

Joanna Kucharska

Also These Voices : Technology and Gender in the Practice of Fanvidding

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Audiences have always been an integral part of media and media studies, but they gained prominence in the age of television, and then internet. Studies of television audiences turned the light on them, showcasing the passive and active ways of approaching the media. But it was the internet emergence that really made the audiences visible, allowing for various channels of participation: the forum boards, comment sections appearing practically everywhere, from blog posts to youtube videos; the widespread tagging and recommendation system, blogging and microblogging, picture and video sharing, and social media profiles. Modern technology not only enabled the viewers to access information quickly, but also made sharing opinions incredibly easy. Creators who ignore the opinions posted online do it at their own peril – the word of mouth, the recommendations, and the viral marketing are powerful tools both in the hands of a television showrunner or a movie director and in the hands of a media-savvy single audience member, turning a personal watching experience into a communal effort.

Just as the modern media channels have enabled the audiences to speak up and opine, they have also enabled them to share their creativity with others. Participating in creative fan practices predates the internet, of course; what we consider the modern fandom was being shaped in the 60s and 70s, but the strategies used by fans have been present in our culture for centuries: the readers entered interactions with the texts, disputing their meanings, creating new ones, and coming up with works inspired by and continuing the existing texts. Fan practices in the age of internet are both grassroots efforts under the radar of the copyright laws or sometimes in argument with them, and extremely visible endeavors entering the mainstream. Fan-nish expression online is often considered juvenile and inconsequential, but some of those outputs are meant as serious commentary, in-depth analysis, and deep criticism of the texts they refer to and of the mainstream popular culture in general. Those producers and copyright holders who look favorably on fan creation tend to laud the more traditional forms that reinforce rather than question the status quo and norms, disregarding the more original and unorthodox approaches.

This text analyses one of the forms that offers a critical and analytical tool to the viewer. Vidding is a fan practice of juxtaposing video footage from one or several sources with the audio clips, most often music, from an external source, in order to comment on the original text. Vidders use this technique to analyse and criticise the source texts, often pointing out cultural narratives and media cliches, but the art is often dismissed by those unused to the peculiar aesthetic of the form and unfamiliar with the fandom tactics.

“The ‘television audience’ is not a social category like class, race, or gender – everyone slips in or out of it in a way that makes nonsense of any categorical boundaries: similarly when in ‘it’ people constitute themselves quite differently as audience members at different times.” (Fiske, 1989). Fiske sees the viewers not as social groups and masses, but as individuals, who not only define themselves as different audiences depending on what they choose to watch and how, but also who take a proactive, productive role in the media process. Fiske refers to two economies of television: the financial economy and the cultural economy (Fiske, 1987). The financial economy is the one we most often consider: it amounts to production of popular programming watched by the demographic groups attractive for advertisers. In this model, the audience is a commodity that can be, and is, sold to the advertisers. In the cultural economy what matters is the consumption of programming by the audience,

Joanna Kucharska is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Audio-visual Arts, Jagiellonian University. Her research interests include transmedia narratives, audience and fandom studies, and televisual and para-televisual texts.

who through this process decides on the popularity of the programming and therefore on its continuing existence. In essence, the audience becomes akin to a producer of meaning. Fiske goes on to discuss the cultural economy model as an integral part of fan practices. All popular audiences, he argues, engage in some degrees of semiotic productivity, in the model discussed above. But fans are a special group of the audience, often turning the semiotic productivity into some form of textual productivity, with the output circulating among the fan community and helping to define it. "Fans create a fan culture with its own systems of production and distribution" which he calls "a shadow cultural economy." (Fiske, 1987).

The fan practice of semiotic productivity that creates meanings different from those intended has been termed "poaching" by Michel de Certeau. "Far from being writers, readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across the fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves." (de Certeau, 1984)

De Certeau's poaching is closely related to the process of bricolage; appropriating existing cultural elements and changing the meaning of the 'borrowed' pieces to create a new one, in a semiotic collage. A *bricoleur*, according to Mikko Lehtonen, is a "sampler of meanings," who produces the semiotic content for themselves. Two different samplers will produce a different set of meanings from the same cultural elements, and the point of the practice, the oppositional reading, lies in the difference (Lehtonen, 2000). De Certeau brings the practice of bricolage, his "poaching," into reading texts. He saw the author and the reader almost as adversaries – the authors and producers are trying to impose their meaning on the text, and the readers are employing tactics during consumption of those texts, in engaging in what he called "secondary production" which "does not manifest itself through its own products but rather through its ways of using the products imposed by the dominant order." (de Certeau 1984). He saw culture as a struggle between the dominant power of creators of content on one side and the audiences' poachers on the other. What the secondary producers have on their side, is time, as they can engage with the text after the content producer is done with it.

