Identifying Fandom Queer Space: Construction and Deconstruction

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"York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada,"

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MAJOR PROJECT SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

Foreword

Looking back, this Major Project took over a year's worth of research to complete, and in many ways has been the culmination of a lifetime of experience and understandings. When I began to design a project to explore themes of queer space -- planning and community -- I chose to connect those themes with my own personal understandings of queer space, and the community I inhabit.

My environment has always contained fan culture and my life and spaces have always been inter-woven with my fan, and my queer, experience. To be given a chance to study these through a lens that allowed me to expand my knowledge of spatial theories also allowed me to expand my fundamental understanding of community experience. The decision to drastically change my area of study focus[1] meant that I could also radically re-evaluate the way in which I viewed my environment -- what composed it, what it held, what pieces I wished to study, and how I interacted with it as a community member. It also allowed me to try to understand the functioning of a community with no formal boundaries or rules.

Furthermore, by putting my Major Project online, I am able to study (queer) fan culture on the internet as a kind of space, as part of my environment and as part of the environment it inhabits. It gives the project the freedom to exist within the community it describes, and allows for

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[1] I began in the Faculty with the intent to study neighbourhood design and rating systems for sustainable development. When I realized that my passions - queer theory and fan culture - could be brought into planning through a study of the concept of community I decided to change my Plan of Study.

conversation to continue even after this report is handed in. Putting my MRP online also allows me to demonstrate how fan communities are able to create and shape their own spaces and environments through their narratives, words, voices, and experiences. Instead of simply describing that process, I am able to show it first-hand. Through this project I found, via struggle and self-reflection, a way to express my understanding of what it is that shapes my engagement with the environment and the people within my community through the medium most appropriate, and hopefully found a way to demonstrate to others the intersections between spatial creation as a planning process and the experiences of those who -- individually and as part of their community -- shape that queer space.

I would like to express my deepest thanks first of all to my participants, who shared with me their lives, their thoughts and feelings -- often above and beyond what I would have expected or asked. They generously let me into their fandom, their homes, and lives, and allowed me to take them into mine in turn. Thank you to the fandom at large, for coming with me on this ride, and to the bands for giving us all a way to create these spaces we inhabit. My deepest thanks also to my supervisor, Susan Moore, who believed that such a project could take shape.

Last, but not least, thank you to Pete Wentz[2], because Pete Wentz is the only reason we're famous.

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[2] Pete Wentz is the bassist and front man of the band Fall Out Boy. Fall Out Boy is one of the bands this fan culture is based around.

"we dont write fiction" - pete wentz

http://www.falloutboyrock.com/faq/default.aspx?qid=1554&cmnt=1

"Iconic and ironic sound pretty much the same. People mix them up a lot." pete wentz

9:44 AM Feb 5th from text

http://twitter.com/petewentz/status/1179828201

So the story goes something like this.

You're a graduate student at York University, doing a Masters' degree with a focus in Planning, Area of Concentration: "Constructing/Planning Queer Space". You decide that the thing you want to investigate is the space you've always inhabited, a space you're familiar and comfortable with, one you know. You want to understand how (and if) queer space links to current planning concepts with regards to community, and spatial practice. You decide to try to illustrate your understandings of how online space and online culture have influenced and impacted your life and the lives of the people you know.

You've read and written fanfic for almost fifteen years; it is a part of your life. You define yourself in no small measure by the fan activity you participate in, and your self-identification is wrapped up with the changing nature of sexuality as it's (often) understood and portrayed in slash fanfiction. Fandom is a natural part of your day, like breathing; it has been and continues to be one of the most important spaces to allow you to understand your own sexuality, how to engage with it and how to engage with other people. It has been the way you engaged with and constructed yourself and your understanding of the community you inhabit -- it has, in short, been the neighbourhood you return to time and time again, wherever your physical body may be.

You decide that this neighbourhood is what you want to study, and the best way to illustrate this is to research a fandom. You pick 'bandom', a fandom surrounding certain bands, because it's popular right now and thus active (there's a lot of fanfiction being produced, and people are

talking about it), and it's about celebrities, which brings a new layer of tension -- but also excitement -- into the mix.

You go into your research design naively assuming you're prepared for the experience of researching the online 'neighbourhood' you call home. As you begin to interview people, you realize how hard it will be to tell the story of this space, the story of its sexuality and its engagement. You know these people, you know this fandom and so you're protective of it. Through your research design, you go to your first concerts of the bands; you start to prioritize the wrong things. You don't know how to tell your participants' stories without them overlapping, crossing, causing tensions in yourself and your ethics. You go visit your participants, and when it comes time to put them on camera, you can't do it, even if that was the plan. You struggle to understand what of your space you're putting on show and what you're choosing to keep hidden -- and moreover, how to make that decision ethically and rationally, staying true to your intentions as well as your participants and yourself.

You go to concerts in Las Vegas, Detroit, Buffalo, and Chicago, on two different tours and with three different bands. You love the music. You go to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, L.A. -- to meet with participants and to feel the cities where other people live. You go to a meet-and-greet with the band Panic! at the Disco; you shake their hands. You go to a club one night where Pete Wentz is the DJ, and the rest of his band are standing on the floor. You get drunk in the club with your girlfriend and don't wonder about the engagement of your own bodies as you're dancing and how it relates to the theoretical model of anything. You don't wonder about the queer performance you and your girlfriend put on for the audience of the club together, how you

may be putting yourself on display in a strange role reversal. You dance. You feel the music in the soles of your feet.

The story goes something like, you thought all of this would be a positive way to explore post-modern understandings of sexuality by those who engage with queer texts online. You hoped that this understanding would give you what research into queer geography or fan culture may be missing: an understanding of how what many previously understood to be a fantasy space -- that of cyberspace -- actually does interact with and relate directly to people's engagement with physical space (and thus their understandings of the makeup of their environment, city, and world). You thought that using your own experiences to inform this study would be a safe way to find common ground with your participants. You thought it was a good idea to push yourself to do these things, to experience these different things, to try and understand how it is your space relates to other fans'. How you create it.

You didn't think you'd have problems becoming a character in your own head in order to examine bandom, examine queer space. You didn't think it would be difficult to write about yourself as fictional, because you've spent a great part of your life writing fictions that overlapped with your reality as a member of fandom. You thought it wouldn't be difficult to take that process and apply it to the fandom itself, and still find an answer in the research.

You find out that the story goes something like: you write your own fiction.

Introduction

This project is a piece of mixed-media / new-media, written and compiled online because the space it describes is, to a large extent, online. The project itself is composed of text and video narrating the meta-text of "bandom", a community of "fanfiction" writers. The project itself was written in the style of the writing community it is attempting to describe -- fanfiction (for a longer discussion of fanfiction, see "Assumptions" below or Appendix A: Glossary). Because fanfiction itself can be quite stylistic in nature, and contains a lot of tropes and stereotypes implicitly understood within fandom itself, those not familiar with the fandom or the styles may need a roadmap into the stories that follow. The way I approached the narrative can be compared to the way someone might put together a documentary with a very specific viewpoint, and as such an explanation of how the stories are structured may help you understand how to read them.

First off, the project is not a chronological account of my research. The reasoning for this decision is explained below (see the theme "the past"), but in short, the choice was made to highlight links and themes in the order that seemed most appropriate to tell the story, implying connections without explicitly stating them -- and that required a non-chronological approach. Secondly, you can read these stories two different ways. One is reading through the pieces as a cohesive whole, from start to finish. This will give you all the content as a single story woven together. The other way to read these stories is through the "tags" they've been assigned.

Dreamwidth.org, the journaling site this project is posted on, defines a tag as: "a keyword or phrase that you add to the entries you post to your journal or community to make it easy for you

to find them again, or to help you place them into a specific category for organization purposes" ("What are tags?," 2009). Wikipedia (which while far from being an academic resource is nonetheless an appropriate source when discussing collaborative content) notes that tags are a "bottom-up type of classification" ("Tag (metadata)," 2009). A longer discussion of tagging and the unique structures that come from tagging is found within the project. In terms of navigation of this project, however, it is important to know that there are several 'tags' found within the project. These all stand for a certain theme or bandom space that is being described. For stories related to the space of 'the body', for example, one would follow the tag 'the body'. Each tag can be used to navigate these stories via theme or a certain kind of space they explore. A brief description of each theme can be found below. Each tag is organized with a beginning and an end, and flows in and out of the cohesive narrative.

Appendix B includes selected excerpts from the project; however, as one of the key intentions of the project was a demonstration of how bandom is organized in an organic fashion through links and collections of journals/links/tags/twitters/youtube clips, the excerpts will not provide the cohesive narrative that reading the project online will.

[project offline]

Project Design

I took certain things for granted in designing this project. One of the most important is a shared experience of the research material between myself and my participants. I conducted a total of 12 interviews, as well as talked to many other people on the topics of queer fandom space. Throughout those discussions I could assume certain things, ascribe certain meanings to words and concepts with the understanding that the people I was talking to (and about) had familiarity with certain definitions and understandings. All my participants and sources have a shared understanding of certain paradigms, even if the way in which they define terminology and phrases may differ. And, being a member of the group, I share those concepts. I don't need to explain what fanfiction is in an interview, because even though my participant may hold a different viewpoint on legitimate fan work, or the nature and breadth of fanfiction and what to include, they all would understand the question. Even if we disagree, we share the basic framework and interact on a certain level that others can't.

> *I think there's an agreement, an understanding on a certain range of visions of how sexuality operates, and then also an agreement that this is something of great interest to us. To me. But I'd also say -- because I think sometimes that, for instance, my own language is less academic than that used by a lot of people -- an agreement that we're in the same country, if you will, agreeing to speak that language.*
>
> *-JW*

As well as a shared country in terms of sexuality, my participants and I share the geography of fandom, and thus we share a fandom language. I wouldn't have to explain the definition of

fanfiction, for example, to anyone I envisioned interviewing -- the writers, readers, or bands being written about. But for those who don't share this framework, let me try and give you an insider's guide to some of the important assumptions that are found in the space we call bandom.

Assumptions and Language: A down and dirty fandom guide

> *One becomes a "fan" not by being a regular viewer of a particular program but by translating that viewing into some kind of cultural activity, by sharing feelings and thoughts about the program content with friends, by joining a "community" of other fans who share common interests. For fans, consumption naturally sparks production, reading generates writing, until the terms seem logically inseparable.*
>   *(Jenkins, 1991, p. 175)*

A more comprehensive conversation about fandom and fan works can be found on the Fanlore[3] website (http://www.fanlore.org). Essentially, the process that Henry Jenkins describes above is the nature of how fans of specific television shows take their viewing (reading) of the programs as cultural texts, and extend it to include their own narratives. Those are fan-created creative texts, and can be stories (*i.e.* fanfiction), art (fanart), or, more recently, videos (fanvids).

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[3] Fanlore is a "a fandom wiki, is devoted to preserving the history of transformative fanworks and the fandoms from which they have arisen." (http://transformativeworks.org/projects) It is run by the Organization of Transformative Works, a non-profit dedicated to fan works as legal, legitimate creative activity.

A large subsection of fanfiction and fanworks centres around "slash", which is homoerotic and/or queer narrative about characters from television, movie, books, and (more recently) celebrity -- essentially stories, videos, fan art, etc., created about a certain source material or 'canon' with queer themes or about (imagined or real) gay relationships, even if the press about the celebrity, or story explicit within the television show, does not present the characters as gay. (This is a simplistic explanation for clarity.) In the last fifteen years, fan works (and slash) have grown in popularity and scope exponentially due to the ability of people to distribute it on the internet. A history of slash would start with television shows, first and foremost Star Trek (Kirk/Spock), continuing through Blake's 7, The Sentinel, and The X-Files. It would expand to include movies and popular books like Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, and later television shows like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Stargate: Atlantis, and Supernatural. Those are just a sample of the fandoms I've personally participated in, or seen unfold, in the last ten to fifteen years (to thirty or forty in some cases). It is by no means close to a comprehensive list.

In the list of larger slash fandoms I've personally seen grow (and fade) over the last fifteen years, I neglected to add two -- 'popslash' and 'bandslash' or 'bandom' (henceforth, I will use the term "bandom" in reference). Popslash, which became more popular around 1999-2000, centered around members of then-current pop music -- the groups *NSYNC and the Backstreet Boys, and included other stars who 'ran in the same circles', as it were, such as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera.[4] This was the first time that Real People Fic (RPF) or Real People Slash (RPS) had

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[4] I speak from my own experience as an active and vocal member of this fanfiction community; as someone who read and wrote, who communicated with lots of the more popular writers and livejournal communities, and who made a strong effort to "keep up" with the fandom.

really hit the 'main' fanfiction/slash population as a large "fandom" to write in, and the huge popularity of it was unprecedented. It faded in popularity beginning around 2003/04 (at least, it fell off my radar, and most of the people I would have said made up the popslash community had moved onto other things by then). But it was an important fandom to pop up for those of us who engaged in this "cultural rewriting", because it in part led into bandom.

Bandom came onto the radar around the same time as popslash began to fade, though in different circles. (The exact timing is hard to pinpoint, since anecdotal evidence is the only way to track fandom history on the internet -- there have been numerous projects attempting to record fandom history, but most have been moderately successful at best. It is in the nature of the beast to be elusive to history.) It is essentially a fandom surrounding the bands attached to Pete Wentz's label (Decaydance) and My Chemical Romance; writers produce fanfiction - mainly slash - about various band members. Briefly, the most popular bands in bandom are typically agreed to be Fall Out Boy (Pete/Patrick), My Chemical Romance, and Panic! At the Disco. My Chemical Romance fanfiction seems to have cropped up first, with Fall Out Boy and then the other bandom bands following.

Appendix A: Glossary provides more information on the bands, musicians, and other terminology that may not be familiar to readers. More information can also be found in the linked 'fandom primers', which are written by other fanfiction writers/readers and intended to be for people just getting into the fandom and wanting more information quickly on the people and events being written about and/or discussed.

Assumptions: Bandom sexuality

Rather than fully explore queer theory's influence on understandings of fandom, slash, and bandom in particular, I'd like to point out a few important assumptions that many bandom fans would likely agree with (to varying levels) in regards to sexuality. First off, in general terms fans would likely agree that sexuality is a social construct, created through practices and understandings within a certain societal and temporal context. Gayle Rubin, in an interview with Judith Butler on early sexuality theories and Rubin's own theoretical models, notes that:

> *I very much had in mind the section from the History of Sexuality where Foucault says, "Particularly from the eighteenth century onwards, Western societies created and deployed a new apparatus which was superimposed on the previous one" (106). He never says it replaces, he says "superimposed". (Butler, 1994, p. 15)*

She goes on to discuss how she attempted to avoid universalities in terms of discussing others' models of sexuality. Social construction of sexuality opens the door for queer sexualities, fluid and changing, which is how many of my participants identified. This understanding of sexuality leaves room for self-identification as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer (for whatever definition of queer one wants to use), asexual (at its most basic a sexuality based around the lack of desire for sex, or a lack of interest in physical relationships), and more. As Lisa Duggan describes in "Making it Perfectly Queer", bandom is a 'queer' nation, "a newly defined political entity, better able to cross boundaries and construct more fluid identities" (1994, 21). Bandom in its queer identity has many ambivalences inherent in its construction. This queer identity is often also ascribed to the fanfiction itself, and thus the cultural context of bandom can generally be called a 'queer' one.

Assumptions: Understanding Twitter

One of the most important aspects of bandom comes from the remarkable level of access fans get to celebrities through the communications technology of Twitter, which is one of the primary modes of communication fans use to communicate with each other as well as with the celebrities they write about. Many if not most bandom members have Twitter accounts to follow each other and follow the musicians. I call Twitter 'texting the internet', in that you get 140 characters to send a message to those people who follow you; you can send messages from your phone; and so it's an internet communications technology that, if you have a mobile phone, you take with you wherever you go.

