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No Canon We Die Like Men: The Oppositional Power of Fanon on Different Social Media Platforms

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Introduction: Welcome to Fandom

Fan communities, also referred to as fandoms, are groups of people with shared interests in different source artifacts, i.e. musicians, movies, books, video games, and more. However, fandom entails more than just a group of people with a shared interest; they have their own cultures, community norms, and sociolects. A pivotal aspect to fandom is their foundation in participatory culture. As the political theorist Darin Barney defines it: "The participatory condition names the situation in which participation—being involved in doing something and taking part in something with others has become both environmental (a state of affairs) and normative (a binding principle of right action)" (2). This mode of engagement with the world is one of the most basic human principles. Societies are able to form out of groups of people due to intentional participation and the establishment of interpersonal relationships. Moreover, contemporary structures of society "have been thematized and organized around the priority of participation" (Barney 2). People grow up in the understanding that communities require support from each individual member. As such, it should be no surprise that fan communities are also founded upon this principle. Fandom practices these same values through the collaborative

creation of fan-made artifacts, like fan fiction, art, vids,[1] films, cosplays, zines, wikis, social media posts, and more. These fan artifacts frequently serve to analyze, critique, or further develop thematic or political themes within the source artifact. Through social media, fans are able to connect with one another to produce their own creations or discuss their favorite source artifacts.

Additionally, it is important to note that there is also a difference between a casual fan and an individual involved with fandom. This difference can be located in the participatory condition. The preeminent fan studies scholar Henry Jenkins considers fan communities to be "voluntary, temporary, and tactical affiliations, defined through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments…held together through mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge" (Jenkins 137). A casual fan may be excited for a new album or anticipate the release of a cast list for their favorite tv show, but to properly be a part of fandom, one must engage past that point. A member of fandom will quickly look to other fans for their reactions, theories, and commentary after any release, announcement, or premiere. It is in sharing their thoughts and opinions, in creating new art and stories due to joy or frustration, and in the deep attachment to the artifacts that fandom is found and formed. Fan communities are just that, *communities*; which means that they are reliant on their members engaging with one another; this core aspect is called intra-community engagement. Rather than just offering up a particular head-canon[2] and hoping people see it, participants turn towards each other in order to construct a new collective understanding for the persistence of the community. Thus, in intra-community conversations, in the service of a particular source artifact, encourage participants to share their opinions and

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[1] Fanvids are short videos of clips from one or more shows or movies edited together, usually to music or dialogue.
[2] A head-canon is a non-canon personal interpretation or belief about an artifact held by an individual, and it is not communally accepted.

create conversations around the source artifact which allows fans to express their (dis)agreement with each other. Through enough people discussing a particular interpretation of an artifact, the idea graduates to 'fanon' and will permeate fandom. This provokes questions concerned with the significance of participatory fan interactions. How does fanon impact fans and their understandings of artifacts? How does fanon complicate the relationship between the creators of source artifacts and fans? Can fan communities be used, through the participatory condition, to disrupt or resist oppressive power structures?

'Fanon' exists as a subversion of 'canon.' The canon of a franchise is the approved information, internal history, and world-building from a singular or collection of artifacts. *Harry Potter*, for instance, has a wide canon which includes the books, movies, and plays. However, despite Hermione being played by Emma Watson, many fans choose to believe that Hermione Granger is black. This head-canon is so popular among fans that it has transcended to fanon, all of which means that there is a short-hand and general anticipation or acceptance of the head-canons appearance in any fan materials with little questions asked. This does not mean that there is no disagreement from within a fandom, but that it is a common interpretation of the work. Fanon may contradict canon, like in the case of Hermione's racial identity, but often fanon exists within the grey spaces of the canon. Another popular bit of fanon surrounds Draco Malfoy's Patronus; there's a few versions floating around, of which option include a fox, a peacock, and a ferret. While this interpretation impacts one's reading of the character, it has no real effect on the canon. Another instance of fanon is the very popular idea that "Hufflepuffs are particularly good finders." Fans do not even know what "finding" this phrase refers to. There most likely is not a real rationality behind its inception, as it originates from a fan spoof play *A Very Potter Musical*, in which the line is a random, throwaway joke. The idea is not grounded in canon; it is utterly

superfluous, yet it is the absurdity which captivated people in order to make it widely accepted. Additionally, all fandoms partake in these behaviors of inventing and popularizing fan interpretations and modifications of artifacts, as such it would be counterintuitive to focus on just one fandom when interrogating the role that fanon plays in digital participatory communities.

Fanon is not simply a collection of head-canons that many participants liked. Intra-community engagement manifests as fanon as it is created by fans borrowing from each other. In passing back and forth an interpretation it gains depth and traction. This borrowing happens in all modes of participation in fandom. Fan artists will pick up a head-canon from a Tweet, which will be borrowed in a fanfic, which will then be reviewed and recommended on TikTok. Each participant, whether they are a creator, reader, commenter, etc., is an active agent in both molding and spreading fanon. Fanon is not meant to replace canon but exist alongside it (in the case that it fills in holes or is relatively meaningless) or provide alternatives to improve people's enjoyment *in fan spaces*. Nevertheless, some producers hold fandom in contempt because of the loss of power that is inevitable in the existence of fanon. When utilizing social media to assert non-canon ideas at a community-wide level, fans gain a level of authority over the artifact, specifically over public perception of the work. Because of its collective creation, fanon can and should be so insidious that initiates are not sure what is canonical and what is not. In changing the public perception of an artifact, fans gain the ability to renegotiate the power structures at play in entertainment. This disruption of control is possible due to the accessibility and shareability of social media platforms.

