in the Twilight films and drops him into the television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Edward targets the show's title character, Buffy Summers, as a potential love interest, using the same brand of domineering courtship tactics that work so well for him within the Twilight franchise. While a vid (http://fanlore.org/wiki/Vid) might build such an alternative narrative by selecting a new song for the music track and using its lyrics to comment on the remixed video footage (Coppa 2008), McIntosh's "Buffy vs Edward" relies mainly on edits to the sources' dialogue. Through various manipulations of the audio and video of his sources, McIntosh builds new scenes where Buffy and Edward speak directly to each other and respond to each other's actions.

[4.3] Within this remixed narrative, Buffy consistently shuts Edward down, and as his harassment escalates, the consequences he suffers get more harsh. The narrative increasingly unveils and condemns the sexism that is celebrated without question within the commercial novels and films of the Twilight franchise, and McIntosh further leverages his criticism by hacking his characters so that Edward's behavior receives the scorn it deserves.

[4.4] By hacking together selected bits of footage from Twilight, the first film of the series, McIntosh changes Edward Cullen from a smoldering, sparkly antihero into a self-obsessed stalker who's prone to throwing tantrums. Buffy Summers reacts to him with disdain and dwindling patience, assertively rebuking his every self-indulgence. McIntosh sculpts these performances out of countless media fragments, which include
not only suitable clips of dialogue, but also brief clips of rolled eyes, glares, furrowed brows, and other reaction shots. This method recalls the same labor-intensive studies that many fannish vidders make of their own favorite characters (Jenkins 1992, 228). In fact, McIntosh (2009) turned to fan-written transcripts to help him find some of the clips he needed. Within the remix, we're encouraged to cheer Buffy on as she deftly repels Edward's bullshit, and this sympathetic portrayal leverages McIntosh's critique of the Twilight franchise. As McIntosh (2009) puts it, "the audience is not supposed to go 'Oh, see how TV is stupid?' They're supposed to go 'Oh, see how Buffy was awesome!'"

[4.5] But in trying to remix a limited palette of extant footage into a 6-minute short film that prioritizes narrative and character, McIntosh does encounter certain obstacles. In filmmaking terms, these obstacles could be described as continuity errors: unexplained changes in wardrobe, hairstyles, lighting, and so on. It is here that the "critical pairing" conventions of PRV can provide an organizing principle for all the disparate pieces of video.

[4.6] As I mentioned above, "Buffy vs Edward" employs the familiar PRV technique of juxtaposing two different media texts. From the straightforward dualism of the title to the contrasting color schemes of each character's footage (orange hues for Buffy, blue ones for Edward), the remix repeatedly prompts us to compare one source to the other.

[4.7] But it is, of course, an illusion that McIntosh is only mixing two sources. In addition to using footage from Twilight, "Buffy vs Edward" includes footage from 36 different episodes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and a bit of a Harry Potter movie. Rigorously interweaving PRV and vidding strategies, McIntosh takes countless disjointed fragments of footage and gathers them into two separate and cohesive piles. Weighing these two constructions against each other offers us new ways to analyze the characters, tropes, and politics of the original sources.

[4.8] "Buffy vs Edward" has been discussed in relation to the vidding subgenre of constructed reality (http://fanlore.org/wiki/Constructed_reality)—vids that edit footage to create a new fictional reality by tweaking locations and characters, or changing plot details, or blending multiple fandoms, or remixing in some other way. But perhaps McIntosh's remix can be better understood as a constructed pair of realities that build the footage into a pair of cohesive fictive worlds that can be compared and contrasted. While vids like Shapiro's "Hurricane" make meaning by expertly blending disparate footage into a single alternate universe, "Buffy vs Edward" repeatedly signals its juxtaposition of two separate universes.
The two-source illusion we find in "Buffy vs Edward" recalls vidding's frequently "complex interrelation between love and critique, aesthetic distance and affect" (Busse 2010). The remix's PRV-style critical pairing gives us a sense of cohesion firm enough for us to believe in the hacked performances of the narrative, and the fact that it is structured like a short film intensifies its criticism. Affect is deployed in the service of analysis, while analytical constructions help us generate affect. And while this intermingling is quite robust in "Buffy vs Edward," it becomes even more so with "Donald Duck Meets Glenn Beck."

The 8-minute "Donald Duck Meets Glenn Beck" remix is more technically ambitious than its predecessor, combining clips from over 50 Disney films with countless Glenn Beck audio snippets. It also employs a firmer method of delineating each side of its critical pairing: all the remix's visuals are from Disney, while Glenn Beck intrudes on Donald's world only by means of audio. Most noteworthy, however, is the increased complexity with which the two media texts interact in a shifting relationship of sympathy and criticism.

Again following the model of narrative short film, McIntosh casts Donald Duck as an anger-prone, laid-off worker who falls for the paranoid racism of media personality and Tea Party hero Glenn Beck. The remix gives a sympathetic account of the kind of socioeconomic turmoil that can make Beck's poison seem palatable.

To a certain extent, the characterization in this remix operates similarly to that of "Buffy vs Edward"—our sympathy for Donald functions to undercut Glenn Beck's phony populism. What is different is that despite being the remix's protagonist, Donald is not spared criticism when he deserves it. This development can be attributed more or less directly to McIntosh's further exchanges with vidding after he completed "Buffy vs Edward." That remix prompted some interesting discussions within fan communities, which included feedback from fan scholar Kristina Busse (2010): "As much as I appreciate Jonathan's remix, Buffy vs Edward, I have discussed with him the way he appropriates one text nearly uncritically to make fun of the other." Busse points out that love of the source material is a crucial component of vidding, but she adds that many vidders reach "beyond [that love] and analyze, interpret, and criticize" their "fannish objects."

McIntosh (2010) himself has recently agreed that vidding's long-standing interchanges between love and critique offer a subtle way of engaging with the problematic sources of different fandoms, and now we see this principle at play in his characterization of Donald. If Buffy escapes criticism in McIntosh's remix, Donald Duck certainly does not.
While Donald's economic frustration is portrayed sympathetically, no sympathy is extended to his racist reaction to Glenn Beck's rhetoric. As Beck's hateful monologues reach a fever pitch, Donald's resulting paranoia is illustrated with some of Disney's most shameful portrayals of racist stereotypes.

By shifting in this way between sympathy and criticism, McIntosh's critique takes on more significance. The popular appeal of Disney's iconic artwork and characters contrasts with Glenn Beck's cynical populist facade. And when we see Disney's racist visuals working in concert with Beck's rants, both sources are implicated in the same system of white privilege. This remix goes beyond merely targeting Glenn Beck, focusing instead on his role within broader systems of domination. The remix acknowledges the legitimate grievances of Tea Party sympathizers (Rothschild 2010) while condemning the movement's white supremacist politics (Wise 2010). It paints a detailed picture of the media's role in turning social and economic devastation to oppressive purposes.

5. Conclusion

Coppa points out that vidders have long been comfortable with combining affect and analysis: "Most fan works seek to unite the analytical mind and the desiring body in order to create a total female subjectivity" (2008, ¶2.19). By adapting the vidder's analytical and affective eye for narrative and characterization, McIntosh has built on the critical pairings typical of PRVs, expanding them into pairs of pop culture worlds that can be compared and contrasted. This interplay between celebratory and oppositional aesthetics reminds us that there are some priorities shared between those remixers who aim to disrupt the mass media and those who actively engage with that same media within a community of fans: each of these practices emerges from the impulse to draw from the media that pervades our lives and turn it to suit our own purposes.

As the cross-pollination between different remixing traditions continues and the resulting aesthetic resources grow more robust, we may find that remix can offer a means not only of responding to the commercial media industry, but of replacing it.

5. Works cited


Abstract—The "abridged series" is one of the more recent genres to come out of the fan culture of anime fan subs. An abridged series is a form of fan parody in which some of the peculiarities of fan subs are mixed with the more general conventions of Internet parodies to produce a shortened version of an anime series with edited video and original dubbed-in dialogue. The abridged series is not just a form of fan translation or a humorous recap of an existing work; rather, because they are engaged in significant textual criticism, construction of independent narratives, and interaction with greater fan communities, they should be considered a unique creative genre of transformative work.

Keywords—Anime; Fan vid; Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series; Parody


1. Introduction

Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, fans of Japanese animation in countries without a significant import market, including the United States, began creating what are now known as fan subs—amateur translations superimposed as subtitles on anime episodes, using imported or pirated raw video and home editing equipment. These fan subs were not considered by the creators to be a commercial venture but instead were circulated personally between fans through mail, at anime conventions, and by screening them at local anime clubs. As the anime medium increased in popularity outside of the Japanese market, and as fans had greater access to Japanese cultural products and their audience through the Internet in the late 1990s and 2000s, this kind of work expanded to include major fan sub sites hosting dozens or hundreds of translated anime and live-action drama series, scanlations of Japanese print comics and fan-created comics, and recapping and screen capping blogs that mix humorous or critical summaries of series with still images (Jenkins 2006).

One of the more recent genres to come out of this fan culture is the anime abridged series. An abridged series is a form of fan parody in which some of the
peculiarities of fan subs, such as loose or inaccurate translations, on-screen glosses, and translator commentary (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006), are mixed with the more general conventions of Internet parodies to produce a shortened version of an anime series with edited video and original dubbed-in dialogue. First appearing in 2006 with the series *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series* by online creator LittleKuriboh, in subsequent years, the genre has proliferated, with a number of high-profile creators and dozens of popular series. The abridged series is not just a form of fan translation or a humorous recap of an existing work; rather, because they are engaged in significant textual criticism, construction of independent narratives, and interaction with greater fan communities, they should be considered a unique creative genre of transformative work.

2. Narrative criticism for creative reinterpretation

[2.1] Most series use a number of different parody techniques to actively engage with and reinterpret their source material. Abridged series tend to draw their source from two overlapping groups of shows: series that have a significant Western fan base, usually as a result of having been dubbed for international television, and series that rely heavily on the genre conventions of children's fantasy and action stories, sometimes to the detriment of narrative quality. As a result, the humor of these parodies often derives from a critical reading of the source material, highlighting the

**Video 1.** *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series, episode 7, "Cliffhanger," by LittleKuriboh, August 2006.*
plot holes and stylistic quirks, the irrational behavior of secondary characters, and the failures of in-world logic that the creators notice in the original shows. Looking at the video above, the seventh episode of *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series*, we see multiple examples of this kind of critical humor even within a brief 4-minute clip. The opening sequence satirizes the overdramatic previous-episode recaps by framing them as an American soap opera. At 1:10, Yugi Muto's incredulous question, "Are you trying to tell me that Kaiba came back from the dead just to play a card game with me?", pokes fun at the entire premise of the anime series, which is that all matters of life and death can be resolved by playing a trading card game, while Kaiba's question at 2:00, "How the hell did I climb up the side of a cliff while holding a briefcase?", highlights a visual plot hole in the episode. At 2.59, LittleKuriboh pauses the narrative so that he can reshown several clips with the original dialogue to demonstrate the overuse of a gag line.

[2.2] The characters are even given a metaknowledge of their own status as narrative objects, making them free to push on the fourth wall in a way impossible for their original incarnations. When Kaiba describes his own actions at 1:55 as a way of redeeming himself in the eyes of his fans, he is certainly describing the authorial narrative purpose of the cutaway scene, but this is not something the character himself is meant to be aware of. Often in an abridged series, the characters and the parody creator team up as an allied force, working against the perceived failures of the show's writers and producers. These parodies rarely passively accept the canonical material and its authors; although the creators are generally affectionate to their sources, they treat it as something that can be teased, prodded at, and taken apart as needed.

[2.3] Aside from this kind of pointed critique, abridged series also provide space for creative reinterpretation of the source material. Rather than trying to reproduce a direct point-for-point abbreviation of the original shows, many abridged series creators opt for a looser adaption in which repurposed footage illustrates an alternative narrative arc.

[2.4] The pilot episode of the *Death Note: Abridged* series by Team Dattebayo, for example, presents us with the character of Light Yagami (*Death Note: Abridged*, episode 1, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zr-JuXVssA). In the original anime, Light comes into the possession of a notebook that allows him to kill people, and he decides to begin mass executing criminals. In this abridged series, Light is determined to become the most popular anime character in the world by killing off the characters of other series, beginning with a character in *Dragonball Z*. Subsequent episodes expand on this plot, splicing in death scenes from other shows and news broadcasts about character deaths and programs being canceled. This is not a one-off joke by the
creators, but a substantive plot arc developed over multiple episodes of the series, in which the motivations and actions of numerous characters and the structure of the fictional world are altered and called into question.


[2.5] *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series* has for the most part stuck to the major plot arcs and conflicts of the original series. After it was removed several times from YouTube for copyright violations, however, the series rewrote several episodes into an encounter with a mysterious organization revealed to be the media company 4Kids Entertainment—the company responsible for the English-language dubs of *Yu-Gi-Oh*. What had been simply a filler arc in the original series becomes instead a scathing critique of the company, culminating in episode 50 with an eloquent defense of fair use and the value of fan works. The creator repurposes a courtroom scene from the anime to allow him to put the series itself on trial, using the characters to justify their own existence by arguing that the abridged series is produced out of a love of the original work. This has resulted in a much larger fan base for the show. By refuting the claims of copyright infringement with an in-universe video, the creator establishes the abridged series as a truly transformative work, drawing on the canon source but able to enter into an independent dialogue with it.

3. Alternate character interpretation
This element of reinterpretation is obviously not limited to the plot. Abridged series often also play with canon characterization in a number of different ways. Character traits from the original show may be comically exaggerated—the *Yu Yu Hakusho Abridged Series* by Lanipator, for example, takes the canonically dimwitted tough guy Kuwabara and makes him so stupid he doesn't recognize what a book is. One-off jokes may undergo memetic mutation and develop a life of their own. In video 1 above, a secondary character introduces himself with the phrase, "Attention duelists, my hair has abducted this small child." This recurrent line started in an earlier episode as a brief gag and was popular enough with the fans of the series that it became his defining character note, reappearing as late in the series as episode 50, long after the character himself had disappeared from the original anime. More popular jokes may be adopted by fans to use for macros (humorous images with captions posted in online discussions) and even commercialized; the Web site hosting *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series* includes a store in which fans can buy buttons, posters, and T-shirts imprinted with their favorite lines from the series. 

Creators may also choose to discard canon characterization and construct their own versions. They may build off fan-popular readings of the characters, take existing character details and subtext in a new direction, or just arbitrarily assign humorous character traits. In many series, this takes the form of a queer reimagining of character relationships. For example, in episode 14 of *Death Note: Abridged*, the two protagonists of the series, Light and L, get into a fistfight while handcuffed together. The abridged series takes a scene that already contains a significant amount of homoerotic subtext in the original show and gives it a new context by having already established in earlier episodes an ambiguous sexuality and mutual acknowledged interest for both characters (*Death Note: The Abridged Series*, episode 14, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeE6QnMazTs). Homoerotic moments are frequently called out and mocked in *Yu Yu Hakusho Abridged Series*, such as a dream sequence in which two of the male characters kiss for plot purposes. In *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series*, the explicitly romantic relationship between the villains Bakura and Marik is frequently referenced, and nearly all of the main characters have had at least one moment of expressing interest in the same sex. Although it is often treated as nothing more than a joke, this queer reading of the character interactions does represent a radical reinterpretation of the source material.