One of the most influential factors affecting the reading of any given media text is the gender of the reader, and so it is not surprising that gender is one of the most often considered issues in writings about fandom as an empowering tactic for those made subordinate by the dominant cultural code. The very image of a fan differs depending on their gender, and fan activities tend to be divided across gender lines.

In her essay "What Can a Heroine Do? or Why Women Can't Write," Joanna Russ states that "Our literature is not about women. It is not about women and men equally. It is by and about men." (Russ, 1995). She points out that in the large portion of texts, especially texts that our culture is thought to be based on, texts which constitute our literary canon, do not only center around male protagonists, but do not really feature women, only images of women shown in relation to male characters as their wives, lovers, mothers, sisters, daughters, nemeses, monsters, temptresses, and so on. This theory is reiterated by the modern pop culture phenomenon, the Bechdel Test.

The Bechdel Test stems from an Allison Bechdel's comic strip "Dykes to Watch Out For" from 1985, entitled simply "The Rule." The comic presents a three-pronged test for movies that one of the characters would watch: 1) it has to have at least two women in it, 2) they have to talk to each other, 3) about something other than a man. Most of the western movies and a large

portion of tv shows and other media fail the test (Bechdel 2005). As Anita Sarkeesian from Feminist Frequency points out, the test is not to be taken literally. It is not a test to see if a movie is feminist, or if it is a good movie. Its role is to simply point out a systemic cultural problem of underrepresentation of women in mainstream culture (Sarkeesian, 2009). A part of fanfiction writing fandom, especially centered around Livejournal and Archive of Our Own has set out to fight the issue, including “Bechdel Test Pass” or “Bechdel Test Fix” as a fanfiction label on the AO3 archive, and hosting ficathons for stories designed to pass the test.

But not only the direct Bechdel Test fixes address the matter of underrepresentation of female characters and lack of narratives for women. One of the most visible and significant aspects of fanfiction, and so the object of most scholarly research into female fan activities, is the slash fiction. Slash is the term used in fandom and scholarship for stories depicting two men in a romantic and/or sexual context. The name comes from the virgule, or the forward slash, the “/” sign between the names of two main characters engaged in the romantic pairing used in the labels and headers for the fic, for example “Kirk/Spock.” The forward slash is used nowadays between the names of all romantic and erotic pairings, including lesbian and heterosexual stories, but the name ‘slash’ continues to denote a relationship between two men, causing some confusion in academia. Slash differs from a gay romance in that it is based on characters coded as heterosexual in the source material, reinvented and reread as homosexual, bisexual, or other, in fanfiction. To be classified as a slash story, a fanfic does not need to concentrate on the erotic relationship. A vast majority of fanfic does not reach beyond a PG-13 rating and does not feature sex scenes. Some stories are focused on more general plots, crime stories, action, sci-fi, etc., with the slash romance being a background factor, much as a heterosexual love interest would be featured in a mainstream movie.

Most of fan fiction, though not all, features a romantic plot or subplot. It is hard to determine if this is the cause or effect of a strong female domination of the fan fiction field, but the gender divide is impossible to ignore. Rhiannon Bury points out the difference between narratives offered to “boys and girls:” “being an intelligible boy or girl, man or woman, in part involves reading prescribed genres in certain ways and gaining pleasure from them.” Stories for girls and women center around romance and relationships. Those stories are clearly marked as intended for women and subsequently devalued as a lesser form of culture: Harlequin romances, soap operas, “chick flicks.” Narratives offered for men, such as blockbuster action films, science-fiction, comedies or crime stories, are served without a label, never called “guy flicks” or any equivalent of the female designator. They are intended to be viewed by all, regardless of their gender. Relationship stories remain a domain of women, perhaps explaining their prominent position among fanfiction, but not quite explaining the popularity of slash pairings (Bury 2005).

