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MUSIC FANDOM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

A Conversation

Nancy Baym, Daniel Cavicchi, and Norma Coates

In the context of cultural commodities, music has undergone some of the most striking changes in the digital era. To discuss the impact of music's changing technologies on fans and fan cultures, we brought together three phenomenal music scholars, Nancy Baym, Daniel Cavicchi, and Norma Coates. Nancy Baym's books on digital media cultures, *Tune In, Log On*, and *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, are foundational texts for understanding online cultures, and her forthcoming book, *Playing to The Crowd: Musicians, Audiences, and the Intimate Work of Connection*, is much-anticipated. Daniel Cavicchi's scholarship on music audiences, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* and *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans,* offers thoughtful and nuanced accounts of historical and contemporary music fan cultures. Norma Coates has written extensively on music cultures and gender; her forthcoming book, *Rocking the Wasteland: A Cultural History of Popular Music on American Network Television from Elvis to MTV*, is a cultural and industrial history of popular music on network television from Elvis' first appearance to the development of cable. Together, these scholars discuss how digital technologies have influenced (and continue to influence) music fandom. In their exchange, they explore a wealth of topics including definitions of "music" and "fan," the changing relationships between musicians and fans, emotion and gender, and approaches for studying music fandom as it continues to evolve.

Norma Coates: What is music fandom in the age of digital technologies? Are we supposed to talk about the modern analogues (which seems like totally the wrong word here) to old-school fans, who bought albums the day they came out, read music 'zines and criticism, went to concerts, bought the stuff, wore the t-shirts, joined the fan clubs, learned the music and so on? Or is a fan a teen girl who follows all of the One Direction Tumblrs, for example? Where does the line between scene member and fan exist, or does it? What is a fan these days? Can it be someone who just likes a certain artist or genre of music, or does fandom connote something more active or different altogether?

Daniel Cavicchi: Norma, you're totally right to point to the ways in which this is a matter of definition. The underlying assumption is that if digital technology has affected the music industry, it also must have affected fan culture and behavior.

I do see changes. Even when I was starting to work with Springsteen fans in 1991/92, using my modem to connect to discussion boards, there was a general sense among those users that the world of mailed fanzines and annual cons was shifting. I only went online to do research because I could not afford to travel around the country to interview people, but I realized quickly that fans themselves were starting to go online at that time, too, to connect with each other. Springsteen fans frequently reported loneliness, limited resources (in terms of music), and a desire to meet other fans; digital technology was an emerging tool that gave them new options. I never expected, however, the ways in which Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Soundcloud, etc. would transform the contours of fandom itself. Before 1995, access to concert tapes, obscure B-sides, stories, and news was not closed but it took some doing; websites and search engines opened that up by making resources (archives, files, people) more visible. Moreover, before 1995, being a fan—especially exhibiting monomaniacal fascination—was still portrayed in the media as questionable and/or concerning. But social media sites, like Facebook or Twitter, openly encouraged users to exhibit their personal obsessions, to "like" and "follow" without any sense that it was creepy or weird. Today, "building followers" and marketing to a niche fan base, is a far more acceptable business strategy.

The strangest discourse change for me has been the ubiquitous use of the term "superfan" over the past decade or so. I wrote an article for *Fast Company* last year, in which the copy editor, to my dismay, used that word in the title. Pre-social media, there were certainly degrees of fandom in the Springsteen community, including "casual fans" and "extreme fans." Such distinctions arose as a way for members to sort, and debate, fellow members' knowledge and commitment, especially after Springsteen became a worldwide star and his audience diversified overnight. But "superfan" has arisen in a social media context where, apparently, everyone is presumed a "fan"—that is, has "liked" or "followed" something. To be a superfan means that you are *really* committed; in other words, you are what we used to call a "fan." Maybe I'm just getting old, but it took me a while to get my head around that one.