These alternative character interpretations can be quite popular with the fan base. LittleKuriboh's version of the villain Marik in *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series*, although radically different from his canon characterization, caught on well enough that LittleKuriboh produced several spin-offs with him, including villainous sitcom parodies, musical episodes, and a parody of the Let's Play genre of YouTube video game commentaries in which Marik plays the game *Vampire: The Masquerade*. At this
point, Marik of *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series* can be said to have an existence separate from his canon character, with his own character traits and a unique fan base. As abridged series and their characters gain popularity in this way, they begin to push the boundaries between derivative series and creative works. For many series, fan participation and requests are significantly influential in the direction the creators take their parodies and side materials, and a number of the most popular series have come to be treated as independent creative products, with their own fan communities and reremixes.

4. Abridged series and the fan community

**Video 3.** "Literal Pants" music video, by LittleKuriboh and Kirbopher, 2010.

[4.1] *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series* is one of the better examples of an abridged series being accepted as a fictional universe in its own right by its fan base. To illustrate some of the various implications of this idea, I use video 3, a fan-made music video featuring the *Abridged Series* version of the *Yu-Gi-Oh* character Marik. To start, it should be noted that this video is a recursive remix, combining several genres of fan works at once. It is presented in the title as a literal music video, a YouTube-popularized genre in which a singer describes what is literally happening in a music video to the tune of the original song. The song that this is a literalization of, however, is not an original song itself, but a LittleKuriboh parody of the Lady Gaga song "Bad Romance" titled "Leather Pants." And, of course, the characters are not the original canon characters, but fan-animated versions of fanon characters from a parody series.
Some of the visual humor in "Literal Pants," and the original parody it is based on, draws from canon events from the original show, but just as much of it is self-referential, based on mocking the fanon characterization of Marik, shout-outs to other creators, and callbacks to jokes and events from the abridged series. While the original abridged series is made for an audience made up of fans of Yu-Gi-Oh, this and the numerous similar music parodies LittleKuriboh has produced are made for an audience who are fans of *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series*; they are engaging in it as a nominally original fandom.

[4.2] This identification of *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series* as a creative work can also be seen in a more negative way in the creator's interactions with the larger anime fan community. The series frequently draws on this community as a source for their humor, making jokes about rabid, boy-obsessed fangirls, anime fans, and the prevalence of fan fiction about the characters. In episode 40, for instance, one character describes a location as one where "spirits of the damned roam freely and every second is like living in a wide-awake nightmare"; another character responds that this sounds like an anime convention (*Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series*, episode 40, [http://yugiohabridged.com/page-ep40](http://yugiohabridged.com/page-ep40)). Although many of the jokes directed toward the fan base are fond and even at times self-deprecating, there is often a subtext of scorn and derision for their obsessions and actions, and this pattern of fan-based jokes is carried out through many other popular series. This can come across as more than a little disingenuous because it is the interplay between the creator, the source material, and the fans that enables them to engage with the original series on this level. However, it is also a way for the creators to distance themselves from the audience as fans, creating the implication that there is something fundamentally different between works like fan fiction or anime music videos and their work. The separation between abridged series and other fan-created works suggests that the creators, as well as the fan base, are thinking of them as a creative genre in their own right.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] Anime abridged series are a frequent target for media corporations. *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Abridged Series* is on the fourth iteration of its YouTube account, and at one point changed its title to *Yu-Gi-Oh: The Cancelled Series* to reflect the difficulty of keeping the episodes online. As derivative works, abridged series occupy the murky legal ground of fair use, with the copyright holders challenging them as illegal infringement and the creators arguing that they constitute allowable parody. In this work, I have outlined some of the major components of an abridged series—humor as textual criticism, radical rewriting of story and character, and a direct creative engagement with the fan base. These qualities support two conclusions: first, that abridged series
are indeed truly transformative works in their approach to their source, and second, that they can be recognized as a unique genre of creative fan work in their own right.

6. Works cited


Symposium

The Star Wars franchise, fan edits, and Lucasfilm

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Abstract—Fan edits assert that fan authority is on par with that of a work’s original creator; this authority is generated not only through the argument, but through the structure of the text itself. Fan edits adhere to classical filmmaking techniques, creating coherent plots and editing for continuity. These recut texts are emblematic of current ownership debates; they are the read/write culture brought to fandom. The Star Wars series of films are among the most frequently recut texts and are my focus here.

Keywords—Fan edit; Fan studies; George Lucas; Textual poaching


1. Introduction

[1.1] We love our fans...But if in fact someone is using our characters to create a story unto itself, that's not in the spirit of what we think fandom is about. Fandom is about celebrating the story the way it is.

—Jim Ward, former vice president of marketing at Lucasfilm

[1.2] Contrary to Jim Ward's statement, there is a long history of fans using video to comment on their favorite texts (Coppa 2008). One example of this is the fan edit, a work in which a fan takes an original text, such as a film, and recuts it to create a new text with a new meaning. Competing edits are passed around within fandoms, where they act as arguments about the original text. Fan edits assert that fan authority is on par with that of a work’s original creator; this authority is generated not only through the argument, but through the structure of the text itself. Fan edits adhere to classical filmmaking techniques, creating coherent plots and editing for continuity. These recut texts are emblematic of current ownership debates. They are the read/write culture brought to fandom (Lessig 2004, 37). The Star Wars series of films are among the most frequently recut texts and are my focus here.

2. Examining fan edits

[2.1] Fan edits are created by fans who take an original work and then use filmmaking techniques to "reclaim" it. Narrative and reappropriation are important to fan edits and vids, but there are some critical differences (Middleton 2010, 121, 126). Fan vids frequently focus on character studies, or they draw out the emotional or internal lives of characters. Fan edits, on the other hand, are only interested in drawing out emotion to the degree that it supports the
narrative (Jenkins 2006, 159–60; Gray 2010, 144). Fan vids are assembled by arranging clips from a work to music, while fan edits tend to use the work in its entirety, with clips removed, added, or rearranged according to the editor's preference. Their use of classical Hollywood techniques and the inclusion of the near entirety of the original work assert the fan editor's authority as akin to that of an auteur. The assertion of parity comes from the fact that fan editors perceive their texts as "director's cuts," but made by fans. Fans' right to make these edits has its origins in Michel de Certeau's notion of textual poaching (Kapell 2006, 13; Mason 2009, 86; Jenkins 1992, 24, 34). De Certeau equated the relationship between a work and its audience with that of roaming nomads taking what they need: "Far from being writers...readers are travelers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves" (2002, 174). Textual poaching is thus framed as being inherently in conflict with content owners. Poaching is typically used as a way to queer a text, but fans can also use it to claim ownership. Henry Jenkins argues this point:

[2.2] The ideology of fandom involves both a commitment to some degree of conformity to the original program materials as well as a perceived right to evaluate the legitimacy of any use of those materials, either by textual producers or by textual consumers...Such a relationship obligates fans to preserve a certain degree of fidelity to program materials, even as they seem to rework them towards their own ends. (2000, 486)

[2.3] Jenkins thus describes the way fan editors adhere to the plotlines of original works while altering them to fit their own interpretations. Jenkins highlights the fact that poaching is a way for fans to take a mass culture product and retool it into a personally significant text (2000, 472).

[2.4] Fan edits exist between the two poles occupied by vidding and fan films. Vids focus on characters' internal lives and are typically gendered as a feminine form of fan production (Jenkins 2006, 159; Gray 2010, 144). Fan films affirm the existing narrative and are typically gendered as masculine (Derecho 2008, 215). Fan edits are gendered as neutral in that they recontextualize a source by editing it but typically reaffirm the broad strokes of the foundational narrative. In the Star Wars fan edit oeuvre, Luke Skywalker always destroys the Death Star, but the way he does so can change. Fan films and edits are often (at least overtly) apolitical, while the most heralded fan vids articulate a strong political perspective. For example, Luminosity's fan vid "Women's Work" critiques Supernatural's misogynistic depiction of women as only being villains, victims, or vixens (http://blip.tv/luminosity/women-s-work-2317110). Fan edits and vids only use existing material, while fan films create new content. Fan films do not challenge the established hierarchy. This is why Lucasfilm hosts its own Fan Film Festival, providing the fan films an official home; such official forums do not exist for vids and fan edits (Jenkins 2006, 135). In fact, works that expand on the Star Wars universe are explicitly forbidden by Lucasfilm (Jenkins 2006, 159; Gray 2010, 165).

3. The Phantom Edit

[3.1] The first prominent Star Wars fan edit was The Phantom Edit, which circulated around Hollywood on videotape in 2001 (Kraus 2001). It is a typical Star Wars fan edit in that it was presented as an attempt to turn cinematic lead into gold (note 1). The Phantom Editor, aka Mike Nichols, has said that his intention was to turn Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace (1999)
Nichols, has said that his intent was to turn *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (1999) into a stronger film by bringing it in line with the filmmaking philosophy that George Lucas espoused while making the original Star Wars trilogy (Fausset 2002; Kraus 2001; Wortham 2008).

![Video 1. "Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Edit (Commentary Track)," by The Phantom Editor (2011).](image)

[3.2] The main element that Nichols sought to adopt was an emphasis on story over special effects (Plinkett 2009b). As an example, Nichols completely cut the sequence where Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan, and Jar Jar pilot a "bongo" through the core of the planet Naboo (Kapell 2006, 254; Rafferty and Snierson 2001). Additionally, he trimmed as much of Jar Jar's antics as possible and trimmed Anakin Skywalker's dialogue to transform his character from a young boy who stumbles through every crisis into a quiet prodigy (Kapell 2006, 254; Kraus 2001). What's fascinating about this positioning is that Nichols attempted to edit a film directed by George Lucas to make it adhere to the style of a film directed by George Lucas. This frames fan poaching of texts as akin to restoration, and Nichols presents himself as the equivalent of a young Lucas. His edit is more than a humble fan's revision of a disappointing product. It is the one true successor to *Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* (1983). This implies that Lucas is now unfit to shepherd the Star Wars franchise, and thus the fans must take control. This fan approach is a common one: fan poachers are often moved by a desire to protect a franchise from its creator (Jenkins 2000, 472). It also stands in opposition to many vids and other forms of fan creation, which embrace their marginality to enable greater creativity (Tushnet 2007, 67).

[3.3] The elements cut in *The Phantom Edit* are the ones most directly targeted toward children. As Jonathan Gray put it, fan-created paratexts work as "highlighters and underliners," which suggest a specific path through a text (2010, 154). *The Phantom Edit* thus supports interpretations of the film that deemphasisize the importance of childish elements such as Jar Jar Binks. This reflects a broader critique that the prequels in general, and specifically *The Phantom Menace*, are too juvenile (Geraghty 2009, 114; Mason 2009, 86). This criticism's claim of legitimacy stems in part from the fact that Lucasfilm made a deal with Hasbro to produce toys based on the prequels (Bowen 2005, 12). The prequels' defenders use this as evidence that those who bash them simply failed to view the films through the eyes of children (Gray 2010, 184). These disagreements have led to the creation of two distinct camps: the gushers, who defend...
These disagreements have led to the creation of two distinct camps: the gushers, who defend Lucas's recent work, and the bashers, who are critical of it (Brooker 2002, 97; Johnson 2007, 290).

[3.4] This discourse is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, *The Phantom Edit* represents one of these competing truths and acted as a clarion call to the bashers (Brooker 2002, 92). Second, it helped establish the niche of antiprequel fan creation. The very fans who sang its praises also promoted Red Letter Media. Of course, there is division even within the basher community. Plinkett, author of a YouTube review of *The Phantom Menace*, and others villainize Lucas, while *The Phantom Edit*'s opening crawl characterizes it as a friendly disagreement. Nichols apologizes if his edit offends Lucas, while Plinkett curses at him (Plinkett 2009a). Fandoms write their own hegemonic histories, as this debate with the Star Wars fandom indicates (Johnson 2007, 287). *The Phantom Edit*'s place within the fan community will be largely determined by which of these truths becomes the consensus.

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4. The auteur strikes back

[4.1] The main barrier preventing these fan edits from reaching an audience beyond fan communities is their legal ambiguity. The production of fan edits requires the circumvention of copy protection, which is illegal under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (Landy and Mastrobattista 2008, 28). Additionally, the distribution of a fan edit is by necessity also a distribution of significant portions of the original film, which is also illegal. Fan editors attempt to skirt this latter issue by insisting on two golden rules (Fanedits.com 2011). First, a fan edit should only be downloaded by someone who owns a retail copy of the original film. This rule goes unenforced and appears to be an attempt to avoid having content taken down by the MPAA, as happened in December 2008 (Young 2008). Second, a fan edit must be nonprofit. This latter point arose in part because Lucasfilm Ltd. has made it clear that they're ready, willing, and able to sue anyone who tries to make a profit on a fan edit (Zalewski 2002). George Lucas himself has even indicated that these edits are only problematic if they intend to generate revenue: "Everybody wants to be a filmmaker. Part of what I was hoping for with making movies in the first place was to inspire people to be creative. *The Phantom Edit* was fine as long as they didn't start selling it" (Balkin 2004, 8). Yet Lucasfilm contradicted this statement when they sent Nichols a veiled threat about *The Phantom Edit*, even though Nichols never sold a single copy:

[4.2] When we first heard about the [reedits], we realized that these were fans having some fun with "Star Wars," which we've never had a problem with. But over the last 10 days, this thing has grown and taken on a life of its own—as things sometimes do when associated with "Star Wars."...And, when we started hearing about massive duplication and distribution, we realized then that we had to be very clear that duplication and distribution of our materials is an infringement. And so we just kind of want to put everybody on notice that that is indeed the case. (Kraus 2001)

[4.3] Lucasfilm is primarily motivated by a desire to enforce its storytelling primacy, as indicated by Jim Ward's insistence that "fandom is about celebrating the story the way it is" (Jenkins 2006, 153). While fans are used to the existence of "rival truths" about a media property, Lucasfilm claims the authority to determine Star Wars's single valid truth (Johnson 2007, 287). This explains why fan editors work together in a spirit of collaboration while Lucasfilm stands in opposition to certain types of fan activity. This is a predictable response from a company formed
Opposition to certain types of fan activity is a predictable response from a company formed in 1971, when storytelling was a one-way street and creators had little patience for poaching (Lessig 2004, 37; "Lucasfilm Ltd." 2011). This idea is further enforced by their long history of aggressive copyright defense, which includes lawsuits inspired by a wide range of fan activities such as fan production of erotic Star Wars material and a prop maker who worked on *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) and went on to sell unauthorized replicas of storm trooper helmets (Jenkins 2006, 155; NPR 2011). These legal defenses are based on the same idea of the auteur's primacy that animates their opposition to fan edits. Lucasfilm may produce and sell replicas of storm trooper helmets (Entertainment Earth 2011). Fans may not. Lucasfilm may produce edited versions of the films. Fans may not. There is no room for fan restoration here. *The Phantom Edit* is one of the few fan edits to garner mainstream attention. No other fan edit, whether for a Star Wars film or for another franchise, has even come close. *The Phantom Edit* was featured in the *Los Angeles Times* and reviewed by the *Chicago Tribune* (Fausset 2002; Wilmington 2001). Even though he eventually clamped down on it when its exposure rivaled that of *The Phantom Menace*, George Lucas was reportedly delighted by it (BBC News 2001).

[4.4] The philosophy behind the new Blu-ray version of *The Phantom Menace* and *The Phantom Edit* is the same. Lucas has returned to his film just as a fan editor would. The largest difference between the two is the environment in which they were produced. The Blu-ray *Phantom Menace* is not the theatrical film. The puppet Yoda featured in the film has been replaced by the CGI Yoda from *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002) and *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) (OneWayStudios 2011). Effects have been changed, and many shots have had their composition altered (DVD News 2011). If anything, these changes are far more extensive than those in *The Phantom Edit*, which relies solely on editing to tweak the source and create a new text. Lucas's auteur status and control of production gave his edit broader public exposure and claimed greater legitimacy, even though Lucas's edit has less in common with the theatrical cut than Nichols's: Lucas altered almost every shot, while Nichols only cut 18 minutes (Rafferty and Snierson 2001).