Patricia Frazer Lamb and Diana L. Veith offer an explanation, noting that slash reworks the typical romance narrative by presenting a relationship between equals. “Theirs is a union of strenghts, a partnership rarely possible between men and women today and just as unlikely – if not more so – between men and women in the ST television universe ...” (Lamb, Veith, 1989). As Harlequins and chick flicks would present various and countless takes on Cinderella story, with a clear and glamourised power imbalance between male and female protagonists; Star Trek universe, despite its futuristic, almost utopian setting, would only reinforce the gender divide, by featuring women

in supportive, nurturing roles of nurses and communications officers, submissive to most males and clad in miniskirts or fetish gear. A female reader and writer would turn to male relationships in search for equality. Lamb and Veith suggest that slash, in its pursuit of equality, plays with androgyny: both Kirk and Spock share traits commonly considered masculine and feminine. As Jenkins summarizes: “Kirk is sexually promiscuous, an undisputed leader, always ready for action and in command of most situations (masculine), yet he is also beautiful, emotional, intuitive, sensuous, and smaller (feminine); Spock is rational, logical, emotionally controlled, keeps others at distance, and stronger (masculine) while he is also virginal, governed by bodily cycles, an outsider, and fully committed to sexual fidelity (feminine).” (Jenkins 1992). Slash romance allows the female writer and reader to both explore a relationship based on mutual respect and equality, but also to identify with a protagonist and the hero of the narrative, something she is denied by the source material itself. Given a choice of identifying with “sex kittens” and “token females” of the mainstream culture and the male heroes... – “the adventurers and problem solvers,” (Bury, 2005) female fans easily choose the latter, even if by doing so they’ve entered the still contested and very controversial area of slash fiction.

Francesca Coppa, in the 2007 series of posts dedicated to gender in fandom on Henry Jenkins’ blog “Confessions of an Aca-Fan,” noted that “What many women want from narrative is often framed as embarrassing or shameful: we’re told that we shouldn’t value what we value in stories (high emotions, deep friendships and strong relationships, expressions of sexuality, as well as the intricate plotting and big ideas of SF) and that our critiques of mainstream culture therefore aren’t valid.” (Coppa, 2007). Francesca Coppa notes: “A fanfiction story or a fanvid may not be read as an obvious critique of its source the way an essay or a parodic film does, but it is. Many female fans critique the mainstream media for its lack of nuance and emotional depth, and we create stories and vids that rectify that; we add feelings to the text, we add personal attachments and sustained relationships; we add sex, tears and put in what I would say are appropriate emotional responses to the kinds of stories we like. You get to cry when your planet blows up. You might fall in love with the person you’ve been fighting aliens with.” (Coppa, 2007).

Fanvid, sometimes referred to in a shortened form as just ‘vid’ or called by its older moniker, ‘songvid,’ is “a fannish form of music video.” Fanvidders use footage from films, tv shows, or other video sources, and edit the short clips over a song, usually from an external source. The music is used as an interpretative lens, allowing the vidder to relay a message through the juxtaposition of the footage and audio. Within Western movie and television fandom, the practice is referred to as ‘vidding’ and similar practices exist in other fandoms, developed separately and existing independently, for example the AMVs (Anime Music Videos) of Japanese animation fandom, or machinima movies of the games fandom.

As has been noted before, vidding originated in the 1970s, in the Star Trek fandom. According to fandom historians, the first vidder was Kandy Fong, who has been showing her slideshows at conventions since 1975. (Coppa, 2007) Her first video, a Star Trek slideshow, “What Do You Do With a Drunken Vulcan?” (1975) has unfortunately not survived to this day. She used music from an external player overlying a series of slides of leftover footage from the cutting room floor. During later showings of her videos, Fong switched from using one projector to two, so she could cut faster from one image to another.

The earliest example of Fong's video that survived till this day is "Both Sides Now," recorded on a video tape for Gene Rodenberry, the series' creator, in 1986, though the slideshow itself dates back to 1980. Francesca Coppa calls this "the grandmother of vids," (Coppa, 2007) and the vid certainly seems almost prehistoric due to its technology. In the early 1980s, vidders were using footage sparsely, with minimum interference and with a very few shots used. It was not unknown for vidders to work as a collective, not individually, in order to speed up the process, and share expertise and equipment. Despite the technological distance, "Both Sides Now" displays the characteristics of contemporary vids on the aesthetic and analytic levels. The structure of the video is very similar to contemporary fanvids. Despite using footage from an external source, it is treated as a completed artwork, with both opening titles (crediting the song and the performer; the source of the video footage didn't need to be specified, as Fong displayed her slideshows only at Star Trek conventions and fan gatherings) and the final slide showing the name of the author and the contributors, in a similar way a movie would display a cast and crew list.