The easiest and most intuitive way to participate on social media is through the comment section, and as such, they are the cornerstone of digital fandom. Comments are the best indication as to why the affordances that social media provides are so foundational to modern

fandom yet also completely reliant on their digital nature. In her book, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network,* digital studies scholar Caroline Levine defines affordance as "a term used to describe the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs" (Levine 6). In this case, the comment section is an affordance as it is a function built into social media and can be used to different effect depending on the participant. It is also important to note that "Although each form lays claim to different affordances, all forms do share one affordance. Precisely because they are abstract organizing principles, shapes and patterns are iterable—portable. They can be picked up and moved to new contexts" (Levine 7). Returning to the example of the comment section, it is present across social media, including Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube. On all three platforms the comments are used to provide participants with a place to react and respond to the original post. [3] However, it is also important to remember that "specific contexts also matter…Each constraint will encounter many other, different organizing principles, and its power to impose order will itself be constrained, and at times unsettled, by other forms. Rhyme and narrative may structure the same text; the gender binary and the bureaucratic hierarchy may coincide in a single workplace" (Levine 7). Each of the three aforementioned platforms are used very differently due to the set up of the platform. Due to Twitter's character limit posts must be snappy and witty; on TikTok, because of exposure through popular audios, quickly changing trends and skits are most popular; and on YouTube in-depth and detailed videos are prevalent

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[3] While being in fandom is often an intense experience, because of the internet there is also the possibility of being a spontaneous participant within a fandom. Before the internet, fandom used to be more labor intensive as it was harder to connect with other fans outside of their friends. The internet makes it really easy to connect, from fans start on messaging boards in the 90s to current social media. As Barney describes: "A crucial set of concerns grew around the distraction and disengagement effects of media—the ways in which they construct (or fail to construct) non-participatory participants" (Barney14). These casual members of a fandom might be more involved in some that others or they may just exist on the periphery of a couple of communities, but the internet allows for this like never before as members can now participate in low-stakes, low-energy ways, like in the comment sections of social media posts.

due to the lack of a time restriction. Accordingly, the comment sections on each platform, while still a place for reactions and responses, also follow these styles. Each platform also have unique affordances which mold the ways the platform is used. Fans take advantage of these affordances in order to enhance participation, communication, and shareable potential. The greater reach that social media allows is also used to entice and enfold new fans.

These social media platforms do not intend to provide fans with a space for their community, rather they are businesses which take advantage of growing fan populations. As platforms which require constant use in order to function, the participatory culture of fandom, and the production of fanon, is a boon to any corporation who can entice fans to use their app. Similarly, other corporations are quick to exploit fan love and labor, whether that be increasing cash revenues by creating more purchasable content or stealing free-to-view fan art in order to sell a new product. Nevertheless, fanon still seizes power away from these corporations through fans retaining authority over their own community. Moreover, participants who previously had little to no power, specifically women, people of color, and queer people, gain the control to reshape artifacts into their own image which defies the current systems of power and oppression.

Both the shared and unique affordances of Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube shape the ways fandom manifests and thus also create different, nuanced fanon. Twitter's blend of short text and pictures create a varied and wholistic fanon which is instrumental in the foundation of digital, modern fandom. TikTok's affordances promote interactivity which constructs a fanon which is both organic and interventive. The DIY nature of cosplay tutorials on YouTube shape fanon interpretations of characters and create possibilities for identities to be visualized within fanon. Fandom demonstrates how communities can threaten corporate power and control while being integrated into capitalist structures, like those of social media, to the point that fan culture cannot

be removed without threatening potential profit. Therefore, fandom models a structure for community collaboration, which can be co-opted by other grass roots organizations, as it is as a site of resistance to dominant oppressive power structures.

Twitter: Been There, Done That

The affordances of Twitter not only create and popularize fanon, but in doing so, the platform gives space for the creation of community. Kaitlyn Tiffany's *Everything I Need I Get from You: How Fangirls Created the Internet as We Know It* explains that "[Twitter] provides interludes in which it's possible to feel that there is such thing as a "community" on a website used by nearly 200 million people, or online anywhere" (119). Fandom is present in every comment section spammed with fancams, every post hashtagged "stream the new release tonight!!!!", and every photoshopped picture of a pregnant Harry Styles. These uses of Twitter make individual fans feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves. Moreover, with just one look at the trending page, it is clear to see that fans often make their hashtags or topics reach an outside audience. To both fandom participants and non-fans, this high level of visibility of the participation of thousands of fans establishes the presence of fan action as community effort.

Twitter can establish unquestioned fanon as fans use of content and organizational affordances, as users share artistic fan works which appeal to fan's emotions. Many *Harry Potter* fans believe that the character Remus Lupin loves chocolate, which also has magical properties. On Twitter, many accounts make posts which reference this idea, like @Izulkowa's fanart from July of 2018. The picture depicts a teenage Lupin sitting on his bed reading a book with an open chocolate bar next to him. The sky outside the window is full of snow setting the scene to be a

cozy and comforting glimpse into the character's past. Through the pleasant moment that @Izulkowa captures in this image, the viewer is inclined to want to believe in a peaceful and intimate moment that they can share with the character. The lighting, wardrobe, and props, specifically a chocolate bar, book, and mug, are integral in creating the tone. After viewing this art, fans are then more likely to utilize these same visuals. The image is accompanied by the words "snow day survival guide by Remus Lupin: coffee, chocolate, pajamas and [a] good book" (25 Jul 2018). This caption serves to reinforce the casual acceptance of Lupins affiliation with chocolate. The combination of both image and text serves to increase viewership and reach through key word search.

While Lupin once offers chocolate to Harry in the movies, there is, in fact, nothing to suggest that he cares for the sweet outside of scene; merely, that Harry needed something, like chocolate, to make him happy. However, through the affordances Twitter provides, like retweeting, liking, and commenting, fans can demonstrate their support for the fanon and participate in its growth throughout the fandom. This has happened in the case of Remus Lupin loving chocolate, as now many fans are unaware that the correlation is not canon. Moreover, @Izulkowa's post exemplifies fan predilection for collaborative creation. Their caption was accompanied by #PotterWeekPrompts. This is the tag for an annual fan event on Twitter where users create fan fiction, art, or head-canon interpretations of one shared prompt a day. While many social media platforms use hashtags, on Twitter they are used to extend a user's reach to a wider audience and improve searchability. By utilizing this hashtag, *Harry Potter* fans can find and engage with each other's participation in the event quickly and easily. Consequently, Twitter's affordances help popular head-canons spread and become pervasive enough they graduate to fanon status.

Twitter is, essentially, the birthplace of modern digital fandom. While fans have a long history of community and creation, their migration onto the internet, particularly Twitter, caused the scene to explode into the mainstream. As the internet emerged and social media platforms came into creation, they "debuted as blank slates, and the people who came to them filled them with culture" (Tiffany 98). Fans dominated the evolution of the app, from integrating the @ symbol in handles to popularizing hashtags; they have always had a hand in the success of Twitter. These users instigated the codification of what is now considered the foundational affordances of the app. More pressing, fan Twitter converged at other established cultures within the app, "[fan] Twitter was molded by these three influences: the emotional valence of Weird Twitter… the public-private flattening of Celebrity Twitter… and the tight networking and enthusiastic riffing of Black Twitter" (Tiffany 101). As fan Twitter was never isolated, combined with fans' compulsive tendency to spread the good word of their chosen idol, the linguistic and operational practices infiltrated the rest of the app, spreading their visibility. Consequently, the fans, and their practices, boiled over onto other platforms. Many social media platforms borrowed from Twitter when creating their own cultures and affordances. YouTube and TikTok host huge fandoms which had migrated from Twitter, carrying their cultures with them. However, because they are both video-based platforms offer types of engagement than Twitter. Without fans using these social media platforms, they would lose some of their cultural impact and economic success as fan participation is a key resource, subsequently, these platforms are invested in fans' continued use.