The connection of celebrities and Twitter is summed up by Steven Johnson's commentary:

> *It used to be that you compulsively checked your BlackBerry to see if anything new had happened in your personal life or career: e-mail from the boss, a reply from last night's date. Now you're compulsively checking your BlackBerry for news from other people's lives. And because, on Twitter at least, some of those people happen to be celebrities, the Twitter platform is likely to expand that strangely delusional relationship that we have to fame. When Oprah tweets a question about getting ticks off her dog, as she did recently, anyone can send an @ reply to her, and in that exchange, there is the semblance of a normal, everyday conversation between equals. But of course, Oprah has more than a million followers, and that isolated query probably elicited thousands of*

responses. Who knows what small fraction of her @ replies she has time to read?

But from the fan's perspective, it feels refreshingly intimate: "As I was explaining

to Oprah last night, when she asked about dog ticks ..."

(Johnson, 2009)

For bandom in particular, Twitter has become one of the primary ways the celebrities being written about allow fans access to their lives. Twitter has no PR mechanism behind it; celebrities send direct messages to the internet, and the communication is instantaneous. I can turn Twitter on for my phone, and get whatever Pete Wentz Twitters at the same time as he's sending it -- and I have the possibility to reply. (Whether he'll see it, or acknowledge the reply, is something else, but the technology itself allows the potential for it.) This becomes more important when talking about what makes bandom unique, because this access is a huge part of its uniqueness.

The foregoing is a very brief description of some of the things that everyone surrounding this project -- my participants, the people who know them, who know me, even the musicians themselves -- already know. The next important question is why study this fandom space in the first place.

Why bandom?

Cobra Starship's ultra-charismatic frontman Gabe Saporta is astonishingly

approachable. When I meet him, this instant and sincere connection he makes

with others has taken the form of a new mobile phone he's carrying.

"I got the phone because a fan who works at Telstra gave me a SIM card," he explains. "He gave the number out to people online, and now kids are calling me on it all day. A girl called me when I was on my way to the bathroom and I was like 'yo! I'm on my way to the bathroom, call me back in five minutes!'."

Ryland Blackington, the band's guitarist, is more laid back than his lead singer, but equally chatty and charming.

"Overlooking the power of online things – like MySpace, any internet communication network – is crazy," Ryland says. "They're so invaluable to a band that's starting out, or to a band that's been around for a long time."

"It's something really interesting, because it's like there's a generation gap," says Gabe. "Kids today, they expect to have access to their bands in a personal way. When I first started playing music and getting some kind of recognition or fame, I had a really tough time dealing with it. Making music was such a personal thing for me that it made me uncomfortable. I felt like sharing myself would undermine the integrity of what I was doing."

"But then I made a conscious decision of 'well, I'm doing this, and I wouldn't be able to do this if it wasn't for these people, so I'll give them whatever they want, basically. I'm happy to oblige anything, because you can't take for granted that

the fans are the ones letting you do the most awesome job in the world. It's not

even a job! It's hard work, but it's yours and the only reason is fans."

"People think they have to get their bands signed to a label, but that's bullshit.

Labels like Fuelled by Ramen are all about this new mentality – it's not about

sending your demo out, it's just about making fans. Everything else follows."

(Borsellino, 2007)

Fan space is related to community in that much of the importance ascribed to fandom arises

through the community building it allows and the relationships it forges. It provides an

alternative method of communicating and relating for many of its participants. As queer space, it

functions as both the creation of culture -- fanfiction serves as an important textual transmission

of values and ethics within the community -- and as the cultural framework for those engaging

(Jenkins, 1991; others). Fan activity is the community focal point, and through the writing it

becomes a subversive space (a queer space) through which women perform their own identities

through their words and conversations.

This view of fandom as culture, as "community glue", can be ascribed to any fandom with any

fanfiction -- and the queer, subversive element of slash tends to come from the theorizing of

straight, female-gendered voices writing queer texts between each other, creating queer

conversations (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Busse, 2005). More recently investigations into the

interactions between fans has broadened, taking into account virtual video games, and virtual

worlds, not just fanfiction; however, to someone who's spent the better part of fifteen years

reading and writing within the online fanfiction world, there has been a drastic shift in the last few years, a new mode of conversation among these writers and fans that for whatever reason has taken place on a collective, communal scale.

There are three things that make bandom -- as an internet fandom, as a fandom surrounding the cultural phenomenon of fanfiction -- a unique experience.

1. It's a fandom surrounding music and musicians.

Because the actual fan activity in bandom centres around band(s), rather than fictional story-lines or people, it's all-permeating. There are shows and music and pop culture, and there's discussion with other people and gossip magazines and television, as well as internet fiction. It's a physical fandom, in that what you're a fan of exists in the physical world as well as the metaphorical.

See: Beatlemania, Dead Heads, sports fans. It can be a way of life to be a fan of something physical. It can be subversive in terms of sexuality, as Ehrenreich describes in her discussions of Beatlemania (Ehrenreich, Hess, & Jacobs, 1992) -- her analysis of the Beatles' gender ambiguity suggests that it made them at once more appealing and also less limiting for their fans' experience of their own sexualities. But most importantly (and as I discovered through discussions with my interviewees) unlike, say, writing about Buffy the Vampire Slayer -- there's a way to immerse yourself physically within the actual fandom. Buffy the Vampire Slayer is set in a fictional town in California, but anyone engaging in bandom can go to concerts whenever there's a tour. This physicality means that, unlike many Fictional People Fic (FPF) or Fictional

People Slash (FPS) fandoms -- those built around fictional canon like television or books -- engagement with the fandom itself can be more encompassing, more multi-dimensional. Because of that, so can fans' engagement in the space and community, as well as their understandings of queer identities that they may rely on the fandom to augment or play out.

2. It's a music fandom writing (strong) fanfiction.

Bandom has a collective understanding of fanfiction. We're a self-aware, collective, active fandom. This is a community of fans that discuss and are aware that there's a community, and they're gathered around more than just music. They're also discussing writing and fiction and creating myth and narrative, not just absorbing narrative or understanding it. While fan communities surrounding other bands that are not necessarily engaged in fan-work creation or fanfiction may have the physicality described above, bandom also has the added dimension of what Jenkins first called "active fandom", that of moving from passive consumers of media (music, television, or otherwise) to active producers of cultural meaning. This coupled with the physicality of a music fandom creates fan space and fan engagement on multiple layers and with a multiplicity of avenues for community-building.

It's also a fandom with, collectively, a lot of writing talent (which attracts more talent, which perpetuates the community and grows the popularity and actual numbers of the fandom). This is a small but important point because the larger size of the fandom (compared to other potential bands' fanfic writers) means that the visibility of the community is larger, and thus the community grows.

3. It's a music fandom writing strong fanfiction, about people who know about fanfiction and interact with it.

Unlike popslash (which is the arguably the only other large-scale comparable music fandom, full of a strong core of writers just like above), bandom has no fourth wall in that the characters (the musicians) interact with their audience and the fanwork creators (the fanfiction writers) in a self-aware manner, explicitly acknowledging the fiction surrounding them and pointing to the fictions their audiences are writing. There are two major components that contribute to this breakdown of the fourth wall that did not seem to be present within popslash. *NSYNC back in 2002 never used the word fanfiction -- they did not engage publicly with the source material (whether because of deniability, disinterest, or because they had no knowledge, no one knew).

Secondly, there was little-to-no chance that fans would ever get explicit access to Justin Timberlake to discuss it, even if he wanted to. There was a strong divide between canon -- the band's activities/emotions/existence -- and the people writing the fanfiction. Part of this comes from the fact that *NSYNC had millions of fans, whereas bandom's bands aren't nearly as 'famous', so getting access to them is (comparatively) much easier. (An easy example: I could have attended the Cobra Starship concert after-party when they played in Toronto, because it was at a very small club down the street from my apartment, and Gabe Saporta was DJ'ing there.) Many of the online fans aware of, or engaging with, fanfiction have also attended meet-and-greets with the bands, often through their fanclubs or other semi-official settings, gaining access to these events and spaces with relative ease. The bands themselves are more available to their

fanbase at large, and their fan base is comparatively smaller, and because of this it is easy(ier) to find yourself with access.

Not only are the bands comparatively less famous, but they make a very strong effort to engage directly with fans (example: Pete Wentz was invited to speak at Billboard's conference on mobile technology and music specifically because he's internet-savvy and has made that attempt to connect directly). Shana (of *Out)* actually noted that when she talks with up-and-coming bands about how to increase their success or build on what success they have, she points to Pete Wentz's and Gabe Saporta's methods of fan-interaction, specifically *because* of their genuine interest and caring for their fan-base. This internet engagement also translates to the bands being more aware of internet culture -- and thus willing/able/for whatever reason actually interacting with it. (See my brief note on Twitter above.)

> *PETE: We were lucky in a weird way because we came in at the tail end of the era when bands still had videos on MTV and were still selling records and made money touring, and we had peer-to-peer downloads on MP3.com and MySpace and all of that. So, we had the best of all those things and were able to establish ourselves as a band so that if one platform disappeared, we still had other outlets. In terms of new stuff, I'm pretty much a total insomniac, and I'm up all night looking around. I follow the kids. My brother was the one who told me to switch everything to Facebook. He was way early on it and he is younger than me. I think that you get into trouble when you stand still. You got to be like a shark.*
>
> *(Harding, 2009)*

Shana also narrated anecdotes in which both Pete Wentz and Gabe Saporta seemed comfortable with fan-created narratives, either fanfiction, music videos, covers, artwork, or otherwise, surrounding their bands. From our conversation, it seems accurate to say that they genuinely encourage creativity within their fan-base. Discussions with my interviewees confirmed this from the other end, as it were. Most implied (if not stated outright) that they were relatively comfortable with the level of interaction the bands had with fanfic, and that -- while forcing it on them was unacceptable -- the band choosing to interact wasn't a strong concern. As one of my participants said:

> *I think bandom accepts, and even welcomes, a lot more interaction with band members, in a lot more ways, than many other fandoms do/did. [People in other fandoms may react with] Oh no! Someone told Pete Wentz about the existence of slash! When it's like telling him about the existence of Google. I refuse to be more upset about Tom Conrad5 reading slash about himself than Tom Conrad is, that's my motto.*
>
> *-JW*

This acceptance of the fourth wall breakdown has, of course, created several new tensions for people engaging in the fandom, and I cannot speak to how widely the view expressed above may be held (a major difficulty in researching this breakdown in barriers between band and fandom is

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[5] A musician in a small rock band, Empires, which is peripherally tied to bandom

that those who may be uncomfortable with it may be much less likely to be willing to talk to someone about it for research).

Because of these three factors, that disconnect between fan-writer and band is nearly, if not completely, gone. This is the aspect that makes bandom unique in the eyes of many of those who engage with it, and this is the aspect that people are still trying to wrap their heads around. In short, this is the aspect that causes the most tension and the most discomfort in many people: there's no way to hide this hobby/activity/fanfiction/lifestyle from the canon about which you're writing anymore. They're posting blogs and Twitters joking about the slash about themselves, pulling the fandom out of the closet whether people are ready to understand or accept the implications of it or not. Popslash belonged to television celebrity culture (as described by Gabler (2002)). Bandom belongs to internet celebrity and internet fandom.

To put it another way, Pete Wentz knows about fanfiction starring Fall Out Boy. Pete Wentz reads fanfiction starring Fall Out Boy. And: Pete Wentz talks about fanfiction starring Fall Out Boy. He acknowledges that it exists by talking about it, thus tearing down that curtain that left other RPS fandoms feeling a lot more safe and hidden.

> *Boundaries in this fandom are a clusterfuck of such epic proportions at this point,*
> *I can't even. This fandom is so 3.0 and after all these years we're still fumbling to*
> *upgrade to the proper software to deal with it.*
> *- anon.*

Tag Information: How The Project Is Organized

In designing the structure of this project, I tried to follow the link structure common to bandom itself: tagging. Most websites bandom fanfic can be "found" on (livejournal.com, delicious.com) uses a tagging structure of some type. Each tag used represents a kind of space I encountered as I conducted my research. There is obvious overlap between each, but I attempted to categorize each entry, media segment or interview piece based on the thematic elements that describe the type of space, or alternately how each piece created the type of space. A very brief description of each tag used can be found below.

the classroom

This tag is used to designate the portions of the project that are replicated as the Major Project Report; sections on methodology, theoretical framework, limitations, and the 'Glossary' are all collected under this tag. The Major Project work itself can be found under the remaining tags.

the past

Space has a physical as well as temporal dimension, and that temporal dimension is especially pertinent when discussing the internet. As I interviewed people and asked them how they experienced their community through the internet, it seemed to me that the mode of communication people use online changes the temporality of their spaces in fundamental ways. Lefebvre's idea of conceived space, and in particular his notion of how history and knowledge of

space (Lefebvre, 1991) helps us to conceive of it, is one example of how a community's experience of time and temporality is important to the creation of environment.

the temple

Fandom is fundamentally about experience and emotion. Both as cultural constructs that put forth community values, and as examples of how people within the community experience meaning, fanfiction and wider fan activities can and often do function as myth. As the fandom community does not share a common physical neighbourhood, or obvious socio-political bounds within a larger city, a key part of the connection that ties one into feeling a part of the community is a sense of belonging stemming from fan activity and engagement (as noted by many participants). As Grossberg (1992) discusses, the investment in fan texts by fans is created through various means, but it exists for many, in part, to provide a sense of meaning (even "sacred") as myth. Fandom space is created by these words and conversations -- and yes, even moments of faith.

the body

While many theorists posit that cyberspace is a place of pure fantasy, an intellectual or emotional space inhabited without any reference to physicality (see *e.g.*, Jahshan, 2007), this isn't what I found to be true. In both interviews and in personal experiences, I found that many if not all bandom spaces were layered with my body and the way my body engaged with others'. This is especially true of bandom as a gendered space or queer space, one that plays with the fantasy of

the body and allows a kind of transgendering for (some) writers as they write male characters in sexual situations, and then meet, converse, even have sex, as women. The conceptualization of the body layered over the physical experience of the body is an important bridge.

the closet

Within interviews, I found that more than once people referenced a certain amount of "othering", especially in terms of being a fan of bands that many wouldn't call legitimate, or in terms of engaging in a hobby (fanfiction, fan activity) that other people may not understand the meaning of or attach importance to. As well, the basic fact is that bandom is a cultural narrative created out of 'queer' -- queer sex, queer fantasy, and queer discourse -- which influences the way that people engage with their own closet and their own sexuality. This space of the closet, for many people I spoke with, was more apparent in their desire to hide their fan activity rather than their sexuality.

the theatre

Eve Sedgwick uses the concept of performatives -- speaking acts that then become actions by the very act of speaking -- to explain the process of 'coming out'. Insofar as bandom is fan narrative about celebrities, those celebrities themselves are part of the narrative, and they contribute to the performance; they put on a queer show and thus create queer narrative. Fan readers and writers, as well, find themselves performing their own identities in a queer fashion -- fantasizing and

reading about queer sex or queer relationships, and desiring queer sex. Through writing, fans perform their (often queer) identities.

the fourth wall

One of the things that I, and many of the people I interviewed, found most interesting about the bandom experience is the lack of boundary between people who write fanfiction, and the bands that the fanfiction is written about -- or the lack of boundary between audience and character (like Bakhtin's carnivale or round theatre, the audience can be seen from stage). Not only do the bands know that fanfiction is out there, but on many different occasions different musicians have taken the opportunity to engage with it. This direct, two-way online engagement has proven problematic as well as positive for fans. "If fanfiction is an empowering postmodern act that gives the fans agency ... RPS is its ultimate instantiation. RPS effectively moves the playing field from the manipulation of purely fictional characters into a real-life arena. As a result, ... it also erodes the boundaries between reality and fiction, thereby raising questions about constructions of reality, creations of fantasy space, and formations of identity" (Busse, 2005, p. 111). Busse is speaking of popslash, not bandom - and in bandom, these erosions prove to be a two-way street.