"Both Sides Now" is an example of a character study vid, and it sets out to offer a vidder's perspective on Mr. Spock, showcasing the dual nature of the character. Spock is half-human, half-Vulcan, and the conflict between his dual nature is one of the show's plots. By the choice of the song and the images from the series, Fong concentrates on the moments important to that aspect of Spock's character, but she frames it in a unique way available to a vidder. By choosing a song by Joni Mitchell, popularized by Judy Collins, she adds another duality to Spock: the male/female aspects of his personality that has been a point of identification for the female viewers. By choosing a version of the song performed by Leonard Nimoy, the actor behind Spock, she frames the lyrics as the character's inner voice, a tactic often employed by vidders to follow. Francesca Coppa points out that the voice of Spock – the "other" on the Enterprise's bridge, caught between a dual nature, is also the voice of the female audience, posing that just as Spock the character is at heart of the show, abandoned femininity is at heart of fandom (Coppa, 2007). She refers to the original, failed incarnation of Star Trek, the abandoned pilot "The Cage" (1964), featuring a different cast of characters. Spock is present in this early take, but not as the aloof, clinical science officer and second in command we would come to know from the actual show. This role is instead taken by Number One, a female officer who is everything Spock will become in the latter incarnation: technical, unemotional, and tactically brilliant. Like Spock, she is torn between methodical mind and a deeply masked sexuality. Number One disappears from the second iteration of Star Trek, her role handed down to Spock. Actress Majel Barrett was recast as Nurse Chapel: emotional in a feminine, submissive way, ultimately nurturing, and a (failed) love interest for Spock. (Majel Barrett also voices Enterprise's central computer in all versions of Star Trek, including the 2009 reboot, her last role before her death. Francesca Coppa in the same essay argues that the unseen voice of the computer could be the voice of female authors; the vidder and the fan artist.). In the tradition of fanvidding, while all that history and interpretation might not be immediately evident in the vid itself, it will influence the viewing experience of a Star Trek fan coming to the vid already armed with the fandom knowledge. For someone outside of fandom, the slideshow might be just a random collection of images set to music, but a fan will understand at least some (if not all) of the intra- and inter-textual references,

including the context of the images, their sequence, the choice of music and editing, and the meta-knowledge of fandom background. For example, most fans, aware of slash history of Star Trek fandom and the importance of the Kirk/Spock relationship to its fans, will interpret the slide of Spock looking at Kirk and Chapel accompanied with lyrics “I’ve looked at love from both sides now,” as relating to that fannish tradition. Spock, framed to the left of the image, is turned away from the viewer, looking in the same direction the viewer does, effectively reinforcing the point of view as belonging to him. Fong adds another duality to Spock’s nature: heterosexual, with the textual love interest of Christine Chapel, and homosexual, with the subtextual and fandom-generated relationship with James Kirk. Such qualities of the vid: open interpretation, character study, intertextuality and function within fandom contexts; are what makes Kandy Fong’s vid extremely significant not only for being historically first, but also for embodying the characteristics of fanvids to come.

The 1980s brought a technological shift to the practice of vidding with the spread of VHS equipment. It became commercially available between late 70s and early 80s, and vidders quickly adopted it as their primary technique. While this meant that making videos became a little easier, the process was still lengthy and technologically demanding, requiring two VCRs (one for playing the footage and the other for recording it) and great attention paid to timing of the edits. “The clips had to be selected and measured in advance, and then the clips had to be played on one VCR and recorded on the other in the exact order in which they were to appear. Vidders also had to grapple with rollback. As VCR users will remember, the tape rolled back a few frames or seconds when the button was pushed. Moreover, rollback wasn’t standard from machine to machine, so vidders had to learn the idiosyncrasies of their particular equipment. Worst of all, in the early days of vidding, the audio track could only be imported once all the clips had been laid down on tape, so a vidder who wanted to edit to the beat or who wanted internal motion synchronized with the music had to be extremely meticulous.” (Coppa, 2007). Because of the financial costs (in equipment and tapes) and time and effort required to create a vid, vidders often collaborated. The preserved vids of 1980s and 1990s are not only technologically advanced (especially when one considers they were made largely by amateurs) but also a testament to collaborative and community power of female fans acting together to create meanings from their perspective.

The process of vid making has been presented and lovingly spoofed in a 1990 meta-vid (a vid containing self-reflecting commentary on fandom) “Pressure,” by three vidders known collectively as Sterling Eidolan and the Odd Woman Out, a subgroup of the California Crew of vidders. The vid showcases the entire process, from travel, through planning, accumulation of resources, timing, clipping, filming and editing, and it also portrays a joy of fannish experience shared with others: the vidders eat together, sleep in the same house, get caught up in watching the show, and celebrate their successes. (Coppa, 2008)