TikTok: A Digital Stitch & Bitch

Before TikTok got popular, when it still went by the name Musical.ly, it was used largely by fans; thus, much like Twitter, fans shaped of the culture specific to TikTok. Much of the platform follows in the footsteps of Twitter. Tiffany points out "how the mannerisms of Stan Twitter became the mannerisms of the whole site—through mutuals creating, as they did, thousands of denser, smaller networks knit together" (109-110). Both TikTok and Twitter create micro-communities around central, popular users who facilitate and dictate conversations on their page. Additionally, both apps start with one original post which others engage with, primarily through the comments. One affordance shared by both platforms is that "people with shared cultural reference points follow each other's accounts, becoming what's known now as "mutuals"— is crucial to fandom, which sustains itself by rapidly escalating the visibility of its passions and funneling attention to the celebrities and causes it cares about" (Tiffany 102). While users can respond to each other through @s on Twitter, the posts are not linked, unlike TikTok which has multiple ways of responding to the original posts. Moreover, Twitter has less affordances that support intra-community conversations, consequently TikTok can be more effective than Twitter at creating collaborative works.

TikTok provides affordances that are both common across social media and unique to its own structure as a platform, which allows users to engage with and create fan communities. It is precisely these functions as community members which make fans uniquely equipped to influence technologies as "Fandom is one of those spaces where people are learning how to live and collaborate within a knowledge community" (Jenkins 134). In learning to adapt fandom to the app and include new participants, fans enfolded the platform into the functioning of the community. TikTok is just one platform in which participants are navigating established and

emerging fandoms, yet it provides a unique format for the development of these communities. This app exemplifies how "participatory culture must be understood as built up from three interrelated components: a) narratives and rhetoric developed and distributed in popular and scholar discourses, b) specific technological qualities, and c) media practices" (Schäfer 167). Fandom can be located in the convergence of source artifacts, social media platforms, and ways of engaging with and on those platforms. Fanon, as a product of participatory culture, exists differently on various social media because of how the affordances of the specific platforms support fan interaction. Fan TikTokers, like users @icaruspendragon and @pagemelt, comprehensively demonstrate the participatory condition emerging from digital affordances through their fandom videos. There are two important layers within this concept, the first being engagement with source material, the second being engagement with the community. Creators make videos which function as analysis or commentary of a source artifact, which can be mainstream, cult classics, or niche; these aforementioned TikTokers specifically focus on *Supernatural*, *Harry Potter*, and *Red White & Royal Blue*, among others. These videos, as fan-made artifacts, contain head-cannons, fanfic recommendations, analyses of worldbuilding or character development, critiques of underlying political messages, or countless other fan-related topics.

On its most basic level, these types of TikToks literally epitomize the idea of a participatory culture: a community made of individuals creating and sharing fan artifacts with one another. The way TikTokers and viewers interact to create a shared language and knowledge around a source artifact directly exemplifies how fandoms are "expansive self-organizing groups focused around the collective production, debate, and circulation of meanings, interpretations, and fantasies in response to various artifacts of contemporary popular culture" (Jenkins 137).

These TikToks which engage with source material are foundational to the aforesaid production of culture and community; without participatory videos, TikTok fandoms would have nowhere to develop from. There would simply be disconnected fans, who might be analytical or share with friends, but there would be no community. In order to facilitate fan interactions, TikTok provides various affordances like the comment section, where participants can respond to each others interpretations and pitch their own ideas. Often, conversations erupt between users about their opinions on the subject of the video. The original TikToker can respond with a comment of their own, or with the reply function which allows one to respond to a comment in a video, which @pagemelt frequently does.

@pagemelt, who also goes by Mel, currently has just under 60K followers and just over 1 million likes on their page. Their videos usually are set against the same background, which is just their wall so that most of the visual attention is directed towards their face, which is always centered on screen, all of which gives a very personal and familiar impression which feels reminiscent of a FaceTime call. They have numerous videos on their favorite romance novel *Red White and Royal Blue*, where, in one instance they reply to a user who suggested a fanfiction in the comments of another of their videos who asked "Have you read 'All That Glitters (Is Not Gold)'? bc that fic is god tier" (@hulloitsame 29 Jan 2022). @pagemelt then goes on to summarize and review the fic. They explain that "it picks up right where the book left off, only there's like this gradual tone shift. Where Alex's relationship with publicity used to be neutral to positive, now it's a little darker…" (29 Jan 2022 00:45-00:55). They utilize the commenter's question for a recommendation video, but more importantly they promote not just the fic, but the fic's interpretation of the characters in the aftermath of the canon story. The singular participants comment spreads the fic and its ideas some, as the comment section is public, yet most people do

not read the comments on every TikTok, or with a video, so these conversations are fairly individualized. Through video replies to comments, TikTokers can respond to an individual, which allows the creator to bring a conversation from the individual level to the community. Replying to a user brings attention to their comment, without providing the context of the video it was left on because replies does not have to be shown to users in any chronological order. The comment can even appear on screen in the reply if the TikToker chooses.

What differentiates TikTok from other platforms, like Twitter, is the For You Page algorithm, which is known for its exceptional personalization of each individual users niche interests. In order to see videos by fans, one must indicate an interest in that type of content by interacting with the video (ie. liking, commenting, or sharing), the effect of which is heightened visibility to other fans. Because of fan cultures valuing participation, TikTok is able to easily classify the interests of fans and circulate videos to users who are most likely to engage. However, fans on TikTok do not rely solely on the algorithm to influence the app, as fans frequently popularize trends or sounds through mass engagement. In doing so, fans assume some control over their participation and reach on the app. While algorithms are usually seen as a means of controlling the dissemination of content or ideas,[4] fandom appropriates this power through the apps own affordances in conjunction with their own participation and engagement to promote their chosen artifact. On Twitter, popular Tweets usually appear on the trending page, rather than the dashboard, but on TikTok, both personalized and popular videos are seen on the For You Page. Fans utilize this mechanic in order to get fan videos on the For You Page of unaffiliated users, which can also spread fandom and spark new fans.

