

**A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH: WOMEN, *STAR WARS*,
AND CONTROLLING CULTURAL PRODUCTION, 1977-1990**

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INTRODUCTION

The first media fanzines started with the premiere of the television show *Star Trek*. The show debuted in 1966 and the first fanzine, *Spockanalia*, appeared in September 1967. *Spockanalia* featured a mix of stories, essays, and news from the fandom. While men dominated the writing and creation of previous science fiction fanzines, women largely controlled the creation of media fanzines and participated in the writing of fan fiction. Many scholars agree with Marion Zimmer Bradley's argument that fanzines and fan fiction "were a supportive environment within which women writers could establish and polish their skills."¹ The emergence of media fanzines and fandom was an effort to create a science fiction fan culture more open to women. For the most part, media fanzines were made for women, by women.

Star Trek fanzines were quite prolific, but *Star Wars* quickly surpassed it in popularity when it premiered in theaters on May 25, 1977. Up until that point, media fandom focused on television shows (other early popular fanzines featured the shows *Starsky & Hutch* and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*), but *Star Wars* opened it up for science fiction and fantasy film, as well. Overall, men dominated the *Star Wars* fandom in public (especially at conventions), but women were responsible for the profound development of its fanzine and fan fiction culture. The first *Star Wars* fanzines were *Hyper Space* and *The Force*, both published in the summer of 1977. The textual content of *Star Wars* fanzines were similar to *Star Trek* and other media zines. Fan fiction, poetry, and artwork inspired by the source text (often referred to as the canon) filled the pages, and many fanzines included over a hundred pages per issue. Eventually, there were many important letterzines, too. Letterzines were shorter, non-fiction zines derived from letter columns of science fiction fanzines; they focused on intense discussions between fans and important news

¹ Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, ed., *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 40.

about upcoming meetings, activities, or conventions. Fanzines and letterzines were two facets of fan culture that demonstrated how people interpreted, modified, and appropriated texts for their own purposes, with or without the approval of commercial producers. For a time in the 1980s, however, the women of the *Star Wars* fandom found themselves in a struggle against the films' director George Lucas, and his film company Lucasfilm, for control over the cultural production of sexually explicit fanzines and fan fiction.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FAN STUDIES

Scholars of various disciplines studied fans and fan creations in several waves since the late 1940s. One of the first approaches to understanding textual meaning was Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver's 1948 publication *A Mathematical Theory of Communication*. The Shannon-Weaver theory suggested text delivered the meaning to the audience, and that the audience accepted the message; the major problem with this theory was its textual determinism which resulted in the passive nature of the audience.² Around the same time, Marxist scholar Theodor Adorno, a member of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, published an essay called "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening."³ Adorno understood the culture industries as a form of social control, and argued that these industries manipulated fans to devote their lives to meaningless pastimes.⁴ Although media scholars deeply criticized Adorno's arguments in later years for its dismissal of fan agency, Mark Duffet believed that some of Adorno's thoughts regarding cultural production and power relations should be given a second look. For Duffet, Adorno's "broader argument about the

² Mark Duffet, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), 55.

³ Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed., Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Co., 1985), 270-299.

⁴ Duffet, *Understanding Fandom*, 57.

industrial production of culture remains relevant: in various ways media producers do wield considerable power and constantly encourage us to collude with their agenda,” and, despite fans’ personal explorations through text, “the inspirations behind their interests are nevertheless arguably social and industrial.”⁵ Still, his pessimism toward the power and agency of fans led to great backlash among many scholars.

In the 1970s, a new shift in audience research occurred that was more optimistic toward the role of fans. In 1973, Stuart Hall, out of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (also known simply as the “Birmingham School” in cultural and media studies), contributed a major theory to the field that posited the ability of fans to read against the grain; “he saw texts as carriers of dominant ideologies...encoded by their makers and decoded by audiences.”⁶ By suggesting the existence of fans that broke from the dominant ideology and made meaning of the text for themselves, Hall broke away from textual determinism and presented audiences as active participants in cultural production. In the 1980s, media scholar John Fiske picked right up where Hall left off in his key books *Reading the Popular* and *Understanding Popular Culture*, both published in 1989. Fiske, more so than Hall, became a prolific writer for the active audience and pushed media scholars into a new paradigm for understanding how fans interact with canon texts to make their own versions, which was the basic premise for all fanzines and fan fiction.

An admirer of Fiske’s, media scholar Henry Jenkins took the scholarship a step further and discussed his own fandom as an insider in his research. Published in 1992, Jenkins’ book *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* became the most critically acclaimed work in fan and media studies up to the present day. The ethnographic book countered

⁵ Ibid, 58.

⁶ Ibid, 60.

negative stereotypes of fans as manipulated subjects of commercial producers (found in Adorno's theories), and challenged media scholars to explore how fans used media texts, what new meanings they created, and why fans mattered in the production of culture. In *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins theorized that fandom was "a participatory culture which transforms the experience of media consumption into the production of new texts, indeed of a new culture and new community."⁷ Fans consume media, appropriate parts of the media for their own use, and thus create new meanings and texts through the production of works like fan fiction; this was what he referred to as "textual poaching." He borrowed the phrase from French literary philosopher Michel de Certeau, who characterized active reading as "poaching" when fans took away "only those things that are useful or pleasurable."⁸ This theory saw the relationship between writers and readers as an ongoing power struggle for control of the text and its meanings. This conflict existed greatly between commercial producers and fans who either published fanzines or submitted fan fiction. Despite major obstacles—such as lacking access to the media, lacking a say in programming decisions, and confronting hostility from commercial producers—Jenkins asserted that "fans have nevertheless found ways to turn the power of the media to their own advantage" and reclaimed "media imagery for their own purposes."⁹

FANZINES AND THE HISTORICAL FIELD

In 2011, the peer-reviewed online journal *Transformative Works and Cultures*, published by the Organization for Transformative Works, introduced an entire volume on the relationship (or lack thereof) between historians and fan studies. The volume's guest editors, Nancy Reagin

⁷ Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poaching: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 46.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

of Pace University and Anne Rubenstein of York University, wrote the opening article “‘I’m Buffy and you’re History’: Putting Fan Studies into History.” The two argued that “sustained historically focused research” can offer fan studies “new ways of understanding the vast range of fan activities and audience responses as they shift between places and change over time.”¹⁰ The scholars noted that, as far as they knew, that particular volume was the first published collection of historical studies concerning fandom and fan activities. Interdisciplinary scholars from the field of literature, sociology, psychology, anthropology and ethnography marked the study of fans with their expertise. Historians have yet to seriously venture into the realm of fandom. Estimated guesses as to why the historical field neglected this particular area of cultural study can possibly be found in traditional negative stereotypes of fandom as an obsessive, pathological subculture dedicated to trivial pastimes and knowledge.