Vidding, while growing in popularity during the 80s and early 90s, has not become a widespread activity until the development of easily accessible computer technology. The successful expansion of vidding can be attributed to two factors: personal computers and software making it easier to create videos, and the internet access opening a new form of distribution. In terms of editing, the tedious process of VHS editing has been substituted by the use of semi-professional and professional programs, like the basic Windows

editor Windows Movie Maker, Apple's iMovie, or more professional Adobe Premiere or Sony Vegas. It became easy to cut and edit film footage available to vidders in form of DVDs or electronic files downloaded from the internet. In terms of distribution, video hosting sites like YouTube or Vimeo made it easy to reach audiences. Early fanvidding sharing traditions have not disappeared completely in the age of online video, but flourished in a slightly updated form. As early videos were shown at conventions and fan gatherings, the tradition continues, for example with VividCon, a convention dedicated purely to vids, for vidders and watchers alike. Another of initial ways of viewing vids were tape distribution channels, with vidders or fans copying and sharing VHS tapes. Nowadays some vidders offer collections of their vids to be downloaded in a DVD-ready version, or distribute copies of DVDs themselves.

While the channels of distribution and the technological aspects of the vidding practice have changed, the primarily purpose, aesthetic, and aim of the vids remains the same: they are meant to present and comment on the films and shows that are objects of fandom, on the media narratives, and on the fandom itself. Watching vids is a challenging endeavor: at first glance they present nothing more but an arbitrary selection of footage, put together over a piece of music. Understanding of vids as a genre requires not only a kind of pop culture savvy relating to the knowledge of the source and concepts of mainstream pop culture, but also a multi-leveled media literacy and context of fandom in general and vidding fandom in particular. Most vids require close reading and repeated viewing to be comprehended.

"The Long Spear" is a Star Trek fan video, made by "Jmtorres, Niquaeli, et al," set to the song "The Boxer" by Simon and Garfunkel (with use of additional audio material by Joni Mitchell, Lorena McKennit, and voices of fans themselves) (JM Torres, 2009). The video has been made in 2009, after the reboot Star Trek movie directed by JJ Abrams came out, but it features footage from all the TV and movie incarnations of Trek, as well as some external source images.

The title is a reference to an obscure fandom metaphor described by Jo Walton as: "a point in writing, and it's a spear-point, it's very small and sharp but because it's backed by the length and weight of a whole spear and a whole strong person pushing it, it's a point that goes in a long way. (...) Examples are difficult to give because spear-points by their nature require their context, and spoilers. They tend to be moments of poignancy and realization. When Duncan picks the branches when passing through trees, he's just getting a disguise, but we the audience suddenly understand how Birnam Wood shall come to Dunsinane." (Walton, 2004). The metaphor takes a particular significance within fandom, as fans are not only aware of their fandoms' history, but also emotionally invested enough to carry on creating fanworks even if the show has ended its run. The Trek fandom flourished in the 70s, after the series has been cancelled. And even though the 2009 movie came seven years after poorly received "Star Trek: Nemesis," panned by critics and fans alike, fandom was ready and eager to accept the new reboot. The reception within fandom was a mix of nostalgia and excitement, with plenty of fanworks concentrating on joining the original timeline with the one offered by the new movie, reconfiguring new emotional connections of the 2009 movie in the context of storylines and relationships considered canon in the light of old series and movies. A plethora of fiction and vids, for example Here's Luck's "The Test" connected the original series footage with the new movie's clips. In "The Test" the vidder illustrates a common

fanfic trope based on a scene in the movie in which Spock Prime (portrayed by original series actor Leonard Nimoy) transfers memories to the young version of Kirk. Fanfic writers and vidders argued that along with the memories, and the “emotional transfer side-effects” of the Vulcan Mind Meld, Spock Prime gave Kirk the knowledge of the relationship between Kirk and Spock in the original timeline. Fan artists strove for a sense of continuity, both in terms of plot which they got from the new movie itself, but also a continuity of the emotional bond between the characters and the continuity of fannish practices of slashing the pair (Here’s Luck, 2010).

While “The Long Spear” is undoubtedly a Star Trek vid, it takes the events of the series and the movie, and the emotional bond between Kirk and Spock, as a secondary matter. It is important in terms of fan practices and fandom’s enjoyment of the show, but the analytical lens of the vidders is turned at the relationship between the text and its fandom, particularly its female audience, and highlights the female voices in the fandom’s conversation with the text. The video opens with a typical title card, offering the credit for the footage and the song used by the vidders, but it shifts into the second card, reading: “But hear also these women’s voices:” and a list of names of the women whose songs were also used in the video, the female creators of the vid, and everyone who contributed to the vid, along with fandom’s historical vidders, like Kandy Fong. As they fade, the emphasis is put on the bold text reading: “women’s voices” “uss Enterprise” and “fandom.”