Despite some of these changes in access and context, I do see some continuities of fan behavior since the early nineteenth century, before "fan" was even a word, to the present. I couldn't believe, when researching, say, opera fans in the 1850s, how much they seemed like Springsteen fans in the 1990s. Both were engaged with music in ways that purposefully enhanced its role in their daily lives. I've come to see fandom as a means of approaching the consumption of the arts that involves obstinately remaining *in* a performance frame when it is no longer there. The struggle to stay emotionally and experientially connected with performers and performances, aside from conventions of exchange set up by service industries, is always there.

The wrinkle, which we might discuss further, is that social media appears to enable this "maintenance of connection" like never before, and, in fact, entrepreneurs have sought ways to monetize it by recognizing attention itself as a commodity. That's why everyone is fan, now, I suppose, and why "superfans" are the new oddity that needs explanation and discussion.

Nancy Baym: Digital media have transformed music fandom as much as they've changed fandom—and arguably citizenship—in general. Fans always talked to one another, and set up informal exchange networks to share information, recordings, and their own creative works, but the internet provided group infrastructures that helped them make these networks semi-permanent, more permeable, and to make the conversations they had always been having more visible to each other and to music makers and those in the business. Digital media provided infrastructures for fan productivity, from the enduring archives of live recordings,

tour dates, releases, and so on, to the creation of fan art, cover songs, fan videos, and the like. This gives fans more power to shape distribution, production, and reception than when their practices were primarily for one another and invisible to the powers that be.

Dan, I love that you are pointing to the rise of "superfan" as a phenomenon. I link it to the rise of social media, the decline of recorded music sales, and the deep uncertainty about how to make a living now if you used to do it from record sales (which only a small, if vocal and visible, minority of working musicians ever did). There have always been "superfans." In *Tramps Like Us*, you talk about fan hierarchies and how some viewed their own fandom as bigger, better, and perhaps more valid than other people's Springsteen fandom. But the new labeling of these people seems directly tied to new challenges in making money from fans. Benji Rogers, for example, created PledgeMusic specifically to target these "superfans," arguing that artists have been "leaving money on the table" by not catering to their needs. Among the things such superfans turn out to be eager to buy, perhaps ironically, are material manifestations of their fandom. In a digital era, autographs, posters, and handwritten lyric sheets emerge as more valuable than ever.

The maintenance of the connection you reference is at the heart of the work I have been doing for several years and is, I think, one of the biggest ways digital technology has affected music fandom. Fans now assume that all but the most elite artists (and sometimes even they) are going to be in constant touch with them, often providing glimpses into their daily lives. Musicians I've interviewed describe it as no longer a thrill but an expectation that they will reply to fans' messages. I've developed the concept of "relational labor" to explain these new expectations that musicians will be in continuous contact with their fan base and will cultivate an audience devoted to their online presence as much as their music. Musicians now have to go where the fans are living their daily lives and interject themselves into their feeds in ways they will find meaningful and engaging. Making great music and being great on stage no longer seem to be enough. Catering to superfans becomes a part of this, but that is always pushing back against the need to cultivate more fans. The more you cater to a small, devoted elite, the more alienated the less-engaged fans can feel. There are so many kinds of audiences, and interacting with all of them through music, performance, and social media raises opportunities but also challenges we've not yet begun to unpack as scholars.

Norma Coates: I was a research fellow at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame archives recently. One of the collections I dug through was called "Collection on the Monkees." It was three boxes of records, clippings, fan club newsletters, and more from 1988–1991, collected by a woman from Reno who very much fits the description of "Superfan." She was very active in organizing other fans for conventions, following the Monkees on tour, subscribing and cataloguing fan-club materials from around the world, writing and distributing newsletters, and making sure that fans respected "the boys." Analog Monkees fans were productive, producing videos, art, poetry, stories, and other things now facilitated online. She was in her late 50s at the time, and was already in her 30s during the first run of *The Monkees* television program. There are distinct continuities between analog and digital fandom and traces of the former in the latter. I wonder how first-generation Monkees fans, those who became fans in the mid-1960s, communicate with each other? What anchors their fandom now? How and what do they share? There are active Monkees digital sites, and some that originated as fan clubs in the 1980s. Many of these are dormant. It appears that second-generation Monkees fans, who were introduced to the band on MTV in the 1980s, are more active online. Does that mean that first-generation fans are not active fans, or that they just perform their fandom differently? Matt Hills' work on *Dr. Who* and generational fandom (2002) is useful here.