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[4] See books like Safiya Umoja Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*

Another pivotal affordance of TikTok is the collaborative tools, stitching, which is when the beginning of one video is sampled from up to 15 seconds of another. The TikToker @icaruspendragon often uses stitches to engage with other fans. @icaruspendragon, also called Berklie, is semi-famous for her fandom TikToks where she has 308.4K followers and just under 39 million cumulative likes. Her videos sometimes switch backdrops, from her car to her workplace, but most are filmed in her room where the viewer can see all of her decorations, which makes viewers feel as if they are getting to know a friend. Her videos span an array of topics related to fanon, but she commonly talks about her favorite show, *Supernatural.* In one video, she stitches @cirices' video about accidentally dressing like Dean Winchester with her own story about doing the same thing. This function allows creators to link their videos together and create a conversation between both the creators and their followers as viewers spill into a new creator's comment sections. In this instance, both comment sections were full of users talking not only about their own experiences, but what makes a look for various characters, whether that be a specific type of jacket or accessories, as seen in the comment "even if it's [the brown leather jacket] not giving Winchester it'll probably still give Peralta!" (@kimaginaryfriend 14 Nov 2022). Many participants concluded that through use of specific fashion, characters could be invoked without any other context; one comment saying, "before I even read the caption or you started talking I was like 'oh, Supernatural!'" was met with 296 likes (@igel.z 14 Nov 2022). Through building upon each other's stories, participants are able to negotiate fanon visualizations of characters. Moreover, TikToks which stitch other users appeal to the algorithm as they reach a broader range of users made up of the typical viewers of both creators and allows individuals to build upon the previous discussion in collaborative ways, whether that be discussions in the comments or video replies demonstrating new interpretations.

These instances of participation compound into original materials surrounding a source artifact, or put simply, fanon; one that maximizes both potential and realized participation, as TikTok can quickly and efficiently enfold others into the interpretation of a source artifact, which graduates a head-canon to fanon status. Through fan interest, some head-canons will remain in circulation long enough to become fanon, while others will disappear when they lose their novelty. Therefore, TikTok's affordance for intra-community engagement, stitching, creates an organic, naturally regulated fanon. A fanon which is reflective of fans inherent and subconscious interests within the fandom.

Although, fans also hold more control over fanon outside of simply facilitating the parts which interest them. The same TikTokers who create fan artifacts also engage in regulatory behavior. For example, @icaruspendragon talks about the sociolects of fandom and the participatory condition. She explains that fan language came about because "we needed a way to be able to talk about our meta-analysis and our discourse and what not and we need a really good, effective way of communicating this, and we were like yep, let's make a language. And then we did!" (8 Sept 2021 01:57-02:06). Fandom is a constructivist community, and when current terminology is found lacking, a new language is born. The sociolect effects the ways in which participants discuss artifacts, thus fanon is shaped in part by the language itself.[5] The language of the fan community includes terms previously mentioned, like head-canon and fanon, but terms more complex and less easily defined like the citrus scale[6] or dead dove: do not eat.[7]

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[5] A current fanon term on TikTok is "baby-girlification." This term refers to the trend of, primarily young women, calling characters, usually middle-aged white men, their "baby girl." In simulating an interpersonal, romantic relationship, fans play with gender and power as participants are placed on an equal social standing while simultaneously feminizing a symbol of masculinity.

[6] The citrus scale is a set of terms which act as a maturity rating for fan artifacts.

[7] Dead dove: do not eat is a warning used in fanfiction to refer to the inclusion of morally reprehensible themes or actions.

All of these terms were created to be a shorthand so that fans could quickly be on the same page, as such they are difficult for outsiders to comprehend. @icaruspendragon's background in higher education allows her to incorporate academic theory into fandom itself. This commonly manifests in didactic videos on fandom history, as such she is a popular resource for new fans looking to learn about fandom and how to participate. By educating new participants into the language, @icaruspendragon ensures the preservation of fan culture. Like all languages, some terms fade in and out of fashion, but as fandom becomes more common and mainstream, the sociolect of fans becomes increasingly more important as an anchor to the grassroots origins of fandom. This TikTok account, in addition to the others like it, is a glimpse into the self-regulatory behavior that is prominent in fandom.

Similarly, @pagemelt frequently discusses the role of fanfiction within the community as an integral part of fandom and as an artifact which comments on and critiques source material. They argue that it is not "fawning, uncritical praise" but that "it's the opposite. A lot of what fanfic is doing is taking the things we like from the original and trying to improve upon the things we don't, which, when well done can be more powerful and enduring than criticism alone" (6 Jan 2022 00:42-00:43, 00:46-00:55). Fans do not create only out of love, but to intellectually engage with the artifact. As these fan creations are a key factor in the creation of fanon, the intentional response to a source work shapes the ways that the artifact is viewed by the fandom. Whatever critiques which prompt the fan artifact are immortalized in fanon to be discussed by countless fans to come. Additionally, as a creator who also participates in BookTok,[8] @pagemelt can appeal to non-members and entice them to join fandom through

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[8] A TikTok community dedicated to reviewing and recommending new literature; it mirrors the structure and purpose of book clubs.

fanfic recommendations. Moreover, their videos work to improve the reputation of fanfiction within the literary community on TikTok.

@icaruspendragon and @pagemelt have made videos situating their viewpoints, fandom, and original creators in conversations about harm reduction. This idea is exemplified in @pagemelt's videos about bigoted authors like J K Rowling: "I think it's important to identify and unpack the ways these series impacts us, and the way all media impacts us, so that we can move forward and create media that does better" (13 Dec 2021 02:14-02:21). This statement is indicative of a wider perspective among fans to prioritize the well-being of others, both fans and outsiders, over more content from their favorite franchise. When the source creator is liable to utilize their platform or artifact to harm others, one must decide whether the additional material is worth it. This is where fandom can step in to be that source. Self-aware fan artifacts, namely fan fiction, art, and film, create oppositional fanon which pushes back against bigotry. Critiquing the source material gives fans an opportunity to rework it to be more inclusive or productive, and a site for play within the worldbuilding. Without erasing the harm that the artifact has caused, fans explore and address racism homophobia, classism, etc., within their creations. The sociopolitical impacts of these decisions are seen clearly in the case of *Harry Potter*. This series has influenced an entire generation and said influence will be apparent in the media yet to come. By integrating oppositional fanon into the public perception of *Harry Potter*, fans diverse and identity-affirmative imaginings will hopefully be seen in the future of published stories.