We have already mentioned the history of Star Trek fandom’s relationship with gender in the light of the show’s treatment of its “First Lady,” Majel Barrett. Barrett was present in all the incarnations of Star Trek: she was cast as Number One, the clinical and logical first officer of the Enterprise in the failed pilot “The Cage;” she was one of the cast members in the actual run of the original series, playing Nurse Christine Chapel; and she recorded voice over for the *uss Enterprise* in all its movie and series versions, including the 2009 movie reboot. Majel Barrett was also married to the series’ creator Gene Roddenberry: the anecdotal story goes that when the TV execs told Roddenberry to get rid of the devilish-looking Spock and remove the female officer from the bridge, as they believed that the audiences would never accept a woman in a command position, Roddenberry “kept the Vulcan and married the woman, ‘cause he didn’t think Leonard [Nimoy] would have it the other way around” (Barrett, 2002). The mechanical, cold woman in charge becomes split in two due to Barrett’s recasting: she becomes the love interest Christine Chapel, whose function is to be in danger, wear short skirts, and pine after Spock, the embodiment of female physicality, emotionality, and sexuality. And she becomes the disembodied voice of the ship’s super computer, mechanical, controlling and ever-knowing voice of a mind without body.

Both voices could be argued to be the voice of fandom. Francesca Coppa argues that the voice of the Enterprise is the voice of the controlling, technologically-savvy woman who reshapes the narrative. In other words, the voice of the vidder. (Coppa, 2007) But the voice of the emotional, romantic Nurse Chapel is the other side of the fannish consciousness: the shipper who delves into the world of emotional and erotic connections between the characters. “The Long Spear” makes the juxtaposition even more tangible, setting its title cards over an audio excerpt from the original series. It is a conversation between Kirk and the Enterprise’s computer, voiced by Barrett, which the vidder also illustrates with subtitled title cards. Kirk records his Captain’s Log, a typical opening of many of the original series episodes.

At the end of the entry, the computer's mechanical voice accepts the log, but the acknowledgement is followed by an endearment. Kirk orders the computer to cease this kind of behaviour, an order which the computer accepts but follows with yet another endearment. The mechanic voice of the computer takes on a throaty, seductive and affectionate quality during the conversation, as if expressing its feelings towards Kirk. What is interesting is that the original conversation was a random one off event, not meriting any sort of plot or a follow-up, but it is used and reframed by the vidders as a representation of the fandom's female voices, both struggling for the control of the message and emotionally affectionate towards the characters despite the fact that that emotional approach is unwelcome by the copyright holders and controllers of the meanings, here represented by Kirk's patriarchal and decisive orders.

The proper song part of the video starts with footage of young Kirk from the reboot movie, but when the lyrics voice "though my story's seldom told," the vid cuts between Kirk's face and images of women reading, their faces out of focus so they can represent the everywoman and not a particular character. The footage comes from *Star Trek: DS9* alternate universe episode in which the crew are science-fiction writers in the 50s. The *Trek* connection is fortunate, but almost coincidental; while the knowledge of the *DS9* is the type of fan textual knowledge that enriches the vid-watching experience, the power of the sequence comes from the visual representations of women whose stories are not told, juxtaposed with the footage of Kirk, the hero of the story. The following sequence introduces Kirk, played by Chris Pine, the way he is introduced in the movie reboot to the new audiences: a reckless, daredevil kid from Iowa. It shows the death and sacrifice of his father at the ship *USS Kelvin* – an aberration from the original series and the plot point sending the reboot movie into a new timeline, and the meeting with Captain Pike and shots of *Enterprise* under construction, the events that will send Kirk out on his journey. As the singer's voice begins to hum, the images of the Kirk Prime from the original show, the role performed by William Shatner, begin to bleed through the reboot footage. As the new viewers of *Trek* were introduced to the character through his hot-headedness and volatile instincts, the *Trek* fan is reminded of the same aspects of the original Kirk's personality in a series of flashes to fighting scenes of the original Captain juxtaposed with very similar shots of the new hero.

The series of violent confrontations leads the New Kirk to his meeting with the New Spock. The footage follows that with a meeting of New Kirk with Spock Prime and the violent physicality of the new relationship is contrasted with the gentle touch of the Vulcan Mind Meld between Spock Prime and New Kirk and between the characters in their original setting. If the images of the original series trickles through before, the mind meld sequence starts a flood, with the vidders cutting between the reboot and the original to highlight the differences and similarities between the old and the new, the two versions of the relationship of the same characters in a different universe. As the chorus rises, images of other characters start to appear, with the cuts between their old universe and new versions, followed by a sequence of characters from different *Star Trek* versions, from the original pilot to the latest *Enterprise* tv series. Vidders give most of the spotlight to female characters, but they are not the only ones to be featured as emotional events and connections are briefly glimpsed in a long montage piling up footage from all *Trek* sources.