To turn to Nancy's quote from the creator of PledgeMusic: I've Pledged or Kickstarted several musician campaigns, but not because I consider myself a superfan of the artist. I Pledged Viv Albertine's album because I loved the Slits. I also know that women of a certain age, punk bonafides or not, have a hard time being heard, musically. I wanted to help guarantee that her music would see the light of day. I have Kickstarted many other projects for artists (and filmmakers), especially those who are older and otherwise might not have a chance of making music that could end up on Spotify or Apple Music for someone to discover. I think that Rogers is a bit misguided. If all your fans Kickstart your project and get your album as a premium, who's going to buy it?

Interpretative Frames for Fan Studies in the Digital Age

Daniel Cavicchi: Norma, I can't wait to hear about your experiences with different generations of Monkees fans. As you ask, "Does that mean that first-generation fans are not active fans, or that they just perform their fandom differently?" I do have to say that my gut reaction whenever degrees of "activity" come up in fandom is to forget it and move instead toward more nuanced descriptions of difference. I've never found that the active/passive distinction tells us much about what fans are actually doing. But this does raise the moral question: what kinds of interpretive frames should we bring to fan studies, particularly as "fandom" itself seems to change and encompass very different behaviors, values, and contexts?

Sorting out continuities and disjunctures of fandom over time is, I think, an important future area of fan scholarship. Fandom, as recognized by scholars, is no longer a new phenomenon, linked to the contemporary, but now has acquired longitude, a past. The field of fan studies has now been around for more than 30 years, revealing new opportunities for comparative work to refine theories and to deepen understanding. The ethnographies of the 1980s and 1990s are rich with insight; contemporary ethnography will extend and contradict those insights in useful ways. At the same time, scholars in the field are recognizing that fan behavior itself likely has a longer trajectory of meaning; it appears to have origins that go back beyond the twentieth century, beyond *Star Trek*, rock'n'roll, and Hollywood. At the same time, I think fan studies is also beginning to gain latitude—the exploration of fandom and its corollaries in various cultures is wide open for exploration. I'm thinking especially of books like Judith Pascoe's *The Sarah Siddons Files* (2011), or Deidre Lynch's *Loving Literature* (2015), both about ardent audiences in the eighteenth century; or Allison McCracken's book *Real Men Don't Sing* (2015), about early twentieth-century crooning, gender, and listening. For global fandom, I think about C. Lee Harrington and Denise Bielby's essay on global fandom in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007); there is also Sharon Mazzarella's work on worldwide girlhood and fandom in *Girl Wide Web 2.0* (2010). Bertha Chin and Lori Morimoto did a special section of *Participations* in November 2015 on transcultural fandom, which was really useful.

In terms of the recent shift from analog to digital fandom, I was thinking about what you said, Nancy, about digital media and how it "gives fans a power to shape distribution, production and reception far greater than they had when their practices that were primarily for one another and invisible to the powers that be." The idea of "visibility" is quite interesting. One of the main elements of PledgeMusic, for instance, is that the value of fandom (monetary and cultural) is explicitly recognized and organized by service providers. What should be the connection between performers and fans, and what is the role of music services in cultivating that? I have always understood fandom in the old-school sense as existing in tension with conventions of capitalistic exchange—not necessarily in the sense of hegemonic "resistance," which I've always argued is more about scholars' politics than fans' politics—but more along the lines

of Matt Hills' conception of fans as embodying a contradiction, of simultaneously being "commodity-completists" and expressing "anti-commercial beliefs" (Hills 2002: 44). I don't know if this tension still exists in the digital world, where commercialism itself seems to have been redefined in particular ways that help fans bypass traditional business relationships. The very idea of a "sharing economy," for example, is fan-like, reminiscent of tape trees, ticket swapping, or the circulation of concert set lists. The idea of "relational labor" is interesting because it reformats the meaning of fandom from a world where record labels controlled distribution and the burden of connection was on fans, to a world where fans control acquisition, and the burden of connection is on performers. In other words, the work of fandom has shifted to performers in a digital world. It used to be that fans had to work to get near performers, to follow their work, to build relationships; now, all that seems to be assumed, thanks to digital media, and it is performers who need to work to get near fans, to follow their work, to build relationships. I'm sure I've simplified all this too much, but that does that fit with your general concept, Nancy?