Whatever the reasons, not interrogating the many social, political, legal, and economic facets to fandom and fan fiction remains a major oversight by the historical field. As it was in the 1970s and as it stands now, media fandom and all of its related activities (fan fiction, artwork, videos, conventions, costume play, blogging, and much more) continues to be a significant part of people’s lives. It is how an increasingly growing portion of the country spends their leisure time and money; in particular, it is how many American women formed a safe space and community to explore various identities and expressions. In this paper, I would like to answer the call from Reagin and Rubenstein when they stated:

“...academic historians can offer something quite different: research and narratives that enable fans to connect their own particular fandom's story to much broader changes over time, locating themselves and their communities in a global history of culture. We can trace important social, legal, and economic changes that set the stage for the emergence

¹⁰ Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein, “‘I’m Buffy and you’re History’: Putting Fan Studies into History,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* vol. 6 (2011), <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/272/200>.

of fan communities and show how fans participated in and had an impact on broader cultural change.”¹¹

Through a historical examination of *Star Wars* fanzines, fan fiction, and letterzines,¹² I hope to demonstrate how social, political, and legal movements in women’s liberation and gay rights affected both commercial and fan cultural production of media texts. The three research questions guiding my paper are: *how did America’s criminalization of homosexuality and the campaign for “family values” affect the production of popular culture in the last three decades of the twentieth century? In relation, how can we understand 1980s American conservatism and the culture wars through an examination of Star Wars fanzines and letterzines? Did these zines—and the women who created them and commented in them—actually subvert the dominant culture or did they, in fact, perpetuate it?* Although previous scholarship suggested women created a subversive culture through the production and distribution of fanzines and fan fiction, an analysis of the responses to Lucasfilm’s cease-and-desist letters in 1981 demonstrated that the majority of the media fandom accepted the commercial rules of cultural production that often perpetuated societal and governmental restrictions on sexual freedom of expression and homosexuality. The *Star Wars* fandom, in particular, mirrored American society’s views on gender and sexual identities in the 1970s and 1980s. As society and the government struggled with the decriminalization of homosexuality in the 1990s and 2000s, the fandom welcomed a greater fluidity of identities, especially as fanzines and fan fiction culture moved online to a more accessible and anonymous space.

AMERICA AND SEXUALITY PRIOR TO 1977

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Note on primary sources: all of the fanzines, letterzines, and other fandom-related primary sources discussed in this paper are housed at the University of Iowa’s Special Collections. The author researched at the Special Collections from March 7-10, 2016 with the gracious help of archivist Peter Balestrieri. A full list of archival collections is available in the bibliography.

Historian George Chauncey's seminal work on gay culture, titled *Gay New York: Gender Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, revealed a vibrant and much more tolerated gay community compared to after World War Two. Prior to the 1930s, American society did not yet subscribe to the heterosexual-homosexual binary. Instead, men and women interacted intimately with people of the same sex in dance halls, speakeasies, bars, and other public and private places without the attachment of stigmas, deviancy, or perversion. What America considered to be sexually "normal" before the war was quite different from after the war. According to Chauncey, "the centrality of the fairy [a certain type of effeminate man] to the popular representation of sexual abnormality allowed other men to engage in casual sexual relations with other men, with boys, and, above all, with fairies themselves without imagining that they themselves were abnormal."¹³ Although the colonies enacted the first sodomy laws in America in the mid-1600s, it was not specific to homosexuality until the 1960s, and "a husband and wife who engaged in oral sex were potentially as guilty as two men who had anal sex."¹⁴ Thus, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, men freely alternated between female and male sexual partners without labeling themselves as "homosexual" or "heterosexual" because those socially-constructed categories did not yet exist.¹⁵

Society's views on homosexuality began to change in the 1930s, when federal, state, and local governments enacted laws and regulations that suppressed areas of gay cultural activity and community-building. Anti-gay policing of public spaces sent the gay community into the underground from the 1940s through most of the 1960s. During this time, the government's policies "explicitly used homosexuality to define who could enter the country and be naturalized,

¹³ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1994), 65.

¹⁴ Dale Carpenter, *Flagrant Conduct: The Story of Lawrence v. Texas* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company), 4.

¹⁵ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 13.

who could serve in the military, and who could collect state benefits.”¹⁶ Through this regulation, the United States government created homosexuality as a category in which to define people—a category of citizenship. The implementation of the G.I. Bill of 1944 greatly influenced the emergence of the binary. Directed at settling men down after wartime, the G.I. Bill provided soldiers with “home and business loans, employment services, college or vocational training, and unemployment compensation.”¹⁷ In 1945, the Veterans Administration issued a policy that barred any soldier who was discharged for undesirable homosexual acts or tendencies from receiving any benefits from the G.I. Bill. In fact, the state embedded heteronormativity into the G.I. Bill by positioning men as heads of the American household and, thus, most deserving of the welfare benefits. Homosexual men did not fit the heterosexual family model of American society. The G.I. Bill strictly defined the differences between homosexuality and heterosexuality, and it aided the federal construction of “the closet,” in which homosexual Americans hid their true sexual identity from the public so that the government could not deny them of benefits, could not arrest them, and could not carry the stigma of deviant.