5. Conclusion

[5.1] In contrast to fan vids, which use music video techniques, and fan films, which work with independently created and produced content, fan edits are unique in fan production: they are the only form that uses classic Hollywood techniques to alter a Hollywood product for fan purposes—that is, they are the only kind of fan video production that uses the methods of content producers to subvert those very producers. Fan edits are often met with an unease and hostility that arise from a belief that only the auteur and auteur-authorized sources have the right to create recuts, as exemplified by *The Phantom Edit*. It remains to be seen whether this hostility will persist or whether fan edits are part of a surge in fan production that will reshape the mass media landscape.

4. Note

1. However, not all *Star Wars* fan edits are based on the prequels. Adywan (2011) edited the 2004 DVD release of *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) to update the special effects and make the film more consistent with the prequels. Some fan edits focus on alteration rather than restoration, such as *The War of the Stars*, which is an attempt to turn *Star Wars* into a grindhouse
restoration, such as The War of the Stars, which is an attempt to turn Star Wars into a grindhouse film (The Man Behind the Mask 2011).

7. Works cited


1. Introduction

[1.1] Bradcpu is a vidder and a vid community moderator. He was a cojudge of the Friendly Neighborhood Video Awards, a tournament-style vid contest with explicitly articulated aesthetic and technical rules, and he currently cojudges The Fourth Wall video awards. He is a moderator of the Vid Commentary community, dedicated to analysis and critical commentary. Brad is also the director of the Vidder Profiles, a series of short documentary films by and about vidders. Each profile features "excerpts from the vidder's work from throughout the years along with an interview with the vidder about his or her style, approach, and general thoughts on vidding" (Vidder Profile series intro post, http://vid-commentary.livejournal.com/3658.html). The series was founded in 2009, and as of this writing, nine vidders have been profiled so far. You can find out more about the series by checking out Fanlore's page on the Vidder Profiles (http://fanlore.org/wiki/Vidder_Profile).

[1.2] This interview was conducted by Counteragent, a vidder particularly known for her meta vids—that is, vids about vidding or about the fan community itself. Her vid "Destiny Calling" celebrates the 35-year history of media vidding fandom, and her Supernatural vid "Still Alive," about the show and its fandom, was the subject of Katherina Freund's essay, "'I'm glad we got burned, think of all the things we learned': Fandom Conflict and Context in Counteragent's 'Still Alive,'" which appeared in Transformative Works and Culture's fourth issue (doi:10.3983/twc.2010.0187). This interview was conducted online and edited for clarity.
Q: What made you want to make the Vidder Profiles?

BC: A few years ago, a gift community was created on LJ for kiki_miserychic's birthday. I wanted to show her how much I admired her work but didn't have a lot of time to dedicate to a vid project. So I just slapped together a very very basic "top 5 favorite moments from your vids," with a cheesy #5–#1 countdown between them. I regretted that when all of the gifts were revealed and I saw what other people had made. For instance, Charmax made her amazing "Unnatural Selection" vid for it.

Over the next few days, I started thinking about how I could revise and expand my idea, maybe even with the vidder commenting on the moments in question and how they came about. Around that time, I saw an early version of dragonchic's "Break Teen Spirit in Four Minutes" Club Vivid vid for "Wanted," and it included one of the most memorable segments I've ever seen in a vid. So I asked dragonchic about that segment, then eventually asked her if she'd be willing to put her thoughts down on audio. The project expanded until it covered many of her recent vids and her thoughts about vidding.

I really enjoyed doing it, and thought "Hey, I could sucker other people into doing this and gain even more knowledge! Muahahahaah!" Except without the laugh... For all you know. No one can prove anything.

I showed dragonchic's now-finished profile to other people—kiki_miserychic and Charmax first—and they said they'd be willing to do the same thing. Within a few months, I had a half-dozen interviews and a folder filled with vidders' catalogues.

Q: They are so complex! And yet seem totally effortless. In brief, what's your process for making them? Do you start with questions and then pick vids to illustrate their answers, like vidding to a song source?

BC: I take more or less the same approach I do when writing a story for a newspaper or magazine: I gather the facts, then look for patterns and metaphors and start and end points, and try to put it all together in a way that tells a story.

So, first, I watch all of the vidder's available work. Then I come up with questions based on things I've seen about their work that I find uniquely appealing. Once the responses come back, I try to choose clips that illustrate the vidder's point, or that sync with emotional tone of the sentiment or comment.

In other words, the comments dictate the clip choices, not the other way around.
Q: One of the things I love so much about the vidder profiles is that the subjects come off as quite self-actualized. You actually almost believe their claims that they've found a balance between public reception of their work and internal fulfillment. Were you trying to bring that out?

BC: I think inside each of us is the person we want to be. I think there's a little bit of perfection in all of us. Especially these people. I like highlighting that because these people really do feel like heroes to me, each in his or her own way, and I want to show why.

Q: In a few words, what are your favorite moments in each profile? I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours!

BC: Oh god, really? I mean... it's basically a matter of picking my favorite moment from my favorite vids. I'm usually just relieved if the vidder doesn't get offended by how I've used the clips.

As far as my influence, and how they're recontextualized within the profile, I guess in general I'm pretty happy with how most of the profiles begin and end. I try to start them with a thesis statement, and end them with a sort of summation. In that way, the beginning of Mister Anderson's profile is maybe my favorite. But I kind of like all of the openings, to be honest.


Q: I think you did a great job with the thesis and conclusion statements! I like the beginning of each as well; I particularly loved that you chose a picture to represent some of the vidders—very meta-viddy. You also make some wonderful analytical connections. For example, in Mister Anderson's voice-over, he contrasts being an
editor for pay and an editor for love, and you visually pair that comment with Iron Man's Tony Stark discovering he had few, if any, limits to his power. Or the way you juxtapose Charmax's wry surprise at finding herself a champion of female characters/femmeslash ("[is it] odd to think strong minded women are awesome[?]") with Alias's Sydney stroking the wall with her [riding] crop.

Vidder Profile


3. Vidding for fun and profit

[3.1] **Q:** You're a professional editor in real life, right? How did you get into vidding for fun, not profit?

[3.2] **BC:** Well, the vidding came first, and that led to the professional editing.

[3.3] It started for me the same way that I suspect it has for many other vidders: hearing music and seeing clips from TV shows in my head, lining up with the music and lyrics of the song.

[3.4] Back when *Angel* season 1 was airing, I remember watching the scene in the episode "Five By Five" in which Faith is dancing and fighting, and picturing that scene mixed with shots from her whole character arc to that song. The idea kept gnawing at me, and at one point I thought about looking into the cost of mixing equipment (the kind that was used at TV stations at the time) in order to make it. But the years went by, and it faded a bit.

[3.5] In 2007, an online friend who, like me, was into writing *Firefly* fan fiction, suggested I give vidding a try. I had never even heard of vidding, much less seen a
vid. She sent me software and instructions, and I literally followed her step-by-step e-mail for how to make a clip and place it in Windows Movie Maker, in order to make my first vid. Yeah, I made about 10 more in the next two months. This is your brain on vid farr.

[3.6] I think I was three vids in before I ever watched a vid by someone else. I got a lot less awful after doing so. Imagine that.

[3.7] **Q:** Imagine that, indeed! I always tell new vidders to watch more vids than they think they need to. Trust me, guys, you need to. We *all* do.

4. Two meta vids: "Hard Sun" (with Laura Shapiro) and "CITIHALL*"

[4.1] **Q:** Let's compare and contrast your vids "Hard Sun" (2009, *Firefly*, made with Laura Shapiro) and "CITIHALL*" (2010, *Futurama*). I think that together they paint a fantastically nuanced view of geek culture (and of vidding culture specifically, but I think it's larger than that). Am I way off?

[4.2] **BC:** It wasn't what I set out to do, but I hope you're right. Can you be right, please? 'Cause that sounds awesome and I want to be that. All I know is what I set out to do with each.

[4.3] With "Hard Sun," I wanted to express what *Firefly* and fandom—specifically, *Firefly* fandom—mean to me. It's something shared. Painful, yes, but in the end it's something that unites us.

Q: Painful because *Firefly* only lasted one season? Because what I got from that vid was joyous obsession and a sense of a strong community. Which sums up the happy sides of fandom, to me. I also got, "You can totally use original footage in a vid, especially a metavid," which was obviously eye-opening to me as a vidder. (I used original footage in my most recent vid, "Coin Operated Boy" [2011, *Supernatural.*])

BC: It's quite flattering that it influenced you in that way! I never set out to influence anyone, so hearing something like that is...quite surreal.

Yes, I've always found *Firefly* a bit bittersweet because, despite all of the joy surrounding the show and the fandom, it only lasted a half-season (plus a glorious but quite downbeat movie) and *that Firefly*—the one the fans all fell in love with—is never coming back. Not the way it was. So in a sense it's like celebrating a memory. When friends tell me they're about to watch *Firefly* for the first time, I always feel a mixture of envy and sympathy.

"CITIHALL*" was, um, a bit different. I set out to make a celebratory "FU" to Fox, after the syndicated ratings basically forced them to bring *Futurama* back to the air several years after it had been canceled. At the same time, I thought it would be fun to show what it would be like if the inmates ran the prison of network television. (And sometimes I feel like they do, for better or worse. Everyone does indeed love Hypnotoad.) ["Everybody Loves Hypnotoad" is a television show within *Futurama*; the show's entire focus is the Hypnotoad, a toad with large, oscillating eyes who keeps viewers, well, hypnotized.]

Q: Are the inmates the fans or the "real" producers? I think you're saying it's both? When I saw the vid, I definitely saw the heroes as fans who've suddenly gained creative control. So to me it was a celebration of fans' power (getting the show back on the air), but a reminder about the potential limits of fan-influenced media. Sometimes the stories fans most want to hear are not the most dramatically generative ones. (We tend to clamor for reconciliation a lot, for one.)

You can watch "CITIHALL*" and say, "Haha, good thing *we fans* aren't in charge," and yet the very quality of the vid itself is its own counterargument. It's funny, it's pointed, it works on at least three different levels, and it's a sublime example of remix culture (a lot of people I saw it with couldn't believe the song hadn't been written for the vid). So what *does* separate the best fan producers from the real, anointed producers? Not talent, as far as I can tell.

So if "Hard Sun" is about the shared source-love and the community it creates, "CITIHALL*" gently lampoons fans' endless armchair quarterbacking while proving that sometimes the armchair quarterbacks are pretty awesome.

[4.11] **BC:** Remixers are pretty awesome, aren't they? While making "CITIHALL*," I remember certain other shows being renewed over cries of "NOOOooooOOOO!" from the shows' hardcore viewers—fan bases that had been propping up (and, some would say, having an influence on the canon) for years. I was somewhat baffled, both by the renewals and the reactions. Then those fan bases immediately went gaga once again over the shows once they returned to the air.

[4.12] I definitely do not claim to understand The TV Powers That Be or fandom. Sometimes they seem difficult to separate. Sure is fun to vid, though!

5. Criteria for recommending, analyzing, and judging fan vids

[5.1] **Q:** Not only do many of your best known vids have a heavy meta-analysis component ("Hard Sun," "CITIHALL*"), but you also tend to recommend vids heavy on community/social critique (e.g., Luminosity, "She's So Heavy," 2005, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*; Sisabet and Sweetestdrain, "On the Prowl," 2010, multi; Jarrow, "Tandemonium," 2010, *Battlestar Galactica*). You're a sophisticated evaluator of the vidding community, having previously cojudged the Friendly Neighborhood Video Awards, currently judging at The Fourth Wall, and directing these vidder profiles. What do you enjoy about the analytical power of vids, and what are their limitations?

[5.2] **BC:** I think meta vids are arguments, or statements, and like all such things, they invite agreement and disagreement (or confusion, if they're poorly made). And because they focus on subject matter and source material and *people* about which most of us are very very passionate, they invite very strong agreement and disagreement.
[5.3] That's why I think meta vids that make their points in an especially effective, impactful way are among the most admirable of all fannish creations. They can be evocative and uniquely powerful. But using beloved images and actors and shows to make a statement to/about the audience can also be a risky thing. It can be easy for vids like that to come across as the vidder having warped the beloved images in order to use them in a selfish and insulting way.

[5.4] I've watched a metavid before and felt angry and hurt because I felt the vidder took the images out of context specifically to make them seem socially reprehensible, while ignoring the clips within the same scenes that ruin the argument. Then I quietly listened to everyone react with "Wow, that show and everyone involved with it is the devil!" (Paraphrasing, but you get the idea. I hope.) I honestly hope no one has ever felt that way about one of my vids.

[5.5] Q: Yeah, ditto for mine but I strongly suspect that is not the case. It's hard to know where to draw that line of condemnation, though. I essentially think it's an emotional choice, not a logical one. One person's shit-stirring-attention-whoring vid may be another's desperate, personal cry. There are a number of vids I don't agree with (and thus don't like) even if I think they've made legitimate points well. (Which is not to say all vids are created equal. Some are definitely more cogent.)

[5.6] Vidding is a blunt instrument for all its complexity. Every vidder is guilty of cutting clips that ignore their context or the fluctuations in canon that may negate them. In essence, that is what all vids do—they say, "this is the way I want you to see this source."

[5.7] The hypothesis one starts out with has to be very, very simple to be effective, especially in a meta vid, where you are expecting the audience to parse the meta and original meanings for each clip at the same time. So a vid pointing out that sexual engagement without specific consent in Dollhouse is rape ("It Depends On What You Pay," by Gianduja Kiss, 2009, Dollhouse) isn't going to showcase complex character arcs or even original authorial intent. It can't, not if it's going to make any sense.

[5.8] BC: I agree, and the vid you used as an example does that extremely well. I agree, as well, about the fact that the reaction to vids (particularly meta vids) can be a very personal thing.

[5.9] One of the reasons I love vidding so much is because of the escapism it offers me. I've worked in a newsroom for the last 15 years, always on deadline, and constantly immersed in real-world current events, social strife, and tragedies. Vidding gives me both an escape from that and a different kind of creative outlet. Because of that, I usually tend to gravitate more toward sci-fi and steer clear of more gritty, real-
world shows and fandoms. Even TV or movie versions of real-world gore or crime actually make me physically ill.

[5.10] When doing meta vids, I try to focus on things that unite us as fans—shared experiences and common bonds. As a viewer, I often have a negative reaction to vids that manipulate these shows in order to make a critical statement about the show, the fandom, or real-world society as a whole—mainly because I see these shows, and vidding itself, as my escape from such things. I prefer less Fox News in my vidding. Those kinds of personal reactions to vids can be very strong, and can vary so much from person to person. That's something over which the vidder has little control, and that's probably the biggest limitation I've run across in the medium.

[5.11] But I don't think the vidder should be able to control such personal reactions. All that matters is that the vidder creates what he or she wants to create, and does it with a very well-made vid. That's what the vidder has control over: the clarity, skill, and flair with which the statement is made.

[5.12] **Q:** Yeah, agreed. The only thing you can do is make the best, most coherent piece you can. And if your piece has negative aspects, you have to search your own soul and make sure you think it's something that needs saying, that it's not just a bid for attention.