Nancy Baym: Yes, Dan, that is dead on. The work of relationship building has shifted to musicians who no longer get to rest on "mystique" (although in some cases a select few still do). To briefly go back to PledgeMusic, though, I don't think Rogers would say that *only* superfans will fund beyond the asking price, but that (at least some) superfans are willing to pay a lot of money for things that the music industry has generally refused to sell them. One thing I find compelling about Kickstarter, PledgeMusic, and Bandcamp is that they take away an upper limit on how much someone can spend on a band.

I see the tension between commodity-completism and anti-commercialism as a clash between social and economic cultures (which, of course, have never been as separate as analytic distinctions between them would have it). Put too crudely, social cultures are built through gift exchange, and economic ones through market exchange. But money can be (and often is) a gift. Fans are in gift culture relationships with one another, and even if they pay for it, often experience music as offering more value than the cash could convey, so that excess can be felt as a gift from the musicians. Yet, musicians are often in market relationships with their audiences, as they are financially dependent on revenue earned from them, even as they are in social relationships with them as well.

If our relationships with musicians are going to get more personal, fans need mechanisms for gift giving to artists, just as they need mechanisms for reaching fans where and how they live. Direct-to-fan sales and crowdfunding platforms can be a way to reconcile the social and economic spheres, in that they can reframe fan payment as a form of gift giving rather than a form of commercial buy-in. I worry that the enormous amounts of affect generated by music and musicians and their fans through social media sites tend to accrue financially toward investors rather than either fans or artists. I have been thinking about how the internet is supposed to have this wonderful power to disintermediate, so that labels and distributors can't stand between artists and audiences, but what really happens is that a new class of intermediaries steps in alongside the "traditional" ones that emerged in the last century. I'd love to see work articulating these dependencies and rewards, both in US/European contexts, but perhaps more importantly, in domains where other arrangements are emerging.

Intermediation

Daniel Cavicchi: In the context of fandom, intermediation addresses a desire for a level of immediacy that cannot be achieved. But who desires to connect to whom, through what, and why? In the 1820s, music was mainly a domestic affair, and a love for music could best flourish

through playing or singing with one's friends and family. But, in a growing middle-class environment which placed value on training, control, and accomplishment, love for music came to involve products and services for instrument and vocal instruction, including instrument sales, printed music, and lessons, as well as public performances that brought star performers and heterogeneous audiences together. By the 1850s, instrument manufacturers, sheet music publishers, and concert promoters had become intermediaries for a variety of musical desires and connections between teachers and players, choirs and congregations, songwriters and listeners, performers and audiences, and even private and public experiences. How to love music was being defined in a context of changing markets wrought by technology and urbanization, new ideas of self-autonomy, and anxieties about gender, race, class, and national identity.

I bring all this up, because I see intermediaries today wrestling with some of the same definitional questions about music in a changing social context. Music fandom depends on what we think "music" is. What kinds of musical desire have emerged in cultures where the history of recorded music is readily accessible online, or where claims to physical ownership have become moot? Should music business entrepreneurs today find ways to support performer–audience connectivity with new, more developed, technological tools, or, instead, will they identify and intervene in completely new conceptions of musical experience, such as selling attention, facilitating mobile engagement, or, as Anahid Kassabian (2013: 111) has suggested, supporting the "distributed subjectivity" of "musical ubiquity"?

