Review

Paul Booth, *Digital Fandom 2.0. New Media Studies. Second Edition*. Oxford. Peter Lang. 2016. ISBN 978-1433131509. 284pp.

Contra arguments that the internet stifles knowledge and offers little more than phatic exchange (Keen 2007, Miller 2008, Lanier 2011, Hassan 2012), Paul Booth's *Digital Fandom 2.0: New Media Studies. Second Edition* (2016) evidences how online media can be central to fan identity performance, circulating salient information, and social cohesion (see Bennett 2014). Updating his previous edition (2010), Booth removes the former's central allegory that conceptualises fan practices as a form of alternate reality gaming (ARG). This works greatly in his favour, allowing greater development of other conceptual models and 'explore[s] new aspects of fandom in the digital age' (3).

Part 1 compresses the first edition's chapters, providing the historical backdrop and establishes three central concepts – web commons, *digi-gratis* and demediation. Presenting a broad overview of the Web 2.0 digital landscape, Chapter 1 argues that '[o]ne key characteristic of digital fandom is how fans' use of technologies bring a sense of playfulness to the work of active reading' (20). Importantly, evidencing how online fan work conflates affirmational and transformative practices (see also Hills 2013), provides one of Booth's most persuasive arguments: consuming online content does not destroy via demand, nor does production create finalised objects. Rather, digital playfulness offers ongoing and malleable textual consumption/production that communities form around.

Developing this, Chapter 2 argues that blog fan fiction provide fans 'unique space[s]' (54). Whilst slightly overstressing blogs' 'constant revision' that does not consider their ending (Whiteman and Metivier 2013), and an emphasising of the communal whole that potentially risks over-homogenising voices – how might collective equal-footing intersect with fan hierarchy/capital? – Booth's innovative use of Bakhtin's carnivalesque (1984) analyses the ontology of blogs. Post and comments reside in the same space, thus (ever-)becoming 'intra-textual', authored communally rather than individually, therefore subverting traditional author/audience hierarchies. I particularly enjoyed how Booth maps this relationship onto the carnival's excessive grotesque body.

Chapter 3 convincingly argues that fan wikis evidence 'narractivity'. Developing Mittel's 'narrative complexity' (2015), Booth displaces traditional 'chrono-logic' narratives by fans creating communal narrative databases intra-textually between extant texts and the

discourses read through them. Web commons manifest as wiki's perpetually grow in Derridian fashion through the hypertextual linkages fans make interacting with sites' pages/elements. Moreover, whilst wikis are 'collective intelligence' individuals' 'different knowledge bases' (97) contribute to the wider whole. Considering how spoilers as 'speculative fan fiction' (100) become historicised on wikis as a form of capital within communal authorship offers a particularly interesting line of thought. Yet I wonder, as with chapter 2, how counter-knowledge, or intra-fandom conflict complicate these models.

Chapter 4 examines MySpace's blurring of digital and real identity via users roleplaying media characters. This 'interreality' between the factual and fictional, Booth argues, represents 'created object[s]… poised between subversion and support of a commercial economy' (115). These profiles are fan gifts to the community whilst simultaneously advertising their championed media text. Resulting in *digi-gratis*, producing and consuming fan content strengthens the communal nature of fandoms whilst encouraging deeper engagement with said media (125). An innovative conceptualisation of text/community relationships, Booth notes that *digi-gratis* has proven a salient tool in wider online fan practices (195-6), evidencing the model's dexterity.

Chapter 5 readdresses ARGs; 'game-like narrative[s] played both off- and online… [using] multiple modes of mediation to immerse the player' (148), moving away from it as an allegorical underpinning of fan practices to locate it in Booth's concept of 'demediation'. Demediation occurs 'when the obviousness of mediation becomes so overt it hides mediation' (125). Situated between hypermediacy and immediacy, these texts can only exist as user experiences through mediated technology, yet are only contextual through their use in the 'real' world. Here, the ludic is recognised through the non-ludic (157).

Extrapolating this, Part II's focus on new online practices begins with chapter 6's analysis of demediation through an autoethnographical account of Booth's own ARG playing of *MagiQuest*. Noting how companies are producing media content that overtly incorporate fannish sensibilities, this demediation produces 'hybrid fandom', where 'fictional diegetic world[s]… use an obvious focus on mediation (or… hypermediation)… to immerse viewers in a more naturalistic world' (169). I would argue demeditation would prove fruitful in studying emerging popular digital practices such as augmented video games (e.g. *Pokémon Go*) and/or augmented journalism.

Analysing three campaigns' online videos that engage with fans' nostalgia (199), Chapter 7 nuances *digi-gratis*, addressing participatory cultures monetisation by crowdfunding projects. Booth argues that *Veronica Mars*'s filmmakers succeeded by stressing collaboration between themselves and the fans. Comparatively, *Wish I was Here*'s Zach Braff uses 'star power and fannish influence' (204) to appeal to *Scrubs*'s existing fanbase. Conversely, Melisa Joan Hart's *Darci's Walk of Shame* failed by her refuting fans' nostalgia for her previous work. A highly stimulating chapter, I would like to see fans'/contributors' voices given further attention; perhaps turning to forums or crowdfunding pages' comments sections.

The final chapter gives self-reflection on fan studies as a research and/or academic field that may suffer from over-formalisation, concurrent to fandom's mainstreaming (222). Booth seeks to remedy this by arguing that the latent qualities of Tumblr and its users offer an informal playfulness that the field could incorporate to remain innovative. The chapter is particularly useful in highlighting the importance of addressing under-explored areas, such as race (Wanzo 2015), and, I would argue, gives salience to online image cultures rather than solely focusing on the digital *logos* of fans writing (Gillan 2016).

To conclude, Booth's original, insightful, and engaging monograph provides accessible methodological schema for exploring Web 2.0 practices, spaces, and digital media. It also presents a wealth of analyses into specific fan communities and their rituals that compellingly demonstrate the social nature of online engagement and the affective grids of knowledge that emerge out of the intersections of fans consuming, producing, and performing. Resultantly, Booth challenges existing notions of media engagement that do not adequately analyse audiences' 'philosophy of playfulness' (8), by giving salience to shifting trans- and multi-medial digital environments they reside in. This book is a highly instructive resource for students, academics, and researchers alike, having relevance across a number of disciplines such as New Media Studies, TV and Film Studies, Video Game Studies, and Audience Studies.

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Biographical note:

Dr James Rendell has recently completed his PhD exploring the rise in 21st century graphic horror television and the audiences who consume it, at Cardiff University. He lectures in a number of areas including world cinema, digital media and cultures, history of the camera, and horror and science fiction cinema. He has written for the *New Review of Film and Television Studies*. He is the co-creator of the *Spirited Discussions: Exploring 30 Years of Studio Ghibli* conference, which is a forthcoming special edition of the *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*. Contact: rendellj1@cardiff.ac.uk.