In 1948, Alfred Kinsey, an American zoologist turned sexologist, published a ground-breaking and extensive statistical study called *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, which revealed that homosexuality was far more common among American men than the public liked to believe. According to the data, at least 37 percent of the male population had some sort of overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm between adolescence and old age.¹⁸ Kinsey hoped that this study would start to breakdown some of the stigmas and stereotypes the federal government and mainstream society developed toward gay men and women.

¹⁶ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 137.

¹⁸ Justin Spring, *Secret Historian: the Life and Times of Samuel Steward, Professor, Tattoo Artist, and Sexual Renegade* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 111.

Unfortunately, his study had the opposite effect. By the 1950s, the McCarthy era pursued a hunt for not only Communists infiltrating government but federal officials sought to purge the ranks of homosexuals, too. Preeminent LGBT historian John D’Emilio stated in his seminal work that “the criminality of homosexual acts and the religious consensus that such behavior was grossly immoral dictated the committee’s [the House Un-American Activities Committee] view of homosexual men and women as ‘outcasts’ thoroughly unsuitable for government service.”¹⁹

Also, the medical and psychology fields continued their belief that homosexuality was a mental and physical disorder, which strongly linked the sexual identity to perversion and pathology for decades. In the 1940s and 1950s, American society adhered to a heterosexual-homosexual binary that cast gay men and women as abnormal, criminal, and a threat to national security and traditional family values. Although the 1960s saw an eruption of liberation movements for black Americans, women, gays, and other marginalized groups, the conservative movement gained control of politics and public fear by the end of the 1970s.

“NO, I AM YOUR FATHER”: *STAR WARS* AND FAMILY VALUES

One month following the *Star Wars* premiere on May 25, 1977, the first two fanzines appeared. Many members of the *Star Trek* television series fandom, which focused on a show that only lasted from 1966 to 1969, became fans of *Star Wars* at the beginning. Scholars agree that these dedicated fans started the original media fanzine culture with the publication of *Spockanalia* in September 1967. Fanzine and fan fiction production spread to other television fandoms in the 1960s and 1970s, but it was the extreme popularity of *Star Wars* that launched science fiction and fantasy film into the media fandom culture. *Hyper Space*, edited and

¹⁹ John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: the Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 42.

published by Scott Griffith, launched in June 1977 as a “place and space for you to contribute your thoughts, drawings, poems, etc. for all the fans of STAR WARS.”²⁰ The editorial section explained that *Star Trek* fans “immediately had the idea of wanting to become involved in collecting materials concerning STAR WARS and meeting other fans,” so the start of the fanzine was a way to share in that fun. The other earliest fanzine, *The Force*, published its first issue in July 1977.

Fanzine publisher Jeff Johnston wrote about the early *Star Wars* fandom in issue five of his letterzine *Alderaan*, which was the first letterzine devoted entirely to *Star Wars*. In the article, titled “Who Comes With Summer,” Johnston explained he witnessed the “birth of a new fandom,” which was something he was not able to experience coming into the *Star Trek* fandom late in 1973.²¹ He described what a fandom meant to him, that it was a “kinship” that entailed some of his “worst adventures” and some of his best. Most notably, he discussed a fan critique that insisted the *Star Wars* fandom failed to develop on its own, free from corporate influence. Some fans believed that the formation of the fandom originated with Twentieth Century Fox, the film studio attached to the movie, and that it was nothing more than a public relations initiative.

Johnston wholeheartedly disagreed, and in doing so, he revealed a couple of key facets about the nature of fandom. For corporations as massive as Twentieth Century Fox, the capital gained from fan clubs was mere pennies. Furthermore, “fandoms are a non-commercial market.” Johnston explained that members of a fandom “don’t buy commercial items because we produce our own material, which is more closely geared to our tastes, and many times of a higher quality than commercial markets can ever hope to achieve because commercial markets are mass audiences.” This is the behavior and belief system that Henry Jenkins called “textual poaching.”

²⁰ Scott Griffith, “Editor’s Space,” *Hyper Space* no. 1, June 1977.

²¹ Jeff Johnston, “Who Comes With Summer,” *Alderaan* no. 5, July 1979.

Fans challenge the authority of the dominant cultural hierarchy, or in Johnston's case the commercial market; "fans raid mass culture, claiming its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions," and such creations and interactions existed in fanzines and letterzines.²² While fans did appropriate the canon for their own fan fiction creations and published these stories without any expectation of profit, fans also bought commercial *Star Wars* products. Both *Hyper Space* and *The Force* discussed the excitement around *Star Wars* novels, comic books, and other merchandise in their very first issues. In fact, Twentieth Century Fox and Lucasfilm Limited—the production company for *Star Wars* founded by the movie's creator George Lucas—built a widespread public relations campaign to promote the movie, which even involved the publication of the film's companion novel a few months before anyone saw it in theaters. Thus, while Johnston was correct that fans build fandoms, he underestimated the influence of commercial producers in galvanizing support for the film and, most importantly, he underestimated how much Lucasfilm wanted to control cultural production surrounding *Star Wars*.

In the 1970s, rightwing conservatives accused mass culture of popularizing moral permissiveness, which resulted in the decline of traditional family values and put the country in a "moral panic." Since the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and the explosion of the gay rights movement with the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the 1970s experienced a push and pull struggle between the expansion of liberation movements and the rise of the conservative religious Right. A sense of crisis surrounded the heteronormative nuclear family as many saw the American Dream on the verge of collapse during the decade. The success of court cases like *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 tested America's moral compass. "Feminism and gay rights simultaneously challenged the boundaries of the traditional domestic ideology," which set the stage for nationwide anxieties

²² Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 18.

over these movements threatening “family values.”²³ Political historians Bruce Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer argued that key to understanding this tumultuous decade was not “simply that conservatives defeated liberals in the electoral arena, but that cultural explanations triumphed over economic ones in setting the terms of public debate and determining the direction of public policies.”²⁴ In 1972, *TIME* magazine’s cover story titled “Sex and the Teenager” placed the blame on poor childrearing practices for the origins of homosexuality, and that American culture perpetuated the decline of sexual propriety.²⁵