The digital age has certainly presented new tools for performers and fans to enact ongoing interests. Twitter, for instance, as discussed by scholars like Lucy Bennett (2012), Bill Wolff (2015), or Liza Potts (2012), for example, has been fascinating in creating opportunities for fans: reframing critical dialogue, providing spaces for role playing, or, in Wolff's terms, "remediating" musical events. The opportunities for performers has been equally important, fostering greater reciprocity with fans in creating, marketing, and refining work. Crowdsourcing, along the lines of Amanda Palmer's Theatre is Evil, presents a leveling of fan–performer interaction that is unprecedented in recent memory. Of course, old debates still come into play: is interactive co-creation between fans and artists online, for example, real and substantive, or just another illusion of intimacy? What are the dynamics of power in such participatory projects? To what extent do local cultures and values persist in global online interaction?

Nancy Baym: It's worth noting that while Amanda Palmer's success with crowdfunding is unprecedented in terms of how much money she raised, both Kristin Hersh and Marillion have been crowdfunding their entire careers since the mid-1990s. In both of those cases, they found their fans online and, in different sorts of collaborative conversations, let the fans take the lead in designing their crowdfunding.

Time is another thread running through this discussion. It's interesting to see two parallel tracks, one the chronology of history and the other of the aging of cohorts of fans like the Monkees fans (or the Cliff Richards fans Ruth Deller has written about). Dan, I wonder if you have more thoughts on Springsteen fandom that might parallel Norma's thoughts on the Monkees given that it's been nearly 20 years since *Tramps Like Us* was published and Springsteen's fans seem every bit as engaged as ever. Is it the same people? With their kids? And grandkids? Any sense of young/older differences? Or how the older fans have and haven't modified practices as they've aged?

Fandom and Aging

Daniel Cavicchi: I have not conducted an in-depth ethnographic study of Springsteen fans today, but there does seem to be an inter-generational component that is often reported in

news coverage of concerts, where sons and daughters are now accompanying parents to shows. Generally, at least, the sharing of fandom across generations does occur more regularly than the idea of "teen culture" may imply. Even back in the 1990s, younger Springsteen fans were reporting how their fandom began with a parent or older sibling introducing them to Bruce's music. And this went the other way, too—one of my favorite interviewees was a mother who had discovered Springsteen through her daughter. Remarkably, I saw this same phenomenon in the 1840s and 1850s.

As your questions suggest, Nancy, this is not only about what happens across people of different generations but also across one's own life. That is something I can only speak of, really, in terms of my own fan experience. I do know that Denise Bilby and C. Lee Harrington, in *Aging, Media, and Culture* (2014), have discussed how fandom gets worked—and re-worked—into long-time fans' life stories, which is fascinating. To the extent that fandom is not a set of behaviors, or a thing, but rather a resource, or "affordance," in Tia Denora's terms (2000: 44) for self-making and empathy, this makes sense to me.

Norma Coates: I saw the Monkees, half of them, on their fiftieth anniversary tour in 2016. The composition of the crowd did not surprise me. Most of us appeared to be first or second generation fans, in old or young middle age. I was hoping for screaming, but beyond polite applause, the only audience noise was made by a few rowdy male fans. This may have more to do with the venue, a casino in Windsor, Ontario, with the widest, most comfortable seats I've ever experienced at a concert.

The show itself catered to fan memories of the group, and the program, as they originally appeared on television and on record. Television screens were an important part of the show, as they are at many larger venue appearances. One of them was placed behind two remaining members of the Monkees, Micky Dolenz and Peter Tork (Mike Nesmith did not tour with them, although he did perform on the group's recent album), and their eight-member backup group. Before the show began, that screen featured clips from the programs, old television commercials on which they appeared, and other visual memorabilia curated by Monkees archivist, Andrew Sandoval. The other two screens augmented the live performance on stage, sometimes with close-ups of the action, other times with video of Davy Jones, whose spectral voice from beyond the grave provided the vocals for songs, like "Daydream Believer," he was most associated with. The set list consisted of mainly older songs from the group's first four albums, released while the program was initially on the air. The set began with the old NBC peacock logo and music that preceded each weekly episode.