[5.13] Your point about escapism is interesting. For me, the nuclear fusion that powers fandom is and always will be squee: our enthusiasm and joy. Without squee, we are shriveled harpies. But I don't think that escapism and meta-analysis are opposites. They can exist in the same vid, and certainly within the same vidder's oeuvre. My favorite vidders make all kinds of vids, from the "OMG*THIS*SHIP*IZ*CUUUUTE" vid to the "Huh, let's take a look at the fannish practice of XYZ again, shall we?" vid.

6. A male vidder in a female vidding culture

[6.1] **Q:** Live-action media vidding on LiveJournal has a female-centric history and mostly female participants. Is it weird being a dude here?

[6.2] **BC:** I feel weird pretty much everywhere. So, status quo.

[6.3] The gender divide is definitely something that's not easy to miss. I'm drawn to vid mostly female characters and 'ships, and the opposite is true for most of the people I've run across in vidding. Feminism and m/m slash are more popular topics among my vidder friends than TV shows or fandom itself. I certainly don't see any of
that as a bad thing (!), it's just hard to miss the fact that I'm very clearly a minority in the community.

[6.4] There have been times when I've been in a group of vidders and they've made some angry, sweeping generalizations about men, specifically about men my age and my race and my sexuality, apparently without realizing I was even there. I suppose that's a compliment, now that I think about it, but at the time I just felt rather alone. Those situations have been the (very rare) exceptions, though. Through vidding, I've met some of the best friends of my life. And I've never felt as though I belong somewhere as much as I do here.

[6.5] Q: Aw! Well, this weirdo is glad you're here. And I do believe you've just summed up why we love the community even more than we love the sources that inspire it. As a sidenote, I find the online aspect of the community very freeing because it comes without a lot of the baggage of in-person interactions. I'm glad I got the chance to know the attendees of Vividcon through their work first and vice versa. I don't want to have to worry if this vid makes my ass look fat, you know?

[6.6] BC: Well said! It really changes everything when you get to know someone first through their work. It's like seeing their soul before you see their face.

[6.7] Q: Final question: You can only do one for the rest of your life: make vids or watch other people's vids. What do you choose?

Interview

Interview with Eric Faden and Nina Paley

Brett Boessen

Austin College, Sherman, Texas, United States

[0.1] Abstract—Interview with Eric Faden and Nina Paley, conducted by Brett Boessen.

[0.2] Keywords—Copyright; Digital Millennium Copyright Act; Fair use


1. Introduction

[1.1] Cultural production in the 21st century is a process deeply intertwined with questions of ownership and control. If an artist wants to create an intellectual work today, she must contend with the intricacies of copyright and fair use, attending to the often finely grained details of copyright law.

[1.2] In the United States, these laws have seen some shifts in the past decade, but for the most part, they remain linked to much older cultural discourses shaped at a time when the physical forms of creative works were far less malleable than they are today. In the 1970s, when the Copyright Act (http://copyright.gov/title17/) was enacted, forms of media and art such as the filmstrip and the printed book dominated the cultural landscape. At that time, it likely seemed unnecessary to make more specific allowances for transformations of existing works into new forms than the brief fair use clause that the act provided.

[1.3] However, in the intervening years, much has changed. The technological tools for transforming existing works have not only multiplied and increased in complexity, but they have also been effectively democratized because of their often significantly reduced cost and near-ubiquitous networked availability. Publishers and editors may no longer stand as primary gatekeepers to most creative works; increasingly, works are assessed in the public sphere through online databases like YouTube, and creators are making more works than ever before. Many such works rely heavily on the public
domain, fair use, and the rich cultural soil of previous works for their efficacy and quality.

[1.4] Yet the old laws remain, often causing social friction as new kinds of uses of existing material come into conflict with increasingly outdated modes of control. New laws such as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c105:H.R.2281.ENR:) only complicate matters. Instead of having one law to cover creative work, the DMCA effectively increased that count to two, one covering analog media and another covering digital. Further complicating matters are the actions of the Librarian of Congress, who has asserted some of his authority in granting limited exemptions to certain groups of creators, such as documentary filmmakers and film and media students. However, all of these changes have only increased the complexity of the system for artists who just want to make something compelling—who just want to make art.

[1.5] It is in this context that Eric Faden and Nina Paley have been working for years, and it is that context that shaped my March 2011 interview with them.

[1.6] Paley, an independent artist, released Sita Sings the Blues (http://sitasingstheblues.com/) in 2008, only to have the copyright holders of many of the songs by Annette Hanshaw that she had used in the film threaten legal action if they were not paid for their use (even though Hanshaw's recordings are from the 1920s). Paley has since spoken about and created works that address these issues, including a series called Minute Memes, short video pieces for the Web focused on copyright-related themes such as "Copying Is Not Theft."

Faden, a member of the Bucknell film/media studies faculty, created "A Fair(y) Use Tale" in response to the broader context in which such legal wrangling has taken place, essentially giving visual and aural life to an essay on copyright and fair use by stitching together hundreds of clips from Disney animated films. (Disney is a notoriously litigious copyright owner.)

[1.7]  

A Fair(y) Use Tale


Because both of them have been so closely connected to the legal and ethical questions related to copying, fair use, and transformative works, I wanted to give them the opportunity to talk about their experiences for Transformative Works and Cultures. This is the result.

2. Video interview
Interview

Desiree D'Alessandro and Diran Lyons bear arms: Weapons of mass transformation

Desiree D'Alessandro

Tampa, Florida, United States

Diran Lyons

Clovis, California, United States

1. Introduction

[1.1] Desiree D'Alessandro is an artist who recently earned her MFA degree as a Regents Special Fellow at UC Santa Barbara. She has exhibited works nationally and internationally at venues such as the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Brevard Art Museum, Atlantic Center for the Arts, and the Tampa Museum of Art. Her video works have screened at the 2011 European Media Art Festival in Germany, Chashama Film Festival, Open Video Conference, RE/Mixed Media Festival, and the Victoria Independent Film and Video Festival in Canada.

[1.2] Diran Lyons is an artist who works in different media, including video and photography, painting and drawing, stationary and kinetic sculpture, indoor and outdoor installation, and performance. His political remix videos have screened at Ars Electronica, LA Shorts Festival, the Open Video Conference in New York, and the Athens Video Festival, among other notable online venues like IMDb, where his "Jake Gyllenhaal Challenges The Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize" (2010) was the first political remix to reach #1 on the IMDb most popular short film ratings.

[1.3] This interview was conducted online in April 2011. Minor revisions, including video embedding, hyperlinking, and formatting, were processed in postproduction.
2. Interview

[2.1] Desiree D'Alessandro: Hello, Diran. I'm excited to ask you some questions about your work. I know your emphasis and focus have evolved over the years since we first met in Tampa, Florida, in 2005. I understand you are currently a political remix video (PRV) practitioner; however this hasn't always been the case. What were your artistic pursuits before engaging remix?

[2.2] Diran Lyons: I studied sculpture and painting at California State University, Fresno, as an undergraduate in the late 1990s. I started making video art toward the end of my time there and became completely enamored of the medium in general by the time I graduated in 2000. I then went on to earn an MFA in new genres at UC Santa Barbara in 2004, putting video to use in interdisciplinary multimedia installations. Currently, I make a lot of remix work, but it wouldn't be accurate to exclusively distinguish myself as a political remix video artist. I've consistently maintained an open art practice, refusing to commit to any single method of working. Ideas can find form in many different ways. When creative people actively seek out the most powerful physical manifestations of concepts they hold to be important, unplanned and exciting discoveries often take place. This is particularly the case when allowing an idea to flow along logical or even illogical trajectories.

[2.3] DD: It is interesting that you took up remix in your postacademic experience. When I was enrolled at UC Santa Barbara, I met institutional resistance in engaging the remix genre as part of my academic studies.

[2.4] DL: That's right! Weren't you issued a Digital Millennium Copyright Act violation through the institution's DMCA agent?

[2.5] DD: Yes, I was issued a first-time DMCA offense for acquiring and utilizing the footage necessary to generate fair use remix works. While I had to get more creative in the way I gathered source materials, it didn't stop me from remixing. I made two remixes in direct response to their reprimands, utilizing footage from the 2008 film Step Brothers. The first was "WHAT?! DMCA Violation." It juxtaposed screenshots of the Internet ban placed on my computer with a humorously defiant scene from the film. The remix screened at the Experiments in Cinema 6.3 festival in New Mexico and the Basement Media Festival in Boston.
Video 1. "WHAT?! DMCA Violation (Step Brothers Remix)," by Desiree D'Alessandro (2010).

[2.6] The other video was an Open Video Conference (OVC) trailer that advocated fair use over DMCA enforcement. I screened it at the conclusion of the lecture I presented in 2010, "UC + DMCA" (http://appropriationalliance.blogspot.com/2010/10/university-of-california-dmca.html). You also contributed to the OVC by coauthoring a paper with Byron Russell on theory related to remix.

Video 2. "Open Video Conference 2010 (Step Brothers Remix)," by Desiree D'Alessandro (2010).
DL: Yes, a video document of the presentation is available (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F-zxvjcE7M), as well as a transcript (http://appropriationalliance.blogspot.com/2010/09/its-critical-ethical-foundations-for.html). Byron Russell and I "polyfurcated" the paper into a few different but overlapping issues. Byron succinctly articulated why critical remix (as opposed to political remix or media stilo) would be a more apt descriptor for the field. I encourage everyone to consult his arguments on that specific subject as well as his assertions regarding free speech and fair use in the 21st century.

For my part, I fortified an ethical foundation for remix video, addressing my commentary to individuals I've encountered on both the left and right of the political spectrum who disrespect the PRV genre because, say they, it peddles in intentional obfuscation and deception. One of my favorite contemporary graffiti artists, Tes One (http://www.facebook.com/tes.one), made precisely such claims when we got into it about one of my videos on his Facebook wall (figure 1).
Figure 1. Screenshot of Tes One's remarks on Facebook regarding the PRV "Obama Likes Spending," by Diran Lyons (2011). [View larger image.]

[2.9] Generally, all remix utilizes what one could call a creative lie, which means at base that the editor cleverly recalibrates clips ripped from context to form a sum that posits a truth proposition. I also described the Creative Lie in an essay entitled "Political Remix Video/The Rupture of Context/Neo-conservative Agenda→Black Widow Spiders" (http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_25boyd_JDmI/TLaY2wrvEI/AAAAAAAAABXQ/N_4d3a7W7_s/s1600/Diran+Lyons+Political+Remix+Video+1.jpg) and during a radio interview (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYV6wT6xsUg), using Nietzschean aesthetic theory to demonstrate that the viewer isn't actually deceived by such works.

[2.10] For example, no one thinks that Obama and Jake Gyllenhaal actually sat down to debate war and foreign policy, but my editing strategy contrives the illusion of them
doing so, which further makes it possible to present the video's punch line shared by many who have opposed the various wars against the Middle East. As such, remix videos don't come across as documentaries or factual, but ostensibly as artistic creations that rebuke the powers and present deeper truths. In any case, when pondered thoroughly, the argument that these works are deceptive (and therefore unethical) isn't very convincing. That's the crux of my contribution to the OVC paper.

[2.11] **DD:** It is interesting how you're incorporating academic theory with the genre of remix, which isn't something I've frequently seen advocated in communities often emphasizing the raw DIY approach. I appreciate that you're not abandoning, but rather applying, your formal academic training to the practice. How exactly did you get involved with remix and begin to hybridize these praxes?

[2.12] **DL:** When I first encountered the PRV community in 2007, I saw the form as a new branch or offshoot for my creative practice, as a way to conjoin my love of video and the topical politics that my work often engaged with other media. I further saw an attractive egalitarian element that remix shares with drawing, one in which the primacy of 'the idea' is emphasized: projects created with either medium cannot be resolved by throwing money at obstacles that arise during the creative process (as we see routinely with high budgeted films or ambitious spatial projects, for example). I really liked that aspect.

[2.13] Moreover, remix was and remains a way for an artist to speak directly to powerful individuals or institutions, although imbuing the work with mystery and subtlety is concurrently important. A hint of ambiguity can help raise questions that get overlooked in the case of more didactic work. Finally, I was seduced by the potential for a more far-reaching conversation via an online platform, beyond the art galleries and screening venues with which I'd already been familiar. Given that I hold the most critical role of art to be creating brush fires of political discourse, it was very exciting to happen upon the PRV community online.

[2.14] **DD:** Given this interest in topical politics, what was your first remix and what compelled you to make it?

[2.15] **DL:** My first political remix was "George W. Bush Battles Jesus Christ" (2007) ([http://www.imdb.com/video/wab/vi866386457/](http://www.imdb.com/video/wab/vi866386457/)). I made it in 2007 in response to USC's call for entry to their 24/7: a DIY Video Summit, which featured a PRV program curated by Jonathan McIntosh in early 2008. (As a point of historical fact, it was not screened at the event.) With that remix, I juxtaposed various aggressive, prowar statements by Bush after 9/11 vis-à-vis the pacifistic appeals of Christ as represented in Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977). Through the montage, my ambition was to problematize and undermine Bush's claims to devout Christian faith, claims he
successfully used to woo the Bible belt and Christian vote in the run-up to the 2000 general election.

[2.16] **DD:** Do you feel the remix was successful in message conveyance?

[2.17] **DL:** Well, many viewers found the piece incapable of achieving such objectives with any sort of axiomatic leverage, for a remix of this nature intrinsically minimizes the theologico-political difficulties surrounding Christ's teachings in ways that are not present in the argumentation of historical and contemporary critical writing on the subject. Writers may use whatever words they choose to support a rigorously argued scriptural position, but remix artists find themselves constrained by the footage and commentaries available in extant film/video works. Yet amid the PRV medium's limitations in presenting a holistic discerning of the biblical text, I saw the overarching value of the remix in the self-reflexive questions it generated about the nature of remix video itself—that is, whether the genre can itself be philosophically rigorous or whether it stands as the catalyzing object of subsequent philosophical and political thinking. I came away leaning toward the latter.

[2.18] **DD:** You have produced a considerable oeuvre of work since that time. What are some of your favorites and why?


[2.20] "Jake Gyllenhaal Challenges The Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize" screened at Los Angeles Shorts Film Festival in Hollywood, the Athens Video Art Festival 2010, and the RE/Mixed Media Fest in Brooklyn, among other venues. It was the first PRV ever to reach #1 on the IMDb most popular ratings for shorts. As an example of transformative storytelling, it directly takes poignant shots at Obama's duplicitous and malleable stance on war within the context of accepting the world's most prestigious peace prize. I felt the narrative dealt self-reflexively with the video medium itself in ways that aren't present in other works, as issues of time, identity, and nonlinearity are at the forefront of the video, which comes out of my interest in Deleuzean film theory.
Jake Gyllenhaal Challenges the Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize


[2.21] The two Chevron remixes I made toward the end of 2010—"Tapping Human Energy (Chevron Commercial Remix)" and "Chevron Lie Detector (2012 Remix)"—are also special to me because the identity correction of Chevron's PR campaigns reminds people of the wars the oil company so often pressures the Pentagon to start, the current conflict in Libya representing the most recent example.

Tapping Human Energy (Chevron Commercial Remix)

[2.22] **DD:** Yes, I remember first encountering your interest in dismantling oil company propaganda when we were invited to present at UCSB's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center Conference, Oil + Water: The Case of Santa Barbara and Southern California (http://appropriationalliance.blogspot.com/2010/09/screening-discussion-oil-water-remixes.html), held in 2010. At that time, I was promoting one of my first remixes on the theme of water conservation, which—when coupled with your oil remixes—completed the two-part conference theme. "World Water Shortage vs. Golf Course Consumption" has since received broad public attention with screenings at the 2010 RE/Mixed Media Festival in New York, Rogue Remix Festival in Fresno, PRV screenings at Gallery 25, and the ONE exhibit with the Arc Gallery and IMAX Dome Theater. The work has also been reviewed on Political Remix Video (http://politicalremixvideo.com/), a forum maintained by Jonathan McIntosh, who you've mentioned, and also Elisa Kreisinger, Martin Leduc, and Anita Sarkeesian.