the meet-and-greet

Not only have the boundaries between band and fans broken down online, but in many cases they've broken down in person as well. The space created by the conversation and engagement

allowed between people in a face-to-face context provides another level of boundary crossing. Engaging with the characters in the stories you read and write, the myths you internalize, and having that level of access relatively easily, means that there can be a high level of discomfort. K. Busse, a prominent fan cultures academic and friend, noted in a private conversation that she felt she would not want to be in that situation, that it might break down the "fantastic" elements of the narrative. Those in bandom I talked to, and my own experiences, proved that the physical as well as cyber breakdown of engagement is a bridge that some people have difficulties with addressing -- and creates a space where the creation of alternate boundaries may be necessary.

the community

While many of the bandom spaces described above could be experienced individually as a single fan -- interacting with the music and the bands can experience a place of loss, a place of physical boundary breakdown, a space that creates meaning for their lives -- the reality is that bandom is a communal experience, and that fanfiction, fan activity, music, dancing and words all function to bring the group together. Fan activity, concerts, communication between fans, writing and reading fanfiction, and engagement with one another all serve a social and cultural function in creating the bandom community. The structure of the fandom community is informal, 'ruled' by convention and understandings (that differ dependent on which fan you talk to); to understand the basis of the bandom community is to talk to people one on one, and to understand why they engage with the cultural narratives that for the basis of the community. This space could be compared to Rotella's (2003) concept of soft neighbourhoods: neighbourhoods that are shaped and understood through emotional ties, personal connections and memories.

the amphitheatre

The Greek amphitheatre was a place of catharsis, a place where the polis as a community could come to experience loss as a group (Powell, 2001). As in any space of emotional connection and investment, there is always a chance -- a strong likelihood -- of experiencing loss. This space of loss for bandom was demonstrated to me most recently through the breakup of bands. Basing stories off real people means that those real people can make choices that then influence us -- like to leave the band their fans have become emotionally invested in -- and thus create loss for those invested in the cultural narrative. This loss has personal as well as communal dimensions; I have witnessed many people publicly and privately wondering whether their emotional engagement with this fandom (and by extension this space) will continue. On a more fundamental level, this loss of cultural meaning impacts how people engage with one another and with the community at large.

the road

While bandom exists more online than off, there is also importance attached to the physical meeting places. Due to bandom being based on bands who, by definition, go on tour -- and engagement through the internet being with fans across the country and globe -- there is also significant focus on travel. This space can be understood most easily as the constant motion of being on tour -- either as a band, or as a fan following a concert tour around, or as a member of the internet community who travels to other cities and other places to meet those you've only

talked to online. My research took me to eight cities, meaning I spent countless hours in the airport, in the air, in the car, and in motion. The particular space created by that motion is an important experience that I found crucial to defining my engagement with the bandom community, and many of my interviewees echoed the importance of traveling to shows, or to see other fans.

Theoretical Framework

"What is queer space?" This is the question I had hoped to address through my studies as well as through this project. Attempting to understand the nuances of queer theory and how it relates to our understanding of planning in a broad context necessitates a re-evaluation of our understanding of our own physical world. Connecting imaginative spaces (*i.e.*: performed spaces, narrative spaces, and culminating in online space or 'cyberspace') with queer theory allows for a broader definition of planning in that it allows for a broader understanding of how spaces are experienced, and includes spaces not typically associated with planning -- *i.e.* online spaces and the layered or augmented spaces that people experience through their fandom lives. It also allows for a deeper understanding of community, and this MRP explores how communities can be created and maintained by fan communities that engage in and with queer narratives.

Because of these varied elements all coming together to frame bandom, three main theoretical frameworks were envisioned within which this project was originally defined: spatial practice (represented by Lefebvre and de Certeau), queer theory (represented by a number of theorists including Sedgwick, Butler, and Rubin), and theories of narrative or semiotics. Once I began my primary research, however, theories of narrative quickly gave way to the more specific area of

fan research or 'fandom theory', as both my interviewees' and my own experiences were better explained through a fan lens rather than a narrative lens, analyzing my and others' responses as part of fan culture and cultural studies. Fandom theory is represented by academics such as Matt Hills, Henry Jenkins, Kristina Busse, and others who take varied approaches to the study of fan experience and fan cultures.

Space -- performed, perceived, conceived as Lefebvre would define it, or simply experienced as most people would understand it -- is performed in the same way modern gender and queer theory (primarily through the authorship beginning with Foucault and Sedgwick) describe sexuality as being performed, and together these two concepts of identity (sexuality and community) form our experiences. Spatial theorists such as de Certeau discuss concepts of narrative and how narrative and language create the identity of our physical 'locations' (de Certeau, 1984). Thus, the unpacking and deconstruction of gender and sexuality mirror the spatial and design concepts of 'space', and the different binaries and discourses on the creation of queer and gender attached to queer studies (Sedgwick, 2008) can be useful tools in examining space as it relates to identity.

Queer theory is at the heart of bandom in that bandom is performed in a queer context, in many cases by those who self-identify as queer, and about those celebrities who also perform a queer identity while not necessarily claiming queer behaviour. Queer theorists like Foucault and Sedgwick redefine our understanding of sexuality and identity and are the basis for a definition of 'queer'. Queer theorists' breakdown of the binaries inherent in previous understandings of human sexuality (Foucault, 1990; Sedgwick, 2008) is a key component in this project's

understanding of sexualities -- and is the lens through which most if not all of my participants viewed their own (and others') sexualities as well. For this reason a post-structural view of sexuality, and of wider experiences, shaped this project and its underlying themes. Human sexuality is assumed to be a spectrum of understandings and experiences, contextual to each individual and culture, a performed identity and series of practices.

These two theoretical frameworks come from a post-modern and post-structural perspective, meaning that the concept of community addressed is one of disparate elements and voices. Because of this queer post-structural lens, I have been careful to speak in specifics and not generalities, and my interviews reflect this. Though many of my interviewees had opinions on similar topics and most even shared very similar world-views, it was very uncommon to hear them give the same answers or even share similar emotions or experiences.

As de Certeau succinctly put it, "there is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers" (1984). If planning space is a performed, created work, and if sexual identity is a performed, created work, then the two are differing aspects of our individual and group cultural identity. Geographers like Brown (2000) and Bell (Bell & Valentine, 1995) explore and rationalize a theoretical framework for queer space through discussions of narrative and spatiality. Brown's exploration of how Sedgwick's metaphorical 'closet' (2000) has a real, physical impact on a range of scopes and scales -- from the national census (there is no way to collect demographic data on gay marriages, never mind co-habitating gay couples or self-identified single queer people) to the urban landscape (the closeting of areas of the city known

for sex-work, for example). These geographers link sexuality to spatial practice and planning

practice; however, one area most have not explored is the 'imagined' space of the internet.

There has also been discussion of spatial stories and how story-telling links directly to planning.

One strong example is Mike Davis' explanation of story-telling (through, among other mediums,

Hollywood portrayals of Los Angeles) impacting planning practice and shaping the built

environment of L.A. (Davis, 2006). That narrative shapes and defines planning (Barbara

Eckstein, even Leonie Sandercock), and that queer theory shapes space (geographers as

mentioned above), are two connections. That narrative and queer identity both shape and create

cyberspace and space online has also been discussed by previous scholars. Many recent theorists

of cyberspace/digital theory (Jahshan, Bell, others) have used de Certeau and others to

deconstruct understandings of spatiality and identity, and most importantly, our understanding of

the boundaries between digital and physical space. Spatiality hinging on narrative practice and

linguistic discourse is a common theme for cyberspace theory and digital theory. However,

while internet theory, and communications theory in general, has focused more on the ubiquitous

nature of this new digital space (we are the first generation to be 'born digital'; and it is

fundamentally altering our lives and our relationships, as Shirkey (2008) discusses) it has not

focused much on how these (cyber)spatial understandings can and are interacting with the

(increasing?) fluidity of our personal natures, nor how this fluidity is affecting how we interrelate

and engage with our environment.

It is within these three theoretical frameworks that bandom finds itself: a queer space of both

digital understandings and physical location. The idea of the internet as a multiple layer, a space

in and of itself as well as a medium of communication for these types of identity and community, is not new -- Marshall McLuhan said "the medium is the message" in 1964. However, more and more rapidly, the medium of the internet becomes the message by which we identify ourselves and interact with others. That kind of communications change that Shirkey describes -- the power of crowds *through* the technology of imagined space to have a different identity through a different communications means -- thus far has not been linked to a new understanding of community building 'offline'.

The way this community is becoming part of our society as a whole is only beginning to be recognized: demonstrated by a book like *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (Gasser & Palfrey, 2008). We are currently the first generation to grow up with a medium like the internet (which changed our communication methods, and thus our ability to create connections and build communities (Shirky, 2008)), and, arguably, that is fundamentally changing the way we live and experience our own identities, and thus the way we experience our cities and communities.

Cyberspace is a medium in which people can become and experience themselves with a completely fluid identity, as well as experience the space and community they interact with as having a completely fluid -- a more perfectly queer -- identity. We are moving into imagined spaces, and using the language that creates imagined spaces. New methods of understanding identity and relationships will only become more important the more ubiquitous these communications methods become, and how fans understand fandom space -- as queer space and

as augmented space -- may have an impact on how they then interact with space, their lives and their physical, urban, and regional world.

If we are (I am) the first generation to "grow up digital", it's inherently changed my concept of the world and the type of community I want to build – as well as the type of community I *can* build and the way I then go about building it. The lack of study regarding how that kind of personal and collective identity is shaping our space is due simply to the newness of the topic. (Shirky's book only came out in 2008.) One insight highlighted by this project is that for this particular fandom, understanding of the fandom as an environment is strongly rooted in multiple layers of experience. Rather than having discrete boundaries of 'physical space' and 'online space', we interact and move in and out of both, in time and place.

The changing way that we as a fandom experience our environments necessitates a certain understanding, as well, that there is no final answer to my questions. As post-structural theories break binaries and seek to deconstruct generalities, I seek to pose questions, to imply connections, but also to leave the space of this project open to the interpretation of the reader so that -- like the fandom I wrote about -- this project can continually change through its audience. As Caputo says at the end of *Radical Hermeneutics:*

> *The book is an illusion. It pretends to have a definite beginning and a distinct*
>
> *conclusion and to show the way from the one to the other. It claims to be able to*
>
> *steer its way through the flux, which is why Heidegger preferred to speak of*
>
> *detours, dead ends, and forest trails. This book has aimed at de-limiting such*

pretentions. And so it can claim here only to end, not to conclude. We do not aim

at a conclusions but an opening. We do not seek a closure but an opening up.

(1987, p. 293-4).

This MRP has no real end, just as RPS has no end, a *lifie* -- what Gabler called the phenomenon of a celebrity living their life like a movie, as a narrative -- has no end, just as each space explored here has no true beginning or end, but rather an experienced boundary for each person within it. I have no explicit conclusions, but rather a conversation to show you, a story to tell, and I hope that through the reading you will find yourself seeing the detours, roads, and openings within.

All Roads Lead To You: Auto-ethnography and fan-oriented methodology

This is not going to be easy. I have known Cobra Starship frontman Gabe Saporta

for a long time, we e-mail frequently, and I genuinely think he is a good guy.

When I first started dating my wife, she lived in an apartment below bassist Alex

Suarez (and for a minute, I actually considered moving in with him and his

roommate). Keytarist Victoria Asher and I have shared several awkward silences

in green rooms across the northeast ... I am thanked in the liner notes for their

Viva la Cobra! album, right in between "Lisa Lauricella" and "Johnny Hockim."

>*It is entirely possible that I am too close to Cobra Starship ... which means that*
>
>*remaining objective about them or their musical output borders on impossible.*
>
>*So, like I said, this is not going to be easy.*
>
>*(Montgomery, 2009)*

The original proposal submitted for this project detailed my methodology and research questions
as follows:

>*What can be considered queer space? How can queer space be represented,*
>
>*articulated, and expressed, through space? What are some models and examples*
>
>*of space that embody (geographically, emotionally, theoretically and literally) the*
>
>*notion of queer identity? What can be considered queer space to my participants?*
>
>*How does the connection of queer online form an alternative or different kind of*
>
>*map for people's lives and for this queer community? Can examining these spaces*
>
>*identify insights on how to map these spaces that are created from narrative?*

This is paraphrasing; however, the original intent was to interview members of the bandom
community in order to understand how they experienced this space of bandom, and what -- if any
-- connections those spaces might have had to their wider experience of their sexuality and their
lives. I didn't want to assume too much before I started asking questions, but one thing I did
know was that since the fanfiction (as produced by the parts of bandom I and my participants
were familiar with) was mainly slash, it dealt with queer themes -- at the very least queer
behaviours -- and so there would be an intersection to explore between queer theory and personal

experiences that create space. Beyond that, I wanted to try to remain open to what people told me about their own personal experiences, trying as much as I could to quash my own pre-conceived ideas about who bandom fans and bandom / slash writers were.

Early scholarship about slash attempting to characterize slash fans, often assumed that fandoms consist of similar populations of women, writing for the same emotional/mental needs/wants and in the same manner. Many previous articles on slash would research one particular fandom (Blake's 7, for example, or X-Files), and then attempt to draw conclusions about the wider intentions and (often subconscious) desires of the community at large. While, as an active community member, I'd agree that many fandoms share characteristics and even populations (the same people often migrate from one fandom to another), I would hesitate to agree that each fandom can be studied and any conclusion be automatically applicable to any other. Much like Healey's reaction to communicative planning (Healy, 1992), which at its heart suggested that the translation of systems of meaning and thus the adoption of consensus is impossible in terms of community-building, it is difficult to translate intentions and desires from one fan to another, much less one fandom (which has its own trends, tropes, in-jokes, boundaries, barriers and understandings) to another. To do so inadequately represents the complexity and diversity of each and every individual fan experience, relationship, and community.

Rather than attempt a study of the community to find generalities applicable to the fandom (or any fandom) at large, I attempted to come up with a methodology to study individuals within the bandom community, not the population as a whole. For that reason, I want to speak only about a part of (a small segment) of the "bandom" community, rather than attempting to characterize

other fandoms or other fans. My intent when I began to look at bandom was to take that representative sample as being a cross-section of potential opinions to draw conclusions from. As I continued, however, my approach became as I described above, and thus my own responses, conclusions, and emotions -- my own spaces and my own engagement with my participants and the community -- do not necessarily reflect bandom as a whole, or fandom as a whole, or slash fans as a whole, or Fall Out Boy fans as a whole -- either their experience of sexuality or their experience of space. I didn't fully understand the implications of the limits of my bandom experience, however, until I began to try and assert myself into the community itself. Without that first-hand experience I would have never perceived those barriers and overlapping spaces, nor their limits.

While I was always planning to ask open-ended questions and hoped to get unexpected answers, I wasn't fully prepared for the complete divergence from my original research model I had to take. My questions, methodology, and own understandings veered radically from where I started.

To begin, my original proposal detailed asking people about the differences in their experience of space online as opposed to off. This was designed because I hoped to compare physical spaces -- places we could see, touch, feel, with virtual spaces -- spaces we envisioned, imagined, fantasized into being. This comparison, I had hoped, would give me insights into differences in my participants' experiences of space offline vs. on, and I hoped that that would lead to a greater understanding of how they constructed queer spaces within their lives, and how those spaces interacted with their cities. Almost immediately this proved to be a next-to-useless comparison, because whatever other barriers my interviewees felt, they didn't differentiate between the

envisioned space of fandom and the physical. The two overlapped (in part) because of the nature

of a music fandom as discussed above -- even though a significant portion of our experiences in

time and space were through a screen, the fandom was intertwined with seeing concerts, visiting

other fans. And then when I went to try and create my own experiences, understand my own

fandom spaces, I made them physical by the travel I did, the people I saw. Had I thought more

like a fan and less like a student, I probably would have seen this difficulty. My spaces have no

discrete boundaries, I'm not a fan one day and a student the next, and neither were my

participants.