At one point, both Peter and Micky acknowledged the criticism formerly lobbed at them and their fans. I provide this detail because it expresses a great deal about Monkees fandom as it now exists. Numerous active Facebook pages are devoted to the group, several with upwards of 1,000 members. There are many active Twitter accounts, including one in which contributors describe their (mostly) safe and often sexual fantasies about members of the group. A first-generation fan Facebook group is curated by a woman. Members primarily post pictures of group members, often from the 1960s. Women far outnumber men. The latter are more likely to post links to magazine articles and photos of the Monkees with other music notables of the 1960s, particularly the Beatles.

Zilch! A Monkees Podcast! has a Facebook group with over 3,000 members. My cursory review of the group indicates that the male–female split is about 50/50. This group is related to the Zilch podcast, a very popular resource for Monkees fans. The podcast is produced by a man who discovered the Monkees after MTV revived interest in the group in 1986. That led to a new generation of fans who could hear the influence of the Monkees in then-current

groups, and who, in the age of MTV, did not care so much about whether groups played their own instruments or the ethics and legitimacy of using television as a platform for selling records. Since then, men have assumed the role of Monkees archivists, working with the group and their label, Rhino Records, on re-releases and new projects. I suspect that the masculinization of certain aspects of Monkees fandom factored in no small way to the rehabilitation of the group in the public (male) eye, and contributed to their longevity as the group celebrates their 50th anniversary. I am looking forward to pursuing this project further, as digital Monkees fandom might have much to tell us about fandom, age, and gender identity.

Daniel Cavicchi: There's something really interesting in your description of the Monkees concert—about girlhood to adulthood and the fading of expressive screaming to more conventional clapping. Perhaps the casino, the archival images, and the disembodied voice of Davy Jones was enough of a changed set-up that people could not conceive of their earlier selves and responses (or even alternative responses). After all, the bounds of what is "appropriate" are signaled in hundreds of tiny ways. Still, we are really at an interesting point in rock fan studies, where ethnographic scholarship can be truly longitudinal in ways not really possible in the past.

Musicians and Fandom in the Digital Age

Norma Coates: I'm looking forward to Nancy's book because I want to know more about what musicians think about fans in the digital age. Does the concept of the "superfan" or even the "fan" mean the same to them as it does to scholars? Is there a cost to being too accessible to fans, especially when there is no financial exchange involved? At what point is superfandom a one-sided relationship with the musician, as Dan put it, an illusion of intimacy, that is no longer about music? What further requirements does superfandom impose upon the artist? I suspect that superfandom takes many forms, and that there might be gendered dimensions to it, especially when examined from the outside.

Nancy Baym: Norma, you ask some questions about musicians. I was careful to ask them about "audiences" rather than fans, because the audiences artists are dealing with online and off may include fans and superfans, but also includes people who are wandering by and curious, people who might become fans, people who aren't really fans of the music but love the way they Tweet or their Snapchat humor, and anti-fans, like Jonathan Gray (2003) has discussed, who actively hate them. Sometimes they spoke about "fans" on their own, and I never had the sense they meant something different than you or I would. At the same time, they all have differing ideas of what "fan" means and how and when they think of their audience in terms of "fans" rather than "listeners," "friends," or some other term. "Superfan" is a term I don't think any of the people I spoke with used, though they certainly recognize the important role of their strongest and most passionate supporters. I think the "superfan" language they encounter happens more under the auspices of intermediaries who want to help them identify, manage and get more money from a subset of their audience.

Norma Coates: A musician friend of mine uses it to describe fans who email him to offer their opinions on his career and what he should or could be doing. His use of the term is vaguely derogatory.

Nancy Baym: You also ask about the cost of accessibility for musicians. There are many! There's the time it takes to engage and the time it takes to gain the skills to engage (Did

Facebook change its terms of service again? What does "organic reach" mean and why should I care if it is down to 3%? Must I use Snapchat?). But there are more subtle and pernicious costs like messages from fans that carry emotional baggage. How many suicides, deaths, and other traumas that the music helped them deal with is one musician meant to hear? What if those well-meant expressions of gratitude trigger their own issues? What about when fans write about their family problems, and then family members start writing too? There are the costs of harassment, especially for women and people of color. How many "your music saved my life" messages cancel out how many rape threats? Lauren Mayberry of the band CVRCHES has been particularly articulate in describing these challenges (see, for instance, the piece she wrote for *The Guardian*: www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2013/sep/30/chvrches-lauren-mayberry-online-misogyny).