[2.23] **DL:** Right. Elisa and Anita engage in remixes that are critical of traditional, rigid gender formulations. Your latest remix and current research operate on similar terms.

[2.24] **DD:** Yes. My remix "Woman Warrior Exposed (Sigourney Weaver Remix)" explores how Sigourney Weaver is represented as a female power icon in pop culture, though several roles from her filmography epitomize Laura Mulvey's notion of the male gaze, whereby Weaver is objectified and sexualized in the character personas she portrays. I utilized juxtapositions of the iconic horror narrator John Newland to draw public attention to the discord between Weaver's selective recollection and her actual cinematic record. The illusion that is presented through Weaver's testimony is dissolved in an illuminating montage that highlights her career of conflicting character personas. It received positive reception at the New York Chashama Film Festival and at the international 2011 European Media Art Festival premier.
I have since decided to get out from behind the computer and fight my battles in the real world rather than via digital technologies. I took up boxing as a recreational practice to lose weight and have found significant results. The psychological changes that have accompanied the physiological ones are remarkable, and my perspective on my artistic practice has transformed as well. This has lead to my current and recent MFA thesis research, which entails examining the form and physicality of boxing as a physical workout, a contest, a spectacle, or the opportunity for visual and cognitive mapping. Examples of these efforts are on my Web site (http://desiree-dalessandro.com/), blog (http://dalessandroart.blogspot.com/), and YouTube channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/libragoddess04).

DL: And being a woman seriously aiming to participate in a male-dominated sport, I think it's great that you're effectively delving headfirst into these contemporary issues by coupling gender and athlete demographics.

DD: Thanks! What about you? Your current remix endeavor is Project 12. What is it and how did it come about?

DL: At the end of 2010, I retired my LYONSPOTTER YouTube channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/LYONSPOTTER) and launched Project 12 as a series of videos on a new channel, DiranLyons (http://www.youtube.com/user/DiranLyons). Incidentally, LYONSPOTTER started as a collaborative space with Matthew Potter to host our feature-length film Goodbye Victoria (2009). However, the channel later transitioned into my own personal space exclusively for remix, and the Goodbye Victoria material went elsewhere (http://www.imdb.com/video/wab/vi3277455897/).
I've named this new channel DiranLyons, but Project 12 has taken on more of a film production model where I directed the videos and collaborated with different script cowriters, among them Stephen Mears, Vruden Jakov, and you, Desiree D'Alessandro. Remix is so big on the concept of sharing that it seemed fitting to have the new project intrinsically incorporate sharing into its scope.

[2.29] **DD:** A clever ambition because remix is inherently collective, both in terms of fabrication and reception. I think in many ways that beta testing with someone is a form of collaboration.

[2.30] **DL:** Absolutely. The script cowriters and I conceptualized the videos, and I then set out to edit them, because I enjoy editing and the creative problem solving that goes into finalizing a piece. The project overall addressed several different topical issues as they arose, posing disparate inquiries as they came to mind during the year. For instance, the first video in the series considered the question, "What if a remix attempted to communicate something about our culture and the world at large, without using any words or statements?" Would it be effective, and to what extent? I had a solo art exhibit ([http://lyonspotter.blogspot.com/2011/01/post-14-solo-exhibition-of-petroleum.html](http://lyonspotter.blogspot.com/2011/01/post-14-solo-exhibition-of-petroleum.html)) open on January 6, 2011, mere days before the Project 12 launch, so I was fresh out of artwork as the first post date approached on January 12 (I post on the 12th day of each month). I edited the first video, "The Dream Is Collapsing (Project 12, 1/12)," in 8 hours on January 11 to address the aforementioned conceptual framework.

![The Dream Is Collapsing (Project 12, 1/12)](http://lyonspotter.blogspot.com/2011/01/post-14-solo-exhibition-of-petroleum.html)

**Video 8.** "The Dream Is Collapsing (Project 12, 1/12)," by Diran Lyons (2011).

[2.31] The March video considered whether a strong remix could be made by meditating merely on a single word with "Obama Likes Spending (Project 12, 3/12)."
Similarly, all the Project 12 videos proceeded with an algorithmic framework, much like Sol LeWitt, Charles Gaines, and other conceptual fine artists approach conceptual art. A system always guided the production so that the artist's subjectivity in the creative process would not run roughshod over everything else.

**Video 9.** "Obama Likes Spending (Project 12, 3/12)," by Diran Lyons (2011).

[2.32] **DD:** Well, Diran, I've enjoyed discovering how our varying remix praxes continue to corroborate and contribute to the remix field. Thanks for collaborating with me on this interview, and I look forward to seeing more of your work!

[2.33] **DL:** Yes, and I look forward to seeing how your work continues to develop as well. Thank you very much.
Multimedia

Fred rant

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Keyterms—Antifan; Fan; Parody; Youth media; YouTube


1. Introduction

[1.1] I was introduced to Fred (http://www.youtube.com/show?p=VUGSB_LmIuA) in 2008 when I was asked to write a commentary about his wildly successful video oeuvre for Teacher's College Record (http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentID=15367), "the voice of scholarship in education." As a stately YouTube expert, a verifiable adult, and a scholar, it seemed my duty to interpret for confused educators this teen performer's insanely popular video performance as a lying, screeching 6-year-old (he is one of the most subscribed YouTubers in the site's short history). I would be a reasoned voice of scholarship in the face of his juvenile squeals. I humbly accepted the challenge. After all, our work as media scholars is to give clarity, reason, and structure to the often unruly objects we study, to make meaning in the wilds of popular culture.

[1.2] As I continued to study Fred, I looked outward to the fan videos of his huge body of followers—kids like him—in hopes that they could better instruct me about what still seemed like the questionable value of his work. In what was to become just one eerie and reflexive parallel in this noisy fun house of a project, I found that his fans were also attempting to make meaning of his often nonsensical videos, and that their work, mirroring his, was mostly pointless and absurd (and still shrill). Therefore, so was mine, even though I had seriously accepted the charge to be a voice of reasoned, seasoned scholarship in education. Given my training, why did I find myself so often stumped (and repulsed, bored, or enervated) in my interpretive work? What were these speedy, screeching children saying?
A common practice within fan studies, particularly the brand that celebrates the utopia of participatory culture, seems to be to coddle and celebrate the work of nascent artists and citizens, but after watching hundreds of Fred fans' videos and tens of Fred's, I found that this huge body of work rarely exhibits anything like empowering possibilities. Sure, I could stretch my interpretive chops to find them, but why do so, given that failures, meanness, and poor imitation are the most common, and popular, forms for these newly minted participants, our sacrosanct children? Why honor cruelty? Why commemorate the paltry?

I am aware that my tone is also shrill, and I will end (or begin) by explaining why. First, biting (or better yet, failed) nastiness is the lingua franca of the videos I consider here. To discuss Fred's fans on their terms is to succumb to a logic of being mean to your friends as a form of supplication. Fred is surprisingly sweet in comparison. But more importantly, I think it is necessary to look to the common practices of quotidian YouTube culture (and its fans, and its students of fans) and try to name how this culture is failing us, to learn from the failures of children and scholars (starting with my own).

I came to YouTube as an advocate, practitioner, and scholar of activist media. People like me have long believed that when regular people were afforded access to the production and dissemination of media, there would be a revolution. How wrong we were! Like many adherents of fan studies, I was drawn to the valuable and enabling culture made by people outside of dominant systems of power. My academic work was often conducted in the guise of interpreter and advocate: naming, promoting, and sharing the alternative practices of outsiders. But here I am compelled to do something different; to speak shrilly and thus harshly to the new forms of people-made media that I currently find, as well as to my own enduring needs and values. Citizens need good cops and bad cops, and kids develop best in relation to mothering across the loving spectrum.

2. YouTour


YouTour. Hotlink to Fred Rant YouTour.

This piece is written into the same architecture as my video book, Learning from YouTube, recently published by MIT Press (http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=12596). You can enter the interface below, then click on the red "Continue Fred Rant for TWC" link on the bottom left of your screen to take this special YouTour. Make sure to pull down the Origins and Context (http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/learningfromyoutube/...
and See Also menus provided. There you will find more background on Fred, his videos and his fans', and other approaches to this body of work.

[2.2] I recently (and with much time and labor) developed this agile, multimodal writing platform for online media studies with the team at Vectors (http://www.vectorsjournal.org/) and with Craig Dietrich (http://www.craigdietrich.com/) as collaborator. When I was asked to contribute to TWC's special issue on fan remix, I was pained to imagine not moving quickly, efficiently, even speedily between text and video, fans' voices and mine, YouTube and academia in this extension of my YouTube studies. Furthermore, an advantage of the video book is that it could expand to encompass new (and related) projects, and that any new writing could link to what was already nestled happily online.

[2.3] I thank TWC's editors for allowing me to continue my experiments in YouTube writing, and I await readers' responses (http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/learningfromyoutube/texteo.php?composite=247). You may respond in the comments here or in the form of your own texteos within the video book; simply make use of the Voice pull-down menu to write your feedback (http://vectors.usc.edu/projects/learningfromyoutube/texteo.php?composite=248).
1. Introduction

[1.1] Appropriation has always played a key role in the survival of queer communities and nowhere is this more prevalent than in online spaces. New media tools and technologies enable creators to deconstruct appropriated pop culture texts and experiment directly with mainstream images of gender and sexuality, recreating more diverse and affirming narratives of representation. These once underground experiments have now spread throughout the Web and have the to power to radically change the way we think of and picture sexual identity. As queer remix works find more mainstream audiences, however, they are increasingly vulnerable to incomplete readings, uninformed by the discursive community from which they arise. Additionally, as the entertainment industry begins to add queer characters to mainstream texts, the available subtext that remix works depend on is threatened.

[1.2] Video remix is a DIY form of grassroots media production wherein creators appropriate mass media texts, reediting them to form new pieces of media intended for public viewing on video sharing sites like YouTube. It should be noted that the remix process itself can be considered a queer act. If *queer act* is defined as any act that challenges, questions, or provokes the normal, the acceptable, and the dominant, then remixes' required rejection of the dominant and acceptable notions of copyright challenges the author/reader and owner/user binaries on which these notions are based. Remix demands that producers physically deconstruct copyright images, identities, and narratives to create new and transformative works, displacing and thus queering the binaries on which copyright, ownership, and authorship are based.
For my purposes here, queer video remix is defined as a reediting of recognizable popular culture texts, without the permission of the copyright holder, to comment on, critique, or deconstruct images of heteronormativity or to expand on an existing, implied, or desired homoerotic subtext. Because of its transformative and critical nature, the appropriation of copyrighted source material in queer video remix falls under fair use.

Remixing requires the use of pop culture clips both in and out of their original context, a dynamic that sometimes occurs simultaneously, depending on the message. As queer remixes find more mainstream audiences, this dynamic often alters their reception and interpretation, making them increasingly vulnerable to misuse or misreadings, uninformed by the discursive community from which they originally arose. For example, the profusion of recut trailers for the popular film Brokeback Mountain (2005) quickly brought a variety of freshly queered pop culture couples to our inboxes. Because of this remix meme, wider audiences became familiar with the rearticulation of identity and the reframing of sexuality through subtextual readings. However, these remixed relationships weren't all positive representations. Many of the parodic videos were posted and shared in male-dominated spaces such as YouTube where queerness is a perceived threat to masculinity, male privilege, and heteronormativity. As a result, many of the virally popular Brokeback remix trailers, such as "Brokeback to the Future" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uwuLxrv8jY), encouraged us to laugh at the oddball pairings of men, pushing gayness further into the realm of Other while simultaneously reinforcing heternormativity—not exactly a queer-positive message.

The rewriting of sexuality seen today in online video emerges from a history of struggles over queer representation in Hollywood. Allusions, signs, and symbols of gayness once read between the lines of code-era movies were later reappropriated by underground filmmaking communities. They were then recycled again in mainstream movies and television shows, where they are still kept alive in the self-conscious subtext of shows like Rizzoli & Isles (2010–11) and Supernatural (2005–present), presumably to appeal to explicitly lesbian and queer audiences.

For content creators, the ever-present homoerotic subtext evident in body language, nonverbal social cues, visual conventions, and narrative entanglements between emotionally connected characters becomes valuable source material for the abundance of queer video work. However, as popular subtext shows such as Glee (2009–present) begin to give the audience what they want in terms of gay and bisexual characters, the issue of available source material arises. For example, when the close relationship between two female cheerleaders on Glee officially becomes a sexual romance, the quantity of available footage for fan appropriation greatly
decreases: there's no longer a female friendship rife with subtext to work from. As subtext moves away from being a culturally marginal practice for appealing to underrepresented communities and toward being the foundation for explicitly gay or bisexual characters, access to the necessary source and inspiration required for remixing may become limited. Although queer visibility in mainstream media is a positive outcome, I question whether the lack of available source footage will result in a reduction in the number of queer variations on these texts. If history is any indication, however, Hollywood simply commodifies depictions of queerness, often creating limited and stereotyped characters. This effect will likely further encourage remixers to create broader variations and more interesting interpretations of queerness, expanding on any relevant main text—provided there is source footage to make it happen.

[1.7] I intend the curated selection of videos that follows to be representative of the queer remix community and not an exhaustive list. I include works that carry the most potential for further or more nuanced subversive readings. Many of these queer remixes require knowledge of a particular community, fandom, or pop culture text to fully appreciate their complexity, but that context is increasingly separate from the actual product as it circulates freely and publicly in video sharing space. The videos are all queer-positive appropriations of popular culture that encourage viewers to gaze through a queer lens, identify with queer(ed) characters, and be sympathetic to their struggles. Each video offers a glimpse into the complexity of its creator's situation.

2. Videos

Video 1. "Barbie and The Diamond Castle Recut" (2010), by gaberine.
[2.1] Playing guitars on their beds, saving each other from the evil forest and dancing hand in hand through the hills—this is not your usual fairy tale or your normal Barbie adventure. Most fairy tales reinforce heteronormative gender roles in girls early on, but this simple remix turns a Barbie fairy tale into a queer love story. Gaberine, a 41-year-old YouTube user, made this recut trailer with her kids by taking scenes from the 2008 Mattel movie *Barbie and the Diamond Castle* and recording a more subversive voice-over. Now remixed, Barbie and her current girlfriend have to save Barbie's ex-girlfriend (they are still friends!) trapped in a castle. There is no Ken; "these gay girls" only have each other.

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**Video 2.** "Glen and Glenda" (2007), by Tom.

[2.2] Bugs Bunny spent a good portion of his career in drag; the iconic cartoon character often dressed up in women's clothes to escape compromising situations and evade his captors, and it always worked. When the narration from the cult classic film *Glen or Glenda* (1953) is placed over a supercut of Bugs Bunny's drag appearances, the rabbit's undercover survival strategy becomes a plea for gender and sexual tolerance.
It's raining 300 men


[2.3] It's difficult to call the homoeroticism in the 2006 blockbuster fantasy action film *300* subtext. Director Zack Snyder claims that featuring shirtless, tan, and leather-clad muscle men was not intended to be homoerotic, especially because his film was targeted to straight male audiences. But similar to other action-genre films, *300* had a distinct appeal to gays, garnering media attention for its ability to cater to this bonus audience to boost sales. When paired with the Weather Girls' "It's Raining Men," the film's testosterone-fueled masculinity is mocked and subverted, illustrating how easily images of performative gender roles can be subverted through remix.
Video 4. "Wouldn't It Be Nice?" (released on Blip in 2009), by Laura Shapiro.