Fans typically have little power over the source artifacts they focus on, but they do control their engagement with it. Thus, it is imperative for fans to do so with intention. These self-aware, introspective videos function as self-regulation for fanon and fandom, in which participants, both creators and viewers, can hold their peers to a standard of behavior without

policing their every post. Through this type of interventive fanon, participants retain control over the content they engage with. The affordances of TikTok amplify the spreadability of collaborative fandom, as such both organic and interventive fanon can change public understandings of an artifact.

YouTube: The Woman's World of Cosplay DIY

The popular video sharing app YouTube specializes in longer videos and allows for anyone to post whenever, and within reason, whatever they want. Like all social media platforms, YouTube is populated by users posting and interacting with one another. Digital studies scholars, Burgess and Green, explain that "YouTube is not actually in the video business—its business, rather, is the provision of a convenient and usable platform for online video sharing: users (some of them premium content partners) supply the content, which in turn brings new participants and new audiences" (4). Without participants there would be no YouTube, it is completely reliant on users constructing communities with one another. It's various affordances are built around keeping users connected to creators, as seen through the ability to subscribe and receive notifications for specific creators. Other affordances are geared towards keeping users engaged with the creators of content of the video, like the (dis)like function and comment sections. There are also many affordances for creators to use, from comment moderation to engagement statistics. YouTube also hosts an editing platform within the site to encourage content creation regardless of prior experience. All of these technologic capabilities serve to produce the maximum amount of content possible. They can also be used by creators to encourage viewers to become participants, as creators are "repeatedly and systematically engaged in video reciprocity to invite or maintain sociality" (Lange 113). This

reciprocity is what forms a community around a central figure, the YouTuber. This is still true for fan content creators, however they have additional possibilities for participation.

On YouTube, a popular fan artifact are cosplay DIY tutorials. Short for costume play, cosplay is a popular fan activity and way of engaging with source material. Through recreating characters and costumes, fans are drawn "to the Cosplay subculture because the Cosplay fandom offers social and cultural spaces to explore and express the love of characters and genres through creative expressions in costume and performances (Winge 28). Through digital platforms, cosplay unites people across the world, as clothing is not limited by language barriers. Through adapting the source artifact into a new medium, costumes, fans are deriving content from the artifact and fan art as well as creating their own artifact through the process, which other people are then able to utilize, perpetuating a cycle of creation. While the costume itself is a physical object, the cosplay can become digital material through its presentation on the internet. The fan studies scholars Kane and Loges claim in "Television Inspired Cosplay and Social Media" that "Hundreds of thousands of cosplayers gather together online through social media platforms …[to] ask other cosplayers questions on how to construct specific parts of costumes, and provide tutorials to help others" (317).

Cosplay DIY or tutorial YouTube videos not only teach other cosplay tips, but new modes of engagement with source artifacts and the associated fandom. Cosplay DIY videos take advantage of YouTube's digital allowances. Like TikTok, YouTube allows fans to communicate through a comment section, however, rather than just displaying the content, these YouTube videos also encourage engagement through following the tutorial. Rarely is cosplay someone's first foray into fandom, but the creative and participatory condition of cosplay inspires retention. Furthermore, "DIY offers spaces and methods for the democratization within the Cosplay

fandom…The DIY skills perfected by Cosplayers are further disseminated via the Internet beyond the fandom to the general public. In this way, the Cosplay fandom is exposed to a broader audience" (Winge 50). The didactic nature of these tutorial videos, though not uncommon within fandom, serves to entice and enfold new participants into fan communities.

The fifteen minute video, "WANDA "Scarlet Witch" Costume Tutorial/Walkthrough by CarmenValentina," made by Carmen from the Estrada Sisters YouTube channel details how she created a screen accurate replica of Scarlet Witch's costume from the end of *WandaVision*. Carmen switches between being seated and speaking to the camera and showing close up footage of the cosplay itself as she explains her process. She talks through each component of the costume from the materials to the pattern. She also includes progress footage to act as a visual template for viewers. Through the extensive detail in her tutorial, viewers are able to completely recreate her screen replica cosplay.

Accuracy is an important component to cosplay, particularly in the planning phase as it can completely dictate the ways in which one pursues obtaining the costume. Though it is important to remember that "Accuracy and authenticity is subjectively defined for each cosplayer, but many believe that it is most important to recreate the outfit of the character as closely as possible" (Kane and Loges 323). The process of achieving this ideal can cost thousands of dollars and hours from the person making the costume. As Carmen attested, just one type of fabric she used cost nearly fifty dollars a yard. But achieving the level of skill and precision in order to fully recreate a costume is a reward in of itself. Concerning cosplay accuracy, Kane and Loges also claim that "The frameworks of knowledge of the viewers who choose to become users become competitive with the producers' original intent, but also conform to the producers' understanding of the characters and their costume. When fans acquire

production technology, control its use, and distribute their productions, fans reply to television"

(326). By this understanding, fans are only able to create cosplays which follow canon portrayals

of a character. While that is an aspect which is important to some participants, this notion

severely underestimates the control fans have over their own creations. Fans do not have the

power over the source artifact that the original creators do, however the opposite is true of

fanon—fans have all the control, and the original creators have none.

The questions concerning accuracy do not end after the costume is finished. No, the

scrutiny is just beginning as "In the creation of a costume, cosplayers are engaged in relations of

production that produce costumes that they can distribute widely online …As much as the

cosplay community claims that there are no rules to cosplaying, as soon as a cosplay photo is

uploaded and shared on the Internet there is the potential for negative and unwarranted feedback"

(Kane and Loges 323). Accuracy can be a serious point of contention within fandom. While it

may not matter to some, it is held to the highest degree by others. Moreover, the digital

distribution of cosplay also serves as a way of moderating fan spaces. As a scholar of cosplays

role in fan studies, Therèsa M. Winge, describes, "Cosplayers define the parameters of their

fandom with their use of social networks…These recognized spaces also encourage active

participation in the fan community even when critiques of Cosplayers are harsh and

discouraging" (28). While many current cosplayers on YouTube hope to inspire their fellow fans

to be supportive of others, even judging another cosplayer is a way of interacting within a fan

community. Although, according to one's values of the culture of their community, YouTubers

can regulate who can engage with their content to control the tone of their fandom. YouTube

provides functions to help the original creator regulate negative comments. Users can delete

comments or block accounts to prevent them from commenting. While these affordances are not exclusive to YouTube, they can still be use to moderate their community.