I've been fascinated by recent moves by people like Justin Bieber to withdraw from doing meet and greets because simply being emotionally accessible to all these people all the time is psychically expensive. This is something social media has accelerated, but it is not new. Instead of parasocial, I have been using a phrase from one musician I spoke with—"false intimacy"—which allows for the possibility that the relationship is in fact social, not "para," but that one person feels a much closer bond than the other does. If we are in a time when superfans are supposed to be the magic path to sustainability (and there are some good arguments to be made that they are at least an important part of it), most musicians do have to cultivate relationships without having good ways to filter out people with whom they don't want to engage. Balancing the emotional and sometimes physical risk of that against the need for funding is a dialectic that doesn't go away.

Another dimension of this vulnerability dialectic is that social media relationships provide social rewards and validation that can be intimate and powerful for artists. Many musicians also want a sense of connection with their audiences and need to know that their work affects people. When someone writes and says, "my father just died, all I can do is listen to your music," the artist may be more touched by that encounter than the letter writer.

This is all heavily gendered, not just in terms of whether the artist or the fan is male or female, but also in terms of the kind of work musicians are supposed to be doing. In some sense, much of musicians' work has always been feminized, in that it has been about providing aesthetic and emotional experiences, managing moods, being aesthetically appealing (and the object of gaze and desire), and so on. When we add to that actually talking with people about their feelings, listening to their problems, and doing the difficult work of providing comfort, we are deep into feminized labor!

Daniel Cavicchi: We've definitely started to touch on the complex emotional nature of fan engagement and perception!

In many ways, contemporary performance structures an assumption of intimacy between performer and audience, from the suggestiveness of hearing the nuances of someone's voice close in the ear to the thrill of encountering a mediated star's immediate presence at a show. Fans are, based on that frame of attraction, acting logically when they feel a personal connection, aren't they? We could call it "false," to the extent that a performer will never be able reciprocate fans' feelings, yes. But the broader exchange of feeling, the "vulnerability dialectic," as you brilliantly put it, Nancy, is still genuinely there, however unequal or mismatched in form. There is definitely a cost to artists who open the door wider to emotional accessibility; there is also a cost for fans who invest emotionally in a star. Artists can talk about fans who have harassed or threatened them; I know fans who can talk about artists who greeted their admiration with clear disgust, something that resonated in fans' lives in damaging ways.

Nancy, when you were mentioning artists feeling the weight of being emotionally accessible through social media, I kept thinking about examples of artists feeling overwhelmed or threatened by their audiences farther back in history: Robert Darnton's research on Rousseau's readers (1984), for example, where Rousseau was taken aback by people showing up at his house to talk with him. Gottschalk was often quite put off about the absurd behaviors and expectations of his listeners during his 1862 tour of the United States. At the same time, there are audience members who have reported vulnerability before their idols, as I was saying before. Painter Sarah Gooll Putnam (1882: September) has a great diary entry, for instance, about meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe at summer party in 1882, where she was surprised at how "weird" Stowe was, saying, "It is very well to be celebrated, but it is just as well to treat other folks as if they were human beings & not foot stools, or coat hooks." Maybe this negotiation has been going on a lot longer than we think.

Nancy Baym: I love this and, to go back to where we started, it points again to the necessity of setting aside assumptions that anything digital media has wrought happened because of that media. It seems like almost every time you peel back the layers of history, the same things have happened before, though perhaps in different ways and with somewhat different consequences.