[2.4] The Beach Boys song evokes hope for the future, but the source footage in this remix reminds us how rare it is to see loving same-sex pairings in a positive light. Usually queer characters are the problem with relationships—the evil lesbian or the effeminate villain who threatens the male protagonist and his female love interest. But in Laura Shapiro's vid, we anticipate a time when gay couples can be married, happy, and even acknowledged and accepted in the media.
**Video 6.** "Come Around: MultiFandom Slash" (2010), by mfirefly10.

[2.6] The lesbian kiss has been so overutilized to leverage ratings that it's referred to as the kiss of death, marking an obvious push for viewers and the possible demise for a TV series. This queer remix puts intimacy back into the lesbian kiss, exploring the emotional connection between two female characters, subverting any exploitative intentions.

**Video 7.** "Gay Romance—Until that Boy Is Mine" (2009), by jbeautifultube.

[2.7] Tucked away in the gender binary, yet ever-present, is the equivalence between female/male and maker/destroyer where the assumption is that women can (and should) be nurturing, warm, and affectionate while men destroy each other. Images of male intimacy are hard to find in mass media and popular narratives; that's
one of the reasons why this compilation of "favorite male affection scenes" cut to Lady Gaga's song is so popular. Incorporating international TV series and films, this multifandom montage illustrates how we have become so inured to images of male violence and savagery that the representation of male affection and tenderness seems radical even to a queer eye. One can't help but notice, however, that despite the international source material, the majority of queer characters featured are white.

http://www.masqueweb.net/cits_page.htm

**Video 8.** "Circle in the Sand" (2003), by Michaela Upton.

[2.8] Remixing requires the use of pop culture clips both in and out of their original context, but when the original context is uncertain, remixing becomes a tool for metaphysically deconstructing texts. Is the creator relying on the *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) subtext to queer the two female characters, or is she paying homage to the existing and evident romance between the two Amazon women? In this way, "Circle in the Sand" exemplifies the creator's connection to the text as well as the practice, utilizing remix as an extension of a larger online queer community. In Upton's words, "[This is] the first 'Xena and Gabrielle as lovers' music video that I produced and the first time that I realized that I wasn't merely picking a nice song and throwing a bunch of clips together. This was something that I cared about and was beginning to discover that other people did too."

![Swingers In Love Trailer Recut](Swingers In Love Trailer Recut)

**Video 9.** "Swingers in Love Recut" (2007), by SelfmadeMonkeys.

[2.9] Deemed one of the "sharpest male-oriented comedies of the 1990's" by *TV Guide*, the original 1996 *Swingers* movie follows five 20-something men as they cope with the mysteries of women and life in Hollywood. The queer remix subverts a male
friendship between two lead characters, played by Vince Vaughn and Jon Favreau, into a romance of loss and longing. When the former friends and current lovers break up, Favreau is suddenly "lost in a world he [doesn't] understand"—that is, heteronormative Hollywood. He attempts to court men and comes out of the closet, but he continues to frequent straight bars to keep up appearances. Experimenting with societal expectations, Favreau "decides to be someone else"—that is, "a man" (as defined by blue captions), meaning a straight man who upholds heteronormativity. However, he soon realizes he's still in love with Vaughn.

[2.10] What makes this remix different from the thousands of other queer remixes of mainstream bromances is the sensitivity we're encouraged to have for Favreau as he tries to negotiate gender roles, masculinity, and societal expectations of men. The video successfully invites the viewer to identify with Favreau's struggle as he tries to fit into a world where heterosexuality and normative gender expression reign.

[2.11] "One Girl Revolution" offers a rendering of the male gaze appropriated and queered into a feminist comment on female exploitation in mainstream storylines. By removing 155 female characters from their original contexts, this remix becomes an antidote to the heroines' original conception and deployment as male fantasies. Here, the vidder has carefully recontextualized the characters, placing them one after another to celebrate the physical strength of women as subjects rather than objects.
[2.12] Viewed over 3 million times on YouTube, "Top Gun Recut" is one of the most popular examples of queer video remix. As main characters Maverick and Iceman begin to fall for each other in this constructed reality, their sexual encounters and romantic relationship mock the aggressively masculine and heteronormative fraternity of fighter pilots explored in the original 1986 Hollywood hit Top Gun. Repeated phallic images are used to drive the point home: these guys want each other bad. Will the homophobic world of the military condone their desire to be together, or will it threaten their love forever?

Video 12. "I'm Your Man" (2008) by Charmax76.
"I'm Your Man" uses 48 different visual sources, offering the viewer a full range of gendered media clichés meticulously organized and edited to successfully mock the notion of essential gender identity. Repeated images of drag, cross-dressing, and stylized butch/femme identities are used to parody our concept of binary gender. The author packs an additional parodic punch by using the song "I'm Your Man" covered by a female performer, Patricia O'Callaghan. This queer remix celebrates the rare moments when marginalized or alternative genders and sexualities make it into pop culture while critically questioning gender representation and the resulting clichés in the mass media.
Multimedia

Genesis of the digital anime music video scene, 1990–2001

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[0.1] Keywords— AMV; Japan


1. A brief history of AMVs

[1.1] The development of the anime music video (AMV) scene, as described here, is centered around Western anime fandom and the music videos created by its fans between the 1980s and the early 2000s. (The tradition of Japanese-created fan videos is an entirely separate tradition that would require its own article.) Western AMV development during this period was dependent on a number of related developments: (1) a growing demand for and access to anime in the West—that is, the availability of anime and the way in which anime video-sharing created an environment for the creation and distribution of fan videos; (2) the development of anime fan communities—how local anime clubs grew to convention communities and finally to AMV communities; (3) the emergence of new technologies—including VCR, LaserDisc, camcorders used for linear editing through analog capture, DVD capture devices, and digital downloaded source for digital nonlinear editing; (4) the cultivation of expertise—in particular, the mastery of professional editing techniques and their application to AMVs by fans; and (5) the codification of AMV aesthetics—comprised not only of the changing, maturing, and diversifying of genre and theme, but also a density and diversity of visual technique.

[1.2] Some questions to consider when watching an anime music video include: What is the subject of the video? What kind of message is being communicated about that subject? What prior knowledge, if any, is required of the subject? How do editing methods influence, guide or realize this message? Who is the potential audience (personal, friends, convention, Internet)?
Anime music videos, or AMVs as they are commonly known, have a history that goes back to the early days of anime fandom in the United States. In the 1970s and 1980s, the everyday TV, movie, and media fan knew little about anime. The commercial market for anime was limited to English-language dubs shown alongside Western cartoons. *Battle of the Planets* (aka *G-force*, aka *Gatchaman*) and *Speed Racer* were watched but with little knowledge of their Japanese roots and no knowledge of the diverse genres to be found in Japanese animation. For those few who did know about anime, access was very difficult. Importing VHS tapes from Japan was difficult, rare, and expensive, and English translations were nowhere to be found. The dawn of consumer VCRs and consumer chroma keying technology changed all this, and throughout the 1980s, anime fans would copy and distribute tapes to any fan who would send them blank tapes, postage, and packaging. Fans formed local anime clubs with lending libraries, and as soon as technology allowed (in the late 1980s and early 1990s), fans began to produce their own subtitled tapes (fan subs).

The technology used for tape distribution was the same technology fans used to make their own music videos, and in 1982 Jim Kaposztas created what we believe to be the first fan-made anime music video in the West: an ironically violent *Space Battleship Yamato* video set to "All You Need is Love" by the Beatles.

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2. The analog era: From VCRs to the dawn of digital editing

Early AMVs were often added to the end of fan sub tapes to fill in space that could not fit an episode of a TV show. Many fans saw their first AMV this way, with "I could do that" being the cursed response of many a soon-to-be AMV creator.

Bobby 'C-ko' Beaver - Every Little Thing She Does...

[2.2] Bobby "C-ko" Beaver's "Everything She Does Is Magic" is the classic two-VCR vid: simple idea, thoughtful execution. C-ko's AMVs are among the most cherished of the tape distro era. Sentimental works of this kind were fairly common during the VCR editing years. The inclusion of the source movie's credits was quite popular in the 1980s and 1990s, partly for attribution and partly to advertise and promote a show or movie to fellow anime fans who might not know about it. Fan videos have always been a strong part of anime promotion in the West—the inclusion of videos on fan sub tapes served to act as promos (traditional trailers would carry a burden of translation where fan-made videos are often flattering and accessible).

[2.3] Trivia: You may notice that the brightness of this video fluctuates. This is a side effect of MacroVision copy protection, an early antipiracy measure that later appeared in a simpler digital form on DVDs.


[2.4] A group of Atlanta-based anime fans made a vast contribution to anime fan works in the 1980s and 1990s. Corn Pone Flicks produced fan parodies, reviews, fan subs, and large number of fan vids. This is possibly the worst surviving copy of this vid, but it's also the most prolific—a very low-resolution MOV file distributed in the mid to late 1990s at the dawn of the digital anime era. There's another classic story here, digging deeper into the psyche of Tetsuo from the groundbreaking movie *Akira*. The English audio is from the original Streamline Video dub. For many anime fans (myself included), this particular dub was their first real introduction to anime as something distinct from Western cartoons.

[2.5] A fan known only as You Know Who made a number of excellent AMVs in the 1990s with a significant focus on timing—especially internal motion. Jump cuts, while not the easiest thing to do when armed with a flying erase head and a stopwatch, were very much the norm in AMVs by this point, but internal motion (gun shots, explosions, jumping) was often accidental. You Know Who uses internal motion and timing to great effect in this spunky action AMV.

3. The 1990s convention scene

[3.1] As anime grew in the United States, the emergence of fan conventions also led to AMVs becoming part of con programming. This began with AMV viewings in late-night slots or showings to fill dead space in convention video programming. As AMVs became more popular as a convention activity (since the difficulty of distribution meant they were something you usually couldn't see at your local anime club), formal AMV shows appeared. At first, AMV shows worked in simple terms—bring your VHS to the con and we'll copy your AMV to a tape and show the tape. As participation grew and the art form developed, the first AMV contests began.

[3.2] Contests were the catalyst that formalized many key AMV aesthetics. Late 1990s AMVs competed in comedy/fun, drama, and action categories, and techniques and a visual language were formed and purposefully used in new AMVs to win awards.
Anime and AMVs grew fast, thanks to the greater access to technology, and among these contests and changing technologies, the second wave of AMV makers emerged.

**Video 4. Brad Demoss, "Dangerous" (1992).**

"Dangerous" is an early 1990s comic convention video and one of many multisource projects by Demoss in the two-VCR era. Demoss had a number of collaborators on this and other VCR projects. Just as in vidding, the expense of the equipment resulted in the formation of small groups who would make fan videos together. "Dangerous" is interesting in a number of ways: this is a video about animation of all kinds. This is effectively a celebratory show reel of everything this group of fans love about animation. By the late 1990s, crossover between Western and Japanese animation in fan vids would be almost unheard of unless it was a deliberate parody—which is more a sign of anime fandom growing large enough to stand on its own two feet than anime fans proactively disliking Western anime.
Unlike vidding, the AMV scene at this point was largely male. It is only since 2005 that female participation in AMV making has grown to match the number of male AMV makers. That's not to say that women making AMVs is anything new—this shocking but hilarious AMV from 1996 is as well regarded as any comic work from that period.
With fans watching the same shows and listening to the same songs, it was inevitable that several different videos would appear featuring the same idea. The song "500 Miles" spawned a number of AMVs in the 1990s, and many of those were to this very character in Ranma 1/2—Ryoga has a terrible sense of direction, leading him on round-the-world travels when he only needs to go next door. He also has an unrequited love for Akane who, unknowingly, cruelly tortures his affections by keeping him as a pet when he inevitably turns into a cute pig, which he does when he comes into contact with cold water. Johnson's take on this idea is fondly remembered by many AMV fans and represents a core AMV principle for videos of this era: Represent an aspect of the show as it is felt by the fans. In a sense, this distillation of feeling is the most essential principle of all fan creations.


The fun action video is a hugely prolific genre that has regularly cross-pollinated with comedy since creators started making AMVs. Johnson follows the playful manner of the source movie here and keeps the action very tongue-in-cheek, managing to stay fun, humorous, and action packed. The importance of the contest scene, however, unintentionally discouraged cross-genre works as the years went on, since editors came to feel that cross-genre videos would not win against purely comic or purely action-packed competitors. Here again we see the impact of contests on the development of AMV aesthetics.
In the early 1990s, straight romance videos like this were very common—surprisingly so, considering the young men making the videos. This end-of-an-era romance video is a stellar example of the genre, but as the convention scene grew, videos like this would not fare well in the drama categories when compared to more somber drama videos. It is not until much later (around 2002), when romance/sentimental emerged as a common fourth category at contests, that there was a revival of videos like this one.

Video 8. Duane Johnson, "Linger" (n.d.).

Another prolific AMV maker of the time, Thompson used a camcorder to create the transitions for his videos before he switched to digital. This video is also a strong crowd-pleaser: It is designed so that the audience eagerly anticipates each new singer to see which of their favorite anime characters have been cast.

| Anime - Crazy Ass Violence |

**Video 10.** BigBigTruck, "Crazy-ass Violence" (1999).

"Crazy-ass Violence" is a real gem of 1990s AMV making, featuring fun, upbeat action. Using every anime she owns, BigBigTruck (aka EK) showed us all why anime is straight-up kick-ass. There is some very impressive action synchronization evident here, with a superb feel for what is right for this joyous and campy rap hit. It also handles the considerable length of the song very well, saving some of its best moments for last.
[3.11] Incredibly, this tightly edited video was linearly edited using a LaserDisc player and a VCR. Finesse cutting (such as the white and black frame flashes) was likely achieved thanks to the ability to perfectly pause LaserDiscs and the ability to insert single frames in the high-end VCRs of the time. The technical aspects of the video were only part of what impressed audiences; part of the effect is created by the surprising anime choice ("Magnetic Rose" from the *Memories* shorts), which would have been largely unknown. Sci-fi opera house horror with a techno Lloyd-Webber soundtrack plus superb editing made this a real hit.

4. The dawn of digital editing

[4.1] By 1999, consumer video capture technology was becoming common, with VCR-based editors switching over to video capture and a whole new crowd of editors appearing as anime gained popularity. While the technology was revolutionary, the change in participation was more evolutionary, with 1999 through 2001 showing a rapid growth of the convention scene as more cons appeared around the country and more editors submitted their videos to contests.

[4.2] This AMV was made around 7 years after "Dangerous" and the difference is very clear—much faster cutting, lots of technical flourishes (like the crowd-pleasing lip-synch at the start), internal motion—everything you would expect in an upbeat action AMV from the late 1990s. For "Come out and Play," Demoss had upgraded from his VCRs to an Amiga 3000. Amiga computers were fairly popular in the mid to late 1990s thanks to the success of the Video Toaster card, which had very good chroma key (an important technology if you wanted to create your own fan subs) and a number of other helpful editing tricks. After the death of the Amiga, Brad and many other AMV makers switched to an Apple Mac and Final Cut video editing software.
[4.3] Technology improved tremendously in the late 1990s, but alas, access to good source footage did not. Anime was an expensive, expensive hobby. The anime *End of Evangelion* had a famously long wait before a commercial English release. An AMV maker either spent a lot of money on a LaserDisc player and imported the LaserDisc version, or used a fan sub or someone's raw untranslated VHS copy. A lot of different sources are visibly mixed here, including a very deliberate fan translation of Asuka's famous "Kimochi warui" line.