Undeniably, there is potential backlash from purists, but some are willing to risk backlash and not aim for accuracy, but ease and personal satisfaction. Alexa Poletti's "Poison Ivy Makeup & Costume Tutorial" demonstrates this viewpoint and guides others through doing the same. In her tutorial she utilizes a storebought Halloween costume which she customizes to align with her vision of the character. She hot glued fake foliage and leaves from a craft store to create a new texture and pattern on the bodice, which she demonstrates through progress footage. When cosplaying, one has to account for the skills they both do and do not possess. For many it is easier to do as Poletti did and modify a pre-made garment. In facilitating other's costume creation, both Carmen and Poletti provide an avenue for other fans to join and participate in fandom. Just as all production within fandom is constructive of a fanon, so too is cosplay. While Jenkin's theory is applicable fandom writ large, it applies to cosplay through the understanding that "belonging to a show's fandom means not only consuming the show as it's provided by producers but… reconstruct[ing] the content to one's desire. For those in fandom, being a fan is more than just taking the material at face value" (Kane and Loges 319). Cosplay is an ideal way to demonstrate fan interpretations of an artifact due to its visual nature. If fanon is meant to supplement canon in order to create the world fans want to see, cosplay takes that fanon and turns it material. Cosplay quite literally takes the fanon vision and crafts it into existence, as such cosplay is unparalleled in its power to distribute fanon. As an artifact on YouTube, the 3D nature of fanon cosplays become within reach of fans. In the convergence of fanon, cosplay, and the internet, fans "have come together to make their own versions of the popular stories, following a short episode format and posting directly to YouTube channels. This democratized distribution

of content is more revolutionary than production" (Kane and Loges 324). As more people gain

access to different cosplays, they are able to assess for themselves the different interpretations of

canon, come to their own understanding, and add that to fanon.

As such, fanon also shapes and is shaped by cosplays. Many participants create not what

they see, but what they want to see. In "Sewing a Damian Wayne Robin costume for

@KrystalShanelee", the YouTuber Coolripa creates a feminine version of Damian Wayne's

classic costume. The video is a step by step explanation of her process with videos depicting

each step from designing, to patterning, to sewing. Moreover, she includes footage in which

demonstrates each step in order to give viewers a better understanding of the production process

for the specific cosplay. Because of the intricacy of her video, fans are able to replicate not only

her costume design, but the process she uses to create her own reflection of canon through

cosplay. The costume is clearly cognizant of the canon Robin costume. It follows the spirit of the

design as it is fairly accurate, except for the fact that the tunic has been turned into a crop top and

skirt. As is the case with most fanon material, it follows most of the canonical representations,

but with a quirk. Fanon interpretations are a site in which fan art and cosplay collide as there are

infinite ways to modify the costume. As fanon becomes visual, these costumes demonstrate how

"Cosplayers are audience members who become authors, they also become actors engaged in

telling a story. A contemporary version of a storyteller, the Cosplayer sculpts and embodies the

3D character (from 2D imagery), moving through physical space and speaking in audible tones

to bring the fantastic character and story to life" (Winge 33). In this way, fanon revitalizes the

source artifact and preserves the mythical feeling evoked by fan devotion. In bringing fanon to

life, it is common within fandom to create gender-bent versions of beloved characters; within

this version of a female Damian Wayne (also identified as fem!Damian) there are many different

interpretations of how, or even if, the Robin costume would change. Furthermore, the canon Damian Wayne is half Arabic, half white, but Coolripa makes the cosplay for the TikToker @KrystalShanelee who is a black woman. So in this fanon, Damian is transformed from being a biracial boy to a black woman, but the costume is still recognizably that of Robin.

Moreover, through the intermingling of YouTube, fan tenacity, and adaptability, fandoms are able to diversify their members and cosplays. Queer theorist Rosalind Hanmer's "Internet Fandom, Queer Discourse, and Identities" explains these negotiation between identity and power, as "fandom supports and sustains oppositional reading towards dominant systems" (155). Cosplays designed by fan interpretations can be used to witness diversity within fandom, particularly in relation to artifacts which preserve modern patriarchal, colonial power structures. As Winge points out, "[fandom participants] defy fitting into tidy categories because they are diverse in ethnicity, race, age, and economic backgrounds… Cosplay is a transcultural fandom with the potential for transnational social, cultural, and economic impacts to both the fan subculture and outsiders who interact with Cosplayers" (33). Fanon can provide space to visualize people of color within the artifact; it can also allow for participants to see their selves and their culture within cosplay. This visibility demonstrates that cosplay can be an inclusive place and encourages people from all backgrounds to be involved. Similarly, fanon interpretations in cosplay can also provide queer participants a place to visualize their identity through a character. Interactions between queer participants and artifacts inspires more artifacts to be queer or read queerly (Hanmer). Queer participants can choose to see their identity within their character and incorporate a queer interpretation in the cosplay, which can be as subtle or accentuated as needed. This cosplay then carves out a space for queerness to be present with fandom. Queerness' visible exploration through cosplay becomes a site of "potentially re-coding

everyday sexual life" (Hanmer 147). If this is true, then even after the cosplay comes off, a space

still remains for queer visibility. Even when no longer dressed as a character, that queerness is

present. Thus, participants do not just become a character, the character comes to reflect the

participant.

This morphing between individual and character evolves from the personal to the

community through YouTube cosplay videos. TikTok, as another video platform can fill similar

role. While YouTube was the blueprint for most video platforms, and both "provided a very

simple, integrated interface within which users could upload, publish, and view streaming videos

without high levels of technical knowledge, and within the technological constraints of standard

browser software and relatively modest bandwidth" (Burgess and Green 1). As popular social

media has to be, these platforms are incredibly accessible from their intuitive interface to their

various versions for web browsers and different phone apps. Unlike TikTok, YouTube can only

highlight one voice, that of the creator. Other users can comment and interact with a video, but

there is no way to respond directly to a video with another video; in this way it is like Twitter.

All three platforms allow the creator to tag another by using the @ symbol. Although this is a

relatively new function on YouTube as of 2020.