Gender Identity and Fandom

Daniel Cavicchi: There is so much to say about gender and how intimacy, vulnerability, emotions, etc. continue to be feminized. I struggled with this, actually, in *Tramps Like Us*; naively, I wasn't prepared for the gender dynamics of my own interviews. More recently, when studying music lovers in the mid-nineteenth century, I was quite struck at the ways in which reporters and critics exhaustively relied on the ideological clusters of masculine/public/productive/active and feminine/private/consumptive/passive in their coverage of the arts, the effects of which are still very much with us. But the simple binaries of that model have also been thoroughly questioned ever since, especially by various fans and fan groups engaged in non-normative forms of reception. Janet Staiger's work on film fans (2000) comes to mind, here, as does Mark Duffett's thinking about Elvis fans (2001). I wonder: what would be an understanding of the social phenomenon of fandom in which gender identity isn't part of the mix and/or doesn't make a difference? Is that possible or desirable?

Norma Coates: Great questions, Dan. We've been talking about music fandom exclusively, as that's what we're all interested in, but to truly think about gender identity and fandom, and whether it does or doesn't make a difference, I believe one would have to look at other fandoms, especially sports. As we all know, gender identity is but one aspect of sports fandom. National identity and sexual identity factor in as well, and they are all tied in together.

It is difficult to detach gender identity (and other identities) from the social phenomenon of fandom. Desirable, I think, but not possible, at least not yet. Digital fan platforms might provide ways to undermine prevailing norms, but at the same time, could entrench them further. Which in some cases may not be a bad thing, especially when thinking about safe spaces for self- and fan- expressions.

Daniel Cavicchi: Your point about the difficulty of detaching identity from the social phenomenon of fandom is quite right, Norma. Especially in light of the fact that fandom appears to be definitionally wrapped up with identity, both across different forms of fandom and also

deeply in the past. Another wrinkle to the issue of identity and fandom might be the ways in which all this plays out internationally, or, let's say, across multiple cultures. How much work is there that purposefully inter-animates the anthropology of identity and fandom?

Nancy Baym: I don't see it as possible or desirable to understand fandom without gender being part of the mix, at least not until a time in the future where we are past gender. But I suspect that rather than getting past it, we are more likely to keep delving deeper into not just how it colors so much of how we think, understand, evaluate, and behave, but how many ways of being gendered there are, and how those genderings intersect with all the other social identities people claim or have forced on them. I think, for example, of black punks, and how they, like punk women (and, most of all, like black punk women), have already been written out of histories of punk. Fan scholarship has begun to talk about race, as phenomena like casting white actors to play Asian characters has become a topic that increasingly merits discussion beyond the purviews of fandoms themselves. We also need to consider questions of regional, national, and transnational fandoms if we're going to keep fan studies relevant.

Concluding Thoughts

Daniel Cavicchi: I find myself moving even further back into the social, rather than the individual, past, investigating the institutionalization of passion, broadly conceived, and setting a wider frame for fan studies, so that it includes, in a more robust way, groups and behaviors before the invention of the word "fan." It may not be as apparent as it is with a word like "art," say, or "community," but fandom is quite a big tent. And fan studies, as a field, has an interesting ability to expand, accommodating wider questions and considerations—about identity, emotion, engagement, politics, economics, age, etc. It's been fantastic learning from you both.

Nancy Baym: Yes, thanks editors for bringing us together for this conversation! Finally, in response to the question of how to define "fan" if the very definitions of "music," "performer," "audience," "work," etc. are in play, it's essential to remember that "fan" and "musician" have never been mutually exclusive categories. Nearly, if not all, musicians are fans. Many fans make music. I prefer to think of these categories as social roles we play. Just as a person can be writer, mother, sister, neighbor, a person can be musician, fan, performer, listener. They're all mutable subject positions. Every time we hear or use "fan" or "fandom," we should ask who is defining "fan" and for what purposes? Rather than presuming there is a thing that is "fan," I hope we can look more at modes of engagement with media and with one another and understand better how they simultaneously have long histories that predate "fan" yet are also transformed by and transforming media technologies and industries.

Norma Coates: It was wonderful to participate in this stimulating conversation. Fan studies clearly has a long and important future.

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