[4.4] With digital editing arrived the ability to add to the footage instead of simply appropriating it. In this excellent *Serial Experiments Lain* AMV, Joe Croasdaile of Maboroshi Studio punctuated the themes in his video by adding his own text to the sea of messages represented in the show coming from "the wired."

![Kare Kano AMV Far and Away (Spoiler)](image)

**Video 15. Maboroshi Studio, "Far and Away" (2000).**

[4.5] This video was a massive departure for AMVs at the time and would still be seen as ambitious at conventions today. "Far and Away" is a long, instrumental AMV narrating what was then a brand-new show (*His and Her Circumstances*) that did not have a huge following. The success of this AMV (and many found it immensely enchanting) was in its storytelling and strong association of musical intricacies with movement and feeling.

[4.6] By the end of the millennium, AMVs had grown from a minor hobby with a handful of participants to a significant part of anime fan culture: AMVs at some conventions were becoming as important as cosplay. The growth both of anime fandom and of AMVs was immense—by the year 2000, many US anime conventions were growing 50 percent a year, and AMV participation grew with them.

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5. The rise of spectacle: Contests and innovation in the early 2000s

[5.1] The end of the VCR era saw the beginning of the digital era for anime fandom in general and AMV making in particular. The all-important anime conventions and the annual AMV contests they would host became the focal point of AMV creative efforts.
Editors would make several videos and send them all to one or more contests to give them an audience, enjoy them on the big screen, and hopefully win an award or two.

[5.2] Then came Anime Expo 2000. Nobody could have known what a turning point this particular contest at this particular con was at the time. The AMV scene had grown to have big names and big (and mostly friendly) rivalries. In 1999, Kevin Caldwell had won every category at Anime Expo (the biggest con in the country). In 2000, the competition was fierce, and practically every big-name AMV creator was either competing or in attendance. AMVs had become an established genre and, in response to growing competition, were now increasingly technical. Overtly technical work in AMVs, particularly in terms of special effects and composition, were the cause of many arguments among creators. Then Caldwell's impressively composed video "Believe" lost the drama category to the simpler, emotionally charged "Rhythm of the Heat." Many believed, Caldwell included, that the effects in "Believe" were distracting and detrimental. It would be the last AMV Kevin Caldwell would make.

[5.3] The following AMVs illustrate the culture of AMV innovation at the anime cons of the early 2000s.

Evangelion - Star Wars Episode 1 Parody


[5.4] Playing perfectly to the crowd, this trailer parody (a common fannish practice) relied on how heavily the Star Wars: Episode I teaser trailer had entered fannish consciousness. Also parodied by South Park, the Star Wars: Episode I trailer was watched repeatedly in the lead-up to the film's release, stirring the hype to unsustainable levels. With some obvious and some clever matchmaking, this AMV was tailored for convention success. Neon Genesis Evangelion was the big anime fandom of
the time, and while the AMV doesn't hold up especially well, it was a massive success when it premiered and for several years after. It became something of a recruiter AMV, the kind of video that fans would show other fans to introduce them to AMVs and the kind of fun they can bring.

**Video 17.** Brad Demoss, "Rhythm of the Heat" (2000).

[5.5] The influence of cinema trailers is clear here: the Ghibli credits at the start and the fades to and from black are techniques that are borrowed from Hollywood. Literalism is a common feature of Demoss's videos (all the way back to "Dangerous," in fact), and here it is somewhat at odds with the seriousness of the video. Nonetheless the themes build very well here to make a strong dramatic AMV. What's important here is what is missing—there is no lip-synch (of the lyrics). Lyrical lip-synch is a tool of the AMV comedian—here Peter Gabriel's howls and cries are those of the tortured animal spirits. The strongest moment in the video actually comes with the longest cut—the powerful moment between San and Ashitaka that leads into the bridge.
[5.6] In "Sleep Now," Croasdaile added graphics to the video in a way that would preserve the aesthetic of the source and would appear, hopefully, seamless. Doki Doki's AMVs, however, showed that (much like the comic lip-synch) deliberate, visible techniques have comic potential. The annotations in this excellent example of early AMV photoshopping do deliberate joke building. This level of manipulation was unheard of until that point, but would within a few years become very commonplace in AMVs and fan vids of all kinds.

This is a direct successor to the kind of character profile seen in "Comfortably Numb," this time with a lot of precise cutting and lip-synch to frame the song as a villainous autobiography combined with the requisite number of flashy action sequences suitable for this AMV genre.


Bringing the old school up to date a little, Pohnert took a classic AMV character comparison trope and spiced it up with some modern editing techniques. Thematically, this AMV feels very 1990s but was still appropriate for the convention scene, where AMVs did not need to be complex or pioneering but simply collected and curated the shows AMV creators liked into a pleasing statement.
What's remarkable about "Caffeine Encomium" is not just the incredible attention to timing, which was unparalleled at this time, but how much thought has also been given to the overall structure of the video. This is a day in the life of the hyperkinetic schoolgirl Sana-chan—from dawn to dusk. During her day she has to overcome all kinds of challenges as she goes to school, fights with bullies, pursues her acting career, fends off would-be boyfriends, and is pestered by her eccentric mother. This marriage of high-precision editing (with a lot of time manipulations in order to repeat and loop motion to match the overture) with the macrolevel narrating is what makes this AMV so successful.

[5.10] Few would disagree that "Believe" was, at the time of its creation, the most technically ambitious AMV to grace the halls of an anime convention: the masking, the composition, the lip-synch, the timing, the internal and external (effects-applied) motion. It was mesmerizing and divisive—were the effects too distracting? Was this video really just effects for effects' sake? At the convention, this version of "Believe" lost to "Rhythm of the Heat," but in the growing Internet AMV community, "Believe" was hailed as a triumph.

[5.11] After the departure of Caldwell from the AMV scene, there was a growing appreciation for his works, especially "Engel," "Caffeine Encomium," and "Believe," and for many years "Believe" was regarded as a work unsurpassed in technical excellence and among the best AMVs ever made—high praise, considering that 1999–2001 saw the release of some truly excellent AMVs (by 2003, AMV fans were referring to these years as a golden age, though I'm sure that term has been reapplied since).
Lostboy moved on from his camcorder days to digital editing and many subtle effects were added. The use of masks to selectively fade out parts of a scene and a lot of overlay use give this video its dreamlike "romance through the TV glass" feel. A keen eye will notice that he borrows some static from the show *Lain* at a few points: the static of an empty signal is an integral part of the loneliness theme. There are a lot of elements in this (and other AMVs of the time) that are genuinely experimental. Lee's addition of a vignette on the idyllic dream sections is borrowing a visual language from film and TV and applying it to AMVs. This is an integral part of the experimentation of these years—editors trying techniques to see if they were equally useful for conveying meaning in their videos.

"Rhythm Animation" takes the "every show on the shelf" AMV and expresses it through motion. Subtle digital editing techniques here are used to try to seamlessly bring each different anime into the same fluid universe. Possibly the most important theme in AMV making that emerged in these years is the creation and celebration of spectacle. Here we have a celebration of the physics-defying madcap high jinks of anime with a few visual effects here and there to emphasize the motion. It's also the kind of video that allows a crowd of anime fans to cheer when their favorite anime shows up looking spectacular.

Vlad_G_Pohnert-Memories_Dance-Xvid.avi

Pohnert was always tech-savvy, and he has made his most successful works in the age of digital editing. The use of Photoshop in this AMV (to frame by frame composite different sources together) was considered cutting edge at the time. Again we have a merging of sources, here emphasizing themes prevalent through the works of Miyazaki. There is a deliberate framing device also: a photograph of a landscape sparks memories of nature, flying, and adventure.


Will Millberry of Aluminum Studios was renowned for aesthetic experimentation, and his work inspired many subsequent creators. His two Sailor Moon videos, "Blue" and "Dreams of Red," rely heavily on visual effects to create juxtapositions explicating the facets of the characters while also experimenting with musical cues matched to deliberate inserted effects such as lens flares, blurs, transitions, and color manipulations.

[5.16] Another hit from the "edit together every anime I own" school of AMV making resulted in a massively popular dance video that would for years be considered the top of its class. This is AMV spectacle in its purest form—a big, happy ensemble dance performance from a hundred shows with eye-popping colors and effects every minute. The rarity of some of the shows here (particularly *Idol Defence Force Hummingbird*) and the list of sources used at the end of the video act somewhat as bragging rights, but it's all in good fun.

EK made numerous attempts to create a *Cowboy Bebop* music video for Anime Weekend Atlanta 6. After a long line of failed experiments, she decided to make a video about her failures. With sentiments shared by all AMV makers, this comedy AMV has become iconic. It is among the earliest examples of AMV meta, a tradition that would become more popular as the community grew and AMV making (and the community surrounding it) became as important as the anime itself.


This massively successful AMV was not the first anime crossover, but at the time, the use of rotoscoping and Photoshop to create a crossover narrative was unique. It would later become a common feature in AMVs as editing tools such as After Effects became the norm instead of the exception. "Senshi on Springer" put Sailor Moon on stage and "Memories Dance" combined Miyazaki films together, but the idea of taking two shows and making a coherent narrative out of the primary themes of both was fresh. Here, the bounty hunters of *Cowboy Bebop* are trying to catch Vash from *Trigun*, luring him with his favorite food. The song was chosen so that lyrics would not distract from the storytelling (unless you understand Japanese, in which case there may be some dissonance).
[5.19] For many, the defining moment of Otakon 2001 was seeing this video win best comedy. AMVs were no longer just about a character or a show or even a subgenre of show: They had become a part of anime fandom, and this video is about fannish experience.

6. This way to the future

[6.1] By 2001, the AMV scene was almost entirely digital. The convention scene had become sufficiently large that creators began collaborating on large multieditor projects for display at conventions. The DDR 3rd Mix Project, conceptualized by Brad Demoss, was a landmark collaborative effort that would spawn three sequels and many other projects of its kind.

[6.2] AMVs were commonly shared online, with AMV makers creating their own Web sites or sharing their videos on the popular (if hard to find) Hawaii FTP server (subsequently Waldo's server). The AMV mailing list on Yahoo! was at peak use, and the forward-thinking Phade created AnimeMusicVideos.org (http://AnimeMusicVideos.org) as a database for AMV makers to log their videos. Many convention-scene AMV creators felt that the surge of participation from 1998 to 2001 was overwhelming, but the digital revolution had only just begun.
A history of subversive remix video before YouTube: Thirty political video mashups made between World War II and 2005

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Keywords—Fan vid; Film; Gender; Government; Media; News; Politics; Race; Remix; Sexuality; TV; War


1. Introduction

Filmmakers, fans, activists, artists, and media makers have been reediting television, movies, and news media for critical and political purposes since almost the very beginning of moving pictures. Over the past century, this subversive form of populist remixing has been called many things, including appropriation art, détournement, media jamming, found footage, avant-garde film, television hacking, telejusting, political remix, scratch video, vidding, outsider art, antiart, and even cultural terrorism.

The politically oriented mashup video subgenre has its roots in the rich and diverse history of left-leaning, often deeply antiauthoritarian, creative traditions. These transformative works, by their very nature, are suspicious of and challenge political, corporate, media, and social power structures. They focus on a wide array of issues, including race, gender, sexuality, and economics, in addition to more overtly political topics of government, public policy, and warfare.

2. A very brief history

The very first political remixes can be traced back to Russia during the 1920s, when Soviet filmmakers like Esfir Shub began recutting American Hollywood films to give them a sharper class commentary. In 1928, the leftist Popular Association of Film
Art in Berlin screened recut newsreel scenes "combined in such a manner that they suddenly lost their political innocence and assumed an inflammatory character." German police shut down the screenings. A decade and a half later, during World War II, Charles A. Ridley created (and gave away for free) the first viral political mashup by reediting footage of Nazi soldiers to make them appear to dance and sing in time to the tune "The Lambeth Walk."

[2.2] Throughout the 1970s, Situationist International artists like René Viénet remixed Chinese propaganda films and kung fu movies to ridicule Mao and Stalin from a left-wing, antiauthoritarian perspective. Around the same time, feminist artist Dana Birnbaum released her influential 1978 video remix "Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6xZOUXNyg), and although it falls into the high-art category, the work did inspire many subsequent artists to work with pop culture imagery.

[2.3] In the mid-1970s, female media fan communities produced their own form of critical remix: the art form now known as vidding. Following Kandy Fong's pioneering 1975 use of slide shows, groups of female fans began creating vids or fan vids by remixing television and film footage to create works that spoke to female (and sometimes to queer) audiences. Often these works were overtly or implicitly critical of mainstream popular culture narratives.

[2.4] When VCR technology became more widely accessible in the early 1980s, a group of politically minded UK artists calling themselves video scratchers appropriated television footage to create biting critiques of pop culture media and Margaret Thatcher's economic policies. Scratchers Sandra Goldbacher and Kim Flitcroft were known for recutting television commercials and music videos to provide a feminist critique. In the early 1990s, several US-based groups of media jammers like EBN and Negativland responded to the televised footage of the first gulf war by creating remixes of evening news broadcasts and TV ads. Underground filmmaker Craig Baldwin documented many of these media jammers and the controversy surrounding their work in his 1995 feature film Sonic Outlaws. That same year, multimedia artist and self-described childhood cartoon fan Jesse Drew released his remixed "Manifestoon" (http://www.archive.org/details/Manifestoon), combining dozens of appropriated Golden Age Hollywood animations with the words of Karl Marx.

[2.5] The second Bush administration—followed by the second US war in Iraq—provoked an explosion in subversive remix works, spurred on, in part, by cheaper and better computer-based editing applications. Before YouTube and other large-scale video sharing services came into existence, political remixers relied on community Web portals like the Guerrilla News Network (GNN) and Adbusters to find, share, and discuss remix works, as it was often too expensive for individuals to host video.
3. What constitutes a subversive remix video?

[3.1] While political or subversive remix video as a transformative category is obviously very broad, it is possible to pick out some shared characteristics to determine if remix works fit into this subgenre. Five essential features are present in all the included videos. (1) Works appropriate mass media audiovisual source material without permission from copyright holders, and often rely on the US fair use doctrine or UK fair dealing. (2) Works comment on, deconstruct, or challenge media narratives, dominant myths, social norms, and traditional power structures—they can be either sympathetic to or antagonistic to their pop culture sources, sometimes both at the same time. (3) Works transform the original messages embedded in the source material, as well as the source material itself. (4) Works are intended for general audiences or do-it-yourself (DIY) communities rather than elite, academic, or high-art audiences, and thus tend to use familiar mass media formats such as trailers, television ads, music videos, and news segments as vehicles for the new message. (5) Works are DIY productions and rely on grassroots distribution methods such as VHS tape duplicating circles, underground screenings, and, eventually, self-hosted Web sites. Many subversive video makers now put their work on YouTube, or similar sites, since its launch in November 2005.

4. Thirty subversive remix videos created before YouTube

[4.1] The following is a representative collection of subversive video remixes made between World War II and the launch of YouTube in November 2005; many of these works may also fit into other remix video genres. A version of this playlist is also available online via YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/playlist?p=00D0543F493057D1).
Video 1. "The Lambeth Walk—Nazi Style" by Charles A. Ridley (1941).

[4.2] During World War II, Charles A. Ridley reedited footage of Hitler and Nazi soldiers (taken from the propaganda film Triumph of the Will [1935]) to make it appear as if they were marching and dancing to the popular tune "The Lambeth Walk." He used that music because members of the Nazi party had referred to the song as "Jewish mischief and animalistic hopping." The remixed short was distributed for free to Allied newsreel companies in the United States and United Kingdom, making it the first viral remix video—created over 60 years before YouTube.