During the same year that *Star Wars* premiered, two key moments in American anti-gay discrimination occurred—the beginning of the Save Our Children campaign and the founding of Focus on the Family. Anita Bryant, a singer and former Miss Oklahoma beauty pageant winner, became one of the nation’s leading outspoken opponents of the gay rights movement when she formed a religious and political coalition called Save Our Children in Miami, Florida. Bryant suggested that gay men and women who refused to remain in the closet were asking America to “bless them in their abnormal lifestyle through protective legislation that discriminates against my children’s right to grow up in a healthy, decent community.”²⁶ The campaign’s initial goal was to overturn a county ordinance in Miami that banned discrimination in areas of housing, employment, and public accommodation based on sexual orientation. The message of the coalition quickly spread nationwide to groups in areas like Minnesota, Oregon, and Kansas who also successfully overturned similar ordinances. For historians, Save Our Children was the first major organization formed to counteract the gay rights movement and its “rapid expansion

²³ Bruce Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer ed., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 15.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

²⁵ “Sex and the Teenager,” *TIME*, August 21, 1972.

²⁶ Schulman and Zelizer, *Rightward Bound*, 24.

signaled that any sort of pro-gay political or social innovation would encounter fierce opposition.”²⁷

Psychologist and evangelical Christian James Dobson founded two of the most influential organizations of the religious Right that infiltrated public policy and culture throughout the late 1970s and the Reagan administration of the 1980s. Founded in 1977, Focus on the Family became a Christian media empire that promoted heteronormative family structures and abstinence-only education. The organization attacked the gay rights movement and sexually-explicit television and film. Dobson also wrote best-selling books in the 1970s that claimed America’s future was at stake in the parental and cultural responsibility to prevent homosexuality.²⁸ By the start of the 1980s, the religious Right firmly took hold of Republican politics. In 1980, at a summer rally in Dallas, Texas, presidential candidate Ronald Reagan exemplified the fusion of traditional religious values and New Right politics as he affirmed the “pro-family” and anti-gay rhetoric of the Moral Majority, a conservative religious organization closely tied to the Republican Party.²⁹ Overall, the New Right triumphed by the start of the 1980s, and conservatism controlled much of the social, political, economic, and cultural discourse of American society.

Through a close examination of the struggle over cultural production and participation between Lucasfilm and the *Star Wars* fandom, one can argue that these 1980s conservative forces influenced how both the commercial producer interacted with the fandom and how the fandom responded to the commercial producer’s attempts to control creative and sexual freedom. As early as 1977, fanzine editors and fan fiction writers questioned the legality of their creative

²⁷ Phil Tiemeyer, *Plane Queer: Labor, Sexuality, and AIDS in the History of Male Flight Attendants* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 112.

²⁸ Schulman and Zelizer, *Rightward Bound*, 21.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

fan activities in terms of copyright infringement and intellectual property law. In *Comlink*, a bi-monthly multimedia review and letterzine, Allyson Dyar commented on unknown the status of Lucasfilm's proposed fanzine policy. As co-editor of *Alderaan*, Dyar made several attempts to contact the film company about any legal concerns regarding the publication of fanzines. She said she possessed letters dating back to 29 October 1977 from Craig Miller, fan liaison for Lucasfilm, about the policy.³⁰ The editor of *Hyper Space* sent in earlier copies of its fanzine to George Lucas and Lucasfilm in 1978, and also received a reply from Miller that stated "Right now we're working out a policy about fanzines. Basically a problem with copyrights has to be resolved."³¹ In 1980, *Alderaan* secured an interview with Miller, and published it in the June issue of the same year. Allyson Whitfield, co-editor, asked Miller about the "legal material" of fanzines to which he replied that Lucasfilm planned on "going after" anyone in violation of copyright in order to maintain "a certain amount of quality within" *Star Wars* products because it could reflect badly on the company.³² When specifically discussing fanzines and stories, Miller stated that Lucasfilm was "unofficially looking the other way" despite requesting fanzine editors to send copies to their offices.³³ Miller ultimately ended the legal discussion with the statement that Lucasfilm's lawyers were trying to come up with a policy that satisfied copyright while still allowing fans to publish fanzines.

In August 1981, Lucasfilm sent the first wave of letters asking fanzine publishers to not accept stories featuring sexually explicit material. Maureen Garrett, Director of the Official Star Wars Fan Club, signed the letters and became the liaison between the fans and Lucasfilm

³⁰ Allyson Dyar, "Letter of Comment," *Comlink*, October 1981.

³¹ Letter from Craig Miller, December 20, 1977, *Hyper Space* winter 1978, page 12.

³² Interview with Craig Miller by Allyson Whitfield, *Alderaan* no. 8, June 1, 1980.

³³ *Ibid*; In November 1978, Lori Chapek-Carlton wrote a letter to *Interstat* no. 13, a *Star Trek* letterzine, that said she received a letter from Lucasfilm wanting to buy past and future issues of her fanzine *Warped Space*. Other *Star Wars* fanzine editors received similar letters, and some fans considered this to be the start of Lucasfilm's attempts to control fan cultural production.

throughout this fanzine debate until she left the job in 1986. In this first letter, Garrett claimed she previously sent a word-of-mouth warning to fans about the film company's intolerance for the inclusion of "X-rated" material in fanzines.³⁴ Since editors continued to publish such stories, Garrett said she was forced "to establish a written, legal policy against such incidents of published STAR WARS pornography." As a general guideline, she suggested that publishers maintain a PG rating for all stories and artwork, which compared equally to the ratings of the films. The letter contained a stern threat that Lucasfilm "can and will take action... against any and all publications that ignore good taste and violate this reasonable cease and desist letter." Garrett then affirmed that Lucasfilm and George Lucas owned and controlled the *Star Wars* characters, not the fans. Aside from copyright violations, Garrett also made it clear that the brand image of *Star Wars* and Lucasfilm was a major factor in cracking down on sexually explicit material; she urged that "damage done to the wholesomeness associated with the STAR WARS Saga... by such irresponsible publishers is permanent and hurts both Lucasfilm and its fans." Apparently, the "main concern" for the company was preventing children from reading the "pornography" found in fanzines. An angry parent could present the "pornography" to a major news outlet and "tarnish the good name of Lucasfilm." The page and a half letter ended with a notice to the publisher that Lucasfilm removed them from their mailing list, but that the film company still requested copies of future fanzines "to check on further stories."