In her thesis introduction (which discusses the slash fandom), S. Youssef tries to articulate the

difficulty in an ethnographic approach to researching fandom experience:

> *The difference between academia and fandom lies not only in the perceived*
>
> *importance of both fields, but more so in the fact that this difference, perceived as*
>
> *it may be, is a lived experience (as often every imagined difference or similarity*
>
> *is). A comparative text would invariably aim to justify fandom to academia, or*
>
> *vice versa. One might even argue that this text, for the simple fact that it is*
>
> *academic, has such an agenda; and psychologically speaking, this may be one of*
>
> *the reasons or purposes for having written it. The point, however, is that many*
>
> *academics, who have not been exposed to fan-culture nor acquired that mode of*
>
> *identity, would never call themselves a "fan" of their own hero-theoretician.*
>
> *However, no fan of a book or TV show would refrain from identifying as "fan"*
>
> *(though many are academic, and in the academic part of their lives this*

> *identification as "fan" does have an impact). And that is what matters.*
>
> *Comparable or not, it is these identification issues that have moved and interested*
>
> *me the most; if I attempt to refrain from justifying one part of the universe (my*
>
> *universe) to another ... it is mostly because my attention has not been caught in*
>
> *an agenda to justify as much as it has been caught up in an attempt to translate*
>
> *identity.*
>
> *(Youssef, 2004, p. 9-10)*

Youssef articulates here what would become one of my primary methodological difficulties. This trouble with identity translation through a lived experience is like trying to translate your research selves (as Reinharz, 1997, details) before one does the research -- it was simply something I could not do. Reinharz emphasizes the need to bring a 'variety of selves' into the field in order to fully understand the impact of one's own positionality on your research study. Matt Hills echoes that sentiment in the Introduction to *Fan Cultures* (2002) as he details the difference between thinking as an academic scholar -- with a certain set of assumptions about what kinds of frameworks to be working in (a rational, analytical thought process, for one) -- and thinking like a fan (prioritizing the emotional, the passion, of loving one's research matter). One of the most important things he highlights is the tensions between those two, something I faced first-hand in trying to resolve my place as academic (someone whose purpose was to analyze what I saw and felt, as well as what the fandom saw and felt), and as a fan (who saw and felt first hand -- and who prioritized that feeling above and beyond rational thinking). For this reason, I have chosen to prioritize both frameworks, attempting to use them where most appropriate. If I have deferred to passion more than rationality, it is a purposeful exercise in expressing my

personal position to my research matter. The conscious decision to prioritize my fan subjectivity

is also in line with Hills' conceptual framework: that fandom "deserves to be represented more on

its own terms" (p. 9). As Matt Hills points out: there are a lot of aca-fans, those academics who

also pursue fan activities, and a majority of fandom research is written from that rational

academic subjectivity. As I write and prioritize the fan in me, I hope to illustrate the influence

and legitimacy of fan-scholarship, and fan-community. By prioritizing the fan, I also hoped to

find a methodology that was more authentic to fan experience -- one that worked within the

worldview of the fan community, rather than one that worked with an academic subjectivity.

During interviews, as well, I instinctively pursued this fan-oriented approach. As Rosenblatt

describes in his approach to interviewing:

> *I know I could do interviews simply to learn what people say -- to do research on*
>
> *storytelling -- but I still think what I hear in interviews gives me more than mere*
>
> *stories.*
>
> *When, for example, bereaved parents tell me about their grieving and their closest*
>
> *relationships after their child's death, I believe I am learning something that is*
>
> *real and true for them. I am not simply learning their stories. ... With Robert*
>
> *Weiss (1994:148-49) and others who have written about qualitative research, I do*
>
> *not consider the truths I learn to be unambiguous, invariant, the whole truth and*
>
> *nothing but the truth. But I still feel I am doing the right thing in making*
>
> *something out of what I hear from interviewees.*
>
> *(Rosenblatt, 2002, p. 894-895).*

When I conducted interviews, I, like Rosenblatt, was aware of the fictional aspect of the interview setup (something Shana from Out Magazine echoes in her description of her engagement with Pete Wentz). As my participants were writers, their storytelling had intrinsic value and the interview process became the process of writing between myself and my participant; as Rosenblatt posits, "fiction may be a legitimate outcome of qualitative interviewing research" (2002, p. 907). My positionality as a writer of fiction became an important part of my methodology, and reflected my positionality as a fan.

Another of the more obvious questions that was highlighted during my research process was that of boundaries: how fans, especially in bandom, required boundaries to be set in a variety of places and in a variety of ways in order to feel safe and/or comfortable, both in the way that they engaged with the fanfiction as well as the way that they engaged (online and off) with the band members and with each other. Throughout the process, questions of how they were set, viewed, and broken continued to be highlighted in different ways and people -- and in all settings: the industry, the fanfiction tropes themselves, and also my ever-growing pushing and shoving of myself through travel and emotionally testing the waters. The sudden change in boundaries as a fanfiction reader/writer -- in short, the relatively closeted fanfiction community coming up against an internet-savvy, and willing, participant, in Pete Wentz -- significantly changed fan experience for a number of community members. I did not fully understand how important the question of setting and breaking boundaries would be when I started, however.

When I began envisioning the kinds of research I might do to try and understand bandom -- its boundaries, my own boundaries, the spaces it occupies and the way it engaged with people's lives -- the intent was to do an ethnographic study of the writers in the online slash community, and their engagement with (what appear to be) queer texts and queer online spaces. The ethnographic research framework attempts a certain distance, and the difficulties in keeping this distance became apparent as I actually tried to stay in the role of ethnographer. The more I *felt*, in terms of emotional investment in the fandom, the bands, and the fan community, the farther I went, the less I could keep that objectivity. I could not step back from my material and stay objective, because I had an emotional stake in it. Like Montgomery, I could not ask questions and analyze the fandom without being invested in how it sounded and how it came across. I cannot analyze slash as a cultural narrative without acknowledging my own subjectivity as a part of that narrative. James Montgomery can't review Cobra Starship because he knows Cobra Starship, he likes Cobra Starship. I can't objectively review fandom because I like bandom, I know bandom, and most importantly, I'm a part of bandom.

My objectivity about bandom flew out the window early on in my research -- I couldn't sit back and pretend I didn't have a stake in these people as individuals, as well as the fanfiction community as a whole. I don't necessarily write bandom fanfiction, but I've been a member of the wider fanfiction community for so many years that I can't pretend not to have that cultural connection to it.

The next thing I realized I had to understand was that my objectivity about the bands and musicians never existed either. Like Montgomery, I felt too close to the music and the bands to

take a rational approach to understanding their action and words, especially in terms of queer

politics or celebrity.   I am emotionally invested in the bands' well being and public, mythic

personas, and thus anything I wrote about them would reflect that. I was acutely aware of that

influence throughout my research process, that anything I wrote would reflect the bandom

community and directly create narrative about it -- and so I was acutely aware of a responsibility

I felt about contributing to the public narrative (both about the bands and about bandom as a

community).

I wrote at one point:

> *Am I too close to my material? Is there any way to do this project without*
>
> *devolving into describing my fandom space exclusively? Can I say anything*
>
> *beyond "this is my space and here are the people in it"?   I question the*
>
> *advisability of doing any of this. Most of my assumptions are, in fact, invalid, and*
>
> *now I'm foundering somewhere between my life as a fan and my anxiety as a*
>
> *student. I chose this project because I'm a fan; can I, in any way, divorce the two?*
>
> *How to go forward with this and keep integrity in both spheres?*

Clearly the one apparent thing is: I never had any objectivity, I was always invested and

engaged. I can't divorce being a fan from being an academic, because they inform each other

equally. Something that came out of interviewing Shana[6] was an increased comfort level in the

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[6] Shana was an editor for *Out* magazine, who has interviewed Pete Wentz and Gabe Saporta - two of the bandom musicians who are most vocal about queer issues and gay rights. She was kind enough to speak to me about queer politics, celebrity and

lack of objectivity I truly had in regards to the writing of this project; as a journalist, having her interviewees know that she is a fan of their music or other work, I'm relieved to admit that I'm a fan, I'm speaking from the place as a fan, and thus have a specific space and agency within the community because of it.

What became of this realization was the understanding that any narrative I could tell would be inter-subjective; it would be a meta-text on the culture, myth, celebrity, fandom, politics, narrative, and space as I see/saw/experience(d)/engaged with others and my participants it.

This became more important as I carried out other research activities -- not, as I'd originally envisioned, to describe bandom space and its intersections with queer space, but to try and describe my own space, and its intersections with others'. I started out trying to objectively describe the experience of others, and as that became impossible, began to explore my own boundaries of space and fandom. Originally I wanted to travel to my interviewees' cities to understand the differences in their spaces and their lives between the virtual and physical. As I traveled and talked to people, however, I realized that the comparison of online and offline was not a meaningful way to understand how people oriented and created their bandom space and their bandom community. This was because those in the community -- myself included -- did not feel differences between the two spaces, but rather moved in and out of them. So I traveled not to compare and contrast two different spaces, but instead I traveled to feel that movement and my own reactions to it, and most importantly, I traveled to create my own space that moved

narrative in terms of how she related to interviewing those celebrities who are most aware of the 'narrative' surrounding them -- whether it be fanfiction or just their public persona.

in and out of all the realms that bandom lives in. Instead of traveling in order to meet my participants and get their own thoughts on film, I traveled to experience my own reactions to different situations: concerts, meet and greets, meeting other fans. I tried to ask questions that would allow me to accurately and sensitively describe my participants' emotions and spaces, while at every step of the way be aware of my own and where the intersections of our lives met -- because those intersections are what defines my bandom and thus my community.

Adding to these other difficulties was my original attempt to accurately document the fandom through an anthropological lens, as a historian rather than a participant. Possibly the most difficult aspect of this research is that history is just that: the past. Fandom, celebrity, and especially online space is constantly in a state of change, not only in the future but in the past as well. Things that were available online one day aren't available the next. Things that musicians were reported to have said are no longer available except in someone's fuzzy memories. Memories change constantly, and so does any narrative produced/created online, so that the internet only has a present, not a past. I tried to write something situated from a place of looking backwards, when every single day new pieces of that meta-text were produced, and older ones changed.

In a lot of ways, the collective memory of fandom is non-existent in that, as a group, the collective memory (the monuments and narratives) is based off textual creations that are subject to change. While fandom is a space bounded and produced in no small measure by texts (fanfic, Twitters from writers and musicians, journal posts and journal comments, etc.), those texts are not static. It is uniquely easy to create, edit, and erase pieces of that memory and thus the

internet can function as an oral culture, which makes the attempt to accurately document its history difficult. A new methodology had to be developed in order to try and keep up (this is discussed more later), but I had some advantage in that as a past and future member of this oral culture -- I can rely on my own memories to understand and relate to the community history.

So my methodology changed, the road to my end product changed, and I changed with it. Instead of writing as an ethnographic anthropologist, analyzing and recording a historical past, I started to research, write, and participate as a member of bandom -- in the same way I would if I weren't just a researcher, but instead as a subjective, present member of a culture, a community that means something important to me. I took my notes, my assumptions, and understandings, and rewrote them in the same way I'd take celebrity photos, interviews, and commentary of Pete Wentz -- produced both by himself, the media, but also by other fans -- and wrote, and rewrote, my memories, narrative, and thus my bandom space into existence.

Instead of writing as a student, I started to write as a writer. I stopped looking to answer questions definitively, and instead approached the questions as if I were producing fanfic -- using the medium by which the community created their stories, exposing emotions, trying to show the story rather than tell it, putting the documentary lens on myself and my fiction. This meant choosing to leave answers ambiguous with the intention of demonstrating how readers and audience can rewrite space by their participation.

In point of fact, one's audience can rewrite anything.

Post-script

In little over a week I will be handing in this project, and now I feel it may be useful to make some comments on what I found, what I learned, and possibly the road ahead for research of this type and scope. I had a conversation this week with K. Busse, and she pointed out that this project goes far beyond the scope of a typical research paper; the project design by its very nature became part of the difficulty I had to work around. The questions I ended up asking by telling these stories were too broad to answer, if they can be adequately answered at all, but it is perhaps the first time the question of how celebrity, fanfiction/fandom, queer identities and space have ever been addressed.

"What is queer space?" This was the heart of my research question. I originally attempted to research within a community, to find an answer, a map and a guide, through research into fandom culture. What I found, instead, was that the dearth of knowledge surrounding the subject of post-modern boundary breakdowns between people and celebrity online meant that there was no way to map out this space -- I found a community that was only beginning to instinctively understand its boundaries (or lack thereof). I could instinctively feel its influence on myself, my identity, my participants. I could sense the ambiguities surrounding those boundary breakdowns. I could feel and describe moments in time and places where queer fandom space occurred and made its mark. But the tools to research the community and draw an academic map of it were not existent. This corner of the internet does not function as a city block, and while the metaphor of a neighbourhood is sufficient to describe people's attachments to an ephemeral sense of community and belonging, it doesn't adequately describe the multiplicity of layers and multiplicity of different streets, names, places, emotions, conversations, pauses, and stories that

belong to it. There is no doubt that bandom is a queer space as well, with all the political ambiguities inherent in that. But just as describing Church Street in Toronto as queer space ignores other implications of business, class, culture, and experience, calling bandom just a queer space ignores other fundamental aspects: travel, the fourth wall, a sense of meaning that is only partially based on sexuality.

De Certeau describes how an academic of myth analyzed mythic stories by *telling* them, by narrating them. I have tried to explain the shape of this world through the planning tool most able to accurately map it: fiction. No other tool appears to show the boundary crossings: myself and my participants as friends; myself and other fans, sharing the same space and writing each other's stories; my participants and the music; the fandom and the celebrities, traveling the same roads and visiting the same websites. The tools to map how my Twitter about Pete Wentz connects me to him, S in Las Vegas, the CD on my stereo, my memories of seeing him in concert, and my sexual identity, have not yet been addressed. Those boundaries are porous, and I fall back on planning metaphors to try and express what is inherently a new path of travel and a new spatial story. We don't walk for two hours, then go west for an hour, to approach this queer space. We don't look on an aerial view of the city of Chicago and point to the path through downtown to get there. We write it, we walk it, we talk it, we fantasize it, we drive it, and more. So that's what I did.

> *"The future is there," Cayce hears herself say, "looking back at us. Trying to make sense of the fiction we will have become." (Gibson, 2002, p. 157)*

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY/ACRONYMS

This is a glossary only to assist readers in understanding the stories as written in the project. As such, it contains only the most basic of information on topics that are often more complex or theorized more fully elsewhere. It is not in alphabetical order, as certain terms should be grouped together (like fanfiction and slash). Fanlore.org has much more detailed and fuller descriptions of these terms and more.

Fandom Terminology

- Fandom – word used to describe a community surrounding a particular fan activity (i.e. the Harry Potter fandom or the Fall Out Boy fandom); may be used to describe only the community engaged with fanfiction in particular, or the wider audience or fanbase.

- Fanfiction / fanfic [used interchangeably]: One type of fan-created work - stories written (typically online) about media (television, books, movies, video games) or celebrity (musicians or actors).

- Slash - fanfiction or fan works of a queer nature; simply put, fanfiction where gay relationships or gay themes come into play.

- Canon - in a fanfiction sense, the 'real' story of something compared to fanfiction (what happens in the television show, rather than what's inferred or made up by fanfic writers; what celebrities have told us to be 'true' about their lives)

- Fanon – as compared to canon, facts or information that fans believe to be true without direct evidence to support it

- RPF/RPS – real people fanfic / real people slash (about celebrities, musicians, etc.)

- FPF/FPS – fictional people fanfic / fictional people slash (about characters from television, books, movies, video games, etc.)

- AU – alternate universe; used to describe a genre of fanfiction set outside the normal setting of the television show or celebrity life (sometimes historical, fantasy or science fiction in nature)

- Hurt/comfort – very basically, a popular genre of slash that revolves around the comfort of one of the pairings from some (emotional or physical) hurt

- Popslash – fandom comprised of the fanfiction/slash surrounding *NSYNC, the Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, etc.; was an incredibly popular fandom for slash writers in the early to mid 2000s.

- "the Cult of Timberlake" – a story written by D. Wilson and K. M. in 2002 that played with elements of new media and celebrity fandom to explore the fading boundaries between celebrities and fans, and celebrity and cult status; in many ways is the precursor to this project

- aca-fan – term used to describe an academic-fan; briefly, someone who researches fandom who is also a fan.

- Fen – another way to say 'fans' (the pluralized 'fan')

- Twitter – twitter.com is a social media website/network site allowing you to use your phone, the web, or other application to post maximum-140 character messages to people who follow your account.

- Delicious.com – a links collecting social media / networking website, many of the bandom fanfic writers and readers collect story links and descriptions on Delicious.

- Buzznet – Pete Wentz's celebrity blog site / picture posting site

- #hashtags – used on Twitter to demarcate a certain trend or certain topic, the # is used in front of whatever tag you hope to illustrate and the

- Livejournal.com – an online journal and networking site where users can post journal entries, follow others journals on their friendslist, and comment on posts made by users. This is a large part of the digital framework that makes up most fandoms at the current time.

- Dreamwidth.org – another journaling site like livejournal.com, only this one is owned by fans/fanfiction writers, and thus caters to that more specialized community

- RPG – role playing game

Bands in Bandom

Fall Out Boy – a pop-punk group from Chicago.

- Members:

  o Pete Wentz – bass guitar, also fronts the band; has played extensively with ambiguous sexuality in the media before his marriage; often paired up in slash with Patric Stump

  o Patrick Stump – lead singer, rhythm guitarist

  o Joe Trohman – lead guitar

  o Andy Hurley – drums

- Albums

  o Take This To Your Grave (TTTYG)

  o From Under the Cork Tree (FUCT)

  o Infinity on High

  o Folie a Deux

Panic! at the Disco – a pop/rock group from Las Vegas; got their start when Ryan Ross emailed Pete Wentz about their band and Pete came out to Las Vegas to sign them (they were still in high school).

- Members

  o Brendon Urie – lead singer, piano, guitar

  o Spencer Smith – drums

  o Ryan Ross (former) – guitar, currently in another band with Jon Walker

  o Jon Walker (former) – bass guitar, currently in another band with Ryan Ross

- Albums

  o A Fever That You Can't Sweat Out

  o Pretty. Odd.

My Chemical Romance – punk/emo band from New Jersey; they and Fall Out Boy have played several festivals together over the years (like Warped Tour).

- Members

  o Gerard Way

  o Mikey Way

  o Frank Iero

  o Ray Toro

  o Bob Bryer

Cobra Starship – dance band from New York City currently signed to Pete Wentz's label; Gabe Saporta the lead singer has known Pete Wentz for several years (through Gabe Saporta's previous punk band).

- Members

  o Gabe Saporta – lead singer; also plays extensively with sexuality, ambiguity, and queer politics in his media persona

  o Victoria Asher

  o Alex Suarez

  o Nate Navarro

  o Ryland Blackinton

Other Bands:

- The Academy Is… - band from Chicago currently signed to Pete Wentz's label

- Gym Class Heroes – currently signed to Pete Wentz's label

- Empires – a local band from Chicago, many of the members know Pete Wentz and other musicians from the Chicago scene (like Tom Conrad)

- The Cab

- PlainWhiteTs

- Leathermouth – Frank Iero from My Chemical Romance's side-project band

Other Fandom Acronyms:

- SGA - Stargate Atlantis

- SG-1 - Stargate the original series

- SPN - Supernatural

- LotR - Lord of the Rings

APPENDIX B: PROJECT EXCERPTS

The following pages contain excerpts taken from the Dreamwidth journal account where the entirety of this project was hosted. They were reformatted for print viewing, and represent only a small portion of the full narrative.

the past

> *It's weird -- bandslash is the first fandom where I feel like the canon is happening*
> *on the internet SIMULTANEOUSLY with the fandom, you know? I mean,*
> *remember in popslash when we would go over to each others' houses and watch*
> *footage? You'd never do that now. Because you're reading someone's Twitter,*
> *you're following their Tumblr, there's no reason to watch a dubbed tape of a 2*
> *minute appearance on Ellen.*
>
> *-- KM*

July 20

In a bookstore in Philadelphia with J, you start a discussion on *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Edelman, 2004). As she points out, it focuses too much on reproductive drive, which is a fairly narrow reading of time, how the politics of reproductive drives and futurism is set in opposition to the "queer" timeline. You read as living in the present, though Edelman's argument is more about politics and oppositions; *In a Queer Time and Place* (Halberstam, 2005) explores a similar reading of "time" as the present.

Halberstam describes queer time as emerging "most spectacularly, at the end of the twentieth century, from within those gay communities whose horizons of possibility have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic" (2005, p. 2). Her breakdown of queer time as oppositional to family time is interesting, but sitting in an academic bookstore -- and later sitting on a bench, afternoon sun shining through the trees -- you and J try to come up with another reading for the

immediacy that you both feel, but don't intrinsically ascribe to either futurism haunted by death, drugs, or rejection of family life. Halberstam is describing a post-modern queer way-of-life for (partly) political ends; you're sitting on a bench and feeling nothing about tomorrow, nothing about yesterday, sitting in today and that's it. You and J, you carve out a piece of queer time for yourselves, consciously or sub-consciously, and you experience that sensation of no future from somewhere else.

There's something to be said for this concept of queer time and its immediacy, whatever the causes underneath the sensation. You think it over, you flip the sensation over in your mind. True, a queer temporal sensation is linked to an alternative family model in your head. You do not want children. You're happiest wondering what's going to happen at most next week, not next year. For you, and for J, however, this may stem from more than simply an opposition to the reproductive drive, or a repositioning of oneself within the larger societal understandings of time. The communications technology that's becoming ubiquitous (mobile phones, texting, the internet, Twitter, email, etc.) has allowed near instantaneous access to a lot of things that previously were situated clearly in the past.

> *If you're looking for interesting articles or sites devoted to Kobe Bryant, you search Google. If you're looking for interesting comments from your extended social network about the three-pointer Kobe just made 30 seconds ago, you go to Twitter.*
>
> *(Johnson, 2009)*

You and J discuss Halberstam in Philadelphia; while you wonder what has begun to push this shift, your phone beeps with Twitters of the news in the fandom. You go back to her apartment, and you both check your email. You can, if you so choose, keep connected all-day every day to a community that never stays the same, is never stable. Perhaps it's just that, through the technology you've begun to use to communicate with the community, you've learned that nothing will stay the same.

You can feel that immediacy in the bandom culture. There is no way -- no way -- to write something about bandom, or even to write a story in bandom, that doesn't feel irrelevant within a shorter time period than any fanfic writer has ever been used to before. You follow Pete Wentz's Twitter, which means you get an instant update to whatever it is he's doing, thinking and feeling without having to read an interview or watch television. Instantaneous access to the bands is available, as well as to news about the community. In the time it's taken to write this project (roughly eight months), Panic! at the Disco lost two members. Blink 182 and Fall Out Boy announced a summer tour together -- which you then saw three times. Cobra Starship released a new album. You saw eight cities and almost a dozen concerts. Day, day, day, hour, day, on and on, you claim a queer concept of time -- defined not by the "death drive" as Edelman describes, but rather by new methods of communication. Bandom moves, all on the road, staring at miles of highway.

But to document research conducted within a constant "present", one still has to attempt to recreate the past. To get technical, you started your out-of-town research the first trip you made to Las Vegas, in June 2009. In point of fact, you might as well go back a year to the road trip

through B.C. with your roommate, Z, where Fall Out Boy's live album put you to sleep through your headphones every night, in unfamiliar apartments and in foreign beds. The trip was an act of creating a present in that you thought nothing of past or future the entire week, and Fall Out Boy provided the soundtrack. This was your introduction to bandom.

But you should also go back to April 2009, the month you seriously began contemplating how to conduct this research, when you decided on a whim to fly to Las Vegas to see Fall Out Boy's first show on the Believers Never Die tour. While it wasn't an official research trip -- you had no questions, no interviews, just a beginning -- it was when you began subconsciously planning where you'd end up going for this fandom.

Or let's go back to March, when you got your first tattoo; an act of inscribing your present on your wrist for the future, a tattoo design inspired partly by bandom. Let's go back to May, to the week you spent in Chicago as a tourist, pretending you weren't thinking about the music scene that Fall Out Boy came from. Let's include the Empires show you went to see that week, a show you wanted to see just as a music fan. Let's go back to 2002 when you spent a lot of time chasing popslash around the United States, the fandom in which you met five of your interviewees and got a lot of the contacts and credibility you ended up banking on to get the interviews you did. Even though many of these bandom participants didn't know you, hadn't talked to you in years, they remembered who you were, you could use that previous connection to gain a certain level of credibility and acceptance that would otherwise have been impossible.

Let's go back fourteen years when you were in Grade 9 and communicating via email and usenet with other people about fanfiction for the first time -- huddled in your bed in the middle of the night, connecting with other teenagers, typing furiously away.

All of these pasts cluster together into your present, sitting with J in Philadelphia at the university and watching splattered sunshine on the leaves. You don't feel a need to properly order these pasts into a coherent timeline, because they mean more as snapshots taken outside time; they bring meaning to you without a linear progression.

> the temple

> *He doesn't remember when it first started. That's impossible. People who say they remember things that clearly -- Ryan thinks they're liars, most of them, making up details that fit the creation myths they need to believe to give things order.*
>
> *-- gigantic [http://gigantic.livejournal.com/353004.html]*

You wrote a paper in an undergraduate seminar that described how the tropes, sentiments, social meanings, ritual actions, and cultural importance of RPS functions in a similar way to ancient mythology by the community producing it. Your basic argument was that popslash was like myth in that it: created and provided social cohesion for the culture that produced it; was attached to social 'rituals' (concerts, meeting fans, even the reading of fanfiction itself); was created about figures that were written, rewritten and thus 'owned' collectively rather than individual authors; was produced via means that are similar to oral tradition (via the

impermanent internet); and finally even mirrored many of the common tropes of ancient myth (gender-swap, turning into animals, etc.). You also argued that popslash served a 'sacred' function (that of providing meaning and importance) to the culture producing and engaging with it.

Imagine your surprise when you found a book called *Cybermapping and the Writing of Myth* which explores how the elements of cyberspace can be mapped and theorized. Jahshan's describes "an actual decentering of the subject" (Jahshan, 2007, p. 5) in cyberspace, made possible because of new technologies, and cyberspace being the place to "enact the deconstructed self" (Jahshan, 2007, p. 6). Jahshan's framework for the exploration of cyberspace, however, stays within the assumption that space online is a space purely of the mind; fantasy, post-modern, implied: that space online is the illusion from which we escape reality. He quotes William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, which is the science-fiction novel that coined the term 'cyberspace' and gave it fantasy. You prefer Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*, which at its heart shows how space online constantly moves and overlaps with other spaces, other times, and other identities.

The majority of Jahshan's interest lay in how, through mythic convention and the concept of narrative, cyberspace might be mapped. He brings up many of the ideas you struggled with in your undergraduate paper; how to describe the function of text as myth, as a socially relevant and socially productive mechanism. Most interesting to you is how textual space is functioning to create cyberspace -- "cyberspace is a narrative construction and re-creation of myth" (Jahshan, 2007, p. 122). Words create space, as de Certeau outlines, and Jahshan discusses how cyberspace

is created through narrated selves. What Jahshan does not do, however, is engage with fanfiction as another layer to narrative online. You wonder if he chose to use 'safer' subjects, more obvious and mainstream subjects, or if he believed hackers to be a better example of myth-creators than fan writers. In the act of writing, fan-writers become creators, of space and of myth about collective themes and mythic actors.

His ultimate question is "will there come a time when cyberspace will be the model which real life will have to imitate?" (Jahshan, 2007, p. 77). It mirrors Gabler's question of whether entertainment -- television, cinema -- and the understanding of what is entertainment, will take over real life. Jahshan uses Calvino's description of Eusapia from *Invisible Cities* to question the active impact narrated cyberspace has, or will have, on identities and spaces:

> *They say that every time they go below they find something has changed in the lower Eusapia; the dead make innovations in their city; not many, but surely the fruit of sober reflection, not passing whims. From one year to the next, they say, the Eusapia of the dead becomes unrecognizable. And the living, to keep up with them, also want to do everything that the hooded brothers tell them about the novelties of the dead. So the Eusapia of the living has taken to copying its underground copy.*
>
> *They say that this has not just now begun to happen: actually it was the dead who built the upper Eusapia, in the image of their city. They say that in the twin cities there is no longer any way of knowing who is alive and who is dead.*
>
> *(Calvino, 1974, p. 110)*

Jahshan's eloquent description of Calvino's mirror city -- the dead city underground actively changing the topography of the living city above-ground -- nonetheless ignores the connections you make on a day-to-day basis with your embodied, physical space. For you, cyberspace could be called a space of fantasy; however, that fantasy space overlaps, engages, changes and is changed by embodied space every day. Jahshan describes the importance of narrative in online space, and how it successfully functions as a mythology -- an oral tradition, creating society, bringing cultural meaning.

He does not fully engage with what your undergraduate third-year myth teacher described like this: the gods, rather than being separate from the physical world on Mount Olympus, were to be found in actions, in physical things. Thus Hera is present in the act of consummation of marriage, in the pains of childbirth. Hestia *is* the hearth fire, not the goddess of it.

Dionysus is not the god of wine, he is present in the making of wine, in the moment when you uncork a bottle, and then present in the moment when you swallow it.

A map for that moment cannot be complete with a model of online space as a city (as Jahshan or Fathy in *Telecity* (1991) suggest), nor as a fantasy realm. It needs more. Your cyberspace is not simply written, it is not just a chat window or a virtual space to play with identity; it's also how you play with identity makes you feel about your body, how the chat window faces you when your friend picks you up from the airport. It is present in the moment of your swallow; taken in, ingested, internalized, externalized, and important.

the body

> *But my body is not mine alone. None of those apartments and hotel rooms and houses were mine to keep. Someone else has moved furniture into the house my parents lived in when I was born. The house where my infant best friend lived is a gutted shell, sagging with age. There's a lawn jockey standing by the steps of my childhood home, in front of the porch where I sat to remove splinters from my feet. My body, too, is not inviolable; there have been touches and words that have moved the furniture around.*
>
> *- J*

August 11

You're on a plane home from New York, reading a book you bought in Philadelphia with J. In the past two weeks you've used and abused your body, stuffing it into too-small bus seats, forcing it into cramped chairs in airports and on planes, curling it up to sleep on other people's sofas and in other people's beds. You've pounded your physical body with travel and sleeplessness in search of bandom, pushed your muscles and trembling skin until you feel it with every step.

This isn't a metaphorical body, this isn't a projection of your consciousness into a textual realm of narrative. Yes, you are putting words and voice online as you're doing it, but you can feel your

bandom in your sore back and your tired eyes and your aching muscles, as you fly home. You

feel it even as your ears pop taking off from La Guardia, the pressure snapping behind your eyes

and in your sinuses as the plane ascends to take you back to Toronto.

The book you're reading is called *Windows and Mirrors* (Bolter & Gromala, 2003) and it's the

catalogue of a gallery's showing of digital art. One piece, as it's described, catches your attention

and imagination. It's the first piece in the book, called TEXT RAIN.

> *"TEXT RAIN consists of two large parallel screens; one features projected video,*
> *while the other serves as a backdrop. These two screens form a corridor about ten*
> *feet wide within the gallery, and no one passes through that corridor without*
> *glancing up at the screen, slowing, and then stopping, at least briefly, to take part*
> *in the show. As the viewer immediately discovers, she herself becomes the show,*
> *when her face and figure are caught by the video camera and projected on the*
> *screen in black and white. At the same time, a rain of coloured letters falls*
> *steadily from the top of the screen. Whenever the letters come in contact with the*
> *viewer's image, they cease to fall. Whenever the viewer moves, the letters that had*
> *collected resume their fall... The experience of this piece comes from the*
> *interaction of the viewers with the creators' design.* **TEXT RAIN is as much an**
> **expression of its viewers as of its creators: it is what the viewers make of it."**
> *(2003, p. 12)*

This charming description of interaction between screen and body, projection and physicality, reminds you sharply of how you continue to reject the notion of cyberspace and real space not being fundamentally intertwined. As Brown notes in *Closet Space* (2000), many of the theorists who engage with the idea of 'the closet' use it in a metaphorical sense, and ignore its spatial (physical) connotation. But you are fundamentally in your body, and that doesn't change if you're typing on a keyboard.

J talks of moving furniture within her body, how her identity is embodied within her words and space but also how her physicality is manifest in a way that can't be ignored. That physicality, more than one of your participants note it as a fundamental difference between bandom and other fandoms; that there are so many spaces and ways that the fandom is manifested in physical, not just metaphorical, ways; that physical activity (dare you say ritual? At least for yourself) is as evident as metaphorical, virtual identity.

While your participants are on screen -- their shadows on the wall, played with and fantasized through the computer -- they also are aware of their physical representations, feel their limbs, feel their excitement when reading sex, feel their frustrations when that fictionalized sex is not what they're looking for. Years ago, Rubin talked about putting sex back into sexuality, about how when theorizing constructions of people's bodies and sexual practices, you may neglect the fact that these things are played out in the bedroom, that theories of sexuality also connect to people having sex. This may be your manifestation of putting the body back into cyberspace and metaphorical, narrated self, acknowledging and exposing/exploring the ways the two connect.

TEXT RAIN demonstrates how a paradigm shift in understanding digital space allows it to overlap, rather than separate it, from what we experience in our physical world.

All summer you sit on planes, trains and automobiles, you feel people hug you, you feel the creak in your limbs as they protest the constant travel as you search for something. You hear the music. You also project yourself, what you feel and taste and see, through the internet, put it into words, put it into a story, for others to read and digest. You try and bridge that gap between the plane and your memory of the plane.

TEXT RAIN demonstrates augmented reality, a way in which physical bodies interact with cyberspace, in words. You feel like, maybe, you've been pushing your body to do the same.

the closet

> *Pete Wentz: But I think sexuality is a lot more ambiguous and more of a blurred line than people make it out to be. People are always like, "It's black or white," but I don't really feel like it is. I feel like people come across all parts of that spectrum. I think there are a lot of people who aren't necessarily gay or straight or even bi; it's just whatever moment or mood you're in, you find different things attractive or cool.*
>
> *-- (Voss, 2009)*

The impact, especially on young fans, is ultimately worth the circular, reductive

debates. "Being ambiguously flamboyant really does help," [Pete] says. "I've

had so many people come up to me and be like, 'I felt OK to come out of the closet

after you said this.' And I'm like..." He looks shocked, even overwhelmed. "When

someone says that to me -- it's not an event I've ever been through, so I don't

know what to compare it to. I don't think I even understand how important that is

to someone's life."

-- (Krochmal, 2009)

the body

Q: How has bandom impacted your life? Your body? Your sexuality maybe?

J: I think it's clarified some things for me about sexuality, that's for sure. I kind of can't turn my

brain off, so I think I would have thought through a lot of these issues with or without bandom.

But I think my attachment to very queerly straight-identified men has given me a very specific

avenue to think about these things. I don't have any bandom tattoos; bandom hasn't really made

me cry, although it has made me feel awful (usually the fandom part and not the people I'm

writing about, to be honest). But I do think that writing gay porn -- and the fandom has definitely

encouraged me to write male/male porn -- has helped me conceptualize myself during sex. I'm

very detached from my body as female, and I think I would be far more trans-identified (that is,

interested in surgical/hormonal intervention) if I didn't have so much background in imagining

male/male sexual perspectives while being in a female body. Long way of saying that I've gotten more flexible in terms of my imagined embodiment.

Q: Do you have anything else you want to say about imagined bodies and fandom? In general? Or about writing?

J: Hm. I have a really rich fantasy life, and a body which frequently doesn't jive with what I need or want. Those things are probably interconnected; **I think one of the things that I like so much about writing fanfiction is not only that it opens up queer spaces in traditional (very hetero-centric and normative) media/representation, but also that it gives me a chance to practice imagining different ways of being.** That's just a clarification of the fantasy life thing. Writing for me is a process of imagining myself in a different body (I'm very much interested in embodiment, and character embodiment, which is ridiculously obvious if you've ever read my fic) and, to an extent, a different way of life.

Q: Does that have an impact on the people you talk to in the community? or-- here's a new one -- have you co-written and had that be part of the engagement?

J: I don't really co-write that often, I think because of how much fantasy goes into it, and how personal that is. I think I've done it once? It was a little frightening, I think because it was also a very id-heavy story that I co-wrote, kind of hurt/comfort. I think, though, that viewing it as a ridiculous over the top story meant that I could let someone else into the process. Hm. That's thought provoking. I don't know that I have a polished answer for it. I think I'm kind of guarded

about co-writing, but not closed off to it. It's mostly that it doesn't appeal to me -- not that it turns me off, but it's not my instinct. My instinct is to create my own fantasy world. I can let someone into it, I think, without repercussions. I've had very participatory betas before, for example, and I don't mind RPGing. But it's not my first thought when it comes to writing, because I like to create the world and the motivations.

Q: You say writing / fandom is heavy on fantasy, for you-- do you think there's a large element (for you, in general) of "slash is my escape"? i.e. older academic portrayals of fan commentary?

J: Hm. I don't think the straight thing reflects bandom very well at all. I think there's a lot of very flexible fans in bandom. Queer, asexual, pansexual, poly, et cetera. So that aspect doesn't ring true for me. But the level of kink that's written in bandom -- far more than a lot of the fandoms I've been in -- is surprisingly, given how vanilla a lot of the fans I've talked to have been. I think there's a certain experimentation, rather than escapism. Pushing the boundaries of the body, and the boundaries of believability, is something that bandom as a fandom has allowed.

> the closet

K: The reason that I originally engaged with slash and later RPS was that it filled the void of gayness in pop culture. Ellen came out on her sitcom when I was in high school, right? And I watched that show, my parents and I watched that show, because it was just a sitcom we watched. And after that, I was kind of like, "...okay, WHERE ARE ALL THE OTHER GAY CHARACTERS?" But, I've sort of reached a point where I can't read slash anymore. Basically

every slash story that's FPS has to create a contrivance for why the characters have to hide their gayness, because that's the only way for it to logically work, right? But that gets depressing after a while! Like, five years go by and you realize that all you do is read stories about people who are closet cases and people who work in homophobic environments and people who are 30+ and are in total denial about their sexuality. And the part where it was just so awesome that they got to be gay in the story has worn off.

K manages to effectively narrate a type of closet that can be felt in some media fandoms by its very nature, simply because of the choice of source material. In her description, an effective FPS story (almost always) either ignores the reality of someone else's written story (that the character they're writing is not canonically queer), or attempts to reveal a closet of invisibility (the character might be gay, but the show does not explicitly reveal them as such -- which is the closet that one is put into in some larger societal contexts simply because of societal assumptions).

The closet that K feels from FPS's requirement to "explain" the lack of canonical queer identity within the source text is further felt within the "homoerotic" shows she mentions -- shows that play with queer, that hint at queer, but don't actually ascribe a queer personality to any of the characters in a way that K can relate to. This feels similar to some descriptions you've read of the feelings that people have had going to Toronto Queer Pride in recent years -- that Queer Pride is less for people who (by their own subjective definitions) act and feel queer, and more

for the city at-large to play queer. You do remember feeling more aware of the non-radical sensation at the 2008 Pride Parade; the feeling that people there had moved away from a political statement and into something else. As John Grundy (2004) describes in his explanation of the removal of queer politics from Toronto Pride, the attempt to make the Parade and other events more family-oriented, more acceptable to a wider audience, actually depoliticizes the once activist space of the parade itself.

K describes media slash as being, for her, a de-political space and narrative that does not adequately represent a queer politic the same way many describe Pride to lack the political space it once had.

Q: And bandslash?

K: Okay, so, RPS, RPS is different, because you are not being delivered RPS through an omnipotent narrator the way that you are when you watch a show or read a book or whatever. So there was more room. Eventually with me and popslash, it became the same old story, though, in the sense that it was depressing to think about these dudes being gay and afraid to come out because it would make them less famous.

> You think that it's true, that *NSYNC's members probably didn't come out because they were worried about other people's careers, that the image and celebrity narrative they were portraying at the time that popslash was popular was at odds with a coming-out story.

K: But! Then Lance Bass happened. I actually think that Lance coming out made the popularity of bandslash possible. Because, as much as everyone all says that they're just having fun, it's all fictional, blah blah blah, you gotta believe that secretly one of them is really gay. Or, at least, I would. Because, for me, RPS is all about trying to smell out the gay celebrities. And being just as irritated that they won't be gay as gay characters will be. But then Lance comes out, and it gives us renewed hope! The thing for me with bandslash is that I think it's creepy that there's so much more access. And I think that if one of them was actually GAY gay, not just "made out with dudes occasionally", we'd already know. There's no Lou Pearlman riding roughshod behind the scenes in bandslash. So there are a bunch of reasons why I never got into bandslash, but the two biggest ones are a) I can't read any more stories that take place on tour buses and b) I don't think there's a big coming out story at the end of the rainbow.

> K articulates a need for reality within the space she puts herself -- possibly a need for validation in the queer narratives she engages in through a confirmation of actual queer identity. She -- consciously or unconsciously -- articulated a need for authenticity in the pop culture reality she chooses to engage with.

Q: Can you think of anything in particular that's different about fandom / bandslash than the places you experience as queer space in your city?

K: I think that fandom spends 1000% more time thinking about reasons/justifications for being closeted that I would ever do in real life. I can't remember the last time I had a conversation in real life about someone I know maybe being closeted. So I feel like the internet is this place where, weirdly, it's advanced technology, but fandom operates on this idea of queerness that's, like, circa 1984. And ultimately, that just got too demoralizing for me, spending that much time thinking and talking and writing and reading and analyzing reasons why people aren't just gay in real life.

And another huge thing that turned me off to fandom as what I felt like was a quote-unquote safe queer space. I think that fandom creates a space where people feel comfortable expressing queerness in a way that they wouldn't in real life. And there is some benefit to that. But it sucks for people who are, like, gay in real life, too.

the theatre

Asked by reporters what rumors the members of Panic at the Disco have heard about themselves, they cite the frequent speculation they're all dating each other. "What's the problem if Ryan [Ross] and Brendon [Urie] were actually dating, you know?" the band's bassist, Jon Walker, told Out last year in reference to the

band's guitarist and singer, who on one tour acted out a love story on stage.

Drummer Spencer Smith jumped in to say, "Because they might be."

"They're more gay in a totally other way," Wentz says cryptically, with a proud

parent's smile.

(Krochmal, 2009)

June 20

Panic at the Disco have always cited large theatre shows, Las Vegas style, as a large part of their inspiration. One of their tours was even called "Nothing Rhymes with Circus". addictedkitten, in her [concert review](#) and tour analysis, called their theatrics a conscious queer performance. She made the very important distinction between the performance they give us and the reality of their desire and "inner" gender identity.

You'd argue that – irrespective of their actual self-identification or sexual behaviours / preferences – because of their performed identity as a collective unit (the band) and individually (in comments in interviews). Onstage, they claim a queer identity, and so – in that space (in our spaces, and for our purposes) they can be given a queer identity.

Is this enough to claim the show as a queer space? Maybe. But as addictedkitten's analysis of the tour describes, the girls in the audience were also cheering for this queer performance, an audience that is typically classified as "teenies" (not queer academics or bandom writers). The audience engagement in the performance transforms it from a stage to a dialogue.

Brendon Urie may not be queer anywhere else but on stage, in front of the camera, in that lens and that space where people who read a queer performance stare back at him. He may only perform a queer identity in the spaces in which his audience engages with it and projects/constructs that queer identity onto him. But it means that all those kids are cheering for the boys kissing and for that spectacle onstage.

In your discussion with Shana - the writer of the cover article on Pete Wentz for *Out* - she describes the difficulties she and the editor had trying to decide on the cover of the magazine. The quote that finally ran on the cover was, in Pete's own words, "Yeah, I am a fag".

> *SHANA: We went around and around and around, internally, about putting it on the cover with Pete, even though it was hands down the most striking thing he said to me that day. The editor in chief and I would alternate. Like one day he'd say, I don't think we should do it, and then I'd talk him back into it. And then I'd be like, I don't know, it's too much. People won't get it. (And they sort of didn't, or missed the point, which WAS the point, I guess).*

The two of you discuss the queer politics that goes into a public performance. You ask her a lot of questions about how she feels about their politics, how she feels they are trying to interact. You talk frankly about fanfic in these interviews, you don't closet or otherwise apologize for your involvement with the larger community.

She describes how doing interviews with people who were not comfortable with their sexuality "just FEELS awful". In comparison, her discussions of her interviews with all of bandom's musicians felt comfortable and not limiting.

the closet

Q: How do you think about sexuality?

J: I think of sexuality as a series of practices, which ostensibly constitute an identity in our society (that is, we tend to equate acts with identity, so if a man has had sex with another man, that makes him gay), but which for me and for my friends tends to be more fluid (that is, sometimes you get drunk and suck some dick). Sometimes the jagerbomb decides your sexuality. I'm not going to hate on that. I think that's why I got attracted to bandom, actually, and why I've written in this fandom more than any other. The characters we're addressing are often more flexible, even while they identify as straight. So Pete Wentz is married to a cisgendered woman[7], but he has a romantic friendship with his frontman. Bert McCracken is married to a cisgendered woman, but he had a giant romantic blowout with Gerard Way. **I like it when I can see a certain kind of sexual flexibility in the characters I write about, probably because sexual flexibility is the part of my identity that comes up the most often.** (What people tend to respect me for on an interpersonal level -- I'm the person people come to with things that are too embarrassing to tell others**.) I can tell stories about them that mimic my worldview, in order,**

---

[7] Someone who is not trans

I guess, to reassure myself that my worldview is (if not normal, then at least) not unheard of. I have a tendency to fall into romantic friendships, rather than sexual relationships -- this would be why everyone thinks one of my friends and I are fucking -- so I love that there are public figures that mimic that.

> J's description of what attracts her to bandom, the individual connection you feel with the canon image of Pete Wentz, as well as the individual connection you feel with other people's fictional portrayals of Pete Wentz, mirrors your own. It also stands in contrast to people like H, who feel like bandom speaks to a different sexuality than the one they experience.

Q: What else attracts you to bandom?

J: I think the community did, at first. It's what I like about fandom more generally, and bandom has a very active community. I actually quite like RPS fandoms because they allow more flexibility for me as a writer. When you're writing in a media fandom, you have to rely in some way on the canon. I like to sprawl and rewrite the boundaries. I was on LJ for a while before I got into bandom, and I think that led me to be less worried about the boundaries of bandom and the figureheads of bandom. Like-- canon, for me, often serves as a limitation on plot. I'm more interested in investigating characters, and the benefit of a "real person" fandom is that you can put characters in radically different situations more easily. It's an alternate-universe-inclined type of fandom. I started out in anime fandoms, and I would write these stories, and the only

feedback I would get would be that so-and-so couldn't have done that, because he didn't get his weapon until season two episode six, and this was obviously set in season one, episode two.

> J's enjoyment of the freedom from canon that bandom allows her is in contrast to her discomfort with the freedom of boundaries in terms of access. J seems to prioritize the fandom community; researching and engaging in a space of audience community, not as much in the space between audience and celebrity.

Q: How does that change how you relate to the actual bands?

J: My interaction with bandom people is actually pretty limited, in terms of the characters I write about. I don't like to actually interact with them, at least of my own initiation.

Q: How does that translate to behaviour? Can you give me an example?

J: I definitely see some people chat with the musicians when they're available -- the Used have Kyte, for example -- and @reply them on Twitter. For me, it's kind of a continuum of behaviors, and I try to stay on the very far left of it. This tends to mean that I won't go to meet&greets. For example. I'm overly cautious about it, I think. I know some of my friends will talk to the musicians, and it's not like I'd run away if a musician came up and talked to me, but I like to stay out of their way. Like, Pete Wentz is going to be a part of our fandom. I can acknowledge that. But that doesn't mean I want to go and talk to the dude. **I kind of like it when the musician is part of the fandom, or at least aware of it, because it means that they-- not**

that they approve, but that they're conscious of it, and that it's not sneaking around. But

generally I like to keep my imaginations of the characters separate from the people themselves,

and it feels dishonest to interact with them.

> You notice that J is careful in the way she describes her opinions on meets, that
> she uses "I" consistently and seems self-aware of how her words could reflect on
> the fandom as a whole.
>
>
> You find her acknowledgment, her vocalization, of feeling relieved that Pete
> Wentz knows about fanfiction, and that consciousness means a relief that the
> fandom, the fanfiction, isn't closeted. J expresses relief, not discomfort, at being
> out of the closet.
>
>
> She comes back to the dishonesty of interacting with Pete Wentz later.

J: However -- and this is the real thing with me -- I don't really disapprove of other people

interacting with them. I don't think this project pushes the "boundaries" too far. Ultimately the

beauty of bandom, especially for people who can interact with the musicians and write porn

about them, is that it points out... I don't know, it points out the delicacy and the complexity of

human interaction. Because the only real difference between these celebrities (and they are

oppressively minor celebrities, for the most part) and the average Joe or Jane is that they have

put themselves in the public eye to some degree. **What I think RPS points out is that we're all**

in the public eye to some degree, we're all vulnerable (or open) to how people perceive us.

In the nineteenth century, this started to be a problem -- there were so many people in the new urban metropolis that one couldn't **know** everyone anymore, leaving one open to confidence men and misperception -- and I think RPS is an elaboration of the fears and possibilities of that kind of overcrowding. Someone you don't know can think and write and believe things about you that you don't think are true. We're playing with that fear. When you write RPS, you're writing romance, you're writing porn, but you're also always playing with that fear of misperception, of someone taking your image and using it. So it's this kind of sexualized, romanticized fear. That's a lot of fun.

> J points out the city and the fears that it spawned in the 19th century. Rather than focus on the post-modern city, you focus on her word "fear". What you're intrigued with is the fear and fascination of being in the public eye.
>
> Gabler calls it starring in your own "lifie" - the movie that is your life, that awareness of life as entertainment rather than life as authentic experience. It's in contrast to J's comment that she's relieved fandom is 'out of the closet' to certain celebrities, because the misperception of the fandom as a whole is what you've heard many people are scared of.

the fourth wall

The lights go down at a little past eight, sinking the tent into darkness for the three seconds it takes for the audience to fall silent. Then the band launches into the familiar, loud brass and keyboards of the opening act and the stage is flooded in red, yellow, blue, and the performers swarm on.

Every night, the same spontaneity; every night, the same second where every person in the audience catches their breath. The lights are up, and for one second the people onstage stand very still and stare back.

-- softlyforgotten [http://softlyforgotten.livejournal.com/140369.html]

the fourth wall

asked by me on 2005-07-29 23:21:00

haha i just read a fan fic about you and frankie from mcr going out.

answered by peter on 2005-07-30 18:48:00

man, you wish that was fiction.

-- falloutboyrock.com via damnyouwentz

the carnival

Once upon a time, years and years ago, you started your first online journal. More than a diary, you unconsciously (or consciously) modeled it after the published Beat Poets' letters: emotional reflections that were always meant to be read by someone else. You never wrote names or specifics so if whoever was reading didn't have some idea of your life, they'd know what you were saying but none of the specifics. While you never made anything up you still had a definite awareness of audience, and so narrative style was always in the forefront of your mind as you composed entries. You wrote down your own thoughts and feelings like a journal, but you wrote them down in a way that was aware that someone else would read them.

At one point, you got an email from an online acquaintance who'd found your online journal. You knew him in that you'd emailed back and forth on a few stories, and he knew a few people that you knew - but that was it. When he emailed you, he basically asked you, "Is it weird? Writing about yourself for an audience like that? Putting all your emotional insides out in public?"

You tell this story because, in your interview process, you don't ask whether people write for themselves; you tend to assume that everyone who is involved with bandom -- from the writers to readers to musicians to Pete Wentz -- is writing things on the internet for show, even if it's in a journal or diary format. If you aren't, then you'd write on paper, or post privately, or choose a different avenue of distribution. You write online because you understand that people are going to be an audience. Part of our collective understanding of fandom is an implied theatre.

Bandom, however, isn't a theatre. It is, as Bakhtin describes, a carnival (1984). It has no orchestra pit, no seats, no safe and dark balcony where the performers can't see you. Everyone is in the round, all on show. No one is behind the curtain or safe behind the stage lights, because there are no stage lights to blind the actors to the audience. The spectacle is not just Pete Wentz. The spectacle is also you, looking at Pete Wentz. You grew up on the internet with an implicit understanding of that stage. In bandom, so did your myths, and in their awareness of that stage, puts you on show.

the fourth wall

JW: That would be another interaction, kind of starting on the other side, that falls within the boundaries of bandom, too -- band members reading/talking about/openly accepting fic.

Q: how do you feel about that?

JW: I won't lie, it makes me feel a little weird sometimes. Partly because in a way, the band members are interlopers -- they don't necessarily understand the rules of fandom. I guess I worry that they don't necessarily understand that fic isn't an interaction with them, that it's not making a demand on them, but for the most part people seem to get that, so mostly I try to just be amused.

JW: I think there tends to be a group of media fans who identify as fans, or slashers, first -- they might move from SGA to Supernatural to Star Trek or something, but they have kind of the same vision of fandom. And I think bandom is pretty far outside that, because of how many fans there

are, how many kind of points of entry into fandom there are, and how many fans are kind of new to fandom, too. Also because I think people who are primarily RPF people have a somewhat different model too. Or they might not interact around fic, but they think about/talk about Pete/Patrick. And when they do engage in bandom, they're not going to buy the idea that they don't get to talk to Pete about all sorts of personal things, because Pete has kind of cultivated that for years, through his various blogs, twitters, etc. I mean, I had an initial reluctance about bandom, and Pete, because I felt like Pete made too many demands on me!

Q: How so?

JW: Just -- whether it was feigned or real, the personal nature of his interactions with fans, his blogs, etc., felt too intimate to me. I felt like he was constantly asking for something -- approval, loyalty, something -- and I felt too aware of, and almost responsible for, his mental health. This has changed over the past couple of years, but I had a very strong resistance to him because of it. Like, I may be in a fandom **about** Pete, but I'm not in fandom **for** Pete, if you see the difference.

Q: You're in a fandom for you?

JW: And for other fans. The interesting thing about bandom, is that **I feel like there's a space that belongs to the band members, and there's a space that belongs to fans, and the borders are porous, and we can see each other.** But it's not as strictly delineated as in more traditional fandoms, where either the borders are more strictly defined, or they can't see in, or whatever.

And there's a lot of fun and playfulness around that two-way glass and those porous borders, but some discomfort, too, on both sides.

the community

*"What do I enjoy about Fall Out Boy? They're sometimes slated for phoniness or insincerity but one of the good things about the band is how self-awareness and sincerity seem to float about in superposition: Pete Wentz is quite aware the lyrics he writes will end up on profiles and in sigfiles, the digital equivalent of pencil cases. He crafts them as soundbites and blog updates, writes (as here) about unexpected fame, fakes that it doesn't matter, lets you know it does. You can't get away with lines like "Long live the car crash hearts" if you mean it any more: but if you don't mean it you end up like the Darkness -- the only way you can pull it off is by leaving the question up to whoever's out there using the song. **It could be 4 Real, it could be a joke you're in on and the haters aren't: whatever you need. They seem to me a very generous band."***

freakytrigger.co.uk [http://freakytrigger.co.uk/ft/2009/09/fall-out-boy-thriller/]

Q: Can you explain how you interact with other people who write bandom then? If it's different than the people you write about.

J: With the characters? Like, the main people? I mostly just go to concerts, and read the blogs that they make public.

Q: What about with other fans?

J: That's been an interesting experience. For a long time I didn't interact with a fandom, per se. I lurked, mostly, even though I commented on people's fanfiction and on their blogs. So when I met people through the internet, it was largely through mutual instigation. Now there are people interested in meeting me, even though we don't know each other very well. (Talk about over-identifying with the characters I write about, I guess?) I mostly am just more tentative about how I meet with. But I like hanging out with fans whom I get along with. We share a common language, and I don't have to feel self-conscious about deploying that language.

Q: How important is fan interaction to you? Like talking to other fans, vs. just going to see the Used in concert?

J: I think fans are more important to me. The community that's manufactured in fandom, even though sometimes it's way too fucking much for me, is more important than the music or the shows. I'm in fandom for fandom, rather than in fandom for the shows and media we consume. I wouldn't post what I write if I didn't value the fandom community more, to be honest. Often this ranges from things like internet slang (I sometimes say "lol" out loud) to things like slash goggles (I like hanging out with people who understand that there is **always** a gay couple on

every show and in every situation, it's just a question of how hard you look), and sometimes it's a question of mutual canon (PETE!) and mutual fanon (PETE WEEEEEZY!).

> You and J both joke for a minute that you invited yourself over to her house. She tells you that if she didn't want you there, she'd have ignored your emails. J describes how it's weird, sometimes, to be known for your writing in an amateur way and have people know more about you than you know about them.
>
> You remember hearing a while ago - in popslash - that someone was nervous about meeting you because of something you wrote. You'd agree, it's kind of weird to perceive yourself in that way. J also recognizes the familiar language that people in a fandom share.

Q: How would you characterize a "bandom" fan? Like, what makes someone?

JT: In terms of belonging to the fandom, I think anyone who reads the fic or talks about the relationships they perceive between the musicians. I've never seen writing or listening as requirements, which I think makes me a minority?

Q: and you've already called Pete a part of the fandom, so you'd call them a part of it, right? Or did I misunderstand?

J: I usually think of the musicians as part of the fandom if they interact with it. Pete is first and foremost in that, but I would include Vicky T, Tom Conrad. Especially the musicians who are regular readers of fic.

--

Q: So you don't read bandslash, but if you were to define the boundaries that make up the 'bandslash community', how'd you do it?

K: It's weird -- bandslash is the first fandom where I feel like the canon is happening on the internet SIMULTANEOUSLY with the fandom, you know? I mean, remember in popslash when we would go over to each others houses and watch footage? You'd never do that now. Because you're reading someone's Twitter, you're following their Tumblr, there's no reason to watch a dubbed tape of a 2 minute appearance on Ellen. It's a lot more like-- sometimes I feel like what bandslash is like is if the nerdy kids decided to write slash about the cool kids in high school. Not to say that slashers are nerds / rockstars are the cool kids. But it's that same level of "we occupy the same SPACE, but we don't really occupy the same space." We both go to tumblr high school, but I'm never gonna sit at Pete Wentz's lunch table.

> This one quote from K in the first interview you conduct, colours how you then look at fandom engagement for the remainder of the project.

--

Q: What do you think the boundaries of bandslash are? Of fandom?

V: Unfortunately not as rigid as they should be! I dunno. I feel bandom fans are a lot creepier than others, even of other RPS fandoms. Though I think that's in large part due to the guys not really knowing where they themselves want the boundaries set.

Q: How does that change your interaction with the fandom? Or, does it?

V: I don't know that it has yet. Again, I'm probably too removed for it to really matter at this point. Though it definitely makes me leery of venturing into the creepier corners of the internet. By which I mean the comments of some of the LJ communities.

Q: That lack of a boundary?

V: Yeah. Some people really don't get that just because the guys haven't drawn a firm line, that doesn't mean that they as fans shouldn't either. In some cases, anyway.

Q: Does a project like this, do you think it has too blurry a boundary?

V: No, I don't-- the thing is, I don't think this is creepy. Like, the creepy stuff I'm talking about is like molesting Pete on stage and making panic hold up "ryden exists" signs. I think Pete would

probably enjoy the intellectual component of your project. (Which I'm totally not saying to suck up or anything, I really think he would.) And he also just loves talking about himself.

Q: How would you characterize the difference -- or I should say how would you characterize the unacceptable behaviour? like, what about it isn't ok?

V: The stuff that really gets me is the physical violation. Like, internet fandom is totally removed from real physical space, but I think a lot of people blur that distinction in their heads and feel a lot closer to these guys than they really are; and it really comes to a head when the two combined in real time and space. **It's creepy when people do/say things that they'd never do to a stranger under similar circumstances, but they think it's acceptable when it's these guys because of their relative openness in other media**.

Q: I feel like, we grew up on the internet, we end up feeling like they grew up on the internet?

V: The problem is that while we all kind of grew up on the internet, we didn't grow up on the internet together. With these guys it's really a one-way relationship.

--

Q: What do you think the boundaries of bandslash are?

KW: It's hard to draw any lines in the sand. I think it must be a global phenomenon, geographically, though with peaks and valleys. I feel like I know where it concentrates, both physically and online? But not where it cuts off--especially since it has this weird feedback loop through fans knowing band subjects, and band people reading fanfiction.

And in the end, it's a culture created by tons of different people--all of whom would draw the lines somewhere slightly different.

Personally, bandslash for me inhabits livejournal, and twitter, and youtube, and myspace, and various blogs, but doesn't have much to do with my internet world of nytimes.com and salon and slate and al-jazeera, etc. So it's more in the DIY part of the web, and less in the "institutional" internet. And physically--living rooms, bedrooms, hotel rooms, planes, chinatown bus, rented cars, the eastern corridor, Vegas, Chicago, a little bit Florida.

> the road

> *SHOCKHOUND: So how do you usually pass the time while Pete's downing his own bodily fluids?*

> *STUMP: I just go crazy. It's weird. I try and write and I try to be creative as much as I can. I think I'm in my first real period of writer's block as a musician. It's frustrating having a decent amount of free time on your hands and not knowing what to do with it. Because the tour is built in a way where [if] they don't really*

need you, you just sleep in forever. But you're not really sleeping in. There's just really nothing else to do on the bus.

SHOCKHOUND: But if you take off the cap, you can roam in all these exotic places fairly anonymously.

STUMP: Yeah, I've never had a problem with that. I'm not especially famous unless I'm walking around a Fall Out Boy show. At the same time, you have no real connection with a thing to do. You're totally lost. You can get up and leave the hotel and go walk around. Most the time you're a needle in a haystack. You have no idea what is what. The other day we were in Vienna and I didn't really do anything. Paris, the same thing. I got a falafel. That was my big Paris adventure.

-- shockhound.com via icecreamheadaches

on the road.

April 5

You go to Las Vegas in April 2009 to see Fall Out Boy at the Palms, at the first show on their Believers Never Die tour. It's your third bandom show, second Fall Out Boy show. You decide to go at the last minute, buy one ticket to General Admission on the floor, and stay with a friend from university for the weekend.

You fly out and get picked up. You can't get in touch with S, and you don't know anyone else going to the show - you're all alone. You ask yourself more than once, do you want to go to the Palms all by yourself, just to see this band? Will you enjoy yourself in GA alone, one face in the crowd, upturned to hear the band?

Up to the last minute, you can't decide. You tell yourself it's what you came to the desert for, and that you'd be disappointed if you don't go, and if you decide you want to that you can always leave; if the scene kids are too much or the crowd's too much. You admit, in the back of your mind, that no matter what else you told people, no matter what else you'd said out loud -- that the trip was a good excuse to see Vegas again, that you hadn't seen your friend for ages -- what you told yourself isn't true. Deep down, you flew from Toronto to Las Vegas to see Fall Out Boy play.

You finally get in touch with S to meet up before the show, and you find her and her friends in the crowd. You say hello to people from a different time and place, people from fandoms you hadn't been in touch with in five years. People may not realize that you'd already met on another concert tour for popslash. This space, this willingness to travel miles to see people play, to share that – the bands are constantly on the road, constantly moving, in a strange space where everything is surreal. And you do it too. You chase that space, that physical place of the arena and the venue as much as that spiritual sameness that Patrick describes about venue, venue, venue, rest stop, venue, bus, bus, rinse, lather repeat.

After the concert, you're waiting for your ride to come and pick you up from the Palms, and the fact is that you'd spent the weekend in Panic's home town, seeing Fall Out Boy, seeing the desert they grew up in. Tomorrow, you're flying back home, more jet lag, more motion, more physical evidence that you chased this research into Red Rock Canyon, into Vegas in the middle of the night.

This is where bandom lives for you. You could write about fictional characters for the rest of your life, but they'll never Twitter about the after-party at the same hotel you're waiting for a ride outside of in the middle of the night. That surreal constant-motion space is something that bandom gets that others don't, a physicality that you travel through. That chase is what defines the rest of your summer.

the road

From my words you will have reached the conclusion that the real Berenice is a temporal succession of different cities, alternately just and unjust. But what I wanted to warn you about is something else: all the future Berenices are already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable.

-- Italo Calvino, "Invisible Cities" (p. 163)

non-hierarchical categorization; the grab-bag of cybermapping

You find yourself trying to put structure on your travels, the people you've met in bandom, the shows you've gone to, the cities you seen. As you go back and sift through your memories, however, you find yourself unable to make everything fit on a mental map. You find yourself having difficulty with dates, places, remembering instead pieces and moments.

As you try to mentally prepare to describe your bandom community, you find that no logical structure fits; no mental map is adequate.

Tagging, according to Wikipedia, first came into Web 2.0 content through the website flickr, to create tag clouds and connect pictures by different users under the same 'topic'. Delicious.com -- the website where many bandom fan members save their fanfiction in lists for later -- uses the same tags. You have troubles understanding tagging 'systems', tag clouds, or the visual representation of these links of otherwise unconnected places online.

If Twitter has changed your sense of time, making it a present-ism rather than a future-ism, then it -- and the wider use of tags rather than hierarchical content online -- is also changing your conceptual map as well.

Descriptions of roads and places used to be linear instructions for movement, rather than descriptions of static places (as de Certeau (1984) describes in his chapter "Spatial Stories", until the invent of the geographic place map, people described places by the actions or motion by which one went to them). People describe(d) where something is(was) by saying "You go left,

then go ahead so far" rather than "it is at this particular location". Instead, now you're slowly

tagging your spaces, online and off - creating linguistic or semiotic connections that relate

through symbols and tags that only gain meaning when they are used. Hyperlinks don't take you

from one page to the next anymore; instead tags group parts and places together in a non-linear

collection.

On Twitter, for example, #hashtags have become embedded within the understanding of

communication. Certain hashtags like #followfriday (which signals those users you think people

should follow) or #fml (which stands for "fuck my life") have gained a communal understanding.

Your use of #fml is connected to someone else's, everyone else's, even if everyone has a slightly

different understanding of the meaning or useage of that term or connection. The space created is

non-hierarchical in that no one's useage is preferred, prioritized over any other - unsorted,

communal chaos.

The cybermap #fml might create if you wanted to try and document the connections between

uses is also non-structured, instinctively understood in a multiplicity of ways by users, and non-

delineable. No hyperlinks would necessarily exist between the stories listed under the tag

"favourite", or even "AU", even if the general theme may be similar. This works, in that if you're

looking for other stories that are AUs you can search the tag and find others that people have

labeled as such. But it works because bandom uses it, and it relies on the people using the tags to

make it work.

In a way, as you click through your delicious tags looking for more things -- as you see the hashtag #WWGSD used in a larger circle, which started out an in-joke -- you start to wonder if you and the fandom are using tags, and especially hashtags, as a post-modern glossolalia, chanting meaningless words and symbols into cyberspace to see who joins in.

You begin to understand that the wider effect of cyberspace on spatial stories is to begin not only to abandon a linear time but a linear place as well. Clouding (a visual representation of tags) functions to remove the stable connections that hyperlinks used to possess, introducing an alternative to the linear structure you're used to. A multiplicity of connections are implied at once, thought of not as web pages linked to web pages, but as embedded pieces of information, self-regulated into categories that overlap and have meaning only in their discrete searches.

You can search for the hashtag #falloutboy, for the delicious tag pete/patrick; you can't describe where to link to the concept in the wider social network without using a search term. The act of searching demonstrates the spatial story; it *is* the spatial story, not moving toward, not creating a network of reciprocal links, but neither static or stationary.

You search for #falloutboy and get everyone's collective #falloutboy, available only in that moment of search, the space created by the act of typing the search. #falloutboy isn't just spoken and thus performed, and it can't be mapped or toured as de Certeau describes. To create that corner of the internet, it must be connected.

You cannot exist in a described space without other people describing it, too; collecting your glossolalia together. You think this might function on your memories and experiences as well: the emotive space of Patrick's voice in your car seamlessly integrating with the memory of walking down 52nd Street, sitting on the sidewalk outside MOMA, your sandals beside you as you feel the pavement of New York City beneath your feet. It's the same as reading J's words, hearing S's voice on the phone, sitting punchy and exhausted in the airport as you move from cities and places that have connections not through the flights that you take but the people and emotions you link them to, typing endlessly into the dark.

the amphitheatre

It's not a lie to say that one of your one-true stories has been falling in love not with the reality of something, not with what's in front of you, but rather the illusion of something. The love of anticipating the boy and the loss highlighted by the space between, a space that isn't really ever bridged.

Not the real boy, but the boy in your head.

July 10

It takes two days and the revelation (or at least photographic evidence) that Ryan Ross may do cocaine for you to shut down that part of you that believed in Panic! at the Disco. You latch onto

his drug of choice as a reason to reject him the same way it feels he rejected the band. This is far from rational; you tell J this as a way to make it less important. You tell yourself that it also gives a reason for the bizarre timing (they are about to go on tour, they keep saying they have new demos; why say this if you're talking about splitting up?). You use it to console yourself that there's a reason for this thing that hurt.

Living as a narration; the conscious act of creating narration. Not the boy in the flesh, but the one in your head.

So now you begin that heavy, disappointed process of rewriting Ryan Ross into a myth you can let go of, one you can abandon as he left the ideal that you wanted, that you have to change in order to move on. In the process, you have to transform your memories themselves to tell yourself he didn't matter; to make him less important, ease that sense of loss. If you loved something that only has substance in your head, you can make it something else when that fiction hurts -- and so doing, become someone else.

The myth is rewritten and you come out of it rewritten, too.

How does this relate to anything other than fandom? You suspect that it means your interactions and feelings are constantly and subconsciously, unavoidably, rewritten in the same way. The technology that allows instant celebrity connection also impacts and reforms your life. Instead of experiencing a day or a conversation, you write it, aware of how tomorrow you can replay it and focus on the narrative. As Gabler says, you are a character in an extended one-act play.

So you ask questions of your participants, and what you're really doing is asking how their fictions write chapters into your own, how their characterizations hit and reinforce or alter yours. A world view created by words and images -- like celebrity, or the internet -- is the only thing you've got. Growing up on the internet, aware of the internet and aware of your own place on the internet, it's the only one you ever had.

If you can rewrite your past, though, you can rewrite your present. So you decide to go to Los Angeles to try and find an ending.

the temple

AP.net: What are some of your favorite songs on the new record and why?

[Patrick Stump]: ...Then there's a song that, again, tentatively titled "What a Catch," and that's probably one of the most effective songs to me; it's a really interesting thing where Pete was kind of writing in a character, and the weird thing is that it's like me, it's as if I wrote the lyrics, but I didn't. And I'm not being narcissistic, it's really cool, like it's impressive to me how well he has me figured out, so it just made me respect him that much more as a writer. It's weird, it felt like I sat down and wrote a confessional song, but I didn't. It feels like that to me, but I didn't. I was writing off of Pete's lyrics, but it's as if I was confessing

through them. That's probably my favorite song, but again, I don't know what the

name is yet.

-- ap.net via icecreamhdaches

June 24th

You sit and research theatre, identity, space; you try to focus on the process of the project, try to divorce imagination from your research subject - like if you impersonalize it you can stop your inherent affection. You sit and read and at the same time listen to "Hum Hallelujah". This song is about someone's real emotions, someone you have affection for, someone who -- because of years of thinking in terms of fiction, character, performance, as much as reality -- you write in your head. You can't divorce your drive to narrate and fictionalize from how you're researching now. The result of all this? You read Bakhtin's explanation of the carnival, think about Panic at the Disco's stage show, think about spectacle and the community's active participation in it--

But somewhere in the back of your mind, you're also thinking about Pete showing Patrick the lyrics, Patrick trying to set them to music., trying to put a melody to the story on the page.

Trying to write the story in Pete's head.

the road

"Are there a hundred and thirty-five of these?" Indicating the numbers.

"I haven't counted them myself, but yes. The one that matches the number Taki gave me is near the bottom of the T."

"It looks as though each location corresponds to a segment of footage. Not the way you'd map a virtual world, though. Not if mapping virtual worlds was ordinarily your business."

"What if it weren't?"

"What do you mean?"

"What if you were just making something up as you went along? Why should we assume that the maker knows what he's doing?"

"Or we could assume that he does, but he's just doing it in his own way. The people who designed all the early Nintendo games drew them on long rolls of paper. There was no better way to do it, and you could unroll the whole thing

and see exactly how it would move. The geography of the game was two-D,

scrolling past on the screen . . ." He falls silent, frowning.

"What?"

He shakes his head. "I need more sleep."

(Gibson, 2005, p. 180-81).

The second time you go to Chicago is in August; it's after you've already seen New York City,

after you go to Las Vegas, after you've already felt the discomfort of not wanting to put your

participants on film and the discomfort of breaking the physical boundaries between yourself and

the celebrities you're researching. After you've created your bandom network through visiting

the cities and lives where your participants live, and even if you don't have a discrete comparison

of how they experience physical space and online space, the physical motion of going and doing

is a valuable process that actually creates the network you now call home.

This time you go to Chicago to write the story of your feet going to see Fall Out Boy play.

Even though you've seen them before, you know that this show will be different than others, both

on this tour and previous tours. This is a home-town show for them, on a huge tour -- larger than

the other two you attended before. You, your girlfriend, and one of your participants get in the

car and drive the I94 for the eight hours it takes to get back to the city you fell in love with the same way you fell in love with the band.

Here's the thing: until you see Fall Out Boy open for Blink 182 in Chicago, you never had the chance to see them in a stadium venue large enough to hold thirty thousand people. Until the Chicago show, you don't actually get to see them play a sold-out show where everyone is singing along.

Each footstep you take, each mile you drive, tells the story of how your motion provides the intersection between your friends, the music and the fandom; it tells the story of those connections as sure as de Certeau's travel stories create a map.

While you're there you meet more people in bandom, you meet new friends and get together with old ones. The motion of your body with every step transforms whatever place you're in -- Pete's bar in downtown Chicago, the TGI Friday's in the suburbs across the street from the venue, the neighbourhood of Oak Park, your girlfriend's car, the El -- into another fandom space. As an individual you take these steps and they intersect with other people's steps too. It may not be a linear map but it maps a community all the same.

Your particular map is, in the end, mentally tagged a pilgrimage, and because of it you suspect you've been operating under the subconscious impetus to write a confessional, not a thesis, all along. The motion of your pilgrimage, the writing of a confessional, you're sharing it with other

people. Your pilgrimage might be non-linear in time and space, but you think this might be the apex.

You sit on the lawns in Chicago with four other members of bandom. You listen to Panic! at the Disco play, you sing along. A confessional might be a personal venture, but when you stand and cheer for Fall Out Boy, thirty thousand other people do too.

<div style="background-color:blue; color:white; padding:10px; border-radius:10px; display:inline-block;">the road</div>

> *So that's Hershey, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Chicago that are happening for me, and they're going to be good because I'm going with friends and I love my friends and I wouldn't have some of those friends or being seeing others if not for four boys who used to make great music with each other. Panic at the Disco may not have been able to stay together for the kids, but at least we still have each other, right? Right.*
> *-- addictedkitten*

September 26

Much as you wanted to ignore it, Panic's split shoved in your face that the stuff you're calling physical, present canon -- the school where Ryan Ross went, the Chicago neighbourhood where Pete Wentz grew up -- these things aren't where they are now. Your fandom space is, safely, attached to a story that doesn't exist anymore. Your present is their past.

So you fly to Los Angeles, to try and understand what it is about that city that bandom lives there now. Someone asks what it is you want to see, and you don't know, because you're not sure what in L.A. embodies bandom space. They tell you that it's hard to say; there's no [Angels and Kings](#) like NYC, no 'clubhouse' as they put it. Los Angeles has been described as a lot of things, and as you land at LAX you feel afraid that you'll never find what it is you're looking for.

> *K: Real life does not follow narrative arcs. As people, we generally realize this, but because we engage with RPF fandoms through a fictional frame of reference, it's weird/frustrating/confusing when RPF canon doesn't act like media canon. Which is to say: if Panic! at the Disco was a television show, the "Ryan and Jon leave the band" narrative arc would have had a beginning, a middle and an end. You would have known when it was coming because it was May sweeps. You might have not liked it, but you would have known how to process it, because it's a television show. Real life's not like that. So the break-up of Panic! at the Disco doesn't come at a narratively opportune time for them as a band/canon source. But the part that really sucks is that real life doesn't have narrative arcs -- so it didn't come at a narratively opportune time for you (where you = the fan) either.*

Your living history, your meta-text, falls apart in its cohesive narrative. Writing real life only works as well as you can adapt to the plot elements that don't end up working out. You've come to Los Angeles and now you're not sure where to go, you're not sure how to end your story.

The story starts like this: you're a graduate student, you want to show that bandom is important, that bandom is new. You start out wanting to demonstrate a new way of experiencing community. The story continues to show that there can be a different way of researching fandom and a different way of writing it, that your subjectivity is not necessarily at odds with your research goals if you re-frame your research to reflect your faith and affect. It continues through loss, and people, and mad dashes to shows and constant motion, constant change. This is the thing: the story doesn't end. You've got plans today to go to Venice Beach. You're hoping to meet up with Shana later tomorrow. You're hoping to go to NYC again this fall. You're waiting to hear about Cobra Starship's new tour dates. You wanted to define the bounds of something that is constantly shifting for yourself and others; the neighbourhood bandom calls home shifts as you shift, as Pete Wentz shifts. It writes and rewrites itself, with no tight narrative arc.

Perhaps the only ending you've got is this: you'll always make choice the choice to get on the plane.

Q: wht does belivers never die mean to you? Posted by: mygecko5 Sep 25, 2009

A: it splits the word "fan" in half. some come out and have a good time. appreciate your music. mosh. sweat. drink. sing along. go to multiple shows. buy merch. get autographs. but the other side of the split are legends. some take part in the art. some make the words come to life when you look them in the eye. some you know will keep walking with you till the end and maybe beyond. some get that

this is a journey that will have highs and lows and dont get off the ride. thats what

it means to me.

- falloutboy q&a via icecreamhdaches