This is a short excerpt from the feature-length détournement documentary *Peking Duck Soup* (also called *Chinois, encore un effort pour être révolutionnaires*) by French Situationist director René Viénet. The *situationist cinématheque* film appropriates and repurposes 1970s TV ads, kung fu films, newsreels, and official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda films to create a devastating anti-Maoist critique of the CCP, the Cultural Revolution, and Mao Tse-tung himself. The full-length film can be seen via the UbuWeb avant-garde repository ([http://www.ubu.com/film/vienet_chinois.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/vienet_chinois.html)).


This excerpt—entitled "Secret Love"—is part of a longer video called "Death Valley Days," created by the British scratch video group Gorilla Tapes in 1984. The full 20-minute remix compilation consists of five parts and appropriates news footage, TV shows, and Hollywood movies to reframe the relationship between conservative politicians Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. In the early to mid-1980s, scratch videos would be seen in nightclub performances, at independent cinemas, and through DIY distribution on VHS tapes. Some scratch video artists referred to their work as antiart or even cultural terrorism.
[4.5] This remix video was created by the UK scratch video duo the Duvet Brothers in 1985. It was created by combining recorded TV footage with the popular song "Blue Monday" by the New Wave band New Order. The music video remix is constructed as a comment on class inequality, privatization, and the economic policies of the Thatcher government. Ironically, even though the UK video scratchers were largely outcasts from the high-art world in the 1980s, much of their work now resides in elite museum collections. As a result, much of it is not available on the Internet.

[4.6] This VCR-made remix from the late 1980s appropriates famous fictional animals from Disney's animated version of Winnie the Pooh and recasts them as characters in Francis Ford Coppola's gritty Vietnam War drama Apocalypse Now. In the new narrative, the beloved Hundred Acre Wood is transformed into a horrific war zone in which Pooh, Piglet, and the rest of the gang struggle to keep their sanity. The humorous and slightly disturbing juxtaposition was an underground viral hit at comic book conventions, and bootlegged copies were passed around and traded on VHS tape. Graham's work, which he called telejusting, differs in some respects from that of later media jammers in that it requires viewers to at least know, if not be a fan of, the original source material. Graham, unlike many political remixers, also managed to create some sympathy for his telejusted cartoon characters.


[4.7] This classic remix was made by Cliff Roth in 1988 with two VCRs. The footage, taken from a 1988 antidrug address by both Ronald and Nancy Reagan, has been reedited to suggest the inauguration of a prodrug campaign in the United States. This humorous mashup attempts to undermine the US government's scare tactics and serves as a poignant critique of the disastrous Reagan-initiated war on drugs that has left hundreds of thousands of nonviolent offenders languishing in prisons all over the United States.
**Video 7.** "Oh Boy" (excerpt) by Sterling Eidolan and the Odd Woman Out (ca. 1990).

[4.8] This fan vid uses footage from the 1980s sci-fi TV show *Quantum Leap*, created by Sterling Eidolan and the Odd Woman Out, who were members of a larger fan collective called the California Crew. The remix plays off both the main character's weekly catchphrase "Oh, boy!" and the famous Buddy Holly song. Through the use of two VCRs, the vidders remarkably manage to sync up the actor's lips to make it appear as though he is mouthing those lyrics. *Quantum Leap* was a show that inspired a huge female fan base, and this vid celebrates female sexual desire at a time when most television narratives catered to heterosexual male desire. Also, as Francesca Coppa points out in "Women, *Star Trek*, and the Development of Fannish Vidding," the show's clichéd "bimbo of the week" narrative has been transformed here into one story featuring scores of female characters (doi:10.3983/twc.2008.0044).

These culture-jamming parody commercials for Exxon and GE are part of a 20-minute remix film entitled "Iraq Campaign 1991," created by San Francisco–based media artist Phil Patiris. In response to the first gulf war, Patiris appropriated and transformed network news footage, clips from Star Trek: The Next Generation, and the movie Dune, as well as NFL sports coverage, to playfully critique the media-industrial complex. The full remixed film is available via YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tg7_ouYmO6Q) and the Internet Archive.

This is the second half of a two-part 20-minute remix called "Gulf War: The Ground War," created by the multimedia performance group Emergency Broadcast Network (EBN). They created the remix in 1991 in response to the first gulf war. The video transforms cable news broadcasts by cutting them to a beat, often having the lyrics "sung" by newscasters or politicians through quick jump-cut editing techniques. The VHS tape of this project, which contains a clip of George H. W. Bush singing Queen's "We Will Rock You," became a underground viral hit distributed by EBN fans, who passed around bootleg copies. EBN’s video remixing style was largely aggressive and unsympathetic to pop culture media, and often implied that television audiences had become victims of brainwashing or mind control. It was one of the first political agitprop remixes, and in the two decades since, it has remained popular with both left-wing and right-wing political activists. Part 1, "Gulf War: The Air War," is also available via YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6OmnsbMci4).

[4.11] This remix music video was built around George H. W. Bush's now-infamous "read my lips" sound bite from his 1988 presidential election campaign. The song was recorded by Don Was (of the band Was Not Was) under the pseudonym of A Thousand Points of Night. The music video for the single later caused a media controversy when it was shown on MTV during the Bush/Clinton/Perot three-way presidential election showdown in 1992. The second half of this clip is a PBS discussion about the sinister implications of remix video with Bill Moyers, Doug Bailey, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson.
**Video 11.** "And Now a Word from Our Sponsor" by Dangerous Squid (1994).

Dangerous Squid (artist Bryan Boyce) was inspired to make this hilarious TV advertising mashup by the classic early 1990s "Barbie Liberation Organization" culture-jamming project created by @TMark. The remix combines a TV commercial for the remote-controlled Dancing Barbie with one for the G.I. Joe Cobra Detonator to subvert the stereotypical gender roles in the marketing of toys for boys and girls.

[4.12]

**Video 12.** "The Street Muppets N.W.A" (1994).

This VCR-made remix was created by an unnamed student at Florida State University in 1994 by combining footage from *Sesame Street* with the protest rap song "Fuck the Police" from N.W.A's 1988 album *Straight Outta Compton*. The result is a humorous juxtaposition of the lovable, but now fed up, Kermit the Frog singing (in Ice Cube's voice) lyrics highlighting the widespread police brutality against black urban youth in the United States.

[4.13]

[4.14] This VCR-made remix by the vidding crew Media Cannibals appropriates footage from the late 1970s British TV show *The Professionals* and sets it to the song "Detachable Penis" by the band King Missile. The vid reinterprets the lyrics to create a humorous commentary about the series' phallic imagery and emphasis on guns, and the connection to mass media representations of masculinity. Viewer interpretations of the vid's intent vary widely, from critique against gun violence on TV to a celebration of that type of imagery.

[4.15] This remix video was created by Harold Boihem for Negativland's critically satirical single "The Greatest Taste Around" off their 1997 popular album Dispepsi. The video borrows from numerous Coca-Cola and Pepsi soft drink commercials, including Max Headroom's famous 1980s Coke ads. This remix is collected with others from Negativland on their 2007 DVD Our Favorite Things.


[4.16] Remix artist Bryan Boyce combines appropriated footage from CNN, NBC, CBS, and ABC news broadcasts with audio from classic 1950s sci-fi and horror movies to make the anchors deliver a message of electronic hypnosis and impending doom. The remix is made particularly convincing by a technique Boyce uses called stunt mouths, in which he films someone lip-synching the dialog, then pastes the mouth onto the face of a mass media figure. Boyce has created many political humorous remixes over the years; "Election Collectibles" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BshlSeJe3Ps) is another example, using both Al Gore and George W. Bush as Home Shopping Channel hosts.
The practice of taking, expanding, and/or altering popular mass media narratives to create new derivative works is a core part of creative fan cultures. Tzikeh made "Close to You" by combining footage from *The X-Files* with love metaphors from the famous Carpenters song. While Tzikeh's remix is not overtly political, it is an exercise in reading against the original source. *The X-Files* portrayed Fox Mulder as the tortured, pained, but ultimately lovable hero, with his skeptical sidekick, Dana Scully, along for the ride to provide sexual tension. Tzikeh's vid transforms and mocks this characterization of Mulder by using the song's lyrics to poke fun at him, along with many of the show's larger tropes and clichés. The vid also functions as humorous metacritique of the fandom itself by gently making fun of popular Mulder-Scully romance fan fiction.
Video 17. "Bless Your Car with Love" by PHO (2000).

[4.18] This mashup criticizes car culture in the United States by overlaying automobile accident footage and car commercials with the soft repetition of a seductive advertising voice-over saying "Bless your car with love." The remix was created by the "mass media manipulation" collective Paul Harvey Oswald or PHO (http://vimeo.com/user157882), which was started in the mid-1990s by Doug Connell and Kevin Cronin, but also included a large number of rotating anonymous members.

Video remix artist Davy Force transforms a 2001 press conference by US attorney general John Ashcroft on illegal immigration into a warning of alien invaders from outer space. This remix can also be seen on the DVD *Not 4 Sale* released by Other Cinema.

**Video 19.** "S-11 Redux: (Channel) Surfing the Apocalypse" by GNN (2002).

This ambitious remix video was directed by Steven Marshall and released by the Guerrilla News Network (GNN) in 2002. It pulls from over 20 hours of television footage recorded over a 1-month period and across 13 networks to challenge the messages emanating from mainstream media news networks about the US government's war on terror.
"Wouldn't It Be Nice?" is a meta slash vid made using a wide variety of TV and movie sources, and featuring some of the most famous slash and femslash pairings in fan fiction. The vid was intended by vidder Laura Shapiro to be a plea for more gay characters in mass media, as well as a celebration of the few existing on-screen gay and lesbian relationships. After the release, it was also embraced by some fan communities for its unintended message of advocating legal gay marriage. (The term "slash" comes from the punctuation mark fans historically used to delineate same-gender pairings in fan fiction works, such as Kirk/Spock—shortened to K/S.)
In this video, a series of famous Disney characters find out that their lovers aren't exactly the perfect idealized visions of deified manhood seen in the original animated features. Artist Eileen Maxson placed audio clips from *90210*, *Dawson's Creek*, and Jack Nicholson in the film *Carnal Knowledge* to video clips of classic scenes from Disney's *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Lady and the Tramp*, resulting in eye-opening juxtapositions that deromanticize the stereotypical gender-based fantasies ever present in Disney fairy tales.
Beginning in 2001, Swedish filmmaker Johan Söderberg began experimenting with editing news footage to make it appear as though world leaders were singing pop songs. The series, entitled "Read My Lips," uses song lyrics to provide hilarious yet biting critiques of politicians and their policies. In this example, George W. Bush and Tony Blair lovingly sing the classic Diana Ross/Lionel Richie duet to comment on the "special relationship" between the US and UK governments; of course, this relationship not only led Britain to follow the United States into the second Iraq war, but also eventually led to Blair's ousting as prime minister. Johan still occasionally adds to his remix collection; in 2011 he created a new duet between Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Italy's Silvio Berlusconi (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FZwf1XPpd8).

In 2002, Edo Wilkins recut George W. Bush's State of the Union address to make the then-president appear to boast about committing acts of state terrorism. Wilkins drove home his critique by intercutting this alternative speech with extended clips of the United States Congress erupting into thunderous applause. Since Web-based video became a practical reality, State of the Union mashups have become something an annual tradition for media activists and remix artists. However, the first State of the Union remix was created in 1997 by video artist Aaron Valdez, using two VCRs, when he mashed up Bill Clinton's presidential address (http://vimeo.com/2717623). Six years later, Valdez followed up with a remixed sequel, using George W. Bush's 2003 State of the Union address (http://vimeo.com/2717588). That same year, Cartel Communique and Chris Morris
used the 2003 address to create their popular remix "State of the Union: Bushwhacked" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PAGb2O7lms).

**Video 24.** "The Lord of the Rings of Free Trade" by St01en collective (2002).

[4.25] In 2002, a group calling itself the St01en collective created this reinterpretation of Peter Jackson's blockbuster motion picture version of J. R. R. Tolkien's famous series *The Lord of the Rings*. The group creatively added subtitles over an extended trailer for the fantasy epic, transforming the archetypal struggle between good and evil into a pointed commentary on corporate globalization, the World Trade Organization, and free trade in the 21st century. The remix was originally uploaded to Indymedia (http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2002/12/22/15532811.php), both to provide a level of anonymity and to avoid potentially expensive video hosting costs.
George W. Bush's speech announcing his illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003 has been the subject of many remixes, but "Bush for Peace" is unique in that it reedits and reimagines the president as delivering an aggressively pro-peace message. In this alternative version, Bush is made to admit the US military's historical role in state terrorism, and he commits to dismantling the Pentagon to make the world a safer, more peaceful place. In this way, the remix makes it possible to imagine the impossible: what it would be like to have a sitting US president earnestly promoting a genuinely nonviolent foreign policy.

[4.27] A pre-YouTube viral Internet hit by the group BangZoomTV, consisting of Jim Paul, Jay Martel, and Brian O'Connor, was created by dubbing new voices over portions of classic Hercules epics from the 1960s to recast the characters as members of the Bush administration. George W. Bush is reimagined as a half-god, half-mortal, half-Texan hero named Hercubush, who is engaged in an ill- advised war for more body oil that he can slather on his manly muscles.

This example of the supercut mashup genre—a remixing style characterized by obsessively cutting together all similar words or phrases from a particular piece of media—is used to illustrate the fear-based messaging strategy employed by GOP politicians at the 2004 Republican National Convention. Houlihan reduced the convention's prime-time speeches to their core themes by editing together only the specific words designed to trigger fear in the audience like "terror," "terrorist," "Saddam Hussein," and "September 11th."


This slash vid hints at a romantic relationship between Captain Kirk and first officer Spock using footage from the 1960s television show Star Trek and the song "Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps" by the band Cake. The Star Trek media franchise now includes six television series and 12 feature films, all without even one openly gay or lesbian main character. The Kirk/Spock relationship, however, has a long, vibrant, and complex history in fan works. Killa's remix is a playful meta comment on and celebration of that long-standing fan fiction tradition.
Video 29. "George Bush Don't Like Black People" by The Black Lantern (2005).

This is one of two music video mashups illustrating the lyrics of the remix hip-hop single "George Bush Doesn't Care About Black People" by The Legendary K.O., which samples Kayne West's song "Gold Digger," which had sampled Ray Charles's song "I Got a Woman." The title is based on Kayne West's spontaneous live television statements immediately after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. The video is highly critical of the mainstream media and then-president George W. Bush's slow and prejudiced response to the 2005 storm. The Black Lantern self-published the remix on his personal Web site a month before YouTube officially launched. The remix went viral in its first 48 hours, causing him to exceed his bandwidth limit and forcing him to temporarily remove it. A few weeks later, another mashup artist, Frank Lopez, released his own remixed video mashup (http://www.archive.org/details/dontlikeblackpeople).

[4.31] Artist and filmmaker Jackie Reem Salloum combined footage from scores of movies and television programs to create her epic remix "Planet of the Arabs." The mashup is a movie trailer–like montage spectacle of Hollywood's relentless vilification and dehumanization of Arabs and Muslims. Salloum was inspired by the book Reel Bad Arabs by Jack Shaheen, which noted that out of nearly 1,000 films made between 1896 and 2000 with Arab and Muslim characters, only 12 were positive depictions, 52 were evenhanded, and the rest—900 or so—were negative. The project reveals the systematic racism toward Arabs and Muslims propagated by American cinema.