The major feature that YouTube is able to provide that neither Twitter nor TikTok can is

their length of video. A video on Twitter can be up to two minutes and twenty seconds, and on

TikTok one can be up to three minutes long. On YouTube the maximum length a video can be is

twelve hours. This is what allows the EstradaSisters to make twenty minute tutorial videos. The

potential for DIY on YouTube is greater than on other platforms because it gives creators the

ability to spend time focusing on each step. Even in a seven minute video, Coolripa can dive into

more depth and show the creation of a costume in its entirety on YouTube in a way that the

others cannot. The increased length also allows creators to expand on fanon in depth and share it as such. Moreover, this extra affordance grants greater visibility to different identities to be reflected in cosplay. By modifying a costume to fit a fanon interpretation, cosplay challenges authors over control of the artifact. Cosplay demonstrates modes of resistance to predominant power structures which limit representation in media by reflecting participants' identities in their garments and presentation.

Future Utopia: Capitalism Can Suck It

Platforms like TikTok and YouTube bring source artifacts from the realm of the cult to mainstream, which inspires more participants who seek to diversify the fandom. The effect of this cycle, as Jenkins puts it, is that the "greater visibility" the internet provides bolsters "community building, intellectual exchange, cultural distribution, and media activism" (Jenkins 150). However, the growth of fandom is a double edged sword. As fandom goes mainstream and becomes more inclusive, it also becomes a bigger market to be targeted by corporations. There is now a plethora of official merch, events, and extra content. Often, this comes at the expense of fans who also provide these services. Fan communities function using a gift economy,[9] but the market has been flooded by both licensed and knock-off merchandise produced by major companies. Fan studies theorist Kristina Busse explains that "There has always been word-of-mouth advertisement, and fans tend to regard fan labor as a labor of love and as a shared passion - and, in many cases, as paying it forward. When this gift economy clashes with media industries, fans tend to be at best excluded and at worst exploited" (112). The ease and convenience of turning to Amazon to acquire goods of an artifact has overshadowed the

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[9] A gift economy is non-monetary economic system which functions through goods and services being distributed as gifts with the understanding that the recipient will pay it forward.

exchange of labor intense gifts. There are still communities and fan events that follow fandom's roots, but they are becoming less common.

Most concerning still is the fan works, usually art, that are stolen by companies with no credit or royalties given to the original creators, "With the embrace of new business models of spreadable and collaborative networked culture, the danger to fan culture has become the co-optation and colonization of fan creations, interactions, and spaces" (Busse 112). As there is no authority within fandom, no one holds the power to prevent corporations from stealing fanart, stories, merch designs, and more. The artists blogging and news platform, Bored Panda compiled a list of offences in which a corporation stole fanart and used the design on merchandise. Many of the instances were from less than reputable sellers, though Disney, arguably the biggest entertainment company in the world, stole Katie Woodger's Alice in Wonderland portrait off DeviantArt[10] to put it on a cosmetics bag without accrediting or paying Woodger (Bar). The same platforms that fans use to participate in fandom and share their creations with others are the same places which are used by corporations to exploit fans. Busse also illustrates how corporations "all share the desire to capitalize on fannish love and its ability to generate and disseminate interest. The best interface is useless without users, and tie-in merchandise rarely lasts longer on the shelves than its source does in the theaters. In contrast, fans engage with their chosen media, and their passion often introduces others to their beloved text" (112). As participation is the standard within fandom, fans are compelled to make fan creations like stories or art. The presence of extra content or merchandise from the creators of an artifact does not discourage fan creations, nor does intimidation or threat of legal action, as seen in the history of fanfiction disclaimers. Fans will continue to be inspired by their favorite artifacts. Furthermore,

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[10] A community-based art website popular with fans because it is free to post and view.

the digital affordances and engagements of fandom on social media elucidate how "[the] dynamic, collective, and reciprocal nature of these exchanges undermines traditional forms of expertise and destabilizes attempts to establish a scriptural economy in which some meanings are more valuable than others" (Jenkins 140). The participatory nature is inherently reciprocal as it is the cycle of commenting, sharing, and creating which constitutes the community. There is no hierarchy of types participation, only respect for their differing required labor and uses. There is no single way to engage with fandom, whether that be the artifacts or the community; platforms like TikTok provide people with options, various ways to engage with people and things to talk about.

While some may try, there is no way for a brand or corporation to monopolize the movements of fandom because of the constant participation within fandom. Even if reduced to small groups, there will always be fans using their flexibility and ability to manipulate affordances creates a striking means of opposition to capitalistic efforts because their love for the source artifact and pension for creation overpowers the ease and allure of corporate products. The presence of the participatory culture of fandom threatens capitalist endeavors, as "fandom is frequently represented as a site of resistance that is always at the same time in danger of being captured or shut down by corporate interests" (Burgess and Green 13). The preservation of fandom requires constant attention in order to stave off corporations. Just the presence of fan content takes away potential profit revenues from companies. Fanon also frequently frightens corporations as they have no control over it, and its base nature is that it is popular. Capitalist entities, be it companies or individuals, do not like the loss of power and editorial authorship that accompanies fanon as they cannot control the ways public perception changes because of fan creations and manipulations. Regardless, it is in these corporations best interest not to destroy fan

culture because, "For YouTube, participatory culture is not a gimmick or a sideshow; it is absolutely core business" (Burgess and Green 6). Twitter and TikTok are also reliant on engagement from fans to make their business profitable. Thus, corporations can not destroy fan culture because they would also be destroying fan's participatory condition which would desolate large sections of their platforms. So, while fan culture both threatens capitalistic efforts, corporations still rely on participation from fans.

Fans carry the potential for an even greater disruption of corporations. Fandom serves as a manifestation of scholar and artist Zach Blas' "Contra-Internet Aesthetics," which serve to combat "normalizing systems of control" (89). Fundamentally, the term refers to artistic use of digital technologies to oppose oppression from the neocolonial heteropatriarchy out of which the internet was created. The aesthetic seeks to be both constructive and deconstructive as it tears down unjust hierarchies and rebuilds them to benefit people before corporations or states. While most of these tenets of contra-internet aesthetics apply to fandom, in order to examine the relationship between fandom and capitalism, it will be most productive to examine two.