As the music rises, the montage expands from the tight character scenes into sweeping images of battles, starships, explosions and disasters. The vidders

show the viewer all of the important events in the decades of Trek history, reminding of the years of fandom's existence. This is all the length and weight of the spear behind the sharp point of the reboot movie, the emotional baggage of all the fans encapsulated in a minute of fleeting footage. To a non-fan, this is a selection of images without context or meaning, but to anyone in fandom, this is a personal and emotional history of the object of fans' devotion. The montage ends with the emotional punch of the new movie: planet Vulcan is destroyed, forever changing and reshaping the original timeline. Whatever comes after the movie will not follow the same path as the previously established canon material, in a way wiping all of the events we have just witnessed out of the existence. For the new viewer of the 2009 movie, Vulcan's destruction was an emotional event due to the personal loss suffered by one of the movie's protagonists, Spock. but for the Star Trek fans, this is the end-all of history. The sequence ends with a nostalgic, emotional image of Spock Prime, played by Leonard Nimoy, looking at the sky and watching his home planet's destruction, being at once the object of fans' affection and a representation of fans watching the movie.

The song fades on that image, but the video doesn't end; instead, the audio side is picked by a different voice, that of Joni Mitchell performing "Both Sides Now." The short segment features the lyrics "as every fairy tale comes real, I've looked at love that way," over the images of new movie's Spock juxtaposed with pictures of a Spock/Uhura pairing, both from the old and new versions of Star Trek. In the old timeline, Spock and Uhura have never been romantically linked on screen – as it has been previously mentioned, Spock's pining love interest was Nurse Chapel, and it has been shown in the movie continuations of the series that Uhura married Chief Engineer Scott. In the new universe, with the altered timeline, relationships are reconfigured and Spock gets a "fairy tale ending." The use of the Joni Mitchell song is a clear callback to Kandy Fong's original video study of Spock's character and relationships. Kandy Fong's name is one of those featured in "The Long Spear's" opening credits and the sequence is in equal parts a homage to the history of vidding, an update of Spock's personal history, and a reclamation of the female voice. Fong's video used a Leonard Nimoy cover of the song instead of the original female-sung version, and the return of a woman's voice seems to emphasise both the female aspects of Spock's dual nature, and the voice of the vidder and the fan, who now looks at the "fairy tale" of Spock/Uhura romance, even though she has seen "both sides" of Spock's pairings, with the fannish interpretation of the homoerotic aspects of Kirk/Spock.

And those aspects of the fannish interpretation are highlighted by another callback to the history of vidding and Star Trek, as Joni Mitchell's voice fades into Loreena McKennitt's for one line: "please remember me." The lyric is juxtaposed with a scene of Spock of the new universe meeting Spock Prime for the first time. For the casual viewer, or even a fan of Trek, the combination of the lyrics and the footage could mean the importance of memory and history in fandom. The meeting of old and new Spocks, and Leonard Nimoy's presence in the movie, are important to fans, who feared that a complete recasting of the original characters would mean a downright reboot and a denial of the decades of history this fanvid just showcased. The scene between Nimoy and Quinto, who portrays new Spock, is as much about passing a torch to the new generation of cast and fans as it is about reassuring old fans of the continuity and respect for the history. But the vidders imbue the scene with additional meaning by overlying it with Lorena

McKennitt's verse; "please remember me" is a plea for respecting the history of the original stories, but it is also a reference to the very specific work in the history of fandom and vidding: Killa's "Dante's Prayer." Killa's vid is regarded as one of the milestones of the fandom, both for the technological inventiveness (it was made in 2001, just when the vidders were discovering what exactly could be achieved on computers, and the vidding software was becoming widespread and accessible), and for the emotional resonance of the Kirk/Spock story arc in the cinematic Star Trek.

Inclusion of "Dante's Prayer" in the video reinforces the message of how important memory and history is in fandom, especially in Star Trek fandom; the message build up throughout the vid. Unlike most of the Star Trek fanworks, Killa's vid doesn't concentrate on the original series, but chooses the movies as the subject of her analysis, particularly the second and third movies: "The Wrath of Khan" and "The Search for Spock." The movies see the heroes aged and moved on from adventuring in space; in fact, *The Wrath of Khan* could be seen in terms of a struggle against old age and inevitable death. The storyline of the first movie is driven by Khan, a villain from the past, and culminates in Spock's heroic sacrificial death. The third movie (and the second continuing the storyline) tells a story of rebirth as Spock comes back from the dead, nurtured by a life-giving planet, but he does not remember who he is, nor does he remember his friends, including Kirk. Significantly, Spock is able to return to life precisely because of his memories: his body has been brought back by the planet, but to be awoken he needs his memories, the Vulcan "katra," which he previously deposited in Dr. McCoy. His memories bring him back to life and allow him to recognise Kirk, and call him "Jim," in the scene Killa's vid builds up to throughout the vid with the song's repeated lyrics "please remember me." The final lines are reinforced with sepia images of the original series embedded in the footage, meaning to represent Spock's memories of Kirk.