In the fall of 1981, nearly every *Star Wars* fanzine or letterzine contained some mention of the cease-and-desist letter. Many letterzines reprinted Garrett's letter in-full. Fans immediately wondered what in particular caused this sudden response from Lucasfilm, and figured out that the editors of the *Guardian* fanzine received the first letter from Howard Roffman, Associate

³⁴ Letter from Maureen Garrett of Lucasfilm to fanzine publishers, August 1981, Maggie Nowakowska Collection of Star Wars Fan Material, The University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa. All quotations in this paragraph refer to this letter.

General Counsel, dated July 30, 1981. Distributed in May 1981, issue 3 of the *Guardian* featured a two-part story, including artwork, called “Slow Boat to Bespin” written by Anne Elizabeth Zeek and Barbara Wenk that involved a romantic and sexual relationship between Han Solo and Leia Organa, two protagonists from the films. In the July letter, Roffman specifically called out this story and the possibility of publishing similar stories as the reason for Lucasfilm to re-evaluate its fanzine policy. He provided this warning to the editors of the *Guardian*: “I can assure you that it will no longer be safe for publishers such as you to feel immune from enforcement action by Lucasfilm.”³⁵ Cynthia Levine and Linda Deneroff responded to the letter a few days later, and expressed that they were “extremely surprised and hurt” by what they deemed to be a misunderstanding.³⁶ They claimed they sent in “Slow Boat to Bespin” to Maureen Garrett for review and thought it received the stamp of approval. Furthermore, the two women pressed that *Star Wars* fans and editors hoped for a set of clear guidelines from Lucasfilm about the publication of fanzines. Deneroff remarked that “just saying X-rated is too vague” because every publisher rated stories differently, and many of her fanzine readers considered “Slow Boat to Bespin” not X-rated at all.³⁷ A majority of fans agreed that a detailed written policy was necessary for future publications, but Lucasfilm never created one.

Through the rest of the decade, fans articulated a wide-range of responses to the cease-and-desist letters and the prohibition of any material that was violent or sexually explicit. A majority of fans that wrote to letterzines and fanzines voiced their support for Lucasfilm and George Lucas’ right to control and set restrictions on fan cultural production. These responses largely contrast with Henry Jenkins’ characterization of fan culture as “an open challenge to the

³⁵ Letter from Howard Roffman to Cynthia Levine and Linda Deneroff, July 30, 1981, published in *Comlink* no. 55, June 1993.

³⁶ Letter from Linda Deneroff to Howard Roffman, August 4, 1981, published in *Comlink* no. 55, June 1993.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

‘naturalness’ and desirability of dominant cultural hierarchies, a refusal of authority and a violation of intellectual property.”³⁸ While fans remained unclear whether or not they violated copyright and intellectual property law, many stood firm on the side of the “dominant cultural hierarchy” and authority of the Lucasfilm as a commercial producer. A common response invoked the idea of George Lucas’ moral rights to decide how others portrayed his *Star Wars* characters. There was a small but loud contingent of fans, many women, that opposed any sort of censorship or restrictions on fan-produced cultural activity, and many of these fans saw the cease-and-desist letters as a repression of their freedom of expression. The years between 1981 and 1983 were perhaps the most tumultuous for fan responses, which included feelings of fear, confusion, and anger.

Linda Deneroff was one of the first fans to publicly discuss the Lucasfilm cease-and-desist warning in letterzines, referred to as “The Controversy” among many fans and fanzines. She wrote a letter dated August 26, 1981, and both *Comlink* and *Jundland Wastes* published it in their third and fourth issues, respectively. Although her publication was the supposed cause of the harsher policy toward fanzines, Deneroff supported Lucasfilm’s “right to set standards for Star Wars stories and I don’t mind maintaining a PG standard.”³⁹ Her one major issue was figuring what exactly fell under a PG rating in terms of the appropriate levels of violence and sexual content. Within the same *Comlink* issue, Connie Faddis pleaded with her fellow fans to not force the issue and “demand that Lucasfilm be specific-to-the-nth-degree about what they mean by the PG rating.”⁴⁰ Also within the same issue of *Jundland Wastes*, Anne Elizabeth Zeek—one of the co-authors of “Slow Boat to Bespin”—wrote a more defensive letter. Published directly below Deneroff’s support for Lucasfilm’s policy, Zeek expressed her concern

³⁸ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 18.

³⁹ Letter from Linda Deneroff, August 26, 1981, *Comlink* no. 3, October 1981.

⁴⁰ Letter from Connie Faddis, August 24, 1981, *Comlink* no. 3, October 1981.

that the censorship “is teaching children that love and creation and life (and, yes, sex!) between two people who love one another is wrong (“unwholesome is the term used), but death and violence and destruction is not wrong, then maybe Lucasfilm should re-examine its priorities.”⁴¹ These two responses set the stage for heated debates among fans that played out mostly in letterzines.

Zeek touched on some of the hypocrisies between what Lucasfilm demanded of its fans and what the *Star Wars* films themselves presented to the public. The cease-and-desist letters wanted fans to maintain the “wholesome” nature of the *Star Wars* universe. The word “wholesome” represented ideas of moral well-being, and, for Lucasfilm in particular, it meant objecting to any material containing “pornography, vulgarity, or explicit gore and violence.”⁴² While it was true that the films lacked visual amounts of blood during battle scenes, the first film saw the Galactic Empire order the destruction of an entire planet of innocent people, called Alderaan, in an act that fans commonly considered genocide. Yet, the hypocrisy started with the film industry’s rating system since its modern formation in the late 1960s, and Lucasfilm simply worked within that culture. In the 2006 documentary titled *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*, director Kirby Dick and producer Eddie Schmidt demonstrated the disparities in ratings between sexual content and violence, and between homosexual and heterosexual sexual situations. The documentary focused on examples of these disparities in films, and one of the most poignant was in the 1999 film *Boys Don’t Cry*. The Motion Picture Association of America’s review board had no issue with the main character getting shot in the head on screen, but made complaints about another scene in which one female character’s orgasm was too long.⁴³ The rating system and

⁴¹ Letter from Anne Elizabeth Zeek, *Jundland Wastes* no. 4, September 1981, page 6.

⁴² Letter from Maureen Garrett, October 7, 1981, *Comlink* no. 4, December 1, 1981, page 8.

⁴³ Kimberly Peirce, *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*, directed by Kirby Dick (Santa Monica, CA: Genius Entertainment, 2006).

ensorship found in the MPAA review board exemplified the system in which much of mass culture operated in the 1980s, especially with television and film. The religious conservatism of the era that often blamed mass culture for corrupting the youth with sexual content influenced these rating systems and how many Americans viewed and absorbed cultural content. Arguably, this influence reached as far as the fandom subculture, the production of fan fiction, and how *Star Wars* fans policed themselves following the objections forced by Lucasfilm's own attempt to stay within the conservative boundaries of the 1980s.

In the November 1981 double issue of *Jundland Wastes*, editor Pat Nussman dedicated several pages to the Lucasfilm controversy since she received a flood of letters debating the state of the fandom and fanzines. The section, titled "The Controversy," filled an entire seven pages with three columns per page of the twenty-page letterzine. Nussman began the section with the latest letter from Maureen Garrett dated October 7, 1981 that distributed slightly more detailed guidelines, which not only banned sexually explicit content but violence and vulgarity as well. Garrett stressed that the policy was an exercise of "OWNERSHIP not censorship," and that Lucasfilm "supports the publication of fanzines."⁴⁴ This letter represented the official written policy from Lucasfilm, but fans continued to question the vagueness of the guidelines.

In the thirteen letters published, more than half supported Lucasfilm's right to control what fans produced for stories and artwork. Terri Black brought up a point that many other fans also agreed with: "You can write about someone making love without going into graphic detail."⁴⁵ Bev Clark echoed this sentiment when she stated that fan fiction writers could imply sex similar to films in the 1930s and 1940s without actually having to write about it. According to Barbara Green Deer who attended a meeting with Maureen Garrett at a convention, this

⁴⁴ Letter from Maureen Garrett and Frances Smith, Legal Counsel, October 7, 1981, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 7.

⁴⁵ Letter from Terri Black, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 7.

implied sexual situation was something Garrett suggested, as well.⁴⁶ Clark took the matter one step further by suggesting that “graphic sex is not adult at all, but adolescent.”⁴⁷ Several fans in various letterzines also made remarks about the childish behaviors of those who opposed Lucasfilm’s ban on sexually explicit content. Other fans who supported Lucasfilm in the letters to *Jundland Wastes* expressed similar views to those already discussed—mainly that George Lucas possessed the moral and legal right to control his copyrighted characters in any fashion he wanted.

A more subtle debate about Lucasfilm’s stance on homosexuality in fan fiction began to creep into letters around late 1981 and early 1982. Amy Falkowitz, also a fan of *Star Trek*, stated in her letter to *Jundland Wastes* that she was already a part of “the whole K/S bit, which is one of the things George does not want in SW [*Star Wars*].”⁴⁸ The “K/S bit” that Falkowitz referred to was the shortened slang term for fan fiction involving a romantic relationship between the two main male characters from *Star Trek*—Kirk and Spock. Homosexual fan fiction, more commonly called slash fiction, existed pretty heavily in the *Star Trek* fandom and caused a split among fans before *Star Wars* even existed. *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry overwhelmingly welcomed the production of fanzines and fan fiction, including slash fiction. Over time, many fans pinned Roddenberry and George Lucas as opposites in terms of each man’s attempt to form relations with their respective fandoms. Falkowitz continued her criticism of Kirk/Spock fiction, saying that, besides “moral judgements,” much of the slash fiction written was of a lower quality.⁴⁹

According to the fan history site Fanlore, created by the Organization for Transformative Works, a letter sent from Maureen Garrett and Lucasfilm’s legal team to the editor of the fanzine

⁴⁶ Letter from Barbara Green Deer, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 9.

⁴⁷ Letter from Bev Clark, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 7.

⁴⁸ Letter from Amy Falkowitz, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Imperial Entanglements centered on the homosexuality of a story written by a woman known as Barbara T.⁵⁰ In the letter, Garrett rejected the story and stated that Lucasfilm was “terribly sorry, but we cannot authorize homosexual expression of love among the characters created by George Lucas. This controversial subject must remain detached from the world created by Lucasfilm in order to preserve the innocence in Imperial crew members must be imagined to have.”⁵¹ The story, called “Hoth Admiral,” featured a non-explicit same-sex relationship between two minor characters from *Star Wars*. Karen Osman, editor of *Imperial Entanglements*, responded to Lucasfilm and protested the hypocrisy of allowing non-explicit heterosexual relationships while not allowing non-explicit homosexual ones.⁵² After Barbara T. also wrote a letter to Lucasfilm, the film company reconsidered their position and officially sanctioned the first non-explicit slash fiction publication. However, this small win did not suppress the fear that many fans felt toward possible objections to slash fiction. “Hoth Admiral” was one of the only slash fiction stories published (that scholars or fan historians are aware of) until fandom moved to the Internet in the mid-1990s. Although the Lucasfilm guidelines were vague, “they had the desired effect of squashing the budding slash community working in the Star Wars universe.”⁵³ Instead of printed in fanzines, fans distributed slash fiction face-to-face at conventions through word-of-mouth advertising.

⁵⁰ “A Small Band of Rebels,” *Fanlore*, http://fanlore.org/wiki/Open_Letters_to_Star_Wars_Zine_Publishers_by_Maureen_Garrett#cite_ref-26.

⁵¹ Letter from Maureen Garrett to Karen Osman, September 16, 1981, submitted by Barbara T., *Fanlore*, http://fanlore.org/wiki/Open_Letters_to_Star_Wars_Zine_Publishers_by_Maureen_Garrett#cite_ref-26.

⁵² Letter from Karen Osman to Lucasfilm, undated, *Fanlore*, http://fanlore.org/wiki/Open_Letters_to_Star_Wars_Zine_Publishers_by_Maureen_Garrett#cite_ref-29.

⁵³ Kelly Simca Boyd, “‘One Index Finger on the Mouse Scroll Bar and the Other on My Clit’: Slash Writers’ Views on Pornography, Censorship, Feminism and Risk,” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2001), 16. Slash fiction became so underground during the 1980s and early 1990s that it is rare for a fanzine archives to have any stories in its collection. Besides “Hoth Admiral,” I did not find any of the known stories in the archives at the University of Iowa.

As evidenced by Amy Falkowitz' comments, Lucasfilm's policy was not the only deterrent to the publication of slash fiction—many fans objected to it, as well. In two separate letters to two separate letterzines, Kathleen Woodbury wrote about her full support of the fanzine policy. She said, "One of the things I loved so much about Star Wars, from the first time I saw it, is that it is so wholesome."⁵⁴ She did not define "wholesome" directly, but her following sentence may give other fans some idea of what was not within the bounds of wholesomeness. When Woodbury first heard about Kirk/Spock slash fiction in the *Star Trek* fandom, she "shuddered to think that something like that could happen in SW fan fiction."⁵⁵ She was "shocked and saddened" and hated to think that there were fans who wanted "to do the same and similar things to the SW characters."⁵⁶ She further stated she did not want "to buy a fanzine that has someone's sordid little fantasy written out in it and I won't want my stuff printed in one that does."⁵⁷ Woodbury never definitively stated her views against Kirk/Spock slash fiction or the possibility of "similar" stories in the *Star Wars* fandom were due to homosexuality, but her statements came fairly close. She clearly did not think such relationships entailed wholesomeness. Woodbury's statements fit well into the 1980s conservative movements that dominated political and social rhetoric that deemed sexual impropriety and homosexuality as damaging to respectful moral values. Thus, both the commercial producer, Lucasfilm, and the majority of fanzine editors and fan fiction writers within the fandom subculture largely worked within society's boundaries in their production and participation of culture.

Fans were not unaware of the connection between the Lucasfilm fanzine policy and the larger political landscape, either. Two fans, in particular, wrote into *Jundland Wastes* and directly

⁵⁴ Letter from Kathleen Woodbury, September 1, 1981, *Comlink* no. 5, February 1, 1982, page 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Letter from Kathleen Woodbury, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 14.

⁵⁷ Letter from Kathleen Woodbury, September 1, 1981, *Comlink* no. 5, February 1, 1982, page 4.

called out the Moral Majority and the House Un-American Activities Committee in relation to the censorship and control of Lucasfilm over fanzines. Elizabeth Gootjes, although firmly in support of Lucasfilm's moral and legal right to set the standards for fan fiction, questioned what constituted "pornography" and agreed with Anne Elizabeth Zeek's argument against the hypocrisy over allowing extreme violence but not sexually explicit material. She then stated that while priorities were backward, "Lucasfilm isn't responsible for our society's silly views, and they have to live with them the same as we all do."⁵⁸ Gootjes understood the conservative boundaries that both Lucasfilm and fans dealt with in the production of culture. She then proclaimed that "something unpleasant seems to be happening to ideas about free expression in this country lately" when the "Moral Majority and their ilk are holding bookburnings, trying to censor public school curricula, and putting pressure on television broadcasters."⁵⁹ She explained the fears of Lucasfilm in this cultural and political environment. While she theorized that it was highly unlikely that a child would succumb to corruption after reading sexually explicit *Star Wars* fan fiction, she pressed other fans to "imagine what would happen if one of those bluenoses somehow got a hold of these relatively innocuous stories?"⁶⁰ It could damage the reputation of Lucasfilm as they would take on most of the blame for cultivating such a subculture.

The other fan that discussed the Moral Majority, Janie Hicks, adamantly opposed any form of censorship by Lucasfilm. Hicks affirmed, "I am NOT willing to be censored. NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES."⁶¹ Hicks represented the small group of women who felt that the fanzine policy restricted their rights to freedom of expression and that it aligned with the repression of the House Un-American Activities Committee and late Senator Joseph McCarthy,

⁵⁸ Letter from Elizabeth Gootjes, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 11.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Letter from Jani Hicks, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 11.

who attempted to purge the United States government of Communists and homosexuals mostly during the 1950s and into the 1960s. She further questioned the “coincidence” that the year in which Lucasfilm enacted a much harsher policy was around the same time of the “rise to infamy of the Reverend Falwell and his Moral Majority.”⁶² Hicks recognized a correlation between the political dominance of the Moral Majority at the start of the Reagan administration and the implementation of the Lucasfilm fanzine policy. Decidedly against any censorship, Hicks announced at the end of her letter that she would no longer continue publishing her fanzines *Thunderbolt* and *Twin Suns*. For those who opposed Lucasfilm’s policy, complete retirement from fanzine publication was one common reaction. Bev Lorenstein, co-editor of noted feminist fanzine *Organia*, blasted the Lucasfilm policy for its censorship in similar remarks to Hicks and claimed that “Lucasfilm has no rights whatsoever with interfering with fandom. It is not his property, it is ours.”⁶³ Her fanzine only lasted one issue before she quit publishing it.

One of the most outspoken critics of the fanzine policy was editor C.A. Siebert, who published *SLAYSU* (So Like And Yet So Unalike). In the March 1982 issue of her fanzine, she and co-editor K.B. Retz wrote an editorial about the Lucasfilm controversy. First, she commented on society’s treatment of women as sexual objects and stated “many people assume things about women which place them in semi-human, sexual-pet status.”⁶⁴ She assured that *SLAYSU* consistently rejected stories that contained such characterizations. In tune with past feminist movements for sexual liberation for women, Siebert asserted that she enjoyed sex and that she wrote “erotic stories for myself and for other women who will not settle for being less than human.”⁶⁵ For her, Lucasfilm’s policy was a way of controlling her sexual freedom and

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Letter from Bev Lorenstein, *Jundland Wastes* no. 5/6, November 1981, page 12.

⁶⁴ K.A. Retz and C.A. Siebert, “By Any Other Name,” *SLAYSU* no. 4, March 4, 1982.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

freedom of expression—it became an extension of the patriarchal control over society. The fanzine policy was George Lucas’s way of demanding women to adhere to his male-dominated views of acceptable female sexuality. Siebert protested, “I am not male. I do not want to be. I refuse to be a poor imitation, or worse, someone’s idiotic ideal of femininity.”⁶⁶ Media scholars, like Henry Jenkins, pointed to these kind of beliefs as the dominant view of women involved in fandom, and that most women were able to find “ways to turn the power of the media to their own advantage and reclaim media imagery for their own purposes.”⁶⁷ Yet, through an examination of the responses from the *Star Wars* fandom, a majority of fans yielded power to the authority of the commercial producer, while fans like Siebert represented a minority opinion and critique. Of course, this paper only takes into account those fans who wrote into fanzines and letterzines, and not those who remained silent on the matter; the difficulty in assessing various sects of fans and fan opinion in a subculture mostly preserved through one type of primary source (zines) is a serious limitation for any scholar trying to study fandoms of the past.

CONCLUSION

In 1986, Maureen Garrett retired as Director of the Official Star Wars Fan Club while fans continued to question the Lucasfilm fanzine policy. Lucasfilm closed the official fan club and let fans know that they planned to chuck the film company’s collection of fanzines. Fortunately, a group of women from the First Terran Enclave—an organization formed for Seattle-area *Star Wars* fans—proposed to Lucasfilm to let them house the fanzine collection and turn it into a lending library. Lucasfilm agreed, and so the Star Wars Lending Library began in

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 32. See also: Karen Helleckson and Kristina Busse, ed., *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2014); Mark Duffet, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013); Lisa A. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992).

January of 1987. The collection passed between different fans throughout the years, and eventually ended up with a beloved woman name Ming Wathne. A group of incredibly active fans in various media fandoms founded the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW) in 2007. This organization is currently the leading source for all fandom-related material, including one of the largest online archives for current and past fan fiction works on the site Archive of Our Own. Wathne handed over the original Lucasfilm fanzine collection to OTW around 2009, and then the group formed a relationship with the University of Iowa Special Collections to house and preserve the collection with professional archivists.⁶⁸

From 1981 to 1986, fans hotly contested the Lucasfilm fanzine policy that restricted fans' use of sexually explicit content in fan fiction. While some fans saw the policy as a violation of freedom of expression, most respected George Lucas's wishes to control his copyrighted characters in the public sphere. Some fans even realized the political, legal, and social restrictions placed on Lucasfilm under the popular rein of religious conservatives like the Moral Majority and decades-worth of policies that deemed sexually explicit and homosexual content as harmful to traditional family values defined by heteronormativity. Lucasfilm, focused on maintaining a reputation well within the confines of 1980s conservative cultural norms, wanted to control its brand and reputation starting with its *Star Wars* films all the way down to the subcultural production and distribution of fanzines and fan fiction. Many media and fan studies scholars argued that the women who produced and participated in this form of cultural production did so as a subversive act to commercial producers and dominant cultural hierarchies. During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the women in the *Star Wars* fandom largely contrasted this theory as many of them upheld the authority of Lucasfilm, who, in turn, tried to

⁶⁸ The history of how the fanzine collection came to the University of Iowa was relayed to the author via email correspondence from archivist Peter Balestrieri, March 10, 2016.

prevent backlash from a society that tried to censor what they deemed immoral expressions of sexuality.

The final installment of the original *Star Wars* trilogy premiered in 1983, so by the end of the decade the fandom lost steam and the fear of Lucasfilm legal action also died down, especially since no fanzine publisher or fan fiction writer ever found themselves in court over copyrighted material or for violation of the fanzine policy. When the internet increased in usage and popularity in the mid-to-late 1990s, slash fiction resurfaced in the *Star Wars* fandom while sexually explicit content continued production and distribution as before. Ultimately, Lucasfilm nor any other commercial producer succeeded in controlling the fan activities of women in media fandom. For the most part, commercial producers reverted to their original stance of “looking the other way” in regards to fan fiction. This female-dominated subculture pressed on, in some cases as an underground movement, and essentially affirmed its right to control its own cultural production, distribution, and participation with or without the approval of commercial producers.

In 2007, a Google search for the phrase “fan fiction” listed over 1.2 million results.⁶⁹ Today, it lists over 16.1 million.⁷⁰ The popular online fan fiction archive, called “Archive of Our Own,” claims on its home page that it serves more than 21,370 fandoms, has 835,600 users, and currently holds 2, 2440, 000 written works.⁷¹ These numbers increase every day. Since the late 1990s, when home computers became commonplace and internet networks became easily accessible and affordable for the average American family, participation in fandom and the writing of fan fiction increased exponentially. Published in 2011, the novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E.L. James launched fan fiction and fandom into the public spotlight, perhaps more than ever

⁶⁹ Rebecca Tushnet, “Copyright Law, Fan Practices, and the Rights of the Author,” in Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, eds., *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 63.

⁷⁰ Number of search results on Google as of May 1, 2016.

⁷¹ “Home,” Archive of Our Own, last modified 2016, accessed April 24, 2016, <https://archiveofourown.org/>.

before, because the story originated as a work of fan fiction in the *Twilight* fandom. In a 2012 CNN article about the novel's origins, a Los Angeles Times staff writer expressed that "the way people deal with fan fiction may be shifting in a real and significant way."⁷² Current media and fan studies scholars acknowledge that the foundational nature of fandom as an underground subculture might not apply much longer in the future as mainstream media outlets continue to recognize fandom and fan fiction as a legitimate hobby and cultural commentary, and as major television and film production companies succumb to influence of fans for story arcs and pull plots straight from fan fiction.

⁷² Stephanie Goldberg, "Fifty Shades of Grey' shines light on erotic fan fiction," *CNN* April 6, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/04/05/showbiz/movies/fifty-shades-of-grey-fan-fiction/>

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