One requirement of contra-internet aesthetics is "An intersectional analysis that highlights the internet's intimate connections to the propagation of ableism, classism, homophobia, sexism, racism, and transphobia" (Blas 90). This tenet is illustrated in TikToks about ethical engagement and harm reduction. Fans are keenly aware of discrimination in artifacts and chose to engage in conversations about how the community should reject the presence of bigotry. Through intra-community moderation, as seen on @pagemelt's TikTok account, fans utilize interventive processes of creating fanon to intentionally mitigating and managing the presence of discriminatory ideology. Another manifestation of this principle is the circulation of fans' identities through cosplay tutorials on YouTube. By providing minorities

with both the space, tools, and knowledge to craft reflections of themselves into their favorite

characters, artifacts then carry associations of these representations. The visibility of oppressed

people challenges dominant power hierarchies and threatens capitalism, as corporations'

exploitation is typically reliant on heteropatriarchal neocolonialism.

The last of the contra-internet tenets is also a core principle in the deconstruction of

fandom. Blas claims that to be contra-internet one must involve the "Constituting alternatives to

the internet, which is nothing short of utopian" (90). The contra-internet aesthetic must address

the problems with the internet and provide possible opportunities for radicalization and

opposition. This concept is further explored in Jenkins' article, in which he cites Pierre Levy's

Collective Intelligence as inspiration for his following scholarship on the participatory nature of

fan culture. He summarizes Levy's argument as "an 'achievable utopia' —not something that

grows inevitably from the new configuration of technologies but rather something we must work

toward and fight to achieve" (Jenkins 134). By Levy's logic, fan culture is an alternative mode of

culture and community and is not limited to the internet. He also believes that through fandom

this utopia is not only a goal, but a feasible one. Undoubtedly fandom models ways to utilize

participation on social media to resist capitalism, and that this behavior may be adapted to fit the

needs of other grass roots communities.

However, asserting that fandom is utopian in doing so is more tenuous. The participatory

nature of fandom also allows for fans to act in their own self-interest to a destructive extent.

Fandoms that center real people, like musicians, are notorious for shipping friends with such

ferocity that the real people's relationship, whether that be platonic or romantic, is ruined due to

the stress put on it in the public eye.[11] While this exact behavior is not what Blas or Levy are referencing, it is still hard to ignore because they also came out of the approved and integrated participatory creations like fan fiction, art, edits, etc. Interestingly, Blas and Levy are at odds in the political effect of their ideologies. Blas understands the concept as a radical destruction and recreation of structures of power. Levy thinks of the utopic alternative as a "a prototype or dress rehearsal for the way culture might operate in the future" (Jenkins 134). Levy's understanding of utopia situates the benefit of fandom being resistant to, while working within, dominant power structures in order for the imagined better future to be one that is reachable.

There is no clear way to determine if either Blas or Levy is right or wrong; although, it may be a bit of both, that fandom can act as resistance and future without contradicting itself. In any case, it may be more helpful to rely more on Levy's notion of a "dress rehearsal" when considering the benefits of following fandom's model of community. Jenkins explores the effect of the mediation of power as he states: "We are trying out through play patterns of interaction that will soon penetrate every other aspect of our lives. Levy, in short, gives us a *model for a fan-based politics*" (134, italics added). Levy offers fandom as a way of thinking about systems of power and authority, especially as it can serve as an example. Labor unions, for example, could benefit from adopting fandoms participatory practices in order to connect and organize large groups of random, disparate people who share a common interest or goal. Mimicking fan uses of social media could reach a broader audience who may be interested in joining or supporting the organization. In following their practices of establishing fanon, unions would also be able to democratize their conversations through communicative affordances. Additionally, both unions

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[11] There are many instances of this, the most noteworthy might be the deterioration of Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson friendship because of fans insistence that they were dating.

and fandom oppose capitalism, as such unions would be able to apply contra-internet aesthetics to strengthen their resistance to oppressive systems of power. Labor unions are certainly not the only organization which can utilize the fandom model, which is elucidated by further examination of fan-based politics.

Returning to @pagemelt's reply video, their fanfiction recommendation demonstrates its own type of "dress rehearsal." The fan-based politics present in this notion is threefold: first, there is the organic accumulation of fanon shown through the fanfic perception of an artifact. Both the story itself and the recommendation video serve to spread an interpretation or fanon. The second is the intentionality behind a fan creation's portrayal of the artifact, what information they choose to keep or discard. This is the interventive work of creating fanon. Moreover, @pagemelt explains how "in a world that tells us that we should be constantly trying to figure out how to monetize our creativity. That someone poured so much love into writing this and then gave it to use to read for free; its incredible" (29 Jan 2022 01:25-01:35). This notion demonstrates the third aspect of the politics at play—the ways that fans manage power and authority. Fanon and fanfiction give voice to new participants. When constructing their own artifact, fans are able to assume authority over their own work, regardless of if it contradicts the canon. Furthermore, this TikToker testifies that not everything must be monetized. Fans will do things for their own enjoyment or to bring joy to others, without needing compensation. Thus, if one follows fans model of community, progress towards a more equal or democratic future may be achievable for others as well.

Coolripa's Robin cosplay tutorial may also serve to demonstrate possible modes of moderating capitalist efforts. Her video includes organic fanon, as her adaptation will be spread by other fans using her design. Additionally, her interpretation intentionally modifies the

character to reflect new identities as she creates a feminine version for a black woman. This not only interventive fanon, but also explores relations of authority over depiction of the character. Fan creations are meant for fans to make changes to the canon, in this way fans forcibly take power from the original creator. The creator does not lose their power, but they are forced to navigate the public perception as it is complicated by fans. This power also grants fans the ability to change the world and their favorite artifacts to see themselves reflected in it. Fans create space within artifacts for complicating and complicated identities to be visible. Other communities can mimic fan-based politics of seizing control in order to retain power within their lives.

When considering the effects of anti-capitalist behavior on social media platforms, Burgess and Green state that "YouTube proves that in practice the economic and cultural rearrangements that 'participatory culture' stands for are as disruptive and uncomfortable as they might be potentially liberating" (10). The anti-capital nature of participatory communities is not unique to YouTube and is present on Twitter and TikTok. Each platform has their own capitalistic goals, but fans can use the platforms and affordances for their own needs. The affordances of the platform, particularly the accessibility and ease of participation, grant power to the average user, which also allows for the renegotiation of authority in its process of inventing fanon. Fan communities still exist within capitalist structures and pad the pockets of their selected idols, yet internally, the community's gift economy serves to connect participants rather than as a means of accumulating wealth. Other communities can adopt the ways that fans utilize affordances to flip the script on systems of power and gain control and authority over not just an artifact, but their lives. It may not be fully utopian, but the platforms support fans as they simulate an improved, anti-capitalist and anti-oppressive community.

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