"The Long Spear," calls back to that with Loreena McKennitt's line, embedding the same sepia images standing for Spock Prime's memories as Killa did in her original video. For the viewer unfamiliar with the history of vidding, the scene stands for Spock Prime's sharing of his memories with the young Spock, just like he did in the earlier movie scene with Kirk through the mind meld. Leonard Nimoy is not only the connection to the history and continuity of the show, he is also there as the fandom stand-in. In the altered timeline he is the one who knows how the things were and how they should be, and endeavors to right them – and the fixing of the universe's history begins with fixing its emotional core, the relationship between Kirk and Spock. He has the same extra-textual knowledge the audience possesses, and tries to guide the events, just like a fan might in a fanfic or a fanvid. And as the vidders use the same clips that featured in "Dante's Prayer," they create additional levels of meaning available for the fan who is aware of the vidding history, who has another level of extra-textual knowledge and is able to interpret the scene within the wider scope.

In the last segment of "The Long Spear," the footage of the conversation between two Spocks continues, but the music comes back to the originally used Simon and Garfunkel song, with one change: this time it is sung by a voice of a female fan. The final lyrics are: "Now the years are rolling by me, they are rockin' evenly, I am older than I once was, And younger than I'll be, that's not unusual. No, it isn't strange, after changes upon changes, We are more or less the same, After changes, we are more or less the same." What

is significant, it is that this verse is missing from the wide release of the song on the “Bridge Over Troubled Water” record, and it has only been played at a handful of live performances. “The Long Spear” uses the original recording of the song, with the missing verse, but the lines themselves are added, sang by a fan, GreyBard. The verse overlays the footage of the old and young Spock, and the voice of the song, sang by the female fan, seems to be Spock Prime’s point of view, again stressing the dual nature of the Vulcan, possessing both male and female qualities, but also, in this case, as the character within the universe and as the voice of the audience commenting on the story. As Spock Prime offers a Vulcan greeting to his younger counterpart, there is another line of images embedded with the footage. As the lyrics say “we are more or less the same,” the greeting is repeated by other characters throughout the verse: Kirk, Spock and McCoy from the original series and movies, Captain Picard, and Captain Archer from the following spin-offs. And then “after changes” as the lyrics say and as the young Spock returns the greeting, raising his hand, so do others from the embedded images, characters and real people from our universe and pop culture: Stephen Colbert, Hiro from *Heroes*, Tony Dinzotto from *NCIS*, Zoe Saldana’s (new movie *Uhura*) character from *Terminal*, Sheldon Cooper from *Big Bang theory*, and finally, President Obama. All of them are shown with their hands up and fingers settled into a recognizable Vulcan salute, the sign of fannishness. Those images fade into photos taken especially for the vid: fans responding with the same gesture.

Fanvidders work within a very specific fandom context, borrowing from the tradition of existing practices, entering a dialogue not only with cultural texts, but also with other fans within a larger fan community, often intending to offer alternative readings. Not all fanvids, of course, aim to negotiate meaning or criticise the sources: some are celebratory or promotional. But their common characteristic is that vidders choose the material they work with very carefully and meticulously edit it to reinforce the message they wish to convey.

Vidding is also an entirely subjective form of fan practices: in watching the vid the viewer is almost literally watching the original source through someone else’s eyes, as the footage has been almost entirely decontextualised and reappropriated. Of course, some members of the media audience are used to looking at media texts through someone else’s lens: it has been often pointed out that the camera’s view follows the male gaze, forcing the identification with a male subject most often looking at female objects on the viewer, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. In this way the vidding shift of the gaze could be seen not only as a subversion of the mainstream standard, but also as a reclaiming of the gaze. Favidding is a relatively new form of expression, even though not as recent as one might expect from its present strong ties to the internet. It is not, however, widely researched, and one can hope that the ideas touched upon within this article would be expanded on further in the years to come, particularly as the social media and prosumer culture-oriented web tools make vidding easier, more accessible, and widely available. As audiences become more savvy in interpreting meanings through multiple channels at once, vidding could be seen as an example of how we will look at and consume media in the near future, and also how the audiences will communicate between themselves and negotiate the meanings provided by